

## OVERVIEW BRAIN SEMINAR

### JOY MEANS “SOMEONE IS GLAD TO BE WITH ME”

- Your brain needs joy if it’s going to be healthy and able to relate to Yahweh and others.
- The kind of joy we will be talking about is not happiness—that’s based on your circumstances. This joy is the result of knowing that “someone is glad to be with me”.
- We’re going to look at what you can do to increase your brain’s joy capacity. And what you can do when you feel the opposite of joy.
- We will also look at what it takes to have a joyful community
- We will talk about BEEPS
- Masks and pseudo-joy
- What brings transformation
- How dangerous self-justification is to relationships and a joyful community
- 19 relational brain skills that are essential to healthy relationships

### PROCESSING TRAUMA WITH THE BRAIN YAHWEH GAVE US

- The Healing Pathway:
  1. Maintain secure attachment
  2. Stay relational
  3. Stay connected
  4. Navigate the situation in a Christlike manner
  5. Correctly interpret the painful experience (know the truth)
- Any painful event that isn’t successfully processed will result in trauma—even minor events
- Attachment styles:
  1. Dismissive/avoidant
  2. Disorganized
  3. Distracted
  4. Secure
- The two kinds of memory: explicit memory is what we call remembering. But Implicit memories are painful events that didn’t get successfully processed so your brain stored the painful event along with all your toxic emotions, lies and beliefs that you felt during the painful event. They surface when you are triggered, but remain behind the scenes—they are presenting themselves in your subconscious mind. You won’t be aware that you are having a “shadow memory”.
- Verbal Logical Explainer (VLE) has the job of coming up with explanations that help us organize and make sense of our experiences and the world around us. These “stories” may be true or may contain toxic, false truths. When you are triggered, your VLE jumps to your rescue without you asking for its help and without you being aware that this is happening.
- Transference is when unresolved traumatic memories come forward as invisible implicit memory (with all the lies and emotions and beliefs of the original event) and all of that is transferred onto others.
- Defending yourself is a joy killer—for you and others.
- When you were an infant, all of your needs were met by others. You had no responsibility to care for yourself. That was appropriate when you were a baby. The problem comes when you’re an adult and this infant behavior gets triggered as an implicit memory. Guess what happens? You act

like a baby/infant/child—whatever age the implicit memory is attached to. And that behavior feels accurate and appropriate in the present. When a situation triggers implicit memories/emotions that belong to an infant, it will feel intensely true that it's the person's fault who triggered you and it's their fault that you're in pain. It could be the Lord, a person or a thing that gets blamed for your pain.

- Most traumatic implicit memory and VLE confabulation usually includes the loss of access to our relational connection circuits, which means that almost all of the time a traumatic memory is accessed, your relational circuits will be off-line. In order to successfully process a painful experience, we must stay in relational mode even while feeling the negative emotions. Maintaining and staying relational is one of our most important processing tasks.
- When I judge someone, I make negative assumptions about another person's motives! In doing so, I'm saying I'm better than the other person and that I would've done things differently and better—even if I had the same obstacles and challenges. When I judge, I'm believing the other person did 'bad' in some way. When I judge another person, that means my relational circuits are off-line.

## HEALING GRIEF

- Negative thoughts increase blood flow to the amygdala, the emotional parts of the brain where anxiety and depression live.
- Positive, happier thoughts cause increased blood flow to the areas that produce helpful neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin, the chemicals of happiness.
- Sick synapses, which are traumatic memories that get triggered, and negative attitudes are a recipe for disaster. When this happens, I must look at my attitude and ask, "Do I want to continue in this state of being miserable, grumpy, depressed, angry, which makes everyone around me feel lousy or do I want to feel better?" You do have a choice. You can change your thinking—the MRI test results are clear!
- In order to heal, we have to change the way we think about the traumatic event.
- It is a scientific fact that we can change our brain by changing our thoughts!
- Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."
- During times of trauma and pain, it is important that I realize I truly need people to acknowledge my pain, to see me. Acknowledgment is an important part of grief.
- Hopelessness is deadlier than any cancer.
- We can be positive or negative—both takes the same amount of work. So, decide to be hopeful—put your hope in Yahweh who is faithful. It is a known fact that hope produces huge improvements in how people feel. In a dark room, a tiny candle is enough light to see your way. Hope is a verb—it requires action and action takes time. Give yourself time to grieve. Hope tells us that it may be midnight right now, but the sun will come up in the morning.
- Make it a habit to question all negative, painful thoughts. Ask if it's true or not. You can't wait for the pain to go away before putting these healing tools to work. Keep moving. Life is never free of pain. Keep believing there is help and hope. Stay connected to the Lord and to friends. Acknowledge the fact that others love us and want us to stay in the fight.

## YOUR YAHWEH SHAPED BRAIN

- What we believe changes us mentally, physically and spiritually
- Our beliefs, thoughts, behaviors and even our diets change our brain structure, which changes who we are!
- Worshipping Yahweh actually stimulates the brain to heal and grow!
- Broken love and trust results in fear and selfishness towards people and Yahweh. As a result, fallen man believes they have to take care of themselves because they can't trust anyone—not even Yahweh. The end result is that fear and self-centeredness rule us. We become self-protecting and watch out for ourselves first and foremost.
- Fear and self-centeredness result in sinful deeds.
- Sin results in damage to our mind, character and body, which is a terminal condition.
- Rom 6:23 The wages of sin is death.
- When fear increases, love, growth, development and healthy thinking decrease. When love increases, not only does fear decrease, but growth, development and healthy thinking all improve.
- Brain research proves that the kind of God you worship changes your brain. Only worshipping a God of love brings healing. Believing lies will prevent healing.
- Until we understand the truth about Yahweh as revealed in Yeshua—we can't be healed. Why? Because lies believed inflame the limbic system which damages our prefrontal cortex which prevents the flow of His love into our being.
- Remember, if we love like Christ loves, we will do what is right, healthy and reasonable, because it is true, not because it feels good in the moment.
- We can't be healed, saved or restored to Yahweh if we refuse to use our prefrontal cortex, because that's where our mind comprehends truth, experiences love and communes with Yahweh.
- One of the best ways to activate the prefrontal cortex is to ask this question: **What does this mean?**
- Viewing Yahweh as an authoritarian, punishing God inflames the fear center (Amygdala), damages the prefrontal cortex and impairs healing and growth.
- We have a choice when it comes to sin.
- Practicing acts of sin will strengthen the limbic-system circuits and damages the prefrontal-cortex circuits, and increases fear, guilt and shame.
- Brain research shows that **fifteen minutes** each day of meditation or thoughtful communication with the God of love results in a measurable development of the prefrontal cortex.
- Our confidence in Yahweh is never supposed to be based on miracles. Miracles can be faked. The question is never about Yahweh's ability to perform miracles. The question is—do we know Yahweh well enough to trust Him with the outcome?
- We aren't saved by faith or trust. We are saved by grace, which is Yahweh's work of restoring love in us when we choose to trust Him. It takes both—the restoration of trust and the act of our will—to bring about healing.
- It is in a trust relationship with Yahweh, communing and meditating on His love, that our brains are transformed.
- It is true that we have power over what we believe, but it's also true that what we believe has power over us—power to heal and power to destroy!

- At the end of the day, the ultimate question is, What do I believe about Yahweh? About His Son? Am I believing the truth or lies?

Mat 25:21 “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

Luk 2:10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.

Jhn 15:11 “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be complete.

Jhn 16:20 “Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will cry and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

Jhn 16:22 “Therefore you too have sorrow now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one *will* take your joy away from you.

Act 13:52 And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Rom 14:17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Rom 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

2Co 7:4 Great is my boldness toward you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I have been filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Php 2:17-18 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. And you also, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

Heb 10:34 For you also showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted with joy the seizure of your possessions, knowing that you have for yourselves a better and lasting possession.

Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit *to them*—for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account—so that they will do this with joy and not with groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Jude 1:24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

## WHAT JOY LOOKS LIKE IN THE BRAIN

All of us have a limit or capacity or ability of how much joy we can possess, which determines how much difficulty or upset we can experience and still remain relational. There are numerous brain studies that prove that people get healed in communities where there are deep bonds of love...not bonds of fear. Joy means someone is glad to be with me—either their face or tone of voice tells me that. Belonging is vital to joy.

COMMUNICATION happens simultaneously on 2 levels:

1. You are listening to my words and are following those words.
2. The right hemisphere of your brain and the right hemisphere of my brain are communicating based on *voice tone* and my *facial expressions* and *gestures* (also true when we look left eye to left eye).

I'm not looking at you as intently as you are looking at me so you are gathering more information than me. What you see on someone's face, you will begin to feel. For example: When someone looks mad, you begin to feel mad back.

My brain registers the expression on your face in *40 milliseconds*. For an infant, this shapes the way their brain grows. If there's a lot of joy, then their brain structure will be large and connected to joy; the same happens with anger, depression etc.

Joy addresses the #1 need of all humanity and that is *belonging*. Every human wants to belong. Joy is at the heart of belonging—someone is glad to be with me! If you aren't joy-centered then you will feel like you're living in a nightmare. If you have low joy, your brain will hate your life. Joy is what ignites the transformation process in our lives. John 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.

Both the bible and neuroscience understand joy as a relational experience in which “someone is glad to be with me”.

- Joy is the excitement around the exchange of everything that is good for life.
- Joy is relational. Joy is contagious. Joy is transforming.
- Joy starts with a smile.
- Joy helps our brain feel better than any health food.
- Joy reduces stress.
- Joy has more social impact than looking sexy.
- Joy improves our immune system more than exercise.
- Joy protects marriages.
- Joy raises brighter, more resilient children. Joy improves resiliency after disasters.
- Joy spreads and helps transform lives.

### 3 THINGS NECESSARY FOR JOY TO BE DEVELOPED AND TO GROW:

1. a multi-generational community
2. a lifestyle of encountering Yahweh
3. relational brain skills

If you remove any of these 3, joy begins to decline quickly.

#### BRAIN DEVELOPMENT:

FOR BABIES joy is created from pleasant smells, being kept at just the right temperature, smiles and a warm voice tone. This joy bonds the baby to the one who is feeding and caring for him/her. If this isn't present, the baby will bond to the food instead of the one feeding him/her—food then becomes the joy substitute (*possibly creating eating disorders*).

Joyful interactions with those who feed us and other primary caregivers shape the structure, chemistry and function of their brains. The foundation of joy that is built in our first year of life profoundly influences our identity and relationships throughout the rest of our lives. If we start our life in fear, we will feel anxious about almost everything.

Our brains are biased toward joy (*someone is glad to be with me—belonging*). Joy is our most powerful desire, and we are designed to seek joyful interactions automatically from birth. Joy stimulates the growth of the identity region of our brains.

When we are empowered by joy, we're able to suffer pain and hardships and still remain relational. Without joy, we view problems as “win or lose” situations, and we solve problems by choosing the options that causes us the least amount of pain, usually at the expense of others. With joy, we are empowered to find creative, mutually satisfying solutions for problems and we will love to create simply because we can.

COMMUNITY LIVING: By delighting in relationships, we create belonging in and around ourselves. Creating belonging means that we continually create a joyful place for others to belong. When we create belonging, our joy extends an invitation for others to grow joy with us. The ability to create belonging is the best indicator of maturity at any age.

The three response styles in communities. (*We can operate in all three at different times depending on the circumstances.*)

- 1) GENTLE PROTECTORS Untraumatized people who grew up in high-joy homes tend to become protectors.
  - a) They have strong joyful identities that welcome others and have tender hearts toward weakness.
  - b) Protectors do not exploit weaknesses but instead help vulnerable community members grow in joy.
  - c) Protectors do not enable dysfunctional behavior but quickly protect the weak.

- d) When your community has high joy, members tend to develop strong protector skills.
- 2) PREDATORS are the primary fear-based response style in a community. Predators are the result of low-joy environments. The lack of relational skills inevitably reduces us to predatory behaviors. The brain is pre-wired for predator responses. Without training and discipline, predatory responses are how we respond. We need training by gentle protectors who respond tenderly to weakness or we will respond like predators and/or prey.
  - a) Predators discover the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of others and exploit them.
  - b) Predators use weaknesses to obtain or remain at the top of the food chain by intimidating, threatening, shaming, manipulating, and controlling to maintain his/her position on the food chain.
  - c) Predators fiercely guard their positions and will hurt others in the community if they feel threatened.
  - d) Predators often wear a mask to look like a sheep. Their mask makes him/her appear friendly, approachable and trustworthy. This allows them to secretly discover the weaknesses of others.
  - e) Predators believe they are always right and everyone else is wrong.
  - f) They do their best to hide their weaknesses and appear strong to assure their positions.
  - g) Those who challenge the opinion of a predator are likely to be eaten alive or driven away.
- 3) POSSUMS are the other fear and anxiety-based response style found in low-joy communities.
  - a) Possums do not occupy positions of dominance in the community, and their style is based primarily on doing whatever it takes to avoid being taken advantage of by predators.
  - b) Possums have usually been hurt in relationships.
  - c) Possums hide, avoid, minimize, withdraw and conceal their weaknesses as much as possible.
  - d) Their low-joy environment creates weaknesses and vulnerabilities that are impossible to conceal. Predators are likely to spot and take advantage of the vulnerabilities in possums leaving them feeling ashamed, used and even more fearful.

### GENTLE PROTECTORS BUILD JOY

Gentle Protectors respond to weakness and create joy in at least three ways:

1. Protectors amplify every bit of joy they find instead of amplifying the problems and upsets.
2. Protectors notice when people are tired and let them rest. Weakness often shows up as fatigue, feeling overwhelmed and tired. Protectors encourage the weak to go a bit farther and then lets them rest until joy returns. This cycle of effort and rest builds trust and shalom. Shalom respects the weakness in others and matches the work to what they can do.
3. Gentle Protectors respond to weakness by sharing the distress caused by the other person's weakness, even when the protector caused their distress. The result is a bond that pain cannot break, and the relationship stays stronger than the problem. We call this ability "returning to joy" after something has gone wrong.

"RETURNING TO JOY" refers to how long it takes after something upsetting happens before we are glad to be together again. For mature people, this should take a few seconds to return to joy after feeling negative emotions.

To grow joy in communities, families, churches, it's vital that the group knows what will happen when we experience that Yahweh was and is with us during painful events. This requires us to learn to tell the story (testify) of what changed when we experienced Yahweh and returned to joy. Telling these stories need to be a normal part of life.

#### GENTLE PROTECTORS:

- Promote play
- Join in joy
- Keep an expectancy and curiosity about what will grow from weakness
- Let everyone rest (even the strong)
- Amplify joy more than distress/problems
- Share all distress including the distress they produce
- Keeps relationships as more important than problems
- Keep the focus on the weak while simultaneously taking good care of themselves
- Maintain their own stability while they stabilize the weak
- Keep predators away
- Encourage the weak to point out weakness in the strong, including themselves
- Encourage the weak to become protectors of the weak.

#### UNDERSTANDING JOY, GRACE AND SHALOM

JOY is the response to grace.

GRACE is best translated as “special” not “unmerited favor”. Unmerited means “without having to work for it or earn it”. Grace means being very, very special to someone.

GRACE is being special without having to earn it or work for it.

JOY is the response to being special without having to work for it or earn it.

SHALOM is the peaceful rest that comes when we know that all is well and good and right—that comes as a result of belonging.

JOY is high energy

SHALOM is quiet and low energy.

Yahweh has wired the brain so that high-energy joy is to be followed by a time of Shalom/rest. It is an endless circle—high-energy joy followed by low-energy shalom.

RETURN TO JOY is the assurance that even when things go wrong, we will not be abandoned or left in our upset.

The best and most effective way to build my **joyful identity** comes by **developing a tender heart toward weakness**. This tender and joyful response comes from seeing weakness as an opportunity to show love and kindness—to demonstrate that you care. Joy levels increase around people who respond warmly and kindly to weakness. When we fear being shamed for our weaknesses, we hide our problems.

