

# **FREEDOM FROM HEADACHE PAIN**

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**DR. KEN PFEIFFER**

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Published by The Pain Relief Center

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## **FOREWORD**

This book presents an effective treatment for migraine, cluster, and tension headaches. Millions of people have severe headaches, and they feel trapped because nothing they have tried seems to work. Headache sufferers are often demeaned by others, and they are sometimes scorned by doctors who feel the problem is “all in their head.”

This book presents a new approach that combines ancient wisdom and modern science. Although all the characters are fictitious, the story will be a familiar one for most headache sufferers. The real heroine of the story is Anne, the headache sufferer, who learns to overcome her pain with assistance from the wise old teacher, Dr. Ben Zood. Dr. Zood explains the nature of pain, and how our attempts to escape from it make it worse. He then presents a treatment that sounds paradoxical. Though it is difficult to understand and accept at first, when practiced over several weeks the treatment works wonders. Not only does it relieve headache and other pain, it has some additional unexpected positive side effects, such as reduced stress.

As you read this book, you might find some things you object to, or disagree with. That’s fine—I expect there will be some things I have not communicated in your language, or in the way you understand or view the world. Please understand that the important thing is the *overall* message of the book. If you find something you don’t like, please ignore it and continue reading with an open mind. Most importantly, make it your top priority to end pain. Make a commitment, and put the techniques in the book into practice. There is a workbook section at the end of the book that includes some demonstrations, and a 30-day program to help you. As in learning to ride a bicycle, the techniques in this book require more than just reading about them—they require active practice on your part. So after you read the book, please work through the workbook, paying particular attention to *relaxed focusing*, the *Three Skillful Means* of pain relief, and *ReSETs*. If you diligently practice these techniques and complete the 30-day program, you will most likely find your headaches gone forever. Try it!

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Many years ago I was wracked with incredible pain. I thought I was a helpless invalid, and that my life was practically over. I am now completely and miraculously healed, thanks to the principles outlined in this book. I want to thank all the people who aided me in my healing, and to all the people who helped with this book, from the original inspiration to the finished product. Special thanks go to Arnold Vandenberg, who provided the initial insight and impetus for the work, and to Dr. John Sarno for his excellent and similar books on back pain. I am continually indebted to Buster Price and to Dr. Moshe Rubinstein, Professor of Engineering and Applied Science at UCLA, for years of education, training, and discussions about problem solving. I am also indebted to Dr. Bruce Trotter, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Santa Barbara City College, and to Dr. James Olson, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Texas, for their seemingly endless hours of help with reviewing and revising the text. Special thanks go to Bridget Wolfe for her clinical insight and invaluable help with the story, and to Lynne Blackman for her expert assistance with the story and with editing. Thanks to Dr. Spencer Sherman and Paul Duckett for their excellent reviews and clinical insight, and to Hal and Jean Berlfein, Jeff Levine, Bob Morris, Lynn Nichols, Carlos Vigon, Dr. Denny Wayman, and Cheryl Wayman for their critical reviews. Thanks to Don Parker for help in reviewing and publication, and to Fred Kintzer for the Dr. Ben Zood concept. Finally, special thanks and deep gratitude go to my loving wife Kathy for her patience with my insatiable curiosity and experimentation with pain.

## CHAPTER 1: THE GREAT PAIN

Anne sat on the bed, holding her head in her hands, praying for the pain to go away. It felt as though a white-hot poker was being shoved through the top of her head and down into her jaw. Her body was wracked by convulsions of agony, and she was barely able to hold back her sobbing. God, I can't stand this, she thought to herself. Why today? The kids were dressed and ready to go. The car was already packed for the weekend at the beach that they had eagerly anticipated for weeks. Her husband Mark walked into the room to tell her they were ready to go. He took one look at her and his face sank.

"Oh, come on, honey, not another headache!" he said despondently. Anne's vision was distorted from the migraine. Through her pain and tears she could barely see Mark's face flushed with impatience. She knew he was trying to restrain his frustration, and she felt so bad to let him down again.

The kids rushed into the room shouting, "Let's go, Mommy!" and then screeched to a halt as they took one look at the scene. Anne could hear the disappointment in their voices as they commented to each other, "There goes another weekend." The words echoed in Anne's tortured head. How much she wished these headaches would just go away, so she could make her family happy. There were always so many things to do, so much to accomplish, and these headaches just made things even more impossible. Life seemed so hopeless at times. It would be so much simpler if it was just over.

Mark sent the kids out of the room and sat down on the bed with Anne. He was compassionate for her pain, but Anne could hear the tension and impatience in his voice as he said, "Anne, we can't go on this way. You have to get help with these headaches, or it will destroy our family, your career—everything that matters to you. I'm going to take the kids to the beach. Please, when this headache is over, figure out what you can do to get help. I will support you in every way I can, but this has to change."

After Mark and the kids left, Anne cried for a long time, feeling worthless and completely humiliated. The worst part was that she felt hopeless—she had no idea where to turn. She couldn't stand the pain

anymore, and she couldn't stand these exasperating family situations either. Anne felt competent in dealing with most situations in life, but this was simply too much. She walked to Mark's desk and rummaged around until she found what she was looking for—the bottle of prescription pain relievers left over from Mark's knee surgery earlier that year. He hadn't taken any of them, so there were plenty left to end the pain forever. She sat and stared at the bottle for a long time before she finally started crying again. Then she picked up the phone and called her doctor.

Anne remembered the scene as she sat in the waiting room of the doctor's office, squirming with embarrassment at being there. She had always been taught that pain was a weakness and a character flaw. It was really difficult for her to ask for help, but the experience of last weekend had scared her so badly that she was finally willing to try something different.

Dr. Winston was warm and compassionate, so it wasn't as hard as Anne had thought it would be to tell him what was going on.

"Doctor, I try really hard to be the perfect wife, mother, business person. Whatever I've chosen to do in my life I've tried to do well. But now, something is destroying everything I've worked so hard to build. I'm really humiliated to bring the problem to you because I feel as though I should be able to control it myself."

Anne had built a very profitable business from scratch, overcoming many difficulties. At a young age she entered a male dominated business, and she endured sneering and ridicule from older men. Now she could laugh and feel pride that her own business was many times more successful than those of her detractors. She had shown them. Anne enjoyed her work even though it was high-pressured. Her staff was bright and friendly, and they made her feel appreciated. They often complimented her on how dynamically she ran her business, and they frequently expressed their appreciation for her attention and for her fairness to them and to the people with whom they did business. Most of her clients loved her for her caring, superb service, and attention to detail. She understandably had a lot of confidence in her ability to do almost anything. Her headaches were the one major difficulty in her life that she had been unable to overcome.

"Well, Anne, if it's a medical problem, why don't you tell me about it and let me see if we can't find a solution together," the doctor said.

"OK," Anne agreed. " A few years ago I started getting severe headaches." She then went on to relate the story of her headaches. Before a headache struck she experienced a strange visual disturbance known as an "aura". As the headache pain progressed, she became nauseated, disoriented, and incapacitated. Her mouth filled with sticky, gooey saliva, and she felt that she was about to throw up. Bright lights were unbearable, and the headaches were so intense she could hardly see. As the pain worsened she would panic, and then break into a cold sweat as she struggled against the pain. Frequently, the headaches would start when Anne was in meetings with clients. She would have to excuse herself to go into a darkened room where she would clutch her temples in agony. She experienced excruciating pain at the back of her head and behind one eye. Although she felt angry about the pain, she also felt totally helpless, humiliated, and degraded by her affliction. She perceived herself as weak and inadequate for not being able to "will" her headaches away.

The headaches became more frequent and disabling as time went on. They would strike in the early morning, and some days they would continue their assault throughout the day. By this time Anne was close to being totally incapacitated, but she had been too embarrassed to seek help.

Dr. Winston was sympathetic. He was also a good doctor who wanted to find the real cause of Anne's pain. He told her, "Most people with serious headaches consider pain as the enemy. That's easy to understand. Pain appears as a horrendous, powerful force that brutally assaults us and disrupts our lives, preventing us from carrying on our normal daily activities. Even so, we must remember that pain is not always an enemy. Pain lets us know when we are in a harmful situation. It's as if your mind doesn't know, but your body does. Your body always knows. If it were not for pain, you might leave your hand on a hot stove, or keep walking on a badly sprained ankle so it never heals. Your mind might tell you to struggle on. Pain is the body's message that lets us know when something is wrong, so we can do something about it. I could prescribe some drugs that might help with your headaches, but we need to get some more information before we try that approach."

He assured her that severe headaches are common, and he presented statistics to prove it. He opened a book on his desk and read to her, "A recent survey showed that 73% of adults had severe headaches the previous year. Statistics show that pain in general is a very common part of modern life. The survey found that 13% of

people had chronic pain that lasted over 101 days in the previous year, and the average adult lost 23 days of work per year because of pain. Another survey estimates that there are about 23 million Americans who suffer from migraine attacks." Despite her doctor's reassurance, Anne knew she had a serious problem. She was wracked by unbearable pain, she was unable to perform her job, and she had fallen into depression. *She needed a cure.*

Dr. Winston asked Anne many questions about her headaches. After she described her symptoms, he told her about the different kinds of severe headache pain. "It seems that you have migraine headaches," he said. "Migraine is often accompanied by visual disturbances and aversion to light. The pain is often at the back or front of the head, and usually on one side only. In fact, the word 'migraine' comes from the Greek word 'hemikrania', which means 'half the skull'. Migraine is most common in women—at least 60% of migraine sufferers are female. And it *is* a common problem—a recent survey found that 30% of young women suffer from migraines. Men tend to have a similar type of headache called 'cluster headache'. Cluster headaches are usually clustered together in time, and often center behind one eye, but there are individual differences in symptoms. Another headache is the 'tension headache' that usually feels like a tight band around the head. But names such as 'migraine', 'cluster headache', and 'tension headache' are just words to describe different symptoms of severe, life disrupting headaches."

As Anne sat in Dr. Winston's office feeling discouraged by her plight, he continued. "Severe headaches can be caused by many different things. For example, some people have food allergies that cause headaches. Eating chocolate, certain aged cheeses, or drinking alcoholic beverages can trigger headaches in some people, as can aspartame, caffeine, MSG, cured meats that contain nitrates, avocados, bananas, papayas, and pickled vegetables. The list of suspect foods goes on and on. There are many other possible causes, for example rapid changes in altitude, bright sunshine, flickering lights, loud repetitive noises, sudden changes in weather, PMS, and menopause. Even stress can cause headaches. And although it's unlikely, some serious diseases such as cancer or brain tumors can cause headaches. We need to investigate these things first, just to make sure we know what we're dealing with."

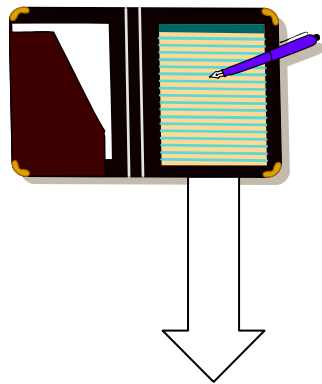
This was not what Anne expected—she had hoped she could go to her physician and get a prescription that would make her pain go away. Now it looked as though she might have to sacrifice some



things, such as her favorite foods and some valuable time. But she quickly concluded that anything would be better than her headache pain.

Dr. Winston said, "The first thing I want you to do is make appointments with two colleagues, an allergist and a neurologist, to rule out food allergies or something more serious. My receptionist will do this for you."

Anne was grateful for Dr. Winston's help. She liked to keep track of everything, and it seemed nice that he would arrange appointments for her rather than asking her to do that herself. One of her favorite practices was to keep a journal where she could record important events in her life. That evening, Anne recorded in her journal a summary of what Dr. Winston told her about severe headaches.



- **Severe headaches are very common and nothing to be ashamed of.**
- **Many different things, including food allergies and "stress", can cause headaches.**
- **Serious disease such as cancer or brain tumors also can cause severe headaches, but this is rare.**

## CHAPTER 2: ADDING INSULT

The next week Anne visited the allergist Dr. Winston recommended. The allergist was a pleasant, sympathetic woman who also asked Anne many questions, and then had her fill out several forms about her medical history and personal habits. She then performed many tests, and asked Anne to keep a food diary before making another appointment.

The next time they met, the allergist reported that Anne had some common, minor allergies. She gave Anne a list of some foods to avoid, and told her that if she followed her recommendations, the frequency and severity of her headaches would probably diminish.

Anne faithfully followed the allergist's instructions. Some forbidden foods were her favorites—particularly ripe bananas and cheddar cheese. Other foods were difficult to avoid because they were common components of many commercial food items, such as refined sugar. Anne noticed that she could prevent some headaches by avoiding suspect foods, but most days she still suffered unbearable headache pain.

Anne also went to the neurologist, who ordered still more tests. When Anne told him why she was there, he seemed to smirk as he said, "People like you keep us in business! There is probably nothing wrong with you. You have that 'all in your head' disease." Anne's face flushed as she tried to hold back her tears. The doctor had insinuated that she was somehow responsible for her pain, and she felt guiltier than she had ever felt before. She also felt angry with the doctor for being so callous. "How can the pain be just my imagination when it hurts so much? How can I bring this much pain on *myself*? Why would I do this to myself and to my family? *Why?*" she asked herself as she sobbed quietly. "I wish the doctor could feel this—he deserves it for being so uncaring." She then felt even more guilt for wishing such pain on another human being.

After being humiliated in the neurologist's office, she never wanted to see another physician again. However, she did return to Dr. Winston's office to review the specialists' reports. He reassured her that she did not have a brain tumor or any other life-threatening condition, but she might have some food allergies. He wrote her a

prescription for a pain reliever, and recommended that she avoid any suspect foods. "And you ought to try to relax, too!" he added as she was leaving the office.

## CHAPTER 3: THE LAST HOPE

The pain persisted although Anne “tried to relax”, and she carefully avoided the foods the allergist warned her about. She still experienced severe headaches at extremely inconvenient times, such as when she was driving with clients in her car. Anne sometimes wondered just what “trying to relax” was all about—it only seemed to add more to her list of important things to do. How can I get all these things done and relax at the same time? Her days were mostly filled with disabling headache pain. Anne felt totally frustrated, defeated, and guilty. The pain reliever Dr. Winston prescribed eased the pain only slightly, and it made her drowsy. She found herself with increasing feelings of anxiety at being out of control of her life. She quickly tried to put these thoughts out of her mind. I am always in control of my life, she affirmed to herself. Often she sensed anger toward her doctors for being unable to solve her problems, as well as anger toward her husband and children for not understanding. But it’s not their fault, she immediately concluded. They’re doing all they can, so I guess it must be my fault, she said to herself.

Anne was feeling particularly down. She had just left an important meeting with a client because of a headache. She felt that something was seriously wrong with her, and she feared for her career. “What am I going to do?” she asked herself. What’s going to happen if I can’t work anymore? We need my paycheck to help make the mortgage and car payments. She felt like an invalid. She also felt very alone. Her family didn’t understand what she was going through, and out of pride she had not confided in her friends. At the time of her deepest despair, her old friend Sarah called to say hello. Anne and Sarah had been best friends when they were younger, but they had not seen each other for a long time. Anne was glad to hear from Sarah. After they caught up with what they had been doing since they last saw each other, Anne confided in Sarah about her headaches.

Sarah turned out to be sympathetic and helpful. Sarah’s husband Doug had also been plagued with severe headache pain that their doctor had diagnosed as cluster headaches. Every day Doug had spent hours on his knees in the bathroom gripping his head in anguish. The pain would come and go in waves, each lasting about an hour. The pain had forced him to quit his job. Doug had gone through much the same routine as Anne in searching for a cure, including visits to

specialists, and more confusion than pain relief. Doug also had been willing to try unconventional healers who did unusual things such as laying their hands or mineral crystals on his head. Again, nothing seemed to work. Doug and Sarah were both glad he had seen specialists to rule out more serious health problems, but the headaches remained. With only Sarah working now, they were nearing the bottom of their financial resources.

A friend of Doug's recently mentioned that he, too, had debilitating headaches, but they disappeared after he had visited a doctor named Ben Zood, who lived in a distant city to the East. "Doug's friend heard about Dr. Zood from other people who had been virtually relieved of migraine, cluster, and tension headaches," Sarah said. "It was a long way to travel, but Doug was ready for anything. He simply couldn't bear the pain anymore—this was his last ditch effort. I was afraid he would kill himself. Miraculously, he doesn't have severe headaches anymore. And he also seems so confident, at ease and ... *together* now. Something really changed in him. Doug is so enthusiastic about Dr. Zood that he claims he must be the wisest doctor in the whole world."

Anne perked up and asked, "Did Dr. Zood give Doug some new drug?"

"No, he gave him something much better and more lasting. It's too hard for me to explain what it was, but Doug is much happier and free from pain now. You should see Dr. Zood for yourself."

Sarah was extremely enthusiastic about Dr. Zood, but Anne was so disappointed with doctors that she was still skeptical. I have seen all these supposedly great doctors, and I still have these terrible headaches, she thought. It was only after much soul searching, and several more horrendous headaches, that Anne finally gave in and called Dr. Zood to make an appointment.

As Anne was making the long drive, she mused, "Dr. Ben Zood, perhaps the wisest doctor in the world." The name had a familiar ring, but she could not place it. His office was on the top of a hill overlooking the city. The receptionist met her at the door and ushered her into Dr. Zood's private office. As Anne walked in, she was struck with the quiet, clean simplicity of the décor. One entire wall of the office was glass, and soft, diffused sunlight flooded the room. Anne looked through the glass and was taken by the beauty of the distant mountains on the other side of the city. The receptionist offered Anne

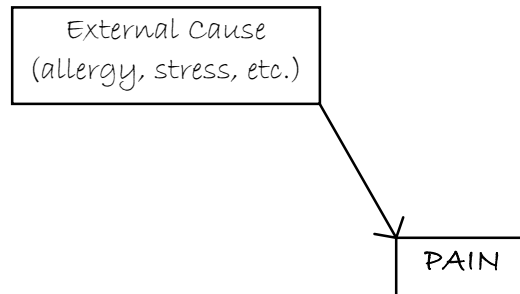
a seat and said, "The doctor will be right in."

Anne settled back into the soft, comfortable chair. A rock fountain gurgled gently in the opposite corner of the room. "It feels really good here," she thought as she looked around. The room resembled a study more than a doctor's office—there were books everywhere. Two entire walls had built-in bookcases that were completely full, and there were books on the floor and on the desk. As she glanced at the titles she saw there were books on many, many different subjects. On the opposite wall there was a large painting of Hokusai's "The Great Wave". In the center of the painting Mount Fuji stands in the distance, still and tranquil, while in the foreground long boats are tossed about by huge, turbulent ocean waves. What a contrast, she thought, and what a beautiful painting.

In a few minutes Dr. Zood walked in, gave Anne a warm, friendly greeting, and seated himself facing her. Dr. Zood moved with easy grace, though he was an older man than Anne expected. Anne was impressed with Dr. Zood's kind, serene manner. He asked Anne a few questions about her headaches, and he listened attentively to her answers. He nodded and smiled when she told him she had gone to a neurologist who could find no serious problem. "Good," he said, "it's always an excellent idea to rule out serious diseases. Now let's get to the root of this headache problem."

## CHAPTER 4: THE TRUE NATURE OF PAIN

Dr. Zood leaned forward and spoke clearly, with a twinkle in his eye. "As you have learned, headache pain can be caused by many different things. Underlying all headaches is a physical condition in the brain. You can think of it as a biochemical imbalance. Conventional treatments focus on eliminating the external causes, or on counteracting the resulting biochemical imbalance in the brain." As Dr. Zood spoke, he drew a sketch on a piece of paper:



For example, a food allergy to ripe bananas might lead to a serious biochemical imbalance in a common brain hormone, such as *serotonin*. Conventional treatments might attempt to eliminate allergenic foods, or to administer drugs to counteract the serotonin imbalance. These treatments can help, but it is not always possible to avoid all potential headache producing situations, such as suspect foods or PMS. Also, some of the drugs we use to treat headache are not always as effective as we would like, and they might have unpleasant side effects, such as nausea or drowsiness. Most importantly, the conventional treatments ignore a major factor. There is something else that has a powerful influence on our brain biochemistry, and which thus determines whether the pain will turn into a serious headache such as migraine or cluster." Dr. Zood smiled warmly as he spoke, and Anne had the feeling he was going to let her in on a secret known only to a few.

"You might find it interesting to know that historically, our understanding of pain has reflected the dominant philosophical viewpoint of each era. For example, ancient Greek thought was exemplified in Aristotle's view that pain is an emotion, rather than a fundamentally physical phenomenon. In the Middle Ages, pain was closely tied with religious thought, and was viewed as a punishment for sin. This view also rejected the body as the true source of pain. This viewpoint changed radically during the Enlightenment, which emphasized rationality, the scientific method, and technology. Descartes emphasized the separation of mind and body, and described pain as a purely functional mechanism to signal bodily damage. This is still the dominant viewpoint in the medical community today, which strongly emphasizes treating only the body to cure pain."

This reminded Anne of an old saying. She asked, "So is that another example of when you have only one tool, say a hammer, you tend to treat everything as a nail?"

"That's right," Dr. Zood said. "Medical doctors tend to use their own tools, such as surgery or drugs. But pain, of all varieties, is much more complex than most people realize today. Many people assume that pain is caused only by physical damage to the body, such as cutting, burning, disease, and so on. This is only part of the picture. Let me tell you a story. I remember when I was a young boy that every year we would get vaccinations in school. The nurse brought out a big needle, and I was terrified. The anticipation of pain was unbearable, even before she poked my arm with the needle, and then that was excruciating. It was one of my least favorite childhood experiences. When I was about the same age I remember playing football with some of my friends. The game was very exciting and my team was winning. On one particular play, I was carrying the ball and I bumped against a wooden fence, but I bounced off it and went on to score. It was a great thrill! A few minutes later two girls were passing by and they started screaming because my leg was covered with blood. I hadn't noticed that some nails sticking out of the fence had ripped a huge gash in my leg. It wasn't until I looked at the cut that I felt any pain at all. I was horrified at how deep the cut was." Dr. Zood paused and leaned back. "Now compare the two experiences, the frightening terror of the needle prick, with hardly noticing a deep cut until I looked at it."

