It’s Your Ego — Stupid!

Fix It to Fix Your Life

Nick Martin
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Stupid!
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NICK MARTIN
To
Melanie Jae Martin

Thank you for transforming the rawness of my thoughts and words into brevity, clarity, and coherence in order to better serve those for whom this book is intended. And for the courage, writing, and activism you have done on behalf of indigenous people, wildlife, and the environment across the world. You are truly a reflection of the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within your being.

Love,
Dad
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My journey into what was to become my life’s work involving ego began in 1986. That is when I successfully completed the national licensing exam for psychologists (known as the Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology), after a period of rigorous daily study that lasted five years. During my studies, I had exposed myself to all of the fields of psychology that this career-altering exam might possibly ask me about—sort of like how future lawyers prepare for the bar exam. These fields included clinical psychology, counseling psychology, neuropsychology, developmental psychology, and social psychology, just to name a few. After this prolonged period of immersion and saturation, I didn’t want to read another word on psychology. And I didn’t—for six years!

That turned out to be one of the best decisions I have made in my life, along with my career choices, life’s partner, and decision to take less money to work at the Mon Valley Mental Health/Mental Retardation Clinic in 1979. From 1986 to 1992, I was unknowingly undergoing another prolonged period of education. This education unfolded as I continued my work as a therapist in the mental health clinic while also working as a university professor at California University of Pennsylvania and serving as a vocational rehabilitation consultant for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. During this work as a therapist, diagnostician, educator, and consultant, I spent all of my time “reading” people and no time reading books.

The people I served were teaching me with their lives much more than any theorist or book could teach me about who they were—and, more importantly, why they were. I was learning from them throughout all the various challenges they brought forth for exploration and treatment. Each one of us faces distinct challenges within our human life endeavors—in
our relationships, as well as in our efforts to love ourselves, achieve our dreams, cope with life changes and adversity, and experience genuine happiness. Some of my patients conquered these challenges and were able to experience a fulfilling, meaningful, and successful life with all it has to offer. Unfortunately, many did not experience this outcome, only getting temporary relief and eventually repeating some of the same issues that had brought them into treatment. They often repeated them with different people or in different places, but with the same results: continued suffering.

After accumulating this “data” over several years and thousands of clients, an insight began to emerge. An overriding message came forward, crystalized in this thought: It’s their ego—stupid! It had been under my nose the whole time, seemingly saying, “I’m here, I’m here!”—but I had not seen it. I had not set out to find ego, but ego had found me. Its mystery, and more importantly, its impact on people’s lives, formed a foundation for what was truly to become my life’s work: helping people to recognize the powerful, pervasive, and consistent impact that ego is having on their lives. If I am successful in this undertaking, I will have accomplished my mission.

By the way, I want to both apologize and explain the main title of this book. I don’t think there is anything wrong with your intellect. The title is not intended to be taken literally. It’s the kind of thing someone might say when stating what has become obvious. In my case, all of my collective professional and personal experiences were speaking to me, saying, “Hasn’t this become obvious to you by now?” Ego is constantly impacting your life, whether you realize it or not. The title is like a cold bucket of water being thrown upon you to bring you into that realization. If it starts to hit you that ego is having that impact, great! You are ready to enter the realm of ego awareness. Sometimes awakening can be a difficult experience but ultimately a good thing, because it means you’re becoming more connected to truth—both human and Divine.

Now that I had received this crystalized message, the real work was only beginning. The specifics; the details of what ego is and what, how, where, when, and why is it doing what it’s doing to people and their lives—often bringing about suffering rather than living—I still had to discover. I spent the next fourteen years unearthing these details, which are discussed in Ego Therapy: A Method for Healing Your Whole Self (Balboa Press, 2015). That book delves into several original concepts that build an “ego vocabulary” (such as ego energy, ego medicine, ego power, ego flexibility, and ego vulnerability), which are also listed in the glossary of this book. These concepts, which are discussed
Throughout that book and this one, illuminate the nuances of ego so as to provide more specificity and precision than has ever been known about this extremely important influence upon our humanity—in both the individual and collective sense—and our spirituality.

As life, luck, and love would have it, I have had the honor and privilege to be married to a wonderful and beautiful woman and spiritual healer, Rev. Linda M. Martin, for over forty years. Part of my journey and education during the past fifteen years has involved our ongoing discussions about our personal and professional experiences. From these conversations, I came to recognize the significant impact that ego can have not only on our humanity, but also on our spirituality and connection to our Divinity. These insights led to the publication of our books, *EgoSpiritualism: Awakening to Your Human and Divine Self* (Balboa Press, 2015) and *The Two Voices Within: Balancing the Energies of Ego and Spirit to Enhance Your Life* (Balboa Press, 2015).

Our joint efforts are intended to help people discover the truth about their humanity and Divinity. Truth is available to all of us—here, now, and always. We only need to be willing to seek it. It does not hide from us. We hide from it—often unknowingly, consumed by faulty beliefs and misconceptions about ourselves, others, and life. And ego has a lot to do with that!

In Peace and Love,

Nick
CHAPTER 1

What Is Ego?

Ego and Your Life

Three quotations appear in *EgoSpiritualism*, spoken by brilliant men, at different times, using different words, while voicing a similar truth: Most people are getting less out of life and themselves, rather than more. That’s because most people fail to recognize what has been made available to them within both their humanity and their Divinity. The authors of those words were Cardinal John Newman, Oscar Wilde, and Jesus. Newman said, “Fear not that thy life shall come to an end, but rather that it shall never have a beginning.” His statement emphasizes how often people fail to awaken to the possibilities within themselves and the life they are experiencing, fixating instead on fears about the end of their existence. Wilde said, “One’s real life is so often the life that one does not lead,” a contemplation of how often the greater life we are meant to live remains unrecognized and unfulfilled. Jesus said, “For many are called, but few are chosen” (*King James Version*, Matthew 22:14). His statement emphasizes that we often fail to experience the greater life available to all of us by failing to choose ourselves.

In response to all three of these statements, I would say that our ego energy is preventing us from awakening to who we truly are, living our real life, and knowing how to choose ourselves, so we can live the great life we are meant to live. We often spend a lot of time talking about different ways of handling relationships, stress, change, and conflict. However, things often don’t get better or stay better for very long. It’s like a cold or headache that keeps coming back.
These relationship, stress, and conflict issues may keep returning in your life because you haven’t changed you—the main source for managing the various challenges you face in your life. More specifically, the ego energy at your core that is unhealthy and imbalanced is shaping your ego mind and ego self, leading to faulty management of your life—by you! You spend a lot of time trying to fix what is going on around you, and little time fixing what’s going on within you.

Take a deep breath before reading this. You and your ego are your real problem. They are the real reason why your life is anything less than great. All of the other problems going on in important life areas are just a manifestation and reflection of this problem. If you don’t believe that, please realize that many of the things that are lowering the quality of your life are being better managed by others. Not necessarily optimally, just better. It’s not because they are smarter than you, richer than you, more well-intended than you, or looked upon more favorably by God than you. Again, you and your ego energy are your real problem. You must change it to move from being a weaker version of yourself to a better version—and ultimately the best version of yourself! The version living a great life. Then you will be beginning your life, living your real life, and choosing yourself in ways that Newman, Wilde, and Jesus were speaking of.

The most important topic being addressed in this book involves the connection of your ego to your life—in both the human and spiritual sense. It is the foundation upon which everything else in this book and the previous ones written by myself and my wife Linda stands. Consequently, understanding what ego truly is—and what it isn’t—profoundly affects your ability to understand why you and your life are the way they are and what you can do about it. You are always dealing with someone’s ego energy—yours or others’. You don’t know it; they don’t know it, but the way you deal with it makes all the difference in the world.

Unfortunately, lacking an understanding of ego and your ego energy weakens your ability to work with it and heal it. It’s like fighting an enemy that you can’t see, if your ego energy is unhealthy. It remains hidden within your ignorance of it, even though it’s there all the time, all of your life. Ego will not and cannot reveal itself to you. It doesn’t possess an intellect or intentionality to bring it from an unconscious to conscious level to you—and it doesn’t have to. You can do what ego is unable to do. You can undertake your “ego work” with the advice in this book as well as our other books. You don’t need to go anywhere, meet anyone, spend a lot of time, or spend a lot of money to undertake your ego work. You can be your own therapist, healing
What Is Ego?

from within—in both the human and spiritual sense. Coming to understand ego is the first portion of ego medicine that you must take.

Speaking more broadly, a failure to develop a collective understanding of the ego will preclude transformation and evolution to a more peaceful and spiritually connected planet. The powerful spiritual messages from traditional and current spiritual teachers are weakened when confronted by collective ego unconsciousness, serving to undermine collective spiritual consciousness. Individually and collectively, we must do our ego work by filling in the steps along the path between ego unconsciousness and spiritual consciousness. Each of these steps, which include ego consciousness and egospiritualism, are described in EgoSpiritualism: Awakening to Your Human and Divine Self.

If you disagree that humankind has made limited progress in becoming a humanly and spiritually connected planet, ask yourself the following questions. Have we really changed since the times of Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad? Or have we simply changed in the ways we engage or disengage from each other, moving from more primitive to technologically sophisticated methods of communication and conflict? The bottom line is that the ego energy that is keeping us from world peace hasn’t changed tremendously over the past three thousand years—and it won’t, until we come to a better understanding of it in ourselves and others. If the idea of world peace is a ridiculous fantasy to you, you’re right. And it will stay that way if we remain in the dark about what ego is.

The journey to fixing your ego and fixing your life involves forming a foundation of ego awareness that includes an understanding of what it is and what it isn’t. So much has been written about ego that is wrong, yet is believed, which has undermined any ability to understand it and heal it. This ignorance will lead you into blind alleys and dead ends, preventing you from getting to know yourself, why you are the way you are, and what you can do about it. Failure to understand ego will block your personal evolution, as it has blocked humankind’s evolution for thousands of years.

Later in this chapter, I will discuss many of the myths about ego that have only served to keep us ignorant of it and how it’s impacting our lives. Then I will discuss the basics of what ego is and how one’s ego energy becomes the way it is.

The Stupidity, Suffering, and Survival of Unhealthy Ego Energy

There is a common thread that affects the stupidity, suffering, and survival that can take place in our lives. It has no boundaries involving
intelligence, gender, age, race, education level, sexual orientation, income, religion, political affiliation, culture, or ethnicity, and it’s at work even though we have all been created with the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within our being. This common thread prevents us from fully knowing the Four Divine Gifts we have all received: The gift of our life, the gift of being able to create the life in which we are living, the gift of our eternal life, and the gift of God’s presence within our being. In short, the common thread is the distance at which we are living from truth—both human and Divine—which results from imbalanced ego energy.

Beyond the personal journey to healing our ego energy is the collective journey we must take as humanity. Much of the stupidity, suffering, and survival we have known during the past three thousand years will be repeated during the next three thousand years if nothing changes in our understanding of ego energy. Irrespective of whatever spiritual messages are put forth, and despite the Divinity that exists within our humanity, nothing will change. World peace will remain as elusive as it has ever been if we remain egoically unconscious and do not learn to understand the imbalanced ego energy that serves to breed dictators, narcissists, authoritarians, sociopaths, and sadists. By shining a bright light on this energy, we can weaken it, as it can only thrive in the darkness of our ignorance of what it looks like in ourselves and others. We must shine on it a bright and brilliant light comprised of truth—both human and Divine.

When we are disconnected from truth, we take a detour into lesser versions of ourselves and life. Within these detours, we engage in stupidity no matter how intelligent or well-intended we are. In our stupidity, we become caught up in thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and physiological responses that are actually hurting rather than helping us, and often others. We become stuck in painful physical, mental, and emotional experiences no matter how much we try to remove ourselves from them. This suffering can also be subtle and seemingly nonexistent. It’s happening; we just may not realize it’s happening, which is often the case for those with higher ego power, lower ego flexibility, or lower ego vulnerability. This suffering that we experience within the ten key life areas, which I will be discussing, is consistent with Buddha’s fundamental pronouncement, “All is suffering.” Survival involves anything less than being the best version of ourselves and living the great life we are meant to live. Failure to deeply connect with both human and Divine Truth due to imbalanced ego energy leads us to default into survival. And we will remain in the imprisonment of survival, no matter how much we want to live, until we fix our ego energy.
The exact nature of our detour will be shaped by where and how much our ego energy is imbalanced. For some, this involves power issues; for others, flexibility issues; and still for others, vulnerability issues. My detour involved higher ego vulnerability issues, particularly during my adolescence and young adulthood. I exhibited a lot of fear-based thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that were quite stupid, contributed to my suffering, and prevented me from truly living, despite being a fairly intelligent and well-educated person. Those qualities were no match for my imbalanced ego energy. Our detours are all different, but the underlying basis for each is not—imbalanced ego energy is keeping you from the truth, including your truth!

Chapters 3 to 8 provide an opportunity for you to recognize these detours and determine which one you may be taking. Each of these chapters lists symptoms and insights involving the ten key life areas, where you may recognize yourself making these detours. They can be used to take the second portion of ego medicine which involves tuning in to your ego energy and recognizing the reality-disconnected thinking you may be engaging in. Again, you are already taking the first portion, which involves getting to know what ego really is, the focus of this chapter. The third and last portion will be covered in chapters 9 to 11, which involve balanced ego energy and the reality-based thinking that reflects and promotes it. When you have taken each portion of ego medicine, you’ll be in the process of fixing your ego and setting forth on the path of joyful living in which you are beginning your life, living your real life, and choosing yourself.

Fixing Your Ego with Ego Therapy

_Ego Therapy_ is a self-help approach to engaging in therapy in which you serve as your therapist while directly working on your ego. It does not involve going anywhere else but within, meeting anyone else but you, or spending any more money than you have already spent in purchasing this book. It _does_ involve using ego medicine, which helps you to: 1) get to know what ego is, 2) tune in to your own ego energy, and 3) work to recognize the difference between ego-related unrealistic and realistic thinking and learn to use more of the latter. It requires looking closely at specific areas in your life such as relationships, events, and experiences to connect them with the examples and insights I’ll be sharing. These reflections will help you to recognize your ego energy and where it may need to be healed.
Getting to Know What Ego Is

So much has been written about ego. Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of it is wrong, misguided, incomplete, fragmented, and lacking in its attempt to capture the essence of this incredibly large and impactful entity. I will be mentioning some of these misconceptions when I discuss several myths about ego later in this chapter. Aside from these myths, our understanding of ego is tremendously “undersized.” For most (99.999%), ego is a three-letter word that has something to do with your will and desire to have influence over things. That’s it! That’s the totality of most people’s understanding of ego. If that describes you, it’s as if you are trying to study bacteria with the naked eye. It’s there, but you can’t really see it and don’t know if or what kind of harm it’s doing to you. This book is intended to magnify ego as if you are looking at it with an electron microscope. The more you open yourself up to a truer understanding of ego, the more truth will come to you—both human and Divine. As you open the door to the truth about ego, the healing of your ego will begin where it is needed while you grow a deeper understanding of ego and you.

Tuning In to Your Ego

Tuning in to your ego will involve getting to know how much ego power, ego flexibility, and ego vulnerability are at work in your ego energy. If you have a faulty understanding of ego, this exercise will be fruitless. That is why the previous step is so important. You need to build that solid foundation of awareness upon which to stand in your efforts to fix your ego. Assuming you are building a solid understanding of truth about ego, you are ready to get to know your own ego.

The tuning-in process involves recognizing the “volume” level of any imbalances you have in the power, flexibility, and vulnerability of your ego energy. You’re going to need some help in this endeavor. This help will involve guidance in looking at the ten key life areas where the nature of your ego energy is revealing itself. Chapters 3 to 11 provide plenty of examples, which I refer to as symptoms, of various degrees of ego power, flexibility, and vulnerability. Comparing these symptoms with examples from your own life will allow you to better tune in to your ego energy. Look for patterns over time in your thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and physiology, not just isolated examples, as you engage in the tuning in process to determine your ego energy.
The ego work you are doing here is critical, as you are getting to the truth of yourself. If you begin to see that any of your ego energy components (power, flexibility, or vulnerability) are imbalanced, especially if the imbalance is extreme, this will likely be painful. You may begin to see all of the suffering and destructiveness you have brought to yourself and others. It may hit you quite hard, the way an addict may be hit by the reality of his addiction when he moves out of denial. The good news is that pain is a sign that you are ready to heal more—to begin a new journey moving forward from surviving to living, and becoming the best version of yourself. At that point, you’ll be living the great life you were meant to live!

Using Reality-Based Thinking

Our mind is an important resource for healing our ego and transforming ourselves so we can live that great life. We have the ability to distinguish between belief and truth. We have the ability to distinguish between the ego-driven unrealistic thinking that’s at work when our ego power, flexibility, or vulnerability is imbalanced, which leads us into a life filled with stupidity, suffering, and survival, though we often cannot see that. Likewise, we have the ability to recognize reality-based thinking that leads to healthy, balanced ego energy, connection to truth—human and Divine—and really living. When we are really living, we are getting the most from relationships, loving ourselves, using our talents, knowing our life’s purpose, and experiencing genuine happiness.

Some would say the nature of truth is debatable and is intimately connected to the person, place, time, and the issue under consideration. Someone’s “fake news” is another person’s hard truth. Someone’s freedom fighter is another person’s terrorist. However, reality tends to become more relative when people’s ego power, flexibility, or vulnerability is imbalanced, especially when the volume of the imbalance is low or high. This often leads to narrow, simplistic, disturbed, distorted, or “black-and-white” thinking, which is really just beliefs masquerading as absolute truth. When ego energy is healthier and more balanced, we can develop a more rational, reality-based, complex grasp of things. Balanced ego energy tends to promote a greater amount of consensual truth across diverse people over time. As an example, most people recognize the need for gun control legislation that strikes a balance between the rights of owners of guns to protect themselves and the
need to ensure proper access that factors in age, legal history, and mental illness history.

*It’s Your Ego—Stupid!* is a short book in terms of its number of pages and the time it will take you to read them. It’s a much longer book if you take time to pause and reflect upon the examples and insights within it (possibly several times) to see where they fit with the data from your life that only you really know. It’s also a longer book if you want to cross the boundary between intellectual insight, in which you have learned the right things about your ego, and experiential insight, in which you can *live* the right things and realistic thinking—which healthy, balanced ego energy will allow. This is when you will know that ego therapy has truly taken place and you have fixed your ego!

**Myths about Ego**

Understanding what ego *isn’t* is extremely important to understanding what it *is*. If we fail to do that, we will remain in the darkness of our ignorance of ego while it continually drives us toward stupid ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving—in sum, surviving. Lots of intelligent people have written unintelligent ideas about ego that have only served to plunge us further into darkness. The myths about ego they’ve put forth have only served to make what is simple seem incredibly complex, beyond comprehension, and, most importantly, removed from truth. The following represents many of the myths I have read about ego, which you must unlearn in order to truly understand it and fix your life.

**Ego Has an Intellect**

Lots of material written about ego suggests that it has an intellectual quality, as if the ego is able to think and construct for you the things that you think—your ideas, knowledge, values, attitudes, prejudices, and illusions. The ego does not have a mental life like you do, so please forget that faulty idea. Ego cannot think for you. The only connection ego has to your mental life is that the energy it is within you (which I will elaborate on later) *guides you* in creating the contents of your mind (e.g., beliefs, values, and attitudes) you use to manage your life. It does not *create* them—you do. Fixing your ego includes recognizing that it doesn’t have an intellect.
Ego Has an Intention

Oftentimes, I have seen it written that ego is trying to orchestrate what is taking place in your life; to directly exert an impact upon you and your life—an impact that may not be consistent with what you want. Ego cannot do that, because it doesn’t have an intellect upon which to build intentions for you. The only “intention” ego can be said to have—which it is not aware of—is to promote your survival, which is its sole purpose. You form the intentions in your own mind, which develop from the nature of your ego energy. When this ego energy is balanced or healthy, the intentions you develop are going to be positive, healthy, and constructive. They will be filled with reality-based thoughts. When this energy is imbalanced or unhealthy, the intentions you develop for yourself or others are going to be negative, unhealthy, or destructive. They’re sure to be filled with lots of reality-disconnected thoughts, even though you may be quite intelligent. This is also the point where we begin to delve into various kinds of suffering within our thoughts, words, feelings, behaviors, and even physiology. Much of this suffering remains unrecognized and subtle, but it is nevertheless happening in many of the key life areas I mentioned earlier—something I believe Buddha was referring to in his foundational pronouncement, “All is suffering.”

By the way, ego is not intentionally bringing us into suffering. Its main job is to promote our daily and mortal survival. Our suffering is occurring due to the imbalance of our ego energy. Ego cannot recognize its imbalance and the suffering it is bringing us in the name of our survival. We need to do that ourselves, or we’ll remain entrapped in whatever form of suffering is taking place in our life, large or small.

Another important area connected to the myth of ego’s intentionality involves spirituality and God. I have seen various writings in which ego is described as deliberately opposing God or acting as God’s enemy. They use phrases like “edges God out”—which is completely wrong. Ego is an energy with no awareness of itself, you, or God. It cannot oppose a God it is incapable of representing in its essence. It can lead us to develop illusions of separation, unworthiness, inequality, sensing all energy, human order, and human control, which make us intensely human, non-spiritual, and disconnected from God. But none of that has to do with an awareness of God or an attempt to keep us from the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within our being. Fixing your ego includes recognizing that it is not intentionally impacting your life—either humanly or spiritually.
Ego Has an Awareness of Itself

This myth involves the notion that ego knows what it is and what it is doing in your life. However, this energy, which lacks an intellect and intentionality, has no ability to experience an awareness of what it is and what impact it is having upon your life—though you do! Consequently, ego cannot appraise the negative or positive impact it is having on the quality of your life, particularly in the ten key life areas—but you can! The ego cannot know how imbalanced it is, or understand its level of need to be healed—but you can! You can form an awareness of your ego energy and put in motion a plan to fix it, which neither ego nor God will do. Fixing your ego includes recognizing that it has no awareness of what it is and what it’s doing to your life.

Ego Only Negatively Impacts Your Life

This myth has you believing that ego only exerts a dark and destructive impact upon your life. It can and will do that when it’s imbalanced and leading you toward unhealthy ways of trying to survive—mentally, emotionally, behaviorally, and physiologically. But when this energy is balanced, it will lead you toward positive, constructive, and enriching ways in which to not only survive, but to thrive and live! It will play its role in helping you eat right, sleep right, exercise right, treat people right, and so on. It will lead you toward healthy ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. It’s not just you doing this alone, but you working in tandem with your ego energy to make all of that good stuff happen while opening the door wider to your Divinity—which awaits your arrival!

When it’s healthy, your ego energy will act as a positive force in dealing with people, connecting with loved ones, loving yourself, discovering your purpose, using your potential, growing the quality of your mind, working with change, coping with adversity, experiencing genuine happiness, managing stressors, and resolving unneeded conflict—the ten key life areas. Fixing your ego includes recognizing its potential to act as a positive influence on your life—both humanly and spiritually.

Ego Cannot Be in the Present

This myth puts forth the notion that when our ego is at work, it can only chain us to the past or preoccupy us with the future. This would be true if the
only thing your ego energy could be was imbalanced. Unhealthy ego energy will have us looking constantly into our past to focus on unresolved events or issues that have harmed us, and which may do so again within current events or new relationships. People experiencing depression often get stuck in this rut, as they may have had difficulty resolving the past, which instills a sense of purposelessness, helplessness, and hopelessness within them. This unhealthy energy can also make us look constantly into the future, wondering what threat may be lurking around the next corner of our life. This myth gets debunked when one’s ego energy is healthy and balanced, however. Neither the past nor the future are the challenges to our survival, we then realize. Our focus is on the present and being in the now. One’s ego energy then becomes free to manage the challenges of daily life in ways that are productive and enriching. Ego is serving as a friend rather than an enemy in the living of your life. Fixing your ego includes recognizing how it can help us to live in the present when it is healthy and in balance.

Ego Can Be Disowned, Dissolved, and Defeated

This myth puts forth the notion that if we try hard enough to do the right things, our ego can be extinguished from us. Unfortunately, this puts forth an impossible task: the elimination of our human energy. In this empty and fruitless approach to life, we remain entangled in the darker side of our humanity and are living a lesser version of ourselves. Ego can’t be disowned, dissolved, or defeated by us—and it doesn’t need to be. It must be healed, and we must be the healer. In this healing, we come to truly know what ego is, learn to recognize the nature of our ego energy’s power, flexibility, and vulnerability, and make use of reality-based thinking to embrace human truth. Fixing your ego includes recognizing that it is an entity to be healed—not disowned, dissolved, or defeated.

Ego Is Your Ego Mind

The term ego mind is often used to capture the essence of what ego is. This places an emphasis on all of the thoughts and ideas you carry around in your brain, including beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, values, and prejudices—as if these are what ego is. They are not ego, however; they are your ego mind, and there is a difference. Your ego is the energy within you that has led you to form all of the contents within your mind that you are using to deal with life. Ego did not
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construct them—you did! Your ego energy determined the quality of the contents of your mind and the degree to which they are reality-based (balanced) or not (imbalanced). They don’t belong to ego, because ego didn’t form them—you did. Fixing your ego includes recognizing that it’s an energy; it’s not your mind.

Ego Is Your Ego Self

The term ego self has been used to attempt to capture the essence of what ego is. This understanding of ego emphasizes the patterns of thoughts, behaviors, emotions, and physiology we typically manifest in our daily lives. Another word for these patterns is “personality.” Similar to your ego mind, your ego energy has led you toward your preferred ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving, but it did not select them for you—you did! Given the nature of your ego energy, you found them to be the ones that work best for you in your daily efforts to survive—even when they have brought about suffering for you or others due to your imbalanced ego energy. Ego is not your ego self, however—you are! You can try to change your life or personality by changing the way you think, act, or feel, but it often doesn’t work for very long—if at all—because you need to focus your healing at a deeper level: your ego energy. Fixing your ego includes recognizing it is not your self—you are!

Ego Is Healed by God

Lots of spiritual messages, both traditional and current, have stressed the need to work on our spiritual consciousness and connection to God in order to deliver us from the darker manifestation of our humanity—ego. To a degree, this is true when we make use of spiritual tools such as meditation, prayer, yoga, and mindfulness practice, which resonate with our divinely created design and the wisdom of the ages. Unfortunately, this healing approach seems to weaken when our ego energy is more imbalanced, preventing us from truly hearing the voice of Spirit within our being. The voice of Ego is too loud, and when it’s manifested in unhealthy and unfulfilling lives, it serves to drown out the softer, steadier voice of our Spirit. In these circumstances, God and our spirituality cannot bring about the healing of our ego energy. But we can! We can do that when we understand this human energy at the core of our being. Our minds can be incredible tools in the service of our wellness. Fixing your ego includes recognizing that you are empowered to heal it with the truth about its essence—and your own.
What Is Ego?

Ego Is Your Survival Energy

Hopefully you have begun to discard many of those inaccurate perceptions of ego so you can reach a solid understanding of what ego actually is. The good news is that things are going to become simpler, more concrete, and more understandable as you focus on ego as an energy, without the added burden of mixing in notions of ego being your mind or self, or any of the other myths. We’ll walk through some fairly complex topics when we talk about the power, flexibility, and vulnerability aspects of this energy. However, there will be lots of examples involving real life experiences in this book, as in my other books, to help you understand your ego energy.

As you know, you must do various things in order to survive. Some of the more obvious ones include breathing, eating, drinking, sleeping, and eliminating. Failure to do any of those things will ultimately lead to death. These activities are woven into your biology in order to assure your survival. You have no choice; they are intended to stave off your ultimate human mortality for seventy or more years.

Survival and humanity are intimately linked, but not only on a physical level. There is an important psychological influence woven into our design with the intention of promoting our survival. Its name is ego. Ego is the entity and energy that leads you to form the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and physiology you need to survive. This is not only the case when we confront events that could lead to our physical death. This also extends to events in our daily life that we don’t ordinarily associate with the notion of survival—events such as interacting with people, dealing with close relationships, and managing change, conflict, adversity, or stressors, to name a few. You see, our ego’s “radar” that is intended to promote our survival extends pretty far. We don’t just try to survive physically, but also mentally, emotionally, and behaviorally, and ego energy impacts these efforts.

At the risk of oversimplification, when things are going well in your life in many of those important life areas, you are living. When they are not, you’re surviving, and you are not meant to be here to merely survive. Unfortunately, survival is the “normal” approach to life for many people, rather than living. It’s the default mode we drift into when our ego energy is unhealthy and imbalanced. We often don’t know the difference between surviving and living, confusing one for the other, while unknowingly settling for less rather than getting more out of life. Chapter 2 is intended to help you understand the difference and determine whether you are surviving or
living. It’s likely that you are doing more surviving and less living—but that’s okay; almost all of us have been there. We don’t have to stay there, if we have a game plan to fix our ego in order to fix our life.

The quality of your radar can be good when your ego energy is balanced and picks up only the things that need to be addressed. In this case, you spend most of your life living instead of just surviving. You’re able to bring your talents into the experiences and challenges that life brings you in ways that are productive, fulfilling, and meaningful. When the quality of this ego energy is imbalanced and weaker (in its power, flexibility, or vulnerability) it will either lead us to pick up habits that exaggerate our survival efforts or cause us to miss things that can be helpful to our daily survival.

The first group includes people with higher ego power, lower ego power, and/or higher ego vulnerability. The second group includes people with lower ego flexibility and/or lower ego vulnerability. In either case, these people begin to resort to stupid thoughts, behaviors, feelings, or physiological responses that don’t fit with the reality of the situation. The problem isn’t “out there”; it’s “in here”—it’s their ego energy. The more this is occurring, the more suffering is taking place—often unnecessarily. Some of it lasts for a shorter time and is of lower intensity, while some of it lasts longer and has a greater intensity. If you are constantly fighting with your family members and the cuts are deep, you are suffering. Remember, the ego has no idea of the length or intensity of your suffering. All it’s trying to do is promote your survival.

The Components of Your Ego Energy

The ego energy you are experiencing, and which is impacting your life, has three major components: ego power, ego flexibility, and ego vulnerability. Whenever I refer to ego energy, I am talking about the combination of these components that exists within you, myself, and any other person. Your ego energy is a mixture of power, flexibility, and vulnerability. In *Ego Therapy*, I identify and describe 125 distinct ego energies that each have a particular combination of these components. As part of tuning in to your ego energy, you must determine the amount of power, flexibility, and vulnerability you possess based on the descriptions in that book as well as this one. This ultimately will help you understand whether your ego energy is imbalanced; where it is imbalanced in its power, flexibility, and vulnerability; the degree
of imbalance in any of these components; and the approach you must take in bringing your ego energy into balance. Fixing your ego involves coming to understand these components and the degree to which they are impacting your ego energy.

I will now briefly describe each of these components in order to give you a basic understanding of what they are.

**Ego Power**

Ego power refers to how much power, control, or influence exists within your ego energy, causing you to exert it in your life. This occurs within social interactions, close relationships, efforts to achieve, and your response to change, adversity, stressors, and conflict. People this describes vary from those who want to take little or no control (lower ego power) to those who are able to share control in the aforementioned life areas (balanced ego power) to those who insist on taking most if not all of the control (higher ego power). The higher or lower people’s ego power is, the less healthy their life is, the more they are surviving rather than living, and the more suffering they are experiencing—even though they often don’t realize it. They’re often unable to see suffering for what it is because it has become normalized. A good example of this is someone with lower ego power who is in an abusive relationship. She may come to expect and accept mistreatment as something that just occurs in a relationship, without realizing that it’s not normal and no person deserves to be abused. Unfortunately, her ego power has led her into a pathological approach to her survival in which she complies with the demands of her abuser. Those with higher ego power often need to dominate or control relationships in order to meet their pathological needs for power, ultimately to gain a greater sense of survival. Again, this becomes very normal for them, so they can’t see the mistreatment for what it truly is. I provide several examples of roles lived by people who are experiencing lower ego power (e.g., victim, martyr, depressive) or higher ego power (e.g., dictator, narcissist, rebel) in *The Two Voices Within* to help you tune in to this aspect of your ego energy.

**Ego Flexibility**

Ego flexibility refers to how adaptable your ego energy is, which impacts how effectively you filter what enters and becomes a part of your mind.
This filtering affects your ability to know the difference between reality-based ideas (truths) and reality-disconnected ideas (faulty beliefs, illusions, prejudices, values, and attitudes), as well as your ability to make changes in your mind (adding, changing, or discarding ideas) to upgrade the quality of your thoughts by assuring that they are more based in reality.

Some people are rigid and inflexible in their filtering, listening mainly to themselves and others who think very much like them while clinging to old, often outdated ideas. These are the people with lower ego flexibility. Others are flexible in their filtering, allowing them to add, modify, or remove ideas based on their connection to reality. These are the people who have balanced ego flexibility. Still others are very flexible, allowing lots of reality-disconnected ideas into their mind. They often get them from the wrong people, who are ill-informed or lacking experience in what they are talking about. These are the people with high ego flexibility. People with lower ego flexibility often believe they own the truth and have a need to convert others to it. People with higher ego flexibility often believe others own the truth, and that they must learn it from them in order to grasp it.

The higher or lower a person’s ego flexibility, the more disconnected he is from reality, as the ideas and thoughts within his mind are often based on faulty, inaccurate information. He can be a person with a high level of intelligence even though he thinks lots of reality-disconnected thoughts (which may be quite stupid). He either doesn’t know, or doesn’t want to know, the stupidity of his thinking. Fact-checking his own mind is not something he wants to do. Several examples of lower ego flexibility roles (e.g., authoritarian, racist, religious extremist), and higher ego flexibility roles (e.g., puppet, cultist, loyalist) are discussed in *The Two Voices Within* to assist you in tuning in to this component of your ego energy and how it’s impacting your life.

*Ego Vulnerability*

Ego vulnerability refers to how intensely your ego energy leads you to experience your human imperfection and vulnerability. This includes all the weaknesses and threats (real or imagined) that you may perceive within yourself, others, and the world. People who have lower ego vulnerability are oblivious to weakness (particularly within themselves) and danger. Those with balanced ego vulnerability are able to acknowledge, accept, and work with their imperfections and those of others. Those with higher ego vulnerability
are often consumed by weaknesses and imperfections (particularly their own), leading them to work hard to deny, reject, or overcome them.

The lower or higher one’s ego vulnerability, the greater one’s difficulty in working with emotions and dealing with one’s weaknesses. Those with lower ego vulnerability are often emotionless and have difficulty experiencing emotional cues such as anger, fear, or love that can draw our attention to how we can work with our imperfections. People often find them insensitive, reckless, or emotionally distant. Those with higher ego vulnerability often experience lots of anger or anxiety, which lasts longer than necessary. It often leads them into emotional and reality-disconnected thinking about themselves, others, and the world—though they don’t realize it. Rather, they react to these faulty thoughts, getting caught up in often unnecessary thinking patterns, behavior, and physical responses—often known as drama—in their efforts to ward off the danger. They fail to recognize that the danger isn’t out there, but in here, within the workings of their higher ego vulnerability. Several examples of lower ego vulnerability (e.g., hedonist, psychopath, sadist) and higher ego vulnerability (e.g., overachiever, stressed-out person, high-maintenance partner) are discussed in *The Two Voices Within* to assist you in tuning in to this aspect of your ego energy and how it’s impacting your life.

**How Did Your Ego Get the Way It Is?**

This is an important question, but there’s a misconception that by answering it, you will come to understand how to fix your ego. Unfortunately, knowing how your ego energy came to be the way it is doesn’t tell you anything about how to heal it. Unfortunately, lots of treatment approaches have emphasized recognizing the origins of one’s difficulties as a primary strategy to resolving them. They fail to address how the damage to your ego energy must be fixed in order to fix your life. That is what this and my other books are intended to do—to address this gaping hole in understanding ourselves and learning to heal the ego energy we are, so we can live the great life we are meant to live!

There are four possible answers to the question of how our ego became the way it is: Ego, You, God, and Life.
It’s Your Ego—Stupid!

Ego?

No, ego did not choose to be the energy it is within your being. As you may recall, ego has no intellect, intentionality, or awareness of what it is doing in your life. It is an energy at work to promote your survival by influencing the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and physical responses you are using to survive. It has no say in how much power, flexibility, and vulnerability will be at work to ensure your survival.

You?

No, you did not choose the ego energy that is working to promote your survival. What you did “choose” were the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and physical responses at work for that purpose. I use the word “choose” tentatively because you did not sit down and say to yourself, “I will think this thought, feel this emotion, engage in this behavior, or experience this physical reaction so I can survive better.” What you did do was “sign off” on them by continuing to use and accept them as your game plan for life rather than challenging them. They became your “normal” and best approach to life, fashioned from your ego power, flexibility, and vulnerability. The good news is, you can stop accepting them and begin to change them so they’ll stop having such a grip over you in ways that are destructive, bring about suffering, and keep you in survival mode all the time. This is where the gift of our intellect and capacity for developing greater self-awareness come in to interrupt and change these dysfunctional and unnecessary patterns of thinking, feeling, behaving, and physically reacting. This transformation will bring about a newer, healthier normal that is more connected to human and Divine Truth. The truth will truly set you free—to live rather than survive.

God?

No, God has nothing to do with your ego energy being what it is. God’s role in your life is your being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is, and giving you the Divine Gifts of Life, Creating Life, Eternal Life, and God Within, which you and all have been given. Your human life is part of the Gift of Life, but the nature of your life and the ego energy influencing it were not selected by God. Unfortunately, historical versions of God may suggest that
God is “pulling the strings” in your life. God is not pulling strings. We are, in the choices we are making built upon the ego energy within us.

Life?

Yes. The ego energy at work in our being was chosen by life. More specifically, many circumstances may occur in one’s life that may threaten one’s daily and mortal survival. They generally fall into three categories: biological, environmental, and social. The circumstances we find ourselves in within one or more of those areas, beginning at conception, impact our ego’s energy and the approaches we will take to ensure our survival. Some of us have had to confront inherited or acquired diseases or disorders that have weakened us physically, mentally, or emotionally. Some of us have had to deal with poverty and less optimal living conditions or educational opportunities. Some of us have had to deal with dysfunctional and abusive people within our home or community. Any of these circumstances can significantly impact and imbalance our ego energy. Life chose the nature of your ego energy with which you have been attempting to survive, given the hand you were dealt. You must choose to fix this ego energy so you can fully live the great life you are meant to live!

From this standpoint, our lives are truly unpredictable and we are at the mercy of events often beyond our control. We have no say in when they will happen, how intense they will be, how long they will last, and how well they will be handled by others during our prenatal, childhood, and adolescent years. The best we can do is recognize and understand those influences, particularly in regard to how they have shaped our ego energy, so we can take it from here. Failing to understand our ego energy and bring it into balance allows those earlier life circumstances to continue controlling us. Life will then continue to impact you more than you’re impacting your own life. You can’t change what has taken place in your life, but you can change your reactions to it. By doing so, you can stop engaging in stupid thoughts, words, behaviors, feelings, and physical responses that at the deepest level are intended to promote your survival, but which actually get in the way of living.

Millions of books have described various biological, environmental, and social influences that can lead us into a pathological version of ourselves, generating a lot of personal suffering intended to ensure our survival. They often do an excellent job of telling us how our difficulties came about. Unfortunately, what they don’t often do is help us to effectively manage
ourselves and our pathologies. They often tell us we must go somewhere, meet someone, do something, with the bottom line being that you must find healing elsewhere. This places others at the center of your healing and you on the periphery. You spend more time looking out rather than within in your efforts to heal. Ego therapy that uses ego medicine—which can be complemented with the use of spiritual tools such as meditation, yoga, prayer, and mindfulness practice—places you at the center of your healing and puts the “experts” at the periphery. They continue to play an important role, but you must work to own your healing and do it from within.
CHAPTER 2

How’s Your Life?

Let’s Get Real!

One of the most difficult questions to ask and answer accurately is, “How’s your life?” It’s difficult because we see ourselves through the lens of our ego energy. When this energy is healthy and in balance, we are likely to get a more accurate, realistic, and honest impression that is not overly distorted in a positive or negative direction. When this energy is imbalanced and unhealthy, it often creates positive or negative distortion in which people think things are better or worse than they actually are. In either case, there is a need for a serious reality check. Unfortunately, most people don’t know where to go to get that. This chapter will help you figure that out, as it asks and helps you answer the question, “How’s your life?”

When I ask people how things are going in their life, they often give me one of four general descriptions: poor, fair, good, or great. Often, these answers focus on one important area, like marriage, work, or finances, while overlooking many others—sort of giving a little-picture impression of their life. I will begin with an overview of each of these four descriptions to get your feet wet. Then, we are going to go much deeper into answering the question “How’s your life?” That will lead us into the focus of the rest of this book, how to make to make things better by fixing your life.
Poor

Those in the “poor” group often say that life sucks, wish they had never been born, or share similar feelings of discontent. These people are in a dark place and have been there for some time, with no apparent way out. There are often lots of bad things happening in many key life areas that contribute to a sense of meaninglessness and hopelessness. Unfortunately, their efforts to make things better often serve to make things worse. They don’t realize that the ego energy behind their efforts is laying the groundwork for a lousy game plan for life. Most if not all of their life involves just existing, with very little living.

Fair

People in the “fair” group often respond with “It’s okay” or “It is what it is” when I ask them how things are going in their life. They often have a sense of resignation, expressing that they know things could be better but they’ll take what they can get. Often, they seem to be settling for less rather than more in what they and life have to offer, be it in relationships, marriage, work, or health. They seem to feel they are at the mercy of life and that it will give them what it chooses to give them, including the good things. These people spend more time waiting for good things to happen rather than taking the bull by the horns to make good things happen. For them, good things happen more by luck, chance, or accident than by design.

Good

Those who believe their life is good often say “Life is good” or “It couldn’t be better.” There are actually two subgroups in this category. One is comprised of people who are experiencing a genuinely good quality of life, and the other involves people experiencing a “fake good” life quality. People who are experiencing a genuinely good quality of life are experiencing success in forming close relationships, in achieving with their potential, and in many other important life areas. Their success does not come at the expense of others, and there is often a strong spiritual core and foundation at work in their life.

The fake good people have also been successful in their lives. They often have good incomes, nice homes, beautiful cars, good health, and seemingly
good relationships on the surface. Unfortunately, much of their success has come at the expense of others, which they don’t see or want to see. Seeing this would burst their bubble. They often live the “ignorance is bliss” approach to life, which supports the illusion of their life being better than it really is. There is also a weak or absent spiritual core, which makes it easier for them to engage in the kinds of things that have contributed to their success—things like lying, cheating, stealing, exploiting, manipulating, and abusing others to further their own success. A lot of times, life gets around to showing them who they truly are and how much of an illusion their good life has been. This can set the stage for something much better if they are willing to open their eyes and learn from these lessons. The higher one’s ego power or ego vulnerability, the more difficult this will be to do.

Great

Those who are able to experience their life as “great” are in a distinct minority—perhaps 5–10% at most. These people are living their real life and have chosen themselves. The great life wasn’t meant to be lived only later on—in a place called heaven—but here and now. Your earthly life doesn’t have to end in order to live the great life. Those living truly great lives have awakened to being a spiritual being encountering a human experience. Their life has shifted from a focus on daily survival to offering service to all beings, which is their purpose—human and Divine. Our human purpose involves the provision of service within whatever your life’s work entails—be it serving as a chef, writer, cleaning service worker, bus driver, actor, musician, or athlete. Your Divine purpose is the same as everyone else’s—being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is.

The following qualities reflect those who are living the great life. Are you one of them?

- Being at peace with yourself, the people in your life, and the world.
- Being motivated by love—not anger, fear, or guilt—in your life’s work.
- Being respectful of your body, mind, and spirit.
- Being free of inappropriate expectations of yourself and others.
- Being able to accept and love yourself unconditionally.
- Being fully present, not consumed by the past or preoccupied with the future.
• Being able to use your talents to achieve your potential and fulfill your life’s purpose.
• Being able to recognize the Divine Gifts of Life, Creating Your Life, Eternal Life, and God Within, which have been given to all persons.
• Being able to recognize the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is, which is within and surrounds you.

Mirrors to the Quality of Your Life

Your ability to answer the question “How’s your life?” is both important and difficult. It’s important because an accurate answer points the way to understanding the nature of your ego energy and how much work you will need to do to fix it. This represents your starting point. If the quality of your life is poor or fair, you have more “ego work” to do. There is more imbalance to address in your ego power, flexibility, or vulnerability. The good news is, you don’t have to remain in your current quality of life. You can fix your ego to fix your life. The information in this book, along with that presented in Ego Therapy, EgoSpiritualism, and The Two Voices Within, along with the healing ego meditations that my wife Linda and I have created, is intended to help you do just that. It’s a big job, but you are being given the tools to do it so you can begin your life, live your real life, and choose yourself, all of the time.

If you fall into the category of people who think their life is good, you are not completely out of the woods—particularly if you are living the fake version of good. You may actually have as much ego work to do as those within the poor and fair categories. You are blinded by your success—or what appears to be success—as well as your ignorance of ego, which makes it hard for you to recognize the imbalances in your ego energy. Eventually, life will get around to telling you that you have more work to do in order to get the most out of life, in ways that are healthier and do not come at the expense of others.