In the absence of joyful protector skills, everyone operates as a predator or a possum. Your response to the weakness in others will determine whether you are operating as a predator or a protector. Both predators and protectors watch for weakness in others. For predators, it's a time to pounce, for gentle protectors it's a time to protect. For predators, it's a time to get something. For protectors, it's a time to give.

#### PSEUDO-JOY CRAVINGS

CHRONIC LOW JOY creates at least 4 common problems that keep us from experiencing relational joy.

1. When we are in distress, we find ourselves without strong joy bonds with Yahweh and others.
2. We may lack some relational skills needed to form and maintain joyful relationships.
3. We will likely view relationships with a good deal of suspicion and doubt.
4. We will be strongly motivated by anxiety, fear and the drive to avoid shame, failure, disappointment and rejection.

A low-joy life or a life of relational pain sets us up to crave “joy substitutes”. **Joy substitutes** generate temporary feelings of pleasure that help us “ignore” internal distress, reduce pain, increase pleasure and escape from negative emotions. These substitutes create **pseudo-joy**, which is an artificial feeling of joy that is created when joy substitutes stimulate the pleasure center of the brain which releases dopamine. A high joy brain is less likely to develop harmful attachments to BEEPS. Pseudo-joy often comes from BEEPS.

B.E.E.P.S. take the place of joyful, life-giving connections with Yahweh and with others.

Behaviors  
Events  
Experiences  
People  
Substances

B.E.E.P.S. include but are not limited to:

- |                    |                     |                 |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| ○ Comfort food     | ○ Anything that     | ○ Gambling      |
| ○ Sex              | triggers a sense of | ○ Entertainment |
| ○ Work             | pleasure            | ○ Alcohol       |
| ○ Performance      | ○ Codependent       | ○ Travel        |
| ○ Approval seeking | relationships       | ○ Creativity    |
|                    | ○ Excitement        | ○ Drugs         |
|                    | (adrenaline)        |                 |

Happiness and excitement are often a substitute for joy. Because they are based on non-relational external circumstances they should not be confused with relational joy. The good news is (no matter how old you are), you can grow joyful skills and bonds, as well as strengthen the joy bonds you already have

## ATTACHMENTS

**TWO-WAY BONDS:** The first place to start growing joy is in our personal relationship with Yahweh who loves to be with us! Secondly, joy capacity increases in people who are married or who have a strong bond with a family member or a close friend. In these relationships, we can look into someone's eyes and know what they're thinking or feeling (this is called mindsight). **Never** begin practicing joy-skills in a two-way bond with someone you don't know very well. The powerful nature of two-way bonds creates an extremely high potential to become inappropriately sexual or co-dependent.

**THREE-WAY BONDS** are the safest relationships in which we can grow and practice our joy skills while increasing our joy capacity because they don't have the same intensity as two-way bonds. While secure two-way bonds are an excellent way to grow joy, they do not solidify our identity in the same way as three-way bonds. We need both. Children need strong joy bonds with two people in order to form a strong identity. The stronger the joy bonds with these two people, the more their identity will be consistent over time, even when things go wrong.

**QUESTION:** Do I create joy (*someone is glad to be with me*) around me? How do I know?

## MASKS

Joy gives us freedom from fear so we can live without wearing a mask because, in spite of our weakness, we know we are loved. By the time we are teenagers, we've learned to create a social image that people like. Over time, we often wonder if people like our image or us. We may believe that if they only knew what I was really like then they wouldn't like me.

When joy is inconsistent, weak or missing, fear, anxiety and stress systems shape our brain's structure, chemistry and growth. As a result, some of us wear masks of success, performance, and being capable or in charge. Others wear a spiritual mask.

When joy is inconsistent, weak or missing, we often fear embarrassment, shame, blame, upsetting emotions and being with difficult people. Masks that actually work make us dependent on the mask. Over time, we will grow tired of having to keep up appearances. All masks slowly steal, kill and destroy joy even when they work.

## ATTACHMENT PAIN

Attachment pain is the result of losing someone we love through betrayal, death, divorce, abandonment, moving away, etc. It is the deepest level of pain a human can experience. Attachment pain causes us to overreact. Attachment pain is inevitable and difficult to regulate. Because it adds intensity to everything, it causes even the strongest mask to drop. When attachment pain is present, predators stop pretending to be nice and they prey on the weak. When attachment pain is operating, possums lose their ability to mask their vulnerability and are driven to hide—they believe isolation is better than becoming food for a predator. Possums who can't hide will express increasing anxiety with intense emotional outbursts

When attachment pain is present and our capacity for joy is low, your brain will crave relief and begin to search for a source of external pseudo-joy to help “numb” your pain. Often, we aren’t even aware we’re looking for something to numb us. For example, when you are craving junk food, especially carbs, chips or sugar, you may be experiencing attachment pain. By keeping your appreciation levels high (*being thankful*), you can help avoid attachment pain and surrendering to BEEPS (behaviors, events, experiences, people substances).

## TRAUMA

The experience of unresolved trauma, especially in early life, leaves us with a low capacity for joy and high levels of fear and anxiety. Trauma also strongly impacts our ability to regulate upsetting emotions, especially if the trauma is unrecognized. All forms of trauma damages our ability to connect with others. Trauma is a joy killer and can lead to wearing masks to hide our pain.

TYPE A TRAUMA: Absence of good and necessary things needed to grow a healthy identity and body.

Type A trauma includes:

- Growing up in a chronic low-joy environment
- Abandonment
- Neglect
- Malnutrition
- The lack of appropriate physical touch

Type A trauma produces low joy capacity, unregulated emotions and unsatisfying relationships. The brain then craves pseudo-joy. People with type A trauma will wear masks that hide the lack of relational skills so they appear normal.

TYPE B TRAUMA: The bad/wrong/painful things that overwhelm our existing capacity.

Type B includes:

- Verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse
- Assault
- Bullying
- Untimely death
- Natural disasters

When we grow up in a low-joy environment, we will lack the ability to resolve type B traumas. We will be easily triggered into distressing emotional states and find it difficult to form life-giving relationships. Fear and anxiety will increase and we will wear masks to hide our pain. Type B trauma causes the brain to feel overwhelmed and craving pseudo-joy.

## LACK OF “RETURN TO JOY” SKILLS

The last factor that leads to pseudo-joy is the inability to return to joy when we experience upsetting emotions which is a strong reason people seek pseudo-joy.

There are 6 basic unpleasant emotions that we must learn to handle while staying relational:

1. Anger
  2. Fear
  3. Sadness
  4. Shame
  5. Disgust
  6. Hopeless
- despai

For example: I'm angry (*sad, afraid, feeling shameful, disgusted, hopeless*) right now, but you are more important to me than what I'm feeling so I'm going to take a few minutes to connect with the Lord or with \_\_\_\_\_. I will be back so we can resolve this because you are so important to me or because I love you, etc.

In high joy families, our parents and caregivers attuned to us when we experienced those emotions and remained connected with us. As a result, we learned that we don't have to disconnect from others when we are upset, and that distressing emotions are an opportunity to grow stronger joy bonds with others. When we lack these skills, we are likely to become stuck in negative emotions and our relational brain will disconnect from other people, even if we desire to stay connected. Being stuck in negative emotions, combined with relational disconnection, leaves our brain in acute distress and our brain craves relief.

## TWO TYPES OF (PSEUDO) FALSE JOY

Living life by focusing on a performance based mentality and seeking the approval of others allow us to avoid rejection and attract attention instead of joy. Working long hours, avoiding mistakes and doing a good job are not harmful. The damage happens when the results are more important than our relationships.

**CODEPENDENCY:** Codependency is a common form of false-joy based upon the attempt to manipulate and control others to get what we want. Without genuine relationships, it's impossible to grow joy. Codependency is common in both predators and possums.

For predators, they create the illusion of dominance, for possums, they actively seek to manipulate the behavior of others. Predators mistakenly believe they can maintain order and avoid chaos by being the one in control. By rewarding those who "behave" and using toxic shame and contempt for those who do not do what we want, predators create a low-joy life that promotes BEEPS (behaviors, events, experiences, people substances).

Possoms engage in codependency to avoid the loss of a valued relationship. To hold onto that relationship, they grow a false-identity to please them and avoid conflict. They will do almost anything to avoid being rejected. To avoid rocking the boat, they rescue others from pain and make excuses for inappropriate behaviors and abuse. Codependent behaviors keep you stuck.

## ATTACHMENT TO FOOD

Yahweh has designed us to bond to the people who feed us. When those who feed us are joyful and attentive to our needs, we develop secure bonds. When the person who feeds us is emotionally disconnected, we automatically bond to the strongest remaining source of pleasure which is the food, this is pseudo-joy.

Drugs, alcohol and sugar release powerful pleasure-causing chemicals in the brain that mimic the effects of true joy. Sugar is more addictive than cocaine! When we consume these chemicals, our brains experience euphoria, a false sense of well-being and impaired judgment plus it causes us to crave more alcohol, other drugs or sugar. The pain may be numbed and temporarily forgotten.

#### EXERCISES:

In order for this information to transform your life, spend time reflecting on the sources of true joy or pseudo-joy that have shaped your identity.

- What are your sources of joy?
- What are sources of pseudo-joy?
- Ask yourself whether or not you wear a mask.
- Ask someone close to you, “Do you think I wear a mask?” If so, ask them to tell you more.

### TRANSFORMATION

Transformation is a change of identity. Wanting and choosing to change is not enough to produce transformation.

What Is Proven to Bring Lasting Transformation?

1. Spending time with Yahweh on a regular basis never fails to transform the human heart.
2. Sharing Yahweh stories (*sharing times when Yahweh was with you and interacted with you*). This helps you know where you have been, who you are and where you want to go.

For joy to transform a group, the following 3 conditions must be in place:

1. The weak and strong are together and interacting
2. Tender responses to weakness are the rule
3. The interactive presence of Yahweh maintains shalom—Yahweh encounters

All of us have predatory responses wired into our brains. That means every one of us has the ability to respond like a predator. Thankfully, we can choose to respond to weakness with kindness and gentleness, which is a protector response.

When I experience Yahweh’s presence and peace, I am able to leave my “comfort zone” and stay in the transformation zone. Staying in the transformation zone requires an awareness of Yahweh’s presence. With Yahweh’s help, I can see people differently. With His presence, I realize I’m not alone. With Yahweh’s help, I can learn that I don’t have to be strong or perfect. Now, I am developing the Christian character growth that we call spiritual maturity.

Joy helps us discover who we really are, helps to build strong bonds, develop GODLY character, resolve traumas, overcome problems and develop the relational joy skills we call maturity. Joy grows when people see my weakness, my legitimate needs and reach out to me. Joy disappears when people ignore me or take advantage of my weaknesses.

How much joy we experience with others establishes our emotional capacity to deal with life. Practicing joy with people who are gentle protectors shapes my brain's abilities, chemistry and strength more than genetics. Who we really are comes from our spiritual DNA in the heart that Yeshua gave us—His heart! We were never meant to be low-joy people. Our true selves are meant to be gentle protectors like Yeshua and He never was low-joy (*not happy to be with us*)—even on the cross. The daily goal for us is to get out of His way and allow Him to live His life through us and that's when we will know true joy!

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*It's vital we see ourselves through encounters with Yahweh  
in order to be transformed into gentle protectors.*

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That isn't just brain science, but this comes straight out of the scriptures:

**Rom 12:2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

**2Co 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding (*encounters*) as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

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*It's also vital that we are part of a joyful community.*

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Joy is the essential quality to grow and train protectors. Protectors can train others to be protectors by responding to their weakness with tenderness. Protectors also know food has a powerful influence on forming joy bonds. Remember **we bond to the ones who feed us**.

Rom 15:1-2, 5 “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up....”

#### EXERCISES:

- Where am I weak? Where am I strong?
- What weaknesses make it hard for me to have a tender response to others?
- Am I more gentle with weaknesses in myself or in others?
- Do I bring my weaknesses to Yahweh for His perspective?

#### JOY ACTIONS:

- Pick something that bothers you and take care of it yourself with a smile and a grateful heart
- Make it a habit to sit beside someone who is sitting alone or appears sad.
- Make a list of things that bother you. Then ask Yahweh how He sees those things
- 

#### A JOYFUL COMMUNITY

The key feature for building joy in a group identity is the way onlookers smile when they see joy.

People with joyful identities will:

- Will invite new people to join their group,
- Will adapt with change,
- Will respect the weak
- Will be able to quickly recover from pain and distress.

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*A joyful multigenerational community is where maturity grows best.*

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## HOW DO WE BUILD A JOYFUL MULTI-GENERATIONAL COMMUNITY?

1. The simplest and most effective way is with food. Having meals together as a family or with friends. Have times when you invite older and younger people to eat with you. Invite people who need encouragement/help (the *weak*) to join you.
2. Serve others (any age)
3. Work with someone on a meaningful activity
4. Camping
5. Building and flying kites together
6. Synchronized dance
7. Play games & put puzzles together
8. Smile—a lot!

PUZZLES: Working on a puzzle can shift the brain from a “Beta” (wakeful) state to an “Alpha” (meditative) state, which helps lower blood pressure and heart rate, relieves stress and promotes a sense of calm. Each time you successfully place a puzzle piece, it triggers the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that regulates mood, concentration and motivation, leading to feelings of pleasure and accomplishment. Puzzles also engage both hemispheres of the brain simultaneously—the left, logical side and the right, creative side—strengthening overall cognition and creativity. Puzzles can create bonding.

EXERCISE: Do at least one of the above activities at least once a day for the rest of your life!

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### *SELF-JUSTIFICATION IS THE SINGLE MOST DESTRUCTIVE THREAT TO A JOYFUL COMMUNITY!!!!*

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Self-justification (a form of self-protection) is a destructive element in community living and in relationships. It stops all relationships in their tracks!

- If you’re a man, and healthy shame presents itself when someone corrects or gently confronts you, you most likely respond with logic and reasoning as to why you did what you did and then blame the other person!
- If you’re a woman and healthy shame presents itself when someone corrects or gently confronts you, you most likely respond with emotions and lots of them!

To understand why self-justification is so destructive, we need to understand the relationship between joy and anti-joy in the brain. Our brains are wired to respond with amplified joy to anyone who is glad to be with us. When someone is not glad to be with us, we feel the anti-joy emotion of shame (*this is unhealthy shame*). When someone is not glad to be with us, we come to believe that we are worthless, unlovable, etc.

Healthy shame is how we learn from our mistakes. Little doses of healthy shame help protect the joy in everyone around us and keeps a high-joy environment. For example, in the classroom, a teacher often has to correct students. As she gently corrects a student, the student often feels shame. As a result, the student has an opportunity to change his behavior.

Some people, who do not have the gentle protector skill of learning from healthy shame, will reject all shame messages. In order to reject all shame messages, it is necessary to justify oneself (self-protection) and blame someone else or your past, etc. The bible calls this being stiff-necked. The present day term for this is narcissism.

Instead of recognizing they did something incorrectly and responding with healthy shame, they justify themselves and blame others. This self-justification destroys joy and creates a distance in the relationship. In order to avoid the healthy shame feeling, a narcissist must pounce on a weakness in the other person and/or blame them.

### HOW DOES THE WEAK BECOME ESSENTIAL?

Transformation happens when the weak and strong are together and weakness is addressed with tenderness. Without tenderness for the weak, the strong will become very possessive—of people, things, self—especially of their position. Christlike character grows when we build joy with weak people. When there is a healthy joy bond with weak people, the strong will discover they also have weaknesses. That is when real transformation can begin for everyone. James 1:27 instructs church communities to accept and care for the weak: widows, orphans, strangers and the poor, etc. Yahweh calls that “pure and undefiled religion”.