Anne reflected for a moment. She recalled some of her own experiences when she was deeply involved in an interesting activity such as horseback riding. Several times she had rubbed her ankle raw



and bleeding, while hardly noticing it. Then there were other times when she experienced great pain over very minor incidents, such as removing a bandaid when she was a little girl, and having the adhesive pull at the tiny hairs on her skin. "Yes, I have had the same type of experience." she said.

Dr. Zood nodded. "This sort of thing happens frequently. The way we look at the painful experience is at least as important as the amount of physical damage. There is abundant research on this subject. For example, one study examined the amount of pain suffered by soldiers who had the same physical battle wounds, let's say losing a leg. Soldiers who weren't committed to the cause of the war reported much more pain than soldiers who believed they were fighting for something honorable and worthwhile. Draftees suffered more than volunteers, and pain was worse when fighting in foreign countries than when defending home soil.

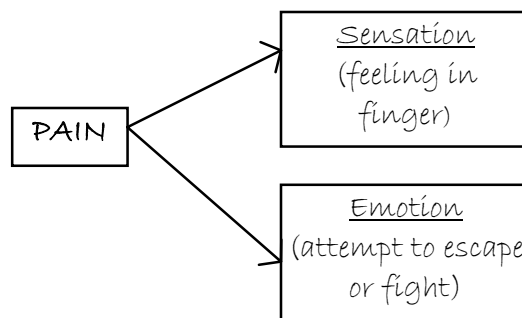
"This is true for all sorts of pain—your state of mind influences how you experience pain. For example, mothers who really want a baby report less pain during childbirth than mothers who are giving birth to unwanted babies. There are even cultures where childbirth is just no big deal. The mother works in the field, and when the time comes she simply squats down, gives birth, and then continues working, almost as if nothing happened."

Anne flashed back and remembered how painful childbirth had been for her. Suddenly she was very glad that she had wanted her children so much. "Why is state of mind so important?" she asked.

Dr. Zood, who seemed to have anticipated her question, patiently explained, "Well, the experience of pain has at least two different components. The two main ones are what we call a 'sensory component' and an 'emotional component'. Here, let me show you." He leaned over to his desk and took a pair of pliers out of a drawer. "I'm not going to really hurt you, I'm just going to inflict a small pain to make a point. Please, extend your fingers."

Anne held out her hand to Dr. Zood, who gently put the jaws of the pliers on her index finger between her fingernail and the first joint. He said, "I want you to pay close attention to how this feels on your finger. Tell me when it starts to hurt." Anne felt some pressure on her finger as Dr. Zood gently squeezed the pliers. As the pressure intensified, she started to feel pain, and she automatically tried to withdraw her hand. Dr. Zood immediately eased up on the pressure and said, "Notice how you feel the pressure first, and then as the

pain starts, you want to pull your hand away. The point is that there is an important difference between the feeling in your finger, and your desire to pull your hand back. The feeling in your finger is the *sensory component* of pain. The *emotional component* is your desire to escape from the sensation, or your fear of not being able to escape. With a more serious injury you could be terrified by the extent of your injury, and you'd want to escape from the whole situation. I remember not wanting to have such a deep gash in my leg—I wanted things to be different. I wanted my leg to be well, and it was hard to accept that it was not. Notice that we use the word 'pain' to refer to both physical and emotional pain. They are very similar, because a large part of what we normally think of as physical pain is actually emotional. It is a well-known and true saying that '*The attempt to escape pain is pain.*' As he spoke, Dr. Zood was drawing another sketch on a piece of paper:



*Try demonstration 1 in the workbook: components of pain*

"Have you ever been close to drowning?" he asked.

"Oh yes," she replied, "I grew up by the ocean, so I've had my share of frightening experiences in the surf."

"And how did these near-drowning experiences feel?" Dr. Zood asked.

"I remember struggling to keep my head above the water. I was

just panicking.” she replied.

“I understand,” said Dr. Zood. “The emotional component of pain is very similar to the attempt to escape from drowning.”

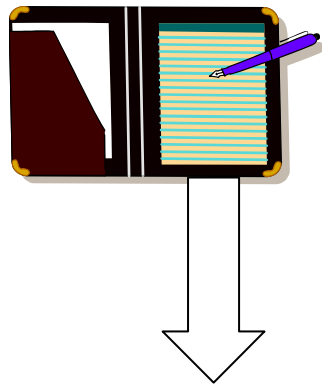
As Anne recollected her childhood experiences, her memory shifted to the suffocating feeling she got when her older brother would tickle her and clamp a pillow over her face to keep their parents from hearing their horseplay. She remembered her panic as she struggled, *desperate* to breathe, but unable to get any air. The feeling was much like that of a near-drowning experience.

Suddenly another image flashed in Anne’s mind; it was from an old television news program showing a monk protesting religious injustice in Vietnam. He was sitting in the middle of a street, pouring gasoline over himself. He struck a match and then burst into flames. He sat there quietly without attempting to run away. She remembered her amazement when she first saw this horrific film clip. “How can he do that to himself?” she asked herself. Her stomach clenched and she gasped for air as she watched him burn to death. He finally just toppled over, without showing any attempt to escape, or the least sign of pain. He was not trying to escape from his fate.

Then Anne recalled the panic she always felt when a migraine would start. Unlike the monk, she would do *anything* to avoid the pain, but she could find no way out. She was terrified of the pain—the fright was overwhelming and sickening. “Yes,” she said, “the fear of an oncoming migraine feels a lot like the panic of suffocating or drowning. I want to escape, but I feel helpless.”

Dr. Zood could see that Anne grasped what he was saying. Still, just to make sure he asked, “So have I made clear the two different components of the experience of pain, the sensory and the emotional?” After Anne nodded with assurance, he continued, “Now for the most important point. *The emotional component of pain can affect your body in a way that increases the sensory component.* That’s right, the emotional part can make it hurt worse.”

Anne took out her notebook and jotted down some notes so she could remember the important things Dr. Zood said:



1. The experience of pain has two components, a sensation component and an emotion component.
2. The unpleasantness of pain is determined as much by the emotion of pain as it is by the sensation of pain.
3. Pain can be made worse by increases in the emotional component.

## CHAPTER 5: THE SPIRAL OF AGONY

Dr. Zood leaned forward to explain, "Just a few years ago the prevailing opinion in many professional circles was that, at most, the mind had only a minor effect on the body. However, it's easy to show that the mind can have a major effect on the body. Let's do a little experiment. Please, sit back, close your eyes, and relax."

Anne sat back in her chair and closed her eyes. Dr. Zood started speaking slowly. "Imagine going into your kitchen, opening the refrigerator, and picking out a big, ripe, juicy lemon. In your mind's eye, see the shiny yellow skin, its pores glistening with pungent natural oils. Now imagine taking a sharp knife and slicing through the lemon. Feel the fine mist of lemon juice and oil squirting from the lemon as you slice it into four pieces. Smell the fresh aroma. Imagine picking up a quarter of the lemon and putting it into your mouth. Bite into it and taste the sour juice as it flows into your mouth."

The sensation was vivid for Anne. As she imagined biting into the lemon, her mouth filled with saliva. She puckered her lips and remarked, "Oh, I see what you mean. My mouth reacted just to my imagination."

"Yes, most people react strongly to that demonstration," Dr. Zood said. "If you vividly imagine an experience, your body will react to your thoughts. Let's try another experiment—try imagining an experience from your life when you were very angry. As you imagine this experience, I want you to pay special attention to your body. What do you feel? I'm not talking about describing it in words, I'm talking about feeling it. *Feelings only*, please. Pay particular attention to the areas around your head, chest, and stomach."

This exercise was a little harder for Anne, because she did not think of herself as an angry person, and she never thought about "feeling" anger. When she was a little girl her parents taught her that good little girls do not get angry. Eventually, she thought of a time when she was a teenager, when her mother told her she didn't do enough to help around the house. Anne very much did want to help her mother, so on hearing her mother's comment she regretted that she had not tried to do even more. The next few times Anne tried to help her mother with

chores, however, her mother became annoyed and angrily sent her away. Whenever Anne tried to help, her mother would say, "Get out of here! You just make things worse!" Anne became very disappointed, sad, frustrated, and angry.

Dr. Zood was watching Anne's neck turn red. He asked, "What are you feeling in your body now?"

That was a tough question. Anne had to pay close attention to the feelings in her body. This was something she did not do often, since she had been taught from her earliest childhood not to express herself—to hold her feelings in—especially feelings of anger. Anne assumed that if she wasn't sick, her body was doing just fine. At Dr. Zood's urging, she surveyed her body from head to foot, paying close attention to her head, chest, and stomach. She knew she had some vague discomfort, but it was hard trying to pin it down. After a while she replied, "My head feels warm, my chest feels tight, and I have a knot in my stomach."

Dr. Zood asked, "How about your hands and feet?"

Anne paid attention to her hands and feet, and replied, "They feel a little damp and cold."

Dr. Zood asked Anne to look at her hands. Anne looked down and was surprised to see she was tightly clenching her fists. She quickly relaxed the tension in her hands. Then she noticed that her hands looked pale.

"Your body is reacting to the anger produced by imagining a past situation," Dr. Zood said. "Your reaction is normal. In fact, it's healthy. When people get angry, they usually get tight in the chest, their stomach knots up, their muscle tension increases, and their head gets warmer. This is why people use the expression 'hot head' to describe an angry person. The increase in muscle tension can cause some very unpleasant side effects, particularly when the tension is centered in the neck, back, or buttocks. This tension can cause cramping, changes in blood flow, and nerve irritation. When confronted with an anger arousing, frustrating situation, some people develop a 'pain in the neck' because of increased muscle tension. When the muscle tension occurs in the lower back or buttocks, it can cause irritation of the sciatic nerve, and a literal 'pain in the butt'. These are specific instances of increased muscle tension, or being 'up tight'. People react to fear similarly. The fear reaction also includes cold extremities, that

is, hands and feet. That's why people use the expression 'cold feet' to refer to a state of fear."

Anne listened intently. "I never knew where expressions such as 'cold feet' and 'pain in the neck' came from. That's very interesting, they're really linked to what's going on emotionally."

"Yes," said Dr. Zood, "many of our common expressions come from our body's reaction to external events, but in modern times we have lost touch with our bodies. We tend to ignore the effects on our body of the everyday emotions of anger and fear."



*Try demonstration 2 in the workbook: effects of anger*

Dr. Zood went on to explain that one reason our bodies react this way to anger and fear is that in a wild, uncivilized environment, it helps us to survive real physical threats. In earlier times, the threat might have come from a wild animal or from a human enemy. Your body's reactions to anger and fear prepare you to fight or to run away, and to live again another day. In both cases your body increases its biochemical arousal level, muscle tension, and heart rate. It also produces the hormone adrenaline. These changes make it easier for you to fight when you have to, or to run away when you need to. Physiologists call this reaction the *defensive reflex*, because your body is trying to defend itself from an external threat. Sometimes it is referred to as the 'fight or flight response' or 'stress reaction'."

"I see," said Anne. "That explains why my heart was racing, but why were my hands clammy and cold?"

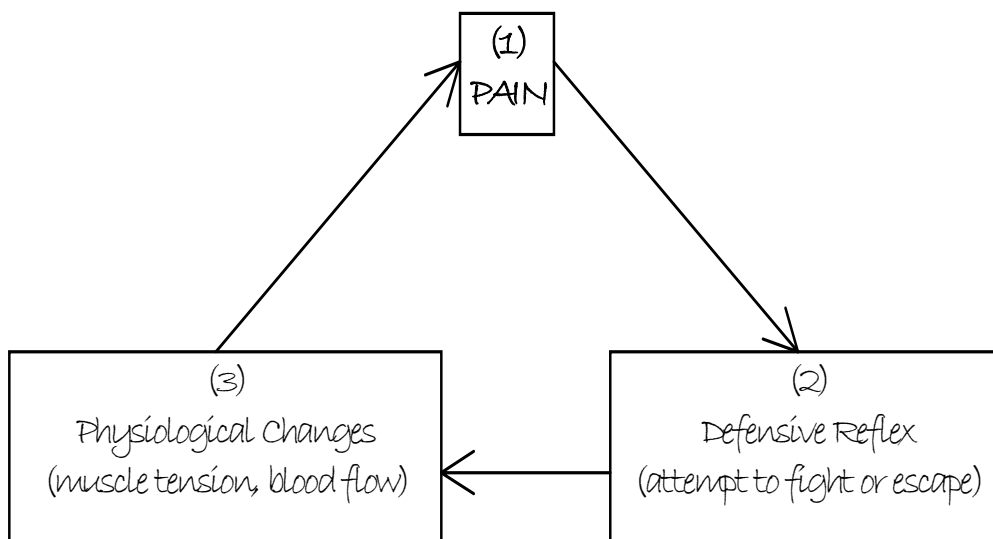
Dr. Zood replied, "In a defensive reflex, your body decreases blood flow to your stomach and to your extremities. Blood is needed in your large muscles for fight or flight—it is not needed to digest food in your stomach. One reason your chest feels tight is that your heart is working hard to pump blood to the skeletal muscles which will need the blood's oxygen to sustain their energy output. Your hands and feet get cold because blood flow to them is constricted. Blood in your extremities can easily be lost if you are bitten or cut, so your body diverts blood away from these areas. There is also a change in breathing, which tends to become faster, shallower, and higher in the chest. Normal, relaxed breathing occurs mainly in the abdomen.

When you are feeling threatened, muscle tension increases in the abdomen to protect your internal organs, so your breathing shifts more to the chest area. When you are extremely frightened, your initial reaction might be to hold your breath in a 'freezing' posture, like a wild animal that is attempting to avoid detection by a predator."

This all made sense to Anne, but it raised an important question. "OK," she said, "I understand how emotions affect the body, but what does this have to do with migraine headaches?"

"Ah, good question," Dr. Zood responded. "We know that the effect of strong emotions include hormonal changes, muscle tension, blood flow, breathing, and so on. Now compare what happens when you feel the onset of a migraine. Your initial reaction is dread, fear, anger, guilt, and feelings of inadequacy. These emotions cause your body to go into a profound 'fight or flight' stress reaction, or 'defensive reflex', which prepares you to fight or to run away from an external enemy." He leaned forward for emphasis. "*An important key to understanding migraine and other severe headaches is that this defensive reflex is itself unpleasant, and it causes an increased sensation of pain.* The attempt to fight or to run away from pain makes the pain worse. I call this the '*spiral of agony*', because the initial pain causes an unpleasant emotional reaction that increases the sensation of pain. The increased sensation of pain causes an increased emotional reaction, which increases the sensation of pain, and so on. "

As he was talking, Dr. Zood was sketching a picture of the spiral of agony on a piece of paper so that Anne could see.





When he was done, Dr. Zood grabbed his head in his hands and said “Ouch!” in a mock display of agony. “I used to have migraines myself, so just talking about this makes me remember how painful it is.”

This talk also made Anne remember how painful her headaches were. She said, “Yes, I know what you mean about the feelings of dread, or more like *terror*, when I sense a migraine starting. I would just do *anything* to get rid of it.”

Dr. Zood said, “That’s right—the spiral of agony makes migraine and related severe headaches particularly devastating. Attempts to fight the pain or to escape from it simply make it worse. Even the change in blood flow associated with the defensive reflex can increase migraine pain. Some researchers have proposed that the increased blood flow to the head is a direct cause of migraine pain. No wonder people call a difficult, frustrating problem a ‘headache’, because the emotional reaction to the problem can cause a severe headache.

“When you thought of the lemon, you experienced how the thought or idea of something can produce some of the same physiological changes as the thing itself. Many things associated with a lemon can produce some of those physiological effects. A strong lemon aroma can make us salivate, as can the picture of someone biting into a lemon. Similarly, something that produces *some* of the conditions associated with a migraine may lead to a full-blown migraine. This includes things that make your head hot, things that increase serotonin or adrenaline, or things that cause a defensive reflex, including the thought of a migraine.”

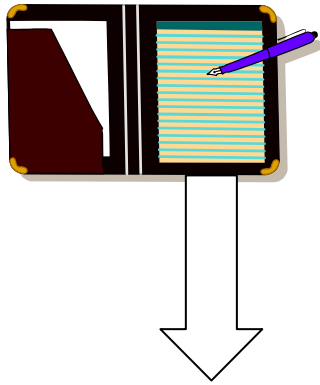
“What other sort of things would do that?” asked Anne.

Dr. Zood explained, “Consider some of the things implicated as causes of migraine. One of these is overheating, such as running around on an extremely hot day. This makes your head hot, and may also create a feeling of urgency to escape from the heat, which is a defensive reflex. Another common condition that increases migraines is entering menopause, which among other things is associated with hot flashes. One medical explanation for a hot flash is that your body slows down its metabolism and cools off. This cooling triggers an adrenaline reaction to heat you back up to normal. The adrenaline reaction is part of the defensive reflex, and it also heats up your head—just what happens in a migraine. No wonder there are

increases in headaches during menopause. When I examine the list of things that have been implicated in migraines, I find it interesting that many of them either create a defensive reflex, or directly cause some of the symptoms of migraine, such as a hot head. Recent studies indicate that many women experience an increase in 'hassles' several days before a migraine."

"Hmmm, more hassles." Ann considered that carefully. Yes, she thought, she *did* get more hassled before episodes of severe migraine. Still, she doubted that this was a major cause for her. She made a note to look into it.

Anne jotted down some additional notes:



- 4. The attempt to escape from pain *is* pain.**
- 5. The emotions associated with trying to run away from pain increase the sensation of pain, and vice versa. This is the "spiral of agony".**
- 6. Fighting, struggling against, or trying to run away from pain just makes it worse.**

## CHAPTER 6: RELEASE FROM THE SPIRAL OF AGONY

Anne understood what Dr. Zood was saying—her attempt to fight or escape from the headaches only increased her pain. This understanding did not improve her mood. She was still discouraged and frustrated because she thought she was doomed to her fate of severe headaches. “If there’s no way out, then what can I do?” she asked. “It sounds as if I’m going to have to put up with pain forever.”

“Only if you choose to,” Dr. Zood assured, “You don’t have to put up with migraine pain forever. Migraine and other severe headaches can be eliminated, but you must realize that you cannot force your way out of the spiral of agony. The way out is a matter of insight, of seeing that trying to force your way out just digs you in deeper. The key to ending headache seems almost nonsensical at first—which is why so many people suffer. *The first key is to stop trying to fight the pain, and to stop trying to escape from the pain.*”

Dr. Zood was watching Anne carefully to see her reaction. When he saw her eyes widen and her jaw drop slightly in disbelief, he elaborated. “Let me explain with an analogy. A person afraid of drowning will struggle and flail around. This just increases the chances of drowning quickly. Fighting or trying to escape simply makes things worse. What is the perfect thing to do when drowning? If you stop struggling and just lean back and relax, you will float. Severe headache is similar—fighting the pain or trying to escape from it makes it much worse. You must stop fighting the pain, and you must stop trying to escape from it.”

The drowning analogy made sense to Anne, but it seemed too simplistic. How could a drowning person ever be persuaded to stop struggling? The analogy sounds fine in theory, but how about in practice? Feeling frustrated and annoyed, she retorted, “I’ve got to fight these headaches. How can I stop struggling? It sounds as if you are asking me NOT to take my hand off a hot stove, and just stand there and suffer.”

“Your question of *how* to stop struggling is an astute one,” Dr. Zood responded, “People often resist the idea of not fighting pain—they fear they will be stuck in pain forever. If you saw a drowning person struggling, how could you tell them to relax and stop fighting? They would probably think you are crazy. It takes a tremendous leap of

faith to do the perfect thing here. First you must understand that *trying to fight the pain or to escape from it makes the pain worse*. Then you must experience for yourself that the pain changes when you stop fighting or trying to escape. The way to stop fighting or trying to escape is to turn your attention to the feeling of pain in your body, and stay with it. The natural reflex is to turn your attention away from the pain—to avoid it, to bury it. Believe it or not, *you must learn to turn your attention toward the pain, to examine the sensation of the pain, and to examine the emotion associated with the sensation*. Most people continue the fight—they never stop struggling with the pain, so they never see what happens when they stop fighting. Here, let's try another experiment."

Dr. Zood picked up the pliers and handed them to Anne. "I will let you do this, because I want you to be in control. Take the pliers and slowly squeeze one of your fingers. There's no danger here—you can always stop when it hurts too much. I want you to *direct your attention to the feeling in your finger* as you increase the pressure. Pay very close attention to the feeling, and don't let your mind wander away from it."

Anne placed the pliers around her left index finger and started squeezing gently. She felt the pressure building. Dr. Zood said, "Tell me what you are feeling as you go along."

Anne replied, "I feel some pressure in my finger. Now it's starting to hurt."

"Good," said Dr. Zood, "now pay very close attention to that hurting feeling as you increase the pressure."

Anne directed her attention to the feeling in her finger. It hurt, but it was unlike anything she could remember. This was the first time she ever turned her attention toward pain without trying to escape. As the pain increased, Dr. Zood observed her wince slightly, and she started breathing faster.

Dr. Zood spoke softly, "Anne, notice how your body is reacting now. Pay attention to the feelings in the rest of your body. These are the feelings of trying to fight or escape. Pay attention to your muscle tension and to your breathing. Without trying to change anything, be aware of the rest of your body."

Anne noticed that her breathing was getting shallower and more strained, and that the muscles in both her arms were trembling.

The pain was intense now—she felt like screaming. She let out a little cry.

“OK, that’s enough for now,” said Dr. Zood. Anne removed the pliers and started to shake her finger. He asked, “What were you feeling besides the sensation of pain in your finger?”

“I felt like running away. It reminded me of the feeling I had when I was a child and I was being chased by a nasty dog. I was desperate to get away. My mind was screaming.”

“Where did you feel that in your body?” Dr. Zood asked.

“My stomach was tight, and it was hard to breathe,” Anne replied. Then she looked down at her finger. “Ow, my finger hurts!” she exclaimed, as if she regretted squeezing it in the pliers. She was looking at the pressure indentation on her finger, and at the whiteness where the pressure had stopped the blood flow.

Dr. Zood leaned forward and spoke earnestly. “Here is another excellent opportunity to practice. Stop shaking your finger and trying to escape from the pain. Pay close attention to the feeling in your finger. Take a deep breath, relax, and turn your attention to the sensation in your finger.”