The origins of this message will be the voice of Spirit and God within your being, which will make you feel unsettled. It usually comes in our 40s or later, when we have seemingly reached life’s mountaintops only to realize that there is more to life than what we have made of it. The “more” that is coming to you involves tapping into the realm of the Divine and the recognition that you have not been fully connected to the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within your being and truly appreciative of the Four Divine Gifts you have
been given. That is the “more to life” that starts coming into focus. It’s not a religious experience, so don’t confuse it with that; it’s a deeply spiritual one.

We often have difficulty recognizing the true quality of our lives because we spend an overwhelming proportion of our lives looking outside of ourselves rather than within. This isn’t a bad strategy if you know what to look at and understand how it reflects what is occurring within yourself. In that case, it could help you create and maintain a high quality of life. It’s a bad strategy if you stop there, concluding that you only need to change is what is going on around you. People often get caught up in blaming other people or things rather than taking ownership of what they need to change about themselves. Emotions, ego defense mechanisms, and personal needs often throw us off the trail by leading us toward plausible reasons and rationalizations for what’s happening in our lives that steer us away from looking deeply at ourselves.

Some may try to take ownership of their life situation by changing their thinking, behaviors, or feelings, which often leads to limited and temporary success. Their underlying imbalanced ego energy hasn’t really changed, and they’ll soon return to experiencing the same issues or some variation of them with other people or in other places. A good example of this is someone who keeps experiencing relationship problems even though she knows she needs to do a better job of communicating and compromising. She realizes that improvement in these areas is a good idea, but she can’t carry them out consistently or for the long haul. She often has what I call intellectual insight but lacks experiential insight. She may do a good job of “thinking it” but a poor job of “living it.” If her imbalanced ego energy remains intact, nothing will really change—only the people, places, and situations where the problems occur.

Over the past thirty-five years, people have taught me about the important areas that have a significant impact on the quality of their lives. I have found that these areas not only serve as mirrors to the quality of their lives, but also reflect the underlying ego energy that is at work to make them the way they are—and which keeps things the way they are, no matter how much they want to change. These key life areas reflect the nature of our ego energy—whether it is healthy and balanced or unhealthy and imbalanced. This education has also given me the opportunity to more precisely understand the nature of ego energy and how the components of power, flexibility, and vulnerability influence the quality of our lives. These mirrors include the following areas of life:

- Our ability to interact with people in healthy ways.
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• Our ability to form close relationships with family and friends.
• Our ability to love ourselves.
• Our ability to achieve and know our life’s purpose.
• Our ability to grow the quality of our mind.
• Our ability to manage life changes.
• Our ability to deal with failures, losses, or mistakes.
• Our ability to experience genuine happiness.
• Our ability to cope with stressors and stress.
• Our ability to resolve conflict involving family, friends, and enemies.

I will now discuss why each of these mirrors is important to the quality of your life and describe the imbalanced ego energy that can negatively impact it. I will also describe how the quality level—poor, fair, good, or great—is reflected within each of these life areas.

Your Ability to Interact with People in Healthy Ways

Our ability to interact with people has a tremendous impact on our emotional development and maturity. We cultivate this ability in the first society we encounter—our immediate family—and that foundation is built upon or undone within our relationships with the friends (particularly peers) and extended family we encounter in later childhood and adolescence.

When we have a healthy family and friends, they positively impact our self-esteem, our sense of worthiness, and our ability to trust people in ways that allow us to participate more confidently in educational, athletic, artistic, cultural, and other opportunities that build character. This foundation gives us the ability to take on even greater challenges in our adulthood that require strong social skills. Conversely, when we are exposed to dysfunctional and abusive parents, siblings, peers, teachers, coaches, and other adults—particularly over time—it can have a tremendously negative impact on how we see ourselves and others in general, which can be quite distorted. It’s as if we take on some semblance of the dysfunctional people we’ve encountered earlier in life. Lower self-esteem, diminished self-confidence, and social discomfort are brought into the social arena, weakening success. People with chronic work adjustment issues, legal difficulties, marital or relationship difficulties, and sexual difficulties often have roots in impoverished social backgrounds. Often they lack the social skills to resolve difficulties in each
of these areas. They just go on to the next situation, or keep their distance from others, which becomes their main social skill.

People with lower ego power or higher ego vulnerability are the most likely to experience difficulty interacting with others. Those with lower power are more inclined to take a passive approach to social interactions. They prefer to remain in the background and serve as followers rather than leaders. They often see themselves as less intelligent or less capable than others and deny themselves permission to speak even when others support or encourage them. People with higher vulnerability experience anxiety in social contexts. Some play it safe by not speaking up because they’re often consumed with fear of social rejection. Others may attempt to overcompensate for their insecurity by speaking out too aggressively, with emotion flooding their thoughts and actions. For instance, they might make bold pronouncements about their talents and successes. They attempt to project an air of confidence that people often see right through.

How well are you able to interact with people in work, play, and social situations? Consider the following descriptions before arriving at your answer.

Those in the poor category are experiencing lots of difficulty in managing social encounters in work, play, or other social settings. They keep their distance from others emotionally and physically (when possible). Their relationships with people are superficial; they tend to remain acquaintances or strangers. They are not interested in building relationships to the point that they become friendships. Because they believe that others will ultimately mistreat or reject them, they experience a basic distrust of people. They’re afraid to relive what they’ve encountered in the past from people in their family or peers they’ve known. Strategies they may use to meet their needs for social contact include forming relationships with people they see as “safe,” such as children, the elderly, physically challenged people, and cyber contacts, as well as relying heavily on animals for companionship rather than people. In doing so, they surround themselves with others whom they see as less likely to reject them.

People in the fair category are able to satisfactorily manage social interactions. They’re able to behave civilly with others in work, play, and social settings, even if they have a lot of room to grow. They form a “hierarchy” of people whom they can like and connect to based on how much they share the same interests, attitudes, and values. They’re more comfortable with people who are similar to them than those they perceive as different, who inevitably remain mere acquaintances or strangers. Thus, they form a circle of friends
and a social network with whom they can share life while feeling safe and secure. Others need to earn their trust and acceptance over time—it takes a while for them to warm up to people. This isn’t necessarily a bad thing. However, it’s a defensive approach that can keep them from developing relationships with people who are worthy of being trusted sooner than later, and who could be helpful to them.

Those in the **genuinely good** group are able to connect with people who are similar or different from themselves in various social contexts. They do not require people to be like them in order to form genuine relationships with them. This is probably one of the best reflections of a mentally healthy individual. Such people feel safe in the differentness of others. People in this group insist on treating others fairly, equally, and with respect, no matter who they are. Despite their openness, they have the ability to filter out people who are genuine as they are and those who may be looking to exploit their good nature. They are also willing to help others, as caring for others is important to them. At the same time, they realize they cannot serve others by enabling them or taking ownership of their problems. They’re able to draw the line between where their efforts may help and where they may allow people to continue harmful behavior patterns.

People in the **fake good** group see people as a means to an end. They approach people and relationships by considering what they could give or do that would benefit them. Caring for others is only a means of getting what they want from them. **Getting** is what is important to them—not **giving**—and they are quite good at getting what they want, which makes them think their social relationships are good. The relationships they form with people are actually weak and superficial. When people stop giving them what they want or need, the relationship is likely to end, as it no longer serves any purpose for them. It can be relegated to the acquaintance or stranger status. The notion of giving to others without the need to get something in return is foreign to them. (If you think volunteering is a stupid idea, you are one of them.) Relationships are like a business transaction for them in many respects. How good they feel about their relationships depends on how much they have to give versus what they can receive from them. When they get more than they give, they consider a relationship good—but it really isn’t.

 Those in the **great** group see the good and potential in all people. They see not only their humanity but also their Divinity. They recognize the God within each person, even when others are unable to recognize it in themselves. Being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is lies at the center
of their social interactions. They offer service to all through their thoughts, words, and deeds to support them on their journey. They need nothing from others for their efforts—no approval, acknowledgment, or affirmation, as these are human needs, and they are more fully connected to their own Divinity. They’re committed to selfless giving, whether in work, play, or other social situations. A few examples of such people in modern life are Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi, and Fred Rogers.

**Your Ability to Form Close Relationships with Family and Friends**

The relationships we share with loved ones are the longest and deepest we will experience in our lives—for better or worse. Much research has revealed an intimate link between the quality of these relationships and the amount of happiness people report experiencing in their lives. Our partner, children, siblings, parents, best friends, and even animal friends provide opportunities to be loving and loved, laying bare our fears, sharing genuine laughter and tears, expressing our hopes and dreams, and receiving emotional support. Within these relationships, we are free to be who we truly are—for better or worse. Due to their intensity and duration, these relationships give us a chance to practice and develop the skills needed to grow other relationships. These skills include the ability to participate in two-way communication, search for compromises that respect each person’s wants and needs when full agreement may not be possible, experience compassion for the weaknesses and needs of loved ones, as well as our own, and work creatively with significant others in ways that open the door to new experiences.

People with higher or lower ego power, flexibility, or vulnerability issues have difficulty forming close relationships with loved ones. Those with higher power spend lots of time trying to control loved ones, often treating them as if their ideas, beliefs, and choices don’t matter. Meanwhile, lower power people allow others to control them in close relationships. They might start acting like the son or daughter of their partner, or come under the control of their child rather than acting as a parent, indicating that a role reversal has occurred.

In contrast, people with lower flexibility want loved ones to become more and more like them. They construe others’ love for them as a willingness to take on their likeness. On the other hand, those with higher flexibility seek to find themselves by becoming more and more like loved ones, particularly their partner, if they have one. They construe love as becoming more like this person to solidify the connection.
People with higher vulnerability can become either high-maintenance or distant in close relationships. The former involves needing constant affirmation and approval from others to address their underlying insecurity. The latter involves trying to mask their insecurity by promoting a false sense of independence in which they pretend not to need their loved ones. Meanwhile, people with lower vulnerability are emotionally absent in relationships, making it difficult to develop a sense of intimacy with their loved ones.

How well are you able to form and experience close relationships with loved ones? Before answering, consider each of the descriptions below.

Those in the poor group often have a long-term history of family dysfunction going back to when they were children. They have carried lots of unresolved feelings about emotional and physical neglect and physical and psychological abuse into their present lives. This leads to distance or battles with their parents (if they are still alive), siblings, their partner, and their children (if they have any). Often these conflicts may at first appear to stem from some current issue involving parenting, money, sex, or other aspect of their current life. However, if these conflicts are frequent and intense, they are rooted more deeply within the past. Furthermore, these individuals have learned few, if any, of the skills needed to grow relationships, such as communication, compromise, compassion, and creativity. Since no one modeled these skills for them, they have not learned to practice them. The absence of these skills makes it difficult to take part in close relationships where they can feel safe opening up to others as well as being receptive to the needs of loved ones.

People in the fair group are better at being in close relationships than those in the previous group. They bring less baggage into these relationships, and the inevitable conflicts they experience are more benign and less toxic when they occur. Also, they have a better ability to communicate, compromise, experience and express compassion, and create within relationships. These tools reduce the frequency and intensity of conflict, so they can spend more time experiencing the positive aspects of close relationships with loved ones. Unfortunately, these relationships tend to be more “functional” than growth-oriented. The closeness they experience depends highly on what they can get from the relationship rather than what they can give to it. The degree to which others make them feel liked, wanted, desired, respected, trusted, and accepted influences the depth of the relationship for them. This signals that the relationship has a conditional quality, meaning it is good when they are
getting what they want and poor when they are not. These relationships can be characterized as “beneficial attachment” rather than healthy connection. They have a superficial quality because the underlying unconditional love is often missing, replaced by conditional love linked to the “rewards” they stand to receive, which is the real basis for the relationship. When the rewards stop coming, the close relationship ends, and they look to others to fill the void.

Those in the **genuinely good** group form close relationships that emphasize both giving to and receiving from others in the relationship, particularly in intimate relationships. Their relationships have an interdependent quality in which each person is able to be dependent on or independent of the other person. The signs of these good relationships include an emphasis on two-way communication, development of healthy compromises, ability to offer and receive compassion when needed, and ability to jointly create in order to maintain vitality in the relationship. These relationships never get old even when they have lasted for many years. Within these relationships, people feel a healthy sense of connection rather than insecure attachment.

Meanwhile, people in the **fake good** group experience an illusion of closeness that is actually based on meeting hidden pathological needs. What makes these relationships feel good is that they may—at least temporarily—hide, mask, or address these needs. Think of the authoritarian or overly protective parent with intense needs for control, who thinks things are just great when everyone, including his partner, is falling in line and doing exactly as they are told—only to have things explode when the kids become teenagers and go beyond the normal rebellion that usually occurs when they’re trying to establish their identity. Or, the overly dependent partner who enjoys the physical, financial, or emotional protection she receives in exchange for failing to express her own ideas and choices within the relationship—which masks her self-confidence, self-acceptance, and self-esteem issues. Or, the parents who are working hard to be their children’s friend by giving them what they want rather than what they need. Their underlying issue is a fear of rejection that leads them to say yes more often than no, so they can receive a false sense of approval and acceptance from their child. When people say, “They looked like the perfect family,” this is often what was going on behind the scenes.

People in the **great** group experience their connection to loved ones by witnessing the Divinity they see within their humanity. They see the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within their loved ones and encourage them to
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see this for themselves. This is part of their service—helping loved ones to know the Gift of God Within. The love they express toward loved ones is unconditional, unburdened, unlimited, and fully connective. They have few human needs that the relationship must meet, but welcome expressions of love from loved ones. They recognize the loving thoughts, words, and deeds that loved ones may display toward them as their being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is.

Your Ability to Love Yourself

People have taught me that the most important relationship they will ever have in life is their relationship with themselves. This is the relationship upon which the quality of all other relationships is built—for better or worse. It shapes the healthy or unhealthy thoughts, behaviors, and feelings we bring into our relationships with family, friends, coworkers, teachers, bosses, subordinates, and even God. The ability to love and accept ourselves even as we grow to be a better person often draws people toward us. It’s as if a positive magnetic force is at work, making people welcome the opportunity to connect with us because they sense the powerful connection we have to ourselves. Conversely, when people do not love and accept themselves in a healthfully loving way, they often look for love and offer love to others in ways that are unhealthy and misguided, even if they are well-intended. They often ask others to fill an internal void that no one else can ever truly fill. They want others to accept them so they can accept themselves—which doesn’t work, because that is conditional, and genuine love for ourselves and others can only be unconditional for it to be real. Failure to recognize this idea often leads people into a series of dysfunctional or broken relationships in which manipulation, exploitation, and even abuse may occur. Or, they may abandon involvement in relationships altogether due to the pain and frustration they associate with being in them.

People with lower ego power and higher ego vulnerability are most likely to experience difficulty with loving themselves. Those with lower power often experience low self-esteem due to a lack of actual or perceived success in their life. They readily attribute this lack of success to whatever they see lacking in themselves, and they engage in the same rejection of themselves they experienced earlier in life from others. When people are overly self-critical, they often miss what is good about themselves or fail to see their successes. Those with higher vulnerability form a very conditional relationship between
loving themselves and their personal qualities and successes. They can like and love themselves when things are going well, and dislike themselves when they are not. They also often look to others to give them the approval and acceptance they have difficulty giving to themselves unconditionally. This may cause them to temporarily like themselves more, but it ultimately doesn’t work, because it involves conditional acceptance. Unconditional acceptance can’t be earned—it just is.

How well are you able to love yourself? Before answering, consider each of the following descriptions.

For people in the poor group, the idea of loving themselves is completely alien. They more likely dislike or even hate themselves to the point where they may wish they’d never been born. They reject themselves in ways that other dysfunctional people, particularly in their family, have done in the past. They are often very self-critical, which echoes what they encountered from their parents and siblings while growing up, and who may continue to act in that way. They see little if any good in themselves. They minimize, overlook, or reject any positive qualities or successes, while paying much greater attention to what they see as their negative qualities—often what others have told them was bad. When they succeed or someone compliments them, they grow suspicious and often reject their words, since they are incompatible with the negative image they carry of themselves.

Those in the fair group experience love for themselves, but it is often conditional rather than unconditional. They like and love themselves based on being successful and getting the approval of others. They work hard to look the right way, say the right things, and do the right things, so they can receive the “blessing” of others. If you put liking and loving yourself off into the future—based upon meeting some personal or professional requirement like losing weight, earning a certain amount of money, or having a particular job—that’s a good indication that you are in this group. Those in the fair group also take a conditional approach to loving others, who also have to “check all of the right boxes” in order to receive their blessing. Unfortunately, this has a negative impact on their ability to love themselves, too, because social esteem and self-esteem are linked. When both are conditional, it weakens our ability to fully love ourselves, as conditional love is incompatible with the God within our being.

People in the genuinely good group are able to like and love themselves and others equally and unconditionally. There are no strings attached to this love. This does not mean they don’t hold themselves or others accountable
for inappropriate, unhealthy, or misguided thoughts, words, or deeds. It does mean that they encourage themselves and others to become better versions of themselves while receiving the love needed to promote this growth. Also, any differences between themselves and others insofar as gender, race, sexual orientation, social class, religious affiliation, ethnicity, or cultural background have nothing to do with the expression of this love. They understand the important and healthy connection between loving others and loving themselves.

Those in the fake good group love themselves more than others. In fact, they may love themselves so much that they are “in love” with themselves, becoming narcissists. They often have unhealthily high self-esteem. They notice all of the good stuff about themselves, while minimizing or overlooking what they should be improving. They often tell themselves how great they are and insist on others doing the same. Love is like a commodity to them, and they can’t get enough of it from themselves or others. This can feel quite good to them, but it’s actually unhealthy. Many famous people including athletes, artists, and politicians display these tendencies, manifested as self-absorption and a sense of entitlement that allow them to mistreat others.

Those in the great group fully recognize the presence of God within themselves and all living beings—human, animal, and plant alike. They manifest the unconditional, unburdened, unlimited, and connective Love—God Is in their encounters with all life forms. They treat each of them as being equally worthy of this love, as in doing so, they are honoring God. They live in communion with the Oneness and Unity of the Universe, a communion in which they hear the One Voice—God’s.

Your Ability to Achieve and Know Your Life’s Purpose

This important mirror involves our life’s work and how we’re using the talents we have been given to reach our potential and feel a sense of purpose through our achievement. We have all been given different abilities with which to undertake our life’s work—intellectual abilities, athletic skills, and artistic talents, to name but a few. Each person’s work is equally important, and we can each embark on a life’s journey in which we recognize the service we are here to provide—both human and Divine. That’s why our talents have been given to us. Your human service involves whatever talents you are using to benefit others, which ultimately benefits you as well. Your Divine service involves being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is, which is the common purpose shared with all beings.
Unfortunately, many never come to recognize their talents, develop them, or understand the service they are here to render. Some have been discouraged by others who failed to communicate a belief in their potential. Others have been discouraged by others who put forth unrealistic expectations and goals that set the person up for failure. Still others have been discouraged by inappropriate comparisons with siblings by parents in a misguided attempt to motivate them. Each of these experiences sets the stage for an absence of belief in one’s potential, an abandonment of one’s talents, and underachievement or no achievement—ultimately robbing them of a sense of purpose in life.

People with lower ego power, and those with higher or lower ego vulnerability, are most likely to experience difficulty in coming to understand and achieve their life’s purpose. Those with lower power often lack enough belief in themselves, expecting failure, leading them to take fewer risks. They play it safe by not trying, quitting when things get difficult, and underachieving relative to their potential. People with higher vulnerability can either become overachievers or underachievers. The overachievers mainly pursue achievement in order to prove themselves and receive affirmation. Unfortunately, their achievement often comes with significant stress, which affects other important areas of life, such as health and family. Meanwhile, the underachievers experience so much anxiety and stress connected to achievement that they shut down in order to get away from it. The people with lower vulnerability, on the other hand, lack motivation. They only want to do the fun stuff. When things become hard or boring, they quit working. Like those with lower ego power and higher ego vulnerability, they have a tough time forming a link between achievement and their life’s purpose.

How well are you achieving with your abilities and coming to know your life’s purpose? Before answering, consider the following descriptions.

People in the poor group have a difficult time believing in themselves. Consequently, they underachieve or fail to achieve at all, even though they have had ample opportunity and ability to reach a fair—or even high—degree of success. They point selectively to their failures while overlooking their successes as a basis for quitting before giving their best effort. They also harbor both a fear of failure and a fear of success. In regard to the latter, they view any successes as an invitation to ultimate failure, because those wins can bring additional responsibilities that they might be unable to meet. Their neglect of their abilities undermines any sense of meaning and purpose for their life. They feel lost, and that their life is a waste, as they
are not connecting their potential to the human and Divine service they are here to offer.

Those in the **fair** group are achieving but are dissatisfied with how much they are achieving or the areas of life in which they are succeeding. They often get caught up in unhealthy comparisons with where they and others are within life. They may look to siblings or friends to measure where they should be in life, which can be quite harmful, especially if they’ve been doing this since childhood. If you think you should be married, making a certain amount of money, or in a certain job because others think you should be, you are in that boat.

In the U.S., a person’s work and income is a major reference point for achievement, and most people are dissatisfied with their progress in these areas. Most people see their job as just a job—a means of making a living; nothing more. Most miss the personal and professional growth they may be experiencing that sets the stage for greater opportunities to come. My first two “jobs” before college were student and athlete. I made no money from either. However, they did promote important skills such as being self-disciplined, respecting my body, respecting authority, showing humility in victory, and working cooperatively with teammates. Most people miss the important service they are rendering to others, though—be they a bus driver, sanitation worker, chef, professional athlete, teacher, coach, or security guard. Similar to those in the **poor** group, they also lack a sense of purpose. For the **fair** group, however, this stems more directly from trouble recognizing that in their giving, lots of receiving is actually taking place. They have difficulty seeing how the fruits of their labor are serving themselves as well as others, which weakens the sense of purpose and meaning they are able to experience.

People in the **genuinely good** group are achieving in many areas of their life, including career, health, relationships, and financial success. Their definition of achievement is broader and includes many areas of life, including those just mentioned—not just work or financial success. They recognize opportunities, embrace their talents, and feel motivated to use them. In the area of work, they experience a sense of passion for what they are doing, and the line between work and play grows blurred. Their work *is* their play. They also recognize the need for giving back, and they see their talents as a means of providing service to others—which they also realize is benefiting them as well in ways they may not always have seen.

Those in the **fake good** group have a much narrower view of achievement. Their view focuses a lot on work, fixating on financial and material success.
They have done well in these areas. They are rising in their field, making lots of money, and buying many of the things people associate with success, such as beautiful cars and homes—which in and of itself is not a bad thing. Unfortunately, they engage in a lot of hidden neglect of their health and family. Some good examples are people who are Type A personalities or workaholics who spend a lot more time working than playing. They are succeeding in those areas, but at what cost? People in this group are also much more heavily invested in “getting” with their talents than “giving.” The latter is a foreign idea—as is the idea of being of service to others. This restricts them to a life’s purpose of getting more and more of what they can receive with the use of their talents.

Those in the great group use their talents to serve others, and their sense of achievement comes from doing so. They fully embrace the idea within the Prayer of St. Francis that says, “For it is in the giving...that we receive.” They fully recognize the reciprocal relationship between giving and receiving. They feel thankful for the opportunity they have been given in this life to serve others, and to act as, drawing from the words of St. Francis, “an instrument of peace.” They don’t need to measure the level of achievement they’ve reached through their service, as this was not their purpose in offering it. Being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is serves as the guiding light for the achievement they pursue with the talents they have been given.

Your Ability to Grow the Quality of Your Mind

Your ability to grow as a person into progressively greater versions of yourself is tremendously influenced by the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, values, prejudices, and illusions that are currently in your mind. Their quality depends on the degree of connection they have to reality and truth. The less connected they are to truth, the lesser the version of yourself you are able to be. The less connected to truth they are, the greater the likelihood that less healthy additional thoughts as well as feelings, behaviors, and physiology will become a part of who you are in your daily life. Truth and healthiness—both human and spiritual—are intimately linked, though at times the path to their linkage can be painful. When we can work with the gift of our mind with openness and flexibility, we can grow its quality by adding, changing, or discarding anything that is not true. That allows us to enjoy the freedom and benefits of truth that reveals itself in each of the other important life areas. On the other hand, when we insist on keeping ourselves at a distance
from truth and reality due to our inflexibility, we remain imprisoned by the bars of our faulty thoughts and locked into unhealthy beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that we believe are promoting our survival.

People with lower or higher ego power and lower ego flexibility have the greatest difficulty in growing the quality of their mind. Those with lower power lack respect for their ability to think for themselves, so they allow others to decide what they should think or believe. This is a problem if they come under the control of the wrong people—even if those people are well-intended—who feed them bad or misguided ideas. On the other hand, people with higher power are very sensitive to being controlled by others. Thus, they’re highly guarded about what ideas and thoughts can enter their mind. They filter everything through their needs for control, which makes it more difficult to take in new or better ideas than the ones they currently hold. To them, allowing others to influence their mind feels like a loss of control, something they only do reluctantly and with certain people. Those with lower flexibility believe they already have the right ideas and beliefs—that they own the truth. Allowing others to influence their mind with different ideas—which they often view as deficient—is tantamount to admitting that they don’t own the truth. They have a lot of difficulty thinking outside of the box, as this requires mental flexibility. They can only think inside the box, making everything fit with what they already know.

How well are you able to grow the quality of your mind? Before answering, consider each of the following descriptions.

People in the poor group have learned to disrespect and distrust their intellect. Often they have been told they are too stupid to think for themselves, so it’s better for others to think for them. This often leads them to conform their thoughts to those of others. They often let others decide what they think, even though they may be smarter than others and sense that their own ideas are better. Their lower power overrules their better judgment, so they play it safe by thinking what they are told to think. When people have higher ego power, they do the opposite. They believe they can control what others think through the sheer force of their will. Just telling people that something is true makes it true for them, they believe. They are unable to question their own thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and prejudices, because doing so would threaten their sense of control. Consequently, their higher power blocks their ability to grow their mind by adding, changing, or discarding thoughts, particularly at the suggestion of others, as this risks a loss of control. Similarly, when people have lower flexibility they believe they
own the truth. This interferes with their ability to question their thoughts, beliefs, and values, which affects their capacity to add, change, or remove what is presently in their mind. Consequently, they often live on an island where the only people who can visit them are people who think like them.

Those in the **fair** group have more ability to grow the quality of their mind than those in the poor group. They are better able to recognize that there can be distance between one’s beliefs and truth. Also, they are better able to question what they know and make changes where needed in their beliefs, attitudes, and values, to a point. Newer, different, and even better ideas still take time for them to take in, though, no matter how connected they are to the truth. For example, they would have trouble embracing a proven alternative medical treatment while abandoning now-questionable traditional medical practices. They’re still lagging behind, although they’re in the process of catching up—a process that accelerates as they progressively make clearer distinctions between truth and belief, allowing for enhancement of the quality of their mind.

People in the **genuinely good** group have a flexible mind that allows them to learn new things, appropriately alter what they are thinking, and stop thinking what they realize is no longer true. They are guided by the need to find truth wherever it may lie, no matter how difficult it may be to accept. Admitting that what they previously believed was wrong does not bother them. They have a healthy respect for what they don’t know and are willing to admit it. They do not conflate ignorance with stupidity. The beliefs, values, and attitudes they carry within their mind are built upon reality-based thinking, allowing them to adapt effectively to the world in which they are living.

Those in the **fake good** group are enamored with their ability to think, and often they’re quite intelligent. In fact, they often conclude that being smart automatically makes one a thinker of intelligent thoughts. Humans can be quite good at coming up with seemingly intelligent thoughts that have no basis in reality, however. We often try to be the *makers* of truth rather than the *finders* of truth—like those in the genuinely good group. The distance between belief and truth is blurred for the fake good group, and they don’t recognize this difference, which can also be the case for those who listen to or follow them. People in the fake good group don’t know what they don’t know, and don’t want to try to know it, which bespeaks a lack of humility and respect for the truth.
People in the great group recognize the brilliance and deliverance of truth—both human and Divine. They embrace Jesus’ message, “And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (King James Version, John 8:32)—a message that says we are designed to resonate with truth and need not remain imprisoned by distance from truth, whether human or Divine. Those in the great group recognize their mind as a tool for learning these truths and serving others by helping them find their truth as well. They also realize that the truth was not hiding from them; they were hiding from it within their faulty beliefs or misunderstandings. As an example, we can see Divine Truth, the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is, in all that surrounds us. However, it has been obscured by versions of God with human characteristics, making it difficult for many of us to truly recognize God. Truth is brilliant in its simplicity, its capacity to heal us, and its ability to be known by anyone willing to seek it.

Your Ability to Manage Life Changes

From our conception to our human death, we are confronted with the inevitability and constancy of change. Some changes are slow, and some are rapid. Some are large, and some are small. Some are expected, and some come as a complete surprise. These changes are going on within us and around us. Things do not stand still, and like time, change marches on. We may experience changes in our body, in our family life, or in the technologies we rely on, to name just a few situations, rooted in the dynamic nature of energy, which does not stand still. We can choose to work with these changes by seeking to understand them better in order to manage them, or with denial, rejection, or inappropriate attempts to undo them. Unfortunately, a failure to manage change is a failure to manage life. This failure will progressively put us out of touch with the world as it is, keeping us clinging to a world that once was. It will also prevent us from taking advantage of opportunities that life may bring our way. Beyond responding to change, we must also be able to foster change when necessary. This is part of the dual relationship with change that we must have in order to grow from it.

When people are experiencing lower or higher ego power, lower ego flexibility, or higher ego vulnerability issues, they are more likely to experience this difficulty. People with lower ego power feel helpless in the face of change. The best they can do is ignore or passively accept it rather than working with it. They feel they are at the mercy of life and must take whatever it gives
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them. Those with higher power view change as a threat to their control. For them, change is not supposed to happen unless they say it can, and only if they instigate it. This reinforces their sense of control over what is happening in their life. They have particular difficulty when their children are going through developmental changes, treating them as if they’re younger than they actually are. People with lower flexibility want to think about change the way they want to think about it, even if their thinking is outdated. They think inside the box and have difficulty acquiring new and different insights. As an example, they would have trouble embracing alternative medicine when traditional medicine is not working. Those with higher vulnerability are fearful of change. It violates their sense of familiarity, consistency, and predictability, making them feel more vulnerable. Even if the change may involve a better job or living situation, or a healthier relationship, they prefer to stand still, immobilized by their fear.

How good are you at managing life changes? Before answering, consider each of the following descriptions.

People in the poor group have lots of difficulty managing change that is taking place in their life, and even more so with instigating change when needed. They often feel overwhelmed by change and become paralyzed in responding to it, particularly the bigger changes. They avoid them when possible (e.g., changing jobs, relationships, or living situations), even when the change has something better to offer them than their current situation. They prefer to remain tightly connected to the familiar, consistent, and predictable rather than entering the unknown, even if it has the potential to offer them something better. This is one of the reasons people stay in abusive relationships or bad jobs—they know what to expect. They often have the sense that they are standing still while others and life are moving on. Dealing with change—whether responding to or instigating it—requires some courage, as it does involve entry into the unknown. I must admit that some of the big changes that have occurred in my life, like relocating from an urban to a rural setting, taking a lower-paying but better job, and having children were a lot easier while holding the hand of my wife, Linda, as we went through them together.

Those in the fair group are less intimidated by the prospects of responding to or instigating change. However, compared to the passivity of the previous group, they are more likely to overreact to change. Their needs for control can lead them to do more than necessary or attempt to undo changes that are actually needed. Some misinterpret what the change represents and how to handle it. They may grow fearful or angry about change, leading to an...
overreaction that actually makes things worse. This is what can happen when parents try to control the changes taking place in an adolescent’s life out of their own fear, missing the identity formation that’s occurring, which results in intense conflict and rebellion. The key idea in dealing with change, whether responding to it or instigating it, is to react rather than underreact or overreact to it. Striking this balance requires moving beyond a rigid, controlling, or fearful approach to change.

Those within the genuinely good group are able to manage and adapt to changes, whether they involve health, physical abilities, children’s development, work, relocation, technological advances, societal change, or financial circumstances that life may bring. At times, they see these changes as opportunities, not something that’s necessarily bad. They know they might find something new or better as a result of the change. Thus, even the loss of a job or relationship can be fortuitous, opening a door that would never have been opened if the change had not happened. They understand that sometimes life will guide us in the right direction if we are willing to work with it instead of fighting it. Working with life involves reacting to change in ways that respect the reasons why the change is occurring as well as the limits within which one is operating. The people in this group also recognize when change is needed and work to bring it about within themselves and society. In regard to the latter, they have a healthy respect for the traditions and wisdom of the past while recognizing the energy of the present and the beneficial changes it is bringing about. This is the work of evolution taking place within the present time. It cannot be stopped, only delayed by humans, as it is the work of God being manifested in the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is.

People in the fake good group approach change with a strong need to control it. For them, life is good when they have been able to prevent the changes they don’t want, when they have halted or undone unwanted changes, and when they have been able to deny that unwanted changes are occurring. They also enjoy instigating change that may benefit themselves—even if it comes at the expense of others. That’s exactly what’s happening when people insist their spouse quit a job or schooling that aids in his or her personal and professional growth, tell their teenager to stop seeing someone for no good reason, steal money to hide financial distress, refuse to see the doctor or take some time off when their health is failing, or refuse to get counseling when their marriage is deteriorating. People in this group are often the last to know that change is happening whether they like it or not, and that their actions have been making things worse—sometimes much worse.
Those in the great group recognize the big picture when it comes to managing change. They understand that change has never ceased and never will, and that its destiny is to manifest God through the transformative process of bringing light and truth to all who are affected by change. Change may not always be understood from the human perspective, because that is not its source. However, the people in the great group take comfort in the knowledge that change often serves a greater good and that they must give way to faith in God’s wisdom to work with it. In doing so, they are providing a service in which they are being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within the experiences that life brings to them and others.

Your Ability to Deal with Failures, Losses, and Mistakes

Our human imperfection and imperfect world are an open invitation to encounter adversity throughout our lives. Common experiences all of us have encountered include failing tests, losing competitions, losing jobs, losing relationships, saying or doing the wrong thing, damaging our health, and on and on and on. Some are acts of omission resulting from ignorance or inexperience that can serve as life lessons. Others are acts of commission in which we know better than to make a particular choice, but our emotions or needs get the better of us, leading us to violate our better judgment.

As you may know, the difference in being a “winner” or “loser” has a lot to do with how we respond to adversity. Do we get up after being knocked down, or do we remain on the ground? Successful people find a way to get up, while learning from their mistakes to avoid repeating them. They get the bigger-picture message that failure is part of the journey to success. Others spend their time paralyzed by failure, convincing themselves that life has singled them out for more than their share of problems. This often leads them to give up before they have tried or look for confirmation that failure is the only thing to expect. Many of these people are more capable than they realize. I have often told them that it isn’t their competence that is the problem; it’s their confidence.

When people are experiencing lower ego power, lower ego flexibility, and higher or lower ego vulnerability, they are more likely to find themselves in this situation. Those with lower power live in a world of perceived helplessness, hopelessness, and pessimism with a limited sense of any ability to confront problems and failures. Their main strategies are avoiding potential failure by not taking risks and getting others to solve problems for them.
People with lower flexibility take a rigid, inflexible approach to problem-solving. They do a lot more of what the great cognitive developmental theorist Jean Piaget terms assimilating rather than accommodating, meaning they overemphasize similarities and underemphasize or ignore differences when solving problems. This interferes with their ability to assess the nature of a problem, their responsibility in creating it, and potential solutions. That’s what happens when leaders only want to listen to like-minded people when confronting problems, getting caught up in “groupthink.”

Those with higher vulnerability are threatened by failure, losses, and mistakes because they view them as confirmation of their weaknesses and imperfection, which is often exaggerated by them. They work very hard to hide their weaknesses from themselves and others, engaging in perfectionism or overachievement—at a significant emotional cost. People with lower vulnerability have a difficult time recognizing and solving problems. They often ignore or significantly minimize them, while exaggerating their successes. They frequently think they did much better than they actually did or that people like them more than they actually do. They don’t get the emotional signals when they are doing something wrong or when they have affronted someone that could clue them in.

How good are you at dealing with failures, losses, and mistakes? Before answering, consider each of the following descriptions.

People in the poor group have a difficult time handling the adversity that comes their way. It doesn’t take much to knock them down, and they remain down. They often misunderstand their failures and become emotionally consumed by them, overly blaming themselves or others when bad things happen. Blame becomes their main explanation for why failures, losses, and mistakes occur in their life. They get caught up in this web of blame, making it more difficult to get up and move on. Their depression and anxiety also keep them down, as they believe getting up may only bring more of these unpleasant emotions. Avoiding failure becomes a primary life strategy, which unfortunately makes them an absent participant in their life.

Those in the fair group are better able to manage adversity than those in the poor group. They may not manage it optimally, but it’s better than doing little or nothing. They do a better job of understanding why it occurred, how much of a role they had in it, and what needs to happen to deal with it. Some of their weaknesses involve dealing with problems later rather than sooner, as they tend to procrastinate. They may initially deny, minimize, underreact, or see if the problem can solve itself before doing anything. This
is more of an issue when facing problems that are bigger and require more immediate attention. The problem may be growing larger while they delay their management of it. Financial, work, relationship, and health difficulties often grow more extreme when people put them on hold.

People in the genuinely good group are effective in managing adversity. They do a good job of sizing up their failures, losses, or mistakes in order to understand their causes and determine when they require more immediate attention. They also do a good job of owning their share of responsibility for problems and finding solutions to address them. If necessary, they are able to think outside of the box or get input from others who have confronted similar problems. They do not view getting help as a sign of weakness. The ability to learn from their mistakes is a tremendous asset, as they are very good at not repeating the same mistakes.

Those in the fake good group work very hard to deny, minimize, or ignore their failures, losses, and mistakes. They tend to blame others for their occurrence rather than owning them. This reinforces a false sense of wellness and competence that covers up the weakness and stupidity they attach to having failed, making mistakes, or experiencing losses. Unfortunately, they do a poor job of learning from their mistakes because they remain insulated from them through their use of blame.

People in the great group understand that their perfection can never be known within their humanity, only within their Divinity. This perfection is manifested when they are being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is. They fully accept and embrace their imperfections and those of others within the Perfection of their Divinity. Failures, losses, and mistakes made by them and others are met with the unconditional, unburdened, unlimited, and connective Love—God Is, which means they are learning and growing from them. They encourage others to know this Love so that they will not suffer or despair when encountering their weaknesses. In this way, they encourage others to rise above their weaknesses through the presence of God that always dwells within them, which can carry them beyond the adversity that life brings them or that they have brought to life.

Your Ability to Experience Genuine Happiness

Happiness is the holy grail of emotional experiences—the one so many seek, but so few find, often detouring into fear, anxiety, anger, depression, or pseudo-happiness. Often we look for it outside of ourselves, and in the
wrong people, places, or things. Often we believe there is a price we can pay for it. Often we convince ourselves we have found it in the physical and psychological pleasures we can experience. This pseudo-happiness often masquerades for genuine happiness. Indeed, that’s the form of “happiness” that most people are getting when they say they are experiencing happiness. Clues that they are experiencing this happiness masquerade are that they’re finding happiness from without rather than within, it has a price rather than being priceless, and it vanishes when its source disappears rather than being ever-present.

So, you may ask, what does genuine happiness look like? Let’s look back to the earlier description of what people who have a truly great life are experiencing. Things such as being at peace with themselves, others, and the world; being motivated by love rather than fear; and being free of inappropriate expectations are the makings of genuine happiness. It emanates from within our being, has no price tag, and is always present within us, even on those days when life is more difficult.

When people are experiencing lower ego power, lower ego flexibility, or higher ego vulnerability, they have the most difficulty experiencing genuine happiness. The emotions brought about by each of these states of being are incompatible with experiencing genuine happiness. Those with lower power experience little or no control in their life. They feel at the mercy of whatever life will bring their way. Their sense of helplessness, hopelessness, and pessimism builds over time, leading to the dominant emotional experience of depression. At its worst, suicide risk is enhanced. People with lower flexibility are often confronted with a world that disagrees with their truth and version of reality. This contributes to frustration, resentment, and anger when others refuse to comply with their truth. This anger can be readily apparent in their thoughts, words, and deeds, or they can harbor a hidden, quieter anger that ultimately leads to an emotional explosion. Racists, religious extremists, sexist people, and some political extremists are good examples of very angry people with lower flexibility. Those with higher vulnerability are frequently consumed by anxiety, anger, or guilt, triggered by having failed to come to terms with the imperfections of themselves, others, and the world. This is most directly reflected by frequent anxious or angry thoughts, words, or deeds, such as yelling, screaming, name-calling, insulting, swearing, lying, or aggression, just to name a few.

How well are you able to experience genuine happiness? Before answering, consider each of the following descriptions.
For people in the **poor** group, genuine happiness is an emotional experience they have seldom if ever known. When they believed they were experiencing happiness, they were more often encountering it in the form of pseudo-happiness. This is what is happening when they get caught in a web of addictions such as food, alcohol, drugs, sex, pornography, abusiveness, violent media, and Internet trolling, where they can experience the physical and psychological pleasure that they have come to associate with happiness. This is their means of gaining temporary distance from the chronic feelings of depression or anxiety that dominate their daily emotional experiences. Most of the time, a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, and pessimism is how they meet each new day. They have the sense of not having much to live for, excepting opportunities to engage in addictive activities, and there is a hollowness to their existence.

People in the **fair** group are happier than those in the **poor** group, but most of what they’re experiencing is pseudo-happiness. They share some of the addictions of those in the poor group, but they may also be involved in more benign addictions such as excessive TV watching and living or dying with the fortunes of their local sports team. If you feel significantly affected by what is taking place in the lives of celebrities, you are probably in this group. Becoming too involved in the lives of others distracts people from looking at their own lives. The main difference between people in this group and those in the poor group is that the fair group is experiencing less depression and anxiety and is less affected by these emotions in their daily lives. For them, life is okay, or “it is what it is.”

Those in the **genuinely good** group are recognizing the difference between genuine and pseudo-happiness and are able to make a clear distinction between them. This does not mean they don’t enjoy earthly pleasures such as good food, drink, and entertainment, which should have a healthy place in people’s lives. Also, this does not mean they don’t feel emotions such as sadness, fear, or anger. However, these emotions are short-lived and serve as signals of what they may need to address so they can fully return to their inner source of happiness. Being genuinely happy has nothing to do with having a perfect life. It has much more to do with how we meet the challenges that life is bringing while staying connected to our inner peace and coming from a place of love rather than fear or anger when doing so.

People in the **fake good** group think they are experiencing lots of happiness, but it is all pseudo-happiness. They have done an excellent job of acquiring the “toys” life has to offer for their physical and emotional
This page discusses the concept of ego versus genuine happiness. It's Your Ego—Stupid! describes two groups: one that is centered on material possessions and achieves happiness by maintaining those possessions, and another that has a spiritual foundation in recognizing the divine gifts they've received, such as life, creating life, eternal life, and the presence of God. The latter group experiences genuine happiness and has developed coping strategies for stress.

Your Ability to Cope with Stressors and Stress

Our lives are filled with a seemingly endless list of responsibilities and obligations to meet on a daily basis, involving work, family, health, and finances. Each alone may not be particularly significant or overwhelming. But the relentless combination often has an insidious quality, building up over time, which can result in two of the main reasons people often die sooner rather than later—heart disease and cancer. Stress has been referred to as the silent killer, and for good reason, as it has been directly linked to these two major threats to our mortality. We have the choice of managing it or allowing it to manage us. We can learn about warning signs and work to address them. Moreover, we can learn to recognize how we may be attaching ideas to stressors that are disconnected from reality, which can make them seem bigger than they really are, which leads to more stress. Successful management of stressors often converts stress into healthy
stimulation, which is a good thing. We all need to be busy to some degree. When stress is managing us, we ignore warning signs, put off getting help until much later, and continually engage in reality-disconnected thinking in which we minimize the duration, frequency, and intensity of symptoms. This wonderful tool—our body—is talking to us, but we aren’t listening.

People with lower ego power or higher ego vulnerability have the greatest difficulty in managing stressors and stress. Those with lower power experience issues similar to their difficulties in handling change and adversity. Their diminished sense of power, control, and influence over what is occurring in their life negatively impacts their ability to confront work, family, health, and financial stressors. Their sense of helplessness often causes them to ignore these stressors or get someone else to manage them. The stressors manage them rather than their managing the stressors, which means the impact of the stressor builds over time. Eventually they experience significant stress symptoms, which they often try to ignore. Meanwhile, those with higher vulnerability enter fight-or-flight mode when a stressor comes into their life. They more readily enter into this mode, experience more intense anxiety or anger while they are in it, and stay in it longer—often much longer than necessary. They will continue to feel anxious or angry even after they or someone else has taken care of the stressor.

How good are you at coping with stressors and stress? Consider the following descriptions.

