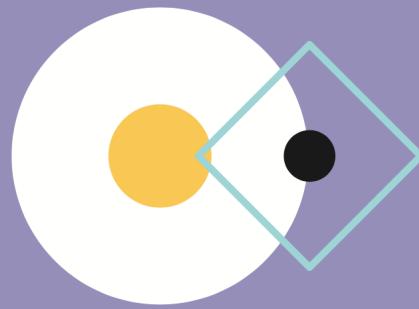


Conscious Recovery

Facilitator's Guide
for Eating Disorder Programs



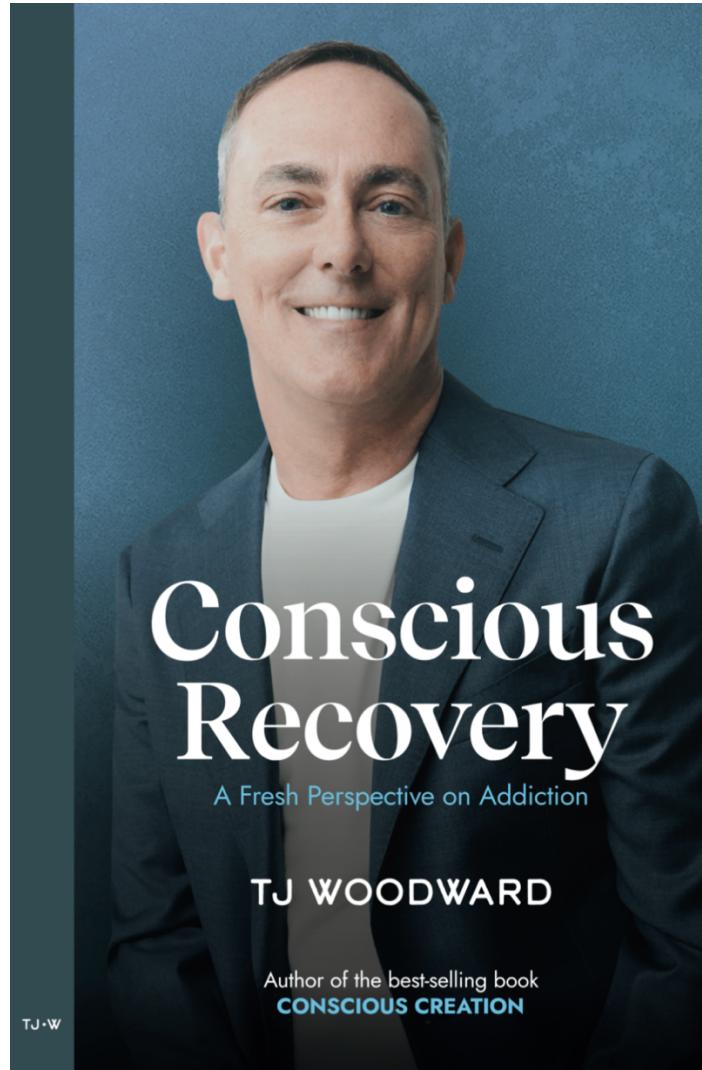
TJ WOODWARD
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TJ•W

EATING DISORDER
FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

TJ Woodward and Dr. Christine Pappas

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Conscious Recovery for Eating Disorders

Overview

Conscious Recovery is a holistic and innovative approach that invites a purposeful and expansive experience into one's journey of recovering from an eating disorder. It moves beyond simply treating behaviors and symptoms. It focuses on some of the risk factors that drive destructive patterns, while providing clear steps for letting go of core false beliefs that can lead to disordered eating.

The 5 Basic Principles of Conscious Recovery For Eating Disorders

- Underneath the symptoms, thoughts, and behaviors of disordered eating is an essential self that is whole and perfect
- The eating disorder itself was not intended to be the “problem” but was a strategy that has lost its effectiveness over time
- Treating eating disorders must go beyond treating presenting symptoms and get down to the layers of risk factors that lead to self-destructive behaviors
- Some of the common influences associated with disordered eating are unresolved trauma, spiritual disconnection, and toxic shame
- There is a pathway to acceptance, compassion, and freedom through the adoption of spiritual practices and principles

Conscious Recovery for Eating Disorders

Treatment Center Facilitator's Guide

The purpose of Conscious Recovery is to offer a spiritual perspective that can assist your clients in addressing and exploring the underlying risk factors associated with developing disordered eating. It is designed for your clients if they have an eating disorder diagnosis, and/or if they are curious about their relationship with food and with their bodies. Conscious Recovery for Eating Disorders is intended to enhance any program, therapy, or other support system in which they are currently engaged. Its aim is not to provide a diagnosis or definitive answers, but to introduce questions that can assist your clients in accessing their own inner wisdom and rediscover their true nature.

This curriculum is designed to be a companion to the books *Conscious Recovery*, and *The Conscious Recovery Workbook for Eating Disorders*, but can certainly stand on its own as a recovery tool. It's intended to assist you in helping your clients break the cycle of their disordered eating and heal the root causes of their destructive patterns.

You may notice certain concepts repeating throughout the curriculum. This is intentional. This repetition will allow these concepts and practices to be understood and integrated from different levels of awareness as you and your clients progress through the curriculum and shift the trajectory of their recovery and healing.

The Power of Presence

Quantum Mechanics – Science is now measuring what spiritual teachers and mystics have been saying for centuries. And that is, that there are infinite possibilities in every situation, and, that the observer has a profound effect. How does this relate to our work as clinicians? We can literally shift our clients' ability to access their own inner wisdom when we make the commitment to view them through the lens of wholeness rather than brokenness. And we then create a higher possibility and probability for true healing, simply by the way we are viewing and "holding" our clients.

Holding Space – *"Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity."* – Pema Chödrön

What happens we generate a non-judgmental, compassionate, and openhearted space for our clients? We create a safe container for our clients to access their own innate ability to heal. And, in that way, we can remain open and available to the present moment and follow the energy in the room rather than being stuck in viewing them *only* from a mental or physical paradigm. Diagnosing and treating has its place, but a deeper, more profound possibility is available to us when we authentically practice genuine presence and openness.

Doing Our Own Inner-Work – Staying present and curious requires us to do our own inner healing work. We cannot possibly allow our clients to go any deeper than we have gone ourselves. Therefore, the greatest way we can assist our clients is by participating in the healing of our own trauma, disconnection, and shame.

The Energizing Quality of Presence – And, the great news is simply this: remaining open and engaged is quite energizing for both the clinician and client. The behavioral health field is one that has a great deal of burnout, and this can be minimized by shifting our awareness away from what's "broken" and needs to be "fixed," and toward the infinite possibilities for healing that exist in every moment.

Our Group Philosophy

Addressing Different Learning Styles – In traditional education systems, students are supposed to learn and retain information by sitting still and listening to a lecture or reading material. This works great for only a small percentage of clients, due to issues related to stages of recovery, cognitive ability, as well as differing learning styles.

Conscious Recovery groups offer variations in teaching and learning styles to engage all types of clients – those who are more visual, auditory, or kinesthetic in their learning style, regardless of where they are on their recovery path.

Keeping Things Moving – We like to get the clients up and moving around. This keeps the energy flowing, and keeps clients engaged. Breaking up into small groups or dyads allows all types of clients, including introverts and extroverts, to interact with one other and feel included.

This is also a great way to build relationships between clients and allow for deeper connections beyond what they would experience in a traditional psycho-educational or lecture-style group.

Willingness to Abandon the “Set” Curriculum – If an exercise feels like it is falling flat, you don’t have to always stick with exactly what’s written. For example, if clients are resistant or not offering up much discussion, it’s ok to shift to the next exercise, use the journaling questions, or give them another question or activity. To the best of your ability, please stick to the curriculum; however, you can also deviate if necessary. This allows for more spontaneity and engagement.

Presence and Curiosity – Staying present and curious will allow you to let go of any attachment to an agenda or expectations about how the group “should” go. If you’re truly committed to remaining present and curious about what the group needs, you may go deeper into a particular exercise, where you might miss an opportunity if you have the mindset that you “need” to get through all the group exercises and activities.

Key Elements of Group

Each of the 12 groups in the curriculum focuses on one of the key principles from the *Conscious Recovery* book and *Conscious Recovery Workbook*. All the groups follow the same basic format, and include a combination of these components:

Meditation (10 minutes) – We start with a 10-minute meditation at the beginning of group to get people grounded and centered. We find that many clients cannot stay focused for that long in silent meditation, so we often do a guided meditation. We have included a PIES guided meditation in the back of this manual (see Appendix), or you are welcome to use your own.

Check-In (10 minutes) – Have each client state their name and say one thing about the topic for that group. This is to get everyone oriented to the subject and for you to get an idea of what views the clients already have on the topic. For Conscious Recovery groups, check-ins do not include things such as “how was your day?” or “what are your craving levels?” The check-in format is designed to simply engage clients at the beginning of group.

Other Group Processes (generally 5-20 minutes each) – These varied group activities and group processes may take several forms, including:

- **Brainstorming** – Exploring the topic together as a large group. May involve writing ideas on a board or flipchart. You will want to always have writing materials available for yourself and the clients
- **Reading Discussions (Small or Large Group)** – Taking an excerpt from the book or a given quote and discussing it in more depth in small groups or together as a large group
- **Topic Discussions (Small or Large Group)** – Discussing a given topic in greater depth in small groups or together as a large group

- **Dyads or Trios** – Group members get together in pairs or trios to address different learning styles and keep clients engaged. This is particularly useful for clients who may seem to struggle with sharing in larger groups
- **Interactive Processes** – Exercises that may involve group activities or more of an internal process, done individually, in dyads, or in the full group
- **“Front of Room” Reporting** – This is for when clients have been working together in dyads or groups. They choose one person as the representative to report back on their discussion to the large group

When there are multiple Group Processes, there may not be enough time to complete all of them; in this case, do not try to rush or force them, simply focus on completing whatever you can. It's more about depth and quality over quantity.

Closing Processes (10 minutes) – This may take any number of forms, including each group member acknowledging another, each person stating what they learned from the group (perhaps a key “a-ha” or awareness they received), one word to describe how they’re feeling right now, etc.

We have included a full list of possible closing exercises in the Appendix.

Conscious Recovery

for Eating Disorders

GROUP CURRICULUM

11

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PREPARING FOR GROUP

Group 1: What is Conscious Recovery?

Group Focus: Balance

Group Objective: To explore what it means to live a balanced life.

Key Teaching Points: This group will explore the “four rooms” of existence (physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual) and provide tools for living a balanced life, by focusing on recovery in each of the rooms.

Materials Needed: Whiteboard or flipchart, large drawing paper, tape, markers.

Modified Reading from Conscious Recovery: *“Everyone is a house with four rooms, a physical, an intellectual, an emotional and a spiritual. Most of us tend to live in one room most of the time, but unless we go into every room, every day, even if only to keep it aired, we are not a complete person.” - Indian Proverb*

If you have been in recovery for any length of time, you know that eating disorders can be considered from any of these rooms. All four: the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual, are present in any maladaptive behavior, and they can be utilized in your recovery. Most commonly contemplated, perhaps, is the physical approach to recovery, with its attention to the physical symptoms of eating disorders and physical healing (e.g., the disease model, studying brain chemistry and genetics, considering medications, changing diet and exercise patterns, and so on). People in recovery also spend time in the mental and emotional rooms, with help from therapists, mentors, and support groups. Living in all four of these rooms can bring us a long way along the road to recovery.

But as the proverb tells us: *“Most of us tend to live in one room most of the time.”* Often neglected in recovery work is the spiritual room, from which we can consider the spiritual questions involved in recovery: What is the root cause of disordered eating? What is the underlying condition of fragmentation and disconnection that leads people to have mental health issues and maladaptive behaviors? How can sitting in the room of spirit bring us to a place of deeper healing and peace? Of course, the four rooms are not cut off from one another; they are all part of the same house, connected by doorways and hallways. We are integrated beings and addressing the spiritual aspects of addiction will bring us into the other rooms, especially the rooms of thought and emotion.

GROUP OUTLINE

Group 1: What is Conscious Recovery/Balance

(Preface and Introduction from *Conscious Recovery*)

(10 minutes) Meditation

(10 minutes) Check-in: Everyone says their name and something about balance.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(5 minutes) Introduction of Topic: Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Spiritual: The Buddhists call it the “four rooms.” Here are the key talking points. (You might want to write them on the board):

- We are like a house with four rooms (P, I, E, S)
- How do the rooms relate to your eating disorder?
- We need to spend at least some time in each room
- What does balance look like?

(15 minutes) Group Brainstorming (Flipchart): What are some examples from the four rooms? Divide the whiteboard or flipchart into four quadrants. List the attributes and activities for each of them. (For example, exercise lives in the physical room, etc.) Possible reflection: Where do family relationships fit into this framework?

(15 minutes) Group Process: Have 4 large pieces of paper hanging on the wall and label each paper with one of the “four room” titles. (You will hang and label these before the group starts.) Have every client draw something that represents each of the rooms. (Each client draws four pictures, one on each large piece of paper.)

(10 minutes) Group Discussion: Which room do you tend to live in most often? (Have each group member identify which room is their “default” room).

(15 minutes) Group Process (Small Groups): Have people break into small groups based on the predominant room they tend to live in and have them discuss the following points. (You might want to write them on the whiteboard or flipchart for them to see.)

- Where did this tendency originate?
- Which room would you like to develop?
- What are some of the ways/tools you can utilize to develop the “new” room?

(Time Permitting) Group Discussion: How was that? Any insights? Any observations?

(10 minutes) Closing Process

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Group 2: The Spiritual Lens

Group Focus: Perception

Group Objective: To explore the power of perception as a recovery tool and introduce clients to the possibility that most of life is perspective.

Key Teaching Points: Introducing clients to the possibility that they can change their perception and therefore change their life. The group is intended to provide tools to help clients shift the deeply held beliefs that impact their wellbeing and lead to mental health issues in various forms, including disordered eating.

Materials Needed: Chair and various other items.

Modified Reading from Conscious Recovery: All spiritual power is based on a shift in perception, and the fundamental insight that ultimate reality, the invisible, is more powerful than relative, or visible, reality. As we grow in awareness, we develop the ability to shift how we interpret the circumstances of life and what we call reality. Our powers of perception get clearer. How much of life is perception? All of it. We each see the world through our own lens. Multiple people in the same situation will each have a different experience of it, based on the lens through which they see it. It's not that one person sees the truth and the others are wrong. It's that our perception colors our experience. As our understanding of this increases, our suffering diminishes. If we live as if there is a reality out there, a truth that's external to our perception, if we're holding on to the idea that things are happening to us, we will suffer. Suffering comes from living in duality, in the idea of a separate self, in a belief in "us" and "everyone and everything else." From this perspective, we continue to plant the seeds of separation.

Here's a simple way to view this: Let's say it's 75 degrees and sunny outside. Many people will experience that as "good weather," as "a beautiful day." Conversely, we tend to judge cold and wet weather as "bad weather" or "a miserable day." What happens when we shift our perception and see sun and rain as equally suitable? A sleet storm and a cloudless sky as equally beautiful? From that modification in perception, our experience also shifts. Rather than fighting against the rain, we could appreciate its moisture. Rather than complaining about the cold, we could feel the bite, welcome the iciness, and see what is there for us to experience. In that way, we can empower ourselves to create a life filled with awe and curiosity, regardless of outer circumstances.

GROUP OUTLINE

Group 2: The Spiritual Lens/Perception

(Preface and Introduction from Conscious Recovery)

(10 minutes) Meditation

(10 minutes) Check-In: Everyone states their name and says something about perception. (For example, you might ask the question: "How much of life is perception/perspective?")

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No "Fixing"
- "I" Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(5 minutes) Introduction of Topic: You can say that life's challenges are a result of misperception. It boils down to "I create the meaning in my life." (Car window analogy): Say this to clients: "If you are in a parking lot on a bright sunny day and you walk up to a car window, what will you see?" (They should say "your reflection.") Then add: "If you concentrate, is it also possible to look beyond your reflection and see what's inside the car? Would you say that either perspective is wrong? No, it really just depends on where you put your focus."

(5 minutes) Group Process: Share this quote. (Ask a client to write it on the board for discussion): "*When we are willing to look within and do the work of inner clearing, removing the false ideas, perspectives, and stories we have about our lives, we can open to a new way of being.*"

(15 minutes) Group Discussion: Simply lead a discussion with the group related to the quote.

(30 minutes) Group Activity-Circle of Honor: Ask participants to make a circle, standing in order of newest people to elder members. Honor each group by stating that each person has a different point of view based on how long they have been in the program.

Place a chair with multiple items on it in the center of the circle. (That you prepared before group started.) Ask people to describe it from their different perspectives, starting with the person who has the most obstructed view. Then ask if anyone else sees something that wasn't mentioned. You might want to add: "Would you say that anyone is "wrong" about what they can see in the chair, or might it be more about their viewpoint.

Teaching Point: Every perspective is valid. Every viewing point is also limited in some way. Ask clients to use this as a metaphor and have a brief discussion regarding the different factors that create our point of view. (Age, race, gender, family history, etc.)

Brief Discussion: What are the different ways we can know what's in the chair? (Change your position in the circle, move the chair, ask someone else who has a better view.)

(Remain standing) Ask them to shift to a new place so they can get a new perspective.

(10 minutes) Now, ask clients to come up with some ideas about how they might begin to shift their perspectives. (How does this relate to your recovery?)

(10 minutes) Closing Process

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Group 3: The Fragmented Self

Group Focus: Acceptance

Group Objective: To explore the powers of self-love and acceptance as recovery tools and create a safe space for clients to embrace self-love and acceptance.

Key Teaching Points: People often fear that if they accept themselves as they are, they won't be able to make positive changes in their lives. This group will investigate the possibility that self-love and acceptance are actually more powerful "change agents than self-criticism or judgement.

