



6 KEYS TO CARING FOR YOURSELF

Below are a set of important factors that, if integrated into your everyday life, will ensure that you awaken, heal and grow for the rest of your life.

1. Education and Inspiration



If we are experiencing anxiety, depression, frequent conflict and other forms of suffering, then this is an indication that our mind's conditioning contains a lot of confusion about what works to enable healing and also create peace, harmony and love. As Steps 1 and 2 make clear, this is not our fault. We don't raise ourselves as a child. Nevertheless, it is our mind and therefore, as adults, our mind is now our responsibility. It is the same for every adult. Those who Accept this, place themselves in the position to take charge of their minds and therefore their lives. Just because we collected a lot of confusion along the way, that doesn't mean we have to live with it. This is definitely not as good as it gets. In order to have the life that we want, we therefore need to re-educate ourselves. Fortunately we live in an age where all the information we need is available to us. Self-help/Awareness books are plentiful. An essential part of reconditioning/reprogramming our minds is studying such material and putting it into practice. Look at this statement carefully. Note how I used the words "study" and "Practice" and not just "read". When we study something, we read it more than once and even make

our own notes. The exercises I have placed in this book and also the 5 Step Process summary on page 224 are designed to help you do this. As I pointed out in the introduction, it is of little use to read a self-help book like a novel and then expect it to make a difference to your life. This is your conditioned mind engaging in magical thinking. You must study such books, do the exercises and endeavour to put them into practice. If you do this, the same book will reveal more and more to you each time you re-read it. This is how you learn anything. The same goes for self-help audio and audio-visual materials. This is the only sure way to reprogram your mind – to kick out those old self-defeating mindsets that keep blocking you from love, serenity, joy and abundance.

It is also important to make a distinction between "self-care" and "self-empowerment" educational material. We need to learn how to take care of our inner-selves – our emotions and states of mind – by studying Self-Awareness/Self-Care books. We also need to learn how to effectively act and create in the world and to stay motivated and we do this by studying self-empowerment books. As you keep reading this book, you will see how Step 3 is focused on Self-Care/healing while Step 4 is focused on conscious-creating and self-empowerment. Steps 3 and 4 are like yin and yang, being your own nurturer and your own mentor.

Also, few of us stop to think that being inspired is our own responsibility, but Accepting this Responsibility may mean making the effort to find that person who has the right message for us and the message we need to hear naturally changes as we grow. It is all part of keeping our consciousness focused in the right direction.

Persistent, consistent, focused thought inevitably manifests that thought into physical reality, by changing the way you speak and act. Your unconscious conditioned mind is creating your reality for you all the time, but it often creates what you, as the conscious self, don't want. Learn how to recondition your mind by being consciously Aware from day-to-day and you will be more conscious and in control of what you are creating.

2. Daily Journal and Other Forms of Expression



Journaling is an essential tool to use for caring for yourself and for reconditioning your mind. Writing out what is in your mind empowers your Awareness. As I have pointed out, if you have not been brought up in a consistently loving and supportive environment, too much of your mind's complex structure becomes created by your primal survival consciousness that does not have the tools to effectively process confusion and associated painful emotions. If this is the case, your mind can be like a multilayered labyrinth of randomly accumulated and sometimes systematically accumulated beliefs systems and coping strategies that don't represent your potential. This multilayered labyrinth is also laced with emotional energy that can go off at a moments notice, like walking through a mine field. Also, your mind will likely have complex and cunning defence systems designed to keep things

buried that are too uncomfortable to face and feel. This happened because your lower, more primal mind was not introduced sufficiently to your higher functioning Conscious-Awareness. Your lower mind is just trying to protect you, while at the same time being tangled up in chaotic conditioning. Your lower mind does not know you as Conscious-Awareness and in many ways, your own mind is a stranger to you when you embark on your healing journey. Therefore, just trying to think your way through your healing process is not going to cut through this complexity and resistance. At first, as Awareness, you will be like a tired and not very skilled swimmer trying to swim against the relentless tide of your emotional wounds and conditioning. To continue that metaphor, for you as Awareness, your journal will be like a motorised life-boat.

Once you have written something down, you have lifted that small piece of your mind, which has been lost and tossed on the ocean of chaotic conditioning, into the life-boat that is your journal. Journaling lifts the contents of your mind into the realm of your Awareness. Once written, you have that piece of your mind, your story, in focus and you can look more deeply into it. It can't then disappear once again into the fog/labyrinth of your mind. That is why you wrote things down at school. Education is about systematically programming your mind. You are now the programmer and you are in the University of Life, learning how to be your own loving guardian and best friend.