People in the poor group live in a world of stress and complain that they are stressed out. Some of this stress is based in reality, as they are encountering financial, health, relationship, family, and work or unemployment stressors—just as everyone is. However, their stress becomes intensified by the way they think about those stressors. They often think that stressors are larger than their capacity to manage them, making mountains out of molehills. They also readily go into fight-or-flight mode, experiencing more anxiety or anger than necessary. In doing so, they delve into “emotional” thinking about their stressors instead of looking at them in a practical and realistic way. Their emotional thinking magnifies their stressors and makes them seem more frequent. They are also lousy “historians,” in that they fail to remember their successes in managing stressors. People in this group are often stressing themselves out but don’t know it. If you say you want a life that is stress-free, you are probably one of them. Also, if you are trying to medicate yourself with illicit drugs, alcohol, or overreliance on prescription drugs to alleviate stress, you are also in this group.
Those in the **fair** group are more successful in handling stressors. They keep them in perspective and grow less emotionally consumed by them. They also utilize some distractions, particularly entertainment, family, or friends, to get some distance from things that bother them. (This reminds me of the lyrics to one of the Beatles’ songs, “I get by with a little help from my friends.”) One issue is that they may be using distraction so much that they have a false sense of wellness that leads them to ignore emerging stressors. This does more damage over time by keeping them from noticing the subtle process of a stressor growing. Stress happens over time, not overnight, in most cases. This is what is happening to people who ignore or minimize symptoms of heart disease that eventually result in heart attacks, or those who eventually succumb to burnout in their jobs.

Those in the **genuinely good** group have developed an important life skill—keeping things in perspective. They have gotten good at not sweating the small stuff. Also, they are good at dealing with work, relationship, health, or financial stressors sooner rather than later, particularly the bigger ones. Since they don’t procrastinate on addressing them, stress doesn’t build up—particularly the “quieter” stress that builds up over time and often shows up initially in physical symptoms such as increased blood pressure, angina, headaches, and muscle tension. They manage stress; stress doesn’t manage them. They also make use of healthy stress management techniques such as regular exercise, healthy dietary intake, meditation, yoga, mindfulness practice, and getting quality sleep.

People in the **fake good** group think they have everything under control, but they don’t. They are often in denial about how often or how intensely they are under stress, giving them the impression that everything is fine. They miss the signs and symptoms of stress, tending to deny or minimize them. In some cases, they resort to strategies or techniques to alleviate stress that help them feel good in the short-run. However, they are actually eroding their physical and emotional wellness. Some of these strategies include drugs (prescribed or illegal), alcohol, overeating, gambling, and other indulgences and addictions, such as excessive use of social media or virtual reality games. They go from one “fix” to the next, which leaves them feeling good as long as these things are available. When the fix is no longer available, things can change dramatically, and suddenly life doesn’t feel so good anymore. People in this group are very much like those in the fair group, only they have the illusion of having it all under control and being beyond the reach of stress. They are the last to find out that they are under stress, while the people
surrounding them can see it in their thoughts, words, and actions as plain as day.

Those in the great group are in tune with the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within their being. They meet life’s challenges with these inner and unlimited resources that can help them meet the stressors that may come into their daily lives. They don’t feel the need to use fear and anger to address them. Rather, they make use of spiritual tools such as prayer, meditation, yoga, mindfulness practice, and humor, which resonate with their Divine design, to manage stressors. Each of these tools allows them to remain fully present so they can devote all of their positive energy to what they are currently facing.

Your Ability to Resolve Conflict

Interpersonal conflict is an inevitable part of life rooted in our individuality. We each come from a different time, place, and set of life circumstances that make us unlike anyone else who ever has or ever will live. Our unique individual context has shaped the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, values, prejudices, and illusions we carry around with us in our human computer—our brain. Conflict occurs so often because our individuality is not lived in a vacuum, but rather, is shared with people we encounter and with whom we live our lives. Conflict is potentially a very good thing, as when handled constructively, it provides an opportunity for all participants to learn and grow. As individuals and as a civilization and species, we need conflict to grow and evolve. In fact, it is probably one of the main sources of our evolution. Signs that a person uses good conflict resolution include being involved less frequently in conflicts, being able to agree to disagree, not making conflicts personal, and not being consumed by emotions while in them. Unfortunately, much of the conflict people experience is destructive and harmful to the participants. Often that leads to distance and dislike between the parties involved, which is carried forward like an old wound that never seems to heal. I have often seen people in families unnecessarily carry forward issues that should have been resolved years ago so they could get on with life. Signs of poor conflict resolution include being involved more frequently in conflicts, being unable to agree to disagree, having to “win” them, engaging in personal attacks, and being consumed by anger while in them.

People with higher ego power, lower ego flexibility, and higher ego vulnerability have the greatest difficulty in resolving conflict. Those with
higher power view conflict as a battle for control. Losing in a conflict represents a loss of control, which they cannot tolerate. For them, conflict can only be “win-lose,” never “win-win,” which they think is plain stupid. It doesn’t matter whether the conflict involves small things or important things. People with lower flexibility believe that an absolute psychological reality exists, that they know it, and that they are the “owner” of the truth. Conflicts are about “converting” people to their truth. Losing involves acknowledging that there may be different and better ways of understanding the issue at hand, which is extremely difficult for them to do, as they equate different ways of thinking with deficiency. Acknowledging the validity of other ways of thinking would be tantamount to admitting that they really don’t own the truth. Those with higher vulnerability bring a great deal of emotion into the conflict arena. They tend to engage in a great deal of “emotional thinking” in which anxiety and anger color their thoughts, creating distance from rationality and objectivity, thereby weakening their arguments. Conflicts also take an emotional toll on them—when the discussion is over, the emotional residue remains. They continue carrying the anger or anxiety they felt instead of getting over it. As I said in Ego Therapy, it’s not like a hockey fight.

How good are you at resolving conflict? Before answering, consider the following descriptions.

People in the poor group have a difficult time resolving conflict. They are in too many of them, either due to their higher ego power, lower flexibility, or higher vulnerability, for the reasons mentioned in the previous paragraph. Generally, they find people to be difficult, and interacting with others feels like being in a psychological war zone because of all the negative emotion that becomes part of a conflict. People become toxic to them when they get involved in a conflict, and the only results that can come from conflict are destructive. Little or no learning takes place. The notion of constructive conflict is a foreign idea to them. Furthermore, conflicts are a long-term event, meaning they aren’t over when the actual fight or disagreement has ended. They become personal and stay personal.

Those in the fair group do a better job of managing conflict than the previous group, but it is not optimal. They do a better job of avoiding people or topics that can lead to conflicts. Preemption is their main strategy in managing conflicts. The fewer the conflicts, the fewer that need to be resolved. Unfortunately, this avoidance does not allow for conflicts to occur that need to occur. Some issues need to be discussed in order to move things forward.
Constructive conflicts are the means for this to occur. Healthy relationships require healthy conflict to grow, so people won’t get hung up on old issues.

For those in the **genuinely good** group, conflicts must be constructive or they will not take part in them. Constructive conflicts are not the kind that need to be resolved with a specific winner. They don’t deteriorate into personal attacks, resort to emotionally based logic, or involve a need to win the argument, which are the hallmarks of destructive conflict. People in this group are also able to read the “signs” that tell them if talking about sensitive subjects such as politics, religion, or sex is a good thing to do at the moment. Moreover, their approach to conflict, which needs it to be win-win, preempts the need for resolution of any hard feelings. The only thing that’s personal for them is the opportunity to learn and grow, as well as to teach.

People in the **fake good** group enjoy being in conflict because of the success they have had in “winning” them. The force of their words and intellect can overpower others in arguments, giving them the impression that their ideas have emerged victorious—which feels very good to them. In regard to the **content** of their argument, they may have had better ideas. But from the standpoint of the **process** of the argument, they have often done poorly, though they don’t know it. Their winning often comes at an emotional cost to the “loser.” Think of a spouse who is winning the battle—the conflict—but is losing the war—the relationship, and you get the idea. People with higher ego power often do this a lot and feel blindsided when their partner decides to leave them. They were so preoccupied by their ego power with being right on all the issues that they missed how wrong they were being in the relationship.

Those in the **great** group bring the Love—God Is into the realm of any conflicts they encounter. This Love makes them immune to any attacks that may come their way and unable to attack those with whom they are in disagreement. This Love leads them toward their best thoughts in contemplating the issues at hand. This Love brings them a sense of peace with others participating in the conflict. They view conflict as an opportunity to find truth that can be of service to all, which is the only resolution they desire.

### Getting to the Great Life

Now that you have begun to develop a better understanding of ego and started looking into the ten key life areas, have you been able to answer
the question, “How’s your life?” If you have been unable to come up with an answer, that’s okay. Truth often takes time to reveal itself to us, if we are trying to be honest. Seeing the truth can be particularly difficult if some aspects of it are painful and difficult to accept. If it’s any comfort, an overwhelming number of us have been there or are there now—failing to choose to begin our real life, the great one that we are meant to live. It’s the imperfect nature of ourselves and people as a whole, in which ego is at the center, that leads us to hold back our own growth in this way.

If you have come up with an answer, you are likely to say poor, fair, or good—but not great! The great life is very much the exception, not the rule. It requires ego work so that one’s ego energy becomes balanced and able to fully synergize with one’s Divine energy, which is ready and waiting for this to occur. This is your seat that awaits you in the Kingdom of Heaven—in this life! An important part of this work involves getting to know your ego energy and learning where it’s imbalanced. That way, you can bring it into balance while speaking with the intelligence of your own voice rather than with the stupidity of an imbalanced egoic voice, particularly in the ten key life areas. You are an intelligent, spiritual being who is capable of becoming a better human being!

Chapters 3 to 8 will provide specific examples of the symptoms that often occur when people are experiencing unhealthy ego power, ego flexibility, or ego vulnerability that keep them locked into lesser versions of life. These symptoms are stupid, ego-driven thoughts, behaviors, or feelings that occur when a component of our ego energy is imbalanced. They’re the root cause of the suffering we bring to ourselves or others—whether we recognize it as suffering or not—which leads us to spend more time surviving than living, often for no good reason. We have so much more potential to work with—both humanly and spiritually. The more familiar you become with the symptoms of ego imbalance, the more light you are shining on your own ego energy, and the further along you are to fixing it and getting on with living the great life you are meant to live.

Each of the symptoms described herein relates to an ego insight. An ego insight is an awareness of how your imbalanced ego energy is creating a symptom, often with the use of reality-disconnected thinking. You must obtain these insights to bring about the healing of your ego. This healing will transpire as you become progressively more connected to truth. Ultimately, you’ll reach an accumulation of insights—particularly across the ten key life areas—that will shift your imbalanced ego energy component into a place
of balance. When you genuinely acquire an ego insight, you will recognize the difference between the person you were being when the symptom was occurring and the person you are becoming, who is no longer exhibiting the symptom or is doing so less often. This requires more than just thinking the ego insight, but being able to live it—being it! Be patient; this may take a little time, as the famed cognitive therapist Albert Ellis said to me many years ago when discussing rational-emotive behavior therapy at a presentation I attended. Repetition is important. You’ll have to go back to and reflect upon symptoms and ego insights in order to progressively download them into your mind, or what I have referred to as your ego space in my other works.

In the following chapters, I will be sharing bullet-point lists of symptoms that tend to show up in each of the ten key life areas when a specific ego component is imbalanced. Ego insights that will promote healing for each particular symptom will follow. The more symptoms you see that are familiar to you (though you don’t have to have all of them) and the more often they occur, the more likely you are experiencing an imbalance in that particular ego energy component. Don’t read too much into isolated occurrences. We all have some bad days or moments. Rather, look for patterns and increased frequency of symptoms. Allow any relevant memories from your life to surface. This will help solidify the impression you are getting of your ego energy and what you need to fix. Also, you may want to get feedback from trusted family or friends to gain additional perspective. However, you will need to be careful, because you might end up hearing what you don’t want to hear—truth can be painful, even when it ultimately serves to heal. That can bring some tension into your relationship with the person you’re asking for feedback.

Chapters 9 to 11 will provide specific examples of the types of experiences that occur when people have healthy ego power, flexibility, and vulnerability. These chapters will provide examples of when a person has “gotten it” and is living an insight, not just thinking it. Many people have the ability to recognize they are engaged in stupid, reality-disconnected thinking as well as behaviors, feelings, and physical responses, but still have not learned to change them. That’s because it’s not enough to have intellectual insight. You must also have experiential insight. You must be living the insight for it to be a real part of you! When you are truly living an insight, you are listening to yourself and your intellect, not your ego. You are now in the foreground of your life, and ego has faded into the background. It’s not gone. It continues to play an important role in your life—your survival. But it only steps in when...
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it’s truly needed. That’s the primary sign of ego energy that is in balance. An extremely important bonus will also come about as you bring your ego energy further and further into balance: The voice of Spirit will become louder, and you will begin to hear it more within your life and yourself. As the great Islamic poet Rumi said, “What you seek is seeking you.”

So, which voice are you really listening to? Your ego’s, or your own? Let’s find out!
CHAPTER 3

Symptoms and Ego Insights for Higher Ego Power

Higher ego power energy is at work when one’s need for power, influence, and control within his life is intense. The greater this need, the greater the number of symptoms and key life areas wherein this energy will manifest itself, and the greater the need for ego healing with the use of ego medicine. Such people include those living the following roles, which are discussed in more depth in *The Two Voices Within*: Dictator, Rebel, Narcissist, Ultra-Competitor, Control Freak, Exploiter, Independent, and Bully.

*Your Ability to Interact with People in Healthy Ways*

- **You aren’t interested in listening to people, particularly those with different ideas or viewpoints.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from listening to others as, you believe this places you at risk of being influenced or controlled by them, which you are very resistant to. Listening to your ego leads you into the stupidity of closing your mind in the illusion that this will empower you.

- **You think closeness to people involves how much they will allow you to control them.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing that real friendship and closeness give people permission to be who they are without the constraints you try to put on them. Listening to your ego leads you into the
stupidity of thinking you are getting closer to people by controlling them, when it’s actually creating distance.

- **You think you are the smartest person in the room and more entitled to express your opinions than others.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power is leading you to think: 1) you are smarter than everyone else, when you often aren’t, and 2) you have the right to force your ideas and beliefs on others due to your greater intellect. Listening to your ego has led you into the stupidity of a superiority complex and telling yourself how much more intelligent you are than others—but you aren’t.

- **You miss the ways in which you disrespect and embarrass people, allowing you to say or do whatever you want to them.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) people see this more than you do and are holding you accountable, often viewing you as foolish or despicable, 2) this way of treating people will eventually turn back on you, resulting in consequences like loneliness, isolation, or rejection, and 3) you have been “intoxicated” by your higher ego power, leading you to think you are getting away with more than you actually are in the way you have been treating people. Listening to your ego is leading you into the stupidity of mistreating people and thinking you aren’t being held accountable.

- **You feel entitled and justified in expressing anger and acting abusively toward people when they say or do something you believe is wrong.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing: 1) your anger and abusiveness have much more to do with your higher ego power and a lot less to do with the “failings” of others, particularly when it occurs a lot and the supposed failings are smaller, and 2) people are viewing your anger and abusiveness as reflections of a weak and out-of-control person. Listening to your ego is leading you into the stupidity of a false sense of entitlement to act abusively toward others, which is actually based on your own weakness—not theirs.

- **You think you can make people think what you think and believe what you say, and that you have the right to control what they are thinking.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) the only people’s thinking you are controlling are those who don’t want to think for themselves,
and 2) people are often smiling or nodding their heads to your ideas while privately disagreeing with you. Listening to your ego has led you into the stupidity of deceiving yourself about how much influence you exert over what people think or do just by saying “believe me” or “trust me.”

• **You think people don’t see the way you truly are, and that you’re able to hide your weaknesses from them.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing: 1) people see all of you, especially those who spend a lot of time with you, such as coworkers, 2) people are talking about your weaknesses behind your back, particularly if you have been domineering or intimidating toward them, and 3) you need to think people aren’t seeing your weaknesses so you can maintain your sense of power and control over them. From listening to your ego, you’ve ascribed to the stupidity of thinking you are doing a better job of hiding your weaknesses from others than you actually are.

• **You think recognizing, acknowledging, or expressing feelings means you are being weak and losing control.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) failing to appropriately recognize, acknowledge, and express feelings is a weakness, because it means you’re out of touch with a part of your humanity, 2) you often resort to expressing anger in a misguided attempt to maintain your sense of control, and 3) people can see the weakness (rather than strength) reflected by your discomfort with the healthy expression of emotion, which leads you to engage in displays of anger or conceal your emotions altogether. Listening to your ego has led you into the stupidity of distorted thoughts about emotions, making you view something that is healthy and strong—showing healthy emotion—into something unhealthy and weak.

• **You gravitate to “yes people” as friends—people who tell you what you want to hear and who are less likely to disagree with or upset you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing: 1) these people are not truly being your friends, because they are not being completely honest with you, 2) there is some form of exchange taking place in which they are getting something from you in return for agreeing with you, 3) true friends don’t just tell you what you want to hear, but what you need to hear, since they are looking out for your best interests, and 4) you surround
yourself with people you can control because this reinforces the sense of control you enjoy experiencing when interacting with people. Thus, listening to your ego has led you into the stupidity of accumulating phony or false friends who will abandon you when you no longer serve their purposes.

Your Ability to Form Close Relationships with Family and Friends

- **You think your relationships with your partner, children, and friends are close when they are thinking what you want them to think and doing what you want them to do.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing: 1) your understanding of closeness is based on controlling your loved ones, and while you may think you feel close to them, they don’t feel close to you, 2) this is going to blow up in your face when loved ones no longer have to “tow the party line,” which is exactly what is happening when teenagers go beyond the normal rebellion of adolescence into very intense, unhealthy rebellion, and 3) you will be completely blindsided when your partner decides to leave you, as you thought it was going so well. It was—for you! Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of trying to make others into another version of yourself in order to experience closeness.

- **You think hearing loved ones speak words and ideas is the same as listening to them.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing that listening involves paying attention to the words and the meaning behind them. Your ego engages you in the stupidity of conflating hearing with listening, while believing you are a good communicator—which you aren’t, since the same issues keep resurfacing.

- **You dominate conversations with loved ones by doing a lot more talking and a lot less listening.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) the quality of your communication is declining as the quantity of your words goes up, and 2) you are creating distance rather than closeness by imposing yourself and your ideas upon your loved ones. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of treating communication as though it’s a one-way street and you’re the most important person in the relationship.
• You think compromising with your partner or children is a stupid idea if you have better ideas—that it’s essentially just a waste of time. The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) the process of compromise communicates respect for others, and 2) compromise reflects a willingness to share control in the relationship, which would make it feel safer for others and allow them to get closer to you more easily. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of ignoring the reasons for compromising with loved ones and causing them to become more distant from you.

• You think expressing or receiving compassion from loved ones is a sign of weakness. The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing: 1) displaying sensitivity to the needs and weaknesses of loved ones conveys support and strength to them, while building your closeness and connection to them, and 2) receiving their kind words or gestures reflects strength by showing your ability to be completely open and vulnerable when appropriate. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of pushing away loved ones at the very times when you need each other most.

• You don’t think it’s necessary to clarify or explain yourself to loved ones. The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) your loved ones think you are hiding things from them when this happens a lot, 2) they begin to “fill in the blanks” about what you’re not telling them and why you’re not telling them, and 3) they begin to have doubts about who you really are, the more guarded you seem with them. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of trying to keep loved ones in the dark, telling them things on a need-to-know basis, and thinking conversations are over when you say, “Because I said so!”

• You want to decide whether to try new or different things with family and friends. The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) being the main or only decision-maker often creates boredom for your loved ones, even if your ideas and plans are good, and 2) loved ones resent you for ignoring their interests and will progressively want to do less with you, instead looking to have fun with other people or things, which is what many teenagers end up doing to resist domineering parents. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of neglecting your loved ones’ interests, making you a “no-fun” person.
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Your Ability to Love Yourself

- **You are in love with yourself and think others should be in love with you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) your love for yourself is based on narcissism, unhealthily inflated self-esteem, and the misperception that you are above others, which may feel good but will not last, 2) experiencing genuine love for yourself does not and cannot have anything to do with how smart, attractive, athletic, artistic, or rich you are, and 3) when others seem to be in love with you, it is not genuine love but a reflection of their own issues and their need to be connected to someone they see as special. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of a “love fest” with yourself in which all are invited to adore you.

- **You think it is more important to love yourself than to love others.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power has led you to think that giving yourself love strengthens and empowers you, while giving love to others weakens and disempowers you. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of being selfish with love by giving yourself as much as possible and giving others as little as possible.

- **You can never get enough love from yourself or from others.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing your intense desire to be loved is actually a disguised effort to get more power and control. From listening to your ego, you ascribe to the stupidity of demanding love to fill your unlimited needs for power and control.

- **You think others owe you love and should love you because of how great you are.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing that genuine love isn’t given or received based on any special qualities you may have. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of wanting and demanding love from others based on physical, intellectual, social, athletic, or artistic abilities, rather than just for being you.

- **You magnify loving words or gestures from others by seeing them as greater signs of love than was intended.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power contributes to this distortion because it feeds your needs for power and control—which have no
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limit—not because you really want the love. From listening to your ego, you ascribe to the stupidity of overinflating the impressions you think people have of you.

• **You get angry with people who you think are withholding love from you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing that your anger is not really about the withholding of love, but the withholding of the power that you can experience from receiving their love. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking people owe you love and demanding it from them.

• **The idea of unconditional love for others is foreign and stupid to you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing that you don’t understand love at all. Your notions about love have been blurred and distorted by your needs for power and control, which only allow you to see it as something conditional that has certain requirements which must be met. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of treating love like a business arrangement.

• **You can’t give love to others unless they earn it and are going to return it in kind.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you have formed a very strong connection between love, power, and control, and 2) you feel that giving love to others without a guaranteed return risks loss of control, represents weakness, and will lead to loving yourself less. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of keeping track of how much love you are getting or not getting from others.

• **You use love as a means to manipulate and influence others to get them to do what you want.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power is preventing you from knowing that you are misusing love as a tool that adds to your sense of power and control over people. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of confusing being controlling with being loving.

Your Ability to Achieve and Know Your Life’s Purpose

• **You use career, work, and financial success and status to measure how far you have come in your life.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power has led you to think achievement and success are the most important aspects of life because they reflect the amount of power and control you feel you need to have in
your life. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in stupid ways of understanding your talents, achievement, and life’s purpose, which mainly lead you to serve yourself in selfish ways.

- **You think your accomplishments reflect the better person you are in comparison to others.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from seeing the inappropriateness of comparing yourself to others as a way to feel more empowered. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of empowering yourself with faulty comparisons that really don’t make you a better person—no matter how successful you are.

- **You think your accomplishments are as important to others as they are to you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing your awards, trophies, medals, and other indications of success are a lot less important to other people (particularly healthy ones) who are going about living their lives, than they are to you. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of overestimating how important you and your accomplishments are for others.

- **Your desire for achievement is unlimited, and you have difficulty resting on your accomplishments.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power is leading you to approach achievement as if it were food to meet your needs for power and control. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of experiencing the absence of achievement as a form of starvation and disempowerment.

- **You think of your competitors as enemies who are trying to take away the achievement and success that rightfully belongs to you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing: 1) nothing is owed to you in the competitive arena just because you want to feel more empowered by your success, and 2) your competitors are kindred spirits—not enemies—who have as much right to use their talents and experience success as you do. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of treating competitions like a matter of life and death, hating your competitors even when the competition has ended, and being a poor winner or loser.

- **You think you’re justified in using any means necessary—including those that are illegal or unethical—to defeat your competitors.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you’re engaged in an often extreme
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blurring of boundaries between right and wrong—meaning you’ve lost your moral compass, 2) you have formed a strong connection between losing and disempowerment, and 3) you are not as talented or capable as you think you are if you have to resort to an uneven playing field. Listening to your ego has you buying into a “win-at-all-costs” approach to competition and achievement.

- **You have difficulty giving others the credit they deserve when they have defeated you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you consider acknowledging defeat and recognizing or celebrating those who have defeated you as a form of disempowerment and weakness, and 2) acknowledging the successes of others in defeat reflects a healthy humility and signals strength of character. Because you’re listening to your ego, you’re engaging in the stupidity of poorly handling defeat through rationalizations such as “It was just bad luck” or “I was cheated,” rather than the real reasons—they were better than you!

- **You focus mainly on the goal of achievement, missing the process.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing the rewards and empowerment that are embedded within the process of achievement as well as the outcome. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of missing what is happening along the journey, such as growth in self-discipline, developing respect for authority, being humble when confronted with success or defeat, and many other lessons that occur within the process of achievement, before reaching the end of the journey.

- **You have great difficulty offering the use of your talents and freely providing service to others, as this involves meeting other people’s needs rather than your own.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you are linking the use of your talents in meeting the needs of others with giving them away, weakness, and disempowerment, 2) you will actually experience more empowerment when giving to others, which is in alignment with your Divine Self, and 3) there is an intimate link between the use of your talents, the service they can provide, and the sense of purpose you can experience in life. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking that the saying “It is better to give than to receive” is senseless.
Your Ability to Grow the Quality of Your Mind

- Your thinking is the only thinking that really matters to you, and you are the only person allowed to change your thinking and grow your mind. The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) your intense need for power and control is leading you to overestimate the quality of your thinking compared to that of others, 2) you view being more open-minded and allowing others to change your mind as weakness because it gives them an opportunity to have some control over you, and 3) you would rather hold on to your own ideas, even if you see them as weaker than those of others, because this lets you retain your sense of control, which is more important to you than being right. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of keeping your mind closed to maintain control over it, even when it needs to be opened in order to be strengthened.

- You have difficulty questioning your own thoughts, although you readily question the thoughts of others. The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing: 1) you don’t like questioning yourself because this makes you feel doubt, weakness, and loss of control, 2) you like questioning others, as this makes you feel smarter, stronger, and more in control, and 3) in reality, questioning yourself is a means of achieving greater control via enlightenment rather than remaining in the ignorance, darkness, and weakness of pretending you know everything and have it all figured out. Thus, listening to your ego leads you to fail to admit to yourself and others that you could learn some new things.

- You believe getting others to think what you are thinking validates your intelligence, your better ideas, and your right to have control over others. The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing that your success in controlling what others think has less to do with the quality of your thoughts, your intellect, and any right you think you have to control them, and more to do with your effectiveness in influencing them through the force of your will and the means you have used to do so. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of self-righteousness that allows you to force yourself and your ideas on others.
• You frequently use phrases such as “believe me” or “trust me” when talking to people to convince them of how right you are. The insight you need is that your higher ego power promotes your use of such phrases, which command others to simply take your word for it. Such statements reflect: 1) how strongly you believe you can control the thinking of others, 2) how desperately you want to control their thinking, and 3) how much you believe the quality of other people’s minds needs to be improved, rather than your own. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking that it is always the minds of others that need to be changed—not your own.

• You are suspicious of new, different, or better ideas that you did not think of. The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you view these new, different, or better ideas as having the potential to control you in some way if you accept them, and 2) you are refusing to grow the quality of your mind by exerting too much control over what may enter into it. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of being overly suspicious of potentially better ideas because they are being filtered through your control issues.

• You find listening to and learning from others to be difficult, so it’s something you try to avoid. The insight you need is that your higher ego power has led you to form an unhealthy and distorted link between learning from others, loss of control, and weakness. This causes you to ignore or disregard the quality of the ideas you can get from others. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of ignoring people in order to maintain your sense of control, even when they have something good to offer you.

• You try to convert others’ good ideas into your own, as if you created them, so you can use and take credit for them. The insight you need is that your higher ego power is leading you to “steal” the ideas of others as a means of feeding your need to be in control while also minimizing the sense that others have some influence over you. Listening to your ego has engaged you in the stupidity of plagiarizing others’ thoughts and claiming something important that does not truly belong to you.

• You disrespect and attack the thinking of others with either direct or subtle insults. The insight you need is that your higher ego
power prevents you from knowing that your disrespectfulness and attacks have far less to do with the quality of others’ thoughts and a lot more to do with your need to claim power and control over others. Because you’re listening to your ego, you engage in the stupidity of mindless attacks whose real purpose is to help you feel empowered.

- **You find it intolerable to admit to yourself or others that your ideas, beliefs, and thinking are wrong.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing this intolerance stems from the link you have formed between being wrong and losing power and control. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of being unable to admit to yourself when you are wrong because this comes at the cost of feeling weak and disempowered.

- **You don’t know what you don’t know, and you don’t want to know it.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power is causing you to avoid the unknown—in favor of buying into the illusion of knowing everything—which feeds your need for control. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of turning a blind eye to your ignorance, giving you the illusion that you know everything and delivering the enhanced sense of control that results.

**Your Ability to Manage Life Changes**

- **You only prefer changes that you have initiated.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing that you use opportunities to make changes as a tool to enhance your sense of power and control over what is taking place in your life. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of making changes for the sake of making changes, including those that are needless or harmful to others.

- **You dislike and reject changes that you have not initiated.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing: 1) the changes occurring in yourself, others, your life, and society are inevitable, not the threat to your control that you make them out to be, and 2) the direction that change can lead you in is often a better one than what you would have created for yourself. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of fighting and resisting change rather than working with it to bring about the benefits it can offer.
• **You have difficulty recognizing that change can bring about something good or needed in your life.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you view changes that enter your life through the prism of your intense needs for control, which blocks your ability to see what may be good for you about them, and 2) change is not trying to be your enemy by reducing your control, but is often opening the door to an opportunity that your needs for control are not allowing you to see. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of keeping doors closed that are trying to open in your life.

• **You have no interest in learning why certain changes are occurring and are necessary.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power makes you suspicious of understanding the reasons for certain changes because they may violate your needs for control and get in the way of keeping things just the way you want them to be. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of remaining ignorant about why change is happening instead of developing an understanding of what has triggered it.

• **You try to deny developmental changes occurring in yourself or your family.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing the limits of your control and the harm you can be doing when failing to respect these limits. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking that changes involving physical, social, and sexual aspects of life aren’t happening or can be controlled by you.

• **You try to ignore undesirable changes involving problems in your health, finances, work, and relationships.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power leads you to ignore these kinds of changes because this gives you a sense of having it all together, which meets your need for control. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of becoming a candidate for having a heart attack or going into bankruptcy because you ignore the warning signs that things are changing, refusing to address them with healthier dietary practices or fiscal responsibility.

• **You try to undo changes that have occurred.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you try to undo changes to restore the sense of control you desire over people and things, rather than adapting to change, which you
experience as a loss of control, and 2) when you undo changes that need to occur in the lives of others, this often has a negative effect on your relationship with them. As a result, listening to your ego may engage you in the stupidity of trying to get your partner to quit a rewarding job or schooling that enhances his or her talents and sense of purpose—because it’s all about what you want.

• You find bigger, faster, and more unexpected changes especially difficult, and you tend to deal with them in inappropriate and aggressive ways. The insight you need is that your higher ego power leads you to view these kinds of changes as overwhelming and extremely threatening to your needs for control due to their size, speed, or surprising nature. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of cutting people off financially or disowning them if they make a life decision you don’t like (e.g., a child getting married to someone you don’t approve of, relocating, or choosing a career you don’t like).

**Your Ability to Deal with Failures, Losses, and Mistakes**

• You have difficulty accepting your failures, losses, and mistakes. The insight you need is that your higher ego power leads you to see these occurrences as violations of your intense need for control over your life and what is taking place in it. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of telling yourself that failure is never an option and under no circumstances can it be accepted.

• You find genuine apologies for your failures, losses, or mistakes difficult to make. The insight you need is that your higher ego power leads you to believe that genuine, heartfelt apologies imply weakness and loss of control. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of making half-hearted, disingenuous, and insincere apologies that are meaningless.

• You have difficulty learning from failures, losses, and mistakes. The insight you need is that your higher ego power has led you to form an unhealthy link between learning and loss of power and control when it comes to failures and mistakes. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of believing that learning from them represents weakness and not learning from them signals strength.
• **You often use denial or blame as ways to keep your distance from failures, losses, and mistakes you have made.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power has led you to these strategies for disowning responsibility, which allow you to hold on to and maintain your sense of control. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of always looking at others and never looking at yourself, even though you’re the main suspect.

• **You readily look for causes of problems within other people and things, not yourself.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power leads you to look outside of yourself for causes of problems in order to maintain the sense of power and control you need to experience in the face of adversity. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of seeing yourself as the last place to look when bad things happen.

• **You have difficulty taking responsibility and owning your share of failures, losses, or mistakes.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from owning your contribution to problems because you think that would imply weakness and loss of control you associate with taking ownership of problems. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of making others the sole owners of problems that often have joint ownership.

• **You solve problems the way you want to solve them rather than the way they need to be solved.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power leads you to a problem-solving approach that gives you a sense of control over the problem rather than the problem having control over you, which often leads to narrowing options and failing to consider those that are truly needed. From listening to your ego, you ascribe to the stupidity of solving problems in ways that are most comfortable and convenient for you, even if they are ineffective.

• **You beat yourself up for having failed or made mistakes when the evidence points directly to you and you can’t escape it.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power is making your failures and mistakes so difficult because you experience them as violations of your intense need for control. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of acting inhumanely toward yourself for being human—and as a means of making sure it doesn’t happen again.
• You have difficulty being the bigger person by making the first move in solving problems where others will need to do their part as well. The insight you need is that your higher ego power has led you to associate going first with weakness and loss of control. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of failing to solve problems that need to be solved no matter who makes the first move.

Your Ability to Experience Genuine Happiness

• You work very hard to get the things that will make you happy. The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you are substituting or confusing pseudo-happiness and pleasure with genuine happiness, and 2) you have formed a strong link between happiness and control in which getting the things you want leads you to believe you can control happiness. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of working hard to get the things that will make you happy only to find out later that the things that bring happiness are priceless and have nothing to do with your control of them.

• You confuse getting what you want with getting what you truly need. The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing that: 1) confusing something you want with something you need is setting you up for more frustration and anger, and distancing you from happiness, 2) converting wants into needs gives them more control over you than you have over them, and 3) you are making it difficult to see that you have most, if not all, of what you truly need because your wants are blurring that recognition. From listening to your ego, you’re ascribing to the stupidity of confusing wants with needs, which is undermining your ability to experience genuine happiness.

• You experience lots of happiness when things are under your control—or when you think they are. The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from realizing: 1) you have formed a strong connection between the amount of control you have over your life and the happiness you are able to experience, 2) genuine happiness is beyond the reach of control; in fact, it involves the freedom of not having to have control, and 3) the sources of
genuine happiness lie within you, not outside of you. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of a control-based approach to happiness that is hiding the real essence and means to happiness from you.

- **You experience lots of anger when things are not under your control.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from realizing: 1) your frequent anger indicates that you don’t really understand what happiness is at all, because it seems to readily abandon you when your need for power and control over things is threatened, 2) you associate not getting things you want or losing things you have with a loss of power and control, and 3) genuine happiness is not that fragile and transient; it sticks around even when things are not so good. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of feeling angry and unhappy when you don’t have the control you think you need to have.

- **You feel entitled to physically or emotionally harm those who frustrate your efforts to experience happiness.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power is leading you to think this behavior is justified, and blinding you to its actual purpose: to exert control over those who stand in your way of getting the pleasure you desire. Listening to your ego may engage you in the stupidity of giving yourself permission to physically or verbally abuse your partner for not cooking a good enough meal, wanting to see the movie you want to see, or having sex when you want to.

- **You experience pseudo-happiness when lying, stealing, cheating, exploiting, manipulating, or abusing others.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power is driving you to use any means necessary to get the happiness you want. Listening to your ego engages you in immoral or illegal behavior as the means of experiencing happiness.

- **Your desire for pseudo-happiness is unlimited and insatiable, and you’re always looking for more.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power has led you to a faulty understanding of happiness in which control, pleasure, and happiness are intertwined. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of getting involved with the wrong people, places, and things to meet an unquenchable desire for pleasure, often ending in dissatisfaction and disappointment.
**Your Ability to Cope with Stressors and Stress**

- **Your main approach to stressors and signs of stress is to deny, minimize, or overly normalize them.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) frequent, unexplained symptoms including headaches, elevated blood pressure, muscle tension, heart-related ailments, or stomach ailments are your body telling you that something important needs your attention, and 2) your approach to coping with stress is being shaped by your need to think you have control over the stressors and stress, which maintains your illusion of having everything under control. From listening to your ego, you ascribe to the stupidity of ignoring what your body is telling you.

- **You think acknowledging you are under stress means giving in to it and represents weakness.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) a lack of honesty about your stress is the real weakness, and 2) the failure to manage stressors and stress will eventually lead to greater weakness due to physical and mental consequences that will result. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of misinterpreting appropriate management of stress as weakness.

- **You get help later rather than sooner, and often not until the symptoms of stress have become serious or life-threatening.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power is delaying you in getting help, due to your need to think you have everything under control, including your body. Thus, listening to your ego leads you into the stupidity of being one of the people for whom the phrase “stress is the silent killer” was intended.

- **You may self-medicate yourself with overreliance on drugs or alcohol in response to stressors and stress.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power is leading you to self-medicate your stress because that gives you the sense of having it all under control. Unfortunately, this often leads drugs or alcohol to take control over your life, which subsumes or adds to the control the original stressor had over it—leaving you feeling more helpless and out of control. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of using strategies that weaken your control and add to your difficulties, often leading to addiction.
• You may cope with stressors and stress through the use of physical or emotional abuse that you think you are entitled to engage in, particularly with loved ones. The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing your abusiveness is not truly justified, but is a desperate attempt to replace your sense of weakness and lack of control with the “empowerment” of abusiveness. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of abusiveness in order to experience a false sense of empowerment when faced with stressors and stress.

• You often blame the world and loved ones for your problems, believing that if they would change, everything would be fine. The insight you need is that your higher ego power stops you from knowing that blame is a tool you use to maintain your sense of control so you won’t have to look at yourself and any contribution you are making to the stress you are facing. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of blaming others when it should have become very obvious that you are your own true enemy.

Your Ability to Resolve Conflict

• You don’t believe in “win-win” conflicts—it’s “winner take all.” The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) conflicts can serve the purpose of helping the participants to learn something, rather than becoming a battle of wills where someone must lose, and 2) your need to win arguments or disagreements has more to do with the control you want to maintain than with the merits of your position. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of trying to prove you are a stronger and more powerful person by winning the argument.

• You are willing to use any means necessary, at any cost to others, to win a conflict. The insight you need is that your higher ego power is promoting your desperate approach to winning conflicts, which is often reckless and destructive to others as well as yourself. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of “lose-lose” outcomes in which nobody really wins, as the relationship with your “opponents” often suffers and you don’t learn anything, even if your ideas or positions are better.
• You interpret losing in arguments and disagreements as stupidity and weakness, seeing it as unthinkable. The insight you need is that your higher ego power is making you believe that losing represents disempowerment, lack of intelligence, and a threat to the control you feel you need to have, and 2) losing an argument can be empowering when you have learned something you needed to learn, which ultimately contributes to greater empowerment. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of failing to learn something you might have needed to learn.

• You get involved in lots of stupid or petty fights regardless of the issue, and you have to win them all. The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing the fights have more to do with your need for control and less to do with the issue you’re fighting about, obscuring the senselessness of many of the fights you get involved in. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of finding things to fight over, which is really an attempt to feel more empowered.

• You become angry and resort to personal attacks, insults, and intimidation when the ideas supporting your position are insufficient. The insight you need is that your higher ego power is leading you to engage in these desperate attempts to maintain a sense of power and control when the quality of your positions is being exposed for its weakness. By listening to your ego, you engage in the stupidity of letting your anger take over for your intellect in a desperate attempt to feel more empowered.

• You try to force others into seeing things your way and agreeing with you. The insight you need is that your higher ego power is promoting this mentality to meet your need for control, rather than because of the merit of your arguments. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of hammering away at people with your ideas until they give in.

• You carry a grudge when you have lost an argument, and the conflict is not really over for you. The insight you need is that your higher ego power leads you to carry a grudge because the lost argument represents a loss of power and control, which you find unacceptable. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of picking a new fight with the same person in an attempt to resolve
the grudge by reestablishing a greater sense of power and control over that person.

- **You only seek to teach rather than learn from others when you are in disagreement.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power has led you to view learning from others as a sign of weakness—and reduced power and control—because it represents admitting that you don’t know something or needing to know something that you don’t presently know. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of refusing to learn from others when it’s appropriate to do so, and failing to recognize that learning from others can actually empower you.

- **You savor victory if you have “won” in a disagreement, relishing any distress that may occur for those who have “lost” to you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing that the more you enjoy victory—particularly when it distresses others—the more it has to do with your needs for control and the less it has to do with the quality of your ideas or arguments. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of trying to rub things in for those you have defeated.

- **You don’t care about the emotional impact that conflicts have on others and how they have impacted others’ self-confidence or self-esteem.** The insight you need is that your higher ego power prevents you from knowing that your lack of concern about the emotional welfare of others often means you may have won the argument but lost the relationship. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of weakening or losing relationships, particularly with your partner or children, just to win an argument.
CHAPTER 4

Symptoms and Ego Insights for Lower Ego Power

Lower ego power energy is at work when one’s need for power, influence, and control in her life is weak or nonexistent. The weaker this need, the greater the number of symptoms and key life areas in which this ego energy manifests itself, and the greater the need for ego healing through the use of ego medicine. Such people include those living the following roles, which are discussed in more depth in *The Two Voices Within*: Victim, Martyr, Dependent, Depressive, Underachiever, Conformist, and Masochist.

Your Ability to Interact with People in Healthy Ways

- **You question the quality of your ideas and thinking even though you are intelligent and may realize it.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) this a habit that you probably learned from people in your past, particularly parents and siblings, who taught you to question yourself excessively by sharing lots of destructive criticism, and 2) these critical people had unrecognized issues of their own, which they passed on to you in the form of criticism. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of dumbing yourself down, often in ways people from your past did.

- **You need others to believe in you in order to believe in yourself.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from knowing: 1) you were taught that the only way you can believe in
yourself is through the acceptance and approval of others, and 2) as an adult the source of belief in yourself can and must come from within. Thus, listening to your ego has led you to treat yourself like the child you were rather than the adult you are.

- **You find it difficult to think people would respect you or want to be involved with you.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you don’t know people very well, and most are willing to give you a chance to get to know them and want to know you, 2) it’s your discomfort with yourself that is framing your perspective of how others feel about you, and 3) people are taking their cues from you on whether they should be involved with you. Listening to yourself engages you in the stupidity of creating distance from others due to the misinformation you are giving yourself about them.

- **You have difficulty giving yourself permission to assert yourself, so you remain quiet within work or social discussions.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you often overestimate the quality of other people’s ideas and thinking, 2) you often underestimate the quality of your own ideas and thinking, and 3) your main difficulty is a lack of confidence—not competence—and difficulty believing in yourself. As a result, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of failing to speak up when you have something worthwhile to contribute.

- **You believe in others more than yourself, and you have difficulty questioning some of their ideas or choices.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you were taught that it’s wrong to question others, particularly those in positions of authority, and 2) it is healthy to be skeptical of what people think, say, or do, to keep them honest, rather than taking things completely at face value. Listening to your ego leads you to accept whatever people tell you rather than questioning their ideas—a lesson that U.S. society had to learn in the 1960s.

- **You believe others have the right to tell you what to think or do because they are smarter, more capable, or more experienced than you.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from knowing that all people are a mixture of strengths and weaknesses, just like yourself, with no greater right to influence you than you have to influence them. Listening to your ego engages you
in the stupidity of thinking others are “more than” and you are “less than,” rather than being equals.

• **You reject invitations to offer your ideas and opinions in order to avoid the anticipated rejection of them and yourself.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has led you to reject yourself in order to preempt rejection from others. As a result, listening to your ego has you anticipating rejection that is often not forthcoming.

• **You tolerate disrespect that others may show you if you feel you have expressed weaker ideas and thinking, believing you deserve this treatment.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you and your thinking do not deserve to be disrespected, no matter how poor your ideas, 2) you learned to disrespect yourself and your ideas from people in your past—again, probably parents and siblings—who wrongly taught you to disrespect your own ideas, and in turn, yourself, and 3) people who attack you personally for your weaker thoughts are reflecting their own issues and should not be taken seriously or listened to. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of believing that being disrespected is the price you must pay for being wrong.

• **You feel safer around children, elderly people, and mentally challenged persons than peers or adults in your age group.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) your greater comfort level with such persons stems from your perception of people in these groups as less threatening or willing to judge, criticize, or try to control you, 2) there are plenty of “safe” people in your peer or age group who are healthy, are busy living their own lives, and have no interest in judging, criticizing, or controlling you, and 3) those who would try to judge, criticize, or control you are people with lots of issues they are trying to pass on to you and others. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of feeling unsafe and threatened by people who overwhelmingly have no interest in harming you.

*Your Ability to Form Close Relationships with Family and Friends*

• **You experience highly conditional relationships with loved ones, as you feel you will only be accepted, respected, or**
loved when giving them what they want or doing what they want you to do. The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) truly loving relationships can only be unconditional and do not require you to do anything to earn acceptance, approval, or respect, 2) you have grown accustomed to being controlled as part of being in a meaningful relationship, and 3) you have a misguided understanding of what giving means in a relationship, viewing it as a requirement for getting love. Listening to your ego has made relationships with loved ones more like business arrangements in which you must give something in order to get something in return—acceptance, respect, and love.

- **You are more comfortable being the follower than the leader in close relationships.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is leading you to trust others more than yourself to make decisions, even when you are more than capable of doing so. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of doing too much following and not enough leading, allowing the relationship to go in a direction you didn’t want it to go.