Materials Needed: Whiteboard or flipchart, markers, "yes" and "no" signs, masking tape, paper, pens, clipboard (or something to write on).

Modified Reading from Conscious Recovery: Early in my recovery I heard someone say, "Recovery is not about changing yourself—it's about loving and accepting yourself." At the time this made no sense because all I could see was how much was wrong in my life and how much I needed to change. What I couldn't see at the time is this: Love and acceptance are much more powerful change agents than judgment. Miraculous things can happen when I shift my approach from changing this or that about myself—from "What's wrong here? What needs to be fixed?"—to radical self-love and acceptance, or "What's right here? What can be celebrated?"

This approach focuses on what the eating disorder is really about, what it tells us. If we add to this the spiritual perspective, we receive even more. Recovery from the room of spirit can help us see that what we're genuinely seeking is love and connection, which are found when we turn inward, to our essential nature. Spiritual recovery encourages us to be fully present, no matter how uncomfortable it may be. It gives us the safety we need to be in the moment and feel whatever it is we're truly feeling. Looking at what is truly being sought in the maladaptive behavior can be a powerful tool for us as we begin to unravel how our search for love and connection has been derailed and moved to the external realm by our core false beliefs about ourselves and the world. So, we shift from an outer-focused life to an inner-focused way of being and seeing. Again, it's a shift in focus.

GROUP OUTLINE

Group 3: The Fragmented Self/Acceptance

(Introduction from *Conscious Recovery*)

(10 minutes) Meditation

(10 minutes) Check-In: Everyone states their name and says something about acceptance. (What is acceptance, etc.)

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 minutes) Group Process (Dyads): Ask clients to get into pairs to discuss this question: “What does self-love and self-acceptance mean to you?”

(30 minutes) Group Process – Continuum: For this exercise use a large open room. Place a sign that says YES on one wall, and a sign that says NO on the opposite wall. Then, with masking tape make a line down the middle of the room. Let clients know you will be making 6 different statements.

Ask them to stand wherever they are on the continuum regarding the statement. (If they totally agree with the statement, they will stand all the way toward the “yes” sign, if they completely disagree, they stand by the “no” sign, etc.) Ask a couple of people to share why they are where they are on the continuum, then ask if anyone wants to change where they are standing as a result of what they have heard. Repeat for all 6 statements.

Statements:

- I am in control
- I criticize myself
- I'm willing to change
- I know my purpose
- No one is against me
- I love myself exactly as I am*

*Teaching Point: People sometimes believe that if they love themselves as they are, why would they want to change? This is an opportunity to explore different layers of conditional and unconditional love. (Which is a better “change agent” criticism or love?)

(15 Minutes) Group Process – Turning it Over Practice:

Ask everyone to get a blank piece of paper make a dot in the center of the page. They then draw a large circle around the outside of the paper and make “spokes” that connect the dot with the circle. On each of the spokes, they write something that is troubling them. This could be a person’s name, or a situation that is currently difficult for them.

Once they have filled up the page, have them stand in front of the group and say: “These are the situations in my life I am ready to release. I am now choosing to let go of trying to control them.” Invite them to use their own language. Once they have read them all, ask them to tear up the paper and dispose of it.

(Time Permitting) Group Discussion: How was that? Any insights? Any observations?

(10 minutes) Closing Process

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Group 4: Unresolved Trauma

Group Focus: Resilience

Group Objective: The purpose of this group is to explore unresolved trauma as one of the possible root causes of mental health issues and maladaptive behavior.

Key Teaching Points: Traumatic events by definition overwhelm our ability to cope. This group will provide an opportunity for clients to identify what trauma means to them, and will provide some tools to assist clients in beginning their healing journey.

Materials Needed: Copies of handouts (one per person), Pens and paper, flipchart or whiteboard with markers.

Modified Readings from Conscious Recovery:

What is Trauma? – Traumatic events by definition overwhelm our ability to cope. When the mind becomes flooded with emotion, a circuit breaker is thrown that allows us to survive the experience fairly intact. That is, without becoming psychotic or frying out one of the brain centers. The cost of this blown circuit is emotion frozen within the body. In other words, we often unconsciously stop feeling our trauma part way into it, like a movie that is still going after the sound has been turned off. We cannot heal until we move fully through that trauma, including all of the feelings of that event. Trauma is something that overwhelms our ability to cope. And unresolved trauma continues to hurt us because we are stuck in the traumatic experience.

Physical/Intellectual/Emotional/Spiritual/Vicarious Trauma:

Physical Trauma – Physical Trauma encompasses many different experiences, including physical abuse, domestic violence, assault, self-injury, natural disaster, an automobile accident, or battlefield trauma, to name a few. Medically speaking, physical trauma is a severe injury to the body, whatever the cause. If we experience this sort of trauma, it's going to affect how we perceive ourselves and our world. Even if the physical wounds are mended, there is a psychological and a spiritual impact that gets stored in the body and is harder to heal. Thus, unresolved physical trauma can be a root cause of mental health issues because walking around with that kind of pain often leads us to turn to mindsets and behaviors that ease our suffering but can also become problematic.

Intellectual Trauma – The vast majority of us experience some degree of mental trauma in childhood simply by receiving repeated messages of untruth. As children, most of us learn lies about ourselves and our world instead of the truth of our inherent wholeness. Being taught a worldview that assumes that the world is governed by limitation, fear, separation, or aggression can make us believe, at a fundamental level, that the world is not safe. This mental trauma is an injury to our understanding of the world. These lies are traumatic. They injure us because they enter our psyches and distort the way we see ourselves. They become our core beliefs, our core *false* beliefs. When we walk around believing things like, “The world is not safe,” or “Life is a struggle,” or “I’m fundamentally unworthy,” then it makes sense to live in a permanent state of fight, flight, or freeze response. For us to expand outside of our comfort zone can often feel disorienting and frightening. This is because we’ve unconsciously created a safety zone that on one hand seems to keep us feeling safe, but on another hand, keeps us absolutely stuck in limited ways of seeing ourselves.

Emotional Trauma – Emotional trauma can be inflicted by a primary caregiver who has their own mental health issues and are not able to offer the love and connection we need. It can also come from teachers, ministers, and the like who are still operating from their “woundology.” It can be caused by peers; the proverbial “kid on the playground” acting as a bully. Being repeatedly mocked, insulted, and criticized can make us feel, at a fundamental level, that we are less than, not good enough, and/or unlovable. This is emotional trauma—*injury to our emotional well-being*. Our psyches can still hold the emotional trauma and hurts from our past. The traumatic event is no longer occurring, but our “freeze” instinct still believes we need protecting. We need to work out the emotional scars associated with the original trauma in order to be free.

Spiritual trauma – Spiritual trauma is inflicted when we are not seen as the deepest truth of who and what we are. It is all too common to be taught ideas about ourselves and the world that are counter to this fundamental truth of our being. When we are not seen in this authentic light, we have what is called spiritual disconnection, which is a separation from our essential self. When that message about our fundamental brokenness and dependence is repeated over and over again, when it’s illustrated and lived by an authority and an institution that our parents and others around us respect and follow, then it naturally seeps into our spirits and breaks down our relationship with the fundamental truth of who we are. This is spiritual trauma; it is an injury to our spirit.

Vicarious trauma – Vicarious trauma, simply put, is witnessing a traumatic event or ongoing trauma perpetrated on someone else. This can be witnessing a horrific accident, or seeing someone physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually abused once or over an extended period of time. This type of trauma can sometimes get overlooked, because someone might say a variation of “But, he never abused me,” or “I only saw it happen, I was not hurt.”

The truth is, this type of trauma can be very agonizing because there might be multiple layers to the experience. For example, someone might carry guilt or shame because they were not able to prevent the accident, or they believe they “should have” done something to stop the violence. One example of this is when children witness one parent abusing the other one. These incidents can leave very profound wounds that need to be addressed in order to find resolution and freedom from vicarious trauma.

Consequences of Unresolved Trauma – Trauma lives in our bodies. If we have unresolved trauma, the responses of fight, flight, or freeze, which are very hard on our nervous systems, can be triggered by everyday physical experiences, and over time this chronic stress takes a toll on our bodies and spirits in addition to the direct physical effect of the trauma. Trauma can take up residence in the body, in effect reinjuring us each time it’s activated. It also has been linked to multiple physical diseases. Whether it’s physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual injury that we experience, unresolved trauma can result in a sense that something is fundamentally wrong or broken. And that a feeling can get buried deep in the subconscious (the part of our psyche that is not easily accessible to the conscious mind). If you’re walking around with the unconscious or subconscious belief that you’re not lovable, you may very well try to find all sorts of experiences to counter that.

You may become addicted to relationships, love, or sex, or you may struggle with mental illness, disordered eating, or other behaviors that become problematic over time. You might be searching for something outside of yourself to try to undo the core false belief that you’re not lovable. The deeply held feeling tone that you’re not lovable works on an unconscious level to attract people who only confirm that negative core false belief. Conversely, you also may tend to be attracted to these very people, in a kind of self-sabotaging reinforcement of those false beliefs. The core false beliefs that result from unresolved trauma can trap us in a limited and limiting reality that keeps us from healing.

GROUP OUTLINE

Group 4: Unresolved Trauma/Resilience

(Chapter 1 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In:

Everyone states their name and says something about the connection between trauma and their eating disorder.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout

Have clients get into pairs or small groups, read the handout out loud from Conscious Recovery (found on page 31), and spend 15 minutes discussing in their pairs or small groups.

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

(15 Minutes) Group Process – Trauma Exercise (Brainstorming):

Simply have everyone brainstorm anything they would consider to be traumatic (whether they have experienced them or not). Once they have the list made, ask them to reflect on their own life and ask them what traumatic experiences they endured in their own life. Now have them choose ONE of them to work with.

(15 Minutes) Group Process – (Group Discussion):

This process can be done in pairs, or the larger group, depending on what is clinically appropriate. Either lead a group discussion (or have them discuss in their pairs) with clients using the following questions. (You might want to write them on the board):

- Are you aware of any ways in which you have locked trauma in your body?
- What emotions, pain or suffering might be stuck in your body?
- What effect has that had on your eating disorder?
- What effect has that had on your mental health and well-being?

(5 Minutes) Group Discussion:

Anything left to share/discuss?

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

HANDOUT

Adapted Reading from *Conscious Recovery*

Traumatic events overwhelm our ability to cope. When the mind becomes flooded with emotion, a circuit breaker is thrown that allows us to survive the experience fairly intact. That is, without becoming psychotic or frying out one of the brain centers. The cost of this blown circuit is emotion frozen within the body. In other words, we often unconsciously stop feeling our trauma part way into it, like a movie that is still going after the sound has been turned off. We cannot heal until we move fully through that trauma, including all the feelings of that event. Trauma is something that overwhelms our ability to survive. And unresolved trauma continues to hurt us because we are stuck in the repetition of the traumatic experience.

How does trauma relate to disordered eating and other mental health issues? Remember, we're talking about mental health issues, including eating disorders and maladaptive behaviors, as brilliant strategies that are no longer working; using repetitive thought patterns or behaviors to try to fix something that feels broken within. The connection is simple: If trauma has led us to walk around with a sense of brokenness, then we naturally turn to these thoughts and behaviors to try to fix that feeling of brokenness. The trouble is, if we've allowed the trauma response to get buried in our subconscious, then it begins to run the show. The trauma defines us and colors all our experiences. We come to believe that we are, fundamentally, victims. Let me be clear: This does not mean that we weren't victimized when the trauma happened. I'm not saying that the trauma you underwent was your responsibility, or your fault. Not at all. What I am saying is that, because of the trauma, we can sometimes take on the *identity* of a victim, which can keep us feeling stuck in an old narrative.

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Group 5: Spiritual Disconnection

Group Focus: Self-Compassion

Group Objective: To explore deeply held core false beliefs that lead to mental health issues and maladaptive behavior.

Key Teaching Points: Unconscious beliefs and the programming we received growing up often lead to maladaptive behaviors. This group will provide practices that will allow clients to explore the origins of these beliefs, question their validity, and release them in an interactive process.

Materials Needed: Whiteboard or flipchart, flat river rocks, markers, paper, and pens.

Modified Reading from Conscious Recovery: If we're born with a solid connection to our divine nature, what happens to that connection? Most of us come into a world that teaches us about fear, separation, and competition. We learn things about ourselves and our world that are contrary to the fundamental truth that we are whole and perfect. Adults, often well-meaning, try to prepare us for the world by teaching us to fight, to wall off our emotions, to criticize. These lessons are based on lies that I call "core false beliefs." The deepest root of mental health issues is this: we learn and we appropriate core false beliefs, which break the connection with our true nature. This fragments us and pushes us to engage in repetitive thought patterns or behaviors, or to turn outward for validation, love, and peace of mind.

Our core false beliefs, which frequently stem from generalized unresolved trauma and spiritual disconnection, may leave us feeling broken. In response, we might look for things to make that feeling go away. That is often the foundational malady of maladaptive behavior. I have seen it repeatedly: What is most often at the core of this behavior is this sense of brokenness within and the search for something outside ourselves to help us manage the resulting discomfort. Looked at in this way, mental health issues and maladaptive behaviors can be seen as strategies, even brilliant strategies, for survival. When our sense of self is fragmented, when we see ourselves as fundamentally broken, that's a very, very painful way to live. We feel like we're surviving rather than thriving, walking around with a sense of separation, a feeling of fear, a belief that we can't reveal our true selves because there's something wrong with us.

GROUP OUTLINE

Group 5: Spiritual Disconnection/Self-Compassion

(Chapter 2 from *Conscious Recovery*)

(10 minutes) Meditation

(10 minutes) Check-In: Everyone states their name and says something about self-compassion. (What compassion means to them, etc.)

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(10 minutes) Teaching Point: Draw a picture of the “seed and tree” and talk about how the seed represents our unconscious beliefs. (We can spend time “trimming and decorating” the tree but nothing really changes unless we get down to the seed). Ask: “If you plant a maple seed, you will get a maple tree, right?” Share with them that the seed represents the unconscious beliefs we have and the roots of our maladaptive behaviors.

(5 minutes) Group Process: Identify one core false belief. Go around the circle and have everyone simply say their belief. (No feedback or comments). Core false beliefs usually start with “I am...” or “I am not...”

(15 minutes) Group Process (Dyads): Have participants interview each other regarding their chosen core false belief using the following four questions. (You might want to write these on the board for discussion):

- Where did this belief originate?
- How do you feel when you believe it?
- When does it arise?
- What would it take to be free from it?

(30 minutes) Group Project: Have everyone write their core false belief on a flat rock. Now, walk to a place (woods, body of water, etc.) to throw the rock while saying some version of "I now release this belief/lie, etc."

OR

Have them write their core false belief on a piece of paper. They can either make a paper airplane, or simply crumple it up. Then one at a time, ask clients to throw the paper while saying some version of "I now release this belief/lie, etc." (Obviously, you want to choose a place where it is safe for them to throw the paper and you'll also want to instruct them not to throw it at anyone.)

Depending on the logistics of your program, and what is clinically appropriate, you can also walk clients to an outdoor space (woods, park, etc.) and have clients bury the paper.

You may want to say: "People often ask if it is really as simple as writing the belief on a piece of paper and throwing it. My answer is this: Maybe, but for most of us it is simply a reminder that if we find ourselves returning to the critical thought, we can remind our self that we 'threw it away.'"

Group Discussion (Time Permitting): How was that? Any insights? Any observations?

(10 minutes) Closing Process

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Group 6: Toxic Shame

Group Focus: Authenticity

Group Objective: To explore the power of authenticity as a recovery tool and create a safe space for clients to share deeply in a supportive environment.

Key Teaching Points: People often fear that if they show their true self they will be judged, criticized, or abandoned. This group is intended to create a reparative experience by demonstrating the closeness people most often feel in the presence of truly authentic sharing.

Materials Needed: Whiteboard or flipchart, markers.

Modified Reading from Conscious Recovery: How many times have you felt obligated to respond positively when someone says, "Hi, how are you?" Many of us answer "Great!" or "Blessed!" or "Awesome!" even when we're not feeling any of those things. That's a surface example of what many of us feel internally: that what's important is to look good on the outside, to hide our suffering. We sometimes feel it's an act of weakness to be honest and talk about what's truly happening. This kind of inauthenticity is at the root of maladaptive behavior. The strategies we use for hiding, for keeping secrets, for avoiding honesty, can lead to various mental health issues. One of the potential root causes of eating disorders, as we saw in Part 1, is toxic shame, and shame needs inauthenticity to survive. It needs secrecy and silence. The maladaptive behavior that inauthenticity creates can create chaos in your life and the lives of others, and it can even kill you. As Brené Brown stated in her groundbreaking book, *The Gifts of Imperfection*: "*Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It's about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen.*" Even when we're coming out of disordered eating, often we're still hiding, we're not ready to be wholly ourselves, to honor the full range of who and what we are with others, or even with ourselves. Many people I work with who are entering recovery say things like, "If you really knew me, you could not possibly love me." That's toxic shame, which can lead to separation and can create the cycle of maladaptive behaviors. On a spiritual level, though, recovery calls us to be authentic, to bring our whole self into the room. We experience a deeper healing when we're not so caught up in the fear of "looking bad" or in the desire to "look good."

GROUP OUTLINE

Group 6: Toxic Shame/Authenticity

(Chapter 3 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 minutes) Meditation

(10 minutes) Check-in: Everyone states their name and says one thing about authenticity.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No "Fixing"
- "I" Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(20 minutes) Group Process (Dyads): Let clients know, for this process, they can close their eyes or leave them open. Now say: "Think of a time when you were really authentic, really yourself. How does that feel? What are the sensations in your body? Now, think of a time when you were really inauthentic. How does that feel?" Notice how each of those feel in your body. Have them get with a partner and describe what came up during that process. (Each person shares while other person listens.)

(15 minutes) Group Process (Whiteboard or Flipchart): Iceberg metaphor. Draw a picture of an iceberg. (Showing that most of the iceberg is "below the waterline.")