Finding the discipline to keep working with a daily journal can be difficult at first. Any ongoing resistance is a good indication of how much you have learned to habitually tune out from yourself. Understand that your lower, conditioned mind has no way of knowing what your real potential is. It can only do what it has been habitually conditioned to do. Your motivation to keep a daily journal will not come from this level of your mind. Your Conscious-Awareness has the key to your potential and is where you see the bigger, longer-term vision of how you want to create your life. Your motivation must come from your determined ownership of your daily life and therefore your future.

You may have also experienced a lack of privacy as part of a chaotic childhood and you are still concerned someone will read it and judge/shame you. You may need to do some processing and healing around this in order to take back your power. Your journal is an essential part of your connection to yourself and is therefore sacred. Don't let anyone or anything take that away from you. Your Acceptance of yourself is your greatest power now. If anyone is disrespectful enough to read your journal without your permission, it points to their lack of integrity and/or Awareness. It says nothing about you. To further secure your journal, you can perhaps keep it online in a cloud server under a security password. As the Aware guardian of your mind, it is essential that you claim your right to take care of yourself. Make journaling an essential routine and a time that is a precious connection with yourself. This is your world now. You are in charge.

Writing out your issues, feelings and thoughts, with the 5 Step Process as a guide, will greatly help you be the forever parent to your vulnerable human-self that you always needed. You will build stronger pathways of Acceptance and Love between yourself as Conscious-Awareness and your human-self. You will be learning to become your own sanctuary and your own master.

You may also have other ways of expressing and exploring your thoughts and feelings, such as with art, poetry, music, or dance. Let who you are be a part of your healing, awakening and growing process. Let journaling be a partner to wider forms of self-expression that you may feel drawn to.

Your life is your business and you are the manager. It is your responsibility to ensure that you don't end up emotionally and spiritually bankrupt. Love, harmony and abundance are already yours. The doorway to all this is within your heart/consciousness. Putting your Conscious-Awareness into action is the key. Your daily conscious connection with your human self is the foundation, the rock

that your entire life is built on. Your daily journal is your meeting place with yourself where you care for yourself and also create the life that you want.

Writing in your journal is about:

- ◆ Getting to know yourself.
- ◆ Building a caring relationship with yourself.
- ◆ An opportunity to express, get in touch with and define your raw emotions – our inner-child longs to finally have someone there to just compassionately listen and validate what was felt and experienced from the helpless vulnerable child’s perspective.
- ◆ An opportunity to identify and keep track of emotional issues (and the confused thoughts that cause the emotions) that tend to build up and interfere with your peace of mind and wellbeing.
- ◆ An opportunity to explore ways of taking care of these emotional issues.
- ◆ Uncovering and challenging self-defeating beliefs/perceptions and negative self-talk.
- ◆ Getting in touch with your Wisdom while endeavouring to take responsibility for the challenges in your life on a daily basis. This can come in the form of:
 - o Reminding yourself of the principles of lovingly caring for yourself.
 - o Identifying victim thinking and then focusing on what your needs are and how to initiate action to take care of them.
 - o Being your own ongoing mentor.
- ◆ An opportunity to plan your day.
- ◆ Setting goals and assessing your progress each day without negative judgment.

This is your own personal workbook that is helping you to awaken, learn and grow from day-to-day. No one is going to mark it. It does not have to be tidy. You don’t have to spell your words correctly. You don’t have to write things that are profound – we often do when we don’t mean to. It is about keeping a focus on your personal growth – keeping yourself pointed consistently in the right direction. It is putting into practice Self-Acceptance and Personal Responsibility. If you persist, in a short time, writing in your journal will become a treasured and routine part of the day. It is also a good reality check, because neglecting your journal is a sure indication that you are neglecting yourself. Keeping a journal enables you to stay in the driver’s seat of your life and once you are settled into the routine, it only takes a couple of pages a day to stay in touch. When you can consistently Accept yourself as you are and keep a daily focus on your life, you can, one day at a time, make great changes in your life. So make good use of your journal as you are reading this book and working through the exercises.

3. Meditation



Meditation is also an important part of this process of Self-Care and self-empowerment. Our blind ego has a habit of avoiding the dark recesses of the mind due to being captured by the fear of its own self-condemnation, or the fear of abandonment. To the ego, facing its own self-condemnation can be like being pushed into a wall of fire. The fear of abandonment can feel like falling into an abyss of loneliness and emptiness. We can feel this emptiness at first when trying to Love ourselves, because for so long we have been expecting others to be our only source of Love.