- **You often assume a dependent, submissive, subordinate position in your close relationships with loved ones.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is leading you to repeat the relationship you experienced with an authoritarian or overly protective parent who taught you not to trust yourself and that you needed to be guided by others. Thus, listening to your ego often has you acting as though you are your partner’s son or daughter.

- **You often give loved ones what they want from you rather than what they need.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has led you to fear that they’ll reject and disapprove of you if you exert control (by giving them what they need) rather than submitting to their control (by giving them what they want). Listening to your ego leads you to the stupidity of giving loved ones what is unhealthy rather than what is healthy for them.

- **You say “yes” too often to loved ones and “no” too often to yourself.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you learned some unhealthy reality-disconnected ideas in the past about giving—particularly the idea that putting yourself first and giving to yourself is selfish, 2) giving to yourself and meeting your needs is healthy and lays the groundwork
for giving to others in healthy ways, and 3) you don’t have to sacrifice your life or become a martyr in order to be a good person. As a result, listening to your ego stops you from saying yes to yourself in ways that are healthy and beneficial to everyone.

- **You are easily preyed upon by others who press your “guilt button” to get you to do what they want you to do.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has helped you to create this guilt button, and that others have used it to control you, including your children. The best way to know is to ask yourself how it makes you feel when people ask you for something and you say no. Listening to your ego makes you feel guilty for saying no and leads you to succumb to a phony sense of rejection when you don’t give loved ones what they want.

- **You fail to recognize how the disrespect you tolerate from loved ones by letting them use you is weakening these relationships.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from knowing that: 1) allowing loved ones to disrespect you by controlling and using you inappropriately is communicating a lack of respect for yourself, and 2) when you show disrespect for yourself by tolerating disrespect from others, this leads to weakness in relationships, even if others are still actively involved with you. Listening to your ego by allowing loved ones to manipulate or take advantage of you is actually weakening these relationships, no matter how much time you spend together and how much you do for them—which you will find out when you stop letting them use you.

- **You may experience a role reversal with your children in which they become the parent and you become the child in the relationship, allowing them to easily manipulate you.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you are living in fear of being a “bad” parent or being rejected by your children, which they can easily do by pressing your “guilt button,” and 2) you are working too hard at making your kids happy rather than healthy, which sometimes requires giving kids what they need rather than what they want. Listening to your ego often has you saying yes when you should be saying no, trying too hard to be your children’s friend, and succumbing to phony rejection when they are angry with you or tell you they hate you.
• **You are comfortable with one-way communication in which loved ones get to talk and you mainly listen.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has led you to the “safest” place you think you can be within conversations, which is to be silent or say as little as possible. Though listening to your ego has you misconstruing silence as a means of safety and protection, it’s actually weakening your relationships.

• **You have difficulty insisting on compromise, instead putting the needs of loved ones ahead of your own.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has led you: 1) to think your needs are less important than those of others, 2) to feel uncomfortable with the influence you have on others when compromise is taking place, and 3) to fail to recognize that participating in compromise is an essential part of being in any close relationship. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of neglecting yourself in the relationship, which often leads to anger and resentment.

• **You have difficulty expecting compassion from your partner, and you question your right to have your needs recognized and met.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is leading you to treat yourself as a second-class citizen whose needs are secondary and should only be met after your partner’s needs have been met. By listening to your ego, you engage in the stupidity of treating yourself as less important in relationships, which is harmful to them.

• **You allow your partner to do most of the creating within your relationship, such as changing routines or becoming involved in new activities and experiences.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) your relationship needs you to play your part in helping it to grow, be dynamic, and maintain its vibrancy even as the years pass, and 2) your participation in the creative process is more important than the quality of your ideas. Listening to your ego will lead to your relationship becoming old, stale, and empty because you’re not involved in creating it.

• **You are at risk of becoming involved with a higher ego power partner whose confidence is attractive to you while your ability to be readily controlled is attractive to him or her.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is leading you to look for something in someone else that you can’t find in yourself, which may work temporarily but not in the long-run, as being taken for
granted, infidelity, and abuse are often the long-term results. As a result, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of trying to find someone to “complete you” when you should be completing yourself.

**Your Ability to Love Yourself**

- **You have difficulty loving yourself and believing others can love you.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from loving yourself and believing you are worthy of being loved by others. Listening to your ego has you repeating the stupidity of people from your past who rejected you and taught you to reject yourself—often parents.

- **You question whether anyone could really love you, given the weaknesses you see in yourself.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has you continuing to believe your weaknesses disqualify you from being loved by others—something you may have learned from significant people in your life when you were a child. Listening to your ego has you repeating the messages downloaded into your mind when you were younger and incapable of challenging their truthfulness—your bad, ugly, stupid, or will never amount to anything.

- **You are very self-critical, readily finding weaknesses in yourself and often magnifying them while ignoring, minimizing, or overlooking your strengths and positive qualities.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has you continuing to ascribe to very negative and distorted beliefs about yourself, often learned from family members or peers—who were wrestling with their own unrecognized issues and displacing them onto you. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of repeating these destructive messages that were downloaded into your mind until you replace them with better, more intelligent, and more reality-based messages that are fairer and unbiased, regarding your strengths and weaknesses.

- **You readily accept and take ownership of inappropriate and inaccurate criticisms of yourself from others.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing that: 1) you fail to see that destructive criticisms are often rooted in issues that others are trying to displace onto you, 2) your acceptance of these
criticisms serves to validate them as correct, weakening your ability to accept and love yourself. Listening to your ego stops you from seeing the difference between constructive criticisms intended to help and serve you and destructive criticisms intended to harm you.

- **You are much more willing to show acceptance toward others and value them than yourself.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has you continuing to believe reality-disconnected thinking that people with their own issues and agendas taught you about others being more important than you. Thus, listening to your ego stops you from accepting yourself as much as others and realizing that all people are equally important and deserving of acceptance.

- **You often look for others to love you as a substitute for your ability to love yourself, by doing things they tell you to do—or that you think they want you to do—to get them to love you.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing that: 1) the main source of love for yourself can only be found within, 2) the people who truly love you would want nothing from you in exchange for offering you their love, and 3) you do things people tell you to do in order to earn their love. Listening to your ego has you doing stupid and inappropriate things to get love or prove your love for others.

- **You have difficulty accepting yourself as you are and have attached self-acceptance to some ability, skill, or accomplishment that you must obtain.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing that: 1) loving yourself requires no ability, skill, or accomplishment, and 2) loving yourself can only happen in the present; it cannot be put on a timetable connected to any future accomplishment or success. So, work hard, develop your talent, and climb your mountains, but realize that none of it should be a requirement for loving and accepting yourself.

- **You learned a conditional approach to loving yourself that requires you to earn self-love.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from knowing: 1) you cannot earn love for yourself because it can’t be earned; it can only be unconditional for it to be genuine, and 2) you learned a distorted and misguided approach to loving yourself from parents or other people who
didn’t understand this themselves and were just passing this reality-disconnected thinking along to you. Listening to your ego is making you ignorant of love’s completely unconditional nature, which undermines your ability to give or receive it.

Your Ability to Achieve and Know Your Life’s Purpose

• You have difficulty believing you have talents and abilities worth developing and using. The insight you need is that your lower ego power has you continuing to believe what you were taught by significant people in your past, and which you continue to teach yourself, about having less ability and potential than you actually do. As a result, listening to your ego keeps you from seeing your potential while others readily can.

• You underachieve when considering the opportunities and abilities you have been given. The insight you need is that your lower ego power is leading you to underachieve due to a lack of confidence, rather than from a lack of ability. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of expecting to fail, giving less than your best effort, and failing to try.

• You think you do not deserve to achieve in comparison to others. The insight you need is that your lower ego power has led you to believe that certain people are meant to succeed and achieve—and you’re not one of them. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of constructing a “glass ceiling” or allowing others to construct one for you that says you can only go so far in life based on your gender, race, social class, etc.

• You allow others to tell you what is important for you to achieve in your life. The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from knowing that you are the only one who can decide what you want to achieve, because achievement is intimately linked to the meaning and purpose of your life. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of achieving for others rather than for yourself and failing to discover your own life’s purpose.

• You make inappropriate comparisons of your achievements to those of others and allow others to do so as well. The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) the only true reference point for judging how much you have
achieved is yourself, and 2) comparisons to others often miss details and differences regarding the contexts in which you and others were working to achieve. Listening to your ego engages you in comparisons with others that are invalid and irrelevant if the playing field is uneven, or the contexts in which you are striving to achieve are different—which is often the case.

- **You allow the wrong people to tell you how much you have achieved.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you trust the wrong people more than yourself when judging your achievements, and 2) you often get bad feedback from the wrong people about your achievements, which is ultimately not helpful. Listening to your ego leads you to view your accomplishments in an overly positive or negative light rather than getting a realistic impression of how far you have come and how far you need to go.

- **You are fearful of failure.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has led you to: 1) attach rejection of yourself and rejection by others to failure, and 2) believe misguided notions put forth by your parents, teachers, coaches, or the media that winning is the only thing that matters. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking failure is an enemy to avoid by quitting or failing to try.

- **You are fearful of success.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has made you suspicious of success because it often leads to greater responsibilities and potential failure. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of disliking and disowning your successes because they are like a trap setting you up for ultimate failure.

- **You are fearful of competitions.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has led you to see competitions as opportunities to be humiliated and made to feel weaker than you already do, which is something you learned earlier in your life from people telling you that losers and losing should be met with disrespect, humiliation, and rejection. Listening to your ego has you repeating this stupid, misguided message to yourself instead of updating it with a more accurate understanding of competition and all of its benefits.

- **You experience no sense of your life’s purpose and feel you are drifting through life.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is blocking your sense of purpose and meaning due to your
inability to see your service to others and yourself in whatever you are doing, particularly in your work life. Your ego prevents you from seeing the important things you are doing and has you minimizing the importance of the service you give to others—no matter what it is.

Your Ability to Grow the Quality of Your Mind

• **You lack confidence in your ability to think for yourself and grow your mind.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you learned to distrust your thinking, not because it wasn’t good, but because people with their own issues told you it wasn’t to be trusted, and 2) your ability to think for yourself is better than your belief in your ability to do so. Listening to your ego has led you to form reality-disconnected, negative, and stupid thoughts about your ability to think for yourself and grow your mind.

• **You disrespect and attack your own thinking with lots of self-criticisms.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has you repeating criticisms you heard in the past from family members or others who were destructively critical of you. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of frequently putting yourself down, calling yourself stupid, and attacking your own ideas even though they are often better than you think they are.

• **You don’t know what you do know and don’t want to get to know it.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is keeping you at a distance from your own good thoughts and ideas so you can avoid taking the control that comes with using your own thoughts and mind within your life. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of closing the door to your mind when it is more capable than you are making it out to be. Your own mind is a terrible thing to waste.

• **You think believing everything people tell you to believe will empower you and make you stronger.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing that gaining new knowledge is only empowering when people are sharing reality-based ideas, beliefs, and information that brings you into greater contact with truth—the foundation of empowerment. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking all learning is helpful and empowering, even when it is untruthful.
• You allow others to own your mind by telling you what to think, believe, and value because you believe they are smarter and know the truth. The insight you need is that your lower ego power has led you to form distorted notions about the right of others to shape your mind, how smart they are, and how connected to truth they are. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of paying attention to the wrong people, at the wrong times, and about the wrong things, rather than listening to yourself and your intellect.

• You have difficulty questioning the accuracy and validity of what others are telling you, including what you find on the Internet, in tabloids, or on social media. The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) these sources are often giving you their version of the truth—not the absolute truth—which has been contaminated by their own personal issues, biases, or opportunities to make money, and 2) you view questioning others as wrong, and as a form of control you should not exercise over what you are learning. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of merely following rather than questioning those people or resources that should be questioned.

Your Ability to Manage Life Changes

• You dislike the developmental, situational, societal, and technological changes that are taking place in your life and in the world. The insight you need is that your lower ego power has led you to see change as interfering with the consistency, familiarity, and predictability you need in order to experience some semblance of control over your life. Listening to your ego has led you to think all change is bad, viewing it as your enemy because it brings with it the unknown, even though it can be positive and often brings about something you or the world needs to happen.

• You ignore or passively accept developmental, situational, societal, and technological changes rather than working with them to maximize their benefits for you. The insight you need is that your lower ego power has led you to a sense of helplessness in dealing with change. As a result, listening to your ego makes you become paralyzed when relationship, financial, work, or health-related changes are happening by pretending they are not happening—but they are.
• You have particular difficulty dealing with quicker, bigger, or more unexpected changes involving work, family, relationships, relocation, marriage, or pregnancy. The insight you need is that your lower ego power leads you to magnify these changes rather than keeping them in perspective because they more intensely challenge your limited sense of control over your life. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of enlarging the change and shrinking your capacity to manage it, even though you have the ability to do so.

• You find it difficult to recognize the positive aspects of change that may exist. The insight you need is that your thoughts about change are being filtered through the prism of your lower ego power, which bends your thinking about change in a negative direction and obscures anything positive about it. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of treating change as though it were a cancer coming to take your life rather than as an opportunity for you and your life to blossom.

• You have a difficult time bringing about change that needs to happen, such as changing to a better job, better relationship, or better living situation. The insight you need is that your lower ego power is helping you to stay in the comfort zone of consistency, familiarity, and predictability you desire, avoiding entry into the realm of the unknown. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of taking a long time getting around to doing something you know you should have done much sooner.

• You want others to tell you how to deal with change rather than leaning on yourself. The insight you need is that you are listening to your lower ego power, which has convinced you of your helplessness and the need for others to guide you through dealing with change. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of making yourself out to be more helpless and less capable than you actually are in dealing with the changes taking place in your life.

• You often feel as if you are trapped in the past and the world is passing you by. The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from keeping pace with changes taking place in and around you, which leaves you falling further and further behind. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of clinging to the past and a world that once was, but no longer exists.
Your Ability to Deal with Failures, Losses, and Mistakes

- **You often think life is giving you more than your fair share of problems.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from knowing that you are encountering as many of the same problems as others. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking life is being unfair and out to get you when it isn’t.

- **You interpret problems in overly simplistic ways, seeing yourself as the main or only reason for their occurrence.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is making you an expert in self-blame—the first and only place you look when trying to understand the cause of problems is yourself. Thus, listening to your ego makes you a lousy detective who only looks in the most obvious place when trying to understand what happened.

- **You beat yourself up for your failures, losses, and mistakes, piling destructive self-criticisms on yourself, such as “I’m so stupid.”** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is leading you to attack yourself the way others did earlier in your life when failures, losses, and mistakes occurred. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of attacking yourself as a motivational strategy—often learned in earlier times—to prevent those types of things from happening again.

- **You see problems as larger, more frequent, and less manageable than they actually are.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power leads you to magnify and intensify failures, losses, and mistakes due to your perceived inability to manage them. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of creating bigger problems to manage than truly exist.

- **You fail to recognize that it's often not the problem, but mismanagement of the problem, that is the real problem when dealing with adversity.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power keeps you focused on problems while preventing you from getting involved in problem-solving, which requires a sense of being able to take some control in the situation. Listening to your ego engages you in a form of tunnel vision in which you keep looking at the problem and can’t work on the solutions because of how disempowered you feel.
• You engage in a life strategy in which you fail to take risks, playing it safe by minimizing opportunities to fail, lose, or make mistakes. The insight you need is that your lower ego power leads you to “cut your losses” by avoiding situations that could lead to failure. As a result, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of standing on the sidelines of life while watching others play the game of life in which they succeed and fail—while truly living.

• You often look to others to solve problems that you are more than capable of solving for yourself, overlooking your past successes. The insight you need is that your lower ego power is magnifying your sense of helplessness, leading you to ask for more help from others than you actually need. Listening to your ego has you overlooking your previous successes in solving problems on your own and making you a lousy “historian.”

• You fail to understand that success does not follow a straight line and failure is part of the journey to success. The insight you need is that your lower ego power has led you to a poor understanding of failure that makes you unable to use it as a tool from which to learn, grow, and succeed. Listening to your ego gets in the way of learning that the earlier failures in your life are setting the stage for later and greater successes in work, relationships, and health, if you are willing to work with them rather than trying to avoid them and “making friends” with failure.

Your Ability to Experience Genuine Happiness

• You have difficulty remembering the last time you felt happy. The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from knowing: 1) you are waiting for happiness to happen to you rather doing what is necessary for it to begin happening, 2) you believe happiness is something that comes from outside of yourself rather than from within, and 3) you can be in control of getting the genuine happiness you desire. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of waiting for people or things to come along to make you happy, that will never happen, because you’re looking in the wrong place—outside instead of within yourself.
• **You are chained to the past by unresolved unfortunate events and relationships that you avoid dealing with.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from knowing: 1) you are empowering the past to have an impact on your current emotional life by avoiding it, and 2) your unresolved past is seeping into your current emotional life in the form of depressive, angry, and fearful thoughts, feelings, and behaviors you are experiencing. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of avoiding the past by trying to hide from it rather than coming to terms with it so you can get on with fully living in the present.

• **You feel life is more like a burden than a gift.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from knowing: 1) this sense of burden is rooted in your belief that you have no control over what is taking place in your life, and that you must take what life gives you, and 2) you are attracting a lot of negative things into your life with the negative expectations you bring, which are being shaped by your lower ego power. Listening to your ego has convinced you that life is a weight to be carried until you die rather than the weightless gift it can be when you stop surviving and start living.

• **You often experience thoughts of helplessness, hopelessness, and pessimism.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power has led you to experience reality-disconnected thoughts in an effort to protect you from the dangers you believe would arise from taking control of your life. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of withdrawing from life in a desperate attempt to experience control over it.

• **You don’t believe you can create a better life for yourself.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power leads you to think a better life for you is not possible and you do not have the ability to create it. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of creating a prison in which the bars are comprised of these kinds of reality-disconnected thoughts.

• **You have difficulty feeling happy being alone with yourself.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from liking and loving yourself as you are, which is the foundation on which happiness is built. Listening to your ego is keeping you at a distance from yourself, which gets in the way of experiencing inner
peace, being motivated by love rather than fear, and being able to live fully in the present.

- **You do not feel at peace with yourself, others, and the world.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power makes you much better at finding what’s wrong with yourself, others, and the world than what is right with them—seeing them as half-empty rather than half-full. Listening to your ego engages you in mainly finding darkness and danger in what is inside you and what surrounds you, which stands in the way of experiencing happiness.

- **You may resort to activities such as drugs, alcohol, sex, violent media, pornography, and entertainment to temporarily distract yourself from your unhappy life.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) these are attempts to gain control over the ability to experience happiness by distracting and temporarily distancing yourself from the depression, fear, or anger that is dominating your emotional life, and 2) these attempts are leading to deeper confusion over the difference between genuine happiness and pseudo-happiness. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of living a life consumed with getting pseudo-happiness and being unable to recognize what happiness truly is.

- **You have a difficult time believing that God is a part of your life.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is leading to thoughts that God is absent from your life, based on the challenges and difficulties you are facing that give you a sense of abandonment, isolation, and separation from God. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking God has become distant from you rather than realizing you have become distant from God.

### Your Ability to Cope with Stressors and Stress

- **You are easily overwhelmed by financial, relationship, health, and work-related stressors.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is impacting your perceived ability to manage them on your own, which is better than you think it is. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking you’re more helpless and less resourceful than you actually are.

- **You wish for a stress-free life, leading you to veer away from potential stressors.** The insight you need is that your lower ego
power prevents you from knowing: 1) stressors often become healthy stimulation when you feel you are in control of them rather than their being in control of you, and 2) having too little stress—which is actually too little stimulation—can bring on the stress of boredom and underactivity. Listening to your ego by trying to avoid or eliminate stressors, rather than managing them, often acts as a prescription for an empty and unfulfilling life—so be careful what you wish for.

- **You overreact with anger or fear**, along with behaviors like yelling, swearing, or aggression, that are out of proportion to the stressor you are facing. The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing these approaches are a desperate attempt to experience some semblance of control over the stressor (e.g., a resistant child) even though you are actually out of control. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of overcompensating for a lacking sense of control by becoming verbally or physically abusive to people, animals, or property.

- **You magnify the frequency and size of stressors.** The insight you need is that you view stressors through the prism of your lower ego power, which makes them appear more frequent or large than they actually are. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of distorting stressors in ways that make them appear overwhelming and suggest that your capacity to manage them is weaker than it actually is.

- **You magnify stress symptoms, making them seem more frequent, intense, or significant than they actually are.** The insight you need is that you see symptoms through the prism of your lower ego power, which distorts them in ways that make them seem more threatening. This makes you feel more helpless to manage them than you truly are. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of making normal and manageable symptoms into something abnormal and unmanageable.

- **You may resort to faulty strategies such as overeating, using alcohol, taking illicit drugs, or overusing prescribed medications to gain some temporary relief from stress.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is leading you to these kinds of “solutions.” In reality, they only give you pseudo-control over stress because they are outside of you, only offer the illusion of
having some control over the stressors, and come with some cost (often addiction) that impacts you negatively in some way. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of using strategies that eventually lead to feeling that you and your life are further out of your control.

- **You often lean on others to guide you in managing stressors, even when you are capable of doing so on your own.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is leading you to ask for help from others that you don’t truly need, which reinforces and enhances your sense of helplessness. Because listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of asking for help you don’t really need, it prevents you from realizing how capable you truly are.

- **You aren’t good at using approaches that require more time, discipline, or effort to work, such as meditation, yoga, mindfulness practice, developing a sleep routine, eating healthfully, and exercising regularly.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from seeing that the things that really work take time, discipline, and effort. They don’t provide the immediate sense of relief and control over stress that you want. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of switching from one quick-fix approach to the next, which may temporarily alleviate stress but doesn’t get at the root of the problem.

### Your Ability to Resolve Conflict

- **You try hard to stay out of arguments and disagreements by keeping your distance from the people and issues that may lead to them.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power leads you to avoid conflict so you won’t have to experience the sense of helplessness and weakness it gives you. Listening to your ego leads you to play it safe by keeping your distance from conflict, even if you know your ideas are good or better than the ones you may hear from others.

- **You hide your disagreements with others in order to keep the peace and avoid their rejection or disapproval.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power prevents you from knowing: 1) you learned earlier in your life that all conflict is unsafe and it’s better to bite your tongue than to be attacked for expressing yourself, and
2) most people are not out to reject or disapprove of you or your ideas. Listening to your ego engages you in a false sense of being at peace with others, when in reality, you’re unable to freely express disagreements and know they’ll be respected.

- **You think arguments and disagreements are opportunities for others to make you feel weaker than you already do.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from knowing that your conflict avoidance was shaped by distorted messages from other people or media, including the notion that losing an argument is a sign of stupidity and weakness. If you think losing arguments means stupidity, you are using stupid, reality-disconnected thinking rooted in listening to your ego.

- **You have difficulty speaking up and giving yourself permission to express your opinions.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is leading you to think that permission to speak must be given by others and cannot come from yourself—often learned from an authoritarian parent. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of suppressing your often intelligent thoughts while listening to weaker ones, failing to respond even though you have something more valuable to contribute.

- **You believe your ideas and opinions must be validated and approved of by others before you can respect them.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from knowing that you learned as a child that the opinions of others are far more important than your own, which you continue to tell yourself. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking your ideas can only be good and intelligent when others say they are.

- **You think conflicts can only be bad and end with people disliking each other.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is making you feel negatively affected by conflict even when you are dealing with healthy and constructive people. For you, conflict always pricks a nerve, and it doesn’t matter if the person doing the pricking is coming from a positive, healthy, and loving place.

- **You have difficulty knowing the difference between constructive and destructive conflicts.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power stops you from understanding conflict in a broader, more balanced light, because any form of conflict makes you feel weak and helpless—even when it’s intended to help
you. Thus, listening to your ego prevents you from distinguishing between healthy, constructive conflict—something we all need—and unhealthy, destructive conflict—something no one needs.

- **You are easily “defeated” in conflict by the conviction others have for their opinions.** The insight you need is that your lower ego power is defeating you by making you feel overpowered by the intensity others display, even when you know they are wrong. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of remaining quiet when you should be speaking up.
CHAPTER 5

Symptoms and Ego Insights for Lower Ego Flexibility

Lower ego flexibility energy is at work when one’s mind is rigid and inflexible, leading him to believe he knows all of the truth and has little or nothing to learn from others. The greater this belief, the greater the number of symptoms and key life areas wherein this ego energy will manifest itself, and the greater the need for ego healing with the use of ego medicine. Such people include those living the following roles, which are further discussed in The Two Voices Within: Authoritarian, Racist, Religious Extremist, Love Elitist, Sexist, Ethnocentrist, Political Extremist, and Paranoid Person.

Your Ability to Interact with People in Healthy Ways

• **You believe people should think and feel the way you do about most things.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is driving you to form thoughts about how deeply connected you are to truth, which you think others are missing. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of spending too much time questioning others and too little time questioning yourself.

• **You are more comfortable being with people who think like you and less comfortable being with people who think differently.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is placing a premium on finding people who agree with your version of the
It’s Your Ego—Stupid!

truth. As a result, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of building a social network comprised mainly of people like you.

• **You look upon people with different ideas, beliefs, and values as deficient.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is causing you to think reality-disconnected thoughts that automatically equate different ideas, beliefs, and values as deficient. Listening to your ego leads you into the stupidity of spending little time getting to know and understand different ideas—something racists, sexists, homophobic people, and religious extremists do a lot.

• **You spend more time listening to people who tell you what you already know or want to know.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you toward people who can confirm and validate your version of truth. Thus, your ego has you spending little time questioning what these people are telling you, because what you really want is confirmation and validation of your own ideas.

• **You have a difficult time listening to people who think, feel, and behave differently than you.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is making you feel threatened by listening to these people because doing that would mean admitting that you may not know as much of the truth as you thought. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of keeping your mind closed to maintain the illusion of knowing all of the truth.

• **You think there is an absolute truth that you know and that others can come to understand if they are willing to do so.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility prevents you from recognizing that our understanding of truth is filtered and shaped by our personal background and experiences. Listening to your ego leads you into the stupidity of asking people to deny who they are in order to become more like you.

• **You view the strong conviction you have for your own ideas, beliefs, and values as confirmation of their truthfulness and your right to convert others to them.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to form reality-disconnected thoughts that confuse your conviction with the truthfulness of what you are thinking. You use this conviction as justification for converting others to what you believe. Listening to your ego obscures what you don’t know, removes any willingness to get to
know it, and gives you a need for others to follow you, even if you’re the wrong person for them to be following. We often see this situation manifesting with misguided clerics and religious leaders preaching messages of intolerance about “non-believers.”

- **You feel frustrated, angry, and resentful of those who don’t come around to your way of looking at things.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility stops you from knowing that you can only be the owner of truth for yourself, not the owner of truth for others. Thus, listening to your ego has you caught up in the stupidity of attacking others who remain connected to their beliefs, which weakens your relationship with them.

- **You don’t realize that people find your rigidity and inflexibility to be disrespectful and rejecting of them.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is discomforting to people, making them keep their distance from you. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of building walls comprised of rigid thoughts that keep people at a distance and prevent you from developing healthy relationships.

**Your Ability to Form Close Relationships with Family and Friends**

- **You need loved ones to think like you in order to feel warmth and connection to them.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility stops you from knowing: 1) your sense of closeness is based on how much loved ones share your version of truth with you, rather than sharing life with you, 2) your relationships with loved ones are conditional because thinking like you has become a prerequisite to loving them and accepting love from them, 3) real closeness is based on accepting people for who they are, not how much they become like you, and 4) you can never be truly close to loved ones, and they to you, unless they are free to be who they truly are in your company. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of requiring people to share your truth in order to love them and feel loved by them.

- **You think close relationships involve establishing similarity and agreement with loved ones about how you approach life.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility stops you from knowing that: 1) accepting differences between yourself and
loved ones has an important impact on the relationships you’re growing with your partner, children, parents, and friends, and 2) differences that loved ones possess can serve as the basis for a closer, more loving relationship than can ever be known by their becoming another version of you. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of rejecting the differences of loved ones so you can feel closer to them.

- **You think you are being helpful, generous, and loving by giving loved ones the wisdom of your truth.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility stops you from knowing that even though your intentions and ideas may be good, you are trampling on the egos of loved ones, leading them to resist you no matter how good and well-intended your ideas are. As a result, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of ignoring your approach to people because you’re so consumed with the truthfulness you seek to offer.

- **You feel disliked and disrespected by loved ones when they disagree with your ideas and beliefs.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you into emotional reactions built upon a faulty understanding of disagreement. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking loved ones can’t like and love you very much when they are disagreeing with you.

- **You disrespect and reject loved ones when they express different beliefs, values, and attitudes from the ones you think they should have.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility prevents you from knowing how this powerfully negative treatment is creating distance in your relationships with loved ones. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of intimidating or humiliating loved ones in order to make them a prisoner of your mind.

- **Communication, compromise, compassion, and creativity are often weak or absent in your relationships with loved ones.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility prevents you from knowing that: 1) flexibility in your thinking is required to open the door to these tools, which are essential to growing the quality of your relationships with loved ones, 2) your relationships with loved ones are often static and stagnant, rather than dynamic and growing, because you lack the flexibility needed to grow them over time, and 3) you are often no fun, as you lack spontaneity and openness to new things, particularly with your partner, causing the relationship
to feel old. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of blocking the growth of your relationships with loved ones, often leading them to look to others for the better things that can be experienced in close relationships.

Your Ability to Love Yourself

• You strongly connect loving yourself with having the “right” ideas, values, and beliefs. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility has led you to emphasize connection to truth as the reference point for how much you can love yourself and others, rather than unconditional acceptance. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of spending lots of time looking for the right ideas and beliefs in others and yourself in order to be more accepting of yourself and others and receive acceptance in turn.

• Your self-esteem becomes high, unhealthy, and overinflated when you believe you have better ideas, beliefs, and values than others. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility prevents you from knowing these kinds of comparisons are ultimately harmful to you and possibly others—even if your ideas are better—because they often bring distance, disrespect, and lack of acceptance with them. Loving yourself and others in healthy ways requires you to stop listening to your ego and to abandon unhealthy comparisons between the quality of your ideas and those of others.

• You love yourself less when you discover that some of your thoughts, beliefs, or values are wrong. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to use faulty criteria for loving yourself, which requires you to have the right thoughts, beliefs, and values. Unlike what your ego has led you to believe, when it comes to loving yourself, you don’t need to have any particular thoughts, beliefs, or values.

• You believe others will love you less when they learn that some of your ideas, beliefs, and values are wrong. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility stops you from knowing that people will continue to love and accept you even if they find some of your thinking and values to be in error—as that is the essence of unconditional love. Unlike what listening to your ego has led you to
believe, they are loving you for you, not for your thoughts, beliefs, or values—and you must do likewise.

• Your esteem for others becomes lower when you think they have weaker or poorer ideas, beliefs, and values than you. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility stops you from knowing that truly loving yourself requires the ability to love others as much as yourself even when you can see their weaknesses. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of searching for the weaknesses of others, which is weakening your ability to love yourself—because this is out of alignment with the spiritual being you truly are.

• You don’t want to be loved by people who are different from you, especially in the ways they think and believe. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to impose faulty criteria for who can love you. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of determining who can and can’t love you.

• You don’t want to love people who are different from you, particularly in the ways they think and believe. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to impose faulty criteria to decide who you are willing to love. In other words, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of determining who you can and can’t love based on what they believe.

• You only want to be loved by people who are like you, especially in the ways they think and believe. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to use stupid criteria that say people must be like you in order for you to accept love from them. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of only receiving love from those who think and believe the way you do.

• You only want to love people who are like you, particularly in their thoughts and beliefs. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to use faulty criteria that say people must be like you in order for you to love them. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of placing boundaries involving thoughts and beliefs on who you can love where none can exist.
Your Ability to Achieve and Know Your Life’s Purpose

- **You have narrow and rigid beliefs about what is important for you and others to achieve in your lives.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility stops you from knowing the diversity of interests and abilities people have, which can take them along equally significant, yet different, paths on their journey to achievement and fulfilling their life’s purpose. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of placing boundaries and limits where none are needed on what you or others can accomplish in your lives.

- **You often focus on a narrow range of achievement that emphasizes career and financial success.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility stops you from knowing that achievement involves many other important areas as well, such as health, relationships, recreation, and loving yourself, just to name a few. When you stop listening to your ego, you will begin hearing your intellect telling you about how life achievement and self-actualization can involve achievement in many important areas using all of your potential, not just some of it.

- **You often negatively prejudge and underestimate what you and others can achieve in their lives.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility has led you to establish a false ceiling on how much you and others can accomplish with your potential. Unlike what your ego has led you to believe, it is the ordinary people who do the extraordinary things.

- **You often listen to the wrong people when it comes to recognizing and developing your potential to achieve.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility stops you from knowing these are close-minded, inexperienced, or biased people with personal agendas that often guide what they are telling you about your potential. If you want to develop your full potential, stop listening to your ego and these people, in order to go where you want to go and become whatever you want to become in your life.

- **You often fail to listen to the right people when it comes to recognizing and developing your potential to achieve.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility prevents you from recognizing the open-minded, experienced, and unbiased people— with no personal agendas—who are telling you what you need to hear
about your abilities and performance, rather than what you want to hear. If you want to develop your full potential, stop listening to your ego and start listening to these people. They’ll help open doors to your achievement, often into places you didn’t expect to go.

- **You have difficulty experiencing a sense of purpose in your life.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility prevents you from knowing that the only service you are offering is to yourself, and mainly to get the physical and psychological rewards (e.g., money, cars, status) that come with success. You are undermining a broader and deeper sense of purpose by listening to your ego, which focuses you on meeting your daily needs for survival while blocking your ability to recognize the selfless service you are here to provide to yourself and others.

**Your Ability to Grow the Quality of Your Mind**

- **You have a very difficult time recognizing the difference between beliefs and truth.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility has led you to believe that beliefs and truth are identical, which leaves no room to question your thoughts, beliefs, values, attitudes, or prejudices for signs of disconnection from truth. Thus, the quality of your mind can’t grow—irrespective of how intelligent you are—because it rests on a faulty understanding of belief and truth due to listening too much to your ego.

- **You are suspicious of new or different ideas and facts, which you readily view as deficient and disconnected from truth.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to attack the unknown by looking upon it as deficient and disconnected from truth. The quality of your mind is progressively weakened—even though you may be very intelligent—by the distance your ego has you maintaining from the truth that often reveals itself in new or different ideas.

- **You are mainly interested in learning from yourself, people like you, and media sources that tell you more of what you know (or think you know).** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to close the door to your mind in order to keep in place what’s already there. Listening to your ego is weakening the quality of your mind, blocking it from following its natural tendency to seek opportunities to grow.
Symptoms and Ego Insights for Lower Ego Flexibility

• **You are mainly interested in listening to people who will confirm what you think and offer you validation.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to find people who will reinforce your version of truth and reality. Thus, listening to your ego is weakening your mind by making it static and stagnant, rather than dynamic and growing, because you think you have nothing more to learn.

• **Your rigidity and inflexibility lead you to take a narrow, more limited, and less complex approach to understanding people, events, and life, even though you are intelligent and well-intentioned.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is blocking access to all of the “data” that comprises the broader truth and human reality. Listening to your ego has you taking an approach to life guided by a poor understanding of its complexity—and often missing the bigger picture.

• **You lack a healthy skepticism for what you don’t know, and you aren’t interested in getting to know it.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is blocking your ability to question yourself because it has you believing you already know the truth and don’t need to seek it. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking you know everything, rather than the intelligence of respecting your ignorance.

• **You are close-minded and stubborn, refusing to change your mind even when the evidence connected to your beliefs overwhelmingly indicates that you are wrong.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is keeping you locked into your version of truth and reality. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of denying the truth and reality when it is not of your own making.

• **You view changing your mind on issues as a reflection of weakness and stupidity.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility has led you to equate being flexible with being weak or stupid because it means admitting you didn’t know the truth to begin with. If you’re worried about being called a “flip-flopper” for changing your mind, even after receiving new or better information on a matter, you are listening to your ego and not your intellect.

• **You trust only a small number of people who can change your ideas on matters.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility has led you to fashion a very strong link between trust
and your version of truth. Listening to your ego engages you in the
stupidity of mistrusting the people who can help grow the quality
of your mind with truth beyond what you know.

- **You believe you have the absolute truth about issues and you must get others to know it.** The insight you need is that your lower
ego flexibility has led you to believe everyone should be able to see
and believe things in the same way. Listening to your ego engages
you in the stupidity of insisting on something that cannot exist—an
absolute human reality.

- **You are more invested in growing the quality of others’ minds than your own.** The insight you need is that your lower ego
flexibility is leading you to think like a zealot whose conviction is triggering a
need to convert others to your truth. If you’re trying to teach others
while failing to recognize the need to be a lifelong learner yourself,
you are listening to your ego and starving your intellect.

- **You often form stereotypic views in areas such as race, religion, culture, and politics.** The insight you need is that your lower ego
flexibility is leading you toward narrow, too-simplistic, and stupid
thinking that often misses the nuances and diversity within these
areas. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of forming
stereotypes involving race, religion, or ethnicity and missing the
diversity within the diversity.

Your Ability to Manage Life Changes

- **You think about dealing with change in old and often outdated ways.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibil
ity is leading you to filter developmental, situational, societal, and technological
changes through only what you know. This blocks you from getting
and using more of what you don’t know in understanding and
working with these changes. Listening to your ego leads you to treat
change like an adversary you must resist because it takes you out of
your comfort zone and requires you to get to know new, different,
or better ideas than you currently possess.

- **You spend a lot more time noticing the similarities to other changes you have dealt with while missing the differences that may be at work in dealing with current changes.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to generalize and
borrow thinking that emphasizes the similarities that exist, which tend to stand out to you, while missing the differences, which are often hidden but are equally important in handling change. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of only working with some of the data, rather than all of it, when dealing with change.

- **You think “inside the box” about significant change involving work, health, finances, and relationships, and work with them in ways that are familiar to you.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is limiting you to only those options you have used before, even if they have failed. When listening to your ego, you resist or reject what are for you “outside of the box” options such as networking, alternative medicine, financial counseling, or relationship counseling, because they involve new or different thinking about managing change.

- **You have difficulty seeking out people who would encourage you to think outside of the box in understanding and working with change.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is making you suspicious of these people, leading you to keep your distance from them because they think differently. Listening to your ego causes you to reject them by closing your mind before you have given yourself a chance to hear what they have to say.

- **You have difficulty adapting to developmental changes within yourself or your loved ones.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to think narrowly and negatively about these changes, which weakens your ability to work with them. If you’re dealing with the inevitable changes related to identity formation occurring in your teenager by trying to force her to maintain a younger version of herself—whether physically, socially, sexually, or religiously—you are engaging in the stupidity that results from listening to your ego rather than your intellect.

- **You have difficulty adapting to situational changes involving work, relationships, finances, or living circumstances.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to think about these changes in ways that are familiar to you—and in the ways you want to think about them. You have difficulty changing your spending habits and being more practical when you experience a financial downturn or loss of a job, because this requires a change
in how you are working with money, which is ego-driven stupidity if you are drowning in greater debt.

- **You embrace traditional and reject progressive approaches when it comes to societal and technological change.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to stay strongly connected to what is known and established instead of the unknown and what has yet to be established. You’re failing to realize that this is where everything that exists in society began taking root. Your ego has you remaining mainly connected to the energy of the past, as you fall further behind in dealing with the energy of the present. Living in the present requires a more open approach to new and different thinking, as is the case in embracing cultural diversity or understanding that we now live as a world community.

- **You don’t like to make changes in personal routines and rituals, so you rigidly follow them even if they serve no purpose other than giving you a sense of consistency.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is locking you into the avoidance of change and the stupidity of investing time and energy in patterns that aren’t helping you. If you are following patterns without recognizing how they are benefiting you, and just follow them because you always have, you are listening to your ego and not your intellect.

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**Your Ability to Deal with Failures, Losses, and Mistakes**

- **You think about problems the way you want to think about them.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to force problems inside the box of what you know (or think you know), rather than working with them by getting more information. Listening to your ego often leads you to overgeneralize by making different problems appear similar, emphasizing their commonalities while ignoring their differences, which is like trying to turn apples into oranges.

- **You think about failures, losses, and mistakes using only what you know (or think you know).** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to narrow the field of options when it comes to understanding causes of problems, your degree of responsibility for them, and the solutions needed to solve them. Your ability to solve problems is weakened not by your intellect, but by
listening to your ego, which has you using only the “data” you want to use rather than all of it.

- **You are much better at working with simpler problems than complex ones.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility leads you to effectively handle simpler problems using obvious solutions but weakens your ability to manage complex ones with multiple causes that require multi-pronged solutions. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of trying to solve complex problems with simple solutions that only scratch the surface, leading to the return of the problem—and sometimes a bigger one.

- **You allow smaller, more manageable problems to turn into larger, less manageable ones.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility locks you into initially dealing with health, financial, and relationship problems only in the ways you want or know how to handle them. Listening to your ego results in problems often getting bigger without your realizing it, until they become so big that they are hitting you over the head, call for urgent action, and lead to being “rescued” by someone else to get a handle on them.

- **You have difficulty owning your contribution to failures, losses, or mistakes.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you away from looking at your own responsibility in creating them because you don’t want to question your thinking and its role in contributing to problems. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of spending most of your time finding others whom you can make responsible when bad things happen.

- **You have difficulty learning from failures, losses, and mistakes and tend to repeat them.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to think about problems with what you already know, leaving out what you need to know. Your ability to understand their causes, assess your responsibility, and develop solutions is weakened because you would rather listen to your ego than your intellect, which has you engaging in the stupidity of repeating the same problems over and over again.

- **You have difficulty telling the difference between the “right” and “wrong” people to look to for help in solving problems.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to look for people who think like you, irrespective of their experience in dealing with the problems you are facing or any hidden agendas
they may have. Listening to your ego leads you to the “misery likes company” approach, looking for people who will tell you what you want to hear—rather than what you need to hear—when dealing with problems.

- **You engage in “groupthink,” which involves relying only on others who think like you to solve problems.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is attracting you to people who think like you because they validate your approach, even when they’re wrong. Listening to your ego leads you to care more about the “warmth” of affirmation you get from these people, even if it leads to getting things wrong, than the necessity and discomfort that often comes from the process of getting it right.

**Your Ability to Experience Genuine Happiness**

- **You have difficulty experiencing genuine happiness and only seem to feel it when people agree with you.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to believe that your version of the world, life, and reality is the right one for everybody. Listening to your ego leads you to become frustrated, angry, and resentful when others do not comply with your wishes—which is often.

- **You experience pseudo-happiness when people, life, and the world appear to be aligning with your way of looking at things.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to interpret agreement with your view of things as validation and affirmation of your way of life, which is very important to you. The more this is happening, the happier you feel, but it’s only pseudo-happiness. If you were truly happy, it would not require their compliance, unlike what your ego has led you to believe.

- **You display lots of angry thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when people disagree with your ideas, beliefs, attitudes, or values.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to aggressively question and challenge those who disagree with you. Listening to your ego engages you in stupid, inappropriate, and over-the-top attacks directed at those who challenge your view of life.

- **Your display passive-aggressive thoughts and behaviors when people disagree with you via their expression of different ideas, beliefs, or values.** The insight you need is that your lower ego
flexibility is making you angry with people who fail to comply with your version of truth and reality. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of making “smart remarks” and subtle insults, and offering unsolicited criticism to express your displeasure with those who disagree with you.

- **You experience anxiety or depression when you aren’t feeling angry.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to form lots of reality-disconnected thoughts that are the basis for experiencing unpleasant emotions. You can never experience genuine happiness—which involves being at peace with yourself, others, and the world—or being motivated by love in dealing with life, because reality-disconnected thoughts rooted in listening to your ego will not allow this.

### Your Ability to Cope with Stressors and Stress

- **You approach stressors and stress the way you approach change and adversity—by thinking about and dealing with it the way you want to.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility keeps you thinking inside the box with only what you know (or want to think you know). You are often stubborn and “pig-headed,” which are good signs that you are listening to your ego and not your intellect.

- **You handle work, financial, health, relationship, and family-related stressors using the same approaches that you have used before, even if they aren’t working.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility has you thinking about them the same way you always have, even though there are often different factors—sometimes hidden—at play. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of using the same failed approaches because your inflexibility is blocking you from looking into other possibilities.

- **You think your thinking is stronger than the stressors and stress that you are being faced with.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility has you believing you are in possession of all truth, and with it, you can defeat any of the challenges you are facing. You carry around an ego-based illusion that life has nothing to show or teach you that you haven’t seen before, or that you can’t handle by yourself—but it does!
You don’t know when to stop listening to yourself when coping with stressors and stress. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility keeps you listening to yourself, as the alternative would be admitting you are wrong and not connected to the truth. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of continuing to be wrong rather than admitting someone else is right.

You often overgeneralize by recognizing the similarities between past and current stressors while missing the differences. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is contributing to a bias in your thinking that emphasizes what is familiar, consistent, or similar while ignoring or deemphasizing what is unfamiliar, inconsistent, or different from what you know (or want to think you know). You are the person for whom the saying “insanity involves doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results” is meant, even though you are not insane or stupid—it’s your ego!

You only ask for help from people or resources that reinforce your way of thinking about and handling stressors and stress. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you toward people like yourself who fall within your comfort zone and will agree with you. What you really want is ego-driven comfort rather than solutions—misery loves company.

