

Workshop Session I: Patterns—Resolving Internal Conflict

Purpose: Tracking your incidents over time reveals your basic repetitive patterns. Learn to find the source of these patterns and resolve many conflicts before they start.

Supplies: Paper, Awareness Wheels, Early Childhood Memory pages (handbook, pp. 9-10).

Content:

- Look more in depth at incidents
- Patterns in incidents
- Payoffs and costs
- Early childhood memories: their influence on incidents and patterns now

Activities:

1. One-on-one: Share positive incident
2. List incidents (at least 10)
3. Complete an awareness wheel
4. One-on-one: Share awareness wheel
5. Early Childhood Memory: meditation, Awareness Wheel, share

T> Good evening. First of all, we'd like to welcome some people who weren't here for the first five sessions of the course this year. They are joining us for the workshops, having taken the course before. [Have them introduce themselves and tell when they took the course before.] We'll play the Name Game in a few minutes so everyone will know everyone's name.

Tonight is the beginning of three workshops, in which we will use our knowledge of incidents and the Awareness Wheel to uncover our patterns and their subconscious causes so that we can choose whether to maintain or change them. We'll also learn how to negotiate to get what we want. Finally, by learning to manage our conflicts, we will learn to claim our capacity to make change in the world, and build our ideal relationships, community, and world.

We'll begin tonight by looking more in depth at incidents, and then we'll see whether there are patterns in our incidents. Then we'll look at early childhood memories and notice their influence on our incidents and patterns now.

T> Let's begin by letting go and being here with a meditation.

T> Well, I sure feel much more relaxed! Let's do a quick Name Game to get our energy going and meet some folks who wanted some more practice of the concepts they learned a while back.

T> Okay. Choose a partner for a one-on-one. In this one-on-one, share with your partner an incident that drew you closer to someone—a positive incident.

T> Good! Now list all the juicy incidents that you had this week. Try to list at least 10. Think of the significant people in your life—what happened between you and them this week? If you don't find 10 this week, range back in your mind until you come up with 10. You'll have about 5 minutes.

T> Now choose one of these incidents for an Awareness Wheel. Choose one that you want to know more about and that you are willing to share. We'll come around and see how you're doing. You'll have about 7 minutes to fill out your Awareness Wheel.

T> **Patterns Lecture.** You may have noticed in listing your incidents that they seem rather similar to each other. This is because we develop patterns in our behavior, our thinking, and our feelings. A pattern is a recurring incident, behavior, thought, or emotion.

T> You may notice the same type of incident with bosses, co-workers, boyfriends, girlfriends, friends, spouses, and children. You know you've got patterns when you keep changing jobs, relationships, even apartments, and yet the same kind of interaction keeps happening. Where do these patterns come from?

Patterns are based on beliefs we formed as children. As children, we made interpretations about others, the world, and ourselves that we used to cope with whatever events were happening to us.

Here's an example: A child is hurt and abused by a parent. Child decides:

- The world is a dangerous place.
- Men and women are hurtful and will not protect me.
- For survival it's best to keep quiet and stay out of the way most of the time.

The child could have drawn other quite different conclusions, but this is one possibility.

T> These decisions we made as children about the world lead to beliefs that still drive the way we act and react to events today. These beliefs are still in our Early Childhood Memories—often unconscious memories. So, why is it important for us to begin noticing our patterns and gathering information about early childhood memories? By noticing what drives us, we can begin to develop choice about how to behave, think, and feel, and about our wants from ourselves and others.

T> The best place to stand when noticing patterns is with our Inner Witness. The Inner Witness helps us observe—oh, there I go again—without judging or using the Inner Critic’s voice. The Inner Critic just keeps us stuck, since it just beats us up for “doing that old number again.”

Medical doctor, psychologist, and founder of the school of Individual Psychology, Alfred Adler believed that we create our realities, and we have the ability to change and grow. So observing and noticing the recurrent themes in our lives gives us the option to change patterns that no longer serve us.

T> Some common patterns are:

- You feel like a martyr a lot.
- Your boss is always wrong (or right).
- You don’t say “no” when you want to and then feel put upon.
- You’ll do anything to avoid a fight.
- You pick fights.
- You tend to think, “It’s all my/their fault.
- You let people get away with disappointing you.
- You give in repeatedly until you finally blow up.
- You think other people don’t acknowledge you as you deserve.
- Yelling, crying, withdrawing, silent treatment, ending the relationship, drinking.

