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IN WHICH STATE DO YOU WANT TO LIVE?

EXERCISE—Find Your Favorite States

First, notice how you are feeling right now.

Next, think of something someone did to you that still hurts (something small, as this is just a demonstration).

- Did they hurt your feelings, disrespect you, annoy you?

- Did it disappoint you?

- How did it make you feel?

- What are all the details leading up to it?

Notice your current state.

- Are you tense, angry, and are you breathing faster?

- What would you NOT be able to do in this state? (e.g., give someone a hug or help a stranger)

Now, think of something that you are deeply grateful for. Imagine it as though it is happening right now. Spend a few minutes reliving that moment, smile at it.

Again, notice your state.

- Are you more relaxed, happier, and perhaps more at peace?

- Has some tension in your body dissipated?

- What could you do in this state that you couldn't if you were upset?

In all the times I covered this topic in workshops and with clients, I've NEVER heard someone say, "I want to live in a suffering state, I want to be worried, I want to be afraid, I want to be jealous, I want to be angry." People will say they want to be in a state of love, intimacy, joy, or something similar.

There are certain states that YOU prefer to be in, where you are being “your best self” as some people say. These are different from person to person, so we are going to gain clarity on states you would choose to be in. It isn’t that you will always be in that state. It’s like if you live in the state of Utah, you might visit the state of New York to visit your parents. The difference between physical states and states of being is that we generally make a conscious choice to fly to a different state, yet we instantly flip from calm to anger without any form of control.

First, write down eight states you want to be in. The order is irrelevant. You can use the list below for inspiration, but please add some of your own:

- Acceptance
- Affection
- Authenticity
- Awareness
- Beauty
- Celebration
- Clarity
- Compassion
- Competence
- Connection
- Consciousness
- Cooperation
- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Ease
- Empathy
- Equality
- Faith
- Flow
- Freedom
- Generosity
- Grace
- Gratitude
- Happiness
- Harmony
- Honesty
- Hope
- Inclusion
- Independence
- Inspiration
- Integrity
- Intimacy
- Joy
- Laughter
- Love
- Peace

- Play
- Presence
- Productivity
- Thoughtfulness
- Truth
- Understanding

Next, you are going to be comparing each of these dispositions with the question, “Does it feel better to be in state A or B?” So, for example, if you created the following list:

- A. *Love*
- B. *Faith*
- C. *Joy*
- D. *Generosity*
- E. *Curiosity*
- F. *Thoughtfulness*
- G. *Happiness*
- H. *Peace*

First, ask yourself, “Does it feel better to be in a state of Love or be in a state of Certainty?” Imagine yourself being Loving and notice how it feels, and then imagine yourself being Certain. For me, the answer would be Loving.

Next, take the one that feels best and compare it to C. (For me, I would compare, “Does it feel better to be in a state of Love or a state of Joy?”)

Then, take the winner from that comparison and compare it to D. Then, take the winner from that comparison and compare it to E, and so on until you are finished.

You will now have your chosen first state. Eliminate it from the list and do the entire exercise again to get your second favorite state. Then, eliminate that state from the list and do it all again to ascertain your third state.

By the end, you will have your top three favorite states. Write them down, as you will be using them all throughout the next section.

What is your favorite state?

What is your second favorite state?

What is your third favorite state?

But before we go on, take a moment, and imagine a life where you were living a life solely in these three states. What would that be like?

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MEANINGS

EXERCISE—Meanings

(Remember that a worksheet for this can be downloaded from the Online Resources)

1. Write down your Hot Potato:

(NAME)_____ did/said _____ to me. OUCH!”

Alternative: (NAME)_____ didn't do/say _____ to me. OUCH!

2. Write down all the meanings you have about the other person.

3. Write down some crazy meanings about them.

4. Write down what this means about you.

5. Write down some crazy meanings about you.

6. What is your favorite state _____ ?
In this state, what meanings would you have about the other person,
yourself or life in general?