You often miss the “right” people who can be helpful in working with stressors and stress because they don’t look like you or think like you. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility has sensitized you to people and thinking that is different from your own. Listening to your ego leads you to refuse treatment from people with different racial, religious, or ethnic backgrounds from your own, simply on the basis of these differences—which can be quite stupid if they are the right people to help you.

You only get help from people who have different ideas and approaches when things get really bad, such as major health or family difficulties. You would go to them only if you had no choice, as a last resort. The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is stopping you from opening up sooner rather than later to potential life-saving alternatives. You are the person who will stop listening to your ego and open up to the potential healing abilities of
stem cell technology only after significant medical problems—often life-threatening—come to your life’s door or a loved one’s.

*Your Ability to Resolve Conflict*

- **You approach different thinking as being stupid and reflective of ignorance.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to look down on others’ ideas and beliefs as a means of further validating your own. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of looking for and finding ignorance in others, which is actually rooted in yourself.

- **You find the idea that different equally valid viewpoints can exist in a conflict a difficult idea to wrap your head around.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility leads you to believe there can only be one absolute version of human reality that people can agree on, rather than a relative one shaped by a person’s individual background. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of believing everyone can always come to the same viewpoints and conclusions, despite the differences in their backgrounds.

- **You find it difficult to believe that different backgrounds can shape equally valid positions on issues that have triggered conflict.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to filter your ideas of what is valid through an egocentric view of different backgrounds that is biased toward your own. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of invalidating the backgrounds of others for merely being different from your own.

- **Your goal in conflict is to convert others to your way of thinking on a particular issue.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility prevents you from knowing you can learn something from others in a disagreement. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of always trying to be the teacher and not the student when involved in a disagreement.

- **You can only feel that conflict has been resolved when people agree with you and end up thinking like you.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility has led you to believe that you know and own the absolute truth. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of believing you have to prevail or win arguments
and disagreements because the alternative is admitting you don’t know or own the truth.

• **You have an extremely difficult time admitting you are wrong in a disagreement.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility prevents you from knowing when you don’t know or own the truth. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of being unable to admit you are wrong, because this requires the ability to know you are wrong.

• **You equate your conviction with being the truth-teller when engaged in arguments and disagreements.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to equate the intensity of your belief with the accuracy of your truth. Listening to your ego has you trying to get others to agree with you based on how strongly you feel about something, in addition to the arguments you are putting forth.

• **You feel justified by your conviction in personally attacking others within arguments and disagreements.** The insight you need is that your lower ego flexibility is leading you to use any means necessary to get others to agree with you, because you believe you’re doing so in service of the greater good—your version of the truth. When you engage in stupid and inappropriate attacks, such as challenging another person’s intelligence or thinking, you are listening to your ego and not your intellect.
CHAPTER 6

Symptoms and Ego Insights for Higher Ego Flexibility

Higher ego flexibility energy is at work when one’s mind is too flexible, readily allowing others to add, change, or remove what is in it and believing that truth can only be found in what others tell her. The greater this tendency, the greater the number of symptoms and key life areas wherein this ego energy is manifesting itself, and the greater the need for ego healing through the use of ego medicine. Such people include those living the following roles, which are discussed in more depth in The Two Voices Within: Child, Cultist, Loyalist, Unloved, Silent, and Puppet.

Your Ability to Interact with People in Healthy Ways

• **You think you should think and feel the way others do about most things.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is leading you to form thoughts about how deeply others are connected to truth, which you think you are missing. Thus, you spend most of your time questioning yourself—and little time questioning others—while listening much more to your ego and much less to your intellect.

• **You look upon your different ideas, beliefs, and values as being deficient compared to those of others.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is leading you to reality-disconnected thoughts that automatically equate your different ideas, beliefs, and
values as being deficient. Listening to your ego has engaged you in the stupidity of questioning and attacking your own thoughts mainly on the basis of their difference rather than on the nature of their content.

- **You readily question your own thinking and ideas within social contexts, leading you to withhold them.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility fills you with lots of self-doubt, which becomes magnified in the company of others whom you have difficulty questioning. As a result, listening to your ego leads you to withhold expressing thoughts in order to avoid others’ confirmation that they are wrong—even though they often aren’t.

- **You believe that by becoming more like other people within your ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and values, and less like yourself, you can become a better person.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from seeing that the better person resides within yourself and not in becoming someone else. Listening to your ego has you caught up in hero worship of others, distancing you from finding the better version of yourself within.

- **You are a very open and flexible person who can be readily influenced by others whose thinking you trust more than your own.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility prevents you from exercising some necessary caution by questioning some of the information, ideas, and beliefs others would have you believe. Listening to your ego rather than your intellect often makes you naïve, gullible, and at risk of being exploited and manipulated by others.

- **You often give in to the ideas, beliefs, and values of others in order to get your emotional needs met for trust, respect, acceptance, and a sense of belonging.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from knowing that as an adult, these are needs that must be met mainly from within rather than through others. Listening to your ego is placing you at risk of compromising yourself and making you an excellent candidate to become involved in a gang, cult, or extremist organization where you can get these needs met in exchange for your loyalty.

- **You view the strong conviction others have for their ideas, beliefs, and values as confirmation of their truthfulness and right to convert you to them.** The insight you need is that your
higher ego flexibility leads you to form reality-disconnected thoughts that confuse their conviction with the validity of what they are thinking and view it as justification for converting you to what they believe. Thus, listening to your ego prevents you from realizing how much they don’t know and hinders your ability to question whether you should be following them.

- **You have a difficult time telling the difference between the people you should listen to and those you should not.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from recognizing the difference between those you can trust and those you cannot. Listening to your ego rather than your intellect is preventing you from developing a filter telling you the difference between the right and wrong people to listen to. This leaves you at risk of listening to anybody and everybody.

- **You sense that people do not respect you as much as you would like them to.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility conveys a lack of respect for yourself, which people are able to pick up on. This makes it more difficult for them to respect you, even when they want to. Listening to your ego is making you appear more immature and childlike rather than the adult you are.

- **You think there is an absolute truth about human reality that others know, and that you must come to know it.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility prevents you from knowing that our understanding of human truth and reality is filtered and shaped by our personal background and experiences, none of which can be exactly the same as anyone else’s. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of denying your own personal human reality and trying to live in someone else’s.

**Your Ability to Form Close Relationships with Family and Friends**

- **You lose yourself in close relationships by trying to become more of what loved ones want you to be.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is leading you to disown yourself in order to experience a false sense of closeness to loved ones. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of deferring to the thoughts of others. This leads relationships to become phony and causes you to be in relationships where you don’t matter.
You experience a sense of closeness and connection when you become more like loved ones within your beliefs, attitudes, and values. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from knowing that closeness to loved ones does not require becoming like them in the way you look at things. Listening to your ego gets in the way of knowing that closeness and connection have a lot more to do with respecting differences and loved ones, accepting everyone as they are.

You become more like loved ones and less like yourself to earn respect, trust, acceptance, and belonging from them. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility prevents you from recognizing that you are trying to get these needs met from without rather than from within. Listening to your ego has you participating in an unspoken agreement in which you disown yourself in order to feel respected, trusted, accepted, and that you belong—but none of it is real.

You think you are being helpful, generous, and loving when embracing the beliefs, ideas, and values of loved ones while rejecting your own. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is distancing you from who you really are so you can feel closer to loved ones. Thus, listening to your ego leads you to often disown or abandon your ideas and beliefs in order to feel more connected to others, which is a faulty foundation for a loving relationship.

Your relationships with loved ones are conditional because you had to exchange something—the ownership of your ideas, beliefs, and values, trading them for those of loved ones—to be in them. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility prevents you from recognizing the exchange that is taking place, and how it’s a precondition for you to experience a sense of closeness with others. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of disowning yourself in order to feel connected to your loved ones.

Your loved ones do not respect you as much as they should due to your failure to be genuinely who you are within the relationship. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from knowing that your absence of respect for your own thoughts and opinions is contributing to a loss of respect from loved ones. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of failing
to be who you truly are, which prevents loved ones from respecting who you are.

- **You are working hard at becoming another version of your partner.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is leading you to duplicate your partner by adopting many of his or her ideas, beliefs, and values as a means of feeling a sense of closeness within the relationship. By listening to your ego, you are actually creating distance in the relationship because your partner is not getting to know the real you.

- **You are not taking responsibility for guiding and growing your relationship with your partner by sharing your own ideas, beliefs, and values.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from knowing that growing a relationship requires you to share who you really are. That’s the only way it can exist and mature in a healthy manner. Listening to your ego has you taking in your partner’s ideas while expressing few if any of your own—a prescription for stagnation, emptiness, and boredom in the relationship (for both of you!).

- **If your partner is emotionally unhealthy, he or she will exploit your openness and turn you into a child within the relationship.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is leading you to rely too much on what your partner thinks and too little on what you think. Listening to your ego has you repeating the relationship with your partner that you experienced with your parents—but now you are an adult.

- **You try to find people to be close to that you can look up to and follow, wanting them to serve as your leader.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from knowing that the leader you need to find is within yourself. Thus, listening to your ego causes you to find faulty leaders who require you to follow them, not true leaders, who would help you to find and follow you.

### Your Ability to Love Yourself

- **You believe you must receive love from others in order to love yourself.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from seeing that loving yourself must begin from within. The source of self-love is inside you, not in someone else. Listening
to your ego has you engaging in misguided, inappropriate, and stupid
efforts to get love from others rather than giving it to yourself.

- **You believe the way to love yourself is to become more like others in the way you think.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is leading you to distance yourself from and abandon yourself in a misguided effort to love yourself. Listening to your ego is making it more difficult to love yourself, because self-love must come from within yourself, not through becoming someone else.

- **You believe others will love you less if they learn you do not share the same thoughts, beliefs, and values as them.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has made you a hostage to the wrong people who often ask you to reject yourself and think like them in order to receive their love. Listening to your ego is preventing you from being involved with the right people, who would accept and love you even if you have different ideas, beliefs, and values.

- **You believe that giving love to yourself is selfish.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to misunderstand the importance of giving to yourself, a reflection of the unconditional love that you must receive from yourself as well as others. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of starving yourself emotionally and feeling guilty for giving to yourself in healthy ways.

- **You believe that failing to give others love is always selfish.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from seeing that “withholding” love from others in the right times and places is often an act of love when it involves giving others what they need rather than what they want. When you stop listening to your ego and start listening to your intellect, you will stop doing the enabling that often makes things worse for others, particularly loved ones.

- **You are easily taken in by people who are only pretending to love you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility causes you to misinterpret phony displays of trust, acceptance, respect, and belonging as genuine displays of love. Thus, listening to your ego has made you an excellent candidate to become involved in groups like cults or gangs that promise to meet your emotional needs in exchange for your loyalty and allegiance.
• You often listen to the wrong people giving you misguided ideas about what love is and the means of getting it. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility prevents you from recognizing the distortions of those ideas about love, which often require you to have the “right” set of ideas or beliefs and engage in the right behaviors to experience love. Listening to your ego often leads to stupid “rules” for who can and should love you and the right behaviors to engage in to demonstrate love—including those involving sexuality.

Your Ability to Achieve and Know Your Life’s Purpose

• You want and need others to believe in you as a prerequisite to believing in yourself and what you can achieve. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to believe that the only opinions that matter regarding your potential to achieve are those of others, not your own. As a result, listening to your ego has you continuing in your adulthood what was more appropriate in your childhood—looking for others to believe in you as a substitute for believing in yourself.

• You often listen to the wrong people about what is important for you to achieve in your life. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from recognizing people who lack the necessary experience to guide you, or those with hidden agendas—even if they mean well—that may not align with your interests and abilities. Listening to your ego and the wrong people often leads to disillusionment and disappointment rooted in bad information about what should be important for you to achieve.

• You often listen to the wrong people who give you bad information about your potential. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility prevents you from recognizing unrealistic appraisals that are overly optimistic or pessimistic, which become the foundation for faulty expectations. Listening to your ego and the wrong people employing the wrong criteria and measuring sticks can set the stage for underachievement or disappointment that your performance doesn’t match your expectations.

• You often listen to the wrong people who inappropriately compare your achievements with those of others. The insight
you need is that your higher ego flexibility prevents you from seeing the inappropriateness of these comparisons, which often ignore the context in which you are working to achieve when compared to others. Likewise, listening to your ego and the wrong people gets in the way of using the most important point of comparison—which is you with yourself.

- **You often experience a lack of passion for what you are doing in your work life.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility and listening to the wrong people have led you away from your true heart’s desire and toward what others have thought would be best for you. Listening to your ego and the wrong people has you fulfilling the dreams others have for you while neglecting your own.

- **You experience a lacking sense of meaning and purpose for your life.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has you listening too much to others and too little to yourself in determining what you should be doing with your life. Thus, listening to your ego and the wrong people has you living the life others want you to live, rather than the one you want to live.

### Your Ability to Grow the Quality of Your Mind

- **You are mainly interested in learning from others rather than from yourself.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from trusting yourself to grow the quality of your mind by adding, changing, or removing ideas, beliefs, and values with the use of tools such as reflection and introspection. Listening to your ego has led you into the stupidity of allowing others to be the caretaker and “owner” of your mind—not you.

- **You have a difficult time recognizing the difference between beliefs and truth.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to believe they are identical, which leaves no room to question the thoughts, beliefs, values, attitudes, or prejudices you are hearing from others for signs of disconnection from truth. Thus, the quality of your mind can’t grow—irrespective of how intelligent you are—because it’s unable to distinguish between beliefs and truth, which is rooted in your ego.

- **You are suspicious and critical of your own thoughts and ideas when they don’t conform to what others have told you**
to believe, having learned not to think for yourself. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to discount your intellect and your individuality. As a result, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of failing to grow the quality of your mind by making your own contributions to it.

- **You are very flexible and readily allow people into your mind who don’t belong there and can bring harm to you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility weakens your ability to recognize those people, who are feeding you reality-disconnected ideas, beliefs, values, and prejudices, which you take at face value. In doing so, you are weakening the quality of your mind. Listening to your ego has you missing the incomplete information, limited experience, personal needs, and hidden agendas often at work behind the scenes that have led to the construction of these faulty and often misguided messages.

- **You think others have the right to add to, change, or remove what is in your mind because they are smarter and know the truth better than you do.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to question the quality of your intellect and ability to establish a connection to truthful ideas, beliefs, and values on your own. Listening to your ego has you dumbing yourself down and disqualifying yourself from knowing what is truthful, while relying too much on others to tell you what is true.

- **You think you do not have the right to question the thinking of others and have difficulty giving yourself permission to do so.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to see others as more intelligent and in possession of the truth than you are. Listening to your ego makes it difficult to question people—even when your intellect is telling you that something is not quite right about what you are being told.

- **You have difficulty understanding that intelligent people do not always know the truth or have intelligent thoughts.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility prevents you from seeing the distance that can exist between a person’s intellect and the intelligence of her ideas and beliefs. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of believing that intelligent people are always being intelligent in the thoughts and ideas they express to you.
• You lack a healthy skepticism for what others don’t know. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is blocking your ability to question others because you want to believe that others know the truths you are seeking. Listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of blindly listening to and following what others tell you, rather than exercising some skepticism—even for those who have good intentions.

• You allow the conviction people have for their ideas, beliefs, and values to open the door to your mind and let them make changes in your ideas, beliefs, and values. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility leads you to conflate the validity of their ideas, beliefs, and values with the forcefulness with which they express them—which you equate with truth. Listening to your ego has you equating conviction with truthfulness, missing the lies, “false facts,” and bad information they are leading you to believe.

• You are readily influenced by social media—regardless of the credibility of the source—and the false facts that often appear on it. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from filtering this information with a healthy skepticism and consideration of the sources and agendas at work behind the “facts” being put on display. As a result, listening to your ego might make you a voracious consumer of tabloid journalism, where oftentimes facts don’t matter—just sales.

• You often form extremist views in areas such as race, religion, culture, and politics. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is leading you to find ideologues whom you believe can lead you to a greater truth about these aspects of life. Listening to your ego and these ideologues often leads to stereotypical ideas about a group, such as believing everyone in it thinks the same way—causing you to miss the diversity within the diversity.

• You believe there is an absolute truth about how to see and deal with human issues that others have in their possession and that you must come to know. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to an approach to human reality that says everyone should be able to see things and believe in the same way. Listening to your ego interferes with your ability to see the relative nature of human reality, and to understand that agreement isn’t always possible—which isn’t necessarily a bad thing.
Your Ability to Manage Life Changes

- You think you are incapable of leading yourself in response to the changes that are occurring or need to occur in your life. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to question your intellect and the intelligence of your thoughts when dealing with change on your own. Listening to your ego often leads you to underestimate your ability, overestimate others’ ability, and ultimately follow people who truly don’t have all the answers about what you need to do.

- You want others to “own” the changes taking place in your life, so you lean upon their thinking rather than your own in handling change. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to think others can be responsible for what’s taking place in your life if you defer to their judgment. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking you’re not responsible for what’s happening in your life—but you are!

- You listen to the wrong people telling you what is normal or abnormal about developmental changes taking place in your life. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to an impaired understanding of normalcy. You may have learned it from listening to people who lacked sufficient knowledge or experience, or those with personal agendas—even if they had good intentions. Listening to your ego and the wrong people leads you to see abnormal things as normal, and normal things as abnormal, such as those involving physical, emotional, or sexual aspects of development.

- You listen to the wrong people about situational changes such as those involving work, relationships, or financial matters. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is weakening your ability to know the difference between those who can be more helpful and those who will be less helpful, as you tend to trust everyone but yourself. In turn, listening to your ego and the wrong people often results in getting bad advice that makes things worse than they were to begin with.

- You listen to the wrong people about the need for making changes in your life. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is leading you to trust others more than yourself in
determining what needs to be taking place in your life. Listening to your ego and the wrong people often leads to doing what may work better for their life than for your own.

- **You are easily influenced by people who display conviction when telling you what to do with your life.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility makes you readily influenced by the way people tell you how to think as much as what they are telling you to think. Listening to your ego often has you overwhelmed by the style rather than the substance of what people are telling you to do with your life.

**Your Ability to Deal with Failures, Losses, and Mistakes**

- **You often listen to the wrong people when dealing with your failures, losses, and mistakes.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has weakened your ability to tell the difference between the right and wrong people to help you with solving problems. Listening to your ego has you failing to ask whether the people helping you have the necessary familiarity and experience, as well as the absence of any personal agendas or ulterior motives, to be in the position of helping you—especially when you’re dealing with significant problems.

- **You are too willing to listen to the wrong people when trying to understand why problems have occurred.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to see others as more intelligent, connected to truth, and able to understand why bad things happen. Listening to your ego makes you positively biased toward the opinions of others and negatively biased toward your own when things go wrong.

- **You are too willing to listen to the wrong people when trying to understand how responsible you are for causing the problems in your life.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to question your own judgment in determining the role you may have played in bringing about your problems. Listening to your ego and the wrong people often leads you to take on either too much blame and guilt or too little responsibility for having contributed to your difficulties.
• You are too willing to listen to the wrong people when trying to find solutions to the problems you are facing. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to believe others can do a better job of telling you what to do than you can. Thus, listening to your ego and the wrong people often has you using strategies that are simplistic, shortsighted, and lacking a full appreciation of the problem you’re facing—often quick fixes.

• You don’t know when you are the right person to listen to when dealing with your failures, losses, and mistakes. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has filled you with lots of self-doubt, leading you to look everywhere but within to find the answers to your problems. Thus, listening to your ego makes you a lousy “historian” who minimizes, overlooks, or forgets previous successes you have had in dealing with problems and adversity on your own.

Your Ability to Experience Genuine Happiness

• You think happiness can be found by listening to others about how to get it. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility prevents you from listening to yourself and looking inward to find happiness. Listening to your ego has you looking past yourself and failing to build a path toward happiness that begins in the only place where it can begin—within.

• You get involved with people who teach you that the means to your happiness involves following them. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from seeing these people as more invested in their own needs rather than yours. As a result, listening to your ego has you following guides or gurus who lead you to them rather than leading you to you.

• You think happiness can be acquired by adopting the same ideas, beliefs, and values of the “happy” people who surround you. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to try to imitate others and become more like them as the means of finding happiness. Thus, listening to your ego has you trying to experience a version of happiness that better fits who others are rather than who you are.

• You listen to the wrong people telling you what you must do to become happy. The insight you need is that your higher ego
flexibility weakens your ability to tell the difference between the right and wrong people to listen to in your efforts to experience happiness. Listening to your ego often causes you to listen to other people’s misguided ideas about what you need to do (or not do) to find happiness.

• **You are taken in by people with conviction who tell you the right way to go about experiencing happiness.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is leading you to be heavily influenced by the style of their messages while failing to question their substance. Listening to your ego makes it easy for advertisers and charismatic leaders to sell you on what you need to own or do in order to feel happy.

• **You can only experience anxiety, depression, anger, or pseudo-happiness, not genuine happiness.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is allowing your mind to be filled with lots of reality-disconnected ideas that distance you from human and Divine Truth, which is the foundation upon which genuine happiness is built. Listening to your ego is keeping you connected to many stupid thoughts, which fuel all of your unhealthy emotions.

• **You confuse pseudo-happiness with genuine happiness.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to an unfiltered understanding of happiness that conflates physical and psychological pleasure with happiness. Thus, listening to your ego has you living *in the illusion* of being happy rather than experiencing genuine happiness.

**Your Ability to Cope with Stressors and Stress**

• **You listen to the wrong people when asking for help in dealing with work, financial, health, relationship, and family-related stressors.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from asking whether prospective helpers have the necessary information, experience, and intentions to help you. Listening to your ego often leads you to those who are less able to help you, and who often make things worse by giving you bad advice—but you don’t know that.

• **You accept bad and unreliable information about products supposedly intended to help you cope with stressors, including**
those that appear on the Internet or TV. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility leads you to take in these “help messages” in an unfiltered way, which often leaves out or hides important details such as potential adverse effects. If you want to know why they speed up the audio at the end of commercials or put things in fine print, it’s to hide these details.

• You allow people to normalize your stress symptoms by telling you they are less frequent, less severe, and less unusual than they really are. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from recognizing the characteristics of these people, which can include lack of information, lack of experience, personal issues, and hidden agendas—whether they mean well or not. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of under-managing or neglecting your stress symptoms which will eventually begin to manage you and your life.

• You allow people to “abnormalize” your stress symptoms by telling you they are more frequent, more severe, and more unusual than they really are. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility stops you from recognizing the characteristics of these people, which can include lack of information, lack of the necessary experience, personal issues, and a hidden agenda created by either good intentions or bad intentions. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of over-managing and over-treating stress symptoms in ways that often makes things worse.

Your Ability to Resolve Conflict

• You think others are more intelligent, knowledgeable, and able to understand the truth than you, which justifies their winning any disagreements you may become involved in. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has you doubting your intelligence and the quality of your ideas, beliefs, and values. Thus, listening to your ego makes you trust others far more than yourself, readily abandoning your positions, even though they are often valid.

• You do not have a healthy respect for what you do know, though it could serve you in a disagreement. The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is leading you to dumb yourself down, keeping you at a distance from many of your good and valid ideas
and beliefs that support the positions you take in disagreements. Listening to your ego leads you to the stupidity of closing the door to your mind and failing to see what is in it.

- **You find it difficult to believe you are right in a disagreement.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility has led you to form a negative bias toward your intellect and the ideas, thoughts, and beliefs it produces. Listening to your ego makes you feel surprised when the quality of your intellect shines through and your ideas reveal themselves to be better than those of others with whom you’re in disagreement—a reflection of an issue with your attitude rather than with your ability.

- **You think the best way to resolve arguments and disagreements is to agree with the other person.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is leading you to trust what others think more and what you think less. As a result, listening to your ego has you readily abandoning your ideas and positions for the “safety” you can find in those of others which ends the conflict.

- **You feel overwhelmed by the conviction others have for their views and position in disagreements, seeing this as further evidence of their truthfulness.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility is making you intimidated by the intensity of others’ beliefs and leading you to conflate their forcefulness with the accuracy of their truth. Thus, listening to your ego makes you readily defeated in arguments, as you are being double-teamed by others’ ideas and the emotion behind them.

- **You have a difficult time recognizing the difference between constructive and destructive conflict.** The insight you need is that your higher ego flexibility prevents you from knowing when disagreements have stopped focusing on the issues at hand and started becoming personal, which is when the quality of one’s ideas and intellect is being attacked either openly or subtly. Listening to your ego has you standing around being someone’s punching bag, thinking people have a right to attack you while asserting their opinions, rather than respectfully disengaging from the conversation.
CHAPTER 7

Symptoms and Ego Insights for Higher Ego Vulnerability

Higher ego vulnerability energy is at work when one experiences difficulty accepting the weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerability of his humanity. The greater this difficulty, the greater the number of symptoms and key life areas wherein this ego energy will manifest itself, and the greater the need for ego healing with the use of ego medicine. Such people include those living the following roles, which are discussed in more depth in The Two Voices Within: Perfectionist, Overachiever, High-Maintenance Partner, Stressed-Out Person, Overly Self-Critical Person, Clean Freak, Traumatized Person, and Order Freak.

Your Ability to Interact with People in Healthy Ways

- You often withdraw and retreat into the background when involved in social groups. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to play it safe by avoiding the exposure of your weaknesses and imperfections that could arise from expressing your ideas and opinions. Listening to your ego results in “hiding” from others, even when your intellect is telling you that you should be speaking up.

You are intimidated by people whom you perceive as more capable, those in positions of authority, and those who have been very successful. The insight you need is that your higher
ego vulnerability has you seeing these people through the lens of your insecurity, which magnifies your sense of vulnerability in their company. Thus, listening to your ego has you seeing them in an idealistic and perfectionistic light, failing to consider the weaknesses and imperfections that they and all people have.

- **You project your own negative and critical thoughts about yourself onto other people as if they were really thinking them.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to anticipate social rejection when oftentimes none is forthcoming. Listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of thinking people are judging you when they aren’t—you are!

- **You often hear destructive criticism from others when positive, constructive criticism was intended.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has over-sensitized you to criticism, preventing you from distinguishing between the two. As a result, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of turning something intended to help you into something meant to harm you.

- **You have a difficult time saying no to people, even when you clearly should.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability sensitizes you to the potential or actual rejection or disapproval you may get from others if you say no when they ask for something from you. Listening to your ego often has you saying yes to people when your intellect is telling you to say no—which can be quite stupid, depending on what you’re saying yes to.

- **You are more comfortable interacting with children, elderly people, and persons with disabilities, than with members of your peer group, and you may find yourself far more comfortable around animals than people.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability leads you to seek out the company of those you see as having less potential to reject you due to their perceived limitations and weaknesses, and whom you perceive to be more vulnerable—like yourself. Listening to your ego has you meeting your needs for social contact with those who are less emotionally threatening to you and do not make you feel vulnerable.

- **You may attempt to dominate and become overly assertive in social groups.** If you’re doing so, the insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is prompting you to compensate for and mask your insecurities by showing people how capable you are. Thus,
listening to your ego leads you into the stupidity of talking too much and listening too little in social groups in order to hide your feelings of vulnerability.

- **You carry a chip on your shoulder and reject others before they have the chance to reject you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to anticipate rejection from others based on a history of real or imagined rejection. Listening to your ego places you on the defensive, rejecting others before they can reject you, which is stupid when you are rejecting some of the people who could actually be helpful to you.

- **You may form negative and critical thoughts about others involving their appearance, intellect, or abilities.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to lower others in order to raise yourself up by gaining distance from any of your own weaknesses and imperfections. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of trying to hide your weaknesses from yourself and others, rather than working on them.

- **Your friendships are conditional and based on how much you think people like, accept, and approve of you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has you seeking out people who give you the acceptance and approval you’re unable to give yourself. Listening to your ego leads to you becoming more involved with people who address your underlying feelings of insecurity and help you feel better about yourself—with the relationship ending once they stop doing this for you.

**Your Ability to Form Close Relationships with Family and Friends**

- **Your relationships with loved ones are negatively affected by the significant anxiety or anger that you experience.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability leads you to bring lots of emotion into these relationships that makes them stressful and difficult to maintain, let alone grow in a healthy manner. Listening to your ego results in lots of stupid thoughts and behaviors that get in the way of good communication, compromise, compassion, and creativity, which are all needed for the relationship to become what you want it to be.
• **You are emotionally dependent and lean too much on loved ones for acceptance and approval.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to ask loved ones to provide the unconditional acceptance and approval you have difficulty giving yourself. In this way, listening to your ego causes you to think immature thoughts and engage in childish behaviors that are stupid now because you are an adult—if you are thirty or older going on sixteen, this is you.

• **You have difficulty striking a balance between being dependent on your partner and being independent at the right times.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability and feelings of insecurity are weakening your ability to tell when you need to give yourself and your partner enough space that the relationship can have a healthy interdependent quality. As a result, listening to your ego often leads to the extremes of over-involvement or detachment in the relationship—which eventually leads it to end, emotionally if not legally.

• **You think your partner’s job is to make you happy.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to see the relationship as an opportunity to take care of your feelings of insecurity and what causes you to feel unhappy with yourself. Listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of making your partner responsible for your happiness rather than yourself—a task that will ultimately end the relationship.

• **You easily find rejection from your partner where it was not intended, such as by negatively interpreting a look, comment, or behavior that was quite innocent.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has sensitized you to your weaknesses and imperfections, which magnifies them when you think others can also see them. Listening to your ego has you overreacting with stupid thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are not reality-connected—don’t ask whether something you’re trying on makes you look fat.

• **You may comply with inappropriate requests or normalize abusive treatment by your partner.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has you filtering this treatment through your intense insecurity, leading you to conclude that you deserve what is taking place. Listening to your ego has you engaging in the
stupidity of making yourself responsible for the abuse rather than your abuser—something your intellect already knows isn’t right.

- **You may become emotionally distant, isolated, and detached in your relationships with your partner or children.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has sensitized you to exposing your weaknesses and acknowledging your emotional needs to those who are closest to you and who live with you. Thus, listening to your ego has led you to build a wall to keep your emotional needs hidden, putting up a stupid façade of strength that is actually weakness.

- **You need your partner but don’t like the fact that you need him or her.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has sensitized you to neediness by strongly tying it to weakness and imperfection, which you have difficulty accepting within yourself. Thus, listening to your ego often makes you resent your partner and stay at a distance emotionally because you need him or her more than you are willing to admit. What you need to understand is that you don’t have to be John Wayne in order to be a strong person.

### Your Ability to Love Yourself

- **You are unable to love yourself just the way you are.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability intensely connects you to your weaknesses and imperfections, which leads you to try to remove them so you can feel okay with yourself. Listening to your ego has you trying to get the “right” looks, attributes, or achievements in order to love yourself—which is stupid, because you don’t have to do any of that to give yourself love and it will not work.

- **You put loving yourself on hold until you think you have done what is necessary to receive love from yourself and others.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability prevents you from seeing there is no timetable for loving yourself—it is either happening now or it isn’t. Thus, listening to your ego places a future-oriented perspective on loving yourself rather than the present where it can only happen.

- **You want others to love you as the means to loving yourself.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to work hard to gain the approval and acceptance of others as a
It’s Your Ego—Stupid!

substitute for your inability to give this to yourself. Listening to your ego has you engaging in inappropriate, unnecessary, and often stupid attempts to get people to like, accept, and approve of you.

- **You are very sensitive to signs of rejection and feeling unloved by others.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has you attempting to fill the “self-love void” with signs of approval and acceptance from others. Listening to your ego sensitizes you to any signs of disapproval or non-acceptance, which often results in your misreading these signs in ways that weren’t intended, responding in stupid ways with jealousy.

- **You try to hide your weaknesses and imperfections in order to receive acceptance and approval while avoiding rejection.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has convinced you that people could not possibly love you as you are and have to become somebody different for this to happen. As a result, listening to your ego has you trying to be somebody you aren’t, which is some stupidity we can all relate to—do you remember being a teenager?

- **You may try to love yourself by engaging in destructive comparisons intended to lower others by focusing on their weaknesses and imperfections.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability and insecurity is leading you to a desperate approach to liking and loving yourself in which focusing on the weaknesses of others allows you to think, “Well, at least I’m not like them!” Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of finding what’s wrong with others in order to find what’s right about you.

- **You may engage in misguided attempts to prove someone was wrong—a parent, teacher, or sibling—as a means of validating yourself.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has led you to think, “If I can change how others see me, I can change how I see and feel about myself.” Listening to your ego has you engaged in stupid attempts to get the approval and acceptance of others, which may be nice but is also unnecessary—you only need your own.

- **You have difficulty grasping the notion of unconditional love, believing all love must be earned from yourself or others instead of being freely given and received.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has led you to form some distorted ideas about loving yourself and others that link love to the absence of
weaknesses and imperfections. Listening to your ego has engaged you in a stupid endless effort to overcome your weaknesses in an effort to get the love you want rather than accepting and managing them.

- **You think the most important relationship in your life is with your mother, father, children, or God.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability prevents you from seeing that your most important relationship is with yourself, and that the quality of this relationship will impact all of the other ones, for better or worse. Thus, listening to your ego can often leave you stuck on trying to get the acceptance and approval that was never forthcoming from your mother or father instead of getting on with your life and doing this for yourself.

**Your Ability to Achieve and Know Your Life’s Purpose**

- **Your efforts to achieve become locked into one particular area, often work or finances, while neglecting others, such as family and health.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability stops you from seeing that your feelings of insecurity are so intense that they’re narrowing your view of life success. Listening to your ego makes you a good candidate to be one of those people who wakes up to this reality in their forties or beyond, realizing all they were missing while staying too preoccupied with work, and striving to become a better, more emotionally available partner, parent, or grandparent.

- **You are motivated by fear in your efforts to achieve.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability fuels your efforts to achieve with fear in order to create distance from significant feelings of weakness and insecurity. Listening to your ego has you working very hard, often becoming a workaholic in order to succeed, but the effects of your successes are only temporary—you need to get up the next day and do it all over again.

- **You often experience work and achievement as a burden rather than a passion.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is fueling your motivation to work, achieve, and succeed with lots of fear rather than love. Thus, listening to your ego causes you to experience work as a weight to carry in order to address your fear, rather than as the weightlessness of passion rooted in love for the work you are doing.
• You often feel guilty when you stop working and take time out to have some fun. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to punish yourself with guilt when you interrupt your efforts to overcome your weaknesses and insecurities by giving to yourself and having some fun. Listening to your ego hinders your ability to have fun, driving you to get back to work on removing your weaknesses and imperfections.

• You may burn out and stop working to achieve when the toll it takes has worn you out. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to try to achieve something that can’t be achieved via your efforts—the elimination of your weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerability. By listening to your ego rather than your intellect—which is telling you to slow down, take a break, and relax a little—you head toward emotional exhaustion and ultimately no achievement.

• Your intense efforts to achieve become quite stressful for those you live with, who are affected by the tension your efforts bring into the home. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability prevents you from seeing the impact you are having on your partner or children and your relationship with them. Listening to your ego keeps you preoccupied with your efforts to achieve and succeed, while engaging in the stupidity of thinking that none of this is affecting others or your relationships with them.

• You perceive your competitors as enemies. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to see them this way because they stand in the way of your efforts to eliminate your weaknesses, imperfections, and insecurity via your attempted success. Because listening to your ego negatively affects your view of these kindred spirits, you may engage in the stupidity of insulting, assaulting, or dehumanizing them.

• You spend a lot of time positively or negatively comparing yourself to competitors. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to make fear-based comparisons rooted in your underlying feelings of insecurity, not just the ability or attribute being compared. Listening to your ego has you engaging in lots of emotionally based and stupid thoughts about how you are better than them or they are better than you, failing to realize your main reference point should be yourself.
• You have difficulty experiencing a sense of purpose and the service you are here to provide—human and Divine. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you toward fear-based living in which work is just a means to an end—your daily survival. Listening to your ego keeps you connected to the little picture of life in which the focus is on getting from one day to the next and getting your needs met—failing to see the big picture, in which there is an intimate link between giving and receiving.

Your Ability to Grow Your Mind

• Your thoughts, beliefs, and opinions are significantly influenced by your feelings of anxiety and anger. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability leads you to filter your thoughts with heavy doses of emotion that weaken your objectivity, rationality, and connection to truth. Listening to your ego causes you to think more with your emotion and less with your intellect—often with stupid results that get in the way of growing your mind.

• You have difficulty questioning the rationality of your thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability and emotions interfere with taking a more sober and objective look at what you are thinking and making changes where necessary. Thus, listening to your ego keeps you experiencing a narrower, emotionally subjective, and disconnected version of reality, which stands in the way of growing your mind with truth.

• You readily believe fear-based messages presented in what you read or what people are telling you. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to take in messages that align with your inner feelings of weakness, imperfection, and vulnerability. Thus, listening to your ego causes you to “learn” lots of frightening junk with no basis in reality, undermining the growth of your mind toward truthfulness.

• You often jump to conclusions and form opinions about people, issues, and events before getting all the facts. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability creates a sense of urgency that makes you more impulsive than reflective in the way you look at things. Listening to your ego leads you into the stupidity of prejudging people and things instead of waiting for all the facts to
come in, while also blocking your ability to grow your mind with truth.

- **You have a difficult time realizing that believing something doesn’t make it true.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability and emotion is narrowing the distance between belief and truth, making it harder for you to tell them apart. Listening to your ego often has you caught up in continuing to believe something that isn’t true or refusing to believe something that is true—both of which undermine the growth of your mind and reflect stupid thinking.

- **Your fear and anger are leading you to form fearful and angry thoughts that match these feelings.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability prevents you from questioning the validity of these feelings and the irrational thoughts you are creating connected to these feelings. As a result, listening to your ego leads to your mental life being dominated by your emotions and experiencing all of the stupidity that comes with letting irrational emotions control your thinking, while undermining the growth of your mind.

- **Your unquestioned fear-based thoughts feed into forming more fear-based thoughts that intensify your feelings of anxiety.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to create a personal reality, built on fear-based thinking, that seems far more dangerous and threatening than your actual reality is. Listening to your ego is weakening your mind by contaminating it with lots of stupid, reality-disconnected thoughts rooted in anxiety and fear.

**Your Ability to Manage Life Changes**

- **You are overwhelmed by anxiety or anger when significant or unexpected changes take place in your life.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability leads you to quickly respond with emotion due to the threat you link to changes in work, family, health, relationship circumstances, and entering into the unknown. Listening to your ego takes you into panic mode, in which you engage in the stupidity of overthinking, misinterpreting, and overreacting to what is taking place—often making things worse.

- **You have a difficult time adapting to the changes taking place in your life.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability
prevents you from seeing how you can work with change because it keeps you entrapped in your fear. Thus, listening to your ego keeps you seeking to return to the “warmth” of the past, which represents the known, rather than dealing with the present and the unknown.

- **You resist making changes in your life, especially those that may be necessary.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to cling to the consistency, familiarity, and predictability in your life because it’s connected to the known, which makes you feel safer and more protected. You are listening to your ego if you stay in an abusive relationship or dead-end job even though your intellect is telling you there is something better out there for you.

- **You find the status quo in your life to be preferable, even if it’s depressing, to the more intense feeling of anxiety that managing or instigating change would give you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has led you into an emotional tradeoff in which you’re accepting longer-term, more subtle, and less painful mild to moderate depression in order to avoid more intense, distressing, and painful anxiety, even if it’s shorter in duration. Thus, listening to your ego keeps you stuck in your current circumstances even though your intellect is telling you things need to change.

- **You “attack” significant changes that are happening by trying to deny, halt, or undo them.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability and fear (often combined with higher ego power) are leading you to attack change in an effort to return to the comfort of the past and its consistency, familiarity, and predictability. Listening to your ego can lead you into the stupidity of making your partner or children quit jobs, relationships, or recreational activities that you don’t approve of—even if they are healthy and enjoyable to them.

- **You have a tough time recognizing any of the potential benefits that can come with significant change taking place in your life.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has you seeing change through the prism of fear, only noticing its negative aspects while the positive ones remain hidden. Because listening to your ego has you seeing change in the worst possible light, you miss any benefits it may bring.
• You “surrender” to significant changes by ignoring or passively accepting them. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability and fear (often combined with lower ego power) are leading you to a helpless approach to change in which you experience it as something that happens to you rather than something to work with. Listening to your ego keeps you playing it safe and “cutting your losses,” rather than accepting the challenge of working with change to realize its benefits.

Your Ability to Deal with Failures, Losses, and Mistakes

• You become emotionally consumed with anger or anxiety when failing, losing, or making mistakes. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to experience these events as reflections of your weakness, imperfection, and vulnerability which you have not come to terms with. Listening to your ego is causing you to emotionally reject yourself and the inherent weaknesses within your humanity rather than working to understand, manage, and accept them.

• Your ability to manage failures, losses, and mistakes is weaker when they are big, sudden, and unexpected. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability takes you deeper into fight-or-flight mode when facing bigger challenges. This floods your mind and thinking with fear and stops you from being able to think in a clear-minded, more deliberative way. Listening to your ego results in your biology and emotions taking over your thinking rather than letting your mind handle it—at the worst possible times.

• You often magnify your failures, losses, and mistakes, making them out to be larger than they actually are. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability and fear often leads to a loss of perspective in which you see these events out of proportion to what they truly are. Listening to your ego often distorts how well you can understand problems and how to go about dealing with them, while leading you to see them as abnormal when they are actually normal—shrinking your perceived ability to manage them.

• Your approach to dealing with problems is often impulsive and short-sighted, rather than reflective and comprehensive, which would give you time to figure things out. The insight you need is
that your higher ego vulnerability and fear leads you into emotionally based strategies that are mainly intended to eradicate your sense of weakness and vulnerability, and only secondarily to solve the problem at hand. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of trying to solve problems before you have all the facts in order to lessen your anxiety—but you aren't really solving the problems.

• **You often blame yourself a lot more than others or the circumstances that may have contributed to failures, losses, or mistakes.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability leads you to experience these events in a deeply personal and emotionally egocentric way, wherein the only place you can look to understand them is yourself. This means that listening to your ego blocks you from taking a wider and more accurate look at why “bad” things happen.

• **You are very tolerant, accepting, and forgiving of the failures and mistakes that others make, while being intolerant, unaccepting, and unforgiving of your own.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is helping you to build a wall between how you see others and how you see yourself. Thus, listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of being much more understanding and forgiving to others while being unfair, unforgiving, and at times emotionally abusive to yourself.

**Your Ability to Experience Genuine Happiness**

• **You are unable to experience genuine happiness.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has you preoccupied with things that can only distance you from experiencing happiness, such as getting rid of your weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerability. Listening to your ego keeps you focused on the wrong things and treating yourself as your enemy—but you and your humanity are not your enemy; your imbalanced ego is!

• **You lack an understanding of the things that will allow you to experience genuine happiness.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability prevents you from seeing that being at peace with yourself, being motivated by love, and being in the present are the basis for experiencing genuine happiness. Instead, listening to your ego is keeping you at war with yourself and others, motivated by fear or anger, and trapped in the past or preoccupied with the future.
• You create many fear or anger-based thoughts that make it difficult for you to experience genuine happiness. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to work overtime to reject yourself and others with these kinds of thoughts. Listening to your ego has locked you into a never-ending battle with your humanity that can only result in emotional pain and suffering—certainly not happiness.

• You confuse pleasure-based pseudo-happiness with genuine happiness. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to blur the lines between the two in a desperate attempt to believe you are happy or as happy as others seem to be. Thus, listening to your ego allows you to think you are happier than you really are, and to live the “fake-good” version of life—at least some of the time.

• You temporarily escape your anger or anxiety with diversions and distractions, such as drugs, alcohol, media, and entertainment, that allow you to experience pleasure-based pseudo-happiness. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to these pastimes as a substitute for the ability to experience genuine happiness. Listening to your ego leads you into addictions, and the stupid consequences they bring, in a desperate attempt to feel some happiness.

• You fail to realize that the more heavily you are getting involved with pseudo-happiness, the further away you are from experiencing genuine happiness. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability leads you to see pseudo-happiness as the only kind of happiness. For you, there is no other version of happiness to be known. Listening to your ego has caused you to abandon getting to experience genuine happiness and resigned you to a life of moving from one “happy” experience to the next in order to get your fix.

• You confuse the relief you get from experiencing anger or anxiety via your diversions and distractions as reflective of happiness. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to think that temporarily shifting from fight-or-flight stressed-out mode to calm, relaxed, non-stressed mode represents an increased level of happiness. Listening to your ego, as well as the pharmaceutical and foods industries, often leads you to buy into pitches for products and comfort foods that will supposedly lead to your happiness—can anyone say “Happy Meal?”
Your Ability to Cope with Stressors and Stress

- You feel you’re being confronted with more than your fair share of stressors (health, relationship, financial, work, family, or home-related). The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is impacting the frequency, duration, and intensity of the biological stress signals you are experiencing. In turn, listening to your ego and these signals has you believing that life is being unfair to you, but it isn’t—the phone calls are coming from within the house!

- You are overwhelmed with anxiety when you are exposed to stressors such as taking tests, having to speak in public, meeting new people, being given additional responsibilities, or meeting deadlines. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability has you encountering stressors with your feelings of weakness and insecurity, which you believe will be exposed to others. Listening to your ego leads you to believe that the only thing that can happen is failure, so you need to avoid or disengage from these situations as soon as possible.