Teaching Point: All we can see is what is "above" the waterline. What is "below" the water line that we are afraid to show?

Group Brainstorming: (Write all answers on board or flipchart) Point: Not everything below the water line is "bad." There are dreams, goals, etc.

Brief Discussion: Why are we afraid to be authentic and show people what is below the waterline?

(20 minutes) Group Process: "If You Knew Me..."

Ask: "Are you willing to practice authenticity?"

Important points:

- Say: "Only go as deep as you feel safe doing so"
- You will set the stage by how deep you go in the beginning
- Get an agreement of confidentiality before the process begins
- Do not allow any feedback, questions, or comments about what people are saying-simply keep the process moving

Invite participants to come together in a circle. (As close together as they are willing to sit.) You begin the process by saying "If you knew me, you would know _____..." (Tell them something about yourself.) Then, one at a time, everyone in the circle also completes the phrase "If you knew me, you would know _____..." Tell them ahead of time that there will probably be three or four rounds and that you will let them know when it is the final round. The second round is "If you REALLY knew me, you would know _____..." The third round is "If you REALLY, REALLY knew me, you would know _____...", and so on.

(5 minutes) Group Discussion: Ask the questions: "Do you feel closer or further away from people in the circle?" and "How do you feel about what you shared?" (Too much...too little, etc.)

(10 minutes) Closing Process

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Group 7: Creating Safety

Group Focus: Trust

Group Objective: To explore the power of inner and outer safety as a recovery tool and create a safe space for clients to share their experiences and perspectives related to trust and safety.

Key Teaching Points: Conscious Recovery recognizes safety as an important first step in early recovery. This group is intended to create an environment of investigation related to the practice of discovering inner resources that will help clients step more fully into trust and safety.

Materials Needed: The four quotes (found on pages 46-49), tape, index cards, pens.

Modified Reading from Conscious Recovery: When we break trust with someone, we need not only apologize, but we also need to change our behavior and begin to become trustworthy. And being trustworthy means being able to say what we mean and mean what we say. It means our actions start aligning with our intentions. Perhaps that's the greatest definition of trust: The sense of ourselves, who we are, is in alignment with what we say and do. It's more difficult to create this alignment when we focus on fixing what's "wrong," because that focus doesn't encourage us to totally trust ourselves. When we are working from a perspective of self-judgment and criticism, it is the opposite of trust. But, when we perceive ourselves and others through the lens of love and acceptance and focus on what's working and what's truly behind our maladaptive behaviors, we start to reveal who we authentically are. When we see what's fueling our behavior, our motivations become clearer. When we become aware of our self-talk, our inner dialogue, we can take responsibility for it. And that's a more solid foundation for building authentic trust. We can then be well on our way to rebuilding trust with ourselves and others.

It may take time to rebuild trust with the people in your life. Remember, you have probably said to them, on many occasions: "This time it will be different," or "I'm going to change, I promise." So, they may not be ready to believe you when you say this, one more time. Perhaps a more useful way to approach this conversation is to honestly let them know what you're doing to support your recovery. You can be compassionate about the fact that it may take time for them to commence to trust you again.

GROUP OUTLINE

Group 7: Creating Safety/Trust

(Chapter 4 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 minutes) Meditation

(10 minutes) Check-In: Everyone states their name and says something about safety or trust.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(10 Minutes) Group Process 1 – What is Trust Process:

Ask participants to speak answers “into the circle” to the question: “What is Trust?” You simply ask the question, and then allow clients to share whatever comes up. I encourage you to allow for space to see what emerges. (Let them know it’s ok if there is silence or if people speak at the same time.)

(10 Minutes) Group Process: – Four Corners: Tape the four different quotes (found on pages 44-47) to the wall in different parts of the room. Have everyone walk around and read them. Then ask them to stand by the one that they most resonate or identify with. Once everyone has chosen their quote, they sit in small groups (based on the one they selected).

(15 Minutes) Group Process: Each group spends time discussing why they choose that particular quote. (Each group chooses one person to summarize the small group discussions.)

(15 Minutes) Group Process: One person from each group stands up in front of the room and “reports” the highlights from their small group discussion.

(10 minutes) Group Process (Dyads): Each person shares and then listens. (You might want to write these questions on the whiteboard.)

- What is one difficulty you have experienced in the last month?
- How did you handle it?
- What were the consequences of your actions?
- What were the hidden INNER resources?

Now write the INNER resource on an index card. (Some examples of INNER resources are, gratitude, acceptance, courage, etc.)

Group Discussion (Time Permitting): How was that? Any insights? Any observations?

(10 minutes) Closing Process

*Your task is not to seek for love,
but merely to seek and find all
the barriers within yourself that
you have built against it.*

— Rumi

*The more you trust your intuition,
the more empowered you
become, the stronger you
become, and the happier you
become.*

— Gisele Bundchen

*Trust yourself, you have
survived a lot and you have
the strength within you to
survive whatever is coming.*

— Anonymous

*A bird sitting on a tree is
never afraid of the branch
breaking, because it's trust is
not in the branch, but in its
own wings.*

— Anonymous

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Group 8: Unlearning

Group Focus: Change

Group Objective: To explore the power of life-changing moments and recognize the “positive” and “negative” impact of those moments.

Key Teaching Points: There are certain moments in our lives that have a profound impact. This group will provide an opportunity to reflect on one of those moments.

Materials Needed: Basic art supplies (paper, colored pencils, pastels, etc.)

Modified Reading from Conscious Recovery: Have you ever realized that it's time for a U-turn? Is it time to make a radical change in your life? Sometimes we find ourselves going in a direction in which we're not content. When we recognize this, we generally make small adjustments in direction or maneuver slightly to change our trajectory. Most of the changes we make are small because we're more comfortable with what's familiar, and we don't want to move too far into unfamiliar territory.

These small shifts can be valuable. Maybe we're wanting more time for meditation, so we start getting up twenty minutes earlier. This gives us what we want without making a huge disruption in our lives. But occasionally we're ready for a bigger, more significant shift. This is what I'm calling a U-turn. It's not a subtle shift; it's taking life in a distinctively different direction. Maybe we're in a dead-end job or in an unhappy relationship, or we're coming up against the limits of our maladaptive behavior. Whatever the circumstances, a U-turn is that moment not only of clarity but of courage and willingness to make a major change.

Those of us who have lived with mental health issues and eating disorders are familiar with the U-turn. For many of us it's mandatory. Our recovery will not work if we take only small and subtle turns, so we need to turn it around completely. And we know that making the U-turn can be a process. It starts with the awareness that the change is necessary, but it doesn't end there. The change won't happen if all we have is the awareness. We also need the courage and the willingness to make the modification. And as we enter the change, we find that it is manifest in different ways in various areas of our lives.

GROUP OUTLINE

Group 8: Unlearning/Change

(Chapter 5 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 minutes) Meditation

(10 minutes) Check-in: Everyone states their name and says something about change.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No "Fixing"
- "I" Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(30 minutes) Group Activity (Art): Have each client draw a life-changing moment. (This can be something they consider to be "positive" or "negative.")

Ideally, they will spread out so no one else sees what they are drawing.

***Important note:** Based on your clinical judgment, there might be certain drawings that are not clinically appropriate for group. If that is the case, we suggest that you gently steer them in a different direction, in a private conversation.

When each client is finished, tape the drawings up on the wall without letting other clients see who drew it.

(30 minutes) Group Process: One by one, have clients guess what the life-changing moment is and who drew it. (If clinically appropriate.)

After everyone guesses, have whoever drew it to stand in front of the group and explain their drawing and about the life-changing moment.

(Time Permitting) Group Discussion: How was that? Any insights? Any observations?

(10 minutes) Closing Process

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Group 9: Practicing Spiritual Principles

Group Focus: Presence

Group Objective: To explore the power of presence as a recovery tool and create a safe space for clients to examine the role of spirituality in their lives.

Key Teaching Points: Many people have been conditioned to focus on the past or future. This group is intended to create a space for your clients to examine the role of presence in their recovery, and through an interactive process, examine the role of questioning as a spiritual practice.

Materials Needed: Whiteboard or flipchart, markers, handouts (one per client), pens.

Modified Reading from Conscious Recovery: Many of us have spent a great deal of time developing all sorts of strategies to not be present, to not live right here in this moment. That's partly because of our approach—most of us have been taught to go through life identifying problems and seeking solutions. This means, essentially, that the current situation is never OK. "If only I could get that promotion, then things will be OK," "If she could just understand me, then things will be better." With this worldview, there's always something out there to strive for. There's always somewhere better than here. Our job, even our purpose, is to control, to improve, to "fix" our circumstances.

This is a focus on the future, on what might be "if only." The flip side of this future focus is looking back on the past. From that perspective, we regret actions we took, or didn't take. Here we might criticize ourselves for failing, not doing the "right" thing, not seeing the problem or finding the solution. So again, we get stuck in patterns of shame and judgment. If we've been living life this way, it can be difficult to wrap our heads around the experience of mindfulness or presence, which is about relating to ourselves right in this moment. We've gone so long without being aware of what's happening in the present that we can't even tell what we're feeling or experiencing right now.

What if presence is our natural state, but we've been programmed to not be in the moment, to be constantly reliving the past or worrying about the future? From this perspective, maintaining presence involves unlearning more than learning. Once we come to the point where the strategy of future/past focus no longer works for us, we can unlearn our un-present way of being.

GROUP OUTLINE

Group 9: Spiritual Principles/Presence

(Chapter 6 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 minutes) Meditation

(10 minutes) Check-In: Everyone states their name and says something about presence.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No "Fixing"
- "I" Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(20 Minutes) Group Process – Non-Resistance Exercise (Dyads): Have clients think of a situation in their life that has been causing them anxiety or worry, then have them interview each other using the following questions. (Give each client the handout with the questions on page 56.)

Related to the situation that has been causing you anxiety or worry:

- What are your thoughts about it?
- What thoughts do you have about trying to control the outcome?
- In what ways are you asking yourself "what if?"
- In what ways are you obsessing with worst case scenarios?
- What would it take for you to shift your thinking?

Now, ask them to sit in silence and bring their awareness to the present moment. Ask them to repeat quietly to themselves some version of the following statements:

- I am perfectly OK in this moment.
- The future has no power over me.
- I have the tools to navigate life.

(20 minutes) Group Activity (Small Groups): Living in the Question. Each client gets the handout on page 57. Have members of the small group read handout out loud and discuss.

(20 Minutes) Group Process - Living in the Question Activity (Dyads): We recommend that you demonstrate this in the middle of the room with a volunteer so your clients can actually see this process.

Have clients sit and face each other. Choose one of the questions below. Person A asks person B the question and listens for an answer. Person B gives a *short* one word or one sentence answer. Without responding, person A then repeats the *same* question, and so on, for 3 minutes. (You will set a timer and let them know when to start and stop). Now, repeat but reverse the roles within the pair. (Choose a different question)

Some suggested questions: What is an eating disorder? – What is recovery? – Who are you? – What is authenticity?

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

HANDOUT 1

Related to the situation that has been causing you anxiety or worry:

What are your thoughts about it?

What thoughts do you have about trying to control the outcome?

In what ways are you asking yourself “what if?”

In what ways are you obsessing with worst case scenarios?

What would it take for you to shift your thinking?

Now, sit in silence and bring your awareness to the present moment.

Repeat quietly to yourself some version of the following statements:

I am perfectly OK in this moment.

The future has no power over me.

I have the tools to navigate life.

HANDOUT 2

Living in the Question

I like to say that "Ego seeks answers, Spirit asks questions." A shift happens when we release the need to find definitive answers to our questions about life and the world around us. Have you ever noticed that the primary function of the mind seems to be finding answers? We are trained from a young age that there is a right answer to every question. Our entire educational system is based on memorizing information and being able to regurgitate the answers come test time. In one reality, there is a correct answer to some of life's questions. However, even in that version of reality, those answers sometimes change based on new information or new ways of seeing the situation. I am reminded of how much our "factual" world has changed over time. Science is continuously revealing how things are not as solid as we once believed.

How willing are we to live with, and in questions, recognizing them as potentially more important than the answers? When we grasp too tightly onto answers, it shuts down our process of inquiry and puts limits on our capacity to understand. Willingness to live in a question opens us up to deeper and greater knowing. It opens us up to infinite possibilities rather than staying stuck in our normal way of seeing things. It allows us to expand beyond our previous limits of comprehension. When we live within a question, we dig deeper into our internal exploration of what's possible, rather than reaching for an answer that is already known. Living in the question invites us to travel into mystery. Spirit loves the unknown. It loves mystery. The mind is constantly seeking problems to solve. That's its function; to respond, survive and problem solve. However, the answers it comes up with can keep us separate from the truth of who we really are.

**A modified excerpt from Conscious Being
by TJ Woodward**

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Group 10: Owning Your Power

Group Focus: Forgiveness

Group Objective: To explore the power of forgiveness as a recovery tool and create a safe space for clients to explore what it means to make peace with the past.

Key Teaching Points: People often believe that making peace with the past and forgiveness are difficult, often because they are stuck at a level of awareness that is deeply entrenched in “right and wrong” and “good and bad.” This group will offer tools to open to a new way of viewing and working through forgiveness.

Materials Needed: Paper and pens, clipboards (or something to write on).

Modified Reading from Conscious Recovery: Forgiveness is a very powerful tool in letting go of the perspectives that keep us in a limited and limiting way of seeing and being. Forgiveness allows us to move more deeply into the truth of who and what we are, to eradicate our stories of separation, powerlessness, and being stuck in blaming and victimization. Many of us have a terrifically hard time with forgiveness. We feel that terrible things have happened in our lives, and we are unable to let them go.

So, let’s start there, with the experience of forgiveness that many of us have had. When we’re stuck in unconscious reactions, forgiveness is next to impossible. The beliefs we hold about ourselves and our world become the lens through which we view the world, the way we frame our stories. They limit our perspective and block us from freedom and authenticity. When we’re living at this victim/martyr level of consciousness, hearing about the need to forgive can push us further into limitation.

If we are holding the idea that we’re fundamentally a victim, then “forgiveness” may look like admitting that we are “wrong” or “bad,” that we “deserve what we get.” Or it can look like giving up, admitting that the other person is stronger or better and that we cannot ever win. From this level of awareness, forgiveness supposes that we’ve been harmed, or have lost, and that we need to forgive the person who harmed us, which can feel like basically admitting that the person who hurt us has won. From the perspective of a victim, forgiveness might also mean pretending that things that happened in the past never happened. This requires forgetting and burying things deep in the shadow.

GROUP OUTLINE

Group 10: Owning Your Power/Forgiveness

(Chapter 7 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 minutes) Meditation

(10 minutes) Check-in: Everyone says their name and something about making peace with the past.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 minutes) Group Activity: Ask clients to think of a person they are having trouble forgiving. Have them write out the details of the situation. (For this exercise, they cannot work with self-forgiveness.)

Have them get with a partner* and share what they wrote. (No feedback for this process and definitely no “solution” seeking.)

***Important note:** Based on your clinical judgment, you might opt to have clients remain in the larger group rather than breaking into pairs, due to the potentially sensitive subject matter. If this is the case, you might simply ask for volunteers who want to read what they wrote with the group.

(15 minutes) Group Activity: Now, have them write about the same situation, but from the OTHER PERSON'S perspective.

They will get with the SAME partner (or stay in the large group if you deem more clinically appropriate) and share what they wrote. (Again, no feedback for this process and definitely no "solution" seeking.)

(15 minutes) Group Activity: Now, have them write about the same situation, but from their HIGHER SELF (or higher power's) perspective.

(15 minutes) Group Process: Have each person read ONLY their third version. (Without telling the "story.")

(10 minutes) Closing Process

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Group 11: The Great Remembering

Group Focus: Accountability

Group Objective: To explore the possibility that no one and nothing “outside” of someone has the power to make them revert to maladaptive behaviors.

Key Teaching Points: Often people say that they feel “triggered” by someone’s behavior or by something that happens to them. In this group, we will practice changing the word “trigger” to “activation” and reframe the belief that someone or something has the ability to control us or make us revert to maladaptive behaviors.

Materials Needed: Copies of Handouts (one per person), whiteboard/flipchart, markers.

Modified Reading from Conscious Recovery: We may sometimes still experience pain, but we will no longer blame anyone or any situation as the cause of the pain. We will be accountable for our own experience. It may be that a wound within us is touched by what happened, and in that case, it’s important to discover how it might help us grow beyond that trigger. As a matter of fact, we no longer focus on triggers at all, but acknowledge that something is activated within us that is wanting to heal. In that way, we can welcome every situation as an opportunity for our own growth and expansion. When we come to see that what other people do or say doesn’t impact the truth of who and what we are, and we recognize they are acting out of their own “woundology,” we don’t make ourselves victims to anyone else’s behavior. We no longer blame anyone else for our experiences. We become able to respond to them rather than reacting out of our old programming. In this way, we can be at peace regardless of outer circumstances.

As we embody this dynamic new paradigm, new possibilities open in our consciousness and in our lives. We recognize that because we have grown in conscious awareness, we can naturally access and activate a deeper blueprint for our lives. We can embrace a life filled with connection and joy. We find ourselves living from a perspective of continuous awe and wonder. Life becomes immensely simpler over time, and we move into a way of being that even feels *effortless*. This is because we have awakened into a new way of seeing ourselves and the world. We have been returned to our original perfection. Because of this, our lives continue to open to greater opportunities. As we grow our level of consciousness, the outer world responds.

GROUP OUTLINE

Group 11: The Great Remembering/Accountability

(Chapter 8 from *Conscious Recovery*)

(10 minutes) Meditation

(10 minutes) Check-in: Everyone says their name and says something about what one of their “triggers” are.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(5 minutes) Introduction of Topic: In the behavioral health field, the word “trigger” is used to describe something (a person, place, etc.) that causes someone to revert to maladaptive behaviors. This is implying the something or someone “out there” is the cause of their pain. But it is really a “button” that was touched INTERNALLY and that is where the focus needs to be.