Anne leaned back in her chair, looked up at the ceiling, and took a deep breath. She stopped shaking her finger, and then tightly grasped her left hand with the right. As she turned her attention to the finger, she noticed that it hurt, but it also had a cold, itchy feeling. How strange, she thought. Filled with a sense of wonder, she said, “My finger feels really itchy.”

“Yes, itching is a mild sensation of pain. Most people are amazed at what happens when they pay attention to pain—the sensation changes. The common reaction to pain is to focus on the emotional distress accompanying pain, and to try to escape. When we try to escape from pain, we turn our attention away from it, so we stop noticing the actual sensation. The next time you have any kind of pain at all, I want you to *gently* turn your attention toward it. Do not try to fight or escape. Be with the pain, the pain is part of you. Accept the pain, give in to it, and don’t fight it. Just let go and surrender to it. In other words, *feel* the pain, go to the center of it.”

“Surrender to it and feel it.” Anne repeated under her breath. She looked at her finger and focused her attention on how it felt. Her sense

of wonder increased as she noticed the feelings in her finger changing to a slight numbness.

Dr. Zood was watching Anne's expression as she looked at her finger—he could see she had discovered something valuable. "The next time you sense a headache coming on, I want you to remember this lesson," he said with a compassionate tone. "First, do not try to escape from your sensations and feelings. Pay close attention to the feelings in your head, and accept them. If there is any pain, do not fight it. Instead, just be with it and feel it. You know from years of experience that fighting migraine pain doesn't help, don't you? You can't run from it either, can you? It always wins. Do the one thing you have never done before, and that is to feel the pain and surrender completely." Anne sighed and nodded her agreement.

Dr. Zood continued, "Fighting pain just strengthens it. So do something different. Get rid of your old habits, they didn't work. Stop fighting, and give in. Let the pain have its way. Let it sink in, as water sinks into sand. Don't resist! Take a deep breath, feel the pain, and relax into it as much as you can."

The last statement shocked Anne. Does this man know what he's talking about? How could he ever have had a migraine? *Relax* into the pain? She shot Dr. Zood an incredulous look and said, "You've got to be kidding. Relax into migraine pain? That sounds like relaxing while the dentist gives you a root canal without any anesthetic."

Dr. Zood replied, "Yes, I understand. That does sound unbelievable to you now, doesn't it? There is a special technique I will teach you called *Relaxed Focusing*. With practice, this technique will eventually help you to relax into pain. It takes a while to learn, but it is well worth it. The idea behind relaxed focusing is twofold. First, you teach yourself to get into a deeply relaxed state, which is incompatible with the defensive reflex. Second, you teach yourself to maintain a highly focused attention on a single point while you are relaxed. Both these skills require practice, just like learning to ride a bike. Neither relaxing on demand nor intently focusing attention come easily for most people, and combining them is even more difficult. We are trying to achieve a state that doesn't occur often in normal, daily life. Usually, when we are paying rapt attention to something, our bodies tend to tense up. An example is when we are watching an exciting sports event. When we are very relaxed, on the other hand, our minds tend to wander. That's why we need practice to be able to relax and focus at the same time. Shall we try it right now?"

OK, Anne thought, that makes more sense. She nodded her approval and said, "Yes, I want to learn how to do relaxed focusing. " After a moment of thought she asked, "Is relaxed focusing anything like meditation? It sounds sort of like it. "

"Yes, you are correct," Dr. Zood replied. "Relaxed focusing is a special type of meditation designed to reduce pain. Much research shows that relaxation training, and meditation in general, helps with chronic pain. Relaxed focusing goes one step further because it is specifically designed to reduce the defensive reflex. Before we try it, let me explain what we are going to do. First, you sit up straight in your chair and relax. Close your eyes and rest your hands comfortably on your thighs or in your lap. Next, you take a deep breath and hold it for a count of three, then exhale with a sigh, letting go of all the tension in your body. Repeat this three times. When you breathe in, remember to breathe into your abdomen. Relax and soften your tummy, and let it swell outward on the in breath, while keeping your chest relaxed. The reason for this 'stomach breathing' is that it is just the opposite of what happens with the defensive reaction. After the three deep breaths, continue breathing through your stomach, and with each exhale let go of all your body tension. As you continue to relax, search your body for any tension, paying particular attention to your face, your jaw, your shoulders, back, chest, and stomach. If you find any tightness or tension, let it go with your exhale.

"When you are completely relaxed, you will then bring your attention gently to one specific sensation or part of your body, and keep it focused there. You could bring your attention to the bridge of your nose, or to the top of your head, or to anywhere you want. Most people find it easiest to bring their attention to the feeling of air as it moves through the entrance to their nostrils, so let's try that. You want to have a highly focused attention on one point, just like a cat stalking a mouse, but with a completely quiet and relaxed body. You will notice that as you do this, your attention will wander occasionally. When this happens, gently bring your attention back to the feeling of air at the entrance to your nostrils. Remember that the goal of this exercise is to create a situation incompatible with defensiveness, so it is important that you do not get frustrated. The more you practice this the easier it will be to remain focused on one point."

"What happens if I start daydreaming, or random thoughts enter my head?" Anne asked. "That usually happens when I am not really busily engaged in something."

"Good question," answered Dr. Zood. "When you find yourself thinking or daydreaming, just acknowledge that fact, and gently return your focus to your breathing. You don't want to be defensive or distracted, so it is important that you not fight or vigorously reject the thoughts, or become attached to them and try to make them continue. In a nutshell, don't fight the thoughts and don't feed them. Just notice them and *let them go*."

"Another thing that will help you is to count your breaths. This gives your 'thinking mind' something to do, so that stray thoughts will distract you less. Count 'one' on the first out-breath, then count 'two' on the second out-breath. Continue doing this until you get to ten, then start over. It's common to lose count, especially in the beginning. Don't worry or fret about this at all—the most important thing is to remain relaxed. If you lose count, start over again at 'one'."

"You should practice this for about ten minutes, once or twice a day. You can do it for more than ten minutes at a time, but it is better not to try it for more than about 25 minutes or so at one sitting. One of the best times is in the morning, after you are fully awake, but before you get busy with other things. It will get the day off to a relaxed, aware start. Another good time is at night, right before you go to bed. Relaxed focusing will help you fall asleep. The more you practice, the easier it will be to relax and to keep your attention on one point."

"Are you ready to try it?" asked Dr. Zood.

"Sure, let's give it a try," Anne replied.

Dr. Zood talked Anne through the process of relaxed focusing. She took three deep breaths, holding each for a count of three, and then exhaling with a sigh. Dr. Zood prompted Anne to relax and to let go of her tension with each out breath. He also asked her to place her hand against her navel to make sure her tummy was relaxed and swelling on the in-breaths. After a few breaths, Dr. Zood asked Anne to bring her attention to the flow of air coming in and out of her nostrils, and to count each exhalation from 'one' to 'ten'. Dr. Zood would periodically remind Anne to let go of all her tension on the out-breath, and to bring her focus back to the flow of air in her nostrils. They worked on this exercise for about ten minutes.

Finally, Dr. Zood asked, "How do you feel now?"



"I feel great," she replied with a sigh. "I feel really relaxed and refreshed."



*Try demonstration 3 in the workbook: relaxed focusing.*

"Good," said Dr. Zood. "Continue to practice relaxed focusing diligently, and you will develop the ability to relax on demand and to bring your attention to a single point. This is what I mean by 'relax into the pain.' At the first sign of pain, or at the first warning signs of a migraine, I want you to bring that relaxed focusing to the site of the pain, or to the warning signal. You will discover a miraculous effect as you keep practicing relaxed focusing."

A miraculous effect was just what Anne had been searching for. She asked, "Besides practicing relaxed focusing, is there anything else I can do to reduce the defensive reflex?"

"I'm glad you asked," Dr. Zood acknowledged. "In addition to relaxed focusing, a good trick to help you pay attention to the pain, and to stop fighting it, is to try to locate the pain exactly. Try also to clarify the type of pain you're experiencing. Some pain feels sharp, other pain feels dull, some pain is hot, some cold, and so on. Most people will notice that the pain changes when they pay attention to it. The pain might even move from one place to another. Some patients notice that the pain behind their eyes moves to the back of their head, or vice versa. The pain also might change in quality. That is, it might change from a hot feeling to an itchy or numb feeling. When this happens you know you are making progress. Sometimes the pain disappears completely.

"Many of my patients tell me that a very strange thing often happens when they try to locate the pain. When they feel a headache coming on, they apply this principle and try to localize the pain exactly. Surprisingly, what they thought was a headache turns out to be a different sensation somewhere else in their body. One patient told me that when he tried to locate his headache pain, he discovered that it was actually a sensation of coldness in his jaw. Another patient discovered that what he thought was the beginning of a headache turned out to be a tightness in his shoulders. In the past, the mere thought of a headache would have created a panic reaction that itself

would have brought on a full-blown headache.”

Anne was intrigued. “That’s remarkable,” she said.

“Yes,” Dr. Zood replied, “Thoughts and ideas are very powerful. Remember how your body reacted when you imagined a lemon? Merely thinking of a lemon affected your body. You can understand how your body would react if you thought you were going to have a headache. The thought of a headache is overwhelming—it alone is enough to create a defensive reflex and a headache. Since people turn their attention away from their sensations at the beginning of a headache, they might never discover that what they assume is the onset of a headache might actually be something else. So always remember, when you have any sign of pain at all, don’t make assumptions. Relax, soften your stomach and keep breathing, and *gently* turn your attention toward the pain. Examine the sensations carefully. Most people find that the sensations of pain are more manageable than the fearful thought of a headache. In fact, our fears are a reaction to thoughts of what *might* happen in the future. Coming back to the present moment and experiencing our *actual sensations* can be a remarkable remedy for fear, because it takes our attention away from our *thoughts* of something frightening.”

Anne could relate to what Dr. Zood was saying. She was very familiar with the feeling of panic she experienced when she thought she was going to have a headache. “Is there something I can do to avoid that panicky feeling?” she asked.

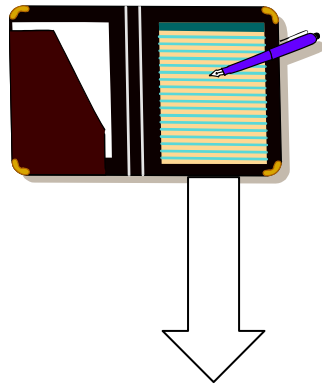
“Yes,” Dr. Zood replied. “You can use the same technique you use with the sensation of pain. The thought of panic is overwhelming. If you come to the present moment and turn your attention to the feelings of panic in your body, they are easier to deal with than thoughts of impending doom. Try to find the feeling of panic in your body. Carefully examine your head, shoulders, chest, and stomach. Relax and focus your attention on the feeling, and stay with it without trying to change it. You will notice that most of the time the feeling will change.”

“Besides relaxed focusing, is there any particular way I should be paying attention to the pain and to the emotions associated with it?” Anne asked.

“When I say to pay attention, it is not like the command you might have heard in school to ‘pay attention’. You don’t have to furrow your brow and put your nose to the grindstone. This is not a test! I just

want you to be present with the pain without trying to escape from it, or to change it in any way. This is an 'effortless attention' in which you simply turn your awareness gently to the pain. Practicing relaxed focusing will help you become familiar with this way of paying attention. "

Anne was amazed that simply observing the pain could make it go away, and she was eager to try the technique for herself. She jotted down some more notes:



7. Paying attention to pain changes it. The location or quality of the pain might change, and it might disappear entirely.
8. Practicing *relaxed focusing* will help in learning how to relax and focus attention on a single point. This is the proper way to pay attention to pain and associated emotions.
9. The next time I feel a headache coming on, I will not try to fight or to escape from the pain. I will relax, accept the pain, surrender to it, focus on it, and *feel* it.
10. I will gently focus my attention on the sensations in my head. I will relax, observe the pain, *feel* the pain, and try to find its exact location and quality.
11. When I feel any of the strong “fight or flight” emotions associated with pain, such as anger, fear, anxiety, or panic, I will treat them exactly the same as the sensations of pain. I will come to the present moment, relax, and try to find the exact location and quality of the feelings in my body. I will just *feel* them without trying to escape from them, fight them, or change them.

## CHAPTER 7: KILL THE REAL ENEMY, NOT THE MESSENGER

“Pain can be a useful messenger, warning us that something is wrong,” Dr. Zood said, “Let’s be careful not to shoot the messenger of bad news—let’s deal with the real enemy. The problem is that pain creates an automatic defensive reflex, so we tend to fight or run away from whatever we think is causing the discomfort. It’s easy to identify the cause of our pain when we put our hand on a hot stove, or when a wild animal is biting us. Headache pain is different—it’s not so easy to identify the cause. It certainly does not work to try to fight or run away from the pain itself. This just makes the pain much worse, because *the pain is not the enemy*. Pain is only the messenger warning us that something else is wrong—the real enemy is whatever is wrong.”

Dr. Zood paused and looked at Anne, who was watching him in expectation that he would tell her who the real enemy was. Dr. Zood resumed, “Suppose you were walking along a path and you suddenly felt a sharp jabbing pain in your arm. When you looked down, you saw you had accidentally brushed against a cactus with very long, sharp thorns, and now the cactus was attached to your arm by the thorns. Is the pain your enemy? No, of course not, the cactus thorns are. The pain is just warning you to do something about the thorns—to avoid running into more, and to remove the ones already in your skin. Or if you were walking along and felt a crushing pain in your leg, and you looked down to see a dog biting you, is the pain your enemy? No, the pain is just warning you to do something about the dog. The pain is your friend, warning you, and motivating you, to do something about the real enemy. *These are good messages—they protect you.*

“The problem with pain is that it is just a warning to do something about a threat—it does not tell you what the threat is. It is up to you to find out. That is why you must look at your headache pain with an open mind to find out what the pain is telling you.”

Anne interrupted, “Well isn’t headache pain always a physical problem? Isn’t the pain telling me I need some medicine? A neurologist just told me that my pain is all in my head, but I can’t believe that. I am sure there is something wrong with me. I guarantee

you, I am not imagining this pain!”

Dr. Zood smiled and joked, “Of course the pain is in your head, that’s why they call it a headache instead of a stomach ache.” Then he continued, “*Yes, the pain is real physical pain, it is not imaginary.* Something started your headache pain by causing a physical, biochemical reaction in your brain. Then your defensive reflex to the initial pain intensified the physical reaction and put you on the spiral of agony. Much of your suffering is because of this spiral. The important question to ask yourself is, ‘What started the pain?’”

Anne was relieved to hear that Dr. Zood did not think the pain was all in her head. She started wondering what *did* start her headache pain. The allergist told her it might be food sensitivities, and her family physician mentioned that it might be stress. As she pondered these ideas, Dr. Zood offered some additional information. “I have an interesting clue to this puzzle of what causes the initial pain, and to what adds more power to the spiral of agony. Let me begin by sharing the fact that researchers have detected few remarkable physical differences between people who suffer severe headaches and those who don’t. There is one striking finding, however—there is often a clear-cut difference in personality. Severe headache sufferers tend to be hardworking, ambitious, and perfectionist. They often don’t like to show negative emotions such as anger or fear. In addition, headache sufferers frequently feel responsible for other people’s welfare, and there is often some underlying resentment for this responsibility.



*Try demonstration 4 in the workbook. It is a test that will tell you how much you correspond with this personality type.*

“My clinical experience confirms this pattern. For example, I had a cluster headache patient a while ago whom I’ll call Alan. Alan was very hard working and responsible. He was caring for his aging mother, and he had a wife and two small children. His mother was demanding of Alan—she wanted him to spend more time with her. She seemed resentful of his family because he spent most of his time with them. He also had to work hard, long overtime hours to make enough money to support his mother and family. If this weren’t enough of a burden, his wife wanted him to spend more time with the family. Alan

wanted to be a good son, a good husband, a good father, and a good employee, but he had trouble meeting all the demands on him. When his wife and mother each asked for more of his time, he felt extremely frustrated, as if he were going to explode. He couldn't understand how other people didn't see his problem, and why they didn't help him by easing their demands on him and his time. He didn't like to display anger—he felt it was not fair of him to be angry with anyone. He also felt guilty that he couldn't make everyone happy. Yet he couldn't dare reveal these true feelings to anyone. He had to push his feelings away and be strong because 'his family depended on him'."

Alan's story sounded painfully familiar to Anne. She could easily understand the difficulty of his position, and she felt sad just listening to Dr. Zood tell the story. She said, "That sounds like a very difficult situation. Alan must have been miserable with all those demands heaped on him, and being unable to communicate how he felt."

"Yes," responded Dr. Zood. "When I saw Alan he was frustrated and depressed. He had paralyzing cluster headaches that kept him from working and from being with either his mother or the rest of his family. The headaches just added to his problems—he felt his whole life was falling apart. I taught Alan *relaxed focusing*, and how to turn his attention toward his headache pain and to surrender to it. Once he worked through his disbelief of my techniques, he practiced relaxed focusing, and he started trying to locate and discern the quality of the pain."

"Did this help him right away, even with all those pressures on him?" Anne asked.

"Not immediately," Dr. Zood replied. "But Alan told me the techniques eventually eliminated most of his headaches. When he first started using the technique, he said the pain would move around in his head and change in quality. At first the pain was behind his eyes, but when he closely examined it, the pain seemed to move down to the region of his jaw. The pain also changed from a burning, stabbing sensation to a dull ache. As he kept observing the pain, it eventually disappeared. He created his own technique to locate the source of the pain. Each of us can develop our own unique means to explore the pain source—the important thing is to bring attention to the pain without being defensive. Alan would imagine that he was a cave explorer, and his entire head was a massive cavern to be explored. He held a powerful flashlight as he searched the inner darkness for the pain site. Once he located the pain in this cavern, he would shine the

light on it and examine it closely. He had no fear, because he realized the pain was the messenger. He continued practicing this technique, putting on his imaginary cave explorer's gear, and after about six weeks he rarely had any more headaches. When an occasional headache did start, he could usually get rid of it before it turned into something serious. He was very thankful and appreciative for this, but he mentioned that he still had rare headaches that would not yield to the technique."

"Well I'm not surprised," Anne said. "It seems like he had so many problems to deal with. That alone would give me a headache. Did you tell him how to solve his problems?"

Dr. Zood let out a good-natured "Hmpf" and said, "I wish I could have solved all his problems for him, but unfortunately I couldn't. I could help Alan solve his problems by himself, though. To solve problems well, you need as much relevant information as you can get, and I think Alan was ignoring some very important information."

"What's that?" Anne asked.

"As I listened to Alan," Dr. Zood replied, "I detected some anger in his voice when he talked about his family situation. When I mentioned this to him, he vehemently denied that he felt any anger. It reminded me of when you tell a person that they seem angry, and they shout back at you that they are not angry. It was clear to me that Alan was angry, but he couldn't express it verbally—he was denying it. *The critical thing is that anger and fear are part of a defensive reflex that can start, maintain, and strengthen the spiral of agony.* This is particularly true if you are trying to escape from, hide, or suppress your emotions, because this just increases your conflict and struggle. Emotions have distinct physiological components. Alan was directing his attention away from his anger because he did not want to see it. Anger did not fit into his image of himself. He wanted to be a kind, loving, understanding person who did not get angry. He also could see that his life was out of control, and he was afraid of what might happen. Since fear didn't fit into his self-image either, he turned his attention away from this emotion, too."

Anne listened attentively. She was thinking to herself that she might be very much like Alan. She started saying, "So what could we," and then paused and corrected herself, "I mean what could *Alan* do to overcome this defensive reflex? Did you teach him how to control his emotions?"



"No, not directly," Dr. Zood said, "That's exactly what he was trying to do himself, and it wasn't working very well!"

Wait a minute, Anne thought, this isn't what I remember hearing from many people I respect. She looked at Dr. Zood and asked for some clarification. "I have a friend who is a member of Alcoholics Anonymous — it completely transformed her life. She told me that AA and other twelve step programs teach that anger and fear are bad, and have to be eliminated, because they can cause you to drink and act crazy. Now you are telling me that suppressing emotions doesn't work. I thought the twelve step programs were very effective."

"Yes, they are," Dr. Zood said calmly. "The twelve step programs attempt to eliminate anger and fear, *but not by suppressing them yourself*. The programs teach you to give up your struggle to a higher power. They stress that you are not capable of dealing with your drinking, substance abuse, or emotional problems by yourself. They also teach you to eliminate the *source* of these emotions by going and making amends with all those people you might have offended. My point is that trying to suppress or struggle with anger and fear *yourself* just increases your defensiveness."

Anne was puzzled. "So what can you do when you have these emotions? If you just go ahead and be angry it won't work because you will generate a defensive reflex. If you try to suppress your emotions it won't work either, because you are fighting yourself and you will have a defensive reflex anyway."

Dr. Zood nodded vigorously to acknowledge this seeming paradox. "Yes, I can see you're catching on. It seems there's no way out, doesn't it?"

Anne nodded, still perplexed. She suspected that Dr. Zood had an answer, but she wondered why he kept her waiting. She asked, "The problem is the defensive reflex, isn't it?"

Dr. Zood explained, "Yes, the problem is the defensive reflex, which is your body's preparation for fighting or fleeing. You can't get rid of the defensive reflex by acting out or feeding your emotions, nor by resisting them or ignoring them."

"What do you mean by 'acting out or feeding' emotions?" Ann asked.