Meditation is an essential part of the process of strengthening your Awareness and retraining your mind. Meditation, powered by Self-Acceptance, is about practicing being present and tuned into yourself as a detached, consciously Aware, compassionate observer who is offering a sanctuary for your mind. Meditation is learning how to be in the driver's seat of your mind, rather than being blindly and chaotically driven by the mind. Meditation is the training-ground for your Mindfulness practice. Even as your conditioned survival mind keeps on reacting, meditation helps you to be the peaceful observer of those reactions and in the process, heal those reactions. It is a powerful tool for learning to see reality as it is, beyond old distorted conditioning. Meditation enables you to Accept yourself, know yourself and work positively with what you find.

If you combine meditation with reading and journaling (which can all be seen as a part of meditation), you have for yourself a powerful process that can effectively reprogram your mind and change your life.

There are at least five main forms of meditation: relaxation, concentration, Awareness, healing and meta. **Relaxation Meditation** is for letting go of tension and replenishing energy. It is also about practicing Acceptance. **Concentration Meditation** is for strengthening your will/discipline and for transcending the mind, which is essential for building a solid foundation for your Conscious-Awareness/observing-self. Here you are learning to shift your focus to and identify with, being Conscious-Awareness. You are also developing a deeper connection to our intuition and to even higher states of Consciousness. You are learning to be your highest potential, where you are centered in Love and Peace, at one with Life, where you know that your worthiness is without question. This is the most powerful position from where to observe your mind. Here you can most clearly see your mind's confusion and why it causes you to suffer.

From this center of Awareness, that you continue to strengthen with concentration meditation, you then turn back toward your everyday life with **Awareness or Insight Meditation**. In this form of meditation, you are observing how your mind is responding/reacting in your relationships and circumstances, by tuning into your emotions/feelings and observing your thoughts. As your center of Conscious-Awareness continues to develop, you are able to gain more perspective on why you are suffering and how to overcome that suffering. Mindfulness is a form of on-the-go

insight/Awareness meditation. **Healing Meditation** focuses on consciously channelling healing energy (Love and Peace, for example) to the body and mind as a process of being centered in Love and Peace. **Meta Meditation** is a practice of sending out loving kindness to the world around you, as a part of knowing that you are learning/that you are a representative of Universal Love and a natural channel of that Love/Oneness. An ongoing meditation practice can become a combination of these five forms.

Meditation is not only about sitting for extended periods of time, looking within. The practice of meditation should lead to an ongoing state of Mindfulness, where you are able to effectively tune into yourself and your environment at any time, even in the midst of activity, as a process of maintaining a state of Conscious-Awareness. Meditation is a very important part of learning to get into the drivers seat of your mind and consistently stay there.

There are many good books and CDs about meditation available today and so much on the internet, such as meditation/mindfulness apps. There are also many good meditation teachers who offer courses and ongoing groups. However, be wary of any teachers or meditation doctrines that claim that their meditation technique is the best and only way. There is no one type of meditation that suits everyone. It is better to learn from various techniques and philosophies and develop your own meditation “tool kit” based on, but not necessarily limited to, the five forms of meditation that I have already mentioned. Your meditation style must also adapt to your ongoing needs and stage of growth.

See ‘A Guide to Meditation’.

4. Counselling/Therapy/Life-Coaching/Mentoring



A counselling therapist, such as a psychotherapist or psychologist, is someone who is trained in various processes that help us to get in touch with our issues and find ways of overcoming them. They can help us see our issues from new perspectives and can also help us to safely and effectively face, release and heal any emotional pain that we may be carrying. A therapist’s ability to relate to us and to help us is greatly enhanced if he/she is also dedicated to his/her own personal healing/development journey. It is also helpful if the therapist is flexible regarding fees and is someone who can offer ongoing support if your issues are deep and complex, such as with support groups.

What often prevents us from seeking counselling is a belief that we have failed in some way if we need to seek help. We feel this lack of self-worth in the form of shame. Shame is a very uncomfortable emotion to feel and we cope with this by covering it up with pride. Pride says we have to pretend we are okay when we know that we are really hurting. Gaining self-Awareness and

mental/emotional maturity is a community experience of being mentored and interacting with people who are learning and growing as well. Isn't this the sort of Accepting and Loving environment that raises a healthy, well-adjusted child? We are now finding and creating the same conditions with which to raise ourselves. Pride prevents us from getting the care that we need. Keeping ourselves trapped in negative emotions and self-defeating beliefs is very damaging to our wellbeing. It is literally toxic to our minds and bodies. We are all limited by our personal experiences and our beliefs. Every athlete who wants to reach a high standard needs a coach. We need to interact with someone who is trained in mental/emotional "fitness" to give us new information and a new perspective. Being in charge of our minds is a learned skill like anything else and this skill needs to be learned in order to gain the fulfilment we are looking for. There is no-one who would not benefit from working with a personal counsellor/life-coach/mentor and most highly-successful people do just that.