(5 minutes) Group Discussion: Read (or write on board) and discuss this quote: “It is not your words that hurt me, it’s that you touched a wound that has not healed.” - Don Miguel Ruiz

(20 minutes) Group Process (Small Groups): Have people break into three small groups and read one of the readings (found on pages 67-69) and discuss.

(15 minutes) Group Process: Have one person from each group “report” to the larger group regarding the discussion in their group.

(15 minutes) Group Discussion (Flipchart): Line down center of flipchart. On one side brainstorm and list “TRIGGERS” on the other side “ACTIVATIONS.”

Key Points:

- There is a deeper way to approach a “trigger”
- It is really a “button” that is touched INTERNALLY that’s the issue
- The “button” is getting activated in order to heal
- In this way we are no longer giving our power away

(10 minutes) Closing Process

READING 1

From Conscious Recovery

We may sometimes still experience pain, but we will no longer blame anyone or any situation as the cause of the pain. We will be accountable for our own experience. It may be that a wound within us is touched by what happened, and in that case, it's important to discover how it might help us grow beyond that trigger. As a matter of fact, we no longer focus on triggers at all, but acknowledge that something is activated within us that is wanting to heal. In that way, we can welcome every situation as an opportunity for our own growth and expansion. When we come to see that what other people do or say doesn't impact the truth of who and what we are, and we recognize they are acting out of their own "woundology," we don't make ourselves victims to anyone else's behavior. We no longer blame anyone else for our experiences. We become able to respond to them rather than reacting out of our old programming. In this way, we can be at peace regardless of outer circumstances.

READING 2

From Conscious Recovery

Imagine a permanent shift in your neural network, in which you don't constantly identify yourself as broken or defective. Imagine going into a place that used to be filled with triggers, a place that formerly would have looked like a temptation or a trap and walking through it with ease and grace. Imagine your life being free from the anguish of "self-hatred" and filled with potential.

Imagine that you are truly free to move in whatever direction your inner knowing points. That's the power of the quantum leap, the U-turn in consciousness. Imagine now that, because you are recognizing your oneness with source, you can absolutely trust its direction. That's the promise of many spiritual practices—that through openness and acceptance, you will develop an unshakable relationship with your inner life and allow it to gently guide you.

READING 3

From Conscious Recovery

Imagine that someone makes a “negative” remark to you. Practicing nonresistance, you can simply observe and notice: How are you judging this situation? What is your judgment about this person?

Then you can take that more deeply inward: You can observe what that statement activates internally. Maybe you feel a tightness in your throat or your chest or your stomach, maybe you experience the urge to react, to lash out, to judge. So, you can observe your reaction, and recognize your desire to judge.

And then you can go even deeper: What is your judgment about *yourself* in this moment? What are you saying about yourself when you judge this person or situation? What are you believing about yourself to be true?

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Group 12: Awakened Living

Group Focus: Purpose

Group Objective: To explore what it means to live on purpose.

Key Teaching Points: Often people think that purpose is an “action” or a role they play. This group will explore the possibility that purpose is actually a quality or an inner resource. (The take-away is that when we are living our inner qualities, we naturally experience a deeper sense of purpose both internally and externally.)

Materials Needed: Copies of handouts (one per person), pens, clipboards (or something to write on), index cards.

Modified Reading from Conscious Recovery: When we talk about purpose, we generally refer to something in the outer realm, something we want to do. We tend to believe that if we achieve this thing or that thing, then we will acquire what we want, whether that’s fulfillment or happiness or a better standard of living. We often look at our goals and achievements as effort, striving, even as struggle. What we’re discovering together in this book is the power of the inward-looking approach. Tapping into our wholeness, into our divine nature, is our most fundamental purpose. Our primary purpose is simply to awaken. Being grounded in that space of essential wholeness makes pursuing any intention in the outer realm much easier, more powerful and connected. When we tap into the truth of who and what we are, life naturally becomes purposeful. There’s no striving to achieve something beyond us. We are simply guided in a very powerful way to what’s already there.

I want to examine two levels of purpose: our common inner purpose and our individual, outer-directed purposes. Our fundamental purpose is simply to awaken—to become conscious of our inherent wholeness, to live in a state of presence, to become aware of our oneness with source. And as we grow in awareness of this purpose, it becomes manifest in all our outer-directed purposes. This isn’t about figuring it out. It isn’t about latching onto a new set of beliefs or perfecting our spiritual technique to do it correctly. It’s about deepening the awareness of our essential wholeness. It’s also about moving from our head, into our heart, and ultimately living in a deep awareness of our intuition. It is shifting from feeling trapped by our thoughts and ego-driven goals into experiencing a deeper, more authentic feeling tone.

GROUP OUTLINE

Group 12: Awakened Living/Purpose

(Chapter 9 from Conscious Recovery)

10 Minutes) Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-in: Everyone says their name and one thing about what it means to live on purpose.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No "Fixing"
- "I" Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(20 Minutes) Group Activity: Have each group member write two or three core false beliefs on an index card. Have each of them stand in front of the room and read the cards. Now ask them to tear the card up and throw away. (Into bowl.)

IMPORTANT: They are not processing, giving feedback, or discussing. Invite them to notice how it feels when they hear people read their core false beliefs.

(15 Minutes) Group Activity: Make a list of seven people...three qualities...have participants fill out sheet. (On page 74.) Let them know it's OK if words repeat. When they are finished filling out the sheet, ask them to circle any words that repeat. Ask them to write down the THREE words that repeat most often on an index card.

Teaching Point: We can only recognize traits in others if you have them in yourself. "You spot it, you got it."

(10 Minutes) Group Activity: Have participant make two lines facing each other. Each person will read their card to the person standing in front of them saying: My name is _____ and I AM _____. Now a person from one side moves to the other end of the line, and everyone on that side "slides down" a person. Repeat this process until everyone from side "A" reads and listens to everyone from side "B."

(10 Minutes) Teaching Point: When we are "living on our card" (practicing the three words) we are living on purpose. (Practicing authenticity.)

Symptoms of Authenticity: Satisfaction, Fulfillment, Meaning, and Harmony

Symptoms of IN-Authenticity: Frustration, Defensiveness, Conflict, and Judgment

Say something like: "When we are living on our cards, we experience the symptoms of authenticity. If you find yourself feeling frustrated, getting defensive, etc. you can simply read your card and remind yourself of who and what you really are.

(5 minutes) Closing Reading: Simply read the excerpt from Marianne Williamson (page 73) out loud to the group.

(10 minutes) Closing Process

SEVEN PEOPLE YOU ADMIRE AND RESPECT

NAME

THREE WORDS TO DESCRIBE THEM (They are...)

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

OUR GREATEST FEAR

Marianne Williamson

It is our light not our darkness that most frightens us

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,
talented and fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of the universe.

You playing small does not serve the world.

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other
people won't feel insecure around you.

We were born to make manifest the glory that is within us.

It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine,
we unconsciously give other people
permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear,
our presence automatically liberates others.

Conscious Recovery

for Eating Disorders

OUTPATIENT

GROUP CURRICULUM

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PREPARING FOR GROUP

OP Group 1: A Fresh Perspective on Eating Disorders

Summary: The purpose of this group is to explore the root causes of disordered eating and other mental health concerns.

Materials needed: Copies of handouts (one per person), whiteboard, markers.

Key teaching points:

Key Principles of Conscious Recovery – You will want to address the key principles of *Conscious Recovery for Eating Disorders*:

- Underneath the symptoms, thoughts, and behaviors of disordered eating is an essential self that is whole and perfect
- The eating disorder itself was not intended to be the “problem” but was a strategy that has lost its effectiveness over time
- Treating eating disorders must go beyond treating presenting symptoms and get down to the layers of risk factors that lead to self-destructive behaviors
- Some of the common influences associated with disordered eating are unresolved trauma, spiritual disconnection, and toxic shame
- There is a pathway to acceptance, compassion, and freedom through the adoption of spiritual practices and principles

The book is organized in 3 parts with 3 chapters in each: The Risk Factors of Disordered Eating, Breaking the Cycle of Disordered Eating, and A Return to Wholeness. This is outlined for the group in the handout.

Conscious Recovery is a holistic approach that addresses disordered eating, mental health issues, and recovery from four “rooms” or areas that include physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual and we must address all four of them in order to change maladaptive behaviors.

1. Wholeness and Perfection – Reading from Conscious Recovery: “Your essential self is perfection. You are essentially one with source, or love, or light—whatever word you use for divinity. Even before you knew language, you came into this world with absolute connection to the ultimate power of the universe. This is a core truth. It’s the truth we are born with, the truth that makes us whole, gives us a sense of connection, a sense of peace and harmony. But in the process of living, we often forget this core truth, and we lose our balance. We lose sight of who and what we truly are.”

2. Maladaptive Behaviors are Brilliant Strategies – Adapted reading from Conscious Recovery: “We often hear mental health issues described in other terms—as a disease, or as a coping mechanism. Both can seem inherently negative in connotation. They suggest that there’s something wrong that needs to be fixed. ‘I have a mental illness and that’s what’s wrong.’ In the western medical model, the problem is the disease of mental illness, and it’s addressed by treating the symptoms, whether they be physical, social, or emotional. And calling mental health issues as a ‘coping mechanism’ suggests that a person is less able to function than ‘normal’ people and needs the crutch of the maladaptive behavior to get along in life.”

3. The Four Rooms – Reading from Conscious Recovery: “Everyone is a house with four rooms, a physical, an intellectual, an emotional and a spiritual. Most of us tend to live in one room most of the time, but unless we go into every room, every day, even if only to keep it aired, we are not a complete person.”

4. Conscious Recovery for Eating Disorders is Presented in 3 Parts – Part 1, “The Risk Factors of Disordered Eating,” delves into the three spiritual root causes of maladaptive behaviors: unresolved trauma in all its various forms, the fragmentation of the self that can generate and develop core false beliefs, and toxic shame, which is a pervasive and corrosive sense of self that further separates you from your true nature.

Part 2, “Breaking the Cycle of Disordered Eating,” introduces the inner work involved in interrupting compulsive patterns, so you can reconnect with your deepest truth. This work includes creating safety through openness, spiritual community, and conscious awareness, unlearning your core false beliefs, habits and points of view, and discovering powerful spiritual principles that, when practiced, can allow you to permanently break free from maladaptive tendencies.

Part 3, “A Return to Wholeness,” will explore how you can move your life from powerless to power-full, how you can return to the essential wholeness of your divine nature, and finally, how you can live an awakened and purpose-filled life.

GROUP OUTLINE

OP Group 1: A Fresh Perspective on Eating Disorders

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In:

Everyone states their name and says something about the root causes of their disordered eating and other mental health issues.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(20 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout (page 82)

- Reading from Conscious Recovery (out loud)
- Small group or dyad discussion of reading

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

(15 Minutes) Discussion/Brainstorming (Whiteboard or Flipchart):

What is disordered eating?

(15 Minutes) Dyads:

Discuss how your maladaptive behaviors (coping mechanisms) were once brilliant strategies and answer the questions: In what ways are they still working? In what ways are they not working?

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

Conscious Recovery

Group One: Handout 1

A FRESH PRESPECTIVE ON EATING DISORDERS

Conscious Recovery is a groundbreaking and effective approach to viewing and treating mental disordered eating and other health issues. Author and spiritual teacher TJ Woodward is changing the conversation about mental health because he recognizes that underneath all maladaptive behavior is an essential self that is whole and perfect.

TJ Woodward's *Conscious Recovery Method*™ moves beyond simply treating behaviors and symptoms. It focuses on the underlying root causes that drive destructive patterns, while providing clear steps for letting go of core false beliefs that lead to maladaptive tendencies. Whether it is spiritual disconnection, unresolved trauma, or toxic shame, these challenges need to be addressed in order to achieve true and permanent freedom.

The purpose of *Conscious Recovery* is to offer a spiritual perspective that can assist you in addressing the underlying root causes of your maladaptive behaviors. It is intended to enhance any program, therapy, or other support system in which you are currently engaged. Its aim is *not* to provide definitive answers, but to introduce questions that can assist you in accessing your own inner wisdom and rediscover your true nature. You are your own best teacher, and you hold the key to ending your own suffering. *Conscious Recovery* can assist you in deepening your understanding of disordered eating and other mental health issues, provide you a roadmap toward liberation, and offer tools to assist you in living your most dynamic and connected life.

Conscious Recovery

Group One: Handout 1

(Page 2)

Key Principles of Conscious Recovery for Eating Disorders

- Underneath the symptoms, thoughts, and behaviors of disordered eating is an essential self that is whole and perfect
- The eating disorder itself was not intended to be the “problem” but was a strategy that has lost its effectiveness over time
- Treating eating disorders must go beyond treating presenting symptoms and get down to the layers of risk factors that lead to self-destructive behaviors
- Some of the common influences associated with disordered eating are unresolved trauma, spiritual disconnection, and toxic shame
- There is a pathway to acceptance, compassion, and freedom through the adoption of spiritual practices and principles

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PREPARING FOR GROUP

Outpatient Group 2: The Spiritual Lens

(Preface and Introduction from Conscious Recovery)

Summary: The purpose of this group is to explore what it means to view eating disorders and mental health through the spiritual lens.

Materials needed: Copies of handout (one per person), quotes, tape

Key teaching points:

1. ***Wholeness and Perfection*** – We come into this world as beings who know and live in acceptance, openness, connection, presence. We are those joyful little children who know in their hearts that they are whole and perfect, and that life is wonder-full and wonder-filled. But life has a way of teaching us the opposite; traumatic experiences teach us that we are broken, and this pushes us further from our oneness with source. Think about what little children are taught about the world, especially children who experience cruelty or who live in a threatening environment. They are taught to be mistrustful, to devalue themselves.
2. ***The Four Rooms of Existence*** – Everyone is a house with four rooms, a physical, an intellectual, an emotional and a spiritual. Most of us tend to live in one room most of the time, but unless we go into every room, every day, even if only to keep it aired, we are not a complete person.
3. ***Viewing Eating Disorders and Mental Health Through the Spiritual Lens*** – Often neglected in recovery work is the spiritual room, from which we can consider the spiritual questions involved in recovery: What are the root causes of eating disorders and other mental health issues? What is the underlying condition of fragmentation and disconnection that leads people to maladaptive behaviors? How can sitting in the room of spirit bring us to a place of deeper healing and peace? Eating disorders and other mental health issues can stem from fragmentation; it is a strategy for dealing with the pain of disconnection from our essential self.

When we reframe our approach to eating disorders and other mental health issues in this way, we can see that the underlying problem is not the maladaptive behavior. The problem beneath the symptoms of eating disorders and other mental health issues is spiritual and psychic disconnection, the fragmentation of self. Recognizing this allows us to start to identify and let go of old core beliefs, to let go of those solutions that are no longer working, and to move toward a place of wholeness and perfection.

4. *Holistic and Integrated Recovery* – A holistic and integrative recovery acknowledges and utilizes the power that resides in all four rooms of the human experience: the physical, the intellectual, the emotional, and the spiritual. The physical room gives us the insight that mental illness is a disease and working from that insight has offered us many powerful tools and approaches. The intellectual room gives us the insight that our thoughts and ideas, our assumptions, and our worldview, have an enormous role in both mental health issues and recovery. And the room of the emotions shows us that how we respond to our feelings—whether we are overcome by them, disengage from them, or somewhere in between—is a factor in our issues. Coming from a spiritual perspective will enable us to take the insights of the physical, the intellectual, and the emotional rooms to a new place, a place of integration and wholeness.

GROUP OUTLINE

Outpatient Group 2: The Spiritual Lens

(Preface and Introduction from Conscious Recovery)

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In:

Everyone states their name and says something about spirituality as it relates to disordered eating and mental health.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout (page 88)

- Reading from Conscious Recovery (out loud)
- Small group or dyad discussion of reading

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

(5 Minutes) Group Process 1 - Four Corners:

Tape the four different quotes from *Conscious Recovery* (found on pages 90-93) on the wall in different parts of the room. Have everyone walk around and read them. Then ask them to stand by the one that they most resonate or identify with. Once everyone has chosen their quote, they sit in small groups (based on the one they selected).

(15 Minutes) Group Process 2:

Each group spends time discussing why they choose that particular quote. (Each group chooses one person to summarize the small group discussions.)

(10 Minutes) Group Process 3:

One person from each group stands up in front of the room, reads the quote, and “reports” the highlights from their small group discussion.

(5 Minutes) Group Discussion:

Anything left to share/discuss?

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

Conscious Recovery

Group Two: Handout 1

VIEWING EATING DISORDERS THROUGH THE SPIRITUAL LENS

READING FROM CONSCIOUS RECOVERY

"Everyone is a house with four rooms, a physical, a mental, an emotional and a spiritual. Most of us tend to live in one room most of the time, but unless we go into every room, every day, even if only to keep it aired, we are not a complete person."

In the physical room is your relationship with your body and its interaction with the physical world. The mental room houses your thoughts and ideas, the assumptions and expectations that shape your perspective of the world. The emotional room is the seat of feelings, and for some, it can be a place to avoid, or run from. The spiritual room is where you connect with your innermost self, and with source that lies within all reality. Part of your healing journey is coming to recognize the importance of all four rooms, and spending time in each of them to strengthen your whole being.

Conscious Recovery

Group Two: Handout 1

(Page 2)

Questions for journaling and further reflection:

1. In what ways do you experience emptiness in your life?
2. In what ways do you feel broken?
3. In what ways are you uncomfortable with some of your “darker” feelings?
4. How has your maladaptive behavior led to further disconnection and isolation?
5. In what ways have you sought relief outside of yourself?
6. Has it worked? If so, for how long?
7. What are you avoiding in your life?
8. What are you clinging to?
9. What would it take to shift your awareness inward?
10. What are some tools you can begin to access to look inward?