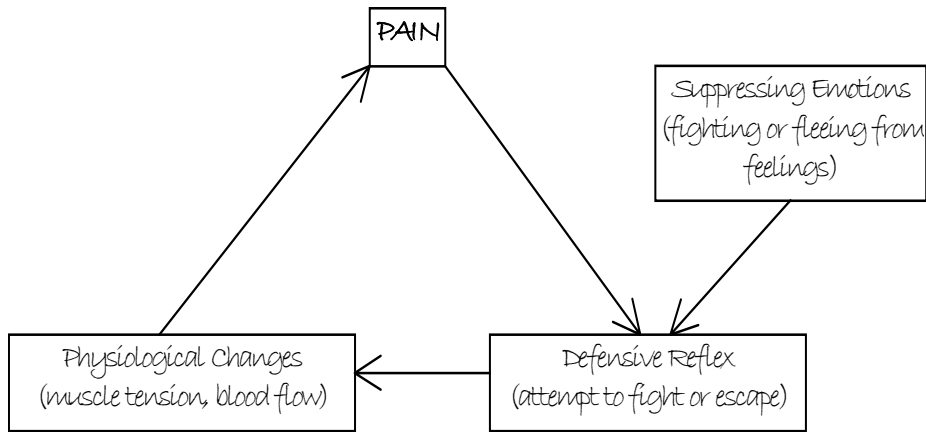
"By 'acting out' emotions I mean outwardly expressing them. By

'feeding' emotions I mean actively doing something to increase them. For instance, suppose you are angry with someone. You can *act out* your anger by assaulting or cursing the person, by breaking things, and so forth. You can *feed* your anger by doing these things, or by thinking of all the reasons you should be angry, focusing on what horrible things the other person has done, and so on. Some people think that acting out and feeding emotions is a good way to get in touch with oneself and one's feelings, and I have no objection to doing it for that reason. All I am saying is that acting out or feeding emotions does not get rid of the defensive reflex."

"I think I see," said Ann. "Do you mean that really *getting into* your anger won't eliminate the defensive reflex?"

"Yes, that is another way of saying it", replied Dr. Zood. "Feeding anger or fear is feeding defensiveness, which cannot eliminate the defensive reflex. On the other hand, resisting your emotions is just more internal fighting, and attempting to ignore or deny your emotions is fleeing from them. These attempts only make the 'fight or flight' defensive reflex stronger. Attempting to suppress or avoid your emotions produces an even worse type of defensive reflex than that created by an external threat—it is as if you are fighting your own body. A related problem is what psychologists call 'alexithymia', which refers to a difficulty in differentiating, identifying, and communicating emotions. People who have alexithymia are much more at risk for a wide variety of body problems and diseases. They even have poorer immune system functioning. This is not too surprising when you consider the amount of energy it takes to divert attention away from the body, and in effect to fight the body's own natural processes. The body resists—it appears as though the body attempts to communicate emotions through physical symptoms.

"Here, let me show you." Dr. Zood drew some more on his sketch of the "Spiral of Agony".



Anne watched Dr. Zood draw the new box that showed how attempting to suppress emotions also caused a type of defensive reflex. "I see," she said. "So trying to suppress emotions won't work to get rid of the defensive reflex, either. What can we do, then?"

Dr. Zood asked, "If you were being defensive and you did not want to, what would you do?"

Anne thought that over for a while. Then she said, "Well, I suppose you could just decide not to be defensive."

"That's very good, Anne," Dr. Zood approved. "The solution is to get rid of the defensive reflex itself, by *making a conscious decision to stop fighting, stop escaping, and stop defending yourself*. This wouldn't be a good idea if you were facing a wild animal, but that's not the enemy you are dealing with here. The enemy here is defensiveness itself. Your conscious decision to stop being defensive will help you become aware of your defensiveness when it arises, so you can let go of it and not feed it. As you practice this over time, you will see the benefits in pain relief as well as in other aspects of your life, and you will automatically stop being defensive."

Dr. Zood paused to let that idea settle in for a moment. At first Anne felt proud because she had figured it out and gotten the answer right. But then something hit like a thunderbolt—it all fit together and made sense. Defensive attitudes, anger, fear, fighting, escaping, anxiety, and all the associated negative emotions and thoughts create a defensive reflex in the body that generates and intensifies physical pain. She was beginning to understand how Dr. Zood was able to help so many people. Several minutes passed while she sat motionless,

digesting her newfound discovery.

Dr. Zood sat quietly, watching her mull over her new understanding. After she seemed to regain her composure, he elaborated, "*One way to stop fighting and stop defending yourself is to investigate your emotions. With an open mind, ask yourself if you are angry, guilty, fearful or anxious. An attitude of open inquiry is incompatible with fighting and defensiveness.* For example, when you might feel anger, opening to and examining the emotion and the feelings in your body will minimize the defensive reflex. I told Alan that if examining the pain itself did not relieve his headaches, then he should examine his emotions. He should ask himself if he was angry or anxious, frustrated or afraid. I asked him to *search for emotions or related feelings* in his body, such as a knot in his stomach. If he sensed any of these feelings, I asked him to use relaxed focusing and to pay close attention to the feelings. He was to try to figure out exactly what he was feeling, and where the feelings were coming from. Was he feeling anger, anxiety, guilt, fear, sadness, or what? I asked him to carefully, gently investigate the emotion and feelings *without trying to change anything*. It's extremely important just to feel the emotions without trying to fight or escape from them. This is the same principle as observing and feeling the sensation of pain without trying to fight or escape. You must open yourself to the sensation and to the emotion—feel it, locate it, taste it, see it, and step into it."

Anne asked, "Is it important to give your emotions a name, such as 'anger', or 'fear'?"

"The most important thing is to *investigate* your emotions," replied Dr. Zood. "The name you give to what you are feeling is not nearly as important as the *searching* for a name. Normally, when we give something a label, we stop looking at it. People will say, 'Oh, I feel angry,' and then stop looking at how they are feeling. You must remember to keep looking and keep feeling. "

Anne nodded imperceptibly. "Why is this investigation and searching supposed to work?" she asked.

Dr. Zood answered, "There are several reasons why this technique works. First, an open-minded attitude of inquiry is the opposite of defensiveness. Second, both anger and fear are emotions associated with non-acceptance—you don't like what is happening or what you think will happen in the future. Accepting and staying with your feelings is the opposite of this. Finally, we get used to or *habituate* to things that we stay with—their effect on us goes away. For

example, you are not normally aware of the feeling of the watch on your arm because it is just there—you are not fighting it or trying to change it.”

Anne asked, “So the key is just to stay with the emotion without trying to escape?”

“Yes, exactly,” Dr. Zood replied. “You must also be aware of some of the common ways people try to escape from feeling emotions, so you can recognize when you are doing that. *Denial* is a very common way. In denial, the person simply denies that they are feeling the emotion. They have learned to turn their attention away from their body sensations and any other cues associated with emotion, just as Alan did. *Distraction* is another way people avoid feeling their emotions. People can distract themselves from their feelings by escaping into activities, such as sports, work, overeating, or other compulsive behaviors. People can also distract themselves by engaging in fantasies about such things as love affairs or career goals, or by watching TV, and so on. All these activities take us away from paying attention to our emotions, taking responsibility for them, and feeling them.”



*Try demonstration 5 in the workbook: how you deal with emotions*

“So if I can stay with my emotions without trying to escape, they will change all by themselves?” asked Anne.

“Yes, this is something you can try, and experience it for yourself,” Dr. Zood replied, “Relaxed focusing and paying attention to emotions and related bodily sensations has the same effect as paying attention to the sensation of pain—it might change or eliminate the emotions. *The main point is that in the long run, keeping an open, non-defensive, exploring mind will eliminate the defensive reflex and the pain.* At first Alan was skeptical. He had a hard time looking for anger or fear, because he was taught and came to believe that ‘good people’ should not feel anger, and ‘strong men’ should not feel fear. He had been taught that emotions were an enemy that should be suppressed. I explained to him that emotions have the same function as physical

pain—they are only messengers to let you know that something else is wrong. You should not kill the messenger—you should pay attention so that you can discover the real problem.”

Anne smiled knowingly. “I get it now. It’s sort of like your body has a natural intelligence, and it expresses that intelligence through emotion.”

“That’s a good way to put it,” Dr. Zood said, pleased that Anne was catching on so quickly. “It’s okay, normal, healthy, and good to feel anger and fear. It’s part of being human to feel these emotions because they serve a useful function—they tell you when something is wrong. They serve to protect you. As I told Alan, the people most likely to deny their anger and fear are the ones most likely to have some kind of physical pain, such as headache or backache. The cure for this cause of headache is to stop being ‘ignorant’ about your body, that is, stop ignoring your body’s sensations and emotions. Instead, *come to your senses* and start searching for emotions and related bodily sensations. Since Alan was the sort of person who was not in touch with his emotions, I told him to pay attention to the feelings in his stomach, chest, throat, shoulders, and head for clues. When he detected any feeling, for example tightness in his chest, he was simply to stay with the feeling without trying to change it. Whenever he felt any discomfort at all, he was to check his body to see what sensations he had, and just be with the feelings. Once he got more in touch with his body, he would be more in touch with his emotions. I told him not to take my word for it, but to investigate it for himself.

“I also reminded Alan that there was a difference between *feeling* an emotion and *acting it out*. That is, he could experience the sensations of the emotion in his body without expressing his feeling to anyone else, or without acting on the emotion. For example, when he felt anger he could simply feel the sensations in his body and stay with them, without necessarily acting angry or telling anyone about it. Many psychotherapists teach that the best way to handle emotions is not to suppress them, but to express them. This makes sense, but many people misinterpret the message. They end up acting out or feeding their emotions, rather than *feeling them without trying to change them*, which is what I want you to do. For example, a person might feel angry toward someone else, and then start feeding the anger by focusing on all the bad things the other person ever did, why everyone should hate such a miserable loser, and about how they should be brought to justice. Then they might express their anger to the other person. The other person might start defending himself, and

the angry person might raise their voice and start expressing more and more anger. The anger then escalates out of control. This is definitely *not* what I am asking you to do. The crucial thing is to tune into the sensations in your body, and stay with them. It is important to express your feelings in an appropriate manner, but that's not the point I am making right now. The point is to tune into the sensations in your body, and feel them and stay with them without trying to change them."

"So are you saying that you should *feel* emotions, not *fight* or *feed* them?" Anne asked.

"Yes, very well put, Anne. *Feel emotions. Don't fight them, and don't feed them.*" Dr. Zood was extremely pleased that Anne had summarized the principle so well, in her own words. He made a point to remember her statement, jotting it down in his notebook before he continued his story. "Alan went away and tried these techniques for about a month. He then came back and told me that they worked wonderfully. He would gently turn his attention to any pain as soon as it started, without resisting it, and then he would search for emotions or any bodily signs of emotions. This combination of attention to sensations and emotions ended all his serious headaches. He occasionally still had the beginning of a headache, but by paying attention to the sensation of the pain, and to the sensations and emotions in his body, the headaches usually ended quickly.

"Headache sufferers typically want to be in control—control of their own emotions, situations, and other people. Ironically, headache pain is one thing they cannot control. Attempts to control the pain make it worse. Pain is a powerful force that demands your surrender. You must understand that the way out of the pain is to stop trying to control it. Stop trying to control your feelings and emotions, and gently acknowledge them without trying to change them."

Anne was fascinated. She asked, "It almost sounds as if there are two different parts of yourself, doesn't it? I remember reading something, somewhere, about an 'emotional self' and a 'rational self', but I forget exactly."

"Right," Dr. Zood said. "An idea that helps people better understand this process is to think of yourself as two different 'selves'—a 'thinking self', and a 'feeling self'. The 'thinking self' is the verbal part of you, that little voice in your head that's constantly thinking and chattering about everything. It's the part of you that solves problems. Some psychologists like to associate the 'thinking self' primarily with the

left side of the brain. On the other hand, the 'feeling self' is the feeling, emotional, intuitive part of you. This is the part that feels happy, sad, angry, or fearful. Some psychologists like to associate the 'feeling self' with the right side of the brain.

"When we were little children, before we learned that we 'should' feel certain ways and 'should not' feel other ways, the thinking self and the feeling self were in harmony. When we felt anger, we said to ourselves 'I am angry'. When we felt scared, we said to ourselves 'I am scared'. Later on, after we learned that we should not have certain emotions, something might have happened that made us angry, but we said to ourselves, 'I am not angry'. So the 'feeling self' was feeling anger, but the 'thinking self' was not acknowledging the anger. Now we have a 'war of the selves' going on. Many adults are living in this war zone, suffering all the pains of war. Most adults turn their attention to the 'thinking self' and identify with the little voice in their head. They turn attention away from the 'feeling self', and attempt to suppress it.

"The 'feeling self' is not so easily suppressed, though. It attempts to express itself by sneaking past the gates imposed by the 'thinking self'. If you watch a person's body language, posture, breathing, and tone of voice, you can often detect signs of the 'feeling self' expressing emotions. For example, on the surface a person might appear to be very calm, but they might have an angry tone of voice while they verbally deny their anger, like Alan for instance. Or you might see a nervous twitch, or their foot tapping when they talked about their family situation in loving terms. This conflict between the thinking and feeling selves causes all sorts of problems, including the defensive reflex and physical pain."

Dr. Zood stood up and walked over to his bookcase. He pulled a book off the shelf and brought it back to Anne so she could see the cover. "Here is something you might find interesting," he said. "This cover photo is of a famous psychologist named B.F. Skinner. He is known for emphasizing the study of behavior, and denying the importance of emotions. Take a look at his face and tell me what you think."

Anne looked at the face for a moment, and then said, "He has a very wry looking smile, almost like a smirk."

"Very observant," Dr. Zood said. "Now look at this." He took a piece of paper and covered up one side of Skinner's face.



Anne was surprised at what she saw. "That's amazing. He looks *really* angry."

Dr. Zood moved the piece of paper over to uncover the first side of Skinner's face and to cover up the other side.

Anne watched Skinner's expression change completely. "On that side he looks really happy," she said, amazed by the transformation.

"Interesting, isn't it?" asked Dr. Zood, who then went on to explain. "The right side of the brain controls the left side of the face. For most right handed people we may associate the right side of the brain with the 'feeling self'. Thus the 'feeling self' is reflected in the left side of the face. Notice that the left side of Skinner's face, that is *his* left, looks very angry. This is not terribly surprising for a person who denies that feelings are important. Likewise, the right side of the face often reflects the 'thinking self', and in Skinner's face we can see that he is thinking he ought to smile.



*B.F. Skinner — try covering up the left side of his face, and then the right side of his face. What do you see?*



*Try demonstration 6 in the workbook: sides of the face*

Anne nodded her understanding and said, "I can see what you mean by the war between the feeling and the thinking self. This man is obviously divided along those lines. Don't you think it would be a good idea if people made peace between the two selves?"

"Yes, I do," Dr. Zood said. "It's not good to live in a war zone, with conflict and misunderstanding going on all around. One way to reduce the conflict between the 'thinking self' and the 'feeling self' is to promote communication and understanding between them. Communications experts talk about the 'Three A' principles of Acknowledgment, Appreciation, and Acceptance."

"Oh, I know about those." Anne interjected. "I use them a lot in my business. When dealing with difficult clients, you first want to *acknowledge* their position, usually by restating it. For example, if a client states that a product is overpriced, you should acknowledge them by saying that you understand that they think the product is overpriced. This makes sure they know that you heard them, and you validate their experience by agreeing that they had it. Then you should *appreciate* their position by finding something good about it, such as saying that many people share that position. You then *accept* their position by not blaming them or shaming them for having it. Finally, you are free to point out your position, or some other alternatives. By using acknowledgment, appreciation, and acceptance, you can avoid much unnecessary misunderstanding and conflict. If you present your position before you *acknowledge* the other person's position, it can lead to defensiveness."

Dr. Zood acknowledged Anne and said, "Yes, I can see you know all about the 'Three A' principles. Now let's apply them to your feelings. Can you do that?"

Anne stared at the floor for a few seconds while she thought hard. Then she turned back to Dr. Zood and said, "Well, let me try. First you *acknowledge your feelings* by saying to yourself that you feel them. For example, you say 'I feel angry' when you have feelings of anger. Next, you *appreciate your feelings* by finding what's good in

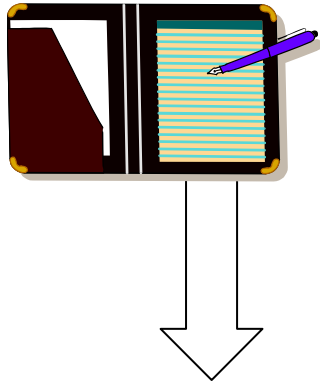
them. For example, you could say that your anger is telling you that there is something happening that you would like to change. Finally, you *accept your feelings* by not judging them as wrong."

"Sounds good to me," replied Dr. Zood. "By using the 'Three A' principles, you avoid fighting with yourself, and you promote understanding. You acknowledge that you have emotions, you see what is good about them, and by accepting them you don't fight them. This promotes inner harmony and peace, and avoids many of the conflicts that arise when we declare internal war between the selves. Both the 'thinking self' and the 'feeling self' are part of our entire selves, and we live more harmoniously when there is internal communication, understanding, and peace."



*Try demonstration #7 in the workbook: the AAA principles*

Anne smiled hopefully—it all made sense. For the first time she had confidence that she too could end her headaches. She jotted down some more notes:



12. Fighting pain, emotions, and other sensations creates *defensiveness*, which maintains and intensifies pain.
13. When paying attention to headache pain does not help, then pay attention to your emotions. Ask yourself if you are feeling anger, fear, or anxiety. Keep an open mind, and let yourself *feel* the emotion by focusing on the associated sensations in your body. Beware of avoiding the feeling by denial or distraction.
14. Pay attention to the sensations of the emotion in your body, without trying to change them. Do not try to fight or to escape from the sensations. Attempt to clarify what emotion you are feeling, and *acknowledge it* by stating it to yourself. Pay attention to the feelings in your stomach, chest, throat, shoulders, head and extremities for clues. The body knows and will give answers.
15. Feeling an emotion and the related body sensations does not mean acting out the emotion. Don't fight and don't feed emotions.

## CHAPTER 8: CHOOSING PAIN

Anne was curious about what happened with Alan's family situation. She asked, "After Alan got over his headaches, what happened with all those other problems he had?"

"Interesting you should ask," Dr. Zood replied. "By looking for his emotions, he discovered that much of the time he felt anger. He also discovered he felt anger and resentment because it seemed to him that his family members were making unreasonable demands on him. He knew he could no longer ignore his emotions because that would lead to pain. He saw he had a choice." Dr. Zood paused to give Anne a chance to complete his train of thought.

Anne thought for a few moments and spoke. "I think he saw that he could choose either to have headache pain, or to feel all those emotions he disliked. By trying to fight with or escape from his emotions, he was creating a defensive reflex. The defensive reflex gave rise to all sorts of physiological reactions that create headache pain." She felt confident she understood Alan's situation, but she tested herself by asking, "How am I doing?"

"You are doing great!" Dr. Zood smiled. "The physiological reactions that result from the defensive reflex are the major cause of pain. Now that Alan could see he had a choice, he was no longer a victim of pain. He understood that he was unwittingly choosing to have headache pain by not paying attention to his feelings. All along, the pain was telling him that something was wrong, but he was not interpreting the message correctly because he was ignoring his feelings. Just as he had thought that pain was the enemy, he also had thought that feelings were his enemy. If he had paid attention to his feelings, they would have told him the problem was somewhere else."

"With his family relationships?" asked Anne.

"That was one part of the problem. The other part of the problem was with his self-image. He thought of himself as a kind and understanding person who never got angry. He had to defend that self-image against the contradicting evidence of his feelings. This created another defensive reflex that added to his pain. When he started feeling his emotions, he realized that he did get angry, just like other healthy people. This was a hard thing to realize, and it took a

few months of searching his feelings before he finally changed his self-image. I had to assure him repeatedly that everyone feels anger at times, and that it's better to acknowledge these feelings than to bury them.

"After looking into himself carefully, Alan eventually discovered that he was afraid of his anger. He was afraid he would blow up and hurt someone. Since he was not accustomed to feeling anger, he needed to learn ways of coping with it and using the information it was giving him. His anger was telling him that something was wrong, and he wanted to use this information to help those around him. To do this, he had to communicate his feelings to others in a helpful, non-abusive, non-defensive way. I gave him several good books on communication and assertiveness, and I showed him some simple ways of communicating anger in a non-threatening, non-blaming way. I showed him the advantages of making 'I' statements, rather than 'you' statements."

Anne joined in with, "I know about those. Rather than saying 'You make me angry when you leave your clothes on the floor', you can say 'I feel angry when you leave your clothes on the floor'. I use that technique all the time with my kids. When you say 'You make me angry' you blame the other person for your anger. But if you say 'I feel angry' there is not that element of blame—you are taking responsibility for your own feelings."

Dr. Zood was obviously impressed. "I see you have some excellent communications skills," he said. "That's very good. It's important to be able to communicate with other people without arousing resistance. So I suspect you also know about the technique of communicating a similar but less frustrating emotion, such as substituting 'frustration' for 'anger'?"

Anne thought for a second and said, "I am not sure about that one. Please tell me about it."

"It's the same idea," Dr. Zood said. For example, a less threatening way to say you are angry is to communicate that you are experiencing a very similar but less threatening emotion, such as frustration. So rather than saying 'I feel angry', you could say 'I feel frustrated'. Alan learned to say 'I feel frustrated when you make these difficult demands on me,' rather than 'I feel angry,' or even worse, 'You make me angry', which puts the blame on the other person. When he first tried this with his mother she told him that he should not feel frustrated. He quickly learned to tell her that regardless of whether

he *should* feel frustrated, he *did* feel frustrated. Rather than her judgments, he would appreciate her help in working out the problems that led to his frustration and subsequent headaches. Sometimes when he disclosed his feelings, others would give him new information that changed his feelings. Once he told his mother that he felt frustrated when she made such difficult demands on him, and she told him that her doctor had just told her she had only about three months to live. He forgot his other problems to go spend his mother's last days with her."

"Oh my," Anne said, "This must have been a really tough time for him."

Dr. Zood replied, "It was indeed a very difficult time of adjustment for Alan and his family, even though he was learning to deal with his emotions more effectively. He learned that his problem was not his feelings, but how he had been dealing with them. His parents taught him to suppress his emotions, which he faithfully tried to do for years. Although he always tried to suppress his feelings, sometimes they built to explosive proportions, and he 'lost it' and acted erratically and dangerously. He finally learned to deal with feelings more appropriately, by noticing them when they arose, and expressing them quickly so that people could help him solve the real problems. He also learned that he could not meet everyone's demands on him—attempting to do so would just make him sick and unable to help anyone, including himself. He realized that his health and happiness were important too, because if he was not feeling well he could not help others. "

Anne remarked, "It seems like Alan had to learn to accept his humanity, rather than continuing to think of himself as Superman or something."