When the interactions between the weak and strong are guided by people who are mature gentle protectors, the interactions are very revealing:

- The strong discover their areas of weakness when they share. Once outside the comfort zone they created with their strength, they will discover new places to grow.
- The weak discover they have areas of strength to share with people they thought were too strong to need them.
- Everyone discovers they are strong with weak times and weak with strong times. Weakness teaches us to value and protect our group, our people.

#### REVIEW:

- We can all have predatory moments.
- We all have times of self-justification.
- We all have weaknesses that we hide from others.

#### FIVE THINGS THAT MUST BE ADDED WHEN WE DESIRE TO START AND GROW JOY:

1. We cannot lay around like possums and do nothing like the Christians did with Hitler
2. We cannot let predators go unopposed. Yeshua pointed out the predators of His day...calling them hypocrites, blind guides, snakes and a brood of vipers.
3. We must keep predators from reproducing through our children,
4. We must learn and practice gentle protector skills.
5. We must start spreading joy today.

#### EXERCISE:

- EVERY DAY practice smiling big when you greet others...let your face light up!
- Be eager to share Yahweh stories with your friends

## SUSTAINABLE JOY

Sustainable joy is based on 3 things that are not usually found together:

1. Multigenerational community,
2. Yahweh encounters,
3. Relational brain skills.

Take any of these away and joy starts falling quickly

RESTORING JOYFUL IDENTITY: There are 2 ways to be transformed.

- 1) Yeshua will awaken our hearts and heal our souls as we encounter Him on a regular basis,
- 2) A mature, stronger Christian regularly speaks truth to us concerning what Yahweh sees in us.

Both of those steps produce shalom. Shalom means that everything is in right relation, in the right place, at the right time, in the right amount. Shalom is the sense that Yahweh is working everything together in a good way even when we are not sure how. Encountering Yahweh on a regular basis produces an increasingly secure bond with Yahweh and others and a growing, increasing capacity to remain connected with Yahweh and others when things are difficult.

## FALSE JOY

All false strength comes as a result of hiding or repressing times of hurt by others. As a result, we seek protection from relationships and learn how to “take care of ourselves” or “not need anyone”—that’s attachment pain! That attachment must be restored in order to HEAL and correct the attachment pain that made us believe we needed to take care of ourselves and isolate. Once the secure attachment is restored, then we will be free of the urge to find power for ourselves.

In order for secure attachment to be restored, we need an interactive, experiential reality to see that Yahweh is with us, likes us and is for us! That’s one reason the Yahweh Encounters are so powerful—they’re experiential!

Yahweh built our brains so they are hard-wired for specific emotions and grow well only in the presence of joyful relationships. Your brain can only see your identity by remembering the past and has no idea that something better is possible.

APPRECIATION AND SHALOM: Appreciation is the best state for perceiving Yahweh’s presence whether we are alone or part of a community. Without shalom our minds amplify the upset and the problems, so the problems get bigger. Without shalom any problem becomes more important than love, attachment and relationships. That means as soon as we lose shalom we need to stop, restore our relational circuits, restore appreciation and reconnect with Yahweh and others.

## RELATIONAL CIRCUITS TEST

Do I feel connected to \_\_\_\_\_?

Do I desire to be connected to \_\_\_\_\_?

Do I perceive him/her as a relational being?

Am I aware of his/her true heart?

Do I feel compassion/concern regarding what \_\_\_\_\_ is thinking or feeling?

Do I perceive his/her presence as a source of joy (as opposed to a problem to be solved or a resource to be used)?

Am I glad to be with him/her?

If the answer to most of those questions is “no” then our relational circuits are most likely offline.

The most effective way to restore “offline” relational circuits is by someone attuning to you.

ATTUNEMENT: someone interacts with you expressing...

I see you

I hear you

I correctly understand your emotional upset

I join you in your emotions

I'm glad to be with you

*The good news is that the Lord is always with us, loves to be with us and His relational circuits are always online!*

Three Common Beliefs that Make it Difficult to Believe Yahweh is With Us and Wants to be With Us:

1. The fear that nothing will happen
2. The fear that I will be misled into replacing the bible with some mystical experience
3. The fear that I already know what Yahweh is going to say, so why ask

## WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR JOYFUL IDENTITY?

For the last 400 years the church has tried to restore godly character through education, right beliefs and right choices. Reading through the New Testament, three things are obvious to me:

1. Followers of Christ interacted with Him about everything (I can pray but never interact with Yahweh).
2. They did nothing based on fear (I did everything based on fear)
3. They loved people deeply (the thing I feared most was loving people)

RETURNING TO JOY refers to how long it takes after I get upset before I am glad to be with the person who upset me. It should take only a few seconds for mature gentle protectors. To grow this joyful identity in communities, in families, groups, etc., we need to know what happens when we experience the truth that Yahweh was with us during our times of upset and trauma. This requires learning to tell the story of what changed when we experienced Yahweh's presence and returned to joy. Telling these stories are meant to be a normal part of life.

EXERCISE: Practice sharing with a small group short stories of times in your life when you were impacted by His presence.

## RELATIONAL SANDWICHES

Relational sandwiches are a practical exercise designed to prevent problems from becoming bigger than relationships. This structure is a natural part of Hebrew thought and poetry. The sandwich looks like this: Relationship. Problem. Relationship.

Example of a relational sandwich when I'm upset with the Lord:

1. Start with the relationship (Thank you, Yahweh, for meeting all of my needs. You've always had my best interest at heart. You love me, etc...)
2. Problem (Lord, I confess that I'm worried and concerned about \_\_\_\_\_. I don't know what to do and it seems like you're a million miles away. I feel so alone and you don't seem to care, etc.)
3. End with the relationship (Lord, I know I can trust You with this. You've always been faithful and I know that You love me and you've always come through for me. Sometimes it takes a lot longer than I'd like, but I must admit that you do work all things out for my good. I love You and thank You!.)

Example of a relational sandwich when in conflict with a friend:

1. We've been friends for a long time and I really love our friendship. I love being with you.
2. Because our relationship is so important, I need to share my heart with you about something. Is this a good time? (if so, proceed). Sometimes I feel like what I have to say is not important to you because there are times when you interrupt me when I'm sharing.
3. I really want us to have a relationship where we truly love and honor each other. (*Notice that we focused on the kind of relationship we want instead of how we want the problem resolved.*)

## WHAT ARE RELATIONAL BRAIN SKILLS?

Some relational brain skills are closely tied to culture. For example, being polite, controlling ourselves, able to sleep through the night without wetting the bed, how to guess what people are thinking, smiling when we see someone, knowing to wait for someone to speak, how to calm a friend who's upset, how to avoid irritating people and so much more.

### 19 RELATIONAL BRAIN SKILLS THAT ARE CRUCIAL FOR THE FORMATION OF HEALTHY IDENTITIES

1. You are able to share joy (*glad to be with others*) and shalom (*peace, calm, all is well*)
2. Able to soothe yourself after upsetting emotions
3. Able to form healthy bonds with 2 people—and able to share a mutual state of mind that brings you closer and lets you move independently as well. Both are satisfied.
4. Able to form family bonds, bonds with 3 or more people.
5. Able to create appreciation in yourself and others—someone with this skill expresses joy everywhere they go. People who express appreciation stay in relational mode and return there quickly if their relational circuits fail. We use this skill to help others return to relational mode as well. Someone with this skill stands out by making people feel seen and celebrated. They are able to create belonging so the weak start to engage with the strong. We remember what is important

about other people, a situation or ourselves. As appreciation levels increase, problems start to shrink and life becomes more manageable. Noticing what we appreciate trains our brains to focus on the good things and, when activated, brings us together.

6. Able to identify heart values that comes from suffering—caring deeply can mean hurting deeply. Everyone has issues that particularly hurt or bother him/her and always have been the way he/she is likely to get hurt. Looking at these lifelong issues helps identify the core values for each person's unique identity. For example, when someone is repeatedly rejected it deeply wounds their heart. The suffering produces a value of accepting people because they know the sting rejection brings to a heart that cares deeply.
7. Able to tell synchronized stories. When our brain is well trained, when our capacity is high and when we're not triggered by the past, then our whole brain works together to communicate clearly and in an orderly fashion.
8. Able to identify maturity levels—we need to know our ideal maturity level so we know if our development is impaired. Knowing our general baseline maturity level tells us what the next developmental tasks will be. Knowing our immediate maturity level from moment to moment lets us know if we have just been triggered. Watching when our maturity level is slipping also tells us when our emotional capacity has been drained in us or others (*Am I responding as a child or an adult?*)
9. Able to take a breather, knowing when to stop, when to disengage. Able to recognize warning signals both visual and auditory cues in yourself and in others. We rely on mindsight to put ourselves in others shoes to accurately gauge how they are feeling and determine what they need and when to stop and rest. Those who read the nonverbal cues and let others rest are rewarded with trust and love. We honor others as we respect one another's limits and endurance. Without this skill, we simply overwhelm others and feel overwhelmed ourselves. People feel guarded around us. Our face, voice, words, intensity and invasion of personal space makes others feel like they cannot let down their guard. The young, elderly and weak will shut down. Not stopping always lowers joy levels.
10. Able to tell nonverbal stories (*body language, tone of voice, facial expressions*).
11. Able to return to joy from the big 6 feelings (*Fear, anger, sadness, disgust, shame and hopeless despair*). You are able to quickly resolve those “not glad to be together” moments.
12. You are able to be your true self in the midst of the big 6 emotions
13. You are able to see what Yahweh sees. This empowers you to perceive situations the way Yahweh sees them, free from distractions. “Lord, what do You see here?” We are able to remember that Yahweh is with us. Hope and direction come from seeing situations, others and ourselves the way they were meant to be instead of only seeing what went wrong. Without this skill, our focus remains on the hurt and pain people cause by their actions or inactions. We get stuck on offenses, hurts, unforgiveness, bitterness, frustrations and wounds when Yahweh-sight drops out. We will experience anxiety, fear, unrest and much turmoil. Conflicts do not get resolved.
14. Able to stop his/her flesh nature. False god-sight may seem true at the moment, but it leads to blame, accusation, condemnation, gossip, resentment, legalism, self-justification and self-righteousness. This Greek word refers to seeing others from our personal view—we tell ourselves a story of who people are and how things should be. This conviction that I know or can determine the right thing to do or be is the opposite of Yahweh-sight.

15. Are quite interactive. Facial cues, particularly of fear, help us to know when we are pushing others too hard. For example: knowing when to stop tickling someone so it stays fun.
16. You are able to recognize high and low energy response—recognizing who tends to respond with high energy (*adrenalin based emotions*) and who would rather withdraw empowers us to respond accordingly.
17. You are able to identify attachment styles. How well we synchronize our attachments early in life leave the most enduring pattern in our personality. These patterns change the way we experience reality. At one end, we may give almost no importance to our feelings or relationships and at the other we may feel hurt almost constantly and think of nothing but feelings and people. We may also become afraid of the very people we need.
18. Able to intervene where your brain is stuck
19. Able to recover from complex emotions, handle combinations of the big 6 emotions—able to return to joy and act like ourselves with the 6 big emotions. Once we can return to joy and be ourselves with one of the 6 big negative feelings taken one at a time, we can then begin to learn how to return to joy and be ourselves when the 6 are combined in various combinations. Shame and anger combine to form humiliation. Fear and hopelessness (with almost any other feeling as well) form dread. These combination feelings can be very draining and difficult to quiet.

The main reason joy is essential for propagating brain skills is that these skills will not spread without a bonded relationship, and joy provides that bond. For example...let's take the skill of "knowing how and when to stop". If I do not know how to stop, and I cannot read the other person's non-verbal signals correctly or activate the correct parasympathetic, vagal nerve branch in response to the signals I do see, then it will not help me if someone tells me to stop the next time. It will not help if I want to stop the next time. The skill doesn't propagate on command or with verbal instructions in my brain.

Christians and educators have long tried to teach character skills through instruction, lectures, bible studies, sermons etc. That would be good if I knew how to stop but just didn't want to. If I could, then once persuaded, I'd change. But for those who don't have the skill, no choice can activate the correct parasympathetic, vagal nerve branch and make them stop. Relational brain skills must be learned and practiced with gentle protectors.

#### HOW DO WE PROPAGATE RELATIONAL SKILLS?

In order for this to be accomplished there must be:

1. A bond between the people
2. Active, face to face, real time engagement
3. A mutual mind state (this is being able to look into the eyes of a loved one and "know" what they are feeling/thinking because of the bond between the two of you)
4. Repeatedly using the mutual mind state skill until the untrained mind learns it
5. Telling the story of the mutual mind state interaction when we want people to propagate the skill intentionally

Just like whistling, we need interaction between someone who can whistle in order to learn the skill. The world has changed so much that it has greatly reduced the number of face-to-face, mutual mind interactions we have in a day. Our technology blocks the mutual mind states required for skill propagation. Smart phones, watching TV, texting, calling and posting your life on social media...all of these are 100% barriers for propagation of these critical relational skills.

Electronics rewire your brain, particularly for low-joy people. Neuroscience tells us that the brains of the younger generation today actually are formed differently from those who are over 60 years old because of the frequent use of electronics. A technologically wired brain has a difficult time resting and shutting off. It has a difficult time calming down. It has a difficult time going to sleep. This lack of rest drives joy levels even lower. Texting does not have the same effect as hearing someone we love laugh.

When essential relational skills are missing, families pass on anger, alcoholism, narcissism, drug abuse, violence, neglect and vulnerabilities. Someone must be the joy starter to bring joy back into low joy families/churches/people. Tenderness and Yahweh encounters are crucial, if we want to help others return to joy. Paul said in Gal 6:1 “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.”

SUMMARY: First, we are all born weak and unskilled into families that have some skills but not others. Every time there has been some kind of trauma to our ancestors, there is a great likelihood that gentle protector skills were lost. Each time skills were lost, we were left with more of our predator brain structure exposed. Because it requires less skill and training, the predatory brain will propagate every time protector skills are lost. As predators increase, our cultures fail to respond tenderly to weakness and joy levels drop.

## GENTLE PROTECTORS

Protectors generally approach others by showing them a weakness first. At the same time, protectors keep the attention on the other person. Powerful leaders will sit down and listen and then say something like, “Would you help me understand something?” Or “I wonder if you could explain...”. They present their need to understand exposing they don’t know everything. The transparency of the protector is crucial to any progress.

Protectors present themselves in vulnerable ways that expose weaknesses they could just as easily keep hidden. Protectors speak about the importance of the relationship and group identity more than they speak about the problems. They use the relational sandwich (*Relationship-Problem-Relationship*) to solve problems. The protector’s consistency, emotional availability and calm presence create a healthy bond to grow new skills.

## EXERCISES:

1. Question to ask yourself when you FEEL TRIGGERED: What would I most likely do if I wasn't so angry, afraid, or anxious right now? Simply asking this question will reset your nervous system and help your relational circuits come back online. You then have a choice to be your true self.
2. Once you are relational, model transparency by explaining your internal process to everyone you "hurt" by your behavior or to whoever hurt you. For example: "Because I care about you, I want to tell you what happened to me. When I snapped at you, my feelings were bigger and more important in my mind than our relationship. My relational circuits were off and I could no longer be my true self. You are important to me and so is our relationship. Please forgive me. I apologize for hurting you because you are a dear friend."
3. Stay in close relationship to those who are both upstream and downstream from you.

John 15:11 These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you and that your joy may be full."

- Joy starts with Yeshua. And his church should be full of joy.
- Joy starts with us.
- Joy is the birthright of the followers of Yeshua.
- Joy is your brain's deepest desire.

## HOW TO IDENTIFY PEOPLE WHO HAVE GENTLE PROTECTOR SKILLS

Gentle Protectors are:

- caring and warm,
- inviting, joyful,
- approachable,
- relational,
- are consistent and transparent.
- genuine and comfortable in their own shoes.
- they create belonging and stay attentive to opportunities to share their joy.
- they do not hoard nor do they take from the weak.
- they give generously.
- they take care of themselves when feeling tired, 6 big emotions, overwhelmed, accused, etc.
- they tend to greet others, look out for the elderly and play with the children.
- and sometimes they are the quiet ones preparing coffee in the kitchen.