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*Recovery doesn't mean
putting your life on hold.
Recovery means holding
on so you can live your
best life.*

— *Brittany Burgunder*

The key problem I encounter working with wounded, depressed, and unhappy people is a lack of connection...starting from a disconnection from themselves and then with others.

— David W. Earle

I've found that every spiritual advance I've made was preceded by some sort of fall—in fact, it's almost a universal law that a fall of some kind precedes a major shift.

— Dr. Wayne Dyer

*And I said to my body softly:
“I want to be your friend.” It
took a long breath and
replied: “I have been waiting
my whole life for this.”*

—Nayyirah Waheed

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Outpatient Group 3: The Fragmented Self

(Introduction from *Conscious Recovery*)

Summary: This group is about exploring characteristics of the fragmented self.

Materials needed: Copies of handouts (one per person), index cards

Key teaching points:

1. ***The Outer-Focused Life*** – Mental health issues can be viewed simply as the outer-focused life. Rather than doing the inner work of healing that which feels broken or meaningless, we focus on something outside of ourselves to resolve, numb, or avoid a sense of psychic pain. When we move from an outer-focused life to an inner-focused way of being, we can start to recognize and engage our wholeness, our inherent perfection.
2. ***Cultural Influences*** – We live in a culture that's addicted to the concepts of "right" and "wrong," highly addicted to competition, highly addicted to the belief in "us" and "them." We live in a world where there is suffering and pain, and our society doesn't offer many healthy tools for dealing with that. And, depending on the specific culture where we are raised, we may get many layers of messages that teach us we are fundamentally broken or damaged in some way.
3. ***Core False Beliefs*** – Most of us come into a world that teaches us about fear, separation, and competition. We learn things about ourselves and our world that are contrary to the fundamental truth that we are whole and perfect. Adults, often well-meaning, try to prepare us for the world by teaching us to fight, to wall off our emotions, to criticize. These lessons are based on lies that I call "core false beliefs." The deepest root of mental health issues is this: we learn and we appropriate core false beliefs, which break the connection with our true nature. This fragments us and pushes us to turn outward for validation, love, and peace of mind.

4. Brilliant Strategies – Our core false beliefs, which frequently stem from generalized unresolved trauma and spiritual disconnection, may leave us feeling broken. What is most often at the core of maladaptive behavior is this sense of brokenness within and the search for something outside ourselves to help us manage the resulting discomfort. Looked at in this way, maladaptive behavior can be seen as a strategy, even a brilliant strategy, for survival. When our sense of self is fragmented, when we see ourselves as fundamentally broken, that's a very, very painful way to live. And when we discover something like gambling or sex or drugs, it can bring us relief from that terrible pain.

Maladaptive behavior is a strategy that may work for a long time; it might succeed in protecting us from the desperation that might otherwise overwhelm us. It's not just a matter of basic survival or avoiding suicide or insanity. Our maladaptive strategies can help us make sense of the world and find relief from pain and suffering. Whatever our brilliant strategy, chances are it will initially work, sometimes even for years. But ultimately, all outward-directed strategies end up affirming that there's something wrong with us and that something out there is going to fix us. These strategies limit our responses to life. If things do not go the way we want, we can only conclude that it's because we have done something wrong, or because we are wrong. Ultimately, our brilliant strategies stop working because they are limited. They are inadequate in that they bring only temporary relief from feelings of fragmentation. And they are limiting in that they ultimately strengthen and solidify our belief in our own powerlessness; they offer no other perspective.

Reframing maladaptive behaviors as brilliant strategies, as a self-preserving human response to a problem, removes the negative judgment from our perspective and invites us to ask ourselves a couple of key questions: "What is my maladaptive behavior a response to? What problem is it trying to solve?" As a brilliant strategy, maladaptive behavior—whether it's using repetitive patterns, drugs and alcohol, gambling, sex, work, etc.—can serve to bring relief from a profound sense of uneasiness in the world, of disconnection and fragmentation. Recognizing maladaptive behavior as brilliant strategies gives us clarity about what's authentically happening inside. It tells us something about the wholeness we are truly seeking. It tells us, with terrifying clarity, where we're stuck, where we're shut down, and where we're closed off. Then we can simply ask the questions: "Is this strategy still working? Is it still serving me? Is there a better way?"

GROUP OUTLINE

Outpatient Group 3: The Fragmented Self

(Introduction from Conscious Recovery)

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In:

Everyone states their name and says something about what mental health means to them.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout 1 (page 98)

- Reading from Conscious Recovery (out loud)
- Small group or dyad discussion of reading

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

(15 Minutes) Group Process 1 – Core False Beliefs (Dyads):

Have clients get into pairs. Give each client the handout (page 100) Have everyone circle any of the core false beliefs they, on some level, are holding or believing about themselves. (They are free to add their own.)

Now invite them to have a discussion with their partner, using these questions. (You might want to write these on the board.)

1. When did you first start believing these ideas about yourself?
2. How have these beliefs contributed to your mental health issues?
3. Can you think of some examples of times when you believed the opposite?

(15 Minutes) Group Process 2 – Reframing Process:

Have clients come back to the larger group. Ask them to reflect on the beliefs they circled on the handout. Now ask them to choose one to work with for this next exercise. Invite them to come up with the opposite of the belief and write it on an index card.

Go around the circle and have clients read ONLY the new (opposite) belief from their card and share how it's true about them.

(5 Minutes) Group Discussion:

Anything left to share/discuss?

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

Conscious Recovery

Group Three: Handout 1

THE FRAGMENTED SELF

ADAPTED READING FROM CONSCIOUS RECOVERY

If we're born with a solid connection to our divine nature, what happens to that connection? Most of us come into a world that teaches us about fear, about separation, about competition—we learn things about ourselves and our world that are contrary to the fundamental truth that we are whole and perfect. Adults, often well-meaning, try to prepare us for the world by teaching us to fight, to wall off our emotions, to criticize.

These lessons are based on lies that I call "core false beliefs." The deepest root of mental health issues is this: we learn and we appropriate core false beliefs, which break the connection with our true nature. This fragments us and pushes us to turn outward for validation, love, and peace of mind.

Conscious Recovery

Group Three: Handout 1

(Page 2)

Questions for journaling and further reflection:

1. Can you remember a time in your life when you felt connected with yourself?
2. What were the external conditions that were present at that time?
3. What were the internal resources you possessed at that time?
4. What happened to change that experience?
5. What were some of the negative messages you were taught as a child?
6. Did you develop any negative core false beliefs because of these messages?
7. Do you still believe any of them to be true?
8. How do those beliefs contribute to your mental health issues?
9. What would it take to unlearn them?
10. How would you feel if you no longer believed them?

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Group Three: Handout 2

Core False Beliefs

We often develop core false beliefs about ourselves and the world.

These core false beliefs are often at the root of maladaptive tendencies.

Circle any of these beliefs that you are, on some level, holding or believing about yourself. (Feel free to add your own.)

I'm not good enough

I am a loser

I am stupid

I am not worthy

I'm not safe in the world

I don't deserve to be _____ (e.g., happy) I'll never succeed

I'm all alone in the world

No one understands me

I'm unlovable

I'll never have enough time, money, energy, etc.

Life is hard, life is a struggle

I'll never amount to anything

I'll never be happy

There's something wrong with me

Life is unfair

I am broken

I am lazy

I'll never get better

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Outpatient Group 4: Unresolved Trauma

(Chapter 1 from Conscious Recovery)

Summary: The purpose of this group is to explore unresolved trauma as a root cause of mental health issues.

Materials needed: Copies of handouts (one per person), pens.

Key teaching points:

1. ***What is Trauma?*** – Traumatic events by definition overwhelm our ability to cope. When the mind becomes flooded with emotion, a circuit breaker is thrown that allows us to survive the experience fairly intact. That is, without becoming psychotic or frying out one of the brain centers. The cost of this blown circuit is emotion frozen within the body. In other words, we often unconsciously stop feeling our trauma part way into it, like a movie that is still going after the sound has been turned off. We cannot heal until we move fully through that trauma, including all of the feelings of that event. Trauma is something that overwhelms our ability to cope. And unresolved trauma continues to hurt us because we are stuck in the traumatic experience.

2. ***Physical/Intellectual/Emotional/Spiritual/Vicarious Trauma:***

Physical Trauma – Physical Trauma encompasses many different experiences, including physical abuse, domestic violence, assault, self-injury, natural disaster, an automobile accident, or battlefield trauma, to name a few. Medically speaking, physical trauma is a severe injury to the body, whatever the cause. If we experience this sort of trauma, it's going to affect how we perceive ourselves and our world. Even if the physical wounds are mended, there is a psychological and a spiritual impact that gets stored in the body and is harder to heal. Thus, unresolved physical trauma can be a root cause of mental health issues, because walking around with that kind of pain often leads us to turn to substances and behaviors that ease our suffering but can also become repetitive.

Intellectual Trauma – The vast majority of us experience some degree of mental trauma in childhood simply by receiving repeated messages of untruth. As children, most of us learn lies about ourselves and our world instead of the truth of our inherent wholeness. Being taught a worldview that assumes that the world is governed by limitation, fear, separation, or aggression can make us believe, at a fundamental level, that the world is not safe. This mental trauma is an injury to our understanding of the world. These lies are traumatic. They injure us because they enter our psyches and distort the way we see ourselves. They become our core beliefs, our core *false* beliefs. When we walk around believing things like, “The world is not safe,” or “Life is a struggle,” or “I’m fundamentally unworthy,” then it makes sense to live in a permanent state of fight, flight, or freeze response. For us to expand outside of our comfort zone can often feel disorienting and frightening. This is because we’ve unconsciously created a safety zone that on one hand seems to keep us feeling safe, but on another hand, keeps us absolutely stuck in limited ways of seeing ourselves.

Emotional Trauma – Emotional trauma can be inflicted by a primary caregiver who is in their own addiction or mental health issues and not able to offer the love and connection we need. It can also come from teachers, ministers, and the like who are still operating from their “woundology.” It can be caused by peers; the proverbial “kid on the playground” acting as a bully. Being repeatedly mocked, insulted, and criticized can make us feel, at a fundamental level, that we are less than, not good enough, and/or unlovable. This is emotional trauma—*injury to our emotional well-being*. Our psyches can still hold the emotional trauma and hurts from our past. The traumatic event is no longer occurring, but our “freeze” instinct still believes we need protecting. We need to work out the emotional scars associated with the original trauma in order to be free.

Spiritual trauma – Spiritual trauma is inflicted when we are not seen as the deepest truth of who and what we are. It is all too common to be taught ideas about ourselves and the world that are counter to this fundamental truth of our being. When we are not seen in this authentic light, we have what is called spiritual disconnection, which is a separation from our essential self. When that message about our fundamental brokenness and dependence is repeated over and over again, when it’s illustrated and lived by an authority and an institution that our parents and others around us respect and follow, then it naturally seeps into our spirits and breaks down our relationship with the fundamental truth of who we are. This is spiritual trauma; it is an injury to our spirit.

Vicarious trauma – Vicarious trauma, simply put, is witnessing a traumatic event or ongoing trauma perpetrated on someone else. This can be witnessing a horrific accident, or seeing someone physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually abused once or over an extended period of time. This type of trauma can sometimes get overlooked, because someone might say a variation of “But, he never abused me,” or “I only saw it happen, I was not hurt.”

The truth is, this type of trauma can be very agonizing because there might be multiple layers to the experience. For example, someone might carry guilt or shame because they were not able to prevent the accident, or they believe they “should have” done something to stop the violence. One example of this is when children witness one parent abusing the other one. These incidents can leave very profound wounds that need to be addressed in order to find resolution and freedom from vicarious trauma.

3. Consequences of Unresolved Trauma – Trauma lives in our bodies. If we have unresolved trauma, the responses of fight, flight, or freeze, which are very hard on our nervous systems, can be triggered by everyday physical experiences, and over time this chronic stress takes a toll on our bodies and spirits in addition to the direct physical effect of the trauma. Trauma can take up residence in the body, in effect reinjuring us each time it’s activated. It also has been linked to multiple physical diseases. Whether it’s physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual injury that we experience, unresolved trauma can result in a sense that something is fundamentally wrong or broken. And that a feeling can get buried deep in the subconscious (the part of our psyche that is not easily accessible to the conscious mind). If you’re walking around with the unconscious or subconscious belief that you’re not lovable, you may very well try to find all sorts of experiences to counter that.

You may be become addicted to relationships, love, or sex, or find yourself feeling stuck in habitual patterns. You are searching for something outside of yourself to try to undo the core false belief that you’re not lovable. The deeply held feeling tone that you’re not lovable works on an unconscious level to attract people who only confirm that negative core false belief. Conversely, you also may tend to be attracted to these very people, in a kind of self-sabotaging reinforcement of those false beliefs. The core false beliefs that result from unresolved trauma can trap us in a limited and limiting reality that keeps us from true healing.

4. Victim Consciousness – It seems like most mental health issues come out of a victim's perspective, in which we see life as something that happens to us. Our problems are caused by other people, by institutions like school or government, even by God—everything is caused by circumstances beyond our control, forces we can't manage. Often this viewpoint stems from our earliest experiences, which taught us that we are powerless to change anything directly and that the only way to get something we need is by sheer force or manipulation. Victim consciousness leaves us feeling powerless over circumstances, and other people's behavior seems to have way too much impact on our lives. This viewpoint offers us little choice. We feel trapped. Living this way is excruciatingly painful so, of course, we're going to look outside ourselves for something to numb that pain.

How does this relate to an fragmented life? Remember, we're talking about mental health issues as brilliant strategies that are no longer working; using something outside of ourselves to try to fix something that feels broken within. The connection is simple. If trauma has led us to walk around with a sense of brokenness, then we naturally turn to things outside ourselves to attempt to repair that feeling of brokenness. The trouble is, if we've allowed the trauma response to get buried in our subconscious, then it begins to run the show. The trauma defines us and colors all our experiences. We come to believe that we are, fundamentally, victims. Let me be clear: This does not mean that we weren't possibly victimized when the trauma happened. I'm not saying that the trauma you underwent was your responsibility, or your fault. Not at all. What I am saying is that, because of the trauma, we can sometimes take on the *identity* of a victim. We can sometimes start believing and saying things like "I am a victim," or "I am powerless" which only concretizes this victim mentality into our consciousness.

Unfortunately, part of trauma's power is that it can lead us to believe that the brokenness it leaves us with is fundamental, it's an essential part of who we are. When we are victims of trauma we often fall into a sense of powerlessness or hopelessness, a belief that we are never going to be able to reconnect with the truth of who we are. This leaves us feeling like we're victims to the entire world. It leaves us feeling as if the problem is outside of us and so the solution must be outside of us as well. To me, that is mental health issues in their simplest form; trying to fix something that feels broken inside by turning to solutions on the outside.

GROUP OUTLINE

Outpatient Group 4: Unresolved Trauma

(Chapter 1 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In:

Everyone states their name and says something about the connection between trauma and mental health issues.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout 1 (page 108)

- Reading from Conscious Recovery (out loud)
- Small group or dyad discussion of reading

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

(15 Minutes) Group Process 1 – (Handout):

Have clients write their answers to the following questions (using the handout found on page 111):

- In what ways have you taken on the identity of a victim?
- In what ways has this left you feeling powerless and hopeless?
- How has this impacted your life?

(15 Minutes) Group Process 2 – (Pairs)

Have clients find a partner and simply discuss what they wrote.

(5 Minutes) Group Discussion:

Anything left to share/discuss?

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

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Group Four: Handout 1

HEALING UNRESOLVED TRAUMA

ADAPTED READING FROM CONSCIOUS RECOVERY

How does trauma relate to a fragmented life? Remember, we're talking about mental health issues as brilliant strategies that's no longer working; using something outside of ourselves to try to fix something that feels broken within. The connection is simple: If trauma has led us to walk around with a sense of brokenness, then we naturally turn to things outside ourselves to try to fix that feeling of brokenness. The trouble is, if we've allowed the trauma response to get buried in our subconscious, then it begins to run the show. The trauma defines us and colors all our experiences. We come to believe that we are, fundamentally, victims.

Let me be clear: This does not mean that we weren't victimized when the trauma happened. I'm not saying that the trauma you underwent was your responsibility, or your fault. Not at all. What I am saying is that, because of the trauma, we can sometimes take on the *identity* of a victim. We can sometimes start believing and saying things like "I am a victim," which only concretizes this into our consciousness.

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Group Four: Handout 1

(Page 2)

Questions for journaling and further reflection:

1. Have you had any pain from trauma that has contributed to your mental health issues?
2. What would happen if you were to let go of that unresolved pain?
3. Have you or someone close to you ever experienced trauma?
4. What impact has it had on you?
5. Have you created a “safety zone” or “comfort zone” for yourself?
6. How has that worked *for* you and *against* you?
7. What would happen if you were to move out of your comfort zone?
8. Have you engaged in any patterns of self-sabotage?
9. Where does that come from?
10. What can you do or be to change it?

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Group Four: Handout 2

Victim Consciousness Technique

- In what ways have you taken on the identity of a victim?

- In what ways has this left you feeling powerless and hopeless?

- How has this impacted your life?

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Outpatient Group 5: Spiritual Disconnection

(Chapter 2 from Conscious Recovery)

Summary: This group is about exploring spiritual disconnection – what it is and how it impacts mental health and recovery.

Materials needed: Copies of handouts (one per person), pens.

Key teaching points:

1. What is Spiritual Disconnection? – It's the separation from our essential nature. We come into this world knowing our essential nature and our oneness with source, but very quickly "the tall people" begin to teach us otherwise. Most of us get taught all sorts of things that are a fundamental lie about who and what we genuinely are.

