

Transforming Painful Patterns

with Arnina Kashtan

Worksheet: Dissolving Suffering by Changing Our Habits

In the Spirit of NVC and the Work of Byron Katie

Here are the suggested steps you can take towards liberation from patterns that create suffering.

Please note: the process does not have to include every step or sub-step, and you don't have to follow this order; the steps may vary, intertwine or go back and forth.

Step 1: Identify and Understand the Pattern

Collect internal observations regarding this pattern. Guide yourself with self questions: (1) How do I behave, act, react when I'm acting out this pattern; or (2) When this or that happens, what are my usual thoughts? Reactions? What do I tell myself?

Collect external observations. When it happens, what can one notice from the outside? (*You can ask for help in collecting data from people in your life whose empathy and love you trust.*)

Identify the motivations for the pattern.

- Find the thoughts (stories, core beliefs) that give rise to the pattern.
- Distinguish the trigger (stimulus) that preceded the reaction from the reaction itself (describe the trigger as an observation);
- Find the thoughts that accompany this trigger; write them down in full phrases. Possible examples: "How stupid can I be...;" "I am never going to succeed...;" "She should know better."

As you search for and/or identify and discover thoughts that are related to the pattern, use this as an opportunity to explore them

- You are mainly looking inside in search of hidden core beliefs about yourself, about life or about others. These might include thinking about how the past, another person, or your life in general SHOULD be. Gently notice your internal reactions as you go along.

Whenever painful feelings arise, SIT WITH THEM:



- Take the time to feel. To stay with. Notice. Listen. Accept (or not... but be there). This is all about bringing compassion to yourself.
- This is a good place to go into The Work, or any path of self-exploration you choose, for deep, internal inquiry.

Explore the origins of the pattern:

- Events in the past that put it in place, or such that you know or realize that are connected to it. If you are having a hard time remembering, you can use any kind of meditation guided imagery to help you in this search.

Investigate the pattern further:

- Which needs does it meet – and which not?
- Sit with ANY feeling and/or need that arises. Savor it. Mourn it. Go within. Wait. Listen. Feel. Notice which feelings are there when you believe this core belief. Sit with them.
- If this is a behavior pattern, ask yourself which needs are met by this behavior. (Remember, they are important and human). Observe without judging. Follow it to its core, and see what arises. Notice if there are tiny or noticeable shifts. Wait for some relaxation or relief. Take your time.
- Ask yourself which needs are NOT met. Take your time to feel. This step may gently take you to the next one.

Step 2: Making the Choice

This step could come in the beginning of the whole process, or at any stage. You can come back to it as many times as necessary, WITHOUT guilt.

Clarify the choice and motivation for change. Are you operating out of fear-guilt-shame or “have to?” Or is there a clear sense of self-connection and desire for liberation? Take the time to explore.

Acknowledgment:

- In writing and/or aloud, express to yourself the conscious acknowledgment that transforming this (or any other) pattern entails difficulty and challenges. Sit with it.

Understanding and Creating Space:

- In writing and/or aloud, express to yourself the conscious willingness to make space for the difficulty you might encounter and/or which you have already encountered when you tried (a million times...?) to work on this particular pattern without succeeding. In some form that is real to you, express and prepare

yourself to forgive and accept yourself. And tell yourself that you are willing to try again, even if the next time does not yet yield the hoped-for results. Breathe. Sit with this understanding. Notice possible shifts.

The Practical Steps of Transforming the Pattern

Creating the Internal, Conscious Observer:

- Use any “observer-creating” phrases, such as “I am hearing myself thinking that ...;” or “I am telling myself that...;” or “I am seeing myself doing...;” or “I just noticed that I did it (again).”

Preparing yourself in advance:

For various stages of dealing with the pattern (self requests):

- For those times that you catch yourself IN IT, think of questions to ask yourself, regarding the choice, such as “Am I operating out of choice or habit?” “Do I want to go on, or find a way to stop?” (Check if you have the internal resources to deal with the challenge of shift NOW).
- Prepare various strategies for different actions you can take if IN the moment you are willing to change (words that you can tell yourself; connect with the need that’s alive; or take some action which seems reasonable for you).
- Imagery work: Imagine and SEE yourself acting differently. Run the scene as many times as you wish/can.
- Imagery work: Imagine yourself with self-compassion when you try again and do not succeed to your full satisfaction. What words, phrases can you tell yourself then? Tell yourself now...

Step 3: Re-evaluating and Celebrating (sometimes...)

At any given time, preferably NOT while actively engaged in playing out the pattern, look back at any aspect or step regarding your conscious work on it.

Look at all the steps you have taken. See what has worked for you, and what has not. Look at the **WHOLE** picture—WITH COMPASSION. If you’re not able to generate compassion, re-ground in your commitment to your own well being. See what enables you to come again (and again...) to choose **YOU**. Take the time to sit with anything that you notice.

Pick up even **ONE** tiny instance that has felt different from the past, perhaps even transformational:



NVC Multimedia Library

- Write it down. Look at the written words. Or say it to yourself. Listen.
- The mind goes into future or old habits of thinking, such as “Yeah, but that was not so difficult...” “I could have done better...” “I have already achieved this in the past...” “This doesn’t count...” Tell yourself that these are ONLY THOUGHTS, and get back into self-acceptance and celebration.

What else would you like ? ? ?

- What would contribute to YOU feeling GREAT about YOU???

Create it for yourself!!!

© 2010 Arnina Kashtan, contact nvc@baynvc.org