## EXERCISE:

- Who are 5 reliable, joyful people you know?
- How can I learn to be a gentle protector? (*Spend time with those who already have the skills*)
- How can stories propagate gentle protector skills? Interactive life stories (*stories that share the problem, and how we experienced Yahweh in the midst of processing it*) are one of the best ways to propagate gentle protector skills. Stories should be short and focused. Stories must give

listeners enough details to understand the context for what we are saying. Stories improve with practice and with feedback so we invite listeners to share how they felt

#### A SELF CHECK-UP: HOW AM I DOING?

1. What happens when I feel angry, sad, afraid, disgusted, ashamed and hopeless?
2. How do I respond when others around me feel the 6 emotions listed above?
3. Do I increase joy levels (*I'm glad to be with you*) when someone is upset?
4. Who are the people who can help me improve my return to joy skills?

#### PRACTICING JOY ENCOUNTERS WITH FRIENDS

1. **SHARE APPRECIATION/JOY STORIES** that show how Yahweh was with you, what He did/said, how you felt before and after, etc. Tell others what we appreciated about His presence—this keeps our relational circuits active. When we express appreciation for the Lord and for each other, we begin to build joy. When the strong appreciate the weak, we begin to change for the better and feel joy. By telling stories of how we found Yahweh's presence and what changed as a result, we help others to recognize the presence of shalom or its absence. We learn the skills and then teach others.
2. **GENTLE PROTECTORS** are necessary for joy to grow in a group. Learning to “experience” the truth Yahweh is with us in our weakness and pain only happens where gentle protectors are recognized, and predators are denied leadership roles or easy access to the weak (frightened possums). One of the reasons predators should not be allowed access to the weak is that the predators are very happy to tell the weak what Yahweh thinks of them which is never true. Remember, words of predators do not bring shalom. Gentle protectors must practice seeing others through the eyes of Yahweh.
3. **SEEK SHALOM.** The most common reason we do not return to joy is that we are not accustomed to stop and seek Yahweh's presence/shalom when we are upset with others or even upset with ourselves. We don't notice our relational circuits are off, which prevents shalom. We do not notice that the people we are with need help when they lose their cool because we lost our shalom with them. Pay attention to whether shalom is missing or present. When shalom is missing, we must stop and express appreciation for Yahweh.
4. **SEEK JOY, SEEK YESHUA WHO IS ALWAYS GLAD TO BE WITH US.** If we have lived in low joy and had to work hard to please others, we tend to approach Yahweh as someone else we must please. Trying to solve the problem of pleasing Yahweh on our own, based on our performance is called legalism. When we force ourselves to follow rules as though we can achieve a righteousness of our own and live without sin, it does not produce shalom, feeling special, or known, valuable, validated or comforted. It actually produces the opposite—stress, anxiety, fear, comparison, self-focused living, etc. If we continue living in attachment pain, it will create legalism—and that's no way to live.
5. **SPREAD JOY EVERYWHERE YOU GO!** Everywhere you go make sure everyone you encounter is met with a smile and a heart that says, “I'm so glad to be with you!” Make this a constant way of living through the indwelling presence of the One who is Joy! Sharing joy helps build the group identity—family, friends, co-workers, fellow Christians, and even strangers.

6. JOY IS FOREVER! For all eternity, throughout the ages yet to come, Yeshua will be expressing to us just how glad He is to be with us! He made us to experience the joy of His presence and we get to practice now!

#### PROCESSING TRAUMA WITH THE BRAIN YAHWEH GAVE US

When we encounter a painful event, our brain works very hard to process the painful experience through a very specific pathway. There are very specific processing tasks that must BE completed if pain is to be healed. If not then it is stored as trauma.

#### THE PATHWAY NEEDED TO PROCESS A PAINFUL EVENT LOOKS LIKE THIS:

1. Maintain secure attachment
2. Stay relational
3. Stay connected
4. Navigate the situation in a Christlike manner
5. Correctly interpret the painful experience

When we are able to successfully complete this journey, we can come through the painful experience without being traumatized. When we successfully process a painful experience we don't just stuff it, forget it, or think about something else. We actually process it and we grow stronger, wiser and more mature.

When we aren't able to follow the processing journey, then that painful experience becomes a traumatic experience (even something that is minor can result in trauma) and the memories of it will contain unresolved toxic content. *(One of those toxins is called mycotoxins, which is the greatest cancer causing substance our bodies produce. This fact alone should motivate us to do the work of healing our past).*

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*Trauma is the result of a painful experience that has not been successfully processed*

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When something happens in the present that reminds your brain of a past traumatic memory, the "file" containing that past unresolved traumatic memory is "opened". The past emotions, beliefs, thoughts, lies, etc. flood to the surface and become part of what the person feels in the present, whether you realize it or not (that is implicit memory). We call that "being triggered". When your response is out of proportion to what just happened it is most likely past emotions, beliefs, thoughts and lies that are coming forward and blending with the present day event. This can cause all kinds of problems: such as addictions, physical symptoms, PTSD, anxiety disorders, depression, eating disorders, to name a few.

#### THE PATHWAY NEEDED TO PROCESS A PAINFUL EVENT LOOKS LIKE THIS:

1. Maintain secure attachment (4<sup>th</sup> attachment style)
2. Stay relational
3. Stay connected
4. Navigate the situation in a Christlike manner
5. Correctly interpret the painful experience

## ATTACHMENT STYLES FORMED AS AN INFANT

1. **DISMISSIVE/AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT**—is formed when primary caregivers reject, dismiss and ignore your emotional state or disregard the importance of emotional connections. As a result, you learn to work diligently to not want or need emotional connections. You don't feel seen, heard, or connected. There will be the absence of emotional intimacy because your caregivers don't offer it because they don't believe it's important.
2. **DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT**—when the primary caregiver repeatedly does things that are frightening, overwhelming and chaotic. The caregiver is the cause of your emotional instability instead of being the comfort and safety you need. As a result, you feel that you need to be with the person and get away from the person at the same time. You will be afraid to leave the person, but if you stay, you believe something awful will happen. As an adult, you will feel the same way in relationships—you believe you need to stay in the relationship in order to be okay, but you will also want to get away because you believe you are unsafe and will get hurt.
3. **DISTRACTED ATTACHMENT**—when the primary caregivers are unpredictable in respect to relational and emotional connections. On good days, they attune well and respond well. At other times, when you need emotional connections, they are distracted and emotionally unavailable. You can't depend on the person to be there for you in times of upset. As an adult, you have a very difficult time trusting people. You won't depend on others. You won't allow yourself to be vulnerable.
4. **SECURE ATTACHMENT**—is established when primary caregivers are available when you need them, attune to you repeatedly and consistently, and demonstrate successful conflict resolution. There's emotional connection and attunement. As a result, you become aware that conflict will happen, but become confident there's a solution. You learn that relationships can be stable, safe, deep and can survive whatever upset may come.

Throughout our lives, secure attachment is vital to being emotionally healthy and mature. When we have secure attachment relational style we will want to be near the people we are attached to and, in their presence, we find comfort and safety during upsetting times.

### EXERCISE:

What kind of attachment style did you experience as a baby/child?

What kind of attachment style do you have today?

## TWO KINDS OF MEMORY

**EXPLICIT MEMORY**—this is what we call 'remembering'. This is when we are able to recall a memory from my past. You may remember many details or just a few. For example: what did you do this morning? That is conscious memory.

**IMPLICIT MEMORY**—is a type of memory, but it isn't like normal memory. Implicit memory is often referred to as invisible memory, since it usually affects us without being seen by our conscious minds.

When an implicit memory is activated, we are subconsciously remembering an actual memory, but we aren't aware of the details of the memory—the memory stays behind the screen, so the speak. Because it doesn't feel like a normal memory, we usually don't have any awareness that we are remembering or being affected by past experiences.

When something in the present triggers a traumatic memory, the unresolved content from the traumatic memory, such as the distorted beliefs and emotions connected to the original traumatic experience will 'surface' as invisible implicit memory that feels true and valid in the present. In other words, something happens that upsets you and subconsciously a similar event/memory file opens containing the memory plus all of its beliefs and emotions around that memory. But the actual memory will be invisible/behind the scenes to your conscious mind.

For example: When I was a child, I never knew what would cause my dad to respond in angry outbursts of violence. So, I worked very hard to be good and not being seen and never making a mistake. After I married Danny, I was amazed at how kind he was and rarely got upset. I remember a time I spilled a glass of tea and suddenly, all of the feelings from an unresolved traumatic memory from my past came rushing forward. I didn't know that was what was happening. I responded in a defensive mode—like I did as a child—I froze waiting for him to be angry and hit me or yell or worse. I never thought my past trauma was affecting me in the present. Danny had never expressed anger or abuse towards me. But my implicit memories took over my present reality and I was certain he was going to hit me or at least yell at me. That's implicit memory at work.

Implicit memory brings with it all of the emotions, beliefs and behaviors from the past, which is perceived by your brain as if those thoughts and emotions are true and valid in the present. And the difficulty with implicit memories is that you have no idea you overreacted or wrongly responded or accused someone of doing something they didn't do. Your feelings and responses will seem real and true to you! Most often, you justify your reaction while blaming the other person for upsetting you.

### VERBAL LOGICAL EXPLAINER

Triggers alert us to the fact that we have unresolved trauma. Triggers can bring up implicit memories. Many things can trigger us—people, places, things, smells, situations, which trigger emotions.

The job of the VLE is to come up with explanations that help us organize and make sense of our experiences and the world around us. Most of the time, that is a good thing unless you are triggered. Your VLE is constantly coming up with explanations that help you make sense out of your life, and it usually happens so quickly and smoothly that we don't even notice them. But, if your VLE starts with distorted and/or inadequate information, it can come up with profoundly flawed explanations.

For example the story about spilling a glass of tea and getting hurt as a child. As an adult, I spilled a glass of tea and instantly my VLE alerted me I was in danger of being hurt. Your VLE will instantly come up with a plan to protect you. Your VLE also has an amazing ability to make things up, and this amazing ability to fabricate is often accompanied by an absence of self-awareness.

The point is that your VLE will quickly and smoothly come up with an explanation for why and how your present circumstance is causing you to experience intense emotions. Your thoughts and emotions are actually content from the unresolved trauma coming forward as implicit memory, but you don't know that consciously. And, unfortunately, the confabulated, flawed VLE explanations feel valid and accurate. It takes a lot of intentional practice to perceive the difference between valid explanations and flawed, confabulated explanations from your VLE.

When unresolved trauma, implicit memory and VLE explanations surface, you will try to resolve your pain/upset by focusing on what triggered you in the present, as if that is the true source of the implicit memory traumatic content. And if the trigger happens to be caused by another person's behavior, you will try to resolve your painful thoughts and emotions by trying to make that person change their "terrible" behavior!

Another important part of this whole implicit memory and VLE confabulation picture is that when someone does something that triggers an unresolved traumatic memory in me, it will feel intensely true that the one who triggered me should take responsibility for causing my pain. And the thing is, I don't just want the person who triggered me to take responsibility for the pain caused by his/her behavior. But I will want him/her to confess, apologize and make restitution as if he/she caused all of my pain. And if he/she doesn't do this, then I will not feel heard, understood, validated, safe or ready for reconciliation until he/she makes it right. And because I believe the person in the present is guilty, I won't look for any underlying memories in me that might be adding to my pain.

Relational conflicts are messy and difficult to sort out because there's almost always triggering and imperfection on both sides. In other words, it would be wise for us to learn to never blame, judge, criticize, or point your finger at another person.

## DENIAL AND SELF-DECEPTION

I think it's important to point out another aspect of our triggers has to do with the fact that most of us don't really want to know just how dysfunctional we really are. We don't want to see just how often we are triggered. We don't want to acknowledge just how many of our perceptions, thoughts and emotions are actually implicit memories coming from unresolved trauma in our past.

And we don't want to see just how many of our explanations are actually VLE confabulations trying to justify our triggered reactions. So, we ignore our overreactions and blame others for our upset. This is not Christ-like!

## OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD

The most important impact from all of this is the fact that implicit memories and the VLE confabulated stories can affect our relationship with the Lord in the same way it affects our relationships with others. If we are triggered by some aspect of our interaction with the Lord, then this can result in traumatic implicit memory and VLE confabulations being transferred onto Him. Depending on our past traumas, we may

see the Lord as mostly angry, distant, uncaring, unloving, etc. If so, when we need His help, we will confabulate a story explaining why He isn't helping or why we won't even ask for his help.

After facilitating thousands of encounters, I'm convinced that if we cannot perceive Yahweh's presence it's because there's something in us blocking Him because the Lord ALWAYS wants to be with us. I believe the most important reason we should seek inner healing is because it removes the blockages and hindrances that keep us from being in the presence of the One who longs to be with us! And the second reason is because healing removes the blockages and hindrances that keep us from being able to love others the way Yahweh loves them.

### TRANSFERENCE

Often, unresolved traumatic memories that come forward as invisible implicit memory are transferred onto others. For example, because my earthly dad was blatantly unfaithful to my mom, I feared and expected Danny would be unfaithful. At the end of every day, I would question him over and over about who he talked to, etc. This went on for years. I was just waiting for him to be unfaithful. My implicit memories kept me in prison. It wasn't Danny that had the problem—it was me. Yet, I believed it was him so I didn't do anything about me.

We can easily transfer the toxic content of implicit memories onto the Lord. If our father was absent, angry, violent, abusive, etc. it's easy to transfer that onto the Lord.

#### EXERCISE:

List at least 3 adjectives that describe the relationship you had with your earthly father:

How did you relate to your father?

Now, ask the Holy Spirit if you see your heavenly Father like that?

How do you relate to your heavenly Father?

List 3 adjectives that describe the relationship you had with your earthly mother:

How did you relate to her? Do I see the Holy Spirit like this?

Ask yourself: How do I relate to the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER Lord, my earthly father was\_\_\_\_\_. I know this has affected my relationship with You. I ask You to forgive me and help me, I pray. Will you show me the truth? Are you like my earthly father?  
Lord, my earthly mother was\_\_\_\_\_. I know this has affected my relationship with You. Will You show me the truth? Are you like my earthly mother?

#### REVIEW OF KEY POINTS:

- Psychological trauma can be caused by painful events that may seem minor, so traumatic memories are much more common than most people realize.
- When traumatic memories surface, the toxic content they carry comes forward and powerfully affects our perceptions, thoughts, beliefs, emotions, abilities and choices

- This traumatic, toxic content comes forward as invisible implicit memory, so that it feels true in the present and is not recognized as coming from underlying unresolved trauma.
- Our VLE's come up with explanations that focus on the triggering event/person in the present.
- Our central nervous system fills in most of the holes in the VLE confabulated explanations and good old denial and self-deception take care of anything that is left over.
- The end result is that we usually believe the VLE confabulated story, accept the implicit memory content as true in the present, and blame the triggers as if they are the original source of the pain and upset instead of realizing that stored pain is being transferred onto the present situation/person.
- If we BELIEVE that a person is responsible for the triggering situation, we will only feel heard, validated, safe and ready for reconciliation IF that person takes full responsibility for my implicit memory traumatic content. This creates an impossible situation because that person can't honestly do that—because they didn't cause the pain that has surfaced from the past.
- Most importantly, if we are triggered by some aspect of our relationship, or lack thereof, with the Lord, then all of the above dynamics will result in traumatic implicit memory content and VLE confabulations interfering with and may even block us from encountering Him.
- Last but not least, there's another reason why it's important to resolve our traumatic memories. As we age, the frontal lobes of our brains are especially affected, and the defenses we use to manage our unresolved issues are progressively weakened. As our coping mechanisms weaken, we become progressively more reactive and dysfunctional unless we also heal and mature. In other words, as you age, you will increasingly walk around in your psychological and spiritual underwear. It may be important to wash our underwear as we grow old and others get to see it!
- If we follow the pain processing path by staying connected with others and with Yahweh, we will resolve the past trauma permanently and it will no longer have any toxic memories that can cause trouble by coming forward as implicit memory.
- The first half of the HEALING journey is exposing and healing traumatic implicit memory and VLE confabulations.