2. Attachment Theory – Attachment theory is a psychological model that endeavors to describe the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. The most important precept of attachment theory is that a baby needs to develop a loving relationship with at least one primary caregiver for the child's successful spiritual and emotional development, and for learning how to effectively normalize their emotions. There are three different unhealthy attachment styles: avoidant, anxious, or anxious-avoidant. The intention is to move toward what is called secure attachment. I prefer to use the term authentic attachment.

The following are some characteristics of the four different attachment styles: Adults with avoidant attachment desire a high level of independence, often appearing to avoid attachment altogether. They view themselves as self-reliant, invulnerable to attachment feelings and not needing close relationships. They tend to suppress their feelings, dealing with rejection by distancing themselves from partners of whom they often have a poor opinion.

Adults with anxious attachment seek elevated levels of intimacy, approval and receptiveness from partners, and can easily become overly dependent. They tend to be less trusting, have less positive views about themselves than the people in their lives, and may display high levels of emotional self-expression, worry and impulsiveness in their relationships.

Adults with anxious-avoidant attachment have mixed feelings about close relationships, simultaneously desiring and feeling uncomfortable with emotional closeness. They tend to mistrust their partners and can often view themselves as unworthy. Similar to avoidant attached adults, anxious-avoidant adults tend to seek less intimacy, and suppress their feelings.

Conversely, *authentically* attached adults foster positive views of themselves, their companions and their relationships. They feel comfortable with intimacy and independence, and have an easy time balancing the two.

3. Maladaptive Behaviors are Brilliant Strategies – We often hear maladaptive behavior described in other terms—as a disease, or as a coping mechanism. Both can seem inherently negative in connotation. They suggest that there's something wrong that needs to be fixed. “I am mentally ill and that's what's wrong.” In the western medical model, the problem is the disease of mental illness, and it's addressed by treating the symptoms, whether they be physical, social, or emotional. And calling maladaptive behaviors as “coping mechanisms” suggests that a person is less able to function than “normal” people and needs the crutch of the maladaptive behavior to get along in life.

Both perspectives have their place in our recovery. But they are limited. They both see mental health issues as the problem rather than as a sign that something is out of alignment internally, on the spiritual level. They are based on a negative assessment of maladaptive behavior (“it's the problem”), and this makes it difficult to see anything else. Reframing maladaptive behaviors as brilliant strategies, as self-preserving human responses to a problem, removes the negative judgment from our perspective and invites us to ask ourselves a couple of key questions: “What is my maladaptive behavior a response to? What problem is it trying to solve?” As a brilliant strategy, maladaptive behavior—whether it's using repetitive patterns, drugs and alcohol, gambling, sex, work, etc.—can serve to bring relief from a profound sense of uneasiness in the world, of disconnection and fragmentation.

Recognizing maladaptive behavior as a brilliant strategy gives us clarity about what's authentically happening inside. It tells us something about the wholeness we are truly seeking. It tells us, with terrifying clarity, where we're stuck, where we're shut down, and where we're closed off. Then we can simply ask the questions: “Is this strategy still working? Is it still serving me? Is there a better way?”

GROUP OUTLINE

Outpatient Group 5: Spiritual Disconnection

(Chapter 2 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In:

Everyone states their name and says something about the relationship between connection and mental health issues.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout 1 (page 116)

- Reading from Conscious Recovery (out loud)
- Small group or dyad discussion of reading

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

(15 Minutes) Group Process 1 – Brilliant Strategies Exercise:

Simply have everyone write out their answers to the following questions using the handout (on page 119):

- What coping strategies did you learn that are no longer working for you?
- What was brilliant about them at the time you used them?
- What would it take for you to let them go?

Now, have them read through what they wrote. Set a timer for three minutes. Ask them to sit quietly for the three minutes on what they wrote. Sit with how the answers *feel* in their body. Instruct them to notice any thoughts, physical sensations, and emotions that show up.

(15 Minutes) Group Process 2 – Dyads:

Have them get with a partner and share what came up during the silence. (They can read each other's answers if they would like.)

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

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Group Five: Handout 1

SPIRITUAL DISCONNECTION

ADAPTED READING FROM CONSCIOUS RECOVERY

“I am whole and perfect in every way.” From a spiritual perspective, life’s journey can be seen as an attempt to reclaim this truth. In fact, even our mental health issues can be a result of our attempts at restoration. Even our maladaptive behavior can come out of the attempt to restore the connection to our true nature. Maladaptive behavior is categorically a response to the felt sense that something is out of balance, that we have forgotten our essential self, forgotten the truth of who and what we are. In our maladaptive behavior, we are usually looking for something outside of ourselves to help us manage something that feels disturbed or broken within. It’s a solution to the problem of the fragmented self. In his book *The Four Agreements*, Don Miguel Ruiz introduces us to the concept of “the domestication of the human”— the process whereby we receive messages about, in his words, “who we should be, what we shouldn’t be, who we (are), and who we (are) not.” That’s what I’m talking about here as spiritual disconnection. It’s the separation from our essential nature.

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Group Five: Handout 1

(Page 2)

Questions for journaling and further reflection:

1. What is one strategy that you have been using to try to feel more connected?
2. Or to feel less pain?
3. Is that strategy still working?
4. If not, are you ready to make a conscious choice to move on?
5. In what ways has your maladaptive behavior been a “brilliant strategy?”
6. Is the strategy still brilliant?
7. Is it still working as a solution?
8. What new strategy could you employ to address feelings of brokenness?
9. What would it take to implement that?
10. What would it take to be free?

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Group Five: Handout 2

Brilliant Strategies Exercise

Write out your answers to these questions

- What coping strategies did you learn that are no longer working for you?

- What was brilliant about them at the time you used them?

- What would it take for you to let them go?

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Outpatient Group 6: Toxic Shame

(Chapter 3 from Conscious Recovery)

Summary: The purpose of this group is to explore toxic shame and its effect on mental health issues and overall well-being.

Materials needed: Copies of handouts (one per person), paper and pens

Key teaching points:

1. *What is Toxic Shame?* – Toxic shame is a sense of brokenness, a sense that “something is deeply, fundamentally, inherently wrong with me.” Brene’ Brown is an incredible writer and researcher who studies vulnerability and shame. In one of her TED Talks, she describes shame in this way: “Shame drives two big tapes: ‘Never good enough,’ and if you can talk it out of that one, ‘Who do you think you are?’” In my experience, when we are holding a deep sense of shame about ourselves, our behavior comes as a result of that shame. Simply said, “hurt” people “hurt” people. And then the “shameful” behavior brings on even *more* shame. This is what we refer to as a shame spiral.

What does toxic shame do to us? There’s a correlation between toxic shame and real diagnosable illness: not only addiction, but depression, anxiety syndromes, eating disorders, and the like. When a person has an identity of brokenness, it can create illness not only in their emotional and spiritual lives, but in their physical lives as well. Toxic shame can lead to literal cancer and disease in all forms.

Another result of toxic shame, and of the secrecy, silence, and judgment that allow it to thrive, is that it drives people to try to fix or hide their essential brokenness with all sorts of unhealthy behaviors. When there is a sense of brokenness internally, we often look incessantly for something outside ourselves to assuage the pain of that brokenness or to at least make sure no one else can see it.

2. Guilt/Shame – With guilt, we believe we have done something wrong, or something that we believe is wrong. With guilt, we can say, “I’m sorry—I made a mistake.” With shame, however, there’s a belief that we are a mistake, we are wrong. The way we work with guilt is very different than the way we work with shame, because when we are coming from a place of guilt— meaning that we have done something that we feel is wrong—we can try to remedy the situation in one way or another. Guilt is generally about a behavior, and it gets fixed behaviorally. Shame is something deeper, more rooted in who we believe we are. And relinquishing it requires deeper, more internal work.

3. Pain and Suffering – Pain is an internal navigational system, informing us that something needs our attention. If we resist or ignore the sounding of pain’s guidance, we prolong it and create unnecessary suffering. In fact, when we resist anything that is happening in our internal or external experience, we create unnecessary suffering. When we refuse to let go of what no longer serves a purpose in our lives, clinging to what once was, we also create unnecessary suffering.

Suffering ceases when we bring ourselves into full alignment with what is, trusting the unfolding of life moment to moment. Suffering ceases when we stop resisting inevitable outer change. For, no matter what happens, we possess the creative power within us to pick ourselves up and continue in the direction of our heart’s desires. Suffering ceases when we are willing to fully accept the whole gamut of our emotions, without judgment. For when we allow ourselves to fully feel what we feel, we understand that emotions exist as a wave of energy moving through us and are temporary. Suffering ceases when we are willing to release what no longer serves us, even though it previously had purpose in our lives, knowing that life will bring us what we need, when we need it.

4. Bringing Shame into the Light – We can start moving away from toxic shame by being conscious of our self-definitions, by looking for ways to shift them to the positive, and by creating safe places from which to nurture our true, authentic selves... Unlearning all those false beliefs and ideas that we've collected about ourselves and the world. On the spiritual journey, we come to recognize that subconscious thoughts do not have to run the show. We recognize that we can bring our false beliefs into conscious awareness, and we can work with shame by nurturing a safe space in which to bring it out of the shadow... You were once a whole and perfect child. And to reclaim the truths that you were born with, to genuinely see yourself as whole and perfect, it will help to practice looking within at what your core false beliefs are.

GROUP OUTLINE

Outpatient Group 6: Toxic Shame

(Chapter 3 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In:

Everyone states their name and says something about the relationship between shame and mental health.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout 1 (page 124)

- Reading from Conscious Recovery (out loud)
- Small group or dyad discussion of reading

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

(15 Minutes) Group Dyads Process 1 – Toxic Shame Exercise: (Handout)

“Toxically shamed people tend to become more and more stagnant as life goes on. They live in a guarded, secretive, and defensive way. They try to be more than human—perfect and controlling—or less than human—losing interest in or stagnated in some addictive behavior.” Have them get with a partner and share (don’t write out) answer to these questions (using the handout found on page 127):

- What does this quote mean to you?
- In what ways do you relate to it?
- In what ways have you lived in guarded, secretive or defensive ways?
- Have you ever tried to cover up shame by using control in your life?

(20 Minutes) Group Process 2 – Turning it Over Practice:

Ask everyone to get a blank piece of paper make a dot in the center of the page. They then draw a large circle around the outside of the paper and make “spokes” that connect the dot with the circle. On each of the spokes, they write something that is troubling them. This could be a person’s name, or a situation that is currently difficult for them. Once they have filled up the page, have them stand in front of the group and say: “These are the situations in my life I am ready to release. I am now choosing to let go of trying to control them.” Invite them to use their own language. Once they have read them all, ask them to tear up the paper and dispose of it.

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

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Group Six: Handout 1

RELEASING TOXIC SHAME

READING FROM CONSCIOUS RECOVERY

Toxic shame, for the most part, gets created quite early in life, often in a broken family system where there is a repeated message that we are not good enough or there's something wrong with us. This sort of message comes to many kids early in life, but not all of them develop toxic shame. It's when we hear a repeated message that there is something wrong with us, when we receive this message repeatedly in the physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual realm, that we begin to take on an *identity* of brokenness. It may also be that certain people are more sensitive to identity-building messages than others. Whatever the case, if we develop toxic shame then eventually, we don't even need to hear those messages anymore because we have become so adept at repeating them to ourselves. We have internalized the negative voices and have become perpetrators of our own toxic shame.

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Group Six: Handout 1

(Page 2)

Questions for journaling and further reflection:

1. What are some examples of when you've felt guilty?
2. What are some examples of when you've felt shame?
3. What's the difference?
4. Do you have toxic shame?
5. Where did it come from?
6. What core belief is at its root?
7. What effect has it had on you?
8. How in the past have you tried to manage your shame?
9. Has that worked for you?
10. What else could you do instead?

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Group Six: Handout 2

Toxic Shame Exercise

"Toxically shamed people tend to become more and more stagnant as life goes on. They live in a guarded, secretive, and defensive way. They try to be more than human—perfect and controlling—or less than human—losing interest in or stagnated in some addictive behavior."

Please discuss these questions with your partner:

What does the above quote mean to you?

In what ways do you relate to it?

In what ways have you lived in guarded, secretive or defensive ways?

Have you ever tried to cover up shame by using control in your life?

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Outpatient Group 7: Creating Safety

(Chapter 4 from Conscious Recovery)

Summary: This group will focus on inner and outer safety: why this inner work requires a space of safety and ways we can create those spaces. It also addresses the importance of building community.

Materials needed: Copies of handouts (one per person).

Key teaching points:

1. ***Internal/External Safety*** – In essence, external safety means being safe from physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harm, and creating an encouraging network of support. External safety is the first priority. We can look at *external* safety from the perspective of each of the four rooms—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. In the physical room is the relationship with your body and its interaction with the physical world. In this room, recovery involves creating external safety from any kind of instability. The mental room houses your thoughts and ideas, the assumptions and expectations that shape your perspective on the world. Recovery in this room involves creating a safe space to examine your inner dialogue, the ways you describe yourself and the world. This may be a treatment program, a trusted counselor, or another type of support group. Recovery in the emotional room, the seat of feeling, and in the spiritual room, where we connect with our innermost self and with the Source that lies within all reality, requires a more internal process of creating safety, but also often requires an external structure as well, such as a supportive community. True safety gets created not by closing ourselves off, but by opening our hearts, and being willing to connect with compassionate people who support our recovery.

2. ***Self-Love and Acceptance (Maintaining an Open Heart)*** – Living for long with a closed heart is painful and exhausting—because we’re not built to thrive in isolation, we’re not designed to live in the world cut off from love and connection. We try to make ourselves secure by closing ourselves off, putting up walls and barriers, hiding our pain and even our essential selves in the shadow. While that may work at first, ultimately this strategy doesn’t make us safe.

It reaches its limits, leaving us feeling cut-off and alone. So, the first step toward true safety is recognizing how we have shut down. Then we can make a conscious choice to begin to open up. Moving from an unconscious closing off to a conscious opening of our hearts is an important step. It's an ongoing experience—moment by moment we make the decision to maintain our inner vulnerability, to open up and experience everything we're uncovering.

When we treat mental health issues as the problem, what we're ultimately doing is supporting a worldview that says the way to grow and improve is to say, "What's wrong here?" and then fix it. This means that if we want to recover, then we need to be self-critical. "If we can just identify what's wrong, if we can just fix certain things about ourselves, then we can change." Again, this defines the person who has a mental health issue as broken in some way. If we're looking primarily through the lens of self-criticism rather than the lens of self-love, we can get stuck in repetitive behaviors.

When we can let go of our judgment, we are open to a profound self-love and acceptance that is more than merely "being good to yourself." This self-love and acceptance means accepting yourself fully, even all your past behaviors. It means shifting your perspective, your habitual way of seeing yourself and the world. Love and acceptance are much more powerful change agents than judgment. Miraculous things can happen when I shift my approach from changing this or that about myself—from "What's wrong here? What needs to be fixed?"—to radical self-love and acceptance, or "What's right here? What can be celebrated?"

3. Rebuilding Trust – When we break trust with someone, we need not only apologize, but we also need to change our behavior and begin to *become* trustworthy. And being trustworthy means being able to say what we mean and mean what we say. It means our actions start aligning with our intentions. Perhaps that's the greatest definition of trust: The sense of ourselves, who we are, is in alignment with what we say and do.

When we are working from a perspective of self-judgment and criticism, it is the opposite of trust. But, when we perceive ourselves and others through the lens of love and acceptance and focus on what's working and what's truly behind our mental health issues, we start to reveal who we authentically are. When we see what's fueling our maladaptive behavior, our motivations become clearer. When we become aware of our self-talk, our inner dialogue, we can take responsibility for it. And that's a more solid foundation for building authentic trust. We can then be well on our way to rebuilding trust with ourselves and others.

GROUP OUTLINE

Outpatient Group 7: Creating Safety

(Chapter 4 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In:

Everyone states their name and says something about the importance of safety in early recovery.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout 1 (page 132)

- Reading from Conscious Recovery (out loud)
- Small group or dyad discussion of reading

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

(10 Minutes) Group Process 1 – What is Trust Process:

Ask participants to speak answers “into the circle” to the question: “What is Trust?” You simply ask the question, and then allow clients to share whatever comes up. I encourage you to allow for space to see what emerges. (Let them know it’s ok if there is silence or if people speak at the same time.)

(15 Minutes) Large Group Discussion – Rebuilding Trust

Have a client write these questions on the board, then simply have a large group discussion about them.

- In what ways do you want/need to rebuild trust with yourself?
- In what ways do you want/need to rebuild trust with others?
- How might you begin that process?

(10 Minutes) Group Process 3 – Brainstorming:

Have a client come up and facilitate a brainstorming on these questions: What is community? What are some ways to build community? What are some recovery focused communities?

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

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Group Seven: Handout 1

CREATING SAFETY

ADAPTED READING FROM CONSCIOUS RECOVERY

To unlearn our core false beliefs, to look inward at what is keeping us locked in unhealthy patterns, we need to create safe spaces for ourselves, correct? But this can be problematic for many of us who are struggling with mental health issues, in part because of the way we perceive ourselves and reality. We might habitually view ourselves in terms of "right" and "wrong;" perhaps we think recovery is about fixing ourselves. But this judging approach does little to help us create safety. People don't often feel safe when they are judged; they feel safe when they are loved and accepted. Deep inner change comes not from identifying what needs to be fixed, but from identifying what's in the way of our natural experience of the love we are.

The Sufi poet Rumi states it this way: *"Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it."*

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Group Seven: Handout 1

(Page 2)

Questions for journaling and further reflection:

1. Have you ever had an experience in which you shut yourself off and closed your heart?
2. Why did you do that?
3. What did it create for you?
4. Did it give you a sense of safety?
5. Is there a connection between closing your heart and your mental health issues?
6. What would happen if you were to open your heart up again?
7. What would happen if you would allow yourself to be vulnerable?
8. How have you dealt with uncomfortable feelings?
9. Have you tended to run away from them and avoid them?
10. What has that created?