- You often worry about stressors that have yet to occur or are unlikely to occur, such as losing a job, experiencing declining health, having to relocate, or losing a relationship. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is expanding your “radar” beyond the stressors that are actually happening to those that could happen, in an effort to maximally protect yourself. Listening to your ego has you engaged in the stupidity of finding things that could go wrong—which is just about anything—but in great likelihood will not.

- You have difficulty getting over it and moving on even when a stressor has been dealt with by you or someone else. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is keeping you emotionally connected to the stressor—often a difficult life event—in an effort to make sure it can’t reoccur. Thus, listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of remaining connected to the past, rather than resolving it, as a means of protecting yourself from the future—something that is happening for many trauma victims.

- You become upset with yourself for having been upset by a stressor. The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to attack yourself for having weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerability. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity
of attacking yourself for being human and becoming inhumane to yourself.

- **You often resort to quick-fix stress-reduction strategies that temporarily work, such as eating, smoking, drinking, or drugging yourself to lower your stress level.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to options that quickly reduce your sense of vulnerability even if they come with side effects or make things worse in the long-run. Listening to your ego keeps you connected to that stupidity, rather than using more intelligent proven strategies such as meditation, yoga, and mindfulness practice.

**Your Ability to Resolve Conflict**

- **You have a difficult time participating in constructive arguments and disagreements.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to filter comments through your emotions and insecurity, leading you to take them more personally and destructively than they were intended to be. As a result, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of defensiveness in which intelligence, objectivity, and civility often fly out the window.

- **You readily turn constructively intended comments into destructive criticisms intended to wound you.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability leads you to hear people through your emotions and insecurity, which converts everything said about you into something harmful or destructive. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of missing positive and constructive comments intended to help you.

- **You may aggressivelv participate in conflict to prove your superiority to others or reinforce your sense of superiority to yourself.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to distance yourself from your weaknesses and imperfections by demonstrating how smart, capable, and great you are. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of making pompous statements that everyone can see are intended to mask your insecurity—except for you.

- **You become readily involved in petty arguments that are not worth fighting about.** The insight you need is that your higher ego
vulnerability and insecurity is leading you to take things much more personally than others ever intended and becoming easily offended. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of becoming overly defensive and attacking others in a misguided effort to feel more adequate and secure.

- **You have a difficult time getting over disagreements and carry a personal grudge that can last for years.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is keeping you connected to the disagreement because it wasn’t just about the issue at hand but also the deeply personal and destructive manner in which it was handled by all involved. Listening to your ego is preventing you from getting over it and allowing the emotional wound to heal—something that often happens in families over really stupid stuff and leads to much lost time in which better things could have been happening.

- **You are often convinced of the truth within your arguments by the intense emotion and conviction you bring to them.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability and insecurity has lead you to embrace your emotion as an ally when it can serve the purpose of distancing you from your weaknesses and imperfections. Listening to your ego causes you to miss the subjectivity, inaccuracies, and holes in your arguments, because for you, *feeling right* is more important than *being right* in a disagreement.

- **You don’t recognize how you may win arguments but lose relationships due to the toxic way you handle conflict.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is preventing you from seeing the destructive process being fueled by your insecurity within the disrespectful way you treat others when in conflict. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of not listening to others, hurling insults, and trying to humiliate them with not-so-subtle digs at their intelligence.

- **You avoid participating in conflict so you won’t be humiliated by any of the weaknesses exposed within your arguments and positions.** The insight you need is that your higher ego vulnerability is leading you to hide from others and avoid the emotional cost of being wrong (or being told you are wrong). Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of misunderstanding the purpose conflict can serve, believing it’s not okay to be wrong, and hiding when you actually have something important to contribute.
Lower ego vulnerability energy is at work when one has trouble recognizing the weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerability of her humanity. The greater this difficulty, the greater the number of symptoms and key life areas wherein this ego energy will manifest itself, and the greater the need for ego healing through the use of ego medicine. Such people include those living the following roles, which are discussed in more depth in *The Two Voices Within*: Hedonist, Sociopath, Logician, Loner, Inattentive Person, and Sadist.

**Your Ability to Interact with People in Healthy Ways**

- **You form friendships on a superficial basis with little or no emotional depth.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability is distancings you from your emotions and the part they can play in connecting you to other people. Thus, listening to your ego contributes to emotionless relationships where people come and go, you can take or leave them, and they remain acquaintances or strangers no matter how often you see them.

- **You have difficulty experiencing emotional cues such as anxiety or guilt to caution you about saying wrong or inappropriate things to people.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has turned down the “volume” on your emotion and its ability to signal inappropriateness in your thoughts and behaviors.
Listening to your ego has made it difficult to see and learn from the mistakes you make in how you treat people.

- **You don’t recognize or care about inappropriate or insensitive comments you make toward people involving their weight, appearance, intellect, income, or station in life.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and lack of emotion weakens your ability to recognize the emotional impact of what you say to others. Listening to your ego removes your filter and capacity to think about the stupid things you say to people before you say them.

- **You have difficulty reading the emotional reactions of others to negative things you have said or done, leaving you with the impression that everything is okay when it’s actually not.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability is making you emotionally unaware of how others are feeling, so their distress or displeasure isn’t registering with you. As a result, listening to your ego makes you completely surprised, blindsided, and in disbelief when people try to point out the hurtful things you have said or done to them.

- **You often overestimate the impressions people have of you, thinking they’re much more positive than they really are.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and distance from your feelings causes you to miss, minimize, or overlook your weaknesses and imperfections, and to believe others are doing the same. Unfortunately, listening to your ego often has you thinking that people like you far more than they do, or that they’re in love with you when they aren’t.

- **You have difficulty displaying compassion toward others when the situation clearly calls for it.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability makes it difficult for you to experience empathy, which requires being in touch with your own feelings in order to walk in another’s shoes. Listening to your ego stops you from doing the intelligent “human thing” by offering kind and supportive thoughts or extending a hand or hug to someone in need.

- **You have difficulty recognizing when people are insulting or disrespecting you in social interactions.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and lack of emotion is making it difficult for you to read verbal or nonverbal cues people are sending about their displeasure with you. Because listening to your ego
It’s Your Ego—Stupid!

weakens your ability to know how people truly feel, you often think
it’s going much better than it really is—they are laughing at you, not
with you.

• **You may enjoy upsetting others, creating drama, or instigating conflict.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability
leads you to interrupt the boredom you feel—particularly in long-
term relationships—by introducing some excitement in the form
of drama or conflict. Listening to your ego causes you to do or say
stupid things to feel the arousal and stimulation you have difficulty
experiencing under healthier and more normal circumstances.

*Your Ability to Form Close Relationships with Family and Friends*

• **Your relationships with loved ones lack emotional depth, as you
have difficulty recognizing, acknowledging, and sharing your feelings with them.** The insight you need is that your lower ego
vulnerability is leading you to hide your feelings from yourself and
your loved ones so your weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerability
will remain hidden. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the
stupidity of emotionless relationships with loved ones in which you
pretend to be stronger than you are—or need to be.

• **You have difficulty saying loving words or making loving gestures toward loved ones.** The insight you need is that your lower ego
vulnerability has made these signs of love difficult, awkward,
and uncomfortable due to the emotion required to extend them and
your need to keep your distance from feeling it. Listening to your ego
has you engaging in the stupidity of failing your partner or children
at the times when they most need emotional support from you.

• **Your loved ones have difficulty feeling a warm, personal connection to you.** The insight you need is that your lower ego
vulnerability has helped you build an emotional wall that prevents
loved ones from getting close to you. Listening to your ego engages
you in the stupidity of denying yourself the opportunity to experience
genuinely close relationships built upon emotional intimacy and the
ability to bare one’s feelings to loved ones when needed.

• **Your loved ones often feel you don’t love or want to love them.**
The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability stops you
from seeing the impact your emotional absence is having upon loved
ones and how frustrated they are with your failure to meet their emotional needs. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking it’s enough to be physically and mentally present but emotionally absent and detached.

- **You have difficulty being motivated to help loved ones who need help.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and emotional absence is making it difficult to feel motivated to help loved ones, unless you are also affected by what’s going on. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of doing little or nothing for loved ones when they truly need your help—making you someone who doesn’t have their back and can’t be counted on.

- **You question the feelings of loved ones and whether they have a right to feel them.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability leads you to require loved ones to justify their feelings based on how rational and logical they are to you. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of insisting that feelings can only be legitimate if they make sense to you, resulting in the absence of empathy or compassion for loved ones when they really need it.

- **You often speak to your partner or children in a cold, insensitive, or blunt manner, failing to recognize the emotional impact you are having on them.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and emotional absence has desensitized you to the harsh and inconsiderate tone of your communication with loved ones. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking that the only thing that matters is what you say to your loved ones, not how you’re saying it.

- **You only want to do things with loved ones that are fun for you, and you stop participating if you grow bored.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has you overemphasizing the entertainment value of the activity while minimizing the opportunity it provides to share time with loved ones. Listening to your ego as a parent engages you in the stupidity of discontinuing activities with your child because you’re not having fun—failing to realize that you just told your child with your actions that being together was not important enough.

- **You often stress the importance of being very logical and rational when dealing with matters affecting yourself or loved ones.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability leads
you to emphasize thinking logically, rationally, and objectively in order to keep distance from your emotions, which are the doorway into your weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerability. In turn, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of discounting the importance of feelings that are often impacting loved ones, leading them to feel that you really don’t get it!

**Your Ability to Love Yourself**

- **You don’t love yourself.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability keeps you at an emotional distance from yourself so you don’t have to experience your weakness, imperfection, and vulnerability. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of being unable to treat yourself in a loving, respectful, and humane way.

- **You believe you don’t need to love yourself.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability undermines your ability to feel compassion for your own weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerability. By believing you don’t need to love yourself, you create the illusion of being stronger and less needy than you actually are. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of failing to love yourself to keep up this illusion.

- **You don’t feel love for others.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability makes it difficult to love others because that makes you feel weak and vulnerable. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of keeping yourself at an emotional distance from others to maintain the illusion of being stronger, less needy, and less vulnerable, which you think is strength—though it’s actually weakness.

- **You are unable to experience love and acceptance from others via their thoughts, words, or gestures.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has made these loving gifts unacceptable to you, as they come with the implication that you have emotional needs that you don’t want to believe you have, because that would signal weakness and imperfection. Thus, listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of rejecting love from others so you can remain an island unto yourself, living within the illusion of being stronger than you actually are.
• **You have difficulty experiencing feelings of non-acceptance or rejection from others via their thoughts, words, or gestures.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has made it difficult to recognize the feelings of others when they are connected to any of your weaknesses or imperfections. Listening to your ego leads to the stupidity of missing emotional cues and feedback from others that could help you grow as a person.

• **You think highly of yourself and can only see the good things about you, missing or minimizing your weaknesses and imperfections.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and emotional absence distances and desensitizes you to your weaknesses and imperfections so you don’t see or deal with them. Thus, listening to your ego leads you to the stupid impression that everything about you is good and there is no need for growth or improvement.

• **You overestimate how much others like or love you.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and emotional absence prevents you from understanding that people see all of you, including your weaknesses and imperfections, not just the good stuff. Listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of thinking people don’t see all of you, that you are able to hide the bad stuff, and that others like or love you far more than they actually do.

**Your Ability to Achieve and Know Your Life’s Purpose**

• **You are an underachiever.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability is limiting the amount of emotion (particularly love and fear) that you have to motivate you to work hard and achieve with your potential. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of doing less—often much less—rather than more with the potential you have, and staying within your comfort zone.

• **You easily get bored and quit learning, doing, and achieving things sooner than it takes to experience fun, enjoyment, and success from them.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability weakens your ability to tolerate the work that often precedes the play that eventually comes as you master a skill or a task. Listening to your ego often has you engaged in the stupidity of
quitting things that you could be very good at and that could give you lots of enjoyment, as well as a greater sense of purpose.

- **You are satisfied with giving less than your best effort when trying to achieve.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability weakens the emotional fuel you have to work with when trying to achieve. As a result, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of settling for less rather than getting the most out of yourself and your potential.

- **You are a difficult person to teach or coach.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and absence of emotion and motivation are making it difficult for you to be motivated by others unless they can find the right buttons to push to get you working. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of tuning out people who could help you move forward and get more out of life and yourself.

- **You have difficulty learning from your mistakes and often repeat the same ones in your efforts to achieve.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability weakens your motivation to pay attention to the details of what you are doing to stop the mistakes from happening. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of “lazy learning” in which you only pay attention to what you want to pay attention to, do what you want to do, and end up putting more time into learning something than was needed.

- **You exaggerate your successes and minimize or overlook your failures as you work to achieve.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has you motivated to pay attention to the “fun stuff,” including your successes, while being unmotivated to recognize failures, which often requires paying attention to details, leads to boredom, and doesn’t motivate you to get better. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of not recognizing your failures or what you could learn from them.

- **You enjoy competition as long as you win and experience the excitement you get from defeating others.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has led you to experience winning and victory as the only justification for participating in competition, due to the excitement they bring. Unfortunately, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of missing all of the other important
and meaningful aspects of competition, staying locked on to the idea that winning is the only thing that matters.

- **You are a lousy teammate who can’t be counted on when things get difficult.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability does not allow you to tolerate frustration, failure, or losing very well. Thus, listening to your ego has you engaged in the stupidity of blaming or pointing the finger at others, abandoning ship, and feeling little or no obligation to the team when things go bad—it’s all about you.

- **You are unable to experience any sense of your life’s purpose.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability prevents you from experiencing the emotion and motivation that is inherently linked to being of genuine service to yourself and others. Listening to your ego has you locked into the stupidity of a selfish understanding of service in which your purpose is mainly to get those things that help you feel aroused, stimulated, and entertained—from one day to the next.

**Your Ability to Grow the Quality of Your Mind**

- **You’re not interested in learning and growing the quality of your mind.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability makes you unmotivated to undertake the effort needed to grow your mind—unless it involves fun stuff. Listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of requiring that learning must always be entertaining and neglecting the incredible tool you have been given to enhance your life with: your mind. Yes, a mind is a terrible thing to waste—and you’re doing it!

- **You have little or no interest in learning the things that are necessary to enhance your life or grow as a person.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability is blocking your view of your weaknesses, imperfections, and areas needing improvement. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of believing there really isn’t anything for you to change or improve about you or your life.

- **You don’t care whether the thoughts, beliefs, values, and attitudes in your mind are connected to truth.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability distances you from
The emotion (love and fear) needed to motivate you to seek truth. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of filling your mind with lots of false and fictional thoughts and beliefs, because they’re more entertaining for you than those based on truth and reality.

- **You have difficulty questioning the validity, accuracy, and truth of your thoughts.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and lack of emotion is making it tough for you to take a hard look at what you are thinking. Listening to your ego has you taking a lazy approach to thinking in which you readily accept your thoughts, beliefs, values, and attitudes as truth without any need for deeper consideration—lowering the quality of your mind by filling it with non-truths.

- **You enjoy thoughts, beliefs, fictions, and fantasies that arouse and stimulate you, thinking they are truthful.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has you craving enjoyment and amusement, and you seek it wherever you can get it, including within your mind. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of finding truth in whatever thoughts you enjoy, even if they’re harmful or destructive to you or others and have no basis in reality—often making you addicted to them.

- **You believe emotions can only harm your ability to think rationally and intelligently and understand the truth.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has led you to see emotions as a weak part of you that can only get in the way of logic, objectivity, and knowing the truth. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of failing to use emotion as a resource that can motivate you to be more rational, intelligent, and able to know the truth.

### Your Ability to Manage Life Changes

- **You often miss, neglect, or ignore important interpersonal, health, financial, or work-related changes occurring in your life.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability is weakening your ability to experience the emotional warning signals that can tell you something important is happening in your life that needs your attention. Instead, listening to your ego causes you to react later, if at all, to these changes when they are less manageable—as in seeing a doctor when entering the advanced stages of heart disease or cancer.
• You often miss important changes taking place in the lives of loved ones. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability weakens your motivation to pay attention to what is happening in the lives of loved ones and how it is impacting them. Listening to your ego makes you oblivious to significant changes happening in their lives until someone spells it out for you that something significant is occurring.

• You make changes in jobs, relationships, residences, or pastimes just to overcome your sense of boredom. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has you changing your life rather than yourself in order to deal with feelings of emptiness and boredom. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of making unnecessary changes in your life, which work temporarily until you move on to the next unneeded change, while failing to work on changes needed in yourself.

• You don’t like being in long-term relationships because the stability, consistency, and predictability bores you. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability leads you to look for excitement and arousal from your partner(s) rather than developing it within yourself. Thus, listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of bouncing from one relationship to the next, despite all the emotional wreckage you leave behind, rather than dealing with the boring person you often are and cultivating your creative potential.

• You fail to make needed changes in the unhealthy ways you deal with work, relationships, or health-related matters. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability is weakening your motivation and ability to pay more attention to yourself in favor of continuing to do whatever makes you happy—or actually, pseudo-happy. Listening to your ego has you living in the stupidity of the “ignorance is bliss” approach to life, which allows you to think that things—including yourself—are much better than they really are.

Your Ability to Deal with Failures, Losses, and Mistakes

• You are oblivious to the frequency and significance of your failures, losses, and mistakes. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and lack of anxiety and guilt are making it
difficult to pay attention to yourself and see what you are actually doing or not doing. Unfortunately, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of being oblivious to your weaknesses and imperfections, acting as if they don’t exist—but they undoubtedly do, at least for the people being impacted by them.

• **You have difficulty learning from your failures, losses, and mistakes.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and lack of anxiety or guilt are weakening your ability to do the important work of understanding the causes of problems, taking ownership of them, and developing solutions that will reduce or eliminate repetition of previous problems. Thus, listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of repeating the same failures over and over again without learning from them.

• **Your unrecognized failures, losses, and mistakes set the stage for bigger ones.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability prevents you from making a connection between present difficulties and potentially larger future ones, as you think everything is fine and there is nothing you need to work on to avoid them. Listening to your ego has you engaged in the stupidity of failing to learn from the past in order to prepare for the future—you probably hate history.

• **You overestimate your successes while underestimating your failures, losses, and mistakes, which often remain hidden from you.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has distanced you from recognizing your weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerabilities, which are the basis for your failures, losses, and mistakes. Listening to your ego has you engaged in the stupidity of a distorted view of yourself in which you can only see what’s right, not what’s wrong.

• **You are often the last person to realize when you’re screwing up, while others have seen it all along.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability is making it difficult for you to make an honest self-appraisal because this requires the motivation and ability to see both your strengths and weaknesses. You only see the former, while others see both. Thus, listening to your ego has you looking foolish to others, and eventually to yourself—if you wake up and begin seeing all of you.
• You have difficulty hearing people who are constructively trying to point out your failures, losses and, mistakes. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability is weakening your access to the emotion and motivation needed to take in the feedback you are being given. Listening to your ego has you engaged in the stupidity of being “tone-deaf” to people who are trying to be helpful and of service to you.

• You have difficulty recognizing the impact your failures, losses, or mistakes are having on others. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and emotional absence is weakening your ability and motivation to be concerned about the needs of others and how you are negatively affecting them. Thus, listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of careless, insensitive, or reckless behavior in which you are oblivious to the needs of others and how you are neglecting them.

• You may instigate failures, losses, or mistakes to enjoy the tension and drama they can create between you and others. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability leads you to create problems and drama in order to experience the emotional stimulation and arousal that can interrupt the boredom in your life. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity often seen on reality TV or soap operas, where faux drama is perpetrated in order to make life more exciting than it normally is on a day-to-day basis.

Your Ability to Experience Genuine Happiness

• You have difficulty feeling genuine happiness. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability distances you from all of the emotions that can help you accept your humanity and draw attention to what you must do in order to establish the inner calm and peacefulness that serves as the foundation for happiness. Listening to your ego has you engaged in the stupidity of being unable to learn about your humanity with healthy amounts of fear, anger, guilt, sadness, and love.

• You have difficulty feeling the emotions of fear, anger, guilt, and sadness. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has disconnected you from directly feeling these emotions, which keeps you at a distance from seeing your weaknesses, imperfections,
and sense of vulnerability—which are essential to establishing genuine happiness. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of failing to experience the emotions needed to guide you toward genuine happiness.

- **You have difficulty feeling love.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has disconnected you from loving others, or feeling their love, as a means of protecting you from acknowledging your weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerability. Listening to your ego has you engaged in the stupidity of believing that feeling and expressing love reflects weakness rather than strength, preventing you from experiencing genuine happiness.

- **You confuse pleasure-based pseudo-happiness with genuine happiness.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and emotional absence has given you a hunger and desperation to experience happiness that has driven you to a false understanding of it, causing you to use shortcuts to get it. Thus, listening to your ego often leads you into the stupidity of various addictions (e.g., food, alcohol, drugs, sex, cyber addictions) that take control over you and your life in the illusion of getting genuine happiness from them.

- **You often express angry or fearful thoughts or exhibit angry or fearful behaviors without feeling the emotion connected to them.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability is keeping you at a distance from your emotions so you can believe you are less affected by people and things than you truly are. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of believing you are less angry or fearful than you really are—though others can easily see this anger or fear.

- **You can be, and often are, a more loving person than you admit.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability prevents you from seeing the love you are showing in your thoughts, words, and deeds because you do not feel it, or want to feel it, thinking that would reflect weakness. Listening to your ego has you engaged in the stupidity of thinking that being loving is a bad thing when it’s really a very good thing.

- **You don’t feel happy for very long, and you have to do something to make happiness return.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has you caught up in the temporary and transitory nature of pseudo-happiness—which, due to it physiological basis,
requires replenishment to get the “happy” effect. Thus, listening to your ego has you engaged in activities like thrill-seeking, consumption of violent or pornographic media, or addictive behaviors involving food, alcohol, drugs, or something else, to get your fix.

- **You feel happy watching others become angry or fearful.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability is making you feel aroused and stimulated by watching others being put into vulnerable situations that are causing them pain and suffering. Listening to your ego has you engaged in the stupidity of being entertained by things that a sociopath or sadist would enjoy.

*Your Ability to Cope with Stressors and Stress*

- **You have difficulty recognizing the stressors that are impacting you and think you have it all under control.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and distance from your emotions prevents you from seeing the ongoing impact that work, home, financial, and relationship responsibilities are having upon you. Thus, listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of “hiding” stressors from yourself and not realizing the physiological and psychological weight they are placing upon you, until you or your body reaches a breaking point and you erupt, burn out, or break down physically.

- **You have difficulty recognizing when you are under stress.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has made it difficult for you to feel the emotions (anger or fear) or recognize the biological signals that would help you to see the stress you are under. Listening to your ego has you engaged in the stupidity of missing, ignoring, or minimizing warning signals, thinking you are immune from stress and invincible.

- **You have difficulty recognizing the idea that frequent angry or fearful thoughts and behaviors are signs of being under stress.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has led you to the conclusion that the absence of felt emotion equals the absence of stress. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of thinking that behaviors like lying, stealing, cheating, yelling, swearing, and insulting others have nothing to do with being under stress.
It's Your Ego—Stupid!

- You get around to dealing with stressors later—often much later—rather than sooner. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability not only weakens your recognition of the significance of stressors; it also weakens your motivation to do anything about them. Listening to your ego has you engaged in the stupidity of letting stressors get larger, often to the point where you can’t do anything about them and they have taken over your life.

- You are more stressful for the people in your life than you realize. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability is contributing to an emotionless quality that people often find difficult and disconcerting, though you’re not able to see this. Unfortunately, listening to your ego has you engaged in the stupidity of ignoring your emotional absence in relationships and the effect it has on others—sort of like having to live with Mr. Spock from Star Trek or Sheldon Cooper from The Big Bang Theory.

Your Ability to Resolve Conflict

- You can be cold, insensitive, and reckless in your management of conflict. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and lack of emotion weakens your motivation and ability to weigh and consider the words you speak before you say them. As a result, listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of often speaking before thinking.

- You often start conflicts without realizing you have done so. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has desensitized you to what you say and how you are saying it to others. Listening to your ego engages you in the stupidity of an emotionally unfiltered style of interacting with people that fails to respect where they are coming from and leads to unrecognized conflict.

- You underestimate the frequency and intensity of conflicts you have actually been involved in. The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and lack of emotion weakens your motivation and ability to keep track of—or care about—the amount of conflict you have been encountering. Listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of being emotionally aloof and recklessly interacting with people more often than you realize.
Symptoms and Ego Insights for Lower Ego Vulnerability

• **You often “miss” conflicts and don’t realize you have unintentionally said or done things to upset people.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has weakened your self-awareness and made you oblivious to how you are coming across to others. Thus, listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of making inappropriate comments and being unable to recognize them for what they are.

• **You think conflicts were less of a big deal than they actually were.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability and lack of emotion has you shrinking the size and significance of conflicts because you’re missing the emotional triggers that could clue you in. Listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of looking at conflict from a purely objective vantage point, missing much of the human element involved—how you said what you said.

• **You have difficulty recognizing the emotional impact you have had on others as a result of conflict.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability has you filtering the emotional responses of others through your own emotionless experience, leading you to miss the emotional impact of conflicts. Unfortunately, listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of discounting the feelings of others—if it didn’t affect you, it didn’t or shouldn’t affect them, you unconsciously think.

• **You have difficulty learning anything from conflict.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability is keeping you at a distance from recognizing your weaknesses and imperfections, which weakens your motivation to learn anything from the conflict. Listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of thinking that conflict doesn’t really have anything to teach you about yourself and what you are thinking or doing.

• **You may intentionally begin conflicts—particularly with loved ones—to enjoy the tension they create, which interrupts the boredom you experience in the relationship.** The insight you need is that your lower ego vulnerability contributes to a hunger for arousal and stimulation, which can be met within interpersonal conflict. Listening to your ego has you engaging in the stupidity of fighting over stupid stuff because the real purpose of the fight was to experience some emotional stimulation.
Balanced ego power energy is at work in one’s life when he is able to share power, control, and influence with others and life, at the right times and in the right places. This sharing is manifested in each of the key life areas, bringing forth a diverse array of signs that it’s happening. This person embodies the message of the Serenity Prayer of Reinhold Niebuhr: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Your Ability to Interact with People in Healthy Ways

• **You are open to forming friendships with all people.** You live the awareness that everyone has the potential to offer you something, and you are able to do the same for others. Listening to yourself has you building bridges in order to get to know people—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, political views, or religious views—rather than engaging in the stupidity of building walls to keep them out of your life or at a distance.

• **You seek to understand people before being understood by them.** On a daily basis, you live the awareness that to reach people, they need to believe you know who they are and where they are coming from. Listening to yourself lets you avoid the stupidity of talking past others in which the main goal is only to tell people what you think.
• **You are assertive and express yourself confidently and appropriately with the people you meet.** You live the awareness of your right to speak within social encounters and need no one else’s permission to do so. Thus, listening to yourself has you participating and contributing rather than engaging in the stupidity of censoring yourself or allowing others to do so when you have something important to say.

• **You respect and encourage people to express themselves in work and social groups.** You live the awareness that inviting others to share their thoughts and ideas conveys interest, respect, and a willingness to connect with people. Listening to yourself engages you in the intelligence of using opportunities to grow mentally, socially, and emotionally from the people you meet.

• **You convey belief in people with genuine affirmations and supportive comments.** You live the awareness that displaying belief in others is a powerful experience and a means to help them believe in themselves and all they have to offer. As a result, listening to yourself allows you to serve and empower others while being the Love—God Is.

• **You try to find compromises that recognize and respect the needs and interests of those involved.** You live the awareness that it’s important for people to feel they’ve been heard and seriously considered in matters that affect them, even when the eventual decision doesn’t favor them. Thus, listening to yourself engages you in the intelligence of considering both the nature of the issue being decided and the process by which this decision occurs.

• **You can both express compassion and receive it from people.** You live the awareness that empathy allows us to share the burden of meeting the challenges of our humanity and the responsibility of being our brother’s keeper. Listening to yourself allows all to be the Love—God Is, together overcoming whatever difficulties may arise.

• **You recognize when you are dominating conversations and pull back, allowing others their opportunity to contribute.** You live the awareness that you can become consumed with your own ideas to the point of being intimidating and overbearing to those in your presence. Listening to yourself interrupts the stupidity of trying to be the smartest person in the room or the person with all the answers.
• **You are good at listening to people you disagree with.** You live the awareness that agreement should not be the basis for how much you listen to people or how much you think they know. Rather than engaging in the stupidity of keeping a closed mind, listening to yourself allows you to maintain an open mind, allowing you to learn things from others that you didn’t expect to learn—but often needed to learn.

• **You continue to listen to and believe in yourself even when others disagree with you.** You live the awareness that disagreement doesn’t invalidate you or your thoughts, even when they are different and others do not embrace them. Listening to yourself allows you to be different in ways that can be healthy and true to yourself as well as often beneficial to others.

• **You can deal effectively with people who are being disrespectful to you or others.** You live the awareness that no one deserves to be personally attacked, regardless of the quality of their ideas or the nature of their background. Thus, listening to yourself makes you able to disagree with others without being disagreeable, and you expect the same consideration in turn.

**Your Ability to Form Close Relationships with Family and Friends**

• **You make time for loved ones.** You live the awareness that failing to adjust your schedule when needed, particularly for your children, often leads to weakening or losing a relationship. Listening to yourself avoids the stupidity of always seemingly having something else to do or somewhere else to be when your partner or children really need you—and they will always remember that.

• **You express and receive warmth and compassion from loved ones.** You live the awareness that emotional availability allows you and your loved ones to feel safe while managing the challenges of close relationships, life, and your humanity. Listening to yourself avoids the stupidity of failing to help loved ones when they are in need or pretending to be stronger and less needy than they are.

• **You participate in activities with loved ones even though you may not enjoy them as much as they do.** You live the awareness that sharing activities and experiences with your partner or children is often more important than the nature of the actual activity.
Listening to yourself, allows you to value the experience you’re sharing with them as much as the entertainment value of the activity.

• **You insist on two-way communication—talking and listening—with your partner or children.** You live the awareness that the health and growth of a relationship requires each person to be an active participant within it. Thus, listening to yourself within adult relationships avoids the stupidity of being too passive, dependent, or submissive, or too dominant, independent, or controlling, which will ultimately kill a relationship emotionally, if not legally—if one of you becomes the other’s mother or father.

• **You are interdependent in your relationship with your partner.** You live the awareness that healthy relationships involve the ability to need and depend on your partner as well as the ability to go it alone and be independent of them. Listening to yourself makes you able to be connected to your partner or allow each other some space—whichever is necessary for either of you.

• **You parent your children in a loving, authoritative manner, telling them yes or no at the appropriate times and places.** You live the awareness that parenting is best done in a flexible manner, considering each situation on its own merits. Listening to yourself avoids the stupidity of authoritarian (always saying no) or permissive (always saying yes) parenting, which are both unhealthy for your children and the relationship you have with them.

• **You are open to explaining yourself and offering clarification when loved ones want to better understand what you have said or done.** You live the awareness that transparency and accountability to loved ones are important, striving to live by these principles rather than hiding or being distant from people you care about. By listening to yourself, you avoid the stupidity of playing word or mind games and keeping loved ones on a “need-to-know” basis when it comes to understanding what’s really going on.

• **You are able to request more understanding and clarification from loved ones regarding what they have said or done.** You live the awareness that you have a right to receive greater transparency, understanding, and accountability from loved ones when needed. Listening to yourself has you asking appropriate questions that can address concerns and avoid the misunderstanding that often occurs when communication is lacking or incomplete.
You create new experiences by changing routines, establishing new traditions, or participating in new activities with loved ones. You live the awareness that flexibility promotes youthfulness, growth, and a dynamic quality that keeps close relationships fresh and vibrant, even as they age and mature. Listening to yourself avoids the stupidity of being inflexible by always doing the same thing, which often leads to boredom, emptiness, and broken relationships with loved ones.

Your Ability to Love Yourself

- You unconditionally accept and love yourself now and as you are. You live the awareness that loving yourself can have no requirements and can only occur in the present. By listening to yourself, you avoid the stupidity of trying to earn love from yourself or from others by meeting demands or requirements for acceptance and approval.

- You honor and respect your body, mind, and spirit. You live the awareness that you must be the steward of your being and nurture it with the opportunities that have been given to you from the wisdom of the ages. Thus, listening to yourself leads you to get proper rest, engage in regular exercise, eat a healthy diet, utilize meditation and prayer, partake in yoga and mindfulness practice, or enjoy healthy recreation, literature, humor, and art as ways of nurturing yourself.

- You understand the importance of loving yourself in healthy ways as a foundation for all other relationships. You live the awareness that loving yourself promotes positive energy that opens doors to offering service to others and attracting people who want to bask in the warmth of your energy. Listening to yourself has you giving to yourself, giving to others, and receiving from them in turn, in ways that build and enrich relationships.

- You understand there can be no difference between loving yourself and loving others. You live the awareness that all are equally worthy of love, and that in giving your love to others, you are receiving it from within. Listening to yourself has you being the Love—God Is, which is connective, unconditional, unburdened, and inexhaustible.
• **You unconditionally accept and love others now and as they are.** You live the awareness that loving others can have no requirements and can only occur in the present. Thus, listening to yourself avoids the stupidity of placing demands or requirements upon others in order for you to love them.

• **You love all persons equally, regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, political affiliation, sexual orientation, or income level.** You live the awareness that love makes no distinction among the multitude of differences that exist between people. Listening to yourself avoids the stupidity of attaching love or hate to any of these differences.

• **You welcome love from all people and in whatever form they are sending it to you.** You live the awareness that genuine love from all people and sources can only be accepted, never rejected. By listening to yourself, you avoid the stupidity of rejecting love based on whom the person sharing it is, establishing faulty conditions under which it must be given to you, or requiring it to be expressed in certain ways—which are not your prerogative to decide.

• **You distinguish between loving and accepting yourself and not accepting destructive thoughts and behaviors.** You live the awareness that you are an imperfect human being who can grow and improve best from loving yourself rather than from rejection. Listening to yourself has you embracing your humanity and working with it rather than engaging in the stupidity of rejecting yourself as the means to improvement.

• **You distinguish between loving and accepting others and not accepting their destructive thoughts and behaviors.** You live the awareness that they are imperfect beings who can grow and improve best from receiving love rather than rejection to motivate and guide them. Thus, listening to yourself has you offering support and believing in the potential of people to become a better version of themselves.

• **You don’t accept destructive and wrongful thoughts and criticisms of you from people experiencing their own issues.** You live the awareness that people who are truly trying to help you do not do this by attacking you. Listening to yourself stops you from accepting these faulty and misguided criticisms and validating them as if they were true.
• You don’t accept destructive comparisons intended to place you in a favorable light compared to others. You live the awareness that you cannot truly love yourself by attempting to lower others in the way you think about them. Listening to yourself stops you from engaging in stupid comparisons involving attractiveness, athletic ability, intellectual ability, or financial success, etc., ultimately intended to help you feel better about yourself.

Your Ability to Achieve and Know Your Life’s Purpose

• You welcome opportunities to use your talents to the best of your ability. You live the awareness that you have been given many gifts and must use those gifts in service to yourself and others. Thus, listening to yourself allows you to experience a sense of passion as you go about your life’s work, rather than experiencing your life’s work as a burden.

• You understand that the journey along which achievement occurs is more important than the actual achievement. You live the awareness that the process of achievement and what it does to build your character is far more important than the outcomes of your efforts. Listening to yourself keeps you from engaging in the stupidity of building shrines to yourself that include all the trophies, medals, awards, prizes, and acknowledgments you have received so that others can marvel at them—as these things are ultimately meaningless to others.

• You understand that the path to success is not a straight line, and failure will often be a companion along that journey. You live the awareness that the process often includes unforeseen obstacles that will challenge you, and that failure is part of the journey to success. Because you’re listening to yourself, you have an attitude of never giving up and always striving to learn what you must learn from the failures you encounter.

• You celebrate and share your successes with humility. You live the awareness that the joy and happiness you experience for your victories and successes cannot be used to embarrass or humiliate your competitors. Listening to yourself prevents you from engaging in unhealthy comparisons with others, particularly those you have defeated.
• You accept your losses and failures with dignity. You live the awareness that there is courage in risking failure and that truly living often requires this courage in the face of the weaknesses that come with your humanity. Listening to yourself allows you to be a good loser, and someone who will ultimately win in the game of life due to your resolve and perseverance.

• You don’t compare your achievements with those of others. You live the awareness that everyone’s journey is unique and the only true frame of reference is what one has done with what one has been given. By listening to yourself, you steer clear of the stupidity of comparing yourself to others, for better or worse.

• You recognize the importance of helping others to recognize and use their talents—whatever they are and wherever they choose to use them. You live the awareness that helping others to use their potential is a powerful form of service that will ultimately be returned to you in the form of a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in your life. Listening to yourself has you giving to others in ways that will be reciprocated by the universe in future times and places.

• You recognize competitors as kindred spirits, not enemies, understanding that they are working to use their abilities just as you are. You live the awareness that everyone has been given gifts they are seeking to use as they undertake their life’s work. Thus, listening to yourself allows you to recognize the love within your competitors as they journey along the path of undertaking their life’s work, rather than engaging in the stupidity of feeling anger and fear toward competitors seen as enemies and obstacles to your success.

Your Ability to Grow the Quality of Your Mind

• You understand that the willingness to grow your mind empowers you. You live the awareness that searching for and knowing truth—human and Divine—opens doors to all that is possible within yourself and life. Listening to yourself allows you to seek, accept, and work with the powerful influence of truth upon your life.

• You actively grow your mind, wanting to learn new things, scrutinizing what is in it, and removing what no longer belongs
there. You live the awareness that you must own your mind and nurture it with truthful thoughts, beliefs, and values. Listening to yourself has you reflecting and questioning your thinking for signs of distortion and distance from the truth, rather than engaging in the stupidity of blindly accepting everything you think as truthful.

- **You recognize the disturbance and disempowerment that often comes from thinking that hasn’t been filtered through consideration of its truthfulness.** You live the awareness that unquestioned thinking, disconnected from truth and reality, often leads to unnecessary suffering in the form of unpleasant and unhealthy thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. By listening to yourself, you prevent or interrupt reality-disconnected thinking from getting ahold of your thoughts, feelings, or behaviors before it begins to harm and disempower you with unnecessary suffering.

- **You are willing to allow others you trust and respect (e.g., friends, teachers, professionals) to grow your mind.** You live the awareness that the right people can play a role in your efforts to learn and acquire truthful thoughts, beliefs, and values that enhance the quality of your mind. Listening to yourself allows you to accept the influence of others in growing your mind in ways that can be genuinely helpful to you.

- **You are willing to seek and accept truth wherever it may lead you, regardless of the pain it may bring.** You live the awareness that sometimes growth is a painful process, and that one of its ingredients is coming to terms with the truth, particularly when that truth is personal and involves you. Listening to yourself helps you to deal with the truth sooner rather than later.

- **You realize that truth can take you in a different direction than you planned to go or wanted to go, but needed to go.** You live the awareness that truth can guide you to where you want to be, though you may not have realized where that is. By listening to yourself, you connect to your human and Divine Truth rather than ignoring it.

- **You recognize the freedom and empowerment that ultimately comes from being connected to truth—human and Divine.** You live the awareness that you need not fear truth, as its ultimate purpose is to help you. Listening to yourself leads you to form a deep friendship with truth that will deliver you from suffering, rather than treating it as an enemy which will only lead to continued suffering.
You recognize that truth will empower you by connecting your humanity with your Divinity. You live the awareness that truth is a bridge between the two that can take you from the “little picture” of life—often framed and filled with reality-disconnected thoughts, beliefs, and values—into the “big picture” framed and filled with human and Divine Truth. Listening to yourself has you building the bridge between your humanity and Divinity, which will be completed when you realize you are a spiritual being encountering a human experience!

Your Ability to Manage Life Changes

You understand that life does not stand still, and you expect that change will be happening to you, loved ones, and the world. You live the awareness that change is rooted in the shifting of energy and that it’s dynamic rather than static, forming the foundation of personal and collective evolution. Thus, listening to yourself has you ready and willing to work with change, regardless of when or where it occurs, rather than engaging in the stupidity of resisting the inevitable.

You try to understand why change is occurring, particularly significant ones. You live the awareness that understanding change is important for managing it effectively and maximizing its benefits to all who are being affected by it. Listening to yourself opens you up to getting all the information needed to understand the change, rather than engaging in the stupidity of closing your mind and remaining ignorant because you don’t like the changes taking place.

You work with the developmental, situational, societal, and technological changes that life brings to you, your family, and society. You live the awareness that change is inevitable and must be managed in order to maximize its benefits for you and others. Listening to yourself stops you from engaging in the stupidity of trying to prevent, ignore, or undo those changes that you don’t like.

You understand that change often represents an opportunity to answer the call of truth—human and Divine—to fashion a life and world that is more connected to this truth. You live the awareness that there is often a close connection between change and evolution, which can lead to better versions of yourself and the
world when it’s managed well. By listening to yourself, you perceive the truth often being revealed by change rather than hiding from it.

- **You make necessary and positive changes in yourself that address harmful and destructive patterns, rituals, practices, and traditions that you may have used to disadvantage others for your own needs and interests.** You live the awareness that you are responsible for engaging in self-improvement and becoming a better version of yourself, even as you love and accept yourself in the present. Listening to yourself allows you to be the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is, as you own what you need to own in order to serve others and yourself.

- **You strike a balance between honoring various familial and social traditions and the ability to establish new ones.** You live the awareness that maintaining a connection to the past must allow for acknowledgment of what is emerging in the present world. Listening to yourself has you living in the present, establishing new traditions to complement those from the past that are still relevant and offer wisdom for the present.

- **You are thankful for the changes brought about by people and events that have served to make you a better person and the world a better place.** You live the awareness that there have been many people along your life’s journey—both known and unknown—who have served you, though you didn’t always know it at the time. Listening to yourself leads you to experience the gratitude for their service to you. (There are so many people, particularly from the 1960s, whom I would love to thank.)

- **You welcome the positive, progressive changes that people from different ethnic, religious, racial, political, gender, and sexual orientation backgrounds are introducing to the world.** You live the awareness that we are a world community responsible for promoting personal and collective evolution. Thus, listening to yourself has you welcoming the contributions of all who are being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within their efforts to promote change.

- **You accept progressivism, while recognizing potential “evils” that often arise when people exploit change.** You live the awareness that change can bring with it the misuse of technology, which has occurred in areas involving nuclear, telecommunications,
pharmaceutical, Internet, and computer-related technology. Listening to yourself allows you to recognize the need to support scientific advances while being mindful of the need to develop ethical and legal safeguards that protect us from those who want to exploit them.

Your Ability to Deal with Failures, Losses, and Mistakes

- You manage your failures, losses, and mistakes by learning about their causes, including the ones that point directly to you. You live the awareness that the origins of problems often begin within, and that you empower yourself by getting to know them before looking elsewhere. Listening to yourself allows you to consider your contribution to problems rather than engaging in the stupidity of overlooking the obvious.

- You try to learn and grow from your failures, losses, and mistakes so you can stop repeating them. You live the awareness that you are most empowered when gaining knowledge about your human imperfection, weaknesses, and vulnerability. Thus, listening to yourself is helping you become an expert on yourself who is able to see all that needs to be seen in order to become a better version of you.

- You don’t try to blame others or engage in denial to absolve yourself of any responsibility when dealing with failures, losses, and mistakes. You live the awareness that blame and denial weaken your ability to see and own what you need to own in managing problems. Listening to yourself helps you solve and resolve problems sooner, rather than engaging in the stupidity of allowing solutions to remain hidden by blame and denial—while problems never get resolved.

- You can stop listening to yourself when this can be helpful and necessary. You live the awareness that you don’t need to have all the answers, and that there is empowerment in being open to what others may have to offer you. By listening to yourself, you gain full access to those who can help and be of service to you.

- You are good at listening to constructive criticism from others that can help you to better understand problems and the solutions they may require. You live the awareness that getting
help is a sign of strength, not weakness, when dealing with problems. Listening to yourself allows you to realize that answers do not have to come from within, and it is healthy to ask and allow others to serve you when needed.

• **You are good at hearing what you may not want to hear—but need to hear—in dealing with problems.** You live the awareness that painful messages from the right people and resources are ultimately intended to serve you, not attack or weaken you. Thus, listening to yourself gets you through the difficult part of hearing the message to the meaningful parts that can serve and strengthen you, rather than engaging in the stupidity of tuning them out.

• **You don’t beat yourself up when you have failed, encountered a loss, or made a mistake.** You live the awareness of your human imperfection and vulnerability, which is an open invitation to failure, loss, or mistakes along the journey of your life. Because you’re listening to yourself, you take a humane approach to dealing with your weaknesses rather than engaging in the stupidity of being inhumane and attacking yourself for them.

• **You make genuine apologies to those affected by your failures, losses, or mistakes.** You live the awareness that being accountable to yourself and others reflects true strength and character in one’s being. Listening to yourself allows you to do the right thing and take responsibility for your actions rather than running from the consequences.