## THE HEALING PROCESS

Encountering the Lord is the number one “method” we use to not only see traumas from our past healed, but the thing I love most about God encounters is the bonding and relationship that happens between the person and the LORD. Every memory that gets healed means you are one step closer to putting the past behind you. The truth is, none of us will be finished with all of our traumatic memories until we are with the Lord.

### HOW DO WE ACCESS TRAUMATIC MEMORIES?

If the traumatic memory is presenting itself as an implicit memory behind the scenes and if the person will receive your attunement their relational circuits will come on-line and you can offer to further help them find the true source of pain. If the person hasn't accessed the past trauma, the best way is to lead them in a God encounter session.

## FACILITATING GOD ENCOUNTER SESSIONS:

1. Always begin with praise and thanksgiving (that helps get their relational circuits online)
2. Ask them to give their imagination to the Lord; ask Him to cleanse it and fill it with Himself
3. Ask if they were to encounter Yeshua right now, where would they like that to take place
4. Once they've connected ask them to describe the safe place, ask if they'd like to invite the LORD to join them there
5. Ask Him to reveal the root traumatic memory connected to the present day trigger event
6. Once the memory surfaces, look for Yeshua in the memory—He was there—He is everywhere, all of the time
7. If you get stuck, ask Yeshua for help. Ask what He wants to do, share how you felt, etc.
8. Stay connected with Yeshua throughout the process. If you get disconnected, go back to the beginning where you were connected and spend some time thanking Him.
9. Ask Yahweh/Yeshua to show you the real truth, not what you think or believe to be true. Repent, if needed.
10. Ask Him to heal and comfort you

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*If we are able to perceive Yahweh's presence and connect with Him, the healing process is very simple.*

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## WHAT DO I DO WHEN A TRAUMATIC MEMORY SURFACES?

When an implicit traumatic memory surfaces, we can partially neutralize the implicit memory and VLE confabulations by:

1. recognizing and acknowledging that (a lot, most, or some) of what I'm feeling is coming from the past
2. making a choice to change my behavior and attitude based on being Christlike

The simple act of acknowledging that I'm triggered, helps me make a choice to not respond negatively or at all. This will greatly reduce my traumatic implicit memory and VLE confabulations. Understanding and acknowledging that I'm triggered opens up the possibility that much of my emotions (fear, anxiety, anger, frustration, etc.) belong in the original memory and not in the present situation. Now, I can do something about it that will be effective and helpful to everyone involved.

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## YAHWEH IS ALWAYS PRESENT

Encountering Yahweh is easier the more we believe that Yahweh is *always* with us, that He *always* wants to help. If we are unable to perceive His presence or receive His help, it's because there is something on our side of the equation that's in our way. When we are convinced of those truths, then when an underlying trauma presents itself subconsciously...and the present day trigger feels real and true...and the VLE explanations still feel valid,...then we are able to stop their damaging effects by recognizing and acknowledging them for what they are...and then change our behavior based on the fact that Yahweh is always with us and we know that He will help us process our pain.

## TRIGGERING AND RESOLVING UNDERLYING TRAUMA

Instead of following our old pattern of focusing on what triggered us, we can choose to surrender our confabulated explanations and accusations and then turn to the LORD, asking two questions:

1. “What am I doing that’s hindering me from perceiving Your presence right now?”
2. “And what choice do I need to make to take the next step forward?”

Those two questions are very effective in opening the door for healing and breakthrough. Instead of defending or fighting to protect myself, the goal is for me to be able to engage in constructive conversation where I can attune and be open-minded, compassionate, generous, patient and flexible. But that can’t happen if I’m triggered. When you realize that you are defending yourself, stop talking. Take a breath. Consciously relax your body. At times, it’s best to simply say (*something like this*), “Our relationship is very important to me. But I’m triggered right now, which means I’m not safe to myself or to you. So, I’m going to step away until I can get my relational circuits back on-line. Because you are so important to me, I will come back so we can work this out in a way that’s not hurtful.”

Remember, defending yourself is a Joy killer—every time! It’s also the most destructive position to take in a relationship. It takes a seasoned gentle protector to be able to have joy (want to be with you) when you’re self-protecting.

Simply recognizing and acknowledging our traumatic implicit memory and VLE confabulations (*the implicit toxic memory and the present day trigger—the VLE then confabulates a story defending yourself and usually blaming the person who triggered you*) is a necessary prerequisite for exposing and resolving underlying trauma. We can’t deal with the underlying traumatic memories until we acknowledge we are triggered and then surrender the VLE confabulation, which often blames others for causing our upset.

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*We can’t receive healing for our unresolved traumas until we acknowledge that they exist.*

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The best way to uncover the hidden implicit trauma memory, is to encounter the Lord and ask Him to show you why you feel the way you feel—FOR EXAMPLE: “Lord, Sally just totally ignored me! She knows how important friendships are to me and she walked right by me so she could talk to Jane! She knows that I’m super sensitive to rejection—after all, I’ve told her many times to stop doing this to me. and here she is again hurting my feelings! But Lord, I went to this brain seminar and there was this lady who was so glad to be with me. She told me about some confabulation and a VLE of some sort and she said for me to stop and ask You, Lord, before I go lecture Sally as to her evil ways. So, I guess I’ll give it a try. Lord, would you show me if there’s a memory that is hiding behind the rejection and pain that I feel right now?”

SOMETIMES IT’S EASY AND SOMETIMES IT’S REALLY HARD TO FOLLOW THE HEALING PATH OF:

1. Engaging in the ongoing process of healing traumatic memories
2. Recognizing when we are being affected by traumatic memories
3. Make behavioral choices based on the truth and not on our triggers/emotions
4. Seeking the Lord (or a Gentle Protector) to help you process the traumatic memories

## WHY IS IT SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TO RECOGNIZE AND ACKNOWLEDGE OUR TRAUMATIC IMPLICIT MEMORY AND VLE CONFABULATIONS?

1. Traumatic, suppressed memories come forward as “invisible” implicit memories that feel true in the present
2. VLE confabulations bring the toxic emotions and beliefs of the original trauma and blends them together with the present event in such a convincing way that it feels intensely true that what just happened is the source of my upset and the person who triggered me is at fault—100%!
3. Our central nervous system fill in the “holes” in our suppressed memories
4. Our self-deception, denial, choosing to look the other way, choosing to blame others, keeps us convinced the problem is present tense.
5. When the trauma surfaces, it does so based on the age we were when the trauma happened. Therefore, those beliefs and emotions will be based on the child’s age at the time of the trauma and will blend with our present trigger. Our response to the trigger will often reflect the age of the implicit memory. For ex: when I was 7 years old, my mother told us she was picking us kids up from school that day plus 3 of our cousins. She told us to stay by the bike stand until she came. I’m a rule follower, so I headed for bike stand even though it was pouring down rain. My mom came and picked up everyone but me (they stayed in the school until she drove up). I was standing by the bike stand in the rain. My mom got home and only then realized I was missing. Of course, she hurried back to get me. When she drove up, I was huddled in the mud by the bike stand. Mom corrected me for not staying inside...when I got in the car, my siblings and cousins were laughing at me. I felt scared, forgotten, alone, and powerless! No one helped me process the trauma of being the only kid left at school, in the rain so all of those feelings got locked away in the treasure chest of my memories. Fast forward to a time when I was about 30 years old. I’d joined 3 other ladies from church to go shopping in a town about 1.5 hours away. We stopped at a restaurant on the way for lunch. After lunch, I went in the bathroom and my friends decided to play a prank on me. They rushed out to the car and took off down the road. I came out of the bathroom and looked around. I didn’t see them so I went outside and saw that the car was gone. Instantly, I turned into that scared, alone, forgotten 7 year old! This was before cell phones. I couldn’t speak. I couldn’t move. I was shaking from head to toe. I felt powerless! It seemed like a very long time before they pulled up in front of me—everyone was laughing, everyone but me. Like a robot, I got in the car and tried not to cry—after all grown women don’t cry over something this silly. But 7 year old girls do. I couldn’t understand why they didn’t know better than to do that. I spent the rest of the time with them trying to figure out why they thought it was funny and why they couldn’t see that I was very upset—I became a possum. In my eyes, they were now predators and I never went on another trip with them anywhere. Sadly, they weren’t to blame. I was the one who had the problem.

### INFANTS: EXTERNAL CONTROL

A young child expects others to take care of them, to feed them, to do the work. Because that is true, if an implicit memory surfaces that occurred at a young age then the adult you may expect others to take care of your problems, to apologize when they don’t, and make sure you are okay. A healthy, mature adult

would understand that we are responsible to recognize, acknowledge and resolve *their* traumatic memories by doing the work and not by blaming others.

When we were infants, it was developmentally appropriate for us to:

1. View the world as the adults having all the control and power, which is called the external lotus of control (as opposed to internal lotus of control, which is the control and power residing within ourselves).
  - For example, when I was an infant, it was often true that the pain I experienced was caused by someone else's failure (*someone forgot to feed me on time or change my diaper or meet my emotional, relational needs, didn't bond with me, didn't keep me warm/cool, etc.*).
  - It was also true that it was someone else's responsibility to fix the problem (*I couldn't feed myself or change my diaper, etc.*).
  - And it was usually true that my only responsibility was to express my unhappiness by crying and then wait for someone to do something to make me feel better.
  - It was also understood that I would become increasingly upset if someone didn't fix the problem soon.

These perceptions, emotions and choices were accurate and appropriate when I was a baby. The problem comes when I'm an adult and this infant behavior gets triggered as implicit memory. Guess what happens? I act like a baby/infant/child—whatever age the implicit memory is attached to. And that behavior feels accurate and appropriate in the present. When a situation triggers implicit memories/emotions that belong to an infant, it will feel intensely true that it's someone else's fault that I'm in pain—the Lord, a person—let's just say Bob.

It will feel intensely true that it's Bob's responsibility to figure out how to help me feel better and how to fix the problem. It will feel intensely true that it's reasonable for me to simply wait for him to do his job. And it will feel intensely true that it's reasonable for me to become increasingly upset with him if the problem isn't solved in a timely fashion. Anytime a situation in the present reminds my brain of a past unhealed trauma it will trigger those beliefs, emotions and choices, and the same scenario unfolds. This pattern of behavior can apply to the Lord and to others at the same time.

Triggered thoughts and emotions from implicit memories and VLE confabulations can feel so true in the present that you will feel justified to behave toward others in inappropriate, and hurtful ways. This often results in lack of openness to hear any input from others, lack of insight, entitlement and lack of apology. If this is your spouse or close friend, or the Lord...it can and usually will create a distance or separation.

As an older child, it is appropriate and developmentally normal to ask for help when you aren't able to solve a problem or complete a task. In doing so, it's healthy for that child to believe an adult will help them. It's normal for that child to wait for the adult to figure out what kind of help is needed and then do it. The problem comes when I'm an adult, and I get triggered. Unknowingly, content from my past as an older child gets triggered forward as implicit memory causing me to believe other people or the LORD should figure out my problems and be the solution. When this happens, it will feel intensely true that I've done everything I'm able to do for myself and the problem is too big for me so I've asked for help, and now it's other people's responsibility (or the Lord's) to give me the help I need and fix my problem. And

if they don't do so in a timely manner, it will feel intensely true that it is reasonable for me to become increasingly upset with them.

THE TRUTH: if I believe I'm stuck because the Lord or others aren't giving me the help I believe I need, and that it's the responsibility of others to identify and resolve my problems then that will prevent me from being able to receive the help others are offering.

If I feel dependent and helpless; and if I choose to wait passively for them to deal with my problems, then I won't own my responsibility as an adult. I won't ask the Lord to show me what I need to do differently in order to discover what is blocking me.

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#### ATTUNEMENT

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I see you	...you feel seen
I hear you	...you feel heard
I correctly understand your internal experience	...you feel understood
I join you in your emotions	...you feel I am with you
I genuinely care about you	...you feel that I care about you
I am glad to be with you	...you feel that I am glad to be with you

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If someone is going through a traumatic experience and he/she has someone who attunes to them, he/she will almost never be traumatized. That means, those implicit memories that surfaced were not attuned to. That also means, when the implicit memory and VLE confabulation surfaces, the person will often feel alone, unseen, not heard, not cared for, that no one wants to be with them, no one understands.

For example: Because I wasn't attuned to as a child, when I'd get triggered as an adult, and someone tried to point out that I was upset without first attuning to me—I would feel deep pain because the absence of attunement from the original trauma got activated ("bled" into the present day experience). When that happened, all the pain of not being attuned to as a child surfaced as implicit memory, and I just wanted to be alone, (*I was a possum*). It felt true that no one would help me anyway, no one cared, no one wanted to be with me, no one notices me...so it's better to just pull inside myself or get out of the house, get away from the source of the pain.

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#### DESIRE FOR VALIDATION AND AGREEMENT

When a painful event happens, we want others to validate the difficulty of the situation, and to agree with our assessment of what happened—that's human nature. The problem with this is that the present painful triggering event most likely has implicit past memory content mixed in with your perception and feelings of the present day event. That means, let's just say Bob, will want others to validate the intensity of his pain in the present—Bob isn't usually aware that a portion of his pain is from the implicit memory. Bob want others to validate his pain as belonging to the present situation. And he wants them to acknowledge that the size and intensity of his reactions are reasonable. Bob will also want us to agree with his VLE

confabulated explanations and that the triggers in the present are the true source of his pain. However, others can't validate and agree with integrity with Bob's confabulated explanations or his overreaction or wrong responses. And when we withhold the expected and needed validation and agreement that Bob craves, he will usually feel disappointed, frustrated, invalidated, disbelieved and misunderstood. Then, if someone dares to suggest that he might be triggered, it feels intensely true to Bob that they are saying that his implicit memory perceptions, thoughts and emotions are unreasonable, and it will feel as if they are invalidating his perceptions, thoughts and emotions.

Often, the one who is triggered because of implicit VLE confabulations will almost always accuse others by saying something like, "You aren't listening to me! You aren't hearing me! I don't feel heard. I'm trying to tell you, but you won't listen." (*If you feel this way or have someone who says this to you, especially if they respond this way during times of upset, it is almost always true that there are implicit memories blended in with the present day upset.*)

After Bob tells you that you aren't listening to him, then he will blame you (*either in his heart or with his mouth or both*). Bob most likely will also believe that the one who triggered him is blaming him or defending himself (*or both*) instead of apologizing and asking for Bob's forgiveness. This is a big reason why conflict resolution is so difficult!

#### FEELING IT'S UNSAFE TO ACKNOWLEDGE RESPONSIBILITY

Many of us have had experiences where it wasn't safe to acknowledge that we did something wrong—in my world, it always brought pain. Because that happened in my past, when someone suggested that I might be wrong, it would activate that past traumatic reality that I wasn't safe because it's never safe to acknowledge that I did something wrong. That made me feel that I wasn't safe in the present and this person who was telling me I did something wrong was no longer safe. I'd either get defensive and throw out a VLE confabulation or I'd turn into a possum and say nothing. That kept me from taking responsibility for my actions. Not good.

It's so important that we remain gentle protectors with everyone, all of the time—especially when they have done wrong. Please understand that I was the one who had the "problem"...not the person confronting me. But what is important is that we are gentle protectors who create a safe environment for others to learn and grow. In that space, we can learn that it's ok to not be perfect and it's ok to make mistakes.