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PREPARING FOR GROUP

Outpatient Group 8: Unlearning

(Chapter 5 from Conscious Recovery)

Summary: The focus of this group is on the process of unlearning: uncovering our core false beliefs to see what lies beneath them in order to live more deeply in the truth of who and what we are.

Materials needed: Copies of handout (one per person).

Key teaching points:

1. *Living Beyond Your Stories* – It is an important part of our spiritual development and recovery to question and live beyond the stories we have been carrying around about ourselves and the world, sometimes for years, maybe even decades. With clear vision, we see that it no longer serves us to cling to *any* story that keeps us feeling stuck and limited. What would be the benefit of continuing to perpetuate stories that are not in alignment with the truth that we are *all* essentially whole? As we shift our perspective about who and what we truly are, that in turn shifts the nature of the world we inhabit and our experience of others. The world becomes a more loving place because we have become more loving, openhearted human beings. And all we did was come into alignment with what was already true. This is what it means to live beyond our stories—about ourselves, others, and the world. Letting go of our stories is the shortcut to living in a peaceful world.

2. *Becoming the Observer* – As we come to remember and to know the highest truth of who we are, we experience ourselves as the ultimate observer of all things. In meditation, we no longer identify with or try to control our mind. Rather we simply bring our awareness to that truest part of ourselves, the energy field of our inner essence. We witness all things in our life through the eyes of compassion and understanding. Knowing ourselves as those qualities allows us to be that in the world. We no longer need to wait or expect somebody else to demonstrate those qualities in our lives. We become the model of it, demonstrating to others the possibility of living in peace and harmony, here and now. No waiting is required. We become a living example to others that it is safe to live openheartedly in this world.

At this mystical level of living, there is no longer any desire or need to blame, judge, or to make others wrong. And if we do momentarily forget who we are, we can easily find our way back to *being* love. We understand and have compassion for the human condition. We see that the vast majority of people are still trapped in a limited, separate identity. They have forgotten their true nature. They are a potential danger to themselves and to others. Coming from a place of separation and fear, they believe they live in a dangerous world. When their safety feels threatened, they are convinced there is no alternative but to attack others in order to preserve their well-being.

3. *Self-Parenting* – One valuable tool in unlearning self-talk that no longer serves us is through the beneficial practice of self-parenting. In self-parenting, we learn to talk, in a loving and supportive way, to those parts of ourselves that feel wounded. We learn to parent the small inner child that may have experienced trauma or that may be sitting in toxic shame, the self that feels disconnected and broken. This is the kind of parenting that maybe we didn't get as small children, and fortunately, we can provide it to ourselves as adults. Many of us were not raised with the type of communication, in either words or actions, that helped us to grow and thrive. And it was this lack of conscious parenting, in part, that gave us our core false beliefs. When there's abuse early in life or an experience of abandonment, the core false beliefs that often result include things like, "Life is not safe," "I can't feel this right now," and "You're going to leave me."

Self-parenting is another way of unlearning ideas and constructs that no longer serve us. We do this by replacing the negative self-talk with supportive and loving self-talk to create a place of safety internally. In assisting people with self-parenting, I have found three key phrases to be incredibly simple and powerful. These are things we say to ourselves in self-parenting: (1) You're safe now, (2) It's Ok to feel this way now, and (3) I'm here for you now.

4. *Integrating the Shadow* – The shadow is the unconscious aspect of yourself, that you keep hidden due to a desire to repress the seemingly negative attributes of your personality. An important element of your recovery work is looking at and integrating the shadow: those parts of yourself that you have buried beneath the surface, beneath your conscious awareness, those parts of yourself that you may not want to see or express. The shadow is what you hold shame about—your unresolved trauma, your fragmented self. You conceal those parts in the shadow, and because they're repressed and not integrated, they tend to surface in ways that make you feel out of control.

GROUP OUTLINE

Outpatient Group 8: Unlearning

(Chapter 5 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In: Everyone states their name and says something about learning and unlearning.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout 1 (page 138)

- Reading from Conscious Recovery (out loud)
- Small group or dyad discussion of reading

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

(15 Minutes) Group Process – Group Discussion:

Have a client write this quote on the board, then simply have a large group discussion about it.

There comes a point when it's time for us to unlearn the stories, the beliefs, the ideas that we have gathered up but no longer fit our lives.

(20 Minutes) Group Process 3 – Inner Critic Process (With a partner):

Say some version of this: Share with your partner some of the ways your inner critic speaks to you. Now think of a situation that is challenging. Describe the situation to your partner. Then have your partner "externalize" your inner voice. First, have them use some of the negative talk you shared with them. For example, they may say: "Why even bother, you never succeed anyway..." Check in and see how that feels. Sometimes, simply hearing these things said out loud rather than having them in your head can be a powerful experience.

Now "shake that off" and have your partner use a gentle, more compassionate voice. They may say something like "I know this situation is challenging, but you have the strength to get through this. I believe in you..." Now, notice how that feels. Really "be with" the difference. Share with your partner how this felt.

What are your take-aways from this process?

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

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Group Eight: Handout 1

UNLEARNING

READING FROM CONSCIOUS RECOVERY

With clear vision, we see that it no longer serves us to cling to any story that keeps us feeling stuck and limited. What would be the benefit of continuing to perpetuate stories that are not in alignment with the truth that we are *all* essentially whole? The fact that most of us are still living in a state of forgetfulness of that fundamental truth doesn't change that reality. As we shift our perspective about who and what we truly are, that in turn shifts the nature of the world we inhabit and our experience of others. The world becomes a more loving place because we have become more loving, openhearted human beings. And all we did was come into alignment with what was already true. This is what it means to live beyond our stories—about ourselves, others, and the world.

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Group Eight: Handout 1

(Page 2)

Questions for journaling and further reflection:

1. What if your stories were just that, a story?
2. What would happen if you would rewrite or let go of those stories?
3. How would your life change?
4. What self-imposed crazy-eight pattern are you stuck in?
5. Was that pattern once a brilliant strategy that worked to protect you?
6. What would it be like to open to the possibility of a different perspective?
7. What is “ultimate truth” to you?
8. Can you now see your false beliefs from a different perspective?
9. What if they are no longer actually true for you now?
10. What if you could let them go?

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PREPARING FOR GROUP

Outpatient Group 9: Spiritual Principles

(Chapter 6 from Conscious Recovery)

Summary: This group will introduce some spiritual principles and practices that can help us break the cycle of mental health issues and the limited ways we see the world.

Materials needed: Copies of handouts (one per person).

Key teaching points:

1. Non-Judgment – By practicing and developing habits of nonresistance, we can identify and observe our judgments and then question whether they are working for us. As you question your own judgments and recognize their impact, you can move a step forward and come to a conscious decision for non-judgment. When you respond with non-judgment, you can take note of your response, and notice how its effect is different from that of a judgmental response.

Through the practices of nonresistance, observation, being present and questioning, we can learn to give up our habits of judgment. We can learn to allow our triggers to go through us instead of taking control of us. That's how we come to the place in our essential self that's neutral, that's beyond judgment, beyond clinging to the fixed ideas and concepts we are holding about ourselves and the world. The ultimate truth of who and what we are is free of judgment. It is one with the ultimate power of the universe, and in that space, there is no judgment.

2. Mindfulness – It's through awareness, through the practice of absolute presence, that we begin to become more awake to how we create what we call reality. Presence is a conscious willingness to be right here in this moment. Once we come to the point where the strategy of future/past focus no longer works for us, we can unlearn our un-present way of being. And then we might find that presence isn't that difficult, because it is our essential nature. We do this unlearning in part through mindfulness practice, which includes meditation. Meditation is an incredibly powerful way to practice not only a mindful state during the actual meditation session, but a mindful way of being in the world.

In meditation, we can learn to be observers of our bodies, emotions, and our thoughts. Witnessing creates a space that separates us from our thoughts, emotions and our bodies, and in that process, we become freed from the false belief that we are those thoughts and ideas. This practice can transform not only the moments during meditation but how we operate in the world after meditation.

3. *Living in the Question* – Living in the question is another very powerful spiritual practice we can use to break free from maladaptive behaviors and live a more connected life. It's a great tool for developing mindfulness because it trains us to notice what our points of view influence us to see. Most of us have been trained from a very young age to solve problems, to "find the answer." Approaching life as a search for the answer can keep us stuck in the comfort zone of our false core beliefs, our small view of the world which assumes there's only one way, one answer. It also creates internal and external conflict.

The practice of living in the question is more powerful than that of searching for the answer. Focusing on the question provides a distance between me (the person asking the question) and the answer (whatever it is that I find). Living in the question allows us to approach things from a position of curiosity rather than anxiety, of play rather than urgency. And that's mindfulness, really. It's non-judgment and nonresistance.

How exactly do we go about living in the question? We ask ourselves open-ended questions that do not start with "Why." These are questions like, "Who else might I want to connect with now?" "What can I do next?" "How can I discover what is mine to do?" "Where else might I look?" These are who, where, what, and how questions. My favorite question currently is "What else is possible?" Being open-ended, these questions cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. They don't claim to have a simple answer. With open-ended questions, we are less likely to create answers based on past experiences and open up to new possibilities. We can open up rather than contract.

4. *Impermanence* – Nothing is permanent in the outer realm. When we make peace with this fundamental truth, we allow ourselves to shift into a way of being in the world that connects with what is permanent, which is Source or love or light – that which we truly are. So, as we open and let go of our normal way of seeing and being, we recognize that there is a deeper level of awareness, and we can live from this greater reality. From this space of Spirit, we get to witness the changing events of life as fleeting on a fundamental level.

GROUP OUTLINE

Outpatient Group 9: Spiritual Principles

(Chapter 6 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In:

Everyone states their name and says something about spiritual principles and spiritual practices.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout 1 (page 144)

- Reading from Conscious Recovery (out loud)
- Small group or dyad discussion of reading

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

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(15 Minutes) Group Process 1 – Judgments Exercise:

Simply have everyone write out their answers to the following questions using the handout (on page 147):

- What judgments do you have about *yourself* and how things “should” be?
- What judgments do you have of *the world* and how things “should” be different?
- What if right now nothing needs to change? What would that bring you?

(15 Minutes) Group Process 2 – Dyads:

Have them get with a partner and share what they wrote. (They can read each other's answers if they would like.)

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

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Group Nine: Handout 1

PRACTICING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

READING FROM CONSCIOUS RECOVERY

People tend to automatically evaluate things as they perceive them. You might see a certain food and get hungry. You might see someone doing something and you experience an emotion—you make a judgment, you react. You might even judge yourself: You react to your own looks or behavior with dismay, criticism, or arrogance. These gut reactions are lightning fast and are for the most part unconscious and unintentional. The question is, does judgment really work?

In my experience, judgment as a way of responding is a limited and limiting strategy when it's unconscious, when we don't see it for what it is. The problem is that our snap judgments create a predisposition for or against the thing or person perceived. They create bias. But because they are unconscious, we tend to trust these judgments like we trust our senses. They seem neutral or objective to us, when in fact they are not. Because our judgments are not neutral or objective, they are inherently limited; they are not the whole story.

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Group Nine: Handout 1

(Page 2)

Questions for journaling and further reflection:

1. How has an unwillingness to be present contributed to your mental health issues?
2. What would happen if you would start to let go and be with what is?
3. What if you did that from a space of non-judgment and acceptance?
4. What if you recognized that everything is actually OK?
5. In what ways are you believing that things are permanent?
6. What are you clinging to, thinking or hoping it won't change?
7. Is that actually true?
8. In what ways do you keep looking for problems and ways to "fix" them?
9. Do you seek outside of yourself for those solutions?
10. What effect does this have on your life and your maladaptive behavior?

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Group Nine: Handout 2

Judgments Exercise

Write out your answers to these questions

Judgments Exercise: Write down your responses to the following questions, then discuss them with a partner.

- What judgments do you have about *yourself* and how things “should” be?

- What judgments do you have of *the world* and how things “should” be different?

- What if right now nothing needs to change? What would that bring you?

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Outpatient Group 10: Owning Your Power

(Chapter 7 from Conscious Recovery)

Summary: The purpose of this group is to explore how participants can tap into and own a deeper sense of conscious awareness and to provide methods for moving their lives from powerless to power-full.

Materials needed: Copies of handouts (one per person), paper, and pens.

Key teaching points:

1. The Power of Perception – How much of life is perception? All of it. We each see the world through our own lens. Multiple people in the same situation will each have a different experience of it, based on the lens through which they see it. It's not that one person sees the truth and the others are wrong. It's that our perception colors our experience.

The power of perception is simply this capacity to recognize that there is an endless variety of lenses through which we can view the world. And it's also the ability to change our perspective, to play with different lenses and see what happens to our experience of what we call reality. It's the ability to choose a perspective that's more open to love and connection. We have power to shift our perception and therefore shift how we experience life. When we let go of our self-limiting beliefs and expand our awareness, things look different and so they become different. We move into power.

2. The Power of Forgiveness – Forgiveness is a very powerful tool in letting go of the perspectives that keep us in a limited and limiting way of seeing and being. Forgiveness allows us to move more deeply into the truth of who and what we are, to eradicate our stories of separation, powerlessness, and being stuck in blaming and victimization.

We may think of forgiveness as making peace with the past. That means different things from different perspectives. From a place of non-judgment, the past is what it is. The past cannot be different—we cannot go back and change what happened. But we can alter the way we see it.

When we arrive at the mystical level of consciousness, of recognizing our oneness with life, there is no longer anything to forgive. This place of alignment with ultimate reality acknowledges that the cause of anyone's harmful behavior is separation from their essential self. When we reach a state of oneness with Source, we recognize that there's nothing to forgive because we can see that everything that's happened in our life has played a part in our transformation; it's been useful in getting us where we are. And as we grow in conscious awareness, forgiveness becomes more of a natural process. At this level of awareness, we shift from forgiveness to compassion and gratitude.

3. The Power of Authenticity – We sometimes feel it's an act of weakness to be honest and talk about what's truly happening. This kind of inauthenticity is at the root of mental health issues. The strategies we use for hiding, for keeping secrets, for avoiding honesty, can lead to maladaptive behaviors. One of the root causes of mental health issues, as we saw in Part 1, is toxic shame, and shame needs inauthenticity to survive. It needs secrecy and silence. The lies that inauthenticity creates can create chaos in your life and the lives of others, and it can even kill you. As Brené Brown stated in her groundbreaking book, *The Gifts of Imperfection*: "Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It's about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen."

On a spiritual level, though, recovery calls us to be authentic, to bring our whole self into the room. We experience a deeper healing when we're not so caught up in the fear of "looking bad" or in the desire to "look good." In conscious recovery, it's not about eradicating what we consider "bad" or "negative," it's about embracing it, allowing it to be, and recognizing that it is not the ultimate truth of who and what we are. The power of authenticity becomes evident when we witness our darkness from a place of wholeness and perfection. "The spiritual journey is not about 'getting good'; it's about becoming more and more real." That's authenticity.

4. The Power of Gratitude – Gratitude may be one of the most talked-about spiritual principles there is, and many of us have learned that gratitude is a powerful tool for spiritual awakening and recovery. What would it be like to be grateful for all aspects of ourselves—not just those things that look like love and light but also the aspects of our shadow?

Those parts of ourselves that we would like to change or shift can be helped by holding a space of gratitude, rather than trying to bury them. The more we can be grateful for it all, the less blocked we are by shame and blame.

GROUP OUTLINE

Outpatient Group 10: Owning Your Power

(Chapter 7 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In:

Everyone states their name and says something about forgiveness.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout 1 (page 152)

- Reading from Conscious Recovery (out loud)
- Small group or dyad discussion of reading

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

(15 Minutes) Group (Dyads) Forgiveness Process (Handout):

Have clients think of a situation in which they find it difficult to forgive. Now have them answer these questions with a partner:

- What is the story you have been telling about that situation?
- In what ways have you been attached to that story?
- Is there another way to look at it?
- Keeping that situation in mind, what happens when you let go of the idea that one story is “right?”
- Can you let go of your initial reactive story about the situation and open yourself to other possible perspectives?
- If you can, what happens when you do that?

(20 Minutes) Group Process - Forgiveness Process 2:

Now, have them write a forgiveness letter regarding the situation, even if they’re not sure that they are ready to forgive the person or situation. They may or may not be ready to forgive, so have them write it from their current perspective. (For example, they might write ‘I am not ready to forgive, but I know I want to’, etc.)” Now invite everyone to read their letters to the group. (Let them know it is not a requirement, but an invitation).

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

Conscious Recovery

Group Ten: Handout 1

OWNING YOUR POWER

READING FROM CONSCIOUS RECOVERY

Forgiveness allows us to move more deeply into the truth of who and what we are, to eradicate our stories of separation, powerlessness, and being stuck in blaming and victimization. Many of us have a terrifically hard time with forgiveness. We feel that terrible things have happened in our lives, and we are unable to let them go.

So, let's start there, with the experience of forgiveness that many of us have had. When we're stuck in unconscious reactions, forgiveness is next to impossible. The beliefs we hold about ourselves and our world become the lens through which we view the world, the way we frame our stories. They limit our perspective and block us from freedom and authenticity.

Conscious Recovery

Group Ten: Handout 1

(Page 2)

Questions for journaling and further reflection:

"Suffering...is usually based on the belief that something should be different than what it is. Suffering happens when we resist pain, when we come up with strategies to avoid or numb or forget pain."

1. In what ways have you created suffering for yourself by resisting pain?
2. How has this led to maladaptive behavior?
3. What beliefs have you had that create that suffering?
4. What would happen if you would let those go?
5. How might inauthenticity be at the root of your mental health issues?
6. In what ways have you been hiding, keeping secrets through your maladaptive behaviors?
7. Are you afraid to "look bad" or do you desire to "look good?"
8. How does it impact your mental health?
9. Have you ever had an experience when you let your guard down?
10. What was that like for you?

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Group Ten: Handout 2

Forgiveness Process

Think of a situation in which you find it difficult to forgive.