"That's right," Dr. Zood replied, "Alan learned to accept his limitations. He came to see his attempt to control everything as incredibly arrogant. After all, the world had gotten along fine before he was born, and it would get along fine after he was gone, so what was the big deal? Why was he trying to control everything, and experiencing frustration when he couldn't? He gave up trying to control everything, and he lived with much more peace just by accepting some things the way they are. He also learned to take some time for himself, simply to relax or to have fun without feeling guilty. He started a regular exercise program that included some activities he enjoyed in his youth, such as basketball. He also saw how other people

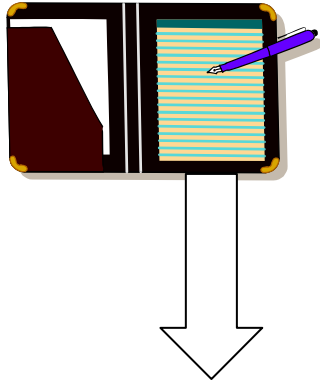
would try to manipulate him by calling him 'selfish' when he did what *he* wanted rather than what *they* wanted. He saw that it was not worth trying to defend his self-image of 'unselfish'. Defensiveness took too much of a toll. He finally understood that his self-image was only an idea—the idea he had of himself. He would rather minimize his pain than defend an idea. Others could, and would, think what they wanted. Everything worked out just fine in the end. He had no more headache pain."

This captured Anne's attention—ending her headache pain was now her prime concern. "No more headache pain, that's wonderful. And all this came about when Alan learned to stop fighting?"

"That's right," replied Dr. Zood. "First, Alan learned to stop fighting his pain. Second, he learned to stop fighting his emotions. Alan had a problem with feeling anger and expressing it appropriately, so that it benefited those around him. By learning to accept his feelings and to express them in a non-threatening way, eventually he was able to enlist the help of others in solving their mutual problems. Other people have problems expressing fear. I have had many male patients who have the 'macho' attitude that it's inappropriate for men to express fear. Defending this attitude causes much pain. I often have to tell patients that they are not going to like what I have to tell them. I tell them that they must choose between pain, and changing their attitudes about what is important to them. Not everyone is willing to listen to what I have to say. I am glad that the ones who do listen find an end to their pain. I wish the best for the ones I no longer hear from."

Anne added to her list of notes:





- 16. Feeling emotions is a normal and essential part of being human.**
- 17. It is important to pay attention to your feelings so that when you make decisions, you can make a choice that does not create or maintain pain.**

## CHAPTER 9: THE THREE SKILLFUL MEANS

Dr. Zood leaned over to his desk, took a sheet of paper from a folder, and handed it to Anne. "I want to give you the Three Skillful Means to pain relief. These summarize the two main principles we have already discussed, and add another. Shall we go over the first one?"

Anne looked at the paper and saw three paragraphs printed in large type. She read the first paragraph aloud:

**SKILLFUL MEANS #1: DO NOT RESIST PAIN: Instead, investigate and explore it. Never fight or attempt to escape from pain. Give in to it—surrender completely. *Feel* the sensation of the pain—let it sink in. Relax and gently turn your attention toward the pain, and try to locate it. Try to describe how it feels. *Feel* the pain without trying to change it.**

When Anne looked up from reading, Dr. Zood spoke. "Do you ever watch trees in the wind? Limber, supple branches such as willow branches bend in the breeze; they yield to the wind and hardly ever break. Old, hard, brittle branches do not bend. Strong winds break even large sturdy trees if they are unyielding. To overcome pain, be like the willow—give in, do not resist."

This reminded Anne of some of her experiences with negotiation. Anne was an experienced negotiator, who learned her considerable skills through training and practice. Though people now considered her to be an excellent negotiator, she remembered when she was a beginner that she would try to meet people head-on. When they would pose an objection, she would immediately fend them off by telling them how they were wrong. Unfortunately, this usually intensified the argument, and often made the other person furious and unyielding. The more she resisted the other person's position, the stronger the person fought back. This was before she learned the three "A" principles of Acknowledgment, Appreciation, and Acceptance. She later learned through experience that negotiation proceeded more smoothly if she first *acknowledged* the other person's position and restated it, in order to clarify it and to make certain she understood it. Acknowledging the other person's position made negotiation much more friendly and calm. This allowed her to present her position with

much less resistance from the other party. No wonder it makes the pain worse if you fight it, she thought. It's like pushing hard on a person. They just dig their heels in and push back harder. Anne now understood that her pain was like a person trying to tell her something—she should pay attention, or else the pain would speak louder. Anne smiled with understanding, and read aloud the second paragraph:

**SKILLFUL MEANS #2: DO NOT RESIST EMOTIONS: Instead, investigate and explore them. Never fight or attempt to escape from emotions. Search your body for sensations associated with emotions. *Feel* the sensations without trying to change them. Relax and gently turn your attention toward the body sensations, and try to identify them. Ask yourself if you are angry, fearful, anxious or guilty.**

When Anne was done reading, Dr. Zood spoke again. "You must have an open mind to find the solution to your problem of pain. If you make assumptions about how you are feeling, or how you *should* be feeling, then you are thinking, not feeling. If you hear yourself saying 'I think I feel so and so,' or 'I ought to be feeling such and such,' then you are thinking. This is your cue to stop thinking, and to turn your attention toward your body and to start feeling. If you don't feel anything then start searching. Some people find it much easier to search their body for specific feelings rather than to look for emotions themselves. Scan your stomach, chest, throat, shoulders, and head for feelings. Anytime you detect a feeling, such as tightness in your chest, just stay with the feeling without trying to change it. Investigate with the goal of finding out what you are feeling. The act of investigating and exploring makes you open. Investigating and exploring eliminate the defensive reflex and relieve pain.

"It's easy to forget that our body is a miraculous and wonderful thing that automatically performs countless functions without our mental involvement. Our hearts beat, we digest our food, and we breathe without any conscious effort. These automatic functions have allowed us to survive and develop over thousands of years. Emotions are a part of the body's natural function to help us cope with life. In our modern society we are often taught that emotions are bad and should not be expressed or felt—they should be suppressed instead. But there is a big difference between feeling an emotion and acting

on it. We must remember that while it is important to inhibit our reactions to some emotions, such as slapping or punching someone in the face when we feel anger, the emotion itself is good, natural, and helps us survive. The emotion is part of you. Trying to suppress your emotions is like trying to stop breathing—it doesn't work. The paradoxical thing is that once we accept our emotions and stop fighting them, they become much tamer and easier to live with. Anger and other emotions will flare briefly and then subside quickly when we acknowledge them and look for their causes.

Anne thought back to when she had some intense emotional distress. Her job once involved public speaking in front of large groups of people. She prepared her presentation well in advance, but she was nearly paralyzed by fear when she stood up in front of a group to speak. She remembered trying to divert her attention away from her fear, but to no avail. The more she tried to ignore her fear, the more distracted she became. In the middle of a sentence she forgot what she was trying to say, which caused a panic reaction that distracted her even more. Once she even had to walk off the stage because she was too frightened to speak. She remembered this as the most embarrassing moment in her life. After that talk a friend gave her some advice. Her friend told her to get up in front of the audience, feel her fear, look a few people in the eye, and start by admitting that this was a very frightening experience. She was reluctant to try this at first because she did not want to admit a weakness. Finally she did try it. After she publicly acknowledged her fear she noticed she had nothing to hide. She could be afraid and still continue her presentation. After a short time she forgot her fear, and soon she was giving one of the best presentations of her life. Giving up her pretense of "cool, calm, and collected" paid off by allowing her to stop defending an image, and to devote her attention to giving the lecture. After a while she truly became cool, calm, and collected.

"These first two principles seem to be about awareness and acceptance," Anne said. "The first principle says to be aware of your pain and accept it rather than fight it. The second principle says to be aware of your emotions and accept them rather than fight them."

"That's right," Dr. Zood said, "the key is to be aware of your sensations and emotions without trying to control them. Just *let them be*. This is 'acceptance'. In this context acceptance does not mean actively seeking any sensation or emotion, it simply means not fighting or rejecting them. Awareness implies acceptance because you cannot be fully aware of something you do not accept—you will fight or turn

your attention away from it. Turning your attention away is just another way of fleeing. A different way of saying this, is that when you don't accept something it causes a 'fight or flight' defensive reflex, and thus pain. Awareness and acceptance are very important in preventing pain. Just think about it—you can see that much of the pain in our lives is because we do not accept things as they are—we try to change them. This can lead to anger, anxiety, and frustration because we cannot control everything. Trying to control emotions is particularly difficult, and often leads to pain. Once you understand this, you can see that frequently we have the choice of awareness and acceptance, or pain. If we are not aware that we have a choice, we become victims of circumstance, and victims of pain. We are constantly trying to control the world and ourselves, fighting them or fleeing from them, and experiencing all the turmoil that goes with the fact that we are out of control. When we try to control the uncontrollable we will feel angry or anxious, inadequate and guilty, and we will hurt."

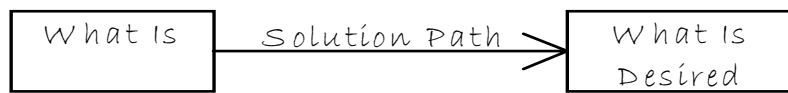
Most of this made sense to Anne, but one thing didn't settle well with her. She stopped Dr. Zood and said, "Wait a minute. Are you saying that we should stop trying to change the world? All you have to do is look at the news to see what bad shape things are in. What would happen if we stopped trying to make things better?"

Dr. Zood looked straight into Anne's eyes and said, "Ah, you think I am telling you to stop trying to change the world, don't you?" He paused and a grin spread across his face. After Anne and Dr. Zood laughed out loud at this pointed acknowledgement, Dr. Zood said, "I am not trying to tell people always to accept everything the way it is. I am only saying that we can choose to try to change some things and not others, and that some problems are best solved by awareness, acceptance, and understanding, particularly problems involving our feelings."

This helped, but Anne was still unclear about what Dr. Zood was trying to convey. "I'm still not sure I understand what you are saying. Can you explain that some more, or give me some examples?" she asked.

"Sure", Dr. Zood replied, "Problem solving experts define a problem this way: 'what is' is different from 'what is desired'. The solution to a problem involves getting from 'what is' to 'what is desired'. The experts call the way to get from 'what is' to 'what is desired' the 'solution path'." Dr. Zood made a new sketch for Anne:

## Definition of a Problem



“For example, suppose you go into the kitchen and notice there are crumbs on the counter, and you want no crumbs on the counter. This is a problem, because ‘what is’ is a crumbly counter, and ‘what is desired’ is a crumb free counter. This problem is easy to solve, the ‘solution path’ is that you simply clean off the crumbs, so that ‘what is’ is now the same as ‘what is desired’. But what if the problem was that ‘what is’ is that you are angry, and ‘what is desired’ is that you are not angry? This is a much more difficult problem, because trying to suppress your anger can make it worse. You are angry in the first place because there is another problem—perhaps you are trying to get your husband to understand your pain, and he is showing no signs of comprehension. You are fighting to make ‘what is’—your husband not understanding your pain—into ‘what is desired’—your husband understanding. Attempting to fight your anger is just more fighting—you are fighting your reaction to the original problem. This can intensify your anger and take you away from solving the original problem of making your husband understand. You can see how counterproductive this is. Here we have another ‘spiral of agony’.

Now Anne understood. She said “aha” to herself as she remembered an instance when she was desperately trying to control her anger and frustration with a particularly irritating client. Her anger just kept getting worse, and she finally had to storm out of the room to keep from exploding in the client’s face. “Oh,” she said with total comprehension, “I know that one. Dealing with emotions is different from dealing with crumbs. You don’t really *do* anything about the anger other than to accept it and *acknowledge* it, just as you would acknowledge an angry client. Is that what you are trying to say?”

“That’s right,” Dr. Zood answered, “the key to dealing with anger is the same as the key to dealing with the sensation of pain. You gently turn your attention toward the anger and observe it. Feel the anger—feel the sensations in your body—do not resist them or try to escape from them. You will notice that the feelings change—they may even disappear. You must not do this with the intention of changing your feelings, as this would be trying to control them. By accepting the

feelings and observing them, you end the fighting and the defensive reflex. Just be there and live the feeling, then you can go on to solve the real problem.



*Try demonstration 8 in the workbook: the nature of problems*

"Of course, there are still other problems that get solved by seeing that 'what is desired' is not really what you thought it was, once you see what the solution entails. I once entertained the notion of participating in the Hawaii Ironman Triathlon. This is an incredible event that requires a 2.4-mile ocean swim, followed by a 112-mile bike ride, and then a 26.2-mile run. At the time, 'what is' was that I was not in good enough physical condition to do this extremely grueling event, and 'what is desired' was to be in good enough shape to do it. After training for a few weeks I discovered that the goal required hard physical training for several hours a day, and I realized that I could put those hours to better use elsewhere. So I changed my idea of 'what is desired'. I just wanted to be healthy and in good enough shape to enjoy my daily activities. Thus the 'problem' was solved."

Anne understood. She wondered how anyone could have enough time to train for the Ironman Triathlon and carry on a business at the same time. As she sat back to let Dr. Zood's words consolidate, she noticed that he looked in great shape even though he had not reached his original goal of participating in the Ironman. After a few moments, she read aloud the third paragraph on the page:

**SKILLFUL MEANS #3: INVESTIGATE WHAT YOU ARE DEFENDING, OR WHAT YOU ARE FIGHTING. Fighting and defensiveness lead to pain. An attitude of open investigation is incompatible with defensiveness. To stop pain, start observing the way things are. Carefully observe your body for feelings of defensiveness or fighting, and carefully observe your mind for thoughts of defensiveness or fighting. Ask yourself, "What am I truly defending?" and "What am I really fighting, and why?"**

When Anne looked up, Dr. Zood explained, "Ending pain is a matter of ending fighting and defensiveness. It's not surprising that the typical headache sufferer is frequently a meticulous, responsible 'people pleaser' who tries to keep everything under control. This sort of person wants everything to be a certain way, just like most of us do. But unfortunately, if we insist on everything being exactly the way we want it, we can end up with a lot of defensiveness. This attitude or personality type can lead to frustration and anger when things do not go as desired, and to anxiety or fear that things will not go well in the future. To make things worse, the headache sufferer often turns attention away from emotions that don't fit into their self-image. They can't control their emotions so they *ignore* them or *rationalize* them. *Rationalization* is focusing on some external reason why you should be having the emotion, rather than simply accepting the emotion as it is, without fighting it. It is another way of defending yourself. Rationalization often shows up as blame, such as when a person says someone 'made me angry', or when a person justifies their emotions, such as when they say 'I am angry because you have ruined my life.' I remember listening to a man who was putting down all women because a particular woman refused a date with him. Instead of simply feeling the rejection, he focused on a reason why he *should* be angry with women.

"In short, people defend what they think 'should be' from the reality of 'what is' in the world. They also defend what they think *they* 'should be'—happy and tranquil—from the reality of their anger and anxiety. The unfortunate headache sufferer is fighting a battle on two fronts—there is a war with the outside world, and there is a war with the inner world of emotions. As we know, this pattern can cause pain, and can lead the sufferer to feel like a helpless, tormented victim of circumstance. On both fronts, the fighting and defensiveness *are* pain. Fighting and defensiveness are themselves painful, and they lead to a defensive reflex that increases the physical sensation of pain, and puts a person on the spiral of agony."

Anne was listening intently as she heard Dr. Zood describe herself. Yes, she wanted things at home to be different. She wanted her children to be happy and perfect, and she wanted everything in her home to be perfect. She wanted her husband and family to understand her problems and to appreciate her efforts, she wanted to have a successful career, and she wanted to be happy and loving and never upset. Abruptly her thoughts shifted to what had happened just before her last migraine attack. She remembered that she was getting ready to meet an important client, and she was running late because



phone calls from other important clients were coming in, she was trying to do the laundry, and she was trying to plan a birthday party for one of her children. Already she could see that she did not have enough time left to plan her client meeting as well as she wanted. Then her husband walked into the room and asked her what she would like to do for fun that weekend. This was just *too* much. She felt so responsible for everyone's happiness, and she didn't want to disappoint them. As she sat in Dr. Zood's office thinking about this, she could feel her neck muscles tense, and her stomach knot tightly. A feeling of despair overcame her. How could she possibly satisfy everyone to her expected level of perfection and feel good about doing so? It all seemed so impossible.

Dr. Zood noticed her glum look and asked, "What are you feeling right now, Anne?"

Anne looked up and paused before she attempted to answer. She said, "I want to make everyone happy."

Dr. Zood opened his palms toward her as if to share an important point. "That's a thought," he said, "not a feeling. I am asking for feelings, for emotions. How does your body feel? What emotion are you experiencing? Look for a feeling like anger, anxiety, guilt, sadness, and so forth. Don't think about your feelings, *feel* them."

Anne stopped and scanned her body and mind to make sure she gave the right answer. She carefully examined the feelings in her stomach, chest, and head. She felt heavy all over, and hollow in her chest. She tried out a few descriptions of her feelings and rejected them one by one. She asked herself if she was feeling angry. Her silent answer was no. A chain of possibilities entered her mind. Anxious? No. Sad? Well, sort of, but that's not exactly it. Finally she found a word that expressed her feelings. "I feel depressed," she said with a sigh.

"Good," said Dr. Zood, "Your feelings are giving you a positive message—that you are defending or fighting something. Here's a chance to apply Skillful Means number three. Now ask yourself what you are defending or fighting."

Anne looked deeply into the question. "What am I defending? What am I defending?" she asked herself repeatedly. After a few moments of reflection, she exclaimed, "Oh, I want to be the perfect daughter, wife, mother, and businessperson. Is there something wrong with

that?"

Dr. Zood detected a defensive tone in her voice. He asked, "Were you aware of your tone of voice when you said that?"

Anne looked a little sheepish. "Yes, that did sound defensive, didn't it?" Softening her tone, she again asked, "Is there something wrong with that?"

Dr. Zood replied, "I didn't want to imply there was anything wrong with it. You are the only one who can make that judgment. But now do you see that you have a choice? You can continue fighting for that image of yourself if it is worth the consequences, or you can give it up."

Anne raised her eyebrows and sighed in resignation. "Yes," she said, "That does appear to be my choice. I guess I need to think about that for a while."

"A good time to think about it," said Dr. Zood, "is the next time you're feeling frustrated, or when you're starting to have a headache. Look into it then. You might find a different answer than you would now. Keep an open mind, look at your sensations, feelings, and emotions, and ask yourself what you are defending or fighting. There are many common ways people defend or fight. Most of the time the fight is over an idea. People try to make a point with others by trying to show that they are right or that others are wrong. They try to bolster their self-image and show to themselves or others that they are worthwhile, or better than others are. They blame others for their own problems, or they seek fulfillment from things outside themselves.

"All the problem situations we have discussed have one thing in common—'what is' is different from 'what is desired'. The key to solving these problems successfully is to make certain that we have as much information as possible so we can choose the best solution. Our pain, sensations, and emotions give us important information, and so does a clear realization of what we might be defending or fighting. If we are not aware of our emotions or what we are defending, then we do not see the entirety of 'what is', and we will not see all our choices. If you don't see your choices clearly, then you will not see that you might have chosen physical pain over giving up your idea of being a 'perfect' daughter, wife, mother, and so on. More importantly, you might not see that you could change your idea of 'perfect' to apply to a normal, happy person who is not in pain. If you were willing to change your idea of 'perfect', you might ask the people who are important

to you which they prefer, a person who was always striving to please everyone, or a normal, pain-free person.”

Dr. Zood’s last statement hit home hard for Anne. Had she been choosing to defend her self-image in spite of her pain? She confirmed to herself that she would have to find out.

## CHAPTER 10: THE BIOFEEDBACK PRINCIPLE

Dr. Zood was watching Anne, who was now sitting back in her chair feeling much more poised and relaxed. "I'm glad you are feeling more relaxed now," he said.

"Yes," she replied, "for some reason just talking with you about all this makes me feel better. I feel a lot less tense now."

"Good," Dr. Zood said, "it's very important to be aware of your feelings at all times. Much of what we have discussed today comes down to a need to be aware of the consequences of our behavior. For example, if you don't know that struggling against pain will intensify it, then you will probably struggle with your headache and make it worse. And if you don't know that trying to please everyone will create conflict and pain, then you will probably try to satisfy everyone's competing and conflicting demands on you.

"It's amazing what we can do if we are aware of the consequences of our behavior. For example, not too long ago scientific researchers thought that body reactions such as heart rate, blood pressure, and skin temperature were totally automatic and beyond our conscious control. Interestingly, these processes are also normally outside our awareness. For example, how often are you aware of your blood pressure or your heart rate?"

After a moment's reflection, Anne replied, "The only time I have any idea about my blood pressure is when the doctor takes it. I have no idea about my heart rate unless it is racing."

"Right," said Dr. Zood, "for the same reason, you are also probably unaware of the things you do that change your blood pressure or heart rate—you have nothing to tell you what these physiological measures are. If I asked you to decrease the blood flow in your head, you wouldn't be able to do it because you are unaware of this blood flow, and you've had no chance to practice trying to change it. Contrast this with what happens when I ask you to lift your arm over your head. You have definite awareness of the position of your arm, and you have had a great deal of practice lifting it, even though you might not be able to explain to someone how you do it.

"Many recent scientific experiments have shown that when people

are given some awareness or feedback about their physiological states, these states can be brought under conscious control, similar to how you can lift your arm over your head. It's nothing magical or mysterious. This is called *biofeedback*, or giving someone feedback about their biological state. For example, when people are placed in front of a meter that displays their blood pressure, they can learn to control it voluntarily. People can learn to control their blood pressure, skin temperature, and blood flow to various parts of their body. All they have to do is look at a meter that displays these various measures, and practice. One study even showed that people can learn to increase the blood flow in one ear and simultaneously decrease it in the other."

Anne was amused. "Why would anyone want to do that? I don't even know why my husband tries to *wiggle* his ears except that it entertains our kids."

Dr. Zood laughed and then explained, "That study does seem a bit strange, but it showed that people can gain very precise control over their body if they have correct feedback or awareness. We know that migraine headaches are related to changes in blood flow. We also know that correct biofeedback and awareness is an effective treatment for migraine. Several studies have shown that connecting migraine sufferers to a machine that gives them feedback about blood flow or skin temperature is an effective treatment. For example, people can learn to increase the blood flow in their hands, or to warm their hands. These are among the best treatments for migraine headache. Now think about it—warming the extremities is the opposite of 'cold feet', or fear, and this reduces migraine headaches. So how do you think people learn to warm their hands?"