#### RELATIONAL CIRCUITS

Most traumatic implicit memory and VLE confabulation usually includes the loss of access to our relational connection circuits. That means that almost all of the time when a traumatic memory is accessed, your relational circuits will be off-line. In order to successfully process a painful experience, we must stay in relational mode even while feeling the negative emotions. Maintaining and staying relational is one of the most important processing tasks. Not being able to stay in relational mode is the

main reason painful experiences become trauma. That means, in most situations, when you are triggered you will fall into non-relational mode. When that happens, you have the challenge of recognizing and acknowledging your traumatic implicit memory and VLE confabulations without having access to your relational circuits in the present.

The good news is that when your brain circuits are functioning as Yahweh designed, your spontaneous experience will be to feel relationally connected and to feel the desire for that connection. You will experience others as relational beings, you will be aware of others' true hearts, you will be concerned about what others are thinking and feeling, you will perceive the presence of others as an emotional resource, and you will experience joy in being together.

The bad news is that when we get upset, we often temporarily lose access to these relational circuits. When that happens, your spontaneous experience will include the absence of feeling relationally connected, and you won't even want to be connected. You won't experience others as a relational being, you won't be aware of each other's true hearts, you won't feel concern (compassion) regarding what the other is thinking and feeling, and you won't experience joy in being together.

Furthermore, when you lose access to your relational connection circuits in the context of being upset with a friend or family member, instead of perceiving that person's presence as an emotional resource, you will perceive him/her as the problem and as an adversary. Since this is critical, one of the most valuable things you can do when you're upset is to find out if your relational circuits are on-line. This is something you can learn to do, and it's easy. Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I feel connected to \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in name)?
- Do I feel desire to be connected to \_\_\_\_\_ (name)?
- Do I perceive him/her as a relational being?
- Am I aware of his/her true heart?
- Do I feel concern/compassion regarding what \_\_\_\_\_ (name) is thinking and feeling?
- Do I perceive his/her presence as a source of joy (as opposed to a problem to be solved or as a resource to be used)?
- Am I glad to be with him/her?

Those questions are asking about the thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and impulses that feel true. If the answers to those questions are "no," then your relational connection circuits are off. One of the most productive things you can do is get them back on and the sooner, the better.

EVERYTHING with respect to your relational conflict will turn out better and flow more easily once you get them back on. If I have a foundation of a secure attachment and relational connections to joy, both being anchored in memories from a lifetime of positive relational experiences with family, friends, and the Lord, then I will be able to stand on this foundation of emotional security and relational joy even when I'm surrounded by people who are upset and attacking me.

In the same way that traumatic content can come forward as implicit memory, positive content from your positive relational memories can also come forward as implicit memory. Even if people in front of me are criticizing me and falsely accusing me, the content from my positive relational memories can come

forward as implicit memory, so that it will feel true in the present. Do you see why creating joy in our families, in relationships, in our community is vital?

If I have a strong foundation of joy, when others are accusing me and rejecting me, I will be able to say to myself, “Yes, but my family and friends love me, they understand me, and are glad to be with me, and the Lord loves me, He understands me, and is glad to be with me.”

However, when we lose access to our relational connection circuits, we temporarily lose access to the resources in all of our relational connection memory bank accounts. It’s like the banks are closed and all the ATM machines are temporarily out of service. To the extent that our relational connection circuits are off-line, we won’t be able to feel the relational connection memories that are the source of secure attachments. We won’t feel the, “glad to be with you” relational connection. Fortunately, the Lord knows that we often lose access to these circuits, and He has provided a way to get them back on-line. He designed our brains so that perceiving someone is with me in my pain, perceiving that this person is glad to be with me, and feeling that this person hears and understands my emotional upset will bring my relational connection circuits back on-line.

If there are people in your life who know how to attune to you, and are glad to be with you, then sharing your upset thoughts and emotions with one of these friends will bring your relational circuits back on-line. For those of us who personally experience the Lord’s presence, we can do this with Him; and this is especially good news, since He is always available and able to do this. In fact, there are times when it seems like the Lord is the only one who can hear us, understand us, and be with us in this way.

#### TOOLS THAT HELP GET OUR RELATIONAL CIRCUITS BACK ONLINE

1. Think about a past positive experience with the Lord – an experience where you felt connected to Him and glad to be with Him.
2. Focus on appreciating His presence and the way He cared for you in this past experience. (*About half of David’s Psalms are various forms of appreciating the Lord’s presence and His goodness*).
3. After appreciation has prepared your brain, mind, and spirit for connecting with the Lord, invite Him to be with you, especially in any negative thoughts and emotions that still remain, and ask Him to help you perceive His presence.
4. Open your heart to Him. Look into your heart and identify the thoughts and emotions you find there. NOT the thoughts and emotions you know you ought to have, but the thoughts and emotions that are actually there. Once you identify what’s in your heart, describe it directly to Yeshua as clearly, honestly, vulnerably, and humbly as possible. This is also very Biblical – (the other half of David’s Psalms are examples of this type of prayer).
5. Once you feel connected, want to be connected, when you experience others as relational beings, when you’re aware of each other’s true hearts, when you feel compassionate concern about other’s thoughts and feelings, when you perceive each other as sources of joy, and when you are glad to be together, I can guarantee that you will be more able to resolve any conflict.

## MORE EXERCISES THAT HELP GET RELATIONAL CIRCUITS BACK ON-LINE:

- DON'T FOCUS ON THE PERSON WHO HURT YOU. When talking to the Lord about your pain, it's important to focus on yourself, especially focus on the painful thoughts that feel true and the negative emotions you're experiencing. Focusing on the person(s) you're upset with, and describing to the Lord all the reasons why they are bad and wrong, tends to be much less productive.
- TALK ABOUT YOUR PAIN. It can be important to tell the Lord about your anger, as part of feeling that you are getting to express all of your negative emotions and feeling that the Lord is hearing you, but in most situations it is helpful to then move from talking about your anger to talking about your pain. There are some exceptions, but in most situations we use feeling angry and talking about anger as a defense to protect ourselves from feeling more painful negative emotions such as shame, powerlessness, sadness, despair, etc.
- NO ROOM FOR SELF-PITY. Choosing to indulge in self-pity or bitterness can block receiving attunement from the Lord (or anyone else), which blocks you from regaining access to your relational circuits.
- IT'S ALL ABOUT BEING IN HIS PRESENCE. I find it helpful to keep reminding myself that my goal is to perceive the Lord's presence, tell Him about my pain, and to feel that He hears me, understands me, and is with me. My goal is not to fix the problem that is upsetting (triggering?) me, or even to find and resolve the underlying trauma. My goal is to perceive the Lord's presence, tell Him about my pain, and receive His attunement so that I can get my relational connection circuits back on-line.
- BE AWARE: It's helpful to be aware of the possibility that triggered underlying trauma may be contributing to the upset.
- Finally, in situations where I am having an especially difficult time getting my relational circuits back on-line, I put all of these tools together. This can take a significant amount of time and energy, especially if I am in a foul mood and not feeling thankful for anything. If that's the case, being grateful is particularly challenging; but it's really worth it.

## REVIEW

1. In trying to deal with the toxic content that has come forward due to a trigger that stirred up unresolved traumatic memories. Dealing with this toxic content is challenging. Our invisible implicit memory and our VLE stories explaining that our pain is really being caused by triggers in the present, and our central nervous system filling in the holes, and self-deception and denial, which causes us to look the other way making it difficult to recognize and acknowledge our triggering.
2. To make things even more difficult, we must work out of the infant or child maturity from the time of the original traumatic experience (the external locus of control package)—a normal part of infant/child maturity. This is why some people act like an 8 or 4 or 1 year old when they are triggered.
3. Specific, memory-based negative reactions to the suggestion of possible triggering—pain from lack of attunement, feeling blamed and accused, pain from lack of validation or agreement, and the feeling that it's not safe to acknowledge responsibility—result in defensive, hostile reactions toward the people we are interacting with in the present.

4. And we face all this without access to our relational circuits in the present and without access to any of our memory-anchored relational resources.

When we are triggered and others tell us we are triggered, and if those 4 situations are present, we will become extremely challenged and, without help, we will respond as either a predator or possum.

### CLUES THAT INDICATE I'M TRIGGERED

I need to take responsibility for processing my triggers and my responses. Taking responsibility is an adult-maturity response rather than to defend or deny my trigger, which is an infant/child response. An adult-maturity response means that I am open and I listen when others suggest I am triggered. Clues that indicate triggering:

- When my internal thoughts are like those of a child I can recognize that an implicit memory has been activated.
- When my response is out of proportion to the situation/frustration/problem, I'm almost certainly triggered.
- When I find myself non-relational and have no desire to connect, I'm most likely triggered.

### RELATIONAL CIRCUIT CHECKLIST:

When you are upset, ask yourself these questions: (Answer what feels true in the moment)

- Do I feel connected to (those involved in the problem) ?
- Do I desire to be connected to him/her?
- Do I experience them as unique, valuable, relational beings?
- Am I aware of their true hearts? (Dr James Wilder in Living From the Heart Jesus Gave us book: our true hearts are the hearts the Yeshua gives us when we choose to follow Him).
- Do I feel compassionate concern regarding what they are thinking and feeling?
- Do I want to offer attunement?
- Am I able to offer attunement?
- Am I free of judgment?
- Do I experience their presence as a source of joy (as opposed to a problem to be solved or a resource to be used?)
- Am I glad to be with them?
- Am I comfortable making eye contact (other than angry glaring)?
- Am I flexible and creative (as opposed to rigid and unable to think outside the box) with respect to thoughts and behavioral options?
- Am I patient and tolerant (as opposed to impatient, intolerant, and irritable)?
- Do I perceive others as allies, and want to join, explore, understand, and collaborate (as opposed to perceiving others as adversaries and tending toward judging, interrogation and focusing on trying to 'fix' the situation?)
- Can I easily recall past positive experiences with the person and do I feel the positive emotions that should be associated with those good memories?
- Can I easily think of things I appreciate about the person and do I feel gratitude as I think about these specific appreciations?

If a person has dismissive attachment and has learned to live with his relational circuits off most of the time, he will tend to think that non-relational mode is the normal, logical, efficient, appropriate way to live life. He may even say that he's not being non-relational, he's just trying to get the job done. When I try to offer attunement, but find that I'm unable to do so, that is a big clue that my relational circuits are off-line.

## JUDGING OTHERS

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*When I judge someone, I'm actually making negative assumptions about another person's motives!*

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In doing so, I'm saying I'm better than he/she is and that I would've done things differently and better—even if I had the same obstacles and challenges. When I judge, I'm believing the other person did 'bad' in some way. When I judge another person, that means my relational circuits are off-line.

Luk 6:37 (*Yeshua is speaking*) “And do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.

1Pe 5:5-7 You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders. And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, CASTING ALL YOUR ANXIETY ON HIM, because He cares for you.

I find it interesting that Peter ties together being proud with anxiety. Pride by its' very nature makes us anxious whether we realize it or not.

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## A SIMPLE WAY TO CHECK RELATIONAL CIRCUITS

Checking whether a person can feel appreciation when thinking about positive memories is one of the simplest and most accurate ways to determine whether you're in relational mode or not.

If the relational circuits are off-line, it will be difficult to remember a time when they have a positive memory about the person they are triggered over. And, if they do have a positive memory, they won't be able to feel appreciation concerning them because their relational circuits will be off-line.

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## WHAT CAUSES YOUR RELATIONAL CIRCUITS TO SHUT DOWN

Pay attention to what you are paying attention to. Check to see if you fall into non-relational mode

- When you feel angry or anxious
- When you are in conflict
- When you feel judgmental
- When you feel irritated
- When you realize you lack joy (*lack feeling glad that someone is with you*)
- When you are feeling bad for any reason

One of the most damaging effects of getting triggered is the loss of our relational connection circuits. When dealing with conflict, it is vital that we have our relational circuits on-line.

When my circuits are off-line, I feel:

- Weak
- Small
- Insecure
- Alone
- Vulnerable
- Unable to care for myself
- And ultimately unsafe

Therefore, I will fight to protect myself instead of engaging in constructive communication.

That changes when I get back into relational mode.

When my circuits are back on-line:

- I perceive the presence of the Lord and others
- I feel large,
- Strong,
- Secure,
- Able to care for myself,
- And I feel safe.

## CONNECTING

- State the truth—according to James 4:8, it says that if I draw near to Yahweh, then He will draw near to me. Based on that truth, give your imagination to Yahweh then “go” to a safe place and invite Him to join you.
- Practice deliberate appreciation. Express your appreciation to Him (can be about a time when you know He was with you and helped you, etc.). This will cause your relational circuits to come on-line.
- Don’t focus on the problem or the upset, but simply share your feelings with Yeshua/Yahweh. Allow Him to attune to you. Don’t get in a hurry. Simply enjoy His peace/shalom.
- In many situations, deliberate calming causes your relational circuits to come on-line. For ex: reading scripture, listening to peaceful music, going for a walk, exercise, rocking, swinging, intentionally relaxing the muscles in your body from head to toe, yawning 10 times in a row, and laughing—even if it’s fake laughter.

## YOUR YAHWEH SHAPED BRAIN

In 1970’s, Sam Shoeman was diagnosed with liver cancer and told he had only a few months to live. A few months after his death, the autopsy revealed that Sam had only one small tumor in his liver—it wasn’t life threatening at all! Sam didn’t die from cancer, he died from believing he was going to die!

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*What we believe changes us mentally, physically and spiritually*

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Your brain is constantly changing. Every moment, new neurons are developing and new circuits are being laid down and more. At the same time, unused connections and neurons are removed and so much more. This is called neuroplasticity.

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*Our beliefs, thoughts, behaviors and even our diets change our brain structure,  
which changes who we are!*

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What happened to the human brain in the garden?

1. The battlefield on which the war between Christ and Satan is fought is the mind (Rom 7:25). It was true for Adam and Eve and it's still true for us. Our battle is within the soul—the mind, will and emotions, which are all seated in your brain.
2. The primary characteristic of Yahweh is love (I Jn 4:8). The bible doesn't say Yahweh is forgiveness, but He forgives. It doesn't say He is knowledge even though He is all-knowing. With regard to love, Yahweh doesn't merely act it out—He embodies it!
3. Love is what? I Cor 13 Love is patient, kind, not jealous, doesn't brag, not arrogant, doesn't act unbecomingly, doesn't see its own, isn't provoked, doesn't take into account a wrong suffered, doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, rejoices with the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all thing. Love never fails. In other words, Love, by its very nature, gives—it doesn't dictate! (Jhn 3:16; I Jhn 3:16)
4. All of creation was meant to be an ebb and flow, a giving and receiving of perfect love. (Jn 3:16)

**BRAIN SCIENCE:** Recent brain research has documented that all forms of contemplative meditation brings about positive brain changes—but the greatest improvements occurred when the participants meditated specifically on a God of love! The results were improvements in the prefrontal cortex (*is where we reason, make judgments and experience God-like love*).

Being strong in joy is vital to a person's overall health and well-being. The right orbital prefrontal cortex of your brain has a "joy center". This joy center has executive control over your entire emotional system.

When your joy system has matured, it regulates:

1. emotions
2. pain control and immunity centers
3. it guides us to act like ourselves
4. it releases neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin
5. and it is the only part of the brain that overrides the main drive centers—food and sexual impulses, terror and rage

Meditating on a God of love increases the capacity for empathy, putting others needs ahead of our own, sympathy, compassion and unselfishness in the prefrontal cortex, which means meditating on Yahweh as the Father who loves us will increase our capacity to love! What's even more amazing—not only does "others centered" love increase when we worship Yahweh, but sharp thinking and memory improve as well!

Worshipping Yahweh actually stimulates the brain to heal and grow! The research also proved that the opposite was also true—when focusing on a god that you see as an authoritarian, critical or distant, your fear circuits are activated and, if not calmed, will result in chronic inflammation and damage to both brain and body.