We also need to be persistent in our search for the right people to help us. Therapists and coaches are diverse in their skill-sets and levels of Awareness and experience. Don't give up. The right people for you are out there, especially now that we are connected by the internet and video calls. Most importantly, they are helping you to help yourself. You will get out of it what you put into it.

5. Self-Awareness Groups



Regularly attending self-Awareness groups enables us to be in a group of diverse people who are coming together with the common goal of making the effort to Accept themselves and one another and to heal and grow. No group will be perfect according to our expectations and the people in that group won't be perfect either, but it will be a place that is safe enough where we can learn and grow and deepen our Acceptance of ourselves while interacting with supportive people. Some of these people are bound to become firm friends.

While participating in such groups, I realised that I had an opportunity to observe how I was connecting to myself while trying to connect with the others. Because of my sensitive character, lack of Acceptance of myself and the bullying I experienced in childhood and young adulthood, I wasn't very socially adept, but I was learning. When I was struggling to connect with someone in these groups, I was able to observe how I was not Accepting myself and so I was either judging the other person, thinking they were judging me, or trying to impress them. I found good environments, where I could be open and real with myself and to those around me, because such groups are designed to create a space that is nurturing and supportive. I was also mentored into leadership roles within these groups and therefore learnt a lot about running my own groups. I did a lot of growing up there.

When we make the effort to regularly attend such groups, we hear and see how the other group members are putting the principles of personal care and self-empowerment to work in their lives and we learn from their experiences. We learn to feel more comfortable about ourselves through the

Acceptance we experience from the others in the group. Here we have a safe enough place to observe how we respond/react in a group and so learn more about ourselves. We get used to being okay with being human and okay with other’s being human, because in such a group, we are all learning to be compassionate toward ourselves and also the others and to own our own vulnerabilities. Participating on a weekly basis in such a group is an effective way of strengthening Self-Acceptance and building the life-skills that we need to heal and grow.

6. Look After Your Body



Diet and Fitness: Another obvious tell-tale sign that we are not caring for ourselves is the way we take care of our bodies. Consciously caring for ourselves includes being active and making the time to prepare wholesome meals. Neglecting our physical fitness, under-eating or over-eating, rigid and obsessive diets or frequently eating poor quality foods means that we need to Accept and Love ourselves more. Our healing process helps us to positively change the way we look after our bodies, which further reveals our confused conditioning regarding our bodies. This gives us an opportunity to heal those confusions as we work towards creating new healthy life-style habits.

Before I began my self-Awareness journey, it would be hard for me to make the effort to cook a wholesome, healthy meal for myself. Now I feel like my own caring parent who is looking after a beloved child, switched on to the long term benefits of how I care for myself. I am now worth the effort and it is even a joy to make that effort for myself. I remember once finding myself crying while cooking a nice meal for myself, really feeling on a deep level the care I was giving to myself, which released some old pain that was caused by years of self-neglect.

Rest and Recreation: We can make a distinction between rest and recreation. Rest is about the cessation of activity and cultivating a state of peace and harmony within yourself. A round of golf is not rest, it is recreation. Rest is essential for healing and rejuvenation of body and mind. Rest in the form of meditation is one of the best ways to learn how to relax. Just sitting on a grassy slope looking out over a lake, connecting with nature, is a relaxation meditation, providing you are also cultivating a state of Self-Acceptance. Some forms of Yoga fit into this category as well. For some of us, genuine rest can be difficult. If you can't sit still for any length of time without getting bored or anxious and having to distract yourself, then you need to get in touch with why. It is likely to indicate an unhealthy disconnection from yourself. The more you Accept yourself and consciously care for yourself, the more you learn to appreciate your own company. You become your own best friend. Also, the more you open to your unconditional connection to Universal Consciousness, the more expansive the sanctuary within yourself becomes.

From “Five Steps to Freedom” by Phil Golding

Having fun in the form of recreation is also essential for healing and rejuvenation. All too often we get on the treadmill of thinking that we can't be happy until we achieve this or that, or until a certain person treats us ‘properly’. Meanwhile we are wasting our opportunity to enjoy life now. Happiness is a choice. It does not depend so much on outside circumstances. Recreation is essential for inner-healing and personal growth. Our bodies and minds need to rest and find enjoyment in order to have time to fully integrate our lessons in life and the expansion of consciousness this creates. We need to realise that when our minds change, our bodies change as well. If we don't make the time to rest and have fun, we soon lose our motivation and vitality and we may even burn out.

A peaceful and joyful mind is a clear mind. A clear mind is a positively creative and powerful mind – one that looks for solutions rather than worries about problems. Furthermore, once you have connected up to your self-Awareness groups, there is a good chance you will find someone to share fun times with and with whom you can also relate.