T> OK. Take a couple of minutes to look over your list of incidents. Do you see any patterns?

T> Now choose a partner for a one-on-one. Share the incident and Awareness Wheel you did earlier. Tell your partner whether this incident seems familiar to you in any way and how. Do you see any patterns? You'll each have about 2 minutes.

T> Any questions?

T> Now we're going to have a meditation. In this meditation, we're going to go back to our childhood and tap into memories we have. We're going to relax and get in touch with events that happened when we were children. So put everything off your lap—take a deep breath. Roll your head and neck, stretch, get as comfortable as possible. Close your eyes and take some deep breaths, in for the count of 5, out for the count of five. Let your mind wander back in time to when you were a little child. Imagine yourself at 6 or a little younger. Picture where you were living, where you were going to school. Picture your family members. [Pause.]

By now you may have focused on a scene or an event or an incident that occurred when you were very young. Scan your young life 'til you find one. Anything that comes up will work. Choose one that you are willing to share.

What happened in this scene? Recreate it for yourself and picture each part of it. Who was there? What were they doing? What was said? What did you do? Remember or imagine what you might have been feeling. Remember or imagine what you might have been thinking. What were your body sensations, if you can remember? When you have a memory that is clear to you, raise your hand. Continue to focus on this scene and picture all the details.

Breathe in again deeply to the count of 5 and out to the count of 5. Continue to breathe, and when you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room.

T> In a few minutes I'll ask you to go back to your last partner and share your early childhood memories with each other.

[Handout on Early Childhood Memory, pp. 9-10 of handbook.]

Now let me have your attention up here while we talk about the handout. We're making a connection between our incidents, patterns, and early childhood memories here.

Look at the handout. Write your recent incident first at the top, the one you've been working with all evening. Then you're going to write your early childhood memory in the next section and do an Awareness Wheel about it. Mine was: My brother gave me a bite of his mustard sandwich.

Work with your partner to decide what kind of beliefs you formed about the world and others and yourself from this incident. Tell mine: Others are deceitful. I am gullible, vulnerable. The world is unfriendly. I'd better be wary, circumspect, keep my distance, and not ask for things.

After describing the beliefs you formed from this early childhood incident, describe your pattern. What is your typical incident, and what do you typically do?

Payoffs and Costs

T> Before we go any further, let me have your attention as a group so we can talk about another aspect of patterns.

Once we identify a pattern, we may wonder *why* we keep it going.

My incident and pattern. [A friend told me she was asked to donate a painting to a clinic.

She asked me which of two of her paintings I preferred. Then she gave it to *me*. I said

nothing about how angry I felt to be tricked like that.] Although I said nothing to her, I agonized about it for a long time.

This was a painful pattern for me, yet I kept it going. Why?

T> The answer lies in what we call **payoffs and costs**.

Payoffs are unconscious benefits we get from maintaining the pattern. Some of my **payoffs** were:

- Avoid confrontation.
- Don't alienate the other person.
- Don't take responsibility.
- Maybe the other won't notice the incident.

But there are also **costs** from having these unconscious patterns. Some of my **costs** were:

- I am misunderstood.
- I don't get what I want.
- I feel weak, ineffective.
- The other doesn't see me as I am.
- I feel I have to cover up who I am and how I feel in order to be liked.
- I suffer a loss of self-esteem.
- This unspoken incident creates a distance between my friend and me.

Acknowledging the costs and payoffs of our patterns is the key to change.

Staying with your Inner Witness helps you notice and create space to choose to maintain your pattern with its payoffs or choose to make changes to stop paying the price.

[If there is time.] Who wants to share his or her incident, early childhood memory, and pattern? As a group we'll brainstorm some possible payoffs and costs. Who would like

this opportunity? [See p. 12 of workbook—common payoffs and costs.] Of course, we're just guessing. These may not be the actual payoffs and costs for our volunteer.

Thanks for sharing your incident and early childhood memory.

T> Homework: observe your patterns, and ask yourself how each one serves you.

Read pp. 12-13 in workbook. Finish the write-up of your ECM. I suggest that you not write in your handbooks but use the forms to make copies that you can write on. Bring your lists of incidents and patterns with you to class next time.

T> Final go-around: how was tonight for you?

See you next time.