Anne searched for an answer, and asked, "Do they learn to stop being fearful?"

"That could be," replied Dr. Zood, "but it's hard to say for sure. Can you tell me how you lift your arm over your head?"

Anne lifted her arm over her head a few times, and then said, "Well, you just *do* it. I can't tell you how. It seems completely automatic."

"Yes, you just *do* it," Dr. Zood said. "It is hard to say exactly *how* you do it, just as it's hard to say how a person can warm their hands voluntarily. They just learn to do it. Do you remember learning to whistle when you were a youngster? I do. I wanted to be able to

whistle, so I asked my mother how to do it. She said I should place my tongue just below my bottom teeth, pucker my lips, and blow. I tried this over and over. Sometimes I would get a weak whistling sound, but most of the time I would just hear my breath blowing. It took a long time, but eventually I learned to make a loud whistling sound.”

Dr. Zood puckered his lips and whistled a loud, but short and indistinct tune. He laughed and said, “You can see I never learned to whistle well, just loudly. I can’t tell you exactly what I did to whistle—I followed my mother’s instructions and then kept trying different things until it worked. I practiced. This is similar to what you do to learn most skills. You try a bunch of things until you find something that works, then you refine it. This is the same with biofeedback—you try a bunch of things until you get the meter to move, then you refine it. You might not be able to say how you move the meter—you just do it.

“There are devices that allow you to monitor various physiological measures related to headache, such as bloodflow, skin temperature, etc. These devices work well, but there is another way to use the ‘feedback’ principle. The reason I bring up biofeedback is to emphasize the importance of keeping your awareness on the sensations and emotions of pain. If you pay close attention to the sensation of pain in your head, you will notice that it fluctuates. Apparently spontaneously, it will move around, ease, intensify, and change in quality. If you turn your attention away from the pain, you will not be aware of its fluctuations, and thus you will not be aware of what you do that changes it. But if you keep your attention on the pain, you will learn how your thoughts, attitudes, and other things you do influence it. Likewise, if you keep your attention on your emotions you will learn how your thoughts, attitudes, and other things you do influence them.

“Remember that a common characteristic of headache sufferers is that they turn attention away from pain and away from emotions. Thus they have no awareness or feedback about what they do that increases or decreases the pain or emotion. To remedy this, it is extremely important that you learn to pay close attention to both the sensation and emotions associated with pain. You will learn that certain things you do will decrease pain and associated emotions, and other things will increase these. You must pay attention to learn this.

“Research on biofeedback confirms some of the principles we have been talking about. For example, biofeedback can be used to measure emotions such as fear, anxiety, anger, or stress in general. You can connect a person to a biofeedback device that measures anxiety or

stress, and then place them in a situation that arouses anxiety, say public speaking. You can watch their stress level go up on the meter. If you get the person to pay attention to the bodily sensations of fear without trying to change them, their stress level goes down. This confirms that a good way to minimize pain and emotions is simply to be present with them without resisting, and without trying to change them. Another fascinating result is that if the person verbally admits they are fearful, the meter also goes down."

Anne remembered her experience with public speaking. "Yes, I know all about that one," she said. "So there is scientific evidence that simply *acknowledging* an emotion and being present with it changes it?"

"Yes, along with abundant clinical evidence," replied Dr. Zood. "The best part is that you don't have to take anybody's word for it, you can try it for yourself and see how it works. Just pay attention to the consequences of your actions. That is how biofeedback works, it allows you to see the bodily consequences of your thoughts and behavior.

"Another way that awareness of consequences will help you is that it will allow you to see that you have choices. Suppose you set out to do something that turns out to be very frustrating. If you are aware of your frustration and its unpleasantness, then you can choose not to continue the task. You might decide that it's just not worth having these unpleasant feelings. If you turn your attention away from your feelings because they don't fit into your self-image, then you are ignoring useful information. Pain might set in to remind you that something is still wrong. It is better to catch the frustrated feeling than the pain, because you can deal with the situation earlier and more effectively."

## CHAPTER 11: THE GENTLE WAY OF UNDERSTANDING

Anne looked up to see Dr. Zood staring at her with disgust. He sneered, "When was the last time you washed your hair?"

Anne was shocked. What was happening? It seemed that the kindly Dr. Zood had just turned into Mr. Hyde. She quickly reached up to feel her hair to see what was wrong. Then she recalled that she had washed her hair earlier that morning. "Huh? What's wrong with my hair?" she asked with a feeling of surprise and dismay.

Dr. Zood broke into one of his disarming smiles and said, "Nothing—truly. I just wanted to give you an example of defensiveness. What were you feeling after I asked you about your hair? Was there a feeling of defensiveness or resistance, or a combination of anger and fear?"

Anne considered his question for a moment, and then replied, "Yes, it was something of a combination of anger and fear. I was surprised and shocked at your behavior, and at what might be wrong with my hair."

Dr. Zood said, "The feeling you had is related to the defensive reflex, and to all sorts of physiological changes that can lead to pain or disease. Skillful Means number two says to be aware of these feelings and not resist them. Skillful Means number three says to ask yourself what you are fighting or defending when you have these feelings."

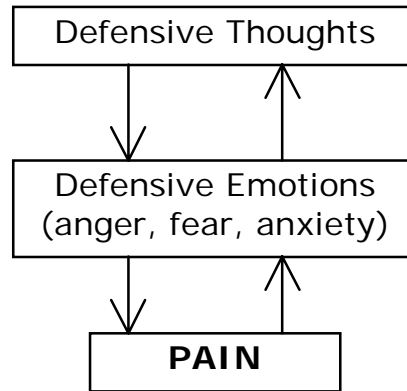
Dr. Zood paused to give Anne time to answer those questions. She said, "I was defending my self-image, I guess. I like to look as good as I can, and I was offended that you thought something was wrong with my hair."

"Yes," he said, "that's an important insight. Sometimes pain gets started by a thought that something is wrong with you. Let's summarize what we have so far, and talk about a problem solving method that goes beyond simple pain relief. This technique can eliminate some problems before they result in a spiral of agony. Dr. Zood turned over the sheet of paper containing the three Skillful Means of pain relief. On the back, Anne saw a diagram entitled



"Patterns of Pain".

## PATTERNS OF PAIN



Dr. Zood explained, "This diagram shows a more complete picture of the spiral of agony. Let's start with the bottom two boxes. We have already talked about how the sensation of pain can lead to an attempt to fight or escape it. Escape is associated with the emotions of anxiety or fear, and fighting is associated with anger. In either case these emotions are part of a defensive reflex that can intensify the pain.

"Now look at the top two boxes, which show how emotions can lead to negative thoughts. Suppose you are in pain, and you think you should not be angry or fearful. Anger and fear are part of the experience of pain, but you are saying to yourself that you should not be having these emotions. Now what? You might conclude that something is wrong with you because you're having feelings that you shouldn't have. Here we go again! You create a new problem as you judge *yourself* as not okay—something is wrong with you because you are having 'inappropriate' feelings. You want to be okay, but you think you are not OK because of the feelings. To solve this problem, perhaps you turn your attention away from the emotions, and affirm to yourself that you *are* okay. This is similar to the 'mind over matter' approach – 'thou shalt not feel', 'tough it out', and so forth. Can you see the new problem here? You are fighting or attempting to escape from your feelings, which creates more anger and anxiety because you are not what you want to be. You are trapped in another spiral of agony."

"I get it," Anne chimed in, "Self-judgment creates a new problem. You see yourself as different from what you want to be, so 'what is' is different from 'what is desired'. That's the *definition* of a problem. You create a problem for yourself because you judge yourself."

Dr. Zood was very pleased at how quickly Anne grasped the nature of problems. "Yes," he replied, "you are absolutely correct. Self-judgment of any kind is particularly insidious. For example, say you are feeling guilty over some behavior—you think you should have done something you didn't, or you think you shouldn't have done something you did. This happens all the time with headache sufferers—mostly they think they should have done more for those who depend on them. The 'thinking self' condemns the 'feeling self' by thinking that the person should have done more. The person then struggles to be okay by trying to do even more. This is bad enough, but it does not stop here. The headache sufferer then tries to suppress the ugly *feeling* of guilt. Trying to suppress any feeling is a good way to create a defensive reflex and initiate a spiral of agony. You are trying to escape from yourself, or fight yourself."

Anne was very familiar with the feeling of guilt. After she nodded gravely to show that she understood, Dr. Zood said, "A new perspective shown in this diagram is that sometimes the spiral of agony starts at the top of the diagram, with negative thoughts. For some reason we might not feel we are okay, so we try to make ourselves okay by bolstering our self-image. We do this by trying to be right, by showing that other people are wrong, by putting down other people, blaming others, or seeking fulfillment from something outside ourselves. We are angry or anxious that we are not what we want to be, and we get frustrated that the world is not cooperating with our plans. This can create a defensive reflex and therefore physical pain."

Anne knew this feeling of inadequacy very well. Why did she always feel not good enough? Where did this come from? She never seemed to be able to do enough for others. As she was pondering these questions, Dr. Zood seemed to read her mind. He said, "Adult children of alcoholic parents often show this pattern, as do children of neglectful or abusive parents. They did not get as much love or attention as they needed when they were children, and sometimes they were witnesses or victims of abuse. They never learned that they are okay the way they are. They constantly seek acceptance and love from other people, by trying to please them. The underlying assumption is that they are not okay the way they are, but if they can only get enough love and attention from others it will make them

okay. This leads to more frustration and problems, because they are trying to fix a hole in their hearts that cannot be fixed. They are unaware that the problem starts with the fact that they don't feel okay about themselves—they think the problem is that they don't have the right lover, mate, friends, car, house, etc., or they can't play golf well enough, or sing well enough, or make their children behave. You get the picture? *They are trying to solve the wrong problem.*"

The picture was becoming much clearer to Anne. Although her parents were not alcoholic or abusive, they were mostly absent when she was a little girl. She remembered trying to do more and more to please her parents and to get attention, but it seemed she could never do enough. No wonder I often feel so inadequate, she thought. "What can I do about these horrible feelings of guilt and inadequacy?" she asked.

Dr. Zood answered, "Fighting who you are, trying to escape from who you are, or trying to fix the wrong problem, will just create defensive emotions and physical pain. The key to releasing yourself from this kind of pattern is to become aware of the pattern itself. Without trying to change the pattern, the awareness and understanding of how it works will free you from its chains."

"Just being aware of the pattern changes it?" Anne asked.

"Yes," replied Dr. Zood, "Awareness, and the understanding that results from awareness, work wonders. For example, I remember when I was much younger, standing in line waiting for a bus. Someone ran into me hard from behind and almost knocked me over. Anger and indignance flashed through my mind as I thought, what's wrong with this person? As I turned around, ready to give the rude lout a piece of my mind, I saw that the 'rude lout' was a blind man who just slipped on a wet spot in the sidewalk and had fallen into me. Suddenly the light of understanding flashed on, and my anger was gone."

"I see," Anne said, "If you understand what is going on, then you don't have to fight anymore."

"That's right," Dr. Zood responded. "To come to an understanding of your patterns of pain you must feel your emotions, and you must also examine your thoughts. Asking yourself what you are defending or fighting when you feel discomfort can lead you to a realization of what is causing your stress. You will often see that the cause is a mere thought."

"A thought?" Anne asked. "How does that work?"

"Most of my patients find a common root underlying many of their problems," Dr. Zood replied. "When they look back to what they are fighting or defending, it comes to their self-image. They are trying to prove to themselves that they are okay. Remember how you felt when I asked you about your hair? It came down to defending your self-image. This understanding can free you from many of your problems and pains."

"Oh yes," Anne said knowingly. "I see what you mean—your self-image is how you think of yourself. That's what you mean by defending a thought. You're defending what you think of yourself."

"Correct," Dr. Zood said. "That's why it's important to watch your thoughts and find out what you are defending at the time. You can see how this defensiveness causes problems. Then you can just let the thoughts go on, without trying to change them."

This didn't make sense to Anne. If I am trying not to be defensive, why shouldn't I try to change defensive thoughts? She asked, "Are you saying that I should let defensive thoughts go on? How does that keep me from being defensive?"

Dr. Zood raised his eyebrows and looked at Anne, expecting that she would come up with the answer to her own question. Anne stared at Dr. Zood, searching for the answer. Then it came. "Ah," she said as the insight penetrated. "You can't try to change the thoughts, because that's just more defensiveness!"

They both laughed out loud at that. "Yes," Dr. Zood approved, "All you can do is to let the thoughts go on, without trying to change them. Trying to change the thoughts creates a new problem. Then it's easy to judge yourself again as a bad person for having impure thoughts, etc., and on and on into a new spiral of agony. Simply watching the thoughts defuses them. You see yourself being defensive, and you just *let it be.*"

"Just let it be," repeated Anne, marveling over her own realization. She now understood how she created problems by not accepting her own self created. She also understood how not accepting parts of herself, in particular her sensations, feelings, emotions, and thoughts, created problems. She had a warm feeling as she repeated, "Let it be."

When she was done, Dr. Zood spoke. "While we're talking about

watching sensations, emotions, and thoughts, I want to mention that it's also helpful to observe your own behavior. Remember when we discussed what happens when your 'thinking self' attempts to suppress your 'feeling self'? The 'feeling self' is not so easily defeated. It will attempt to express itself through the body, with gestures, posture, tone of voice, and so on. If you watch yourself carefully, you might discover some things you tend to do repeatedly. You might have a nervous habit or tic such as blinking, or scrunching up your face, or a repetitive gesture such as tugging at your ear, rocking back and forth, or scratching or touching yourself in the same place. These things are easy to see in other people, but difficult to see in ourselves because we either turn our attention away from them or we try to suppress them. Just as attempting to suppress emotion doesn't work, attempting to suppress these other manifestations of the 'feeling self' doesn't work—it just makes them worse. I remember a patient who appeared very calm on the surface, but who had a peculiar way of blinking that we later discovered was a manifestation of anger."

"How did you discover that?" asked Anne.

"We used a variation of the principle of nonresistance. The gesture is maintained and strengthened because the person is not acknowledging the 'feeling self'. A useful trick is to give yourself permission to make the gesture by trying to magnify it, or make it bigger. I told the patient to go ahead and blink, but to exaggerate it. He really got into it and started to blink, scrunching up his face, opening his mouth, and baring his teeth. After a while he started to growl. I asked him to pay attention to what he was feeling, and to what his gesture reminded him of. He said it reminded him of when his wife unjustly accused him of infidelity. He had been completely faithful to her, so her accusations greatly angered him. He felt he could not express his anger because he thought that would drive his wife further away. He was angry, but he was also suppressing the feeling, so his 'feeling self' sought other means of expression. This showed up in his facial tic.

"Anytime you find yourself repeatedly doing something that you don't understand, it is probably because your feeling self is seeking expression. The key to ending these behaviors is to turn your attention to your feelings, and to give your 'feeling self' permission to express itself by making the symptom bigger. As you stay with your feelings and make the symptom bigger, ask yourself what the situation reminds you of. The answer will probably be a painful scene from your past that you have been suppressing. Recalling this scene, reliving the

associated emotion, and acknowledging it with the thinking self, will probably be sufficient to end the war between the selves, and to end the symptom.

"If there is one principle that summarizes what we have discussed today, it is this." Dr. Zood took Anne's sheet of paper and wrote across the bottom,

### GET TO KNOW YOURSELF

"Get to know yourself," he said emphatically. "This may sound strange since you have lived with yourself all your life. But so much of what people do happens automatically, with little or no awareness. We run on autopilot, doing things habitually, without awareness of our feelings, our thoughts, our assumptions, or our goals. In our hurried world we do things automatically, often several things at once, without paying full attention to any of them."

As he was speaking, Anne remembered that just that morning she had been talking on the phone, eating breakfast, reading the newspaper, and filing her nails at the same time. It all seemed so hectic and rushed—like an air traffic controller. No wonder she was often unaware of her feelings. As she was considering Dr. Zood's comments, he resumed. "If you wanted to get to know someone else, you would watch the way they acted and reacted, ask them questions, and listen to them. You would not turn your attention away from any behavior you didn't want to see—you would pay careful attention to their entire behavior, to how they appeared to be feeling, and to what caused these feelings. You would also not try to change or influence the other person, you would just watch them. We are much better observers of other's behavior than of our own. To get to know yourself, you must do the same things with yourself—pay attention to your thoughts, feelings and sensations, and do not turn away from things you don't want to see. Explore yourself without trying to change anything. Pay attention to what you are defending, the points you are trying to make, either with other people or to yourself, and why you do these things."

"OK, that makes sense," said Anne. "So I am suppose to watch my feelings, emotions, and thoughts, without trying to change them. That seems like so much to do! Where am I going to get time to do all that?"

"Good point, Anne," Dr. Zood said. "It seems like a lot to do, but once you get into the habit, it will happen all by itself. You will not have to spend any extra time doing it, because you will be able to do it while you go about your daily life."

"So how do I get into the habit of doing it?" Anne asked.

"You can establish the habit just by doing it. To help you get started, you can use a simple reminder. What you want to do is *Relax*, and focus on your *Sensations, Emotions, and Thoughts*. Relax, Sensations, Emotions, Thoughts. 'ReSET' is an acronym you can use to remind yourself of this. Try doing a ReSET right now. It can take you less than a minute. Take a deep breath, exhale, let go of all tension, and *Relax*."

Anne took a deep breath, let it out, and relaxed into her chair. "Should I close my eyes?" she asked.

"You don't have to close your eyes, but you might find it helpful in the next steps," Dr. Zood said. After Anne closed her eyes, he spoke again. "Now focus on your *Sensations*. Scan your body up and down, and pay attention to the feelings in your legs, torso, shoulders and head. Continue to relax and let go of any tension you feel, but do not try to change any of your sensations. Just be aware of them."

After a few moments, Dr. Zood spoke again. "Now focus on your *Emotions*. Ask yourself if you are angry or anxious. Pay attention to the feelings in your head, shoulders, and chest for clues. This is a natural extension of the previous step of focusing on your sensations. Just remember to continue relaxing, and don't try to change your emotions. Just be aware of them."

After a few more moments, Dr. Zood said, "Now examine your *Thoughts*. Are you fighting or defending anything? Keep relaxing and inquiring, without trying to change your thoughts."

Anne sat quietly for a few more moments, then she opened her eyes. Dr. Zood asked, "How are you feeling now?"

"I feel really good and relaxed." she responded.

"Good," Dr. Zood said. "You can do these ReSETs frequently during the day. Think of something that you do frequently every day, such as going to the water cooler. Affirm to yourself that you will do a ReSET every time you go to the water cooler. You can put a reminder note

on the water cooler if you wish. That way you will establish a habit of doing ReSETs. Other excellent times to ReSET are right when you wake up, before you get out of bed, and right after you go to bed at night. It gets the day, and night, off to a good, relaxed, aware start. Also, when you are experiencing any discomfort, either physical or emotional, try ReSETing. It is a good way to remember the three Skillful Means and put them into practice."

"All right," Anne said, who made a mental note to ReSET every time she hung up the phone, which seemed like a major cause of stress to her.

Dr. Zood shifted in his seat and spoke. "This brings me to one final point. You seem to care about other people. Why not bring that caring and loving kindness to yourself? You are not being selfish to do so. I repeat, to care for and nurture oneself is not selfish. Who do you feel a great deal of love for?"

Anne immediately replied, "Oh, my children, of course."

Dr. Zood asked, "Can you let yourself feel that love right now?"

Anne sat back and a big smile spread across her face. "Yes, that's easy," she said.

"Now, can you feel that same love for yourself?" Dr. Zood asked.

Anne felt a bit sheepish, but then she smiled as she wrapped her arms around herself. She seemed to glow with warmth.

"That's good," Dr. Zood approved. "Treat yourself with attention and respect. As you watch your thoughts and feelings, your feelings will let you know when you need to be kind to yourself. Be sure to take the time you need to do the right thing for yourself. When you are kind to yourself and acknowledge your feelings, you will feel much better about helping others.

"It's important to make your own feelings a priority in your life. Be aware of your feelings and do what you need to feel good. Otherwise, you will rush around trying to please everybody else, and you will create pain for yourself. The end result will be that you will not be able to please others, either."

Dr. Zood glanced up at the clock on the wall and mentioned that he had another appointment soon. He asked Anne, "Are you willing to do



almost anything to get rid of your headaches?”

“Yes, I am,” she replied.

“Excellent,” he said. “Then you will be willing to do some things differently in your life. First, I am going to ask you to prioritize. Make getting rid of your headaches your number one priority. Will you do this?”

“Yes,” Anne answered.

“Great,” said Dr. Zood. “Now here is a specific plan for you.”

Dr. Zood took out his prescription pad and wrote the following in large clear print:

## **PRESCRIPTION FOR HEADACHE RELIEF**

- Every morning or evening, or both, at a convenient relaxed time, practice *Relaxed Focusing* for 10 minutes. The best times are after you are fully awakened in the morning, or just before bed at night.
- Attach the sheet containing the *Three Skillful Means* of pain relief to your bathroom mirror where you will see it in the morning and in the evening. Read the Three Skillful Means the first thing in the morning, and the last thing at night before you go to bed. When you read the Skillful Means, affirm to yourself that you will follow them.
- Make a habit of doing brief ReSETs throughout the day. Find something you do frequently, such as going to the water cooler, and ReSET every time you do that.

“I am also going to ask you to pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and sensations all the time. Doing frequent ReSETs will help you get into the habit. The more you pay attention, the more of a habit it will become, and the less effort it will require. You will notice that this attitude of awareness will improve many things in your life, and over time it will become automatic. I am also going to ask you to take the time you need for yourself. If you need to relax, do it. If you need to reschedule things to alleviate some stress, do it. Just be aware of your defensiveness and fighting and realize what causes this pattern.” Dr. Zood held out his hand and asked, “Do I have your word

on this?"

Anne reached out and shook his hand. "Wonderful," he said, "if you do this, practice *relaxed focusing*, follow the *Three Skillful Means* of pain relief, and do frequent ReSETs, I am confident you will be relieved of your headaches in less than two months." Anne thanked Dr. Zood and started to leave his office, armed with her prescription, the sheet of paper containing the "Three Skillful Means of Pain Relief", and a conviction to find out what was causing her headaches. On the way out, she paused and said, "Maybe you could give me a pointer about relaxing. All my other doctors said I should try to relax. What is the best way to do that?"