• **You aren’t affected or weakened by people trying to humiliate or embarrass you for your mistakes.** You live the awareness that people who are attacking you for the weaknesses of your humanity are actually reflecting their own unrecognized issues. Thus, listening to yourself has allowed you to develop a very important life skill—ignoring and not taking seriously people who are behaving stupidly toward you.

• **You are the bigger person by making the first move in solving problems, regardless of what others involved in the situation are willing to do.** You live the awareness that your own strength and ability to do the right thing are not affected by what others are willing to do in solving problems. Listening to yourself stops you from playing games, keeping score, and waiting for others to make the first move to avoid being seen as weak.
Your Ability to Experience Genuine Happiness

- **You understand and accept that there is a difference between what you can and cannot control.** You live the awareness that happiness does not require that everything taking place within yourself, others, and the world must be within your control. Listening to yourself keeps you from imposing a requirement upon happiness that doesn’t exist.

- **You accept what you are unable to control.** You live the awareness that this acceptance is a key to experiencing happiness in a world that offers challenges that are often beyond the reach of your influence and control. By listening to yourself, you avoid complaining and becoming depressed, fearful, or angry about a world that isn’t complying with your wishes.

- **You know the difference between genuine happiness and pseudo-happiness.** You live the awareness that the more you try to do or pay to feel happy, the less you are getting of the real thing. Thus, listening to yourself leads you to realize that the things that give you physical or psychological pleasure are substitutes for genuine happiness, not the basis on which a truly happy life can be built.

- **You are able to take a “half-full” approach to life, appreciating what you do have and working with it, rather than a “half-empty” approach focused on what you don’t have.** You live the awareness that genuine happiness has a lot more to do with realizing that you are getting what you need and less to do with getting what you want. Listening to yourself ensures you don’t miss what you have to work with to be happy, rather than focusing on what you don’t have—one of the great takeaways from *The Wizard of Oz*.

- **You experience a sense of inner peace about yourself, others, and the world.** You live the awareness that you don’t walk alone in your life, and that God is accompanying you every step of the way. From listening to yourself, you realize that you have the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within your being, allowing you to know the peace and the happiness this brings forth.

- **You use love to create the life in which you are living.** You live the awareness that love is the fuel that energizes the creation of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that lead to experiencing genuine happiness. Listening to yourself stops you from primarily experiencing other
emotions such as fear, anger, and depression that weaken our ability to create the great life we are meant to live.

- **You have appropriate expectations of yourself and others.** You live the awareness that expectations should be connected to a realistic consideration of abilities and circumstances, not just on what you want or don’t want in your life. By listening to yourself, you avoid asking too much of yourself or others and causing unnecessary fear, anger, guilt, or resentment for failure to meet unrealistic expectations.

- **You live fully in the present.** You live the awareness that genuine happiness involves being in the here and now, with neither the unresolved past nor the anxiously anticipated future exerting any control over you. By listening to yourself, you avoid being distracted and preoccupied by your past or future—while, if need be, dealing with them.

### Your Ability to Cope with Stressors and Stress

- **You don’t think you are immune to stress.** You live the awareness that stress is part of life and something to manage rather than ignore. Listening to yourself allows you to recognize stress sooner rather than later, keep stressors in perspective, and react appropriately to stress symptoms.

- **You don’t interpret being susceptible to stress as a sign of weakness.** You live the awareness that experiencing stress is part of your humanity and imperfection. Thus, listening to yourself guides you to deal with stress rather than engaging in the stupidity of misinterpreting it as weakness.

- **You can recognize when you are under stress.** You live the awareness that stress symptoms often take different subtle physical, emotional, mental, or behavioral forms that can build over time. Listening to yourself does not allow stress to be the silent killer it can be for those who choose to ignore it.

- **You understand that dealing with stress has a lot more to do with managing it effectively than eliminating it.** You live the awareness that the “cure” for stress lies in managing it rather than eliminating its sources or finding ways to avoid it. Thus, listening to
yourself keeps you from wasting time trying to defeat stress only to have it reappear in some other shape or form in your life.

- **You have a game plan for managing stress.** You live the awareness that you must have an active rather than passive approach to stress in order to get ahead of it rather than letting it get ahead of you. Listening to yourself has you engaging in preventative stress reduction activities such as meditation, yoga, exercise, healthy dietary patterns, healthy sleep patterns, and mindfulness practice.

- **You convert financial, relationship, work, and health stressors into “stimulators” that motivate you to take appropriate action to manage them.** You live the awareness that the stress can be removed from these stressors by forming a plan of action to manage them. This leaves you with a healthy sense of control within the situation. Listening to yourself gets you into gear to call upon any resources needed to deal with stressors and stress.

- **You get help from others, when needed, who are more familiar and experienced with the stressor and stress you are facing, and you don’t view this as a sign of weakness.** You live the awareness that reaching out to the right people reflects strength rather than weakness. As a result, listening to yourself gets you the help you need when you need it, rather than engaging in the stupidity of putting off asking and suffering in silence.

- **You don’t become someone else’s stressor when you are under stress.** You live the awareness that mismanaging stress can have a negative impact on others, particularly your partner and children. By listening to yourself, you avoid becoming so self-absorbed that you miss when you are mistreating or abusing others while under stress.

- **You don’t seek to live a stress-free life.** You live the awareness that stressors and stress only become stressful when you think you aren’t able to manage them. Listening to yourself lets you deal with them as stimulators that are often a part of an active, vibrant, busy life, as opposed to the boredom and emptiness of a stress-free life.

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**Your Ability to Resolve Conflict**

- **You want to hear all sides of an argument, not just your own.** You live the awareness that getting all viewpoints is important to fully understanding an issue and achieving better resolution than
may happen by using only your own perspective, particularly when dealing with complex issues. Listening to yourself stops you from getting less information rather than more, while saving you from the stupidity of thinking you know more about an issue than you really do.

- **You want and encourage others to speak up when they may have difficulty expressing themselves openly.** You live the awareness that good ideas can often be hidden behind feelings of self-doubt, keeping people silent who should be heard. Thus, listening to yourself leads you to welcome everyone to contribute within a warm and supportive environment.

- **You understand that you can win in an argument if you have learned and grown from the experience.** You live the awareness that empowerment comes from enriching your mind, and it doesn’t matter whether you or others are the source of this enrichment. Listening to yourself lets you experience the wisdom of knowing when to stop talking and start listening—including to those with whom you are in disagreement.

- **You understand what is meant by a “win-win” resolution to conflict.** You live the awareness that the best resolutions to conflict involve a healthy maintenance of the relationship, regardless of who has prevailed in the argument. Listening to yourself sensitizes you to when you may be winning the argument but losing the relationship in the process.

- **You are able to be friends and remain friendly with those you have been in conflict with.** You live the awareness that healthy relationships often involve a mixture of agreements and disagreements. Thus, listening to yourself lets you avoid requiring people to agree with you on most things as a condition of friendship.

- **You don’t experience any enhanced sense of affirmation, pride, or enjoyment when you have proven others wrong in a disagreement.** You live the awareness that the arguments you put forth may be victorious, but you are not personally victorious. Listening to yourself does not lead you to be invested in the stupidity of winning arguments at the personal expense of others.

- **You are able to admit when others are right and you are wrong.** You live the awareness that such admissions reflect strength rather than weakness, as well as the ability to be fair to the people with
whom you are in conflict. By listening to yourself, you refrain from engaging in the stupidity of failing to admit you are wrong in order to save face.

- **You can agree to disagree in order to resolve the argument when no meeting of the minds can occur.** You live the awareness that in some cases, everyone cannot agree on resolutions, due to their personal backgrounds and experiences. Listening to yourself stops you from trying to force a resolution upon yourself or others, letting you know that this is okay.

- **You try to gain closure, if possible, when involved in significant conflicts, particularly with loved ones.** You live the awareness that unresolved conflict is often carried forward and spills into other places within the relationship. By listening to yourself, you avoid the stupidity of allowing significant unresolved conflicts to fester like open wounds in relationships, only to find out years later that miscommunication was at the root.

- **You don’t allow the passion and conviction you have for your arguments to interfere with your ability to hear others out.** You live the awareness that passion and conviction alone does not necessarily make for better ideas on your part, or weaker ideas on the part of others. Listening to yourself stops emotion from getting the better of you by turning off your ability to listen or keeping you thinking of your next counterargument when people are talking.
Balanced ego flexibility energy is at work when one is able to add, change, or remove what is in her mind, allowing her to abandon faulty beliefs and remain firmly connected to truth. This flexibility manifests itself in each of the key life areas, which brings forth a diverse range of signs that it’s occurring. This person seeks the truth wherever it may lead, and however painful it may be, so she can live the freedom and deliverance of truth.

Your Ability to Interact with People in Healthy Ways

• **You are flexible in your approach to people and are willing to get to know them before forming an opinion of them.** You live the awareness that pre-judging people on the basis of outer appearances and limited information often leads to misunderstanding who they truly are. Listening to yourself has you following the wisdom of not judging a book by its cover. This saves you from the stupidity of avoiding people you really need to get to know, or filling in blanks about people with bad information.

• **You welcome the opportunity to be exposed to new, different, and potentially better ideas from people.** You live the awareness that the right people can teach you things you did not know, and which you need to know in order to enhance your life and grow as a person. Because you’re listening to yourself, you remain ready and
willing to open your mind to the right people, at the right times, and in the right places.

- **You are willing to understand the different beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and values people have and how they have served them.** You live the awareness that there are many paths that can serve people in living a good life and a better version of themselves. Listening to yourself allows you to see the diversity of the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is at work in the lives of others.

- **You are able to update your mind as you learn more about people, so you don’t remain locked into what you previously thought.** You live the awareness that people can change—including yourself—for better or for worse, so it’s important to know them for who they are rather than who they were. Listening to yourself allows you to recognize important changes taking place within others that affect the way you deal with them, rather than remaining naïve and unfair in your approach to them.

- **You respectfully share your ideas and beliefs with the awareness that they may not be embraced by others with different backgrounds and experiences.** You live the awareness that those raised in a different life context may not agree with you, which neither invalidates your ideas nor the people who do not accept them. Thus, listening to yourself allows you to feel warmth and connection to others even when you don’t experience agreement with them, rather than engaging in the stupidity of feeling coldness and rejection.

- **You are open to people respectfully questioning your ideas and beliefs, which may serve to point out issues that you did not realize were there.** You live the awareness that others can and must serve you by teaching you what you need to know. Listening to yourself has you experiencing a healthy respect for what you don’t know, and the willingness to come to know it from the right people.

- **You avoid stereotyping people from any racial, religious, ethnic, income level, gender, or sexual orientation background, realizing the beauty of the diversity that exists within these communities.** You live the awareness that there is diversity within the diversity, meaning that all members of a demographic group don’t share the same beliefs, interests, attitudes, or values. As a result,
listening to yourself prevents you from engaging in narrow, limited, and ignorant thinking about people you really don’t know.

- **You welcome relationships and friendships with people from different racial, religious, ethnic, income level, gender, and sexual orientation backgrounds.** You live the awareness that the differences of others should have no place in determining your connection to them. Listening to yourself allows you to see the Oneness and Unity that exists within all people, as each is the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is, and we all share in having received the Divine Gifts.

**Your Ability to Form Close Relationships with Family and Friends**

- **You keep an open mind when listening to loved ones.** You live the awareness that respecting all viewpoints, even when different from yours, is more important than agreement in establishing closeness and connection in your relationships with those closest to you. Thus, listening to yourself prevents you from imposing a filter on what you are willing to hear from loved ones.

- **You experience fun, vibrant, and stimulating conversations with loved ones.** You live the awareness that being flexible gives everyone the freedom to open up and be who they truly are, which deepens the relationship. Listening to yourself contributes to a warm and safe environment where loved ones don’t have to watch what they say and censor themselves in your presence.

- **You are open to hearing and sharing personal thoughts and experiences that can serve to deepen relationships.** You live the awareness that truly intimate relationships do not have boundaries for what can be shared—only a time and place that may be better to do so. By listening to yourself, you open yourself to the closeness and connection that revealing inner truths can bring about.

- **You have a healthy respect for what you don’t know and are willing to learn about it by talking to loved ones.** You live the awareness that valuing the input of loved ones not only conveys a value for their ideas and opinions, but also how highly you value them, which enhances the relationship. Listening to yourself has you reaching out to loved ones when needed and showing them they are important to you.
• **You understand you may not always see eye to eye with loved ones.** You live the awareness that each person is living their own personal version of reality, and these often won’t completely overlap, leading to different views on matters. Listening to yourself helps you make sense of disagreements rather than engaging in the stupidity of questioning the validity of an opinion or the intelligence of the loved one holding it.

• **You are interested in the different ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and values of loved ones, even if you disagree with them.** You live the awareness that deepening relationships includes conveying the willingness to understand things from loved ones’ perspectives and trying to walk in their shoes. Thus, listening to yourself leads you to validate your loved ones for who they are, even when their ideas and beliefs don’t work for who you are.

• **You understand the role that healthy conflict can play in growing relationships with loved ones.** You live the awareness that conflict can act as a means by which loved ones can bare themselves completely to you, and vice versa. Conflict can fully reveal who you both are, while providing the opportunity to learn from each other, you understand. Listening to yourself guides you to use conflict as a tool for experiencing relationships in which people are free to be who they are rather than hiding from each other.

• **You can respectfully disagree with the ideas and opinions of loved ones.** You live the awareness that how you disagree with loved ones is as important as what you are disagreeing about. Listening to yourself prevents you from engaging in the stupidity of getting too caught up in what you have to say and losing track of how you are saying it, which often damages relationships.

• **You try to develop compromises that respect each loved one’s ideas and opinions.** You live the awareness that everyone’s input must be treated as equally important, particularly when making decisions that affect them. By listening to yourself, you avoid the damage and distance that can develop in a relationship when loved ones feel they have been ignored or treated as a non-entity.

• **You avoid jumping to conclusions about loved ones before getting all the facts.** You live the awareness that fairness to loved ones means getting all the information before forming an impression.
of them regarding a particular matter. Thus, listening to yourself avoids the damage that can be done to the loved one and the relationship if you form and express premature opinions.

**Your Ability to Love Yourself**

- **You are a lifelong learner willing to learn new, different, and better things that contribute to developing even better versions of yourself.** You live the awareness that your perfection does not exist in your humanity but within your Divinity. Listening to yourself makes you willing to keep growing as a person throughout your life, rather than engaging in the stupidity of thinking you are a finished product.

- **You experience a healthy sense of respect for your thoughts and beliefs, while realizing they are not infallible.** You live the awareness that you have the tremendous gift of your mind to work with in coming to know truth—both human and Divine. Listening to yourself has you loving your mind by working to fill it with truthful thoughts, beliefs, and values that can be used to serve all while being the Love—God Is.

- **You love yourself in healthy ways.** You live the awareness that you must take care of your body, mind, and spirit in ways that honor and respect them. Because you’re listening to yourself, you’re giving to yourself in ways that enhance your ability to give to others, rather than engaging in the stupidity of thinking you must sacrifice your own life for others by forgoing your needs.

- **You know it’s as important to love others as it is to love yourself.** You live the awareness that there can be no difference between the two when being the Love—God Is. Thus, listening to yourself does not allow you to place any boundaries on receiving or giving love to yourself or others—including those with different ideas, beliefs, or values.

- **You know the Love—God Is exists within all beings.** You live the awareness that all beings are endowed with this Love, from which they can fashion loving thoughts, beliefs, and values in service to themselves and others. Listening to yourself has you realizing that you are a spiritual being who has been given the opportunity to have a loving human experience with yourself and all other beings.
• You know each of the Divine Gifts is a reflection of Divine Truth being manifested in your life. You live the awareness that in the absence of God, you could not experience life, have the opportunity to create your own life, have an eternal life, or have the presence of God within your being. From listening to yourself, you recognize that you have been given everything needed to live the great life you are meant to live.

• You recognize the right people who will guide you to love yourself and all others. You live the awareness that these people are being the Love—God Is toward you, and that they can see the Love—God Is within your being. Listening to yourself leads you to open up to the Divine Truth of who you really are and those who are trying to lead you toward it.

• You know the true nature of love, understanding that it’s unconditional, connective, unburdened, and inexhaustible. You live the awareness that this love resides within your being, and that you only need call upon it to meet the challenges life brings to you and others. Whenever you manifest this love with your children, family members, friends, or those in distress, in service to other people, animals, or the environment, you know you are being the Love—God Is.

Your Ability to Achieve and Know Your Life’s Purpose

• You are realistic about your potential, understanding your strengths and weaknesses. You live the awareness that being in touch with your capabilities is important to determining what you are going to try to achieve. Listening to yourself helps you set realistic goals rather than ones that are too low or too high and out of alignment with your potential.

• You are the person who has decided what you want to achieve in your life. You live the awareness that you can only be happy and satisfied with what you have achieved if it stems from who you are, not who someone else is. Because you’re listening to yourself, you are climbing the mountains you have decided to climb rather than the ones others would have you climb, which often leads to a sense of disillusionment and disappointment.
• You understand that life achievement goes well beyond career and financial success. You live the awareness that living a rewarding, enriched life involves many areas of growth, development, and achievement. Thus, listening to yourself prevents you from engaging in the stupidity of neglecting your physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual wellness while getting distracted by how much you can earn or the social status you can reach.

• You understand that the process of achievement is often more important than the end results. You live the awareness that the process is developing your potential in ways that set the stage for greater success and achievement down the road. Listening to yourself has you recognizing qualities being developed by the process, like discipline, ability to deal with authority, cooperation, patience, and humility.

• You use yourself as the main point of reference in judging how much you have achieved. You live the awareness that comparisons to others are often meaningless and can be harmful, as your situations often have key differences. By listening to yourself, you are staying connected to your path and not getting distracted by what is taking place along someone else’s.

• You use realistic criteria to evaluate your achievement, while ignoring “soft” criteria intended to make you feel good or “hard” criteria intended to dishearten you. You live the awareness that fairness to yourself requires the ability to be objective, see what you need to see, and do what you need to do in your efforts to achieve. Thus, listening to yourself keeps you grounded in reality and helps you learn what you need to learn sooner rather than later.

• You recognize the right and wrong people to guide you in your efforts to achieve. You live the awareness that the right people have relevant information, experience, awareness of the obstacles that may get in your way, and a lack of personal agendas. You know they will tell you what you need to hear rather than what you want to hear. Thus, listening to yourself keeps you moving forward along the path of success rather than becoming sidetracked by listening to the wrong people—even if their intentions are good.

• You realize that doing what you can do is all that you need to ask of yourself in your efforts to achieve. You live the awareness that achieving success means using all of your abilities, although
success may not always come in the exact form you expect. Listening to yourself ensures you work within your capacities and don’t get caught up in too much “have to” or “want to” thoughts in your approach to work and achievement.

• **You use your potential to serve yourself and others.** You live the awareness that your interests, abilities, and skills are on loan for the purpose of serving all, regardless of what form your life’s work is taking. Because you’re listening to yourself, you are using these tools while being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is, as you fulfill your human and Divine purpose.

**Your Ability to Grow the Quality of Your Mind**

• **You know that the quality of your mind is affected by how much truth is within it.** You live the awareness that rational, objective, and accurate thoughts promote healthiness in the workings of your mind. Listening to yourself allows you to display a healthy skepticism about your own thoughts, as well as ideas others would have you believe, before accepting them as truth.

• **You are aware of the distance that often exists between belief and truth.** You live the awareness that making the distinction between belief and truth enhances the quality of your mind by connecting it more deeply to truth and reality. Thus, listening to yourself has you seeking and finding the truth, no matter how painful or elusive it may be, rather than engaging in the stupidity of avoiding, hiding from, or failing to seek it.

• **You understand there is no absolute human reality in which everyone can come to the same understanding and conclusions about truth.** You live the awareness that human reality is diverse and relative to the person who is living it. Listening to yourself has you respecting these differences rather than feeling the need to change others to be like you, or to change yourself to be like them.

• **You have a healthy respect for the differentness of your thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes from those of others.** You live the awareness that agreement from others is not a prerequisite to seeing your ideas and beliefs as valid. Because you’re listening to yourself, you’re honoring and respecting your truth and your freedom to express it.
• You understand that the differences in others’ thoughts, beliefs, and values from your own does not mean theirs are deficient. You live the awareness that these differences have often served people in ways that are important and healthy for their daily lives and survival. By listening to yourself, you see the healthiness of these differences and how they have served others.

• You have a healthy respect for what you don’t know, and you are willing to seek it from the right people and resources. You live the awareness of the limitations in your personal background, relationships, and experiences that have kept you from being fully exposed to all the truths that can be known. Listening to yourself has you learning about the truth from others in ways that serve to grow the quality of your mind.

• You see the ability to change your mind as a strength, not a weakness. You live the awareness that flexibility in growing your mind with new, different, and better information is important to maintaining the quality of your mind. Because you’re listening to yourself, you’re constantly upgrading your “database” rather than allowing it to become outdated and obsolete.

• You are willing to add, change, or remove thoughts, beliefs, and values within your mind so your thinking aligns more fully with truth. You live the awareness that having an open and flexible mind connected to truth and reality is the best means of enhancing its quality and healthiness. Listening to yourself keeps you a lifelong learner, cultivating personal growth and keeping your mind young, even as you age.

• You do not allow the conviction you have for a particular belief, attitude, or value to serve as a substitute for its truthfulness. You live the awareness that feeling strongly about an idea, opinion, or value does not in and of itself make it valid for you or others. Listening to yourself allows you to realize that emotions can lead you to miss inaccuracies in what you are thinking.

• You do not let others’ conviction for a particular belief, attitude, or value lead you to automatically view it as truth. You live the awareness that others may be consumed with passion and emotion that can keep them and you from seeing some of the mistruths they are putting forth. Thus, listening to yourself leads you to disregard
the emotion in the messages people are sending in order to evaluate the actual truth within them.

- **You know the difference between the right and wrong people from whom to receive realistic information to influence your beliefs, attitudes, and values.** You live the awareness that not all people can be trusted equally, due to the nature of their experiences and motivations. Listening to yourself therefore has you employing a filter before giving people access to your mind in order to download their potentially faulty messages.

- **You know the difference between the right and wrong resources, such as media, from which to receive realistic information that may impact your beliefs, attitudes, and values.** You live the awareness that not all sources can be trusted equally, due to the nature of their agendas seeking to influence you. Listening to yourself leads you to consider the source before letting various forms of media and social media into your mind to download their potentially faulty messages.

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**Your Ability to Manage Life Changes**

- **You understand the inevitability of change in yourself, others, and the world.** You live the awareness that change is rooted in the dynamic nature of energy, which is always transforming and cannot stand still. Listening to yourself connects you to the personal and collective evolution that has, will, and must continue to occur in order to make you a better person, the world a better place, and a humanity capable of knowing world peace.

- **You are able to adapt your thinking to changes taking place in yourself, others, and the world.** You live the awareness that you must learn what you need to learn and get rid of inaccurate ideas in order to deal effectively with developmental, situational, societal, and technological changes. By listening to yourself, you grow your mind, when and where necessary, rather than remaining stuck in old and outdated approaches that may have worked then but don’t work now.

- **You don’t try to fit changes into what you know or want to know.** You live the awareness that growing your ability to think about change acts as the key to working with change effectively. In
doing so, you’re fitting yourself to the change rather than the reverse. Listening to yourself keeps you from wasting time trying to make the change fit who you are.

• **You can stop listening to yourself when you realize you are the wrong person to listen to in handling important changes.** You live the awareness of the limitations of your familiarity, experience, and knowledge about what is happening and your potential to make things worse due to your ignorance. Thus, listening to yourself makes you open to listening to the right people when you’re not one of them.

• **You understand that important changes can be painful, which is part of the price of making progress.** You live the awareness that change often takes you out of your comfort zone, but this helps you to grow and presents you with new opportunities that would be unavailable without change. Listening to yourself has you realizing that change can take you places you did not want or expect to go, but needed to go for a better life.

• **You understand that often, several causes—often hidden ones—are at work behind the scenes of important changes going on in your life.** You live the awareness that oversimplifying and dumbing down changes often leads to misunderstanding them and how to best work with them. Listening to yourself avoids the stupidity of only pointing to one or two causes and thinking you fully understand what’s going on.

• **You welcome new, different, or better ideas and perspectives from the right people who can help you to better understand and work with important life changes.** You live the awareness that keeping an open mind and being able to think outside of the box allows you to put all options on the table before making important decisions involving change. By listening to yourself, you can brainstorm on how to deal with change using this new input, rather than treating different or unfamiliar input as deficient and readily discarding it.

• **You can balance between honoring and maintaining traditions that are relevant and offer wisdom, while serving a healthy purpose, and discarding those rooted in faulty beliefs that have shown themselves to be harmful to people.** You live the awareness that some traditions were built on faulty and misguided
ideas, beliefs, and values that are revealed in their destructiveness to people. Listening to yourself stops you from participating in stupid traditions that serve no healthy purpose and prevent you from developing healthier ones consistent with the present times.

**Your Ability to Deal with Failures, Losses, and Mistakes**

- **You are good at keeping problems in perspective.** You live the awareness that problems come in all shapes and sizes, which requires a flexible approach to managing them. Listening to yourself allows you to see a problem for what it truly is without oversimplifying, overcomplicating, underreacting, or overreacting in ways that make the situation worse.

- **You deal with problems sooner rather than later.** You live the awareness that problems happen for a reason, often don’t get better on their own, and respond better to attention than neglect. By listening to yourself, you keep problems at a manageable size rather than allowing them to grow into something that becomes overwhelming and unmanageable.

- **You own your contribution to problems.** You live the awareness that failures, losses, and mistakes are reflections of your imperfection that you must acknowledge and manage, not disown, ignore, or neglect. Thus, listening to yourself allows you to hear what the problem is telling you about you, rather than blaming other things and people.

- **You recognize the strength rather than weakness revealed in asking others to help you solve problems.** You live the awareness that knowing your limitations reflects the ability to be honest with yourself and to be in touch with the imperfection of your humanity, along with the character to admit it. Listening to yourself allows your brother or sister to be your keeper in your time of need, being the Love—God Is.

- **You are good at recognizing when you’re the wrong person to listen to and when you are in over your head in dealing with a problem.** You live the awareness that you can’t always be your own expert, so you may not know what you need to know in order to manage a problem. You’re willing to go to therapy in order to
work on a personal or family problem, rather than engaging in the stupidity of thinking that no one can know you better than yourself.

- **You are open-minded and willing to understand all of the causes of a problem, your level of responsibility in contributing to them, and the best solutions to solving problems.** You live the awareness that a comprehensive approach gives you the best chance of managing problems and reducing the likelihood of their reoccurrence. By listening to yourself, you engage in deeper problem-solving in which you aren’t just dealing with the symptoms, but are getting at the roots of the issue.

- **You are open to new, different, or better ideas from the right people, like those with expertise who can help you to better understand and work with problems.** You live the awareness that getting to know what you don’t know is essential to managing problems. Thus, listening to yourself takes you beyond what you already know (or think you know) to what you need to know—even when it’s unpleasant—to optimize your management of problems.

- **You resist bad ideas from the wrong people (including intelligent and well-meaning ones) who lack understanding and familiarity with the problem you are dealing with.** You live the awareness that experience, familiarity, intentions, agendas, and convictions must be factored into the equation when deciding who you can listen to in managing problems. Listening to yourself guides you to consider the source and how well-equipped that person is to help you.

**Your Ability to Experience Genuine Happiness**

- **You understand that genuine happiness begins within yourself.** You live the awareness that happiness reflects how connected you are to human and Divine Truth. Because you’re listening to yourself, you’re building a path to happiness in which reality-based thoughts, beliefs, and values are the ground upon which you walk.

- **You understand that you are responsible for your own happiness.** You live the awareness that you must grow the quality of your mind to lead yourself toward happiness and away from unnecessary feelings of anxiety, anger, and depression that will distance you from it. Listening to yourself has you paying attention
to your thoughts, questioning them, and changing them when they are inaccurate, irrational, or unhealthy.

- **You understand the connection that exists between being the Love—God Is and genuine happiness.** You live the awareness that love removes illusions of inequality, unworthiness, and separation that undermine the ability to experience genuine happiness. Thus, listening to yourself leads you to know the Oneness and Unity you share with all beings.

- **You understand that other people or things can serve to make you happier, but not genuinely happy.** You live the awareness that other people or things outside of you cannot substitute for or take on the burden of making you happy, which must come from within. Listening to yourself stops you from looking in the wrong places or people to find happiness, which often results in an endless and fruitless search.

- **You understand the difference between genuine happiness and pseudo-happiness.** You live the awareness that pseudo-happiness is what you are getting when you are experiencing physical or psychological pleasure, and that its source is outside of yourself. By listening to yourself, you know whether you are genuinely happy or experiencing a substitute that creates the illusion of happiness.

- **You understand that reality-disconnected thoughts and beliefs will lead you to be more angry, depressed, or fearful than you need to be, and away from happiness.** You live the awareness that these kinds of thoughts can have a powerful negative impact on your feelings and block you from experiencing happiness. Listening to yourself helps you work to uncover these often hidden thoughts masquerading as truth when unchecked and undermining your ability to experience genuine happiness.

- **You recognize the power of your mind as a tool that can lead you toward genuine happiness when filled with truth about yourself, others, and life.** You live the awareness that the truth—human and Divine—will truly set you free to live in happiness, knowing that your mind is the gift you have been given to do this. Because you’re listening to yourself, you’re filtering your thoughts for signs of truth and non-truth in order to enhance the quality of your mind and your life.
• **You are able to recognize the right people to help you find genuine happiness.** You live the awareness that these people are genuinely happy and do not ask you to walk in their truth, but rather, lead you to walk in your own. Listening to yourself allows you to see the face of God in their being as they reflect the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within their service to you.

*Your Ability to Cope with Stressors and Stress*

• **You know that if you fail to manage stressors and stress, they will eventually manage you.** You live the awareness that stressors and stress form an inevitable part of your life, due to the imperfect nature of your humanity, and managing them effectively requires your attention. By listening to yourself, you prevent stress from quietly building up over time and becoming the silent killer it can be, setting the stage for heart disease and cancer.

• **You know the way you think about stressors and stress has a major impact on how well you will manage them.** You live the awareness that rational and realistic thinking based in truth makes things better, while irrational or untruthful thinking tends to make things worse by magnifying the size, frequency, causes, and duration of stressors and stress. Thus, listening to yourself leads you to pay attention to your thoughts for signs of distortion, so you can keep your feet on the ground as you deal with stressful situations.

• **You know that stressful thoughts can have a ripple effect on your behavior, feelings, and physical wellness.** You live an awareness of the connection of your mind, body, and spirit and how disturbance in your mind can affect your body and spirit. Listening to yourself guides you to pay attention to your thoughts for signs of stress, realizing the effect it can have on the rest of you.

• **You can adapt your thinking to the stressors and stress you are facing.** You live the awareness that the best way to manage them is to see them for what they are, not for what you want them to be. Because you’re listening to yourself, you keep an open mind and consider everything that can be useful when dealing with the situation at hand, which may include thinking outside of the box.

• **You keep work, health, family, and financial stressors in perspective.** You live the awareness that gaining a realistic
understanding of the size, frequency, causes, and duration of stressors plays a vital role in effectively managing them. Listening to yourself stops you from getting caught up in inaccurate thoughts that lead to underestimating, overestimating, underreacting, or overreacting to stressors, which often makes things worse.

• **You know when you are the wrong person to listen to in handling a stressor or stress.** You live the awareness of the limitations of your knowledge related to work, health, relationship, family, or financial stressors, and when it’s time to get outside help. Thus, listening to yourself lets you realize when you are in over your head, so you can allow the right people to help you rather than trying to figure it out all on your own.

• **You are open to new, different, and better ideas for managing stressors and stress.** You live the awareness that you don’t know everything, and that others can add to what you know about managing stressors and stress. Listening to yourself makes you open to growing your mind by learning from the right people, who have relevant knowledge and experience that can help you, rather than always trying to be your own expert.

• **You are good at spotting quick fixes being sold on the TV or the Internet to alleviate stress.** You live the awareness that managing stress effectively requires the time and motivation to use proven methods such as meditation, yoga, exercise, breath work, mindfulness practice, healthy dietary patterns, healthy sleep patterns, relaxation training, and cognitive therapy. Listening to yourself stops you from throwing away money on things that only attempt to remove the symptoms of stress while ignoring its underlying roots.

*Your Ability to Resolve Conflict*

• **You enjoy opportunities to participate in healthy conflict.** You live the awareness that your mind can grow from the stimulation of being exposed to new, different, or better ideas and viewpoints. Listening to yourself guides you to approach conflict as if were a mental workout helping you to build your “mental muscles” with the truth you may be exposed to through others.

• **You know the difference between healthy, constructive, and useful conflict and unhealthy, destructive, and useless conflict.**
You live the awareness that conflict can only be a tool for growing your mind and relationships when it’s undertaken with fairness and respect between the participants. Thus, listening to yourself stops you from wasting time by participating in arguments in which name-calling, personal attacks, insults, and unwillingness to hear you out is occurring.

- **You know that truth is often in the eye of the beholder, and that conflict often doesn’t or can’t result in agreement.** You live the awareness that each person’s “human truth” has been shaped by unique, diverse events, relationships, and life experiences that influence their personal reality, approach to issues, and quality of their mind. Listening to yourself stops you from insisting that people can always see things your way, or that you will be able to see things their way—which allows you to agree to disagree.

- **You can hear all sides in an argument, not just your own.** You live the awareness that constructive conflict requires openness to all points of view, even when you disagree with them. Listening to yourself leads you to listen to everyone, rather than engaging in the stupidity of closing your mind at the first sign of disagreement.

- **You are guided by a strong sense of fairness when arguing with others.** You live the awareness that the absence of fairness to yourself and others blocks any real opportunity for you or them to learn from the conflict. By listening to yourself, you avoid engaging in the stupidity of staying involved in toxic, destructive, and unfair arguments in which fairness is absent and the main objective is to “win.”

- **You can see where you’ve been wrong in an argument or disagreement.** You live the awareness that a conflict has been successful when it helps you to see what you need to see and think what you need to think, rather than remaining in the ignorance of your previous thoughts and beliefs. Listening to yourself helps you to grow your mind by adding, changing, or removing what’s in it after learning from others in conflict.

- **You can have a disagreement with yourself when you sense that something is not quite right about an idea, belief, or value that you have.** You live the awareness that having an open, flexible mind connected to truth requires the ability to be honest
with yourself and call attention to what may not be true within it. Listening to yourself encourages you to update your “database” rather than allowing it to become outdated or needing others to call attention to it.

• **You know the amount of conviction you and others have for your thoughts and beliefs doesn’t always mean they are true.** You live the awareness that conviction can often lead to oversights in which you miss important disconfirming information that makes your positions weaker than you think they are. You’re able to maintain an open, flexible mind by realizing the negative effects that passion and conviction can have on your mind’s flexibility and connection to truth.
CHAPTER 11

Symptoms and Ego Insights for Balanced Ego Vulnerability

Balanced ego vulnerability energy is at work when one is able to accept and manage the weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerability that exist within himself, others, and life. This acceptance and management manifests itself in each of the key life areas, bringing forth numerous and diverse signs that it’s occurring. This individual seeks to be a healthily imperfect human being, while realizing that his perfection exists with his Divinity.

Your Ability to Interact with People in Healthy Ways

- **You convey healthy acceptance of yourself that invites people to want to get to know you.** You live the awareness that the attitude you display toward yourself has a powerful positive effect on how others see you. Listening to yourself therefore helps you to be genuine with others, acknowledging your strengths and weaknesses in a way that says, “I’m okay with being me.”

- **You convey healthy acceptance of others in ways that tell them you genuinely want to get to know them.** You live the awareness that conveying acceptance sends a powerful message that you are safe, warm, and easy to be with. Listening to yourself guides you to live as the unconditional, unburdened, connective, and inexhaustible Love—God Is with others, just like Fred Rogers, who did as good a job of connecting with people as anyone who has ever lived.
Symptoms and Ego Insights for Balanced Ego Vulnerability

- **You openly express your feelings to people when needed.** You live the awareness that you need no one’s permission to honor your feelings, and that they need no justification in order to share them. Thus, listening to yourself allows you to be genuine with people rather than engaging in the stupidity of masking or hiding your feelings, which would only lead them to come out in other ways that involve your thoughts or behaviors.

- **You are open to people expressing their feelings to you.** You live the awareness that healthy relationships do not have emotional walls or boundaries that others cannot pass through. Listening to yourself allows you to establish a deeper connection to people that gives them a sense of warmth and safety in being who they truly are with you.

- **You pay attention to the emotional impact that what you say or do is having on people.** You live the awareness of how your human imperfection and weakness can lead to saying or doing the wrong things, or choosing the wrong times or the wrong places. By listening to yourself, you remain sensitive to the emotional needs of others rather than engaging in the stupidity of callous or reckless disregard for their emotional wellness.

- **You genuinely apologize and ask for forgiveness when you have done someone wrong.** You live the awareness that acknowledging and owning your words and deeds reflects the strength of being in touch with the weakness of your humanity. Listening to yourself stops you from engaging in the stupidity of trying to hide what you have done from others or yourself—which others can often see anyway.

- **You accept genuine apologies and forgive those who have done you wrong.** You live the awareness that you must support those who are willing to take responsibility for their human imperfection and weakness, so they can become a better version of themselves. Listening to yourself leads you to live as the Love—God Is by forgiving others for the weakness and imperfection of their humanity.

- **You don’t allow anger or fear to determine how you think about people or how you think they are seeing you.** You live the awareness that emotions can distort how well you know people, and how well you think they know you, in ways that can be harmful and misguided. Listening to yourself helps you to think with your thinking instead of with your emotions about the quality of the relationships you have with people.
• **You say no to people when that’s the right thing to do.** You live the awareness that any disapproval or social rejection you may get is not rooted in your weakness, imperfections, or anything you have done wrong, but within the issues that others are carrying around within them. Thus, listening to yourself stops you from becoming an emotional hostage to what others want from you or submitting to inappropriate requests they are making of you.

**Your Ability to Form Close Relationships with Family and Friends**

• **Your relationships with loved ones are based on love, not fear, anger, or guilt.** You live the awareness that a truly close relationship can only have love at its center. By listening to yourself, you avoid the stupidity of becoming involved or staying in relationships that are physically, emotionally, or sexually neglectful or abusive.

• **You experience a healthy sense of trust in your relationships with loved ones.** You live the awareness that trust is essential to being vulnerable in healthy ways within a close relationship. Listening to yourself lets you avoid the stupidity of trying to be in a close relationship where trust is missing, along with the ability to experience healthy human vulnerability.

• **You openly express love to loved ones in your thoughts, words, and deeds.** You live the awareness that you must nurture close relationships with love to keep them healthy and growing, particularly through the challenges that life brings. Thus, listening to yourself lets you avoid the stupidity of neglecting relationships and treating them like they can be self-sustaining without any “watering” and “sunshine.”

• **You express feelings of anger, fear, or sadness toward loved ones in appropriate ways.** You live the awareness that being emotionally present in close relationships involves the ability to express feelings so they can be recognized and resolved. By listening to yourself, you avoid the stupidity of hiding and carrying around unresolved feelings for long periods of time that are doing damage to a relationship rather than clearing the air.

• **You build relationships with loved ones based on a healthy emotional connection, not emotional over-attachment or detachment.** You live the awareness that too much of the wrong
kinds of “love” can drown a relationship, and too little love can starve it. Listening to yourself lets you avoid the stupidity of enabling others, being over-involved and enmeshed with loved ones, or being physically present but emotionally absent with your partner or children.

- **You share concerns about your weaknesses and are not afraid to be emotionally vulnerable with loved ones.** You live the awareness that relationships can only be close if you are able to reveal all of yourself within them. Listening to yourself stops you from engaging in the stupidity of trying to hide yourself from the people who see you all of the time, and trying to present the image of strength to people who can see your weaknesses plain as day.

- **You welcome loved ones’ sharing of feelings of weakness, imperfection, and vulnerability with you.** You live the awareness that unconditional love involves accepting loved ones as they are and having an open door they can walk through to completely reveal themselves. By listening to yourself, you avoid the stupidity of putting up walls, boundaries, or conditions on what you are willing to know about loved ones in order to keep them at a distance.

- **You are able to need and be emotionally dependent on your partner.** You live the awareness that drawing upon your partner’s resources in your time of need is a sign of strength within yourself and the relationship. Listening to yourself avoids the stupidity of thinking that asking for help represents weakness.

- **Your partner needs you and can be emotionally dependent on you.** You live the awareness that being emotionally available and giving to your partner in times of need is essential to growing the relationship. Listening to yourself makes you ready and willing to communicate, show compassion, compromise, or create whatever is necessary to deal with your partner’s needs.

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**Your Ability to Love Yourself**

- **You understand that the most important relationship you will ever have in your life is with yourself.** You live the awareness that the healthiness of this relationship and your ability to love yourself is affecting all of the other important relationships you have, including with your partner, children, parents, siblings, friends, and God.
Listening to yourself leads you to pay attention to the healthiness of this relationship rather than getting distracted by what is occurring in any of the others.

- **You like and love yourself just the way you are.** You live the awareness that loving yourself doesn’t have any prerequisites, like overcoming weaknesses and imperfections before this can happen. Thus, listening to yourself doesn’t have you engaged in the stupidity of putting love for yourself on hold while you try to fix what you think is wrong with you.

- **You see yourself through feelings of love rather than anger or fear.** You live the awareness that love is the only emotion that will allow you to embrace your humanity rather than rejecting or disowning it with anger or fear. Listening to yourself stops you from engaging in all of the darker thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that people engage in to deal with the weakness and imperfection of their humanity.

- **You don’t try to hide your weaknesses and imperfections from people.** You live the awareness that trying to hide them doesn’t reflect strength, but rather, weakness and difficulty accepting yourself. Listening to yourself leads you to show character and the courage of being who you are, rather than the stupidity of pretending to be somebody you’re not.

- **You are able to celebrate and share your weaknesses and imperfections with others in ways that convey honesty, warmth, and a healthy sense of humor about yourself and life.** You live the awareness that you are being the Love—God Is when displaying comfort with your humanity, which can allow others to be comfortable with theirs. Listening to yourself engages you in these loving experiences that serve as a bridge to forming connections with others in which love flows back and forth.

- **You don’t need other people to love you in order to love yourself.** You live the awareness that conditional love from others cannot replace unconditional love for yourself. Thus, you don’t spend any time trying to get people to like you, love you, or approve of you—you don’t feel the need to prove your worthiness of being loved by them.

- **You don’t compare yourself to people in order to like and love yourself more.** You live the awareness that you cannot truly like and love yourself more by focusing on the weaknesses and
imperfections of others. Listening to yourself lets you avoid the stupidity of focusing on what’s wrong with others in order to lower them and raise your self-esteem.

- **You don’t feel the need to prove others are wrong in order to validate yourself.** You live the awareness that those who truly love themselves have nothing to prove to others in order to get acceptance and approval. By listening to yourself, you avoid engaging in the stupidity of investing time and energy in proving something to somebody that doesn’t need to be proven.

- **You accept well-intended accurate feedback from others to help you grow as a person.** You live the awareness that others can serve you by being the Love—God Is, helping you manage your weaknesses and imperfections while progressively becoming a better version of your human self. Listening to yourself allows you to receive the loving messages that others are offering you as you work with the vulnerability within your humanity.

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**Your Ability to Achieve Your Potential and Know Your Life’s Purpose**

- **You are motivated by love and passion to work with your potential in order to know and achieve your life’s purpose.** You live the awareness that using your talents is bringing joy, happiness, and fulfillment to your life as your life’s purpose is coming into focus. Listening to yourself guides you to achieve with love rather than fear or anger, which leads many to dissatisfaction, disillusionment, and inability to know their purpose—human and Divine.

- **You are able to persevere through feelings of frustration and failure as you work to achieve.** You live the awareness that many things worth achieving take time, patience, and resolve before they become fun and enjoyable. By listening to yourself, you avoid the stupidity of quitting things too soon, giving yourself time to discover the joy and happiness they can bring you.

- **You can relax and take time out from your efforts to achieve.** You live the awareness that you must strike a healthy balance between work and play that allows each to enhance the other. Thus, listening to yourself allows you to recharge your battery rather than draining it to the point where the quality of your work becomes poor or you resent doing it.
It's Your Ego— Stupid!

- **Your efforts to achieve are not stressful to the people you live or work with.** You live the awareness that efforts to achieve that are fueled by too much anger or fear often introduce tension into the lives of loved ones. Listening to yourself helps you realize when you are becoming a workaholic and forgetting how to balance work and play.

- **You don’t attach a greater sense of worthiness or importance to yourself due to your successes and achievements.** You live the awareness that your accomplishments do not erase your human imperfection, weaknesses, or vulnerability. By listening to yourself, you avoid the stupidity of thinking you’re a better person than others as a result of your achievements and successes.

- **You don’t need others to acknowledge your achievements or successes.** You live the awareness that seeking the acknowledgement of others is just another way of trying to mask feelings of insecurity about weaknesses, imperfections, or vulnerability. Because you’re listening to yourself, you believe in yourself and don’t need others’ approval when you have been successful.

- **You don’t spend time positively or negatively comparing yourself to competitors.** You live the awareness that these types of comparisons are fueled by anxiety and anger intended to make people feel better about their own weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerabilities. Listening to yourself stops you from engaging in these destructive comparisons and guides you to spend more time focusing on comparing you to you—in terms of what you have done with what you’ve been given.