## YOUR ALARM SYSTEM

Your brain has an alarm system called the amygdala. When something frightens or triggers you, your amygdala instantly releases attention-getting adrenaline from the adrenal glands and it also alerts the hypothalamus, which is like a “911 operator”. The hypothalamus then sends out an urgent message to your pituitary gland, which is like a radio tower. The pituitary gland then sends out hormonal signals calling for your body’s emergency response, which comes from the adrenal glands—they release stress hormones called glucocorticoids.

When your body’s emergency responders arrive at the “fire” (crisis, trauma), the fire chief (your hippocampal neurons) assesses the extent of the blaze (crisis, trauma), and how many firefighters you need. Once there’s enough firefighters, the chief (hippocampal neurons) calls the 911 operator (hypothalamus) and reports that, even though the alarm is still going, don’t send any more help (stress hormones). Then, the brain’s administrator, the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, evaluates whether there is real danger or was it a false alarm. The dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is part of the prefrontal cortex and acts like a school principal for your brain. If the brain’s administrator determines there is real danger, the alarm gets louder. If it determines that it was a false alarm or under control, everything calms down.

## THE ORIGIN OF FEAR

Imagine you have the perfect marriage. You’ve been happily and faithfully married for many years. Now imagine someone you love and trust tells you that your husband is having an affair. This person even shows you photos. When you look closely at the pictures you suspect that they’ve been digitally altered. You realize that there is no way your spouse has been unfaithful, even though your spouse has been and is loyal, faithful and true, if you believe the lie, something in you changes. The love and trust you felt is broken and fear floods your heart.

satan is the father of lies (Jn 8:44). He lied about Yahweh to Eve. Eve believed those lies and was deceived. Because she believed satan, the love Eve had for Yahweh was broken and so was her trust. As a result, paradise was lost for Eve and for Adam. Their choices impact us today. From that fateful moment, mankind was flawed and spent their entire existence in search of “good and evil” rather than searching for and relying on the only One who is good!

### THE RESULTS:

1. The lies they believed broke their love and trust. As a result, we believe that Yahweh isn’t good so we can’t trust Him.
2. Broken love and trust results in fear and selfishness towards people and Yahweh. This caused fallen man to believe we have to take care of ourselves because we can’t trust anyone—not even

Yahweh. The end result is fear and self-centeredness rule us. We become self-protecting and watch out for ourselves first and foremost.

3. Fear and self-centeredness result in sinful deeds.
4. Sin results in damage to our mind, character and body, which is a terminal condition.  
Rom 6:23 The wages of sin is death.

Once Eve believed Satan's lies, the circle of love and trust was broken in her heart and mind. Believing Satan's subtle accusations of Yahweh, Eve no longer trusted Him. Her prefrontal cortex, instead of responding in love and trust, activated the fear center (amygdala) which created anxiety, insecurity and the desire to protect herself. Seeing they were naked, they ran in fear and tried to hide from Yahweh. Their overactive, deregulated fear center further impaired their judgment and they failed to think clearly, which caused them to make unwise choices (we can't think clearly when we feel guilty). They took matters into their own hands and not only ate the fruit, attempting to be like Yahweh, but then also tried to hide what they had done by making fig-leaf skirts. Their prefrontal cortex lost its governance and the fear center became inflamed. Love was suppressed and fear became the primary driving force in fallen humanity.

Rom 8:5-8 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God, for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, and those who are in the flesh are not able to please God.

Paul is saying that ever since Adam, humans have been born with their brains controlled by fear and selfishness; and such a state of disharmony with Yahweh's design for life results in death. But when one trusts in Yahweh, a change takes place: the prefrontal cortex is flooded with love and truth, restoring Yahweh's balance, leading us back to other-centered, peaceful living.

On the other hand, the selfish, fear-controlled brain is hostile to Yahweh and instead of submitting to love will be self-sufficient and unable to please Him. And this all began because Eve believed Satan's lies about Yahweh! I can guarantee you, that the same has been true in your life. What lies are you believing?

#### A FEW IMPORTANT FACTS

We are born with brains that naturally fire the alarm center, impair the prefrontal cortex and seek to protect self at the expense of others. But that isn't how it was for Adam and Eve. They were created to operate on perfect love, other-centered, outward-focused love, where we give to benefit others.

Brain-imaging studies show that the more time a person spends in communion with the God of Love, the more developed the "heart" (Anterior Cingulate Cortex) of your brain will be. Anterior Cingulate Cortex is where we experience empathy, compassion and love. It's also where we choose right from wrong. In addition to that, as we spend time with Yahweh, we will decrease in stress hormones, blood pressure, heart rate and risk of untimely death. Even in our physical bodies, love is healing!

## THE BOTTOM LINE

When fear increases, love, growth, development and healthy thinking decrease. When love increases, not only does fear decrease, but growth, development and healthy thinking all improve.

Your PREFRONTAL CORTEX is where you experience:

1. Healthy love
2. Compassion
3. Altruism
4. Empathy
5. Reasoning capacity
6. Judgment
7. The ability to worship
8. Conscientiousness
9. Morality
10. The ability to plan, organize and problem solve.

Your LIMBIC SYSTEM is where you experience:

1. Fear
2. Insecurity
3. Selfishness
4. Anger
5. Rage
6. Lust
7. Jealousy
8. Envy
9. Aggression

## THE THOUGHTS WE ACTUALLY THINK ACTUALLY RESHAPE OUR BRAINS

Brain research proves that the kind of God you worship changes your brain. Only worshipping a God of love brings healing. Believing lies prevents healing.

As we near the end of this age, what will the last battle be about according to the bible? It will be a conflict over worship, over two “systems”. The last battle determines once and for all time who is God!

TWO SYSTEMS:

1. Beast system of extreme control—unless you take his mark no one can buy or sell (Rev 13:17).
2. Yahweh’s system of selfless love—no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” Jhn 15:13.

Two antagonistic principles that are at war on earth:

1. Yahweh-love says, “I love you so much that I’ll do whatever is necessary for your benefit, health, and good even if it means I need to give My life that you might live.”
2. Self-focused love says, “I love myself so much that I’ll do whatever I have to do to protect, advance, reward and exalt myself.”

With each passing day, we're being pushed toward the final showdown where every person will have to choose between:

1. violate freedom through control. The result is love is destroyed, rebellion abounds, individuality erodes and the prefrontal cortex is damaged)
2. love Yahweh and love others more than you love yourself (Rev 12:11). The result is we overcome satan.

Yeshua said that at the end of time the love of most people will grow cold (Mt 24:12). Why? Because of increased wickedness because most people will have their eyes on themselves and this world.

Yahweh won't win this war for our hearts and minds or restore us to love by the use of might or power, but by His Holy Spirit (Zech 4:6). As we said earlier, real change only happens when it happens in our mind, when our thoughts change, thus changing our brain/mind.

### KNOWING THE TRUTH

Truth enters the mind through the prefrontal cortex. Evil desires come from our limbic systems, which are our own centers of emotion and desire. The human race is sick and dying. Yahweh has been working from the beginning to save and heal, to restore us to trust so we will let him cure us. But our distorted beliefs about Yahweh often misunderstands what He is doing. We've viewed Him as terrifying or angry or distant or non-caring and the list goes on. As a result, we've rejected His messengers, and refused His help.

Until we understand the truth about Yahweh as revealed in Yeshua—we can't be healed. Why? Because lies believed inflame the limbic system which damages our prefrontal cortex which prevents the flow of His love into our being. On the other hand, the truth destroys lies, restores trust and, as we build that trust relationship with Yahweh, His lifesaving love begins to flow through us and that is what heals our brain and transforms our soul.

### APPLICATION

If you've ever struggled with control, or judging others, or fear and insecurity, or felt tempted to act against your conscience in order to win human approval, here are some steps that will help your brain make healthy, godly choices so you can change:

1. Mentally take a step back and ask yourself, "What is the truth? What is the right, healthy and reasonable action for me to take in this situation?" (*this will stimulate your prefrontal cortex into action*)
2. If someone rejects you or becomes angry with you for doing what you believe is right, ask yourself if that person is really a friend. And do you really want his/her approval? (*stimulates your prefrontal cortex*)
3. Ask yourself if you are willing to set others free—free to think or feel any way they choose about you. Or are you, on some level, trying to control what others think about you? Are you thinking, *If I do what they want then they won't be mad at me. If I do what they want then they will like me?* Consider setting them free to think whatever they want and setting yourself free to be true to who Yahweh made you to be. The beauty of Yahweh's law of liberty is, when you set others free to think whatever they choose about you, you set yourself free from the pressure of conforming to their opinion. (*this stimulates your prefrontal cortex into action*)

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*Remember, love does what is right, healthy and reasonable, because it is so,  
not because it feels good in the moment.*

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#### REVIEW OF THE BRAIN'S FEAR-BASED PATHWAY

1. Something happens that creates anxiety or fear
2. Your prefrontal cortex instantly releases adrenaline then signals the amygdala to set off the alarm
3. As a result, anxiety and fear increase, reacting back on the prefrontal cortex, causing further threat-based interpretations of life, resulting in even more fear and anxiety.
4. If this continues over time, your mind becomes a stronghold of fear and anxiety.
5. Believing lies about Yahweh and other people will cause bitterness, anger and resentment.
6. In order to find peace, we must be free from the lies about Yahweh, others and ourselves.
7. We must accept the truth that Yahweh is for us. He is our Friend and Savior. Restoration begins by removing the lies and restoring trust. That's one reason encounters with Yahweh are life-changing—He always tells us the truth!

#### HEALING COMES FROM YAHWEH THROUGH OUR PREFRONTAL CORTEX

We can't be healed, saved or restored if we refuse to use our prefrontal cortex, because that's where our mind comprehends truth, experiences love and communes with Yahweh. Therefore, the lies we've believed must be demolished in our minds with the truth. In other words, it's vital that we process what we believe in our prefrontal cortex—in our mind.

Rom 14:5 One person judges one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

Mat 22:37 And He said to him, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’”

Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mindset on the Spirit is life and peace,

Eph 4:23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

Yeshua doesn't want us to be unthinking, unquestioning servants who just do what we're told. He wants us to be understanding friends who think and process with the Holy Spirit. It's critical that we engage our prefrontal cortex to process this life. That's one reason passivity is so destructive.

One of the best ways to activate the prefrontal cortex is to ask this question: What does this mean?

1. In a Bible study (ask what does this mean?)
2. In a God encounter (ask what does this mean?)
3. When meditating on His love (what does this mean?)
4. When worshipping (ask what does this mean?)
5. When a part of a relational upset (ask what does this mean?)

## THE POWER OF TRUTH

Delaying pursuit of the truth doesn't prevent the truth from happening. Delay only makes the problem worse. We often fear knowing the truth will cause pain, embarrassment or loss causes some to avoid it altogether. The primary reason for pursuing the truth is to bring about our healing/freedom.

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*Truth destroys lies and positions you for healing*

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If we deny the truth, run from it, suppress or ignore it, we only delay the time when we'll have to deal with it. If we delay long enough, we may pass the point of recovery, whether physically or spiritually.

### IMPORTANT FACTS:

1. Viewing Yahweh as an authoritarian, punishing god inflames the fear center (Amygdala), damages the prefrontal cortex and impairs healing and growth.
2. We have a choice when it comes to sin. But that is only true if you have been born from above and have the Father, Son and Holy Spirit living in you and through you. Our human strength is never enough to overcome our sin nature. When Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from Yahweh because they were afraid. Fear is part of the infection that comes as a result of our choice to sin. Every human born since Adam has been infected with fear and self-centeredness—a terminal condition. We didn't choose to be born with fear and it isn't our fault. If there was a cure for your terminal disease called sin and you refused it, would that be your fault? Yes. That's the question we need to focus on—have we accepted Yahweh's free remedy? The sins that we tend to focus on are not our problem—they are merely symptoms of a deeper issue—our need for a Savior who can wash us free and clear of all remnants of the disease. Our sin is a symptom and the more sins we commit, the sicker we get. Therefore, we can't ignore or minimize our sins. The act of sinning damages our minds, sears our consciences, warp our reason, defiles our characters and make it easier and easier to resist Yahweh, ultimately resulting in our being lost for all eternity.
3. Practicing acts of sin will strengthen the limbic-system circuits and damages the prefrontal-cortex circuits, and increases fear, guilt and shame. Another reason we can't afford to ignore sin. if we focus on the sin and guilt and finding a way to be free, we actually get worse rather than better due to our damaged prefrontal-cortex. Yahweh wants so much more than to just forgive us, He wants to completely transform our heart and renew mind.
4. Some people are afraid of Yahweh. Imagine going to the doctor. Your husband goes with you because you're so afraid. When the doctor steps into the exam room, you grab your husband and push him in front of you and ask the doctor to examine him instead. That wouldn't make any sense. Yet, many Christians teach that, for the saved, Yahweh doesn't look at them, he looks at Yeshua who stands in their place. But David prayed, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." [Psa 139:23-24](#). Shouldn't we want Yahweh, just like our doctor, to examine us and then heal us? We don't need to be afraid of Yahweh because He just wants to heal us and give us life abundantly. [Jhn 10:10-11](#) "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." We don't need to be afraid of Yahweh because Yahweh, just like your doctor, just wants to heal you.

5. Brain research shows that fifteen minutes each day of meditation or thoughtful communication with the God of love results in a measurable development of the prefrontal cortex, especially in the Anterior Cingulate Cortex (ACC). This is the area where we experience love, compassion and empathy. The healthier the ACC, the calmer the amygdala (alarm center), and the less fear and anxiety we experience. Truly, love casts out all fear! 1Jn 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

### FAITH CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS

Mat 17:20 And He \*said to them, “Because of your little faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

Mat 21:21 And Jesus answered and said to them, “Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it will happen

So often, we take these two passages and make a doctrine out of them that says: If you have faith, miracles will happen, and if miracles don’t happen, it’s because your faith is weak. But is this really true? Is it possible that miracles happen not just for the strong in faith, but also for the weak? Is it possible that for those whose faith is strong, they don’t need miracles, but the young in Christ and those with weak faith may need miracles? Could it be that miracles happen through the strong in faith but not for their personal benefit?

For example:

1. Did Gideon ask for the miraculous sign of the fleece because his faith was strong or because it was weak and he needed encouragement?
2. When Elijah poured water all over the wood on the altar at Mount Carmel to prove to the people that Yahweh was God, was it because Elijah needed to know that Yahweh was God, or was the miracle given for the people who were weak in faith?
3. Job was blameless and upright—there was no one on the earth like him (Job 1:8). He was a true man of faith and yet he lost his wealth, his children and his health. No miracle saved him from the devastation. Did this tragedy happen because he was weak in his faith? Or perhaps it happened because his faith was so strong that Yahweh knew nothing could shake Job from trusting in Yahweh?
4. Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace, Yahweh miraculously saved them from becoming fried chicken. For what purpose? Was it primarily to extend the lives of the 3 men? Or perhaps it was to expose the false idol that king Nebuchadnezzar and the people worshipped? The 3 men were willing to put their lives into Yahweh’s hands and trusted Him with the outcome, knowing Yahweh could save them but also knowing He might not (Dan 3:16-18.)
5. The apostles all were martyred (except for John). Yahweh performed many miracles through them, but Yahweh didn’t save them from death. Was it because the apostles didn’t have enough faith? Or was it because their faith was so strong that they trusted Yahweh with their very lives? Was it because their faith was so strong that Yahweh didn’t have to perform a miracle in order to

prove Himself to them? And because of that, He was free to bring about His will for each one of them.