"Dr. Zood replied, "One way is to keep practicing *relaxed focusing*. But in general, relaxing is not something you have to do. *Relaxing happens naturally when you stop trying to do something else!* Just be aware of the things you do that lead to pain, and then you can choose not to do them. If you accept some things the way they are, you will stop trying to change them. Trying to control the world is not relaxation. Relaxation is acceptance."

## CHAPTER 12: FREEDOM FROM PAIN

Anne practiced relaxed focusing before she went to bed that evening. She set an egg timer in the next room to let her know when ten minutes were up. Her first time practicing was a bit discouraging because her mind kept wandering while she was supposed to be focusing on her breath. She remembered Dr. Zood's words not to be frustrated or discouraged, so she gently returned her focus to counting her breaths and to feeling the air moving through her nostrils. After she went to bed that night she did a brief ReSET. She fell asleep quickly, and she felt especially rested in the morning.

The next morning she did another brief ReSET before she got out of bed. She had a cup of coffee and practiced relaxed focusing again. This time it was much easier to relax and maintain concentration on her breath. The rest of her morning seemed to go more smoothly than usual, and she felt more relaxed and at ease throughout the day. As the days went on, Anne found that relaxed focusing gave her the feeling of a 'calm center' that she could carry with her throughout the day. It became progressively easier to do the exercise, and she looked forward to the tension relief it provided. Sometimes she would even practice in the middle of the day when she was feeling tired or upset, and the short break provided welcome refreshment. She also did ReSETs every time she hung up the phone. These were very helpful in reestablishing a calm center after a difficult phone call.

Anne did not have to wait long to try the *Three Skillful Means* of pain relief. Early the second morning after meeting Dr. Zood, while she was planning for a client meeting, she felt the early warning signs of a headache. She remembered her promise to Dr. Zood that she would take the time she needed for herself. She quickly picked up the phone and left a message for her client that she was postponing their meeting. After she hung up the phone she did a quick ReSET, and then she went into the spare bedroom, locked the door, turned out the lights, and lay down on the bed. The pain was building rapidly, and she was afraid that she was going to be a helpless prisoner of another brutal headache.

She collected herself and applied the first principle—not resisting the pain. She took a deep breath, tried to relax, and she turned her

attention to the pain in her head. Her head was burning, and her body was tense. She could feel herself resisting the pain's invasion. It took all her will to exhale, relax her body, and surrender to the pain. As she did this, the pain flooded her head with a wave of agony. But then, surprisingly, the wave diminished, little by little. Intrigued, she tried to locate the pain. This was not as easy as she thought. The pain seemed to be behind her right eye, but she could not exactly pinpoint it. At first it moved to the side of her head, and then it became a shifting cloud. The more she tried to locate it, the more diffused it became. At one point it even seemed to be like a visual grating in front of her head, outside her body. How bizarre, she thought. She then remembered the second principle—to examine her emotions. Anne searched her body and mind for emotions, particularly anger, anxiety, or fear. She searched her head, shoulders, throat, chest and stomach for clues. She felt nauseated and her stomach was cramping. Anne thought she felt fear, but she was not sure. She was surprised that just looking for her emotions diminished the pain and her nausea. As she continued to observe the pain and her emotions, the pain and nausea gradually subsided.

This was a severe headache, but it was not quite as bad as the ones she normally had. Over the next week she had several headaches, but they were becoming progressively milder as she continued practicing relaxed focusing, frequent brief ReSETs, and applying the first two Skillful Means of pain relief. As time went on, she could usually prevent a headache by gently turning her attention to the sensation of pain when it started. When she did this she found that the pain would shift around in her head and change in quality. Sometimes the pain would move from behind her eye to the back of her head, and the quality would change from a burning to a feeling of tightness.

There were a couple of times Anne fell into a trap. After she felt she had gained control over her headaches, she firmly believed she could end them by observing her pain. Then something happened—the technique stopped working. Fortunately, she quickly discovered what was happening. She thought she could escape from the headache pain by strongly turning her attention toward it. As she did this, she noticed that she had a feeling of struggle—of fighting with the pain again. She discovered that she was using her attention to try to control the pain, so of course it did not work. As soon as she relaxed and gently turned her attention toward the pain without attempting to escape from it, the technique worked again. She noted in her journal that *you must not use your attention as a weapon for more fighting. Just feel the*

*pain and let it be.*

Anne had another interesting experience she wrote about in her journal. One day she and Mark were getting ready to take their children to the beach. Earlier that morning she and Mark had gone for a jog, but they had to cut it short because it was a very hot day and Anne started to get a headache toward the end of their run. By this time Anne knew what to do. She went home and sat in a cool, darkened room. She relaxed and gently brought her attention to the already considerable pain in her head. On her way home, she thought "Oh no! I don't have time for a headache." She then remembered that it was important to take the time she needed for herself. By now, Mark understood that there were times when Anne needed some space, so he did not object when Anne asked for time to get rid of her headache. Mark played with the children while Anne rested and focused on her pain for several minutes. This headache was more persistent than usual, however. Although it did not get worse, it did not get better right away. Then Mark came into the room and said, "Take your time, honey. I'm going to go take a shower." As soon as Mark left the room, Anne's headache vanished instantly. Even though Anne had given herself permission to take time for her headache, she still felt that she was holding up her family from their outing. It was only when Mark announced that he needed time to do something else that she realized that it was not her fault for the delay. This event impressed Anne with the power of the "feeling self", and how difficult it is to be aware of your feelings. She hadn't realized that she was feeling pressured to get rid of the headache so she could please her family.

After a few weeks, her headaches were infrequent. Sometimes she would have a headache that refused to go away when she stopped fighting and she turned her attention toward the pain. Then she applied the second Skillful Means of examining her emotions, asking herself whether she was angry, anxious, or fearful, and searching her body for specific feelings. Often she would search her feelings and detect some anger or anxiety, and then the headache would go away slowly. Sometimes she could not find any specific emotion, but the mere act of exploring made the headache disappear.

After about six weeks, she very rarely had headaches. If she did, they would go away very quickly when she applied the first two principles of pain relief. Around the same time, she noticed that she had quite a bit of tension in her neck and shoulders. She did not remember having this before. Perhaps, she reasoned, it had been

there, but her headaches were so painful she never noticed. Alternatively, whatever had been causing her headaches might now be causing muscle tension now that her headaches were gone. She could not figure it out. She recalled that Dr. Zood told her that muscle tension was also a part of the defensive reflex, and she wondered if applying the principles of pain relief would eliminate the muscle tension. When she turned her attention to the tension in her neck and shoulders, and she also examined her emotions, the tension usually disappeared. There were some rare occasions when the tension returned after a while. Then she remembered the third Skillful Means of pain relief, to examine your thoughts and ask yourself what you are defending or fighting. When she did this, she noticed that the tension usually went away for a very long time. She discovered that sometimes she was defending her self-image, but other times she could not figure out what she was defending. Still, the tension went away.

This second “cure” made Anne a believer in the power of self-observation. She started doing even more frequent ReSETs, and in addition she began watching her feelings and thoughts more often. She soon noticed that almost all her pain and tension was preceded by a feeling she called “resistance”. This mostly felt like tightness in her head, but sometimes she felt something in her throat or tightness in her shoulders or in her chest, near her heart. She wondered if this was where the term “hard-hearted” came from—she made a note to ask Dr. Zood. She noticed this feeling would come when she was trying to control situations or other people. The feeling occurred even before she became angry or frustrated over a difficulty in getting her way. It also happened when she was trying to make a point to others, when she judged others, or when she judged herself.

She recalled Dr. Zood’s definition of a problem: when “what is” is different from “what is desired”. She could see that whenever she judged others, she was creating a problem for herself. For example, one day she was walking down the street and she saw a woman walking the opposite way, wearing a particularly flamboyant outfit. As Anne said disdainfully to herself, “That woman looks like a hooker,” she had the feeling of “resistance” again. Anne knew she had a problem, because “what is”—she thought the woman was dressed suggestively—was different from “what is desired”—that the woman dressed differently. Anne could feel her body tense as she judged the other woman. How could she solve this problem? Go over to the other woman and tell her to change her clothes? Turn her attention away

from the other woman? None of her choices seemed satisfactory.

Anne considered that perhaps her own judgment was the problem—if she did not judge the other woman, there would be no problem. Then she found herself thinking that judgment itself was bad—every time she judged others she felt conflict and resistance. If she did not judge other people at all, there would be no problem. While she was thinking that judgment was bad, she suddenly started laughing uncontrollably. “How silly,” she said aloud. She glanced around and saw that people were staring at her strangely. She continued silently, “Now I’m judging judgment itself. This is just more judgment. ‘What is’ is that I am judging, and ‘what is desired’ is that I do not want to be judging.” She could see that there was no way out of this spiral.

If judgment leads to problems, how do we get out of this pattern? Dr. Zood had told her it was important to pay attention to her thoughts and feelings, and to observe patterns, without trying to change them. The words, “Let it be” came back to her. As she continued watching her pattern of judgment leading to feelings of conflict and tension, something unusual happened. Her judgments seemed to lose their emotional impact. It seemed that her thoughts were going on without her involvement. She would watch herself judge others, and she would say to herself, “Oh, there’s that old judgment again.” She could laugh about it, without fighting her judgment or taking it to heart and being swept away in a spiral of emotional turmoil and pain. She would just let her thoughts be.

She had the novel experience that as she watched her thoughts, she seemed detached from them. It was as if she discovered that thought is a tool for us to use and to observe, rather than for us to be used by it. The same thing happened with her emotions—they seemed to be going on all by themselves, without her involvement. Something would happen that made her angry, but as she watched her anger it seemed that she was detached from it. She would watch herself issue stern words of reprimand to the person who deserved the anger, but on the inside the whole scene secretly amused her. It seemed as though her two selves, the ‘thinking self’ and the ‘feeling self’ were getting along wonderfully now. The more she observed herself, the more it seemed that there was a ‘higher self’ watching both the ‘thinking self’ and the ‘feeling self’.

Over time, Anne noticed that she judged others less, and she judged herself less. This happened spontaneously, without her trying to change her judgments. She just observed the pattern. When she

found herself judging, she paid attention to the thought and just “let it be”, and went on about her business. With this diminution of judgment, there was also a slow change in the way she looked at problems in general. She used to think that all problems were because something “out there” in the world needed changing. Now she saw many problems as the way she *reacted* to what was “out there”. For example, she used to get upset when people in her office would use informal, grammatically incorrect phrases. She used to correct people’s grammar several times a day, and it would annoy her that she had to do this. But nowadays it just didn’t seem to matter much how people spoke, as long as she understood what they were saying. It was no longer her issue or problem. She recognized how her pattern of trying to control others created a feeling of conflict, tension, and resistance, and it disappeared. She used to feel like it was Anne against the world, but now it felt like Anne was part of the rest of the world. Peace, harmony, and freedom from pain were her most important values now, rather than control over other people and the world.

Comparing herself with others was another type of judgment that diminished without her efforts. She used to compare herself with people who made more money, had more fame or acknowledgment, or who had other things she desired. She could see that this comparison was another problem in which “what is”—the way she was, was different from “what is desired”. She now saw the real problem as her reaction to this situation. She used to experience pain as she tried to “keep up with the beautiful people”. Now she saw the *pattern of comparison* as a cause of conflict and pain, and she let it be without getting emotionally involved in it.

She came to a better understanding of the guilt she used to experience almost all the time. She realized that guilt was a form of self-judgment. When she felt guilty, she was thinking that he should have been a better person, and that she should have done more for others. When other people expressed their disappointment, Anne took it to heart and blamed herself. As soon as she saw guilt as a form of judgment, she could give it up. She realized that she could not be all things to all people, and that her attempt to do so was a major cause of her headaches. She was not willing to continue the struggle to defend her self-image of perfection.

After Anne was free of headache pain she called Dr. Zood to tell him the good news, and to thank him again for his help. She also mentioned to him that much of the emotional turmoil she used to experience was now diminishing, and she felt like telling other people



who seemed to be in emotional pain that she had found a way out. Dr. Zood was gratified that Anne had found more peace in her life, and he confirmed that this was one of the usual effects of watching sensations, feelings, and thoughts. Then he added a warning, "You must always remember, Anne, that the peace you have found is a *consequence* of being attentive to your feelings and thoughts. If a person were to start with the goal of finding peace, they might try to arrive at it by ignoring or suppressing their feelings and thoughts. You know this does not work. The paradoxical thing is that peace comes as a result of accepting your emotions and thoughts, and not fighting them. *Make sure that people do not confuse the end result of peace, with the means of attaining it, which is awareness.*

"You see, our thought process is a lot like fire. Fire is a very useful tool—we can use it to keep warm, to cook our food, and so on. But if we are not careful, fire can burn us. So it is with thought. We can use it to solve many different types of problems, but if we are not careful we can become entangled by it. If we identify ourselves with our thoughts we may not see that we might be using thought to prevent ourselves from seeing 'what is', or from feeling our emotions. Observing our thoughts in a detached way will keep us from being swept away by them."

As Anne became more open, honest, and gentle with herself, she became more open, honest, and gentle with others. No longer did she blame others for things that went wrong, because she saw that this was just defending her self-image. She allowed herself to feel a wide range of emotions, and she felt more alive than she had since she was a teenager. She understood how she had been creating physical pain by not wanting to feel her emotions. After she made the conscious decision to accept her feelings and emotions, a strange thing happened. Many of the decisions she used to agonize over now seemed to be resolved automatically. She no longer felt that she had to make choices—the correct decision seemed to happen by itself. Life seemed much more peaceful and joyous.

The most important thing was that Anne no longer had headache pain. Anne and her family lived happily ever after.

*As swimmers dare  
to lie face to the sky  
and water bears them,  
as hawks rest upon air  
and air sustains them,  
so would I learn to attain  
freefall, and float  
into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,  
knowing no effort earns  
that all-surrounding grace.*  
-Denise Levertov

*He draws a line in the sand,  
attacking one side and defending the other.  
In his fury he doesn't see that he could have drawn the line someplace else,  
or in a different way.  
He must enjoy the battle to divide the sands like this,  
to make one side forbidden when he could have it all.  
Does he still think the earth is flat,  
and that he stands on only one side of the line?  
He ends up battling himself, bloody and wounded in the end.  
Who profits? Doesn't he see the blood is his own?  
The winds of time have erased the many lines he has drawn in other places.  
Lines he held so dear are now forgotten.  
He doesn't remember on which side of those lines he is now.  
Only the blood remains to mark the battleground,  
and to inspire a new generation of line drawers.*  
-KP

## SUMMARY

### Anne's Notebook

- Severe headaches are very common and nothing to be ashamed of.
- Many different things, including food allergies and “stress”, can cause headaches.
- Serious disease such as cancer or brain tumors also can cause severe headaches, but this is rare.
- The experience of pain has two components, a sensation component and an emotion component.
- The unpleasantness of pain is determined as much by the emotion of pain as it is by the sensation of pain.
- Pain can be made worse by increases in the emotional component.
- The attempt to escape from pain *is* pain.
- The emotions associated with trying to run away from pain increase the sensation of pain, and vice versa. This is the “spiral of agony”.
- Fighting, struggling against, or trying to run away from pain just makes it worse.
- Paying attention to pain changes it. The location or quality of the pain might change, and it might disappear entirely.
- Practicing *relaxed focusing* will help in learning how to relax and focus attention on a single point. This is the proper way to pay attention to pain and associated emotions.
- The next time I feel a headache coming on, I will not try to fight or to escape from the pain. I will relax, accept the pain, surrender to it, focus on it, and *feel* it.

- I will gently focus my attention on the sensations in my head. I will relax, observe the pain, *feel* the pain, and try to find its exact location and quality.
- When I feel any of the strong “fight or flight” emotions associated with pain, such as anger, fear, anxiety, or panic, I will treat them exactly the same as the sensations of pain. I will come to the present moment, relax, and try to find the exact location and quality of the feelings in my body. I will just *feel* them without trying to escape from them, fight them, or change them.
- Fighting pain, emotions, and other sensations creates *defensiveness*, which maintains and intensifies pain.
- When paying attention to headache pain does not help, then pay attention to your emotions. Ask yourself if you are feeling anger, fear, or anxiety. Keep an open mind, and let yourself *feel* the emotion by focusing on the associated sensations in your body. Beware of avoiding the feeling by denial or distraction.
- Pay attention to the sensations of the emotion in your body, without trying to change them. Do not try to fight or to escape from the sensations. Attempt to clarify what emotion you are feeling, and *acknowledge it* by stating it to yourself. Pay attention to the feelings in your stomach, chest, throat, shoulders, head, and extremities for clues. The body knows and will give answers.
- Feeling an emotion and the related body sensations does not mean acting out the emotion. Don’t fight and don’t feed emotions.
- Feeling emotions is a normal and essential part of being human.
- It is important to pay attention to your feelings so that when you make decisions, you can make a choice that does not create or maintain pain.

## **Three Skillful Means of Pain Relief**

- SKILLFUL MEANS #1: DO NOT RESIST PAIN: Instead, investigate and explore it. Never fight or attempt to escape from pain. Give in to it—surrender completely. *Feel* the sensation of the pain—let it sink in. Relax and gently turn your attention toward the pain, and try to locate it. Try to describe how it feels. *Feel* the pain without trying to change it.
- SKILLFUL MEANS #2: DO NOT RESIST EMOTIONS: Instead, investigate and explore them. Never fight or attempt to escape from emotions. Search your body for sensations associated with emotions. *Feel* the sensations without trying to change them. Relax and gently turn your attention toward the body sensations, and try to identify them. Ask yourself if you are angry, fearful, anxious, or guilty.
- SKILLFUL MEANS #3: INVESTIGATE WHAT YOU ARE DEFENDING, OR WHAT YOU ARE FIGHTING. Fighting and defensiveness lead to pain. An attitude of open investigation is incompatible with defensiveness. To stop pain, start observing the way things are. Carefully observe your body for feelings of defensiveness or fighting, and carefully observe your mind for thoughts of defensiveness or fighting. Ask yourself, “What am I truly defending?” and “What am I really fighting, and why?”

## **Prescription for Headache Relief**

- Every morning or evening, or both, at a convenient relaxed time, practice *Relaxed Focusing* for 10 minutes. The best times are after you are fully awakened in the morning, or just before bed at night.
- Attach the sheet containing the *Three Skillful Means* of pain relief to your bathroom mirror where you will see it in the morning and in the evening. Read the Three Skillful Means the first thing in the morning, and the last thing at night before you go to bed. When you read the Skillful Means, affirm to yourself that you will follow them.
- Make a habit of doing brief ReSETs throughout the day. Find something you do frequently, such as going to the water cooler, and ReSET every time you do that.

## WORKBOOK

This section of the book is divided into two parts: (1) some demonstrations to illustrate important points in the book, and (2) a 30-day program to help you apply the book principles to your life. *It is most important for you to complete the 30-day program.* The basic program takes only about 30 minutes per day, and it is essential for your healing. You wouldn't expect to be able to learn the piano without practice, would you? Likewise, you can't expect to be free from your pain without practicing some essential skills. If you do nothing else, please complete the basic 30-day program.

### PART 1: DEMONSTRATIONS

#### *Demonstration #1: The nature of pain*

(a) Take a bucket and fill it about one third full with ice. Then fill it to about the two-thirds level with cold tap water. Optionally, add two or three tablespoons of table salt to make the water colder. Stir and wait a few minutes for the water to get ice cold. Submerge one hand into the ice water. At first you will feel the intense cold. As your hand gets colder, you will begin to feel pain. Focus your attention on the sensation of pain in your hand. Then shift your attention to the feelings in the rest of your body. Can you separate the feeling in your hand from the urgent desire to remove your hand from the cold water? Where in your body do you feel this desire to escape?

(b) The next time you go into a cold swimming pool, the ocean, a cold shower, or do anything else that entails some brief discomfort, pause beforehand. Do you have an anticipation of pain or discomfort? Notice that this *thought* of anticipating discomfort or pain is itself unpleasant. Can you feel anything in your body that is uncomfortable, or is the unpleasantness rooted entirely in the thought? Now go ahead and jump in. Is it as bad as you thought? Was your thought an accurate representation of the actual feeling?

*Warning:* Do not do these above exercises if you have heart,

circulatory, or neurological problems. Remove your hand from the cold water when the pain becomes too intense.

*Demonstration #2: The effects of thoughts and anger on the body*

Imagine a person or situation that makes you very angry. Give yourself permission to be angry, just for now. Let yourself go. Think of what you like to do to that person or in that situation. *Important: Take a towel and twist it.* Feel the anger, and get into it. Twist and wring the towel. Imagine the person is with you, and do or say whatever you want to that person. Scream, growl if you want. As you do this, notice the sensations in your body, particularly in your head and chest. Is it clear how thinking of an anger-arousing situation can profoundly affect your body? When you have had enough of this exercise spend a few minutes relaxing. Now feel your body. How do you feel?

*Demonstration #3: Relaxed Focusing*

Side two of the optional audiotape, "Freedom from Headache Pain", will guide you through a relaxed focusing session. The basic procedure is to sit up straight, close your eyes, and relax. Breathe through your abdomen. When you start, place one hand over your navel to make sure you are breathing into your abdomen rather than into your chest. Take a deep breath and hold it for a count of three, then exhale with a sigh, letting go of all the tension in your body. Repeat this three times. Then continue breathing and relaxing. Search your body for any tension, particularly in your face, jaw, shoulders, back, chest, and stomach. Let go of any tightness or tension as you exhale. Then gently bring your awareness to the feeling of air flowing in and out of your nostrils (or anywhere else you want). Count your breaths on the exhale from one to ten, and then start over again. If you lose count, just start over again at 'one'. When your attention wanders, gently bring it back to the feeling of air at the entrance to your nostrils. Do not get flustered if your attention wanders, just gently bring it back. Do this for about ten minutes. When you are done, scan your body again. How do you feel?



*Demonstration #4: The headache stress test*

How do each of the following statements apply to you now? For each item, please fill in the blank with a number from the scale below. Fill in all the blanks, even if you have to guess.