7. What is your second favorite state _____ ?
In this state, what meanings would you have about the other person,
yourself or life in general?

8. What is your third favorite state _____ ?

9. In this state, what meanings would you have about the other person, yourself
or life in general?

10. You should now have a long list of meanings. Which of these meanings feel
right? Which ones “spark joy”?

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EXPECTATIONS

EXERCISE—Expectations

- Write down your Hot Potato.

- Write all the specific details of what you expected.

- Next, search for things that actually met your expectations.

- Where did these expectations come from? When and where have you seen it?

- With other people?

- In other situations?

– In the media?

– In your ideal scenario?

– Simply because it “should”?

■ Notice the difference between your expectations and reality.

■ Create and write down a modified expectation that now more closely matches reality. Remember, it helps to start with the word “Sometimes.”

Breaking down the unmet expectations causing us pain can help us see more clearly.

We can see what did happen the way we expected them to, which is typically soooo much more than the things that didn’t go the way we expected.

We can then reset our expectations so that unmet ones match reality. Just like the plane in the East River, we can’t make any change if we are stubbornly thinking something “should” be a certain way when it demonstrably isn’t.

Denying reality or “arguing” with reality disconnects us from life and the people in it. It also prevents loving solutions and churns out even more Hot Potatoes.

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STORIES

EXERCISE—Stories

1. Choose a Hot Potato in your life that you have already cooled.
2. Answer these questions:

- List out all the people involved with this Hot Potato.

- Which part are you playing? Victim, Villain, Hero, or Guide

- Are you trying to get someone else to save you? Who?

- Are you the one who has been hurt and wants to hurt someone back?

- Are you the one who is going to transform this pain into your three favorite states?

- Are you wisely guiding the hero on the journey you have already taken?

- Who is the hero in your story?

- What is the conflict?

- What has to happen for the story to have a “happy ending?”

- List ten other ways this story can have a happy ending.

- Which endings feel best to you?

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STRATEGY

EXERCISE—Strategy

1. First, write down a Hot Potato.
2. Answer these questions:

- What is it you want to “have” in your relationship with that person? There are two definitions of *have*, one means to “possess,” and the other is to “experience.” Since you never actually possess the other person in a relationship, the only way to “have” a relationship is to “experience” it.

- How are you trying to change them?

- What ideals of theirs are unacceptable to you?

- What are you worried they will take away from you?

- How do you worry they will try to make you behave in a way that is contrary to your ideals?

- What do you think they will try to take away that is scarce and needed for you to survive and thrive? Is it really scarce?

3. After writing this all down, it is helpful to take several deep breaths and let these questions settle.
4. The next step is to simply write out what it would be like to say exactly what you want and why, as though that other person were **totally and completely** on board as your ally, instead of your enemy. Be sure to write it from the viewpoint of being in your top three states. Assume that if they can provide that for you, they will.

If you do this in the future, you will be communicating honestly and purely and with no manipulation. We are so afraid of a “no,” just like that salesman in Chapter 10, or a confrontation, an awkward situation, or a potential argument, we develop an entire arsenal of strategies, tactics, and deception, rather than bare our souls and speak from our heart.

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A MORE MESSY MESS

EXERCISE—It's Not About You

Find a Hot Potato you have cooled down.

1. Write it down.

2. Now rewrite this event, but this time take yourself or any reference to yourself, out of the sentence.

3. Write how an alien from another planet might view this.

4. Write how the other person, from their own obsessively self-centric view, would see this.

5. Write out how you would view this from each of your three favorite states.

First Favorite State _____

The event would now be:

Second Favorite State _____

The event would now be:

Third Favorite State _____

The event would now be:

6. Select which of them feels best to you—which of the three creates the least hurt and the most connection.

Feeling it is all about you is like being Atlas, bent over from carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. If you can stop this, you will be able to stand tall again.