

CONFESSION: SELF-AWARENESS, SELF-DISCLOSURE WORKSHEET

PART 1: What Happened? A Single, Afflictive-Emotion Episode

1. What happened that caused your afflictive emotion? Keep it to a single episode that happened on a day, at a time. Recount the episode in 2-3 sentences, as if you were a third party witnessing it.

PART 2: The Story I Tell Myself (Data Dump)

2. What does this episode mean to me? What story am I telling myself that has me so worked up?

3. Carefully explore what is bad about the situation. Did someone do something bad to you? Why do you imagine they did? What motive or intent are you assigning to this person? Or, did *you* do something bad? If so, why? What were the forces in play? The reasons? The causes?

4. In your internal story, what further bad thing(s) will this episode cause you? Now that this thing has happened, what future threat does it pose? To your environment? Your prospects? Your relationships?

5. How is this bad thing like some other bad thing that has happened in your past? Does a similar experience come to mind? If so, picture it. What parts were similar to this episode? Different?

6. Does this episode affect your sense of personal empowerment? If so, describe how. Does it diminish the control you need to make your life work? If so, describe how. Does it make you feel weak? Powerless? Impotent? If so, describe how.

7. Does this episode leave you feeling less secure? Less safe? If so, describe how. Do you feel more vulnerable than you did? If so, describe how. Do you feel more danger than you did? If so, how?

8. Does this episode diminish your sense of yourself? If so, describe how. Do you feel you need to fight harder to feel worth, goodness? How? Is guilt in play? Shame? How? Are you disappointed with yourself? How?

9. When you strip this current episode down, what is the thing that most disrupts your well-being?

The Story I Tell Myself: High-Level Summary

10. Try to put into words, the essence of the story you tell yourself. Remove some of the detail from the data dump. Try to see the crux of the story. Use more abstract words. Try to capture the heart of the story.

PART 3: Unearthing the Feelings I Feel

Our culture has trained us to ignore emotion. To help us relearn our subtle feelings, we read through a list of feeling words. Look over the list at the end of this document (or one of many online versions)

11. Read through a list of feeling words. When a word nudges you, write it down. Next, go over your list word by word. Why did that feeling word ping you? Does it capture what you are feeling/felt?

12. Go over your list again to be sure you know the link between each feeling you listed, and the story you tell yourself (part 2)? How did you get from your story – to that feeling?

If you can't find a link, it doesn't mean the emotion isn't valid. More likely, it means there is more to your story. Go back and backfill your story in light of the emotion you felt.

PART 4: Have You Seen this Pattern Before?

13. If you remove the person or circumstance that precipitated this episode, have you told yourself this story before? Have you felt un-empowered like this before? Insecure? Afraid of the same kinds of things? Have you seen this pattern before? When? Where? In what circumstances?

14. What name would you give the pattern? If you take out the specifics of this episode, what would be a fitting title for the pattern?

PART 5: Self-Disclosure (Telling Your Story)

Doing this practice together is a powerful way to build spiritual friendships. We start out tentatively. We sanitize our stories at first – until we begin to feel safe together. But doing the practice forms deep, abiding, safe, and strong spiritual friendships.

15. Who will be your spiritual friend to share this practice with?

Self-Disclosure: (Challenging Your Story) Is It True? Is It Helpful? Is It Necessary?

One of the gifts we give one another in spiritual friendship is the gift of not being inside one another's heads. When I hear your story, and you hear mine, we hear it from outside the emotion, outside the history, outside the fear and hurt and insecurity the episode has evoked.

Because we see one another's episodes differently we can ask probing questions that inform this last part of the practice – challenging the stories we tell ourselves. We do that with three questions.

16. Is it true?

Is the story you tell yourself true? Are there other ways you could tell the story? Other truths that mitigate your truth?

17. Is it helpful?

When you tell yourself this story – when your thoughts and emotions follow these well-worn patterns... when your beliefs, and values, and inner narratives kick in – is it helping you? Is producing peace and well-being? Is it deepening your relationships? Expanding your connection to others and to the Divine?

18. Is it necessary?

Do you have to tell yourself this story? Does your story contain such inviolate truth that you must continue telling it? If not, the next time a trigger like this comes up, you could challenge the pattern, and see that thoughts are just thoughts, feelings just feelings. They are not the whole truth. If it's not necessary, maybe you could explore other interpretations, other stories, other truths, other responses.

19. Make sure your spiritual partner asks this question as you conclude...

What have you seen in telling your story, that you had not seen before?

And having seen it, how could you live differently the next time you have this afflictive emotion?