1	2	3	4	5
 never or strongly disagree	 seldom or disagree	 sometimes or neutral	 frequently or agree	 always or strongly agree

1. There is a lot of tension in my life. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I am a healthy person. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I smoke cigarettes. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I exercise regularly. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I feel overwhelmed by life. \_\_\_\_\_
6. It is easy for me to let go of worrisome thoughts and troubling emotions. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I feel threatened by life. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I set high standards for myself. \_\_\_\_\_
9. I have to defend myself. \_\_\_\_\_
10. I feel good about who I am. \_\_\_\_\_
11. I worry about things over which I have no control. \_\_\_\_\_
12. I have supportive friends or family. \_\_\_\_\_
13. I feel helpless. \_\_\_\_\_
14. I find meaning and purpose in life. \_\_\_\_\_
15. I feel controlled by deadlines and time pressure. \_\_\_\_\_
16. I would rather confront problems than ignore them. \_\_\_\_\_
17. Being afraid is a sign of weakness. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Scoring**

(A) Add up the answers to all the odd numbered questions  
and write the answer here: \_\_\_\_\_ = A

(B) Add sixty to your answer to (A) and write here: \_\_\_\_\_ = B

(C) Add up the answers to all the even numbered questions  
and write the answer here: \_\_\_\_\_ = C

**Your Score:** Subtract (C) from (B) and write here: \_\_\_\_\_ = score

<b>If your score is</b>	<b>It is</b>
60 or over	Very High
55-59	High
50-54	Moderately High
45-49	Moderately Low
40-44	Low
below 40	Very Low

Your score represents your tendency to *somaticize*, or express stress in your body with headache, backache, neck ache, TMJ, muscle tension, etc. These body symptoms are a result of the defensive reflex. The higher your score, the more you can benefit from the lessons in this book.

### *Demonstration #5: How you deal with emotions*

Ask yourself to give some honest answers to the following questions:

1. What do you think about other people who show their feelings, in particular anger and fear?
2. What do you think about your own feelings of anger or fear? Do you think they are bad?
3. Do you understand where your attitude toward anger and fear come from? Your parents? Your peers? Other people?
4. How do you cope with your own feelings of anger and fear? Do you try to keep from feeling them? How?

### *Demonstration #6: Sides of the face*

Look at your face in the mirror. Is there a difference in the expression on the two different sides of your face? You can use your hand or a piece of paper to cover up each side of your face in turn to help you compare. Now make a deliberate attempt to smile, and again compare the sides of your face. Finally, think of something that makes you happy. Again compare the sides of your face. Is there a difference in the expressions on the two sides? Can you relate this to your thoughts versus your feelings? Can you relate any differences in the expressions to your attitude toward feelings? *Note:* Most people tend to express their emotions more in the left side of their face. However, this pattern might be reversed in some people, particularly left-handers.

The next time you are feeling particularly happy, or particularly angry, repeat this demonstration.

Also, try observing the different sides of other people's faces. This can often tell you whether a person is "thinking" they should be showing an emotion, versus actually "feeling" that emotion. You might find this very useful in stressful sales situations, such as at a used car lot.

*Demonstration #7: The AAA principles of Acknowledgement, Appreciation, and Acceptance*

The next time you find someone disagreeing with you, try the AAA principles. First *acknowledge* the other person's position. This can be as simple as repeating it, for example, "You are saying such and such." Then *appreciate* it. This will help you to put yourself in the other person's shoes and see things from their viewpoint. You might say something like, "I can understand that. Many people feel the same way." Then be sure to *accept* their position by not blaming them or telling them they are wrong. Only *after* you have done these three things should you present your own viewpoint, as such. For example, you could say, "But I see it differently, because ..." and give reasons why your viewpoint is different. Do you find that using the AAA principles decreases resistance?

Now try the AAA principles with your emotions. The next time you sense any emotion, turn your attention to the feelings and acknowledge them. You might even say something like, "Hello, fear!" Appreciate your emotions by recognizing that they serve a useful purpose. Finally, accept the emotions by not trying to suppress or change them. Try doing this several times in different situations. Do your emotions become less bothersome, persistent, or intense?

*Demonstration #8: The nature of problems*

Take a personal problem you are now having, and put it in the form of "what is" and "what is desired":

1. State "what is" right now.
2. State "what is desired", or how you would like things to be.
3. Important: Be sure to include your *feelings* in your description of "what is desired"

## PART 2: 30-DAY PROGRAM

This is a complete 30-day program to help you put into practice the principles described in this book. Learning to overcome pain is much like learning to ride a bicycle. You can't really do it by reading a book—you have to practice—and practice some more. I know the “practice” word may seem like something you have heard before, but it is critically important, and it will work. Sure, reading helps, but there is no substitute for real practice. Completing the basic 30-day program is the most important thing you can do right now. You deserve to live pain-free, so do something for yourself *right now* by starting the program. It is well worth the time and energy!

### Preliminaries—Before you start the program

1. If you have not done so, finish reading the text part of this book. Review Anne's notebook in the summary and make sure everything makes sense before you continue. Take some notes, and if you have any questions, again review the relevant part of the book.
2. If you have not done so already, make an appointment today to see your physician to rule out any serious disease as a cause of your headaches, particularly if they are accompanied by general illness, such as nausea, fatigue, or fever.
3. If you have not already done so, make plans for an exercise program. This might include walking, dancing, bicycling, tennis, basketball, stretching, yoga, etc. The important thing is to plan something *you enjoy* and do it at least three times each week. Set a specific date and exercise schedule as soon as possible, and *start* your exercise program. Aerobic exercise is a terrific stress reliever, and it greatly improves your overall health and sense of wellbeing. Make entries into a log or exercise journal of the dates you exercised. It feels good to make these entries, especially after a month or so of consistency. Give yourself some strokes. You deserve it.
4. In the summary of the book there is a list of the Three Skillful Means of pain relief, and the Prescription for Headache Relief. Take this page out of the book and post it where you will see it every

morning right after you get out of bed, and every evening right before you go to bed. Next to your bathroom or dresser mirror are good places. Next to light switches works great, too. Read these Skillful Means every day and affirm that you can and will follow them.

## **Every Day: The Basic 30-Day Program**

There are several activities that you will be doing every day. These activities constitute the *Basic Program*, which is an essential part of your healing. Here is a list of these activities from the beginning of the day to the end, including a brief description.

- 1) *Before you get out of bed:* Do a ReSET. Breathe, relax, and feel your body. Become aware of all the sensations in your body. Take your time. Then feel your emotions, asking yourself if you are angry or fearful. Finally, look at your thoughts, asking yourself if you are fighting or defending anything. Keep breathing and relaxing as you feel your body and examine your emotions and thoughts.
- 2) *After you get out of bed:* Read the Three Skillful Means of Pain Relief, and affirm to yourself that you can and will follow them that day — just a commitment to the next 24 hours. As they say, “Commit one day at a time”. This eliminates unneeded stress.
- 3) *After you are fully awake in the morning:* Do 5-10 minutes of relaxed focusing. You may do this in conjunction with the (optional) audiotope\*, either in the morning or in the evening.
- 4) *Throughout the day:* Do brief ReSETs. Do ReSETs before and after meals, at snack time, and when you visit the restroom. Post a reminder to yourself so you will do ReSETs often, at least every hour or two. A good place is by your phone, in the kitchen, in the bathroom, by the water cooler, light switches, etc.
- 5) *In the evening:* Do 5-10 minutes of relaxed focusing. If you did not listen to the optional audiotope\* in the morning, do it now.
- 6) *Before you go to bed:* Read the Three Skillful Means of Pain Relief, and affirm to yourself that you can and will follow them.
- 7) *After you go to bed, before you go to sleep:* Do another ReSET.

\* *Every day* listen to the optional audiotope, “Freedom from Headache Pain”, which guides you through a progressive relaxation session, followed by a body scan, and then a relaxed focusing session. This will provide your relaxed focusing session either in the morning or in the evening, whenever you can get an uninterrupted free half-hour. The tape will teach you to relax deeply, to shift your attention to your body and get in touch with it, and to practice relaxed focusing.

## **Optional Activities for the 30-Day Program**

The following are some interesting and useful optional exercises for you. Several exercises ask you to keep a journal, so you might have several different journals going at the same time. A loose-leaf binder might be helpful if you choose to keep all the journals, since that way you could have a page or an entire section for each journal.

For **Day 1 through Day 14**, in addition to the other exercises listed for each day below, *keep a **daily journal of headache pain***: Carry a small notebook or tape recorder and note the following as soon as possible:

- The time of day the pain occurred
- What happened before the headaches — what did you eat or drink, were there changes in weather patterns or sleep patterns? On the next pages there is a list of common foods and events that may trigger migraines in some people.
- What you felt — be precise about the location of the pain, what kind of pain (sharp, dull, etc.), how bad it was, and how long it lasted
- How did you deal with the pain? Who was present, if anyone? Did you resist the pain? Did you apply Skillful Means #1?

The purpose of this exercise is to help you identify all the things that might be causing your headache, and to keep you focused on the solution of feeling the pain and not resisting it.



**Foods that may trigger migraines** — Many foods that contain tyramine, sodium nitrite, or phenylalanine may lead to headaches. Some of these and other suspect foods are listed below.

- Aged, canned, cured or processed meat, including bologna, chicken livers, game, ham, herring, hot dogs, pork, pepperoni, and sausage
- Alcoholic beverages, especially red wine
- Aspartame (NutraSweet)
- Avocados
- Beans, including pole, broad, lima, Italian, navy, pinto and garbanzo beans
- Brewer's yeast, including fresh yeast coffee cake, donuts and sourdough bread, and pizza
- Caffeine in excess (coffee, tea, and cola beverages)
- Canned soup or bouillon cubes
- Carob
- Cheese, especially ripened cheese such as Brie, Camembert, cheddar, etc.
- Chocolate and cocoa
- Cultured dairy products, such as buttermilk, sour cream and yogurt
- Figs
- Lentils
- Meat tenderizer
- Mincemeat Pie
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Nuts and peanut butter
- Onions
- Papaya, bananas, and some citrus fruits
- Passion fruit
- Peas and pea pods
- Pickled, preserved or marinated foods, such as olives and pickles, and some snack foods
- Raisins
- Red plums
- Sauerkraut and other foods containing vinegar
- Seasoned salt
- Snow peas

- Soy sauce and other fermented foods

### **Events that may contribute to migraines**

- Strong odors, bright lights or loud noises
- Weather changes or altitude changes
- Being tired, stressed, or depressed
- Repressing anger or feeling let-down after an intense or stressful event
- Changes in sleeping patterns or sleeping time, especially sleeping late or sleeping longer than usual
- Missing meals or fasting
- Menstrual periods for some women
- Birth control pills or hormones for some women

## **Day 1**

Reminder: Do all the *everyday* exercises today. In addition, do the Day 1 to Day 14 exercise of keeping a *pain log*, which is described in the previous paragraph.

If you have not done so already, take the Headache Stress Test (Demonstration #4) and score it. Write down your score here: \_\_\_\_\_

Later on, we will see if this score changes after the 30-day program.

## **Day 2**

Reminder: Do all the *everyday* exercises today. In addition, do the Day 1 to Day 14 exercise of keeping a *pain log*.

Write a paragraph describing what negative effects your pain has had on your life. Include work, recreational activities, friends, family relationships, etc. What emotional effects have you experienced as a result of these problems? For example, have you suffered sorrow, anger, or anxiety as a result of lost relationships, lost work, and so forth? How do you feel right now about these problems? The purpose of this exercise is to help you identify all the ways the pain has harmed you besides the obvious physical suffering.

## **Day 3**

Reminder: Do all the *everyday* exercises today. In addition, do the Day 1 to Day 14 exercise of keeping a *pain log*.

Write a paragraph describing any positive effects your pain might have had. That is, has your pain prevented you from doing any annoying or uncomfortable tasks you really didn't want to do? Or relating to people you didn't want to deal with? How do you feel about this? The purpose of this exercise is to help you look into any ways the pain might be serving a useful purpose to you, that is, in solving other problems by avoiding them. If so, then to rid yourself of pain you will want to discover alternative solutions for dealing with these problems. For example, your headache pain might have prevented you from going to a job you don't like, or dealing with difficult relationship problems.

You might need to find more enjoyable work, or seek help in dealing with an uncomfortable relationship.

#### **Day 4**

Reminder: Do all the *everyday* exercises today. In addition, do the Day 1 to Day 14 exercise of keeping a *pain log*.

Today, select one of your normal daily routine activities, such as having breakfast, taking a shower, walking to work, or taking out the garbage. As you perform the activity today, do it with *complete awareness*. Slow down, be in the present moment, and pay attention to every detail of what you are doing. For example, suppose you decide to have breakfast with complete awareness. While you are eating, do not engage in distractions such as watching TV, listening to the radio, or reading a book or newspaper. Be aware of lifting your eating utensil, putting the food into your mouth, and chewing. Pay attention to how the food tastes. Pay attention to the smell, and the feel and texture of the food in your mouth. If your awareness drifts away from eating, for instance if you start thinking about something else you should be doing, then simply acknowledge to yourself that you are thinking, and gently bring your awareness back to eating. The purpose of this exercise is to train yourself to attend to the present moment, to bring your awareness to your body sensations, and to distinguish actual sensations from imagination and intruding thoughts. Often the spiral of agony will begin with your body's reaction to a thought.

#### **Day 5 to Day 9**

Reminder: Do all the *everyday* exercises today. In addition, do the Day 1 to Day 14 exercise of keeping a *pain log*. As with Day 4, pick another routine daily activity and do it with complete awareness. You can pick either the same activity or a new one to do with complete awareness.

#### **Day 10**

Reminder: Do all the *everyday* exercises today. In addition, do the Day

1 to Day 14 exercise of keeping a *pain log*.

Today, select any one of your habits — good or bad — and break it, just for today. For example, everyday you might have coffee before breakfast, or dessert after dinner, or you may watch TV at a certain time, or go for a walk at another time. Change that routine today, and pay particular attention to the sensations in your body at the time(s) you would normally engage in the habit. Do not try to change or suppress the sensations, just be aware of them and stay with them. The purpose of this exercise is to help you become aware of your body sensations, and to be aware of them without resisting them or trying to change them.

### **Day 11 to Day 14**

Reminder: Do all the *everyday* exercises today. In addition, do the Day 1 to Day 14 exercise of keeping a *pain log*.

As with Day 10, select another habit and break it. Pay attention to your body sensations without resistance.

For **Day 15 to Day 28**, in addition to the other exercises listed for each day below, *keep a **daily journal of emotion***. Record when you felt hassled, responsible, guilty, defensive, angry, anxious, fearful, or impatient. *If at that time you also told yourself that you should not feel these emotions, record that*. Carry a small notebook or tape recorder and note the following as soon as possible:

- What emotion did you feel and when did you feel it?
- Did you tell yourself you should not have the emotion? Did you feel unjustified in having the emotion?
- How did you deal with the emotion? Did you resist? Did you apply Skillful Means #2?

The purpose of this exercise is to help you shift your attention to your emotions and *feel* them, rather than *fight* or *feed* them. It will also help you pay attention to when you are resisting your emotions. And it will help you identify the types of things that cause you to have these feelings.

For **Day 15 to Day 21**, in addition to the other exercises listed for each day below, practice ***grounding*** after your morning or evening relaxed focusing session. In this exercise you will be shifting your attention to different sensations and thoughts, and labeling what you experience. The purpose of this exercise is to help you create a habit of coming to the present moment, and identifying and labeling imagination and thought as such. It is important to be immediately aware that imagination and thought are different from actual sensation, because often the spiral of agony begins when our body reacts to thoughts—particularly thought intrusions. In this exercise we will start with the sense of vision and then go through hearing and touch, in each case experiencing the difference between the actual sensation and imagination. Then we will end with the experience of observing thought by itself. First, shift your attention to your actual sense of vision and label what you see. For example, look at your hand and say “hand”. Now close your eyes and imagine seeing your hand (or anything else you can easily conjure up), and say “image”. Then shift your attention to an actual sound and label it. For example, if you can hear traffic noise, say “traffic noise”. Now imagine a sound you heard in the past, for example the alarm clock going off, and say “image”. Then shift your attention to an actual sensation of touch and label it. For example, if you feel the seat of your chair, say “chair”. Now imagine a touch you had in the past, for example the feeling of your hot morning shower, and say “image”. Then create a thought, for example start talking to yourself, and say “thought”. Repeat this five times, going from sight to sound to touch, and ending with thought on each repetition.

### **Day 15**

Reminder: Do all the *everyday* exercises today. In addition, do the Day 15 to Day 28 exercise of keeping an *emotion log*, and the Day 15 to Day 21 exercise of *grounding*.

Review the pain journal you kept during days 1 to 14. Do you notice any patterns to your headache pain? For example, do increased hassles, frustration, guilt, or feelings of responsibility usually precede your headache pain? How about particular foods, weather patterns, or time of day? How about before-during-after being with or thinking about another person or relationship? Were you increasingly able to apply Skillful Means #1 and feel the pain without resisting? Did the severity or duration of your headaches diminish?

### **Day 16 to Day 21**

Reminder: Do all the *everyday* exercises today. In addition, do the Day 15 to Day 28 exercise of keeping an *emotion log*, and the Day 15 to Day 21 exercise of *grounding*.

For **Day 22 to Day 28**, in addition to the other exercises listed for each day below, practice **labeling** after your morning or evening relaxed focusing session. This exercise is very similar to grounding, except instead of creating the sensations or images you label, you wait for them to happen spontaneously. For about five minutes, sit with your eyes closed and observe what sensations, feelings, or thoughts come to mind. For example, suppose your foot starts to itch. Silently say "itch" and continue relaxing. Of course, scratch if you want! If a thought comes into your mind, silently say "thought". If the image of a picture comes to mind, silently say "image". The purpose of this exercise is to help you become more aware of actual body sensations, and to distinguish them from thoughts.

### **Day 22 to Day 28**

Reminder: Do all the *everyday* exercises today. In addition, do the Day 15 to Day 28 exercise of keeping an *emotion log*, and the Day 22 to Day 28 exercise of *labeling*.

For **Day 29 to Day 30** (and optionally for as long as you find useful) *keep a daily journal of fighting and defensiveness*. That is, when did you fight, or feel defensive or judgmental.)

- When did you fight, or when were you defensive and/or judgmental?
- How did you feel about your fighting or defensiveness? What did you feel in your body?
- Did you ask yourself “What am I fighting or defending?” Did you apply Skillful Means #3?
- Were you able to let go of your fighting or defensiveness? How did that feel? How did your body react?

Also for Day 29 to Day 30, identify one of your fears and approach it. That is, suppose you are afraid of heights, or public speaking, or of going up to a particular person and introducing yourself. On these days go ahead and do what you are afraid of (given, of course, that it is not physically dangerous). As you approach what you fear, pay particular attention to your body sensations, without trying to resist or change them. Also be aware of your thoughts. How much of your fear is due to a thought? What happens when you come back to the present moment and stay with your sensations?

### **Day 29**

Reminder: Do all the *everyday* exercises today. In addition, do the Day 29 to Day 30 exercise of keeping a *defensiveness and fighting log*, and approach something you fear.

Review the emotion journal you kept during days 15 to 28. Do you see any patterns connecting emotions and headache pain? For example do headaches follow feelings of guilt or responsibility? Do you see any pattern between *suppressed* emotions and headache pain? Do you see any patterns between suppressed emotions and emotional turmoil, repetitive thoughts, or feeling out of control?

### **Day 30**

Reminder: Do all the *everyday* exercises today. In addition, do the Day



29 to Day 30 exercise of keeping a *defensiveness and fighting log*, and approach something you fear.

Once again take the Headache Stress (Demonstration #4) and score it. Write down your score here: \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a difference in your score? Are your attitudes about certain potentially stressful life events changing?

Congratulations! You have finished the 30-day program. By now your headache pain should be much less frequent, less intense, and shorter lasting. We hope you are completely free of pain by now, but if not, please continue with your practice of the *everyday exercises*, and any other exercises you found valuable. Continued practice of the *everyday exercises* should completely free you of pain in a few more weeks, at most.

If you want some personalized help, Dr. Pfeiffer offers private office visits in Santa Barbara, California, and also a series of virtual, interactive office visits via email, FAX, or regular mail. Visit [www.painrelievers.org](http://www.painrelievers.org) on the World Wide Web for more information.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Ken Pfeiffer was completely debilitated by pain—he was unable to get out of bed for months at a time. He researched all the relevant medical literature on pain cures, went to doctors, unconventional healers and shamans, all to no avail. Finally, a friend, Arnold Vandenberg, steered him on the right path to end his suffering. In a short time Dr. Pfeiffer was completely cured of pain. His wife, Kathy, also suffered from severe migraine headaches while he suffered with back pain. Using the program he created, Kathy is now migraine-free. These seeming miracles have motivated him to help others overcome their own pain. His research took him to major medical research libraries, and to the far reaches of the world, to compile the healing methods presented in the pain relief programs offered here. In addition to his research and clinical studies of pain, Ken has traveled to Nepal and Tibet to learn and understand the ancient wisdom and secrets of adepts and mystics of the East.

Dr. Pfeiffer presently teaches people how to overcome pain. He is also a founding director of The Pain Relief Center, that is engaged in ongoing research on pain, and produces pain relief books, tapes, interactive learning programs, computer programs, and biofeedback devices. The Pain Relief Center also develops innovative pain measurement equipment.

Dr. Pfeiffer lives with his wife Kathy in Santa Barbara, California. After receiving a Ph.D. in psychology from UCLA, he taught there in the departments of Psychology and Engineering. He has spent thirty years teaching and doing research in psychology, consciousness, and problem solving. He is a master teacher, a teacher of teachers, and a recipient of the rarely awarded Distinguished Lecturer Award. He is also the author of numerous books and professional articles on psychology and problem solving.

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## FEEDBACK

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Thank you for reading this book and practicing the 30-day program. We want to get your feedback so we can improve this product and help relieve other people's pain. Please help us by providing the following information. When you are done, please FAX the page to (805) 965-5384, or you can mail it to The Pain Relief Center, 405 Loma Media Rd., Santa Barbara, CA 93103. Thank you, and good health!

1. What did you particularly like about this book and 30-day program?

2. What did you particularly dislike about this book and 30-day program?

3. What would you do to make this a better product?