Now answer these questions with a partner:

What is the story you have been telling about that situation?

In what ways have you been attached to that story?

Is there another way to look at it?

Keeping that situation in mind, what happens when you let go of the idea that one story is “right?”

Can you let go of your initial reactive story about the situation and open yourself to other possible perspectives?

If you can, what happens when you do that?

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Outpatient Group 11: The Great Remembering

(Chapter 8 from *Conscious Recovery*)

Summary: In this group, the members will uncover the divine movement they can experience as they emerge from the cycle of mental health issues: from letting go to welcoming the shifts in their lives, welcoming love and connection, and finally, experiencing divine integration.

Materials needed: Copies of handouts (one per person).

Key teaching points:

1. Letting Go – We let go of the idea of a limited self, a self that is separate from Source. We let go of all our thought patterns, all our beliefs, all those behaviors that keep us small and separate. And in letting go, we come into the experience of *The Great Remembering*: The deeply felt knowing that we are one with Source. We have returned to our state of original perfection.

This kind of letting go is a powerful component of spiritual awakening. There's more power in letting go, in yielding, and in redirecting energy than there is in resisting, controlling, and pushing back. When we're struggling with mental illness, we're resisting. We're pushing back against our inner need to be present with ourselves in the moment. Maladaptive behavior is simply that—a resistance to presence, a strategy for avoiding what's here now because it's too painful or too shameful. Letting go in the context of this means not only releasing the idea that we are inherently broken and need to change, but also releasing all the strategies we've perfected for protecting what we perceive as our brokenness.

2. Making U-Turns – It's not a subtle shift; it's taking life in a distinctively different direction. A U-turn is that moment not only of clarity but of courage and willingness to make a major change. Often, we start our U-turns in the physical room: detoxing from a drug we're addicted to, moving out of a precarious living situation, staying away from our triggers—these are U-turns in the outer realm. These U-turns require us to name the mental health issues as a problem and admit that we need help. But if we don't move

through the other rooms—mental, emotional, and spiritual—chances are we won’t permanently break the cycle of fragmentation.

The only way to permanently break free from mental health issues is to have a U-turn in consciousness, a dramatic shift in the way we *relate* to our innermost self. In other words, we break the cycle of mental health issues by bringing our unconscious thoughts and patterns into conscious awareness, by identifying our core false beliefs and uncovering the root causes of our fragmentation. When we know inwardly—that is, when we truly know and experience that we are not our stories, beliefs, thoughts, emotions, or bodies, but are one with Source—that’s the ultimate U-turn. It’s a U-turn in consciousness that’s not about *doing*, but about *being*. In this ultimate U-turn that breaks the cycle, we turn from an outer-focused way of life to an inner-focused way of being. And as we shift to an inner-focused way of being, the world seems to literally change.

3. Embracing Love – When we feel that we’re not worthy of love, we will potentially sabotage it when it shows up. That’s partly because of what we believe, because we need our experience to resonate with our core false belief in our own unworthiness. But it’s also because of how we’re *being* in the world. It’s the frequency at which we’re vibrating, the energy that we’re holding. That’s what creates what we call reality. We are literally creating what we see and experience in the physical realm based on the vibration we are holding. So, if we’re vibrating at a frequency that says “I’m not lovable,” we will tend to attract and be attracted to people who can tune into that frequency, people who will verify that core false belief in our own unworthiness.

Embracing love requires a shift in focus, which can be a very subtle, even simple thing. Embracing love is not about trying to force love, or create love, or discover love; it’s not about changing how you appear so that people will love you. It’s about embracing the love that already is, in others and in yourself. It’s knowing and feeling and living the truth that you are made in love by love and surrounded by love. It’s knowing that you are created complete and unbroken, that those around you are created complete and unbroken as well. This knowing is restored to us in The Great Remembering.

4. Inner and Outer Connection – We all have a need to connect with other people; we want to love and receive love. But when we’re disconnected from our essential self, our attempts to connect with others are an attempt to feel better, to numb the discomfort of that disconnection. We’re trying to use outer love to heal ourselves. But no one person can heal our disconnection; no relationship can bring us to the truth of who and what we are. Nothing “out there” is going to fix what seems broken within.

GROUP OUTLINE

Outpatient Group 11: The Great Remembering

(Chapter 8 from *Conscious Recovery*)

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In:

Everyone states their name and says something about remembering the truth about themselves.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout 1 (page 160)

- Reading from *Conscious Recovery* (out loud)
- Small group or dyad discussion of reading

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

(15 Minutes) Group Process – 4 Small Groups:

Each group gets an excerpt from the chapter and discusses. (Excerpts found on pages 160 -163)

(5 Minutes) Group Process – Group Reports:

Have one person from each group report back to the larger group about the discussion that emerged in their small group.

(15 Minutes) Group Process Dyads – Shift Happens Technique (Handout 3):

Have clients read the paragraph on the handout and discuss.

Then they answer these questions with a partner. (Don't have them write their answers.)

- What would your life be like if you were free from the problem of "mental illness?"
- What direction is your inner knowing pointing you?
- What would it take to trust your inner knowing more fully?
- How could you strengthen your openness and acceptance and allow your inner knowing to gently guide you?
- How would this change your life?

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

Conscious Recovery

Group Eleven: Handout 1

THE GREAT REMEMBERING

ADAPTED READING FROM CONSCIOUS RECOVERY

There's a lot of power in letting go, and in yielding, and in redirecting energy than there is in resisting and controlling and pushing back. When we're struggling with mental health issues, we're resisting. We're pushing back against our inner need to be present with ourselves in the moment. Maladaptive behavior can be seen as simply that—a resistance to presence, a strategy for avoiding what's here now because it's too painful or too shameful. Letting go in the context of mental health issues means not only releasing the idea that we are inherently broken and need to change, but also releasing all the strategies we've perfected for protecting what we perceive as our brokenness. The ultimate surrender is not surrendering those parts of us that are "bad," but surrendering to who and what we are as whole and perfect. This is not about looking perfect on the outside; it's about resting in that original perfection, the blueprint that we are as spiritual beings.

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Group Eleven: Handout 1

(Page 2)

Questions for journaling and further reflection:

1. What would happen for you if you were to let go of the desire to control?
2. Notice what this brings up. Does it bring a sense of peace or fear?
3. What core false belief might any fear or doubt be coming from?
4. Do you have a core false belief that life is about trying to fix problems?
5. If so, what has that created in your life?
6. Is that what you'd like your life to be?
7. What other point of view could you choose to have more happiness?
8. Have you ever perceived "the still, small voice" of your inner self?
9. When and how did you experience that?
10. What would it take to create more experiences of that?

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*How we perceive reality creates
how we experience reality.*

Your awareness of this truth, no matter how you come to it, combined with a deep relationship with your essential self, is what brings peace and happiness. A shift in perspective can open us to infinite possibilities.

- An excerpt from Conscious Recovery

A spiritual journey is not about eradicating perceived difficult life situations. It's not about avoiding or denying problems or challenges.

As we grow in awareness, we recognize that apparent problems or challenges can be approached from endless perspectives.

- An excerpt from Conscious Recovery

We all have a need to connect with other people; we want to love and receive love. But when we're disconnected from our essential self, our attempts to connect with others are an attempt to feel better, to numb the discomfort of that disconnection.

- An excerpt from Conscious Recovery

We're trying to use outer love to heal ourselves. But no one person can heal our disconnection; no relationship can bring us to the truth of who and what we are. Nothing "out there" is going to fix what seems broken within.

- An excerpt from Conscious Recovery

Group Eleven: Handout 3

Shift Happens Technique

"Imagine a permanent shift in your neural network, in which you don't constantly identify yourself as broken or addicted. Imagine going into a place that used to be filled with triggers, a place that formerly would have looked like a temptation or a trap and walking through it with ease and grace. Imagine your life as free of the problem of 'mental illness' and as filled with potential. Imagine that you are truly free to move in whatever direction your inner knowing points. That's the power of the quantum leap, the U-turn in consciousness. Imagine now that, because you are recognizing your oneness with source, you can absolutely trust its direction. That's the promise of many spiritual practices—that through openness and acceptance, you will develop an unshakable relationship with your inner life and allow it to gently guide you."

Now, share your answers to these questions. (No need to write your answers.)

- What would your life be like if you were free from the problem of "mental illness?"
- What direction is your inner knowing pointing you?
- What would it take to trust your inner knowing more fully?
- How could you strengthen your openness and acceptance and allow your inner knowing to gently guide you?
- How would this change your life?

PREPARING FOR GROUP

Outpatient Group 12: Awakened Living

(Chapter 9 from Conscious Recovery)

Summary: This group investigates what it means to find a deep sense of purpose and a life filled with peace and happiness—this life of the new paradigm.

Materials needed: Copies of handouts (one per person).

Key teaching points:

1. Finding Purpose – Two levels of purpose: our common inner purpose and our individual, outer-directed purposes. Our fundamental purpose is simply to awaken—to become conscious of our inherent wholeness, to live in a state of presence, to become aware of our oneness with Source. And as we grow in awareness of this purpose, it becomes manifest in all our outer-directed purposes. This isn't about figuring it out. It isn't about latching onto a new set of beliefs or perfecting our spiritual technique to do it correctly. It's about deepening the awareness of our essential wholeness.

It's also about moving from our head, into our heart, and ultimately living in a deep awareness of our intuition. It is shifting from feeling trapped by our thoughts and ego-driven goals into experiencing a deeper, more authentic feeling tone. It is expressing a fundamentally new way of being in the world. This is the most profound journey, because as we move into this intuition-based, inner-directed way of living, everything changes.

As you move more deeply into recognizing your oneness with Source, you will also be opened to a vision specific to your individual life. As you live more fully in connection and love, you'll glimpse a distinct purpose that's tied to the universal purpose, which is to remember and live from our essential wholeness and perfection. The deep trust of your inner knowing will guide and inform you about your own way of serving humanity and the world.

2. Choosing Peace and Happiness – Happiness is a state of contentment, and a level of satisfaction with *what is*. We might call it joy. It is a choice. One of the choices happy people make is the choice to feel emotions deeply.

Happy people choose to embrace *all* their feelings. When happy people lose someone, they hurt, they grieve, they feel loss. When truly happy people allow themselves to feel deeply, those feelings pass through them, which allows them to return to their natural state of presence and joy.

If you're trapped by your unconscious biases and assumptions, then those things are running the show and making your choices *for you*. Those mental structures are unconsciously dictating what you feel, and what you push into the shadow. From that level of awareness, you can't seem to choose happiness. You can't seem to choose because you don't know you can. But as you begin to identify those limiting inner constructs, those deeply held beliefs about yourself and the world, then more possibilities become open to you. As your awareness deepens, so does your experience of freedom, including the freedom to choose peace and happiness. And this comes from a state of consciousness, a way of being in the world.

Happiness and peace are decisions we make. We can decide that no matter what happens, we're going to be open-hearted, loving, and connected. Even when we lose touch with that choice and seem to get bumped off track, as when something happens to trigger our fight, flight, or freeze responses, we can still return to this choice. Peace is what makes this happiness choice possible. Peace is the sense that we don't need anything or anyone to change in order to experience a deep sense of contentment and joy. It's the assurance that our freedom is not limited by how things are in the external world.

3. Discovering True Freedom – This is an inner freedom from duality, from "good," "bad," "right" and "wrong." It's freedom from the stories and perspectives that limit our choices and viewpoints. This freedom opens us to the power of authenticity, to the choice of peace and happiness, to awakened living. It's being in a state of awareness of nonresistance and non-judgment that allows us to evaluate our opinions and perspectives and choose from there.

Inner freedom is living in present moment awareness. It is a level of consciousness that's beyond clinging and aversion, beyond suffering. That to me is what is meant by "*Being in the world but not of it.*" When we're of this world, we are bounced around by life, reacting to what happens to us, imprisoned by the stories we've built up about ourselves and our world. When we're in this world but *not of it*, we still move through relative reality, but we're grounded in our absolute essence, and this provides unlimited freedom to choose, to feel fully without being manipulated, and to respond rather than react to the fluctuations of the outer world.

GROUP OUTLINE

Outpatient Group 12: Awakened Living

(Chapter 9 from Conscious Recovery)

(10 Minutes) Opening Meditation

(10 Minutes) Check-In:

Everyone states their name and says something about what it means to live an awakened life.

Review Shared Agreements

- One Person Speaks at a Time
- Confidentiality
- Share the Air
- No “Fixing”
- “I” Statements
- Feedback Upon Request

(15 Minutes) Small Group or Dyad Process: Handout 1 (page 172)

- Reading from Conscious Recovery (out loud)
- Small group or dyad discussion of reading

(10 Minutes) Large Group Discussion:

What stood out that wants to be shared with the whole group?

(20 Minutes) Group Process – Embracing Happiness Activity:

(This is an exercise adapted from the powerful book *How We Choose to Be Happy* authored by my friends Rick Foster and Greg Hicks.) Set a timer for four minutes. During the four minutes, make a list of everything that makes you happy. List anything that comes to mind by speedwriting. This means you write as fast as you can without stopping. Include things both large and small. Don't judge your answers. The idea here is to allow internal "stuff" to surface. When the timer sounds, stop writing immediately. Make a note of how you feel. Often, making the list will actually change your body chemistry. Many people have a feeling of lightness or exhilaration after speedwriting their list. Some feel relaxed and others may experience sadness. At this point, it doesn't matter what you've put on your list; what is important is experiencing the process of identifying what brings you happiness and how it makes you feel. Study your list.

(15 Minutes) Group Process – Dyads (Handout 2):

Have clients share with their partner: How do you feel about what you've written? Surprised? Frustrated? Was it difficult for you to come up with things? Did you freeze as you wrote? How much of the list reflects who you really are? Now, ask yourself what it would take for you to create more happiness in your life.

(10 Minutes) Closing Process

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Group Twelve: Handout 1

AWAKENED LIVING

READING FROM CONSCIOUS RECOVERY

When we talk about purpose, we generally refer to something in the outer realm, something we want to do. We tend to believe that if we achieve this thing or that thing, then we will acquire what we want, whether that's fulfillment or happiness or a better standard of living. We often look at our goals and achievements as effort, striving, even as struggle. What we're discovering together in this book is the power of the inward-looking approach. Tapping into our wholeness, into our divine nature, is our most fundamental purpose. Our primary purpose is simply to awaken. Being grounded in that space of essential wholeness makes pursuing any intention in the outer realm much easier and powerfully connected. When we tap into the truth of who and what we are, life naturally becomes purposeful. There's no striving to achieve something beyond us. We are simply guided in a very powerful way to what's already there.

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Group Twelve: Handout 1

(Page 2)

Questions for journaling and further reflection:

1. Have you ever thought that happiness as something to be achieved?
2. If so, what are the things you are supposed to do to achieve happiness?
3. Is that authentically true?
4. What other core false beliefs do you have about happiness?
5. What if happiness is truly a choice?
6. What does this mean to you?
7. How can you make this choice now?
8. "Peace is the sense that I don't need anything to be different." What does this mean to you?
9. Do you experience this kind of peace?
10. What is it like for you?

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Group Twelve: Handout 2

Happiness Process

Share with your partner:

How do you feel about what you've written?

Surprised?

Frustrated?

Was it difficult for you to come up with things?

Did you freeze as you wrote?

How much of the list reflects who you really are?

Now, ask yourself:

What it would take for you to create more
happiness in your life?

Appendix

PIES MEDITATION

This is an outline for a (Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Spiritual) meditation. It is intended to offer a basic structure. You can simply read it verbatim (slowly with pauses) or use your own style.

I invite you to sit in a comfortable and receptive position. You can gently close your eyes, or leave your eyes slightly open, with your gaze focused downward. Sit on the floor or in a chair with your spine as straight as you can make it. Now, begin to breathe in deeply, then exhale. Simply pay attention to how the breath moves into and out of your body. With each exhale, allow yourself to settle in, and open to this present moment experience. Begin by simply noticing any sounds or sensations you are experiencing in your environment. Take a few deep breaths in this present-moment awareness and simply notice. (Allow for at least 15 seconds of silence here.) Now, shift your awareness back to the breath. I invite you to consciously choose to slow your breath down. Now notice what happens as you choose these slower inhales and exhales.

Next, we shift your awareness inward, starting to check in with yourself. Begin by checking in with yourself physically. Do you notice any tension in your body? As you breathe, with each exhale release that tension, gently. Allow your shoulders to drop, your jaw to soften, and trust that you can let go and feel supported in this very moment. Picture yourself really sinking into the floor or chair, and really give yourself permission to let go, and open up to this now moment. Now, bring your attention to any thoughts that are present. And see if you can simply witness those thoughts without attaching to them. You might imagine them floating by on a cloud or coming and going as gently as a wave. If your mind starts to wander, simply bring awareness back to your breath and begin witnessing the thoughts again.

Now, shift awareness into your heart region, becoming aware of the emotional inner landscape that is present in this moment. Breathe in and out again, keeping the focus on your heart. Do this for several moments. As you keep your attention on your heart, notice any emotions that are present. See if you can become intimate with the emotions and even make friends with whatever is present. Then ask yourself the question: "Does this emotion hold a message for me?"

Finally, shift awareness even more deeply inward, discovering that place within yourself that is still and calm. Simply allow yourself to settle into that place of inner spaciousness now as we take one minute together in the silence.

(After One Minute) Now, slowly begin to bring your awareness back into the room and gently open your eyes.

CLOSING PROCESSES

- Go around the circle and have each person briefly share their "take away" from today's group
- Go around the circle and have each person acknowledge, or offer a word of gratitude for another group member
- Go around the circle and have each person share one thing they are grateful for
- Go around the circle and have each person share one thing they are going to do to support their recovery in the coming days

ADDITIONAL NOTES

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Thank you so much for taking this journey with us.



Sending you love and light!

TJ Woodward and Dr. Christine Pappas

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