- **You are able to be friendly with your competitors when the competition has ended.** You live the awareness that your competitors are as entitled to use their talents as you are, and that they’re not trying to deny you success or achievement. By listening to yourself, you avoid looking at your competitors through the emotions of anger or fear and the destructive thoughts they often bring forth.

- **You can celebrate the achievements of your competitors.** You live the awareness that acknowledging and honoring competitors is an act of love that has nothing to do with being “less than” or less worthy than they are. Listening to yourself saves you from the stupidity of being shallow in your words or actions when others have defeated you.
• You’re a good teammate who experiences a healthy sense of responsibility toward those with whom you are working. You live the awareness that others are showing trust and belief in you, which you must honor with your best effort. Thus, listening to yourself stops you from engaging in the stupidity of betraying their trust by giving less than your best effort or quitting on people who are depending on you.

• You see a connection between the work you are doing and the service you are providing to yourself and others. You live the awareness that love is fueling what you are doing, no matter how meaningless you previously thought it was. Listening to yourself brings into focus your life’s purpose—both human and Divine.

Your Ability to Grow the Quality of Your Mind

• You are motivated to grow the quality of your mind. You live the awareness that the weaknesses and imperfections of your humanity can lead you to develop or acquire faulty thoughts and beliefs. Thus, listening to yourself makes you willing to seek the truth, know what you need to know rather than what you want to know, and add or change your thinking to improve the quality of your mind.

• You take full ownership and responsibility for what is in your mind. You live the awareness that to be fully connected to your truth, you must fully embrace what’s in your mind. Listening to yourself stops you from engaging in the stupidity of conforming your thoughts to those of others, borrowing the thinking of others, or letting others do your thinking for you, regardless of how much you like them, how intelligent they are, or how well-intended they are.

• Your feelings are helping you to think more rationally, deliberately, and reflectively. You live the awareness that the right amount of anxiety, anger, guilt, sadness, and love can motivate you to use your best thinking, question yourself when necessary, and serve as a filter for the truthfulness of your thoughts, beliefs, and values. Listening to yourself therefore has you working with the intelligence of your emotions as they guide you toward truth.

• You recognize when too much anger or fear is getting in the way of your best thinking. You live the awareness that too much emotion distorts the quality of your thinking, making it more
irrational, subjective, and impulsive, which affects the quality and truthfulness of your thoughts and beliefs. By listening to yourself, you realize when you have stopped thinking with your thinking and started thinking only with your emotions.

- **You can spot fear-based and anger-based thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and values that you hear or read within various forms of media.** You live the awareness that due to their own human imperfection, people often form thoughts that are more strongly rooted in significant emotion than in reality. Listening to yourself stops people from pressing your emotional buttons in an effort to influence your beliefs—something many politicians have effectively done over the years to get votes.

- **You understand that all minds are made weaker by the distance they’re at from truth—human and Divine.** You live the awareness that truth and the willingness to seek it is the essential ingredient to growing the quality of one’s mind and dealing with the weaknesses and imperfection of one’s humanity—which most people don’t do. Because you’re listening to yourself, you display a healthy skepticism as you respectfully listen to people telling you their version of the truth.

- **You understand that realistic thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and values can promote emotional wellness in yourself and others.** You live the awareness that love and truth are intimately linked, and that each serves to address the weakness, imperfection, and vulnerability within your humanity by growing the quality of your mind. Listening to yourself leads you to seek the truth in order to be set free to live the great life you are meant to live!

- **You have no fear of the unknown or getting to know it.** You live the awareness that you can only grow the quality of your mind by getting to know all that can be known in order to bring forth the light of truth. Listening to yourself allows you to embrace opportunities to learn and work with the imperfection of yourself, others, and life, while realizing this is a never-ending journey that cannot bring you to human perfection—the perfection lies within the healthy management of your human imperfection and Divinity.
Your Ability to Manage Life Changes

• You do not get overwhelmed by significant changes occurring in your life or the lives of loved ones. You live the awareness that change is often intertwined with growth, due to the love that’s at work in the lives of those being impacted by it. Listening to yourself prevents you from feeling threatened by change and growing consumed by anger or fear when it is occurring.

• You don’t view change as a threat or an enemy, but as a potential friend. You live the awareness that change is not attempting to expose your weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerability, but calling attention to opportunities to develop you into a better version of yourself. Thus, listening to yourself helps you to see change as connected to your personal evolution, leading you to keep pace with the changes happening within and around you.

• You keep the significant changes taking place in perspective and react appropriately. You live the awareness that you must strike a balance between underreacting and overreacting to the situation in order to get the best results. Listening to yourself allows a reasonable amount of emotion to guide you so that you’re neither neglecting nor becoming consumed by the developmental, work, health, financial, family, or relationship-related changes that are happening.

• You don’t get caught up in anger or fear-based thoughts when significant changes are occurring in your life or the lives of loved ones. You live the awareness that too much anger or fear will lead you to think emotionally rather than rationally in managing a change. By listening to yourself, you avoid the stupidity of thinking and doing things to attack, undo, deny, or ignore a change rather than managing it.

• You can instigate necessary change even when you know it will be painful to you or others. You live the awareness that you must answer the call of love and truth rather than fear in doing what must be done for yourself or others, even when it is difficult. Listening to yourself allows you to realize that you’re doing the right thing even when it doesn’t feel right to bring forth needed change.

• You are willing to keep pace with the changes taking place in society and technology. You live the awareness that progress is taking place as a result of the love and truth at work within
the unfolding collective evolutionary process. Listening to yourself makes you want to live in the world that currently exists, rather than engaging in the stupidity of trying to return to a world that once was.

**Your Ability to Deal with Failures, Losses, and Mistakes**

- **You accept that you will fail, lose, and make mistakes throughout your life.** You live the awareness that your healthy human vulnerability and imperfection will inevitably lead to unfortunate and unpleasant experiences, including failing, losing, and making mistakes. Listening to yourself stops you from engaging in the stupidity of denying your imperfection with perfectionism or worrying too much about when bad things will happen.

- **You don’t need to hide your failures, losses, or mistakes from yourself or others.** You live the awareness that your human vulnerability and imperfection are reflected in adversity and don’t need to be hidden from yourself or others. Listening to yourself guides you to accept all of who you are rather than engaging in the stupidity of pretending to be infallible or immune to failing, losing, or making mistakes.

- **You don’t lose sight of the good things about yourself when you’re going through difficult times and adversity.** You live the awareness that you must remain fair and humane to yourself in the face of adversity, keeping in mind what is good and right about yourself. Thus, listening to yourself stops you from engaging in the stupidity of disowning yourself, rejecting yourself, or beating yourself up emotionally when “bad” things happen.

- **You recognize the importance of emotions in helping you to better see your failures, losses, and mistakes.** You live the awareness that healthy amounts of love, fear, anger, sadness, and guilt can help you see what you need to see, hear what you need to hear, think what you need to think, and do what you need to do in your response to the challenges of your humanity. By listening to yourself, you’re able to experience a friendship with your feelings that helps you better understand, own, and solve problems, than may occur in their absence.

- **You are motivated to deal with problems sooner rather than later.** You live the awareness that it’s better to manage problems
when they begin to appear than to wait for them to grow larger and begin managing you and your life. Listening to yourself stops you from engaging in the stupidity of procrastination or waiting for a problem to go away on its own, particularly with bigger ones.

• **You accept constructive suggestions and criticisms from people who want to help you with your weaknesses and imperfections.** You live the awareness that being a healthily vulnerable person includes the ability to accept a helping hand in your time of need. Listening to yourself guides you to take advantage of the wisdom of others rather than engaging in the stupidity and ignorance of believing you’re beyond the need for any help.

### Your Ability to Experience Genuine Happiness

• **You understand that happiness doesn’t require the removal of your weaknesses, imperfection, or vulnerability.** You live the awareness that you must embrace your humanity in order to experience happiness, rather than attempting to disown or reject it. Listening to yourself helps you to reconcile the imperfection of your humanity with the perfection of your Divinity rather than engaging in the stupidity of trying to choose one over the other.

• **You understand the connection that exists between truth and happiness.** You live the awareness that human and Divine Truth are embedded with love, which opens the door to experiencing happiness. Thus, listening to yourself has you lovingly seeking truth to move you forward along the path to happiness, rather than engaging in the stupidity of taking detours or shortcuts involving untruths rooted in fear.

• **You use your emotions as a tool to guide you toward genuine happiness.** You live the awareness that feelings such as anger, anxiety, sadness, and guilt are tools and signals telling you how far you are from experiencing happiness. Listening to yourself leads you to pay attention to these signals and consider what must change in your thoughts, words, and deeds to bring you into greater alignment with love and truth while building happiness from within.

• **You have replaced fear with love as the fuel powering your life.** You live the awareness that love for yourself, others, and life is intimately connected with happiness. By listening to yourself, you’re
fashioning thoughts, words, and deeds rooted in love rather than engaging in the stupidity of using fear as the means to happiness.

- **You recognize that the more you are experiencing genuine happiness, the less dependent you are on pseudo-happiness.** You live the awareness that pleasure-based happiness is only a substitute for genuine happiness; it’s not the real thing. Listening to yourself prevents you from engaging in the stupidity of frequently using diversions and distractions in an attempt to feel happy, and thinking that’s what life is about—getting your next “fix” of happiness.

- **You understand that getting relief from experiencing unpleasant emotions such as anger, fear, or sadness isn’t happiness.** You live the awareness that the interruption of unhappiness is not the same as happiness, which requires work to bring it about. Listening to yourself stops you from becoming dependent on pleasure-based relief strategies and the stupidity of thinking that’s what feeling happy is all about.

*Your Ability to Cope with Stressors and Stress*

- **You don’t look for bad things to happen.** You live the awareness that you can handle whatever comes your way, and that fear will not stop bad things from happening. Because you’re listening to yourself, you’re dealing with things as they come rather than ruminating and wasting time and energy on things that most likely will not happen.

- **You don’t feel that life is out to get you or that it’s giving you more than you can handle.** You live the awareness that stressors appear to be more frequent, larger, and more unmanageable when your fear level increases and your sense of being able to handle them decreases. Thus, listening to yourself has you paying attention to your emotions and the loss of perspective they can bring about if you ignore the impact they can have on you.

- **You respond to stressors using love rather than fear.** You live the awareness that fear often drives you quickly toward your worst thoughts and behaviors, whereas love promotes greater depth of understanding and a wiser, more deliberative approach. Listening to yourself guides you to work to manage stressors instead of engaging in the stupidity of trying to reject, disown, or defeat them based on fear.
• You react with an appropriate amount of emotion, depending on the stressor you are facing. You live the awareness that nothing is beyond your ability to handle it as long as you keep it in perspective and don’t allow anger or fear to get the better of you. Listening to yourself keeps your feet on the ground, realizing that the management of a problem is often more important than the problem itself.

• You can spot your stress-induced thoughts and behaviors. You live the awareness that stress reveals itself not just in feelings, but also in your thoughts, words, and behaviors. Listening to yourself guides you to pay attention to all of these things instead of engaging in the stupidity of thinking stress is only an emotional experience.

• You stop experiencing stress once you have dealt with the stressor. You live the awareness of your ability to deal with the stressor now and if it returns. Thus, listening to yourself allows the problem to be over rather than getting caught up in the stupidity of waiting for it to return—which often doesn’t happen.

• You don’t beat yourself up for having succumbed to the stressor. You live the awareness that weakness, imperfection, and vulnerability are part of who you are and don’t need to be renounced or rejected. Listening to yourself allows you to have bad moments and get over it, rather than letting them linger.

• You recognize when you are being stressful for others to be around. You live the awareness that stress is like a disease that others around you can catch. Listening to yourself has you paying attention to your thoughts, words, and behaviors and realizing that others—particularly your partner and children—are also having to deal with them, which can be stressful.

• You use proven strategies rather than quick fixes to handle stress. You live the awareness that quick fixes are often as much about removing your anxiety and fear as they are about fixing the problem. Instead, listening to yourself has you working with meditation, relaxation training, exercise, yoga, healthy dietary patterns, healthy sleep patterns, mindfulness practice, and cognitive therapy rather than unproven strategies often sold on TV or the Internet.
Your Ability to Resolve Conflict

- **You approach conflict with love for yourself and those with whom you are in disagreement.** You live the awareness that conflict only works well when undertaken with respect for yourself and others, and with a sincere desire to both teach and learn. Listening to yourself has you engaged in constructive conflicts while avoiding or removing yourself from those that have become destructive and oftentimes petty and personal.

- **You experience healthy amounts of anger and anxiety, as well as love, when involved in arguments and disagreements.** You live the awareness that your emotions can serve as tools to energize the formation and expression of your best thoughts while appropriately scrutinizing those of others. By listening to yourself, you're taking advantage of the benefits of your feelings in motivating and raising the quality of your participation in conflict.

- **You keep the relationship in focus even as you engage in arguments or disagreements.** You live the awareness that it’s as important to respect the people you are dealing with as it is to respect their positions, even when you disagree with them. Listening to yourself has you paying attention to both the process and the content of the conflict, rather than engaging in the stupidity of only focusing on the latter, as many people do.

- **Your arguments and disagreements are over when the discussion ends, even when there has been no meeting of the minds.** You live the awareness that continuing to repeat the conflict in your mind is usually a sign that too much negative emotion has become entangled in the disagreement, making it personal. Thus, listening to yourself guides you to deal with those feelings rather than keeping the disagreement alive, keeping it personal, and carrying a grudge that may spill into other interactions, particularly with family members.

- **You are not afraid to lose an argument or disagreement.** You live the awareness that your imperfections and weaknesses will inevitably need some correction and improvement. Listening to yourself leads you to take a very healthy approach in which you are willing to expose your mistaken ideas to scrutiny rather than engaging in the stupidity of hiding them from yourself and others and remaining in ignorance.
• **You apologize when you step out of bounds during arguments or disagreements.** You live the awareness that due to your imperfection, your emotions may get the better of you during conflicts, leading you to say something that you don’t truly mean. Listening to yourself helps you to own these moments of weakness instead of engaging in the stupidity of being too proud to admit when you were wrong.

• **You don’t use arguments or disagreements as a form of entertainment.** You live the awareness that conflict is not a tool for amusement or for the purpose of feeling an emotional rush to interrupt your boredom. Listening to yourself allows for meaningful engagement in conflict while avoiding the stupidity of engaging in conflict for conflict’s sake and being disingenuous with others.
Your relationship with God is tremendously influenced by the nature of your ego energy. When your ego energy is healthy and balanced, the doors are wide open to recognizing the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within yourself, living it in your daily life, and finding it in others. You are able to be the unconditional, unburdened, unlimited, and connective Love—God Is, as you are meant to be within your daily life and as you undertake your life’s work. This Love positively impacts all of the important life areas and skills you are called upon to use along the path of living the great life you are meant to live. You are able to recognize and respect the presence of God in all living beings. There is no hierarchy, and you don’t distinguish within your thoughts, words, or deeds between different life forms’ embodiment of the Life—God Is. You can call upon the transformative Energy —God Is within your being to move you toward the One Voice of the universe as you progressively enter into the Kingdom of Heaven—here and now!

When your ego energy is healthy and balanced, it will allow you to embrace each of the Four Divine Gifts that everyone has received. These Gifts given to us by God include your life, your ability to create the life in which you are living, the presence of God within your being, and your eternal life. Your life holds greater value for you when you embrace the opportunity given to you to live when compared to the alternative of never having existed. This realization can help you to know that your life has more purpose than simply time spent between your birth and death.
You enhance your ability to create the life in which you are living when your ego is healthy and balanced. You are then able to use the tools connected to your body, mind, and spirit to move through the challenges you face and create the great life you are meant to live. It is your task to create this life. It is not handed to you, even if you have been given wonderful earthly gifts involving beauty, intelligence, athletic potential, or artistic ability. The great life does not come to you. You must go to it by choosing to live the great life with what has been given to you. It does not require great wealth or talent, or more than what you have—only the use of what has been given to you.

The witnessing of God’s presence within you is unmistakable when you have embraced this Gift. This Gift is most intimately known when you have formed the awareness that in God’s absence, you, or any life, could not be. This is the incredible Love—God Is that is revealed to you. You have never walked alone and never could walk alone in your life, as God is your constant companion—even if you don’t know it, and even after your physical death. Only imbalanced ego energy can lead you to think otherwise. God’s absence is only an illusion that occurs when your ego is focusing you on survival rather than living.

Your eternal life cannot be obscured by your earthly death when you have embraced this Gift. In God, there can be no death for you or anyone—only transformation, as you move forward on your journey into the Kingdom of Heaven. Survival and death are intimately linked when your ego energy is imbalanced. This linkage is weakened and broken as you step beyond the illusions your ego has helped you to construct in an effort to keep you safe and protected. Living and life, here and beyond, are the alternatives you begin to recognize as you no longer fear what is impossible—your complete death.

Little Picture vs. Big Picture

When we are heavily engaged in efforts to ensure our daily and mortal survival, we are only able to see the “little picture.” Our human life and humanity are very much in focus, and our spirituality and divinity are very much out of focus. We only see things through our ego energy and the images we get. Thus, the impressions we form grow progressively more unrealistic, distorted, and even disturbed when the power, flexibility, and vulnerability of this energy is imbalanced. Many reflections of this distortion have been mentioned in previous chapters of this book. These distorted thoughts also create difficulty in seeing the big picture, which involves recognizing Divine
Truth and the Four Divine Gifts, which are a core part of who we are. We are missing opportunities to synergize our humanity with our divinity, but not losing them. We can awaken to Divine Truth and the Four Divine Gifts at any time. However, this requires moving beyond our complete ignorance of them or merely intellectual appreciation of them, where they exist only in the mind but not in the heart—and even more importantly, in our life.

We are seeing the big picture when we are being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is and embracing the Four Divine Gifts in the way we are living our lives, particularly in the ten key life areas. We are synergizing our human energy—our ego energy—and our Divine energy. The opportunity to live the best version of ourselves and the great life we are meant to live has arrived. That opportunity will never pass, because it is part of our destiny. Our place in the Kingdom of Heaven has been prepared and awaits us. The only thing to be decided by us is the time of our arrival.

Our arrival is only delayed by imbalanced ego energy and six ego illusions that can keep us firmly entrenched in the little picture view of ourselves and life. In the little picture view, survival—often involving various forms of suffering and stupidity—comprises a much greater part of our experience and existence than living does. These ego illusions keep us at a distance from our spirituality and Divinity. They include the illusions of separation, unworthiness, inequality, sensing all energy, human order, and human control. Each of them ensures that ego will be speaking for us in our life, rather than ourselves, while also rendering us unable to hear the voice of Spirit, weakening our connection to God, and obscuring our view of the big picture.

The Illusion of Separation

When imbalanced, our ego energy erects a wall between our humanity and our Divinity. We experience a sense of distance and disconnection from God, including the God within ourselves and others. Sometimes this leads us to question whether God exists, or if we really need God in our life. All of the qualities that are part of our humanity remain tightly in focus and magnified, and all of the connections to our Divinity become so out of focus it’s like they don’t exist. We cannot recognize the Oneness and Unity of our connection to God via Divine Truth and the Four Divine Gifts when power, flexibility, or vulnerability issues are leading us away from experiencing this connection. We can only recognize the manifestation of God within our being when we are living the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within our
thoughts, words, and deeds. Some may attribute them to the goodness within their humanity alone. However, that misses the point, because it all originated in our Divinity. It’s only being manifested within our humanity. When people well up with pride, pat themselves on the back, or look to others to affirm their good deeds, that’s all ego. They want to believe they did it all themselves, not recognizing how much God was involved in making it possible. That’s what can take place in the Illusion of Separation.

Within the Illusion of Separation, you also may see others as being separate from God in either a “positive” or “negative” way. When they are doing wonderful, positive things for others, you may see them as great people and wonderful human beings. And they are, but their thoughts, words, and deeds did not originate in their humanity, but within their Divinity. The Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within their being was the source of their great work. You may want to give them an award or some special recognition in response to their efforts, but if they’re aware of the real origins of their works, they would not want those things. Jesus, Gandhi, or Mother Teresa would not have wanted or needed them. Their thoughts, words, and deeds came from God and need no recognition. They were spiritual beings encountering a human experience, with no separation between their humanity and Divinity—and so are others doing good and great works.

We can be consumed with the Illusion of Separation in another way: convincing ourselves of the absence of God in others. The weaknesses and imperfections we may witness in the thoughts, words, and deeds of others may be filtered through imbalanced ego energy, leading to the conclusion that God cannot exist within them. For some, this makes it easier to hate, oppress, or even kill others. It’s a strategy used in warfare, particularly in wars involving religion in which another person’s understanding of God is perceived as “godless.” People like Jesus, Gandhi, and King never lost sight of the presence of God within their oppressors, and even appealed to it, as they sought to address the ills of the status quo.

Furthermore, we often see ourselves as separate from others within the Illusion of Separation. We may relate to others on purely human terms by noting all of the characteristics that make us different, such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, beliefs, attitudes, and values, while missing the commonality of our Divinity. We may not see the God within them, and they may not see the God within us. We may call upon the best of our humanity to bridge the gap between us and our brothers and sisters, but in focusing only on what makes us different, we fail to realize a deeper connection exists
between all of us. When recognized, this connection allows us to collectively create the great life we are all meant to live and share with each other. The Illusion of Separation undermines our spiritual consciousness by keeping us from seeing that we all share Divine Truth and the Four Divine Gifts. This Divine Truth supersedes the differences within our humanity and is the basis for our Oneness and Unity, no matter who we are or where we come from.

*The Illusion of Unworthiness*

The *Illusion of Unworthiness* involves the belief that we and others are not worthy of God unless we meet certain requirements—which have actually been defined by humans, not by God. Unhealthy ego energy can lead you to question your worthiness or the worthiness of others to be connected to God. This question can often lead to fashioning various “qualifications” you and others must meet, none of which are required by God to be worthy of God. Because you were born worthy, with the Gift of God Within, you cannot become worthy. You already are. You can only become aware of your worthiness. You are only asked to be what you are—the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is, not something you aren’t. God does not abandon you by imposing any requirements or criteria. You can abandon yourself, becoming immersed in questioning your own worthiness or that of others, when ego power, flexibility, or vulnerability issues are impacting the way you know yourself, others, and God. They can interfere with your ability to be the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within your daily life, manifesting themselves as behaviors and emotions that affect your feelings of worthiness to be connected to God—or your belief in the worthiness of others. Many conflicts rooted in ego issues began in a misguided attempt to outline the “right” way to be worthy of God. Humans have taken something very simple and made it extremely complex, and seemingly unattainable for most.

God has never written one word in the history of humanity about God. Our ancestors and ourselves have done all the writing. Thus, this writing can have a spiritually based foundation or a humanly based foundation. When it is spiritually based, it shares messages and stories that directly refer to Divine Truth and the Four Divine Gifts. They reflect a celebration of who you are and the opportunities you have been given to be the best version of yourself and live the great life you are meant to live. These messages can be heard within all faiths that seek to teach us about the wondrous nature of God within our lives.
When ego is at work, particularly when it’s imbalanced and unhealthy, the tone of the message darkens. The speaker or writer begins humanizing God in ways he does not realize he is doing, nor does the listener or reader. He believes he is doing a service to God, but he is actually doing a disservice when crafting messages about God’s requirements and our unworthiness. The greatness of God is revealed in our unending connection to God, despite our human weaknesses and misdeeds. The themes in these false messages connect God to anger, resentment, intolerance, punitiveness, and retribution, which actually rest in the mind and heart of the speaker or writer. God does not bring about natural disasters to teach us a lesson, select people of any race, religion, culture, or sexual orientation to suffer consequences merely for being who they are, send us to Hell for failing to meet God’s standards, or want us to experience any of the pain or suffering that may enter into our lives—because we are not worthy. This is one of the reasons many people stop attending religious services. They don’t want to hear messages about God and themselves that they know intuitively, if not intellectually, are wrong.

The church and other religious venues are like a classroom. They are there to teach us about God and bring us closer to God within ourselves and others. When the teaching gains distance from Divine Truth and the Four Divine Gifts, it is being contaminated by ego—that of the speaker or writer. Listen for the higher ego power, lower ego flexibility, or higher ego vulnerability issues within the cleric—they are there. They will paint a picture of God that actually reflects the speaker or writer’s own needs for control and inflexible approach to working with dogma that may include deprecation of other faiths. They will offer a heavily fear-based message about God and what God wants from us.

In our current stage of evolution, we continue to need religion and clerics. They can serve as beautiful bridges to knowing God and the God within us. They do this for us when they are spiritually based and not being diluted by imbalanced ego energy within the religious leader. In actuality, any of us could have written what is said in religious texts. If your thoughts and words are flowing from being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is, and you express them about the Four Divine Gifts, you are no different from the writers who contributed to the texts that guide our religions. You are speaking with the One Voice of the universe, and that has no boundaries in regard to person, place, time—or religion.
The Illusion of Inequality

The *Illusion of Inequality* is at work when we have created a hierarchy in the way we think about living beings. This hierarchy affects the amount of honor and respect we show toward other living beings—both within the human species, and across all living species. When we make distinctions across racial, gender, religious, ethnic, social class, gender orientation, or political lines in the way we treat people, we are engaged in the Illusion of Inequality. When we are treating animals, plants, and the environment with disrespect manifested in abuse and exploitation, we are also engaged in the Illusion of Inequality. When we look at ourselves and place ourselves above or below others as a result of our own physical, mental, social, or emotional characteristics, we are engaged in the Illusion of Inequality as well. We cannot be the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is when treating different life forms as unequal. God is present in all life, or it could not be. To disrespect life in any of its forms is to disrespect God, as they are one and the same.

Ego energy issues play a significant role in the creation of this illusion. Substantial power issues and needs for control can fuel the need to exercise control over other people or living beings. The perception of others’ inferiority and a “we know better” or “big brother” attitude often justifies this control. Racism, sexism, and colonialism are prominent examples of how “weaker” personal characteristics have been ascribed to particular groups, then used as the basis for discriminatory practices. At times such practices were presented as intended to help people. Attempts to prevent women from entering the military or pursuing career options supposedly done better by men because women were seen as too weak or emotional reflect these supposedly good intentions. Lower ego flexibility issues often guide the thinking of those who are locked into the notion that differentness equals deficiency. These issues drive the way they mistreat people who do not share their background as well as other living species. The abuse of animals based on the premise that they have a different and “lower” intellect represents the Illusion of Inequality at work. Higher ego vulnerability issues can feed into fear-based thoughts that comply with the Illusion of Inequality. These thoughts often seize upon what is unknown about other people or species, defaulting to ideas that dishonor and disrespect what is unknown—often in a misguided effort to ensure one’s own protection and survival.

We are focused heavily on survival and firmly ensconced in the little picture when we employ a hierarchical view of life. The Love—God Is has no
boundaries based on inequality that would affect its connective, unburdened, unlimited, and unconditional nature. We cannot know the Life—God Is when we honor and respect only human qualities or characteristics, as God is present in all life. We cannot recognize the Energy—God Is when failing to see that any of the life one is witnessing is a manifestation of the wisdom of the ages and represents God’s work in its current form. None of life’s dignity can be brought into question or disparaged by the Illusion of Inequality when knowing it through the big picture of Divine Truth.

The Illusion of Sensing All Energy

Our five senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch are intimately linked to the physical, earthly world we constantly encounter. They are wonderful tools brought forth by evolution that offer the opportunity to experience incredible sunsets, beautiful music, sweet fragrance from flowers, sumptuous food, and warm embraces. They also help us to survive by sending warning signals when we encounter something in the environment that could endanger us. We rely on them so much, and they work so seamlessly, that we often take them for granted until they begin to fail us or we lose them. We also rely on them so much that we often believe they are giving us the whole picture of what is taking place around and within us. This promotes the Illusion of Sensing All Energy. This illusion tells us that human, physical, and earthly reality is all reality and that our senses are giving us the whole picture. While failing to realize they are not giving us the big picture.

Reality—both physical and psychological—is affected by the energy that goes into creating and shaping that reality. The energy that shapes our world is far more diverse than our senses can register and process. The fact that we cannot sense it does not mean it is not out there or inside us. The Energy—God Is has far greater diversity and impact than we can recognize within the limits of our five senses. When our ego energy is healthy and balanced, we can leave the door open to the possibilities that lie beyond the reach of our five senses and avoid succumbing to the Illusion of Sensing All Energy. We can embrace what we do not fully know or understand that lies within the Divine Realm. We do not require proof of its existence, which is often an egoically based demand.

Scientifically based explanations become the only basis for the acceptance of truth when the Illusion of Sensing All Energy is at work. Spiritually based experiences are often discounted because they don’t comport to the rigor
of scientifically based facts. Yes, science is an incredibly important tool that has played an important role in our evolution and the progress we have made, particularly in the technological and medical realms. However, it must always respect the limits of its research tools and methodology, while also realizing that the energy it is ultimately studying is God, meaning it is always undergoing transformation.

When our ego energy is unhealthy and imbalanced, we often cling to our five senses and lean heavily upon them in understanding the reality we are experiencing within us and around us. Our senses become our primary data source, and they shape an incomplete version of reality that only gives us the little picture. Unhealthy ego power (whether lower or higher) places an emphasis on how much control we can get from the use of our five senses. Accepting that they are only giving us part of the picture would weaken our sense of exerting control in our lives. When we believe nothing is hidden from us, we experience a greater sense of control. When we equate the effectiveness of our senses with having control, we think we can better ensure our survival. In contrast, seeing the big picture requires faith and trust in what lies beyond the reach of our five senses. When ego energy is healthy and balanced, we can go beyond the limitations of our senses and ourselves.

If people’s ego flexibility is unhealthy and imbalanced—whether high or low—they may insist there is an absolute truth that exists in the human realm that all people can know and share. The five senses play an important role in shaping this truth. They believe what they sense can only be real and true. For them, the non-sensed is nonsensical; they dismiss it as being unworthy of truth. This leaves out an incredible amount of energy (over 99%) that is actually at work within all forms of life. Even our human senses are limited, as there is visual, sound, smell, taste, and tactile input that we cannot sense, but which is real. For those with ego flexibility issues, survival is deeply connected to possessing the truth, and their truth is built by their own senses. Gaining a richer and healthier life requires abandoning the notion that our senses are the only means of revealing truth, while recognizing the energy that lies beyond the reach of our senses. By doing so, we can become more connected to genuine truth and the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is being revealed within it.

When ego vulnerability energy is unhealthy and imbalanced, fear is often at work in guiding the use of our senses. They become maximally attuned to anything and everything that could harm us and threaten our survival. We then have a difficult time sensing any of the good that is going on within us.
and around us. We fail to recognize the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is, so we draw the conclusion that it is absent. This leads to a failure to draw upon the incredible inner strength that’s available to us, if only we were open to it. The Illusion of Sensing All Energy often closes the door and keeps us in the little picture of life, especially when we’re going through more difficult and darker times. In actuality, our senses are doing their part in revealing the big picture and Divine Truth to us. If we go beneath the sensory surface of our experiences and our limited comprehension of them caused by imbalanced ego energy, we can recognize the Love, Life, and Energy that underlies our sensory experiences. Our human senses may not be sensing all of the energy at work, but they are revealing some of it, and God is present within it as well.

The Illusion of Human Order

The Illusion of Human Order involves the belief that any or all of the pain, suffering, or stupidity that is taking place in your life or the world should not be happening. It is a “noble” illusion that suggests that you and the world are better than this. It holds that all of the inhumanity directed at yourself and your fellow humans should not be happening. It maintains that you are living beneath what you are capable of when considering your intelligence, capacity for good intentions, and ability to make yourself a better person and your world a better place. This illusion also suggests that anything bad you hear about when watching the evening news, listening to the radio, reading the newspaper, or going on the Internet, involving man’s inhumanity to man, should not be taking place. But it does, it can, and it will continue to take place if you remain in the grasp of an illusion telling you that if you can draw upon your human resources alone and capacity for good, you are capable of experiencing a better, if not perfect, life and world.

The relentless pain, suffering, and stupidity that we may bring to ourselves, that others bring to us, or that we can bring to others—particularly those experiencing the poor or fair versions of life—is exactly what we should expect to occur when unhealthy and imbalanced ego energy is at work. It is the “order of human disorder” rooted in unhealthy ego energy that leads us to be inhumane to ourselves and others, over and over again. Lack of intelligence or understanding of the right things to think, feel, or do is not the pervasive source of man’s inhumanity to man. It’s the work of ego power, flexibility, and vulnerability issues that forms the foundation of the order of human disorder. They overrule what is good within us, both
The boundaries of our ego energy frame our little picture of life. And the more distinctly these boundaries are defined by imbalanced ego power, flexibility, or vulnerability, the more we can expect to witness or experience the order of human disorder.

The Illusion of Human Order also distances us from Divine Order. When we are living in Divine Order, we are being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is to ourselves and all other beings. The big picture of life cannot become known to us when we are not living under Divine Order. The grip of imbalanced ego energy then leads us into various manifestations of the order of human disorder intended to promote our daily and mortal survival. The Illusion of Human Order also obscures our recognition of the Four Divine Gifts—Life, Creating Our Life, Eternal Life, and God Within. We may see them only as beautiful ideas or idealistic notions, or fail to recognize them at all. This is often the case for those viewing the quality of their life as poor or fair. For them, it’s as if the Divine Gifts don’t truly exist, as well as the Divine Truth from which they emerged. They are only left with the Illusion of Human Order with which to work toward a better life. However, this better life cannot be known in the absence of connection to Divine Truth and the Divine Order it sets forth. It is this Divine Order shaped by being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is that allows us to deal with the order of human disorder. It is this Divine Order that allows us to recognize the big picture of who we truly are—a spiritual being having a human experience. It is this Divine Order that allows the notion of world peace to move beyond being an unrealistic fantasy to become an achievable reality, as we move forward along the path of evolution.

The Illusion of Human Control

The Illusion of Human Control involves the belief that all of the pain, suffering, and stupidity taking place in our lives and in the world can be fixed with our human resources alone. These resources include our intellect, good information, good intentions, and medications, to name a few, which we can work with to heal ourselves and others. Certainly these can be effective tools, and we need to use them—just not exclusively. When we are depending solely on them, our imbalanced ego energy is leading us only toward these answers. Power, flexibility, or vulnerability issues are leading us toward a little picture view of healing. We believe the means to our daily and mortal survival can only be found in our human resources. We are cut off from our spirituality and Divinity, and there is no bigger picture to be seen.
When we are calling upon our spirituality and Divinity, we are still utilizing our human talents. However, we are using them while being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is. These “Divine Resources” allow us to approach situations with a much greater breadth and depth of understanding, patience, flexibility, acceptance, and unlimited energy, which goes beyond a purely human approach. You have probably heard stories of how people overcame incredible challenges due to their indomitable human spirit. And they did—but the spirit being referred to is found within their Divinity, not their humanity. Such people often say they confronted the situation with a strength they did not know they had. Yes they did. This inner strength flowed from their Divinity, not their humanity.

You have surely also heard the phrase “God works in mysterious ways!” Often those mysterious ways are Divine Resources being manifested within individuals or groups to bring about something that was completely unexpected from a purely human standpoint. You have probably heard the phrase “the sum is greater than all of the parts,” too. The opportunity to come together often provides a means of not only sharing our humanity, but also our Divinity. One of the greatest examples of this is the Olympic Games, in which a competitive context ultimately serves as a communal, spiritual experience. One of the greatest people I ever met was the famous track and field athlete Jesse Owens, and I think he would have agreed with that.

The Illusion of Human Control also creates distance from the Divine Resources involving spiritual tools we have been given to heal ourselves and others. These spiritual tools have come forth through our evolution and have been fashioned by the wisdom of the ages. They work because they resonate with our design, which includes our Divinity. These spiritual tools include meditation, prayer, yoga, mindfulness practice, humor, healthy diet, exercise, and healthy sleep patterns. You were probably born within the past one hundred years, but your design has been crafted by millions of years of wisdom—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually speaking. When we ignore that wisdom, we are living in the little picture of life and relying heavily on our human resources alone. When we draw upon our Divine Resources and the spiritual tools available to all of us, we have gone beyond the Illusion of Human Control and are seeing the big picture.
The Deliverance of Truth

I can think of no more integral word to healing and wellness than the word “truth.” Despite the doors it can open to relieve people of much of their pain, suffering, and yes, stupidity, we have a difficult time finding it. Often we get sidetracked by an ego-driven version of truth masquerading for it in the form of belief. Its disguise is often shaped by power, flexibility, or vulnerability issues in one’s ego energy. For some, the masquerade never ends and the disguise is never removed. Life will always be poor, fair, or an illusion of good. It can never be great, because that life requires a deeper connection to human and Divine Truth.

Divine Truth has been made available to everyone who has ever lived and who ever will. It is the making of our Oneness and Unity. It is truly brilliant in its simplicity and immediacy. Divine Truth does not hide from us; we hide from it. The Love, Life, and Energy—God Is will always be within us and surrounds us constantly. We need only open our mind and heart to see it, become it, and reap all of what it can bring to us.

For those who seek to undertake the journey, I offer a path to finding your humanity and Divinity. It is a path intended to illuminate who you truly are, but who you often aren’t behaving as, both humanly and spiritually. It is a common path to us all, as we all experience similar challenges and destinations along the journey. However, it is a path that you can only walk alone, and no one can walk it for you. This path allows for the synergy of your ego and spirit, your humanity and Divinity, and
speaking with *your* voice, not ego’s, in concert with the One Voice of the universe—God.

“And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”

~John 8:32
GLOSSARY

**Divine Order:** The Universal Law under which our higher good unfolds when we are being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is.

**Divine Truth:** The Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within all beings.

**Ego:** The source our human energy whose main purpose is to promote our daily and mortal survival. It is comprised of power, flexibility, and vulnerability. Ego impacts the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and physiology that we experience and use in daily life. The terms “ego” and “human” are equal. Our human self is our ego self, our human mind is our ego mind, our human nature is our ego nature, and a human being is an egoic being.

**Ego Awareness:** An understanding of what ego is on both broad and specific levels. Gaining the former involves developing familiarity with various ego-related concepts, which are discussed in this book and in *Ego Therapy*. The latter involves becoming familiar with the level of power, flexibility, and vulnerability within our ego energy and how we are living it in the ten key life areas.

**Ego Consciousness:** An awareness of how, when, and where egoic issues of power, flexibility, or vulnerability are manifesting themselves in our life, particularly in the ten key life areas.

**Ego Energy:** The unique combination of ego power, flexibility, and vulnerability levels that comprise our ego. This combination determines how well we will manage the ten key life areas. Our ego energy will also
influence our approach to spirituality and our connection to God, including the Godness within us. Chapter 4 of *Ego Therapy: A Method for Healing Your Whole Self* discusses 125 possible ego energies, and along with Chapters 3-11 of this book, is intended to assist you with finding and getting to know your own ego energy.

**Ego Flexibility:** The degree of flexibility within our ego energy. It is the ego component most directly linked to seeking and knowing truth. Our ego flexibility is reflected in our ability to add, change, or remove “knowledge” (e.g., ideas, beliefs, values, attitudes, prejudices, or delusions) from our mind. The extent to which we rely on our own thinking and knowledge (internal input) and that of others (external input) determines our ego flexibility. Our ability to tell the difference between reality-based thinking (good input) or non-reality-based thinking (bad input) also affects our ego flexibility. Ego flexibility levels range from low to high.

**Ego Imbalance:** A state in which the power, flexibility, and/or vulnerability within one’s ego energy is at a distance from the balanced level. The more components that have an imbalance, and the greater the distance from the balanced level they are, the greater the ego imbalance. This negatively affects management of the ten key life areas and the depth of one’s spiritual consciousness and connection to God. Ego imbalance can involve low or low-normal ego power, flexibility, or vulnerability, and high or high-normal ego power, flexibility, or vulnerability. Each of these possibilities is extensively discussed in *Ego Therapy*.

**Ego Medicine:** Ego healing that involves developing ego awareness, tuning in to our ego energy, and recognizing how egoic issues of power, flexibility, and vulnerability are impacting us in the ten key life areas, followed by the use of reality-based thinking and insights to more effectively manage these issues.

**Ego Mind:** The sum of all of the contents of our mind, including the ideas, beliefs, values, attitudes, prejudices, and delusions that we form based on the nature of our ego energy.

**Ego Power:** The degree of power within our ego energy. It is the component most directly linked to our need to exert power, control, or influence in the world, particularly as reflected by our need to use our own ideas, choices,
and behaviors within the ten key life areas. Ego power levels range from low to high.

**Ego Self:** The patterns of thinking, feeling, behaving, and physiological reactions that we form based on the nature of our ego energy in order to manage daily life and the ten key life areas.

**Ego Space:** This term is analogous to our ego mind, in which we carry all of the ideas, beliefs, attitudes, values, prejudices, and delusions that we use in our thinking to manage our lives, particularly in the ten key life areas. The contents of our ego space are housed in our brain.

**Ego Therapy:** The self-help method of healing our ego energy by cultivating our ego awareness and working to bring it into balance where needed, if an imbalance exists in its power, flexibility, or vulnerability. This healing optimizes our functioning within the ten key life areas, promotes the development of our spirituality, and allows us to live the best version of ourselves and life.

**Ego Unconsciousness:** A lack of awareness of ego and how egoic issues of power, flexibility, or vulnerability are being manifested in our life, especially in the ten key life areas. In this state, we have no idea how our imbalanced ego energy is negatively affecting us, others, and our life.

**Ego Vulnerability:** The degree of vulnerability within our ego energy. It is the ego component directly linked to the recognition and acceptance of our weaknesses, imperfections, and vulnerability. It is affected by how well we are able to accept and work with weaknesses and imperfections that exist in ourselves, others, and the world. It is reflected by how quickly, how deeply, and how long we go into fight-or-flight mode, which involves feeling anxiety or anger in response to stressors—whether large or small, expected or unexpected, real or imagined. Ego vulnerability levels range from low to high.

**Ego Spiritualism:** This is a consciousness in which you are fully awakened egoically and spiritually. The energy of your humanity has been synergized with that of your Divinity. You meet the challenges of your daily life while being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is.
Four Divine Gifts: The Gifts of Life, Creating Our Life, Eternal Life, and God Within, which have been received by all who have ever lived and ever will live.

God: The source of all that Is, embodying the Love, Life, and Energy that makes up all that exists. Different belief systems may use other words to describe God, such as Source, Vishnu, Yahweh, Allah, and Great Spirit.

Illusion of Human Control: The belief that any or all of the pain, suffering, and stupidity taking place in one’s life and in the world can be fixed with human resources alone.

Illusion of Human Order: The belief that any or all of the pain, suffering, or stupidity taking place in one’s life or in the world should not be happening.

Illusion of Inequality: The belief that within and across living species, there is a hierarchy that should shape the level of honor and respect displayed toward a particular species or individual depending on where it appears within the hierarchy.

Illusion of Sensing All Energy: The belief that our five senses alone will give us all there is to know about human, physical, and earthly reality, that anything we don’t perceive through our senses does not exist, and that it would be nonsensical to believe such things exist.

Illusion of Separation: The belief that we are not connected to God, others are not connected to God, and we are not connected to each other.

Illusion of Unworthiness: The belief that we and others are not worthy of God unless we meet certain requirements, determined by humans.

Spiritual Consciousness: A consciousness in which we recognize the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is within all beings and our connection to them. We fully embrace the Divine Gifts of Our Life, Creating Our Life, Eternal Life, and God Within. We are completely joined with God and all others as One and in Unity.
**Ten Key Life Areas:** Core aspects of human life, which often reflect egoic issues involving power, flexibility, or vulnerability. They serve as mirrors to the ego energy we are living. They include our ability to interact with others in healthy ways; form close relationships; love ourselves; achieve our potential and come to know our life’s purpose; grow the quality of our mind; manage life changes; deal with failures, losses, or mistakes; experience genuine happiness; cope with stressors and stress; and resolve conflict.
Why Stupid?

• Stupid means our intellect is being overruled by our ego in the way we live our lives.
• Stupid means having ego-driven, reality-disconnected thoughts, often leading us into unnecessary and painful beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and physical symptoms.
• Stupid means spending more of our life focused on daily and mortal survival and less of it on truly living.
• Stupid means blocking ourselves from spiritual awakening and being the Love, Life, and Energy—God Is.
• Stupid means failing to recognize and live the Divine Gifts everyone has been given—Life, Creating Our Life, Eternal Life, and God Within.

It’s Your Ego—Stupid! exposes you to a greater understanding of your ego; symptoms of ego imbalance involving power, flexibility, and vulnerability; and insights for fixing your ego so you can live the great life you are meant to live.

You are an intelligent, spiritual being capable of becoming a better human being!

—Nick Martin

Dr. Nickolas Martin, a licensed psychologist, certified school psychologist, and social worker, has worked in clinical, university, public school, and private practice settings as a therapist, diagnostician, educator, and consultant throughout the past 40 years. He is the author of Ego Therapy: A Method for Healing Your Whole Self and co-author with Rev. Dr. Linda M. Martin of EgoSpiritualism: Awakening to Your Human and Divine Self and The Two Voices Within: Balancing the Energies of Ego and Spirit to Enhance Your Life.

To learn more, visit www.egoandspirit.info