6. One more—perhaps you are so loved by Yahweh that because He knows the end from the beginning, He called you to the witness-stand of the ages to say what is right and true about Him? That He has chosen you to be one who would proclaim that He is good, that He is the one true God and that He is trustworthy? That Yahweh may have said to satan, “Have you considered my servant (your name)? He/she is blameless and upright, one who fears Me and turns away from evil! You can test him/her, but you can’t take his/her life!” So satan attacks Job and destroys all that he has trying to get Job to turn on Yahweh. Yahweh didn’t create the destruction—satan did. satan is a destroyer. Yahweh is a life-giver. We see that in the book of Job, in the book of every true believer!

*As you contemplate what you just read, consider asking, “What does this mean?” Your prefrontal cortex is engaged. That’s very good!*

Our confidence in Yahweh is never supposed to be based on miracles. Miracles can be faked. The question is never about Yahweh’s ability to perform miracles. The question is—do we know Yahweh well enough to trust Him with the outcome? To truly ask for *His* will to be done in everything? If so, our confidence in Him won’t be shaken when tragedy strikes. We, like Job, will respond, “Even if He slay me, I will trust in Him!” (Job 13:15).

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*Genuine faith doesn’t mean Yahweh will miraculously intervene.*

*Genuine faith is trusting Yahweh not to intervene if He has other plans for my life!*

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## YAHWEH, THE JUDGE

Have you ever been enjoying a nice drive in the country when you looked up and saw a police car in your rearview mirror? If you’re like me, you eased off the gas pedal and looked down at the speedometer. Did you become hyper-aware of your driving? As the policeman continued to follow you, did you begin to feel anxious or fearful?

Sadly, some people view Yahweh like He’s a cop following you around just waiting for you to make a mistake so He can punish you. And others believe Yahweh is like a cop, but believes that Yeshua stands between us to protect us from Yahweh. I used to believe that until I began to see Yahweh through the life of Yeshua. If we’ve seen Yeshua, we’ve seen the Father—they are One and they are the same!

Jhn 14:9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all so long and have you not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how *can* you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

As I began to see how Yeshua lived His life, I learned that I was still loved even though I was still flawed and still sinned. One area that was especially painful for me was the belief that Yahweh was going to expose all of my sins before the entire human race when I stood before His judgment seat. It wasn’t until I read I Cor. 13:4-5 that I saw the truth. “Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and **does not keep a record of wrongs.**”

Stop the train. Ask yourself, “What does this mean?”

If Yahweh is Love and love keeps no record of wrongs, does it make sense that He is keeping a list of all my sins that have been washed away with Yeshua’ blood?

2Co 5:17-19 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come! Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us.

What does this mean? You may say, “But doesn’t Yahweh keep a record of all of our sins?” Yes and no.

I read a true story about a helicopter crash with 6 people on board. All 6 were brought to the hospital in critical condition. One of the crew was bleeding profusely. To save her life, the doctor explained that she needed a blood transfusion. She refused because she was a Jehovah’s Witness. The doctors and nurses explained that she was going to die without it. She still refused. They pleaded with her to change her mind—she refused. They even asked the hospital chaplain to visit her. He did and the woman still refused. The hospital administrator came to see her, but she still refused. Everyone in that helicopter crash was saved but that lady. Every doctor and nurse that attended to her and every interaction was recorded. Why? Because if her family filed a lawsuit against the hospital and doctors claiming they didn’t take good care of their mother, the hospital administrator would have all the records as evidence.

I see Yahweh as the hospital administrator who keeps records as evidence of His love and relentless pursuit of every human who has ever lived. A record that proves He did everything He could to save and heal everyone. Even Hitler. But they died in their sins because they refused His treatment!

Many scriptures say that the sins of those who belong to Him, are wiped away, erased.

Isa 43:25 "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins.

Act 3:19 "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

1Jn 2:12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

Yahweh not only blots out our sins but He also purifies those who accept His blood transfusion and makes them like gold and silver (Mal 3:2-3). That process happens in the fire of testing. He is working to remove sinfulness from our hearts and minds!

*There is no reason for Yahweh to think about or remember our sinfulness  
once we are perfectly restored to His original plan and purpose by His blood!*

For those who refuse His blood transfusion, the record remains explaining why that person dies—for all eternity that person will suffer the worst kind of death—separation from love, joy, peace, light, freedom, sin!

Heb 12:25 See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven.

## OUR BELIEFS ABOUT YAHWEH

Do our beliefs about Yahweh truly matter? Beliefs—such as Yahweh being the great Policeman in the sky just watching to nab us when we sin—which creates fear and activates your amygdala. The constantly active fear circuit activates your immune system—the white blood cells called macrophages. Our immune system is like the National Guard. It is designed to protect us from invasion, and when the alarm goes off, it signals the immune system to get ready for invasion. Our beliefs matter spiritually and they matter to our physical bodies.

We have two types of immunity, acquired and innate.

1. Acquired immunity is what we get from vaccines or from having a sickness/disease like the measles. Once exposed to the harmful invaders in our body, antibodies are created specific to that enemy. Those antibodies will protect you from then on to that particular enemy. The antibodies are like a sniper sitting throughout your body silently waiting and watching for invaders.
2. Innate immunity is an almost instant response to a perceived threat. It's like when someone wakes up in the middle of the night and hears a noise. Knowing there's no one else in the house, He grabs his shotgun quietly goes to investigate. Seeing a movement, he raises his gun and shoots only to discover that it was a mouse. He got the mouse, but he also damaged his house.

That's what happens when you get triggered and the alarm goes off in your brain, the amygdala activates macrophages, which begin releasing inflammatory cytokines. These cytokines are like the shotgun pellets, designed to destroy the enemy, but just like the pellets, they create havoc throughout your body/house.

Under chronic activation (stress), the cytokines damage the neurons that tell the brain, "Enough stress hormones have been released so don't send anymore." The glucocorticoid receptors on our hippocampal neurons are attached, and we lose the message from the 911 operator (hypothalamus) to stop. The operator then calls for more stress hormones. This causes further elevation in blood glucose, heart rate and blood pressure. At the same time, the cytokines damage insulin receptors in the body, making it harder for the body to use glucose. This creates an increased risk of: type 2 diabetes, obesity, elevated cholesterol and triglycerides, heart attacks, strokes, ulcers, infections and inflammatory disorders. The cytokines also increase the perception of pain and interfere with brain neurotransmitters, so a person in chronic stress will usually experience decreased energy, lack of motivation, impaired concentration, decreased appetite, aches and pains and sleep disorders.

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*My point in sharing all this is to show that stress can be deadly  
and it really does matter what you believe about Yahweh and His Son!*

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## WHY YESHUA HAD TO DIE

Because Adam and Eve believed satan's lies and chose to live independently of Yahweh, humanity was changed from living in harmony with Yahweh and His law of love to beings operating in fear and self-centeredness. Yeshua gave His life to destroy satan, his works and death (2 Tim 1:9-10, Heb 2:14, Jn 3:8) In order to accomplish this, Yeshua had to do two things:

1. Reveal the truth about Yahweh so we can trust Him—He came to show us the Father (Jn 14:9)
2. He had to put Yahweh's will and purpose back into us—His first and second greatest commandment! Mat 22:37-40 and He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment. And the second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets."

We aren't saved by faith or trust. We are saved by grace, which is Yahweh's work of restoring love in us when we choose to trust Him. It takes both—the restoration of trust and the act of our will—to bring about healing.

Eph 2:5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

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## HOW YESHUA ACHIEVED HIS FATHER'S WILL

Yeshua is one of a kind—forever! He joined His divinity to our humanity. Why? To destroy fear and self-centeredness and perfectly restore His Father's law of love back to the human species. He is the only human whose brain loved perfectly. He fought the battle we all fight every day—are we going to love others or promote self?

satan used 3 temptations to try to get Yeshua to sin:

1. If you are the Son of Yahweh, cause these stones to be turned into bread—save yourself!
2. If you are the Son of Yahweh, jump off this tower—prove yourself!
3. If you are the Son of Yahweh, bow down to me—save yourself from the agony of the cross!

We all experience that internal temptation to self-protect, to put ourselves first, to wear fig leaves. Yeshua died to deliver us from living like that. He took on the full force of satan's destructive devices and He overcame by the power of self-sacrificing love!

Jhn 10:17-18 "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one takes it away from Me, but from Myself, I lay it down. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

Yeshua took our sinfulness, our terminal condition, our iniquities, our infirmities on Himself in order to cure, heal and restore us back into Yahweh's original design and purpose. (Is 53:4)

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*Yeshua perfected humanity. He achieved what Adam was intended to become.*

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When we trust Him, He pours His love into our hearts (Rom 5:5). His perfect love dwells in us and that is how we live this life:

Gal 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Because Adam and Eve didn't trust Yahweh, humanity could only be cured by a human who would choose to trust Yahweh. No human, descended from Adam, could accomplish this, but Christ being fully God and fully man at the same time could choose to bring the life-saving blood needed for our salvation. When we choose to surrender our lives to Christ, His perfect nature and character (His very life) is "deposited" in all who trust Him.

In order to cure humanity, a human had to:

1. A human had to trust Yahweh in every way
2. A human had to reject the lies and temptations of satan
3. A human had to eradicate self-centered living by loving not His life unto death

## CONCLUSION

It is in a trust relationship with Yahweh, communing and meditating on His love, that our brains are transformed. The prefrontal cortex grows stronger and its influence spreads though the rest of the brain. The distorted ideas and lies are removed, empathy, selfless concern for the well-being of others, and giving increases, and we experience genuine peace and joy. Only through Yeshua is this possible. Only in a trust relationship with Him can we ever be healed, because only in Yeshua can we know the truth about Yahweh.

Once we know that He is love, then we learn to trust Him and, then, in that trust relationship, we experience the transfusion of His character of perfect love. And finally, in spite of our humanity, we begin to live by the power of love. If you are tired of this sick and selfish world, if you long to be free then embrace the One who is perfect Love, the One who proved it with His actions! It is true that we have power over what we believe, but it's also true that what we believe has power over us—power to heal and power to destroy! The ultimate question is, What do you believe about Yahweh? About His Son?

## HEALING FROM GRIEF

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*We can't change our lives until we change our minds.*

### THE 7 T MRI BRAIN SCAN:

- Negative thoughts increases blood flow to the amygdala, the emotional parts of the brain where anxiety and depression live.
- Positive, happier thoughts cause increased blood flow to the areas that produce helpful neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin, the chemicals of happiness.
- It is now a scientific fact that you can change your brain by changing your thoughts! The bible tells us this in Philippians 4:8 “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”

Inside your head is the world's fastest supercomputer. It is estimated that you have between 100 billion to 1 trillion neurons and supporting cells. If those cells couldn't communicate with one another, your brain would be useless. What makes the brain so amazing is its vast network of trillions of connections called synapses?

Synapses are specialized connections between two or more cells. They allow the cells to talk to each other, to coordinate numerous functions and tasks. They build networks and create little computer programs that runs our body systems without us having to think about them. Like how we breathe while we sleep etc.

But synapses also trigger memories, drive emotional responses and create physiological reactions to situations. Healthy synapses keep your nervous system functioning well—they control everything you do, think and feel. Every organ in your body is influenced by synapses between the cells. Synapses trigger a happy feeling when you get a bonus at work—they can even program you to try as hard the next time so you will receive the same reward.

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Synapses can also make you sick and they can cause major problems (even diseases) in your body and mind.

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Sick synapses, which are traumatic memories that get triggered and negative attitudes are a recipe for disaster. When this happens, I must look at my attitude and ask, “Do I want to continue in this state of being miserable, grumpy, depressed, angry, which makes everyone else around me feel lousy or do I want to feel better?” You do have a choice. You can change your thinking—the MRI test results are clear! If you change your thoughts, you change and so does your attitude and outlook on life. You see, thoughts become things. Remind yourself that feelings are not facts. They are simply neurochemical events that can be challenged and rewritten. Stop the negative thoughts, the rehearsing of the trauma, grief, pain and remind yourself of positive memories, of times when life was good. Equally important, is to remind yourself of how Yahweh has been faithful to you. Take the time to rehearse a time when Yahweh was very present and near to you. If you don't have a history with the Lord, then take the time to encounter Him and allow Him to make His presence known to you.

Psa 34:18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psa 147:3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

I love to encounter Yeshua/Yahweh as I read Psalm 23. He wants to be with you more than you want to be with Him. Consider allowing your consecrated imagination to “see” the words of this Psalm. He is your Shepherd and you are His sheep. Invite the Lord to interact with you, to comfort you and wrap up your wounds with His gentle, all-knowing love.

Psa 23:1 A Psalm of David. Yahweh is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Psa 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.

Psa 23:3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake.

Psa 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Psa 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.

Psa 23:6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will pursue me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of Yahweh forever.

#### IMPORTANT FACTS THAT ASSIST IN PROCESSING GRIEF:

- During times of trauma and pain, it is important that I realize I need people to acknowledge my pain, to see me. Acknowledgment is an important part of grief.
- No one can fix my problem. No one can change or undo what has happened.
- Am I going to let Yahweh help me or not? It’s my choice.
- Don’t make your grief an idol (Moses sought Yahweh’s help and had a face-to-face encounter with Yahweh while Aaron was making a golden calf—an idol). In other words, don’t fix your eyes on the pain/trauma/diagnosis. In doing so, you are making an idol. If you spend your time focusing on the problem, the problem can become your god.
- Traumatic, extreme, extraordinary suffering is to be expected in this life. Jhn 16:33 “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation (*extreme suffering*), but take courage; I have overcome the world.”
- It’s important that we are real with Yahweh. Simply surrender everything to Him, every moment of every day.
- Don’t wait for the outcome, the end result, to determine whether or not you are going to trust Yahweh. Everyone dies or has something tragic happen in their lives, so we can’t use those things to determine who Yahweh is to us. Instead, decide today that Yahweh is faithful therefore, He will cause all things to work together for our good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28).
- Hopelessness is deadlier than any cancer.
- We can be positive or negative—they both take the same amount of work. So decide to be hopeful—put your hope in Yahweh who is faithful. It is a known fact that hope produces huge improvements in how people feel. In a dark room, a tiny candle is enough light to see your way. Hope is a verb—it requires action. And action takes time. Give yourself time to grieve.
- Remember all the times in your life when Yahweh came through for you, when He got you through. Meditate on those times—that brings hope. (Psalm 77 & 143) Remember. Meditate. Movement. Take action—decide to hope in Yahweh!

- There will be days of grace and days of contending. You can choose to listen to the father of lies (satan) and stay in the pit or you can listen for Yahweh's voice and discover the truth.
- Faith isn't believing Yahweh will rescue you from pain and suffering; it is the belief that He's Sovereign and He will carry you through the storms of this life. And, in the end, it will be worth whatever price we pay.
- In order to heal, we have to change the way we think about the traumatic event.
- Our brains respond to trauma parallels how our brain responds to physical diseases. Our thoughts about the tragedy/disease both lead to unhealthy emotional responses. Left unchecked, this emotional cancer spreads into pervasive bad thinking that listens to the Accuser's lies (untrue conclusions, VLE confabulated stories, etc.) These repetitive voices consume our thoughts and behaviors just like sickness spreads throughout the body. We develop depressed attitudes, which means we are now acting out our own attitudes instead of the original trauma. This grows into shame and blame. Before we know it, this toxic neurological soup floods us with fear and doubt while growing into cancer. This is where our toxic thoughts brought us—to hopeless despair, disconnected from our faith in Yahweh.
- We must interrupt the above journey in our brains by: pausing when a negative thought gets in. Ask, "Is this thought true?" It may feel true, but is it true? Ask the Lord. This gives our brain time to process. Then we can examine whether it's the situation we are in or our attitudes that are causing the thoughts/feelings. Knowing the truth sets us free! (John 8:32). This is a daily process—many times a day. Take every thought captive! (2 Cor 10:5)
- To help get your life back, change your view of the tragedy from it being *the* thing that happened to being *a* thing that happened.
- As you challenge your thoughts, you will discover that many of them are simply not true. Over time, it will also cause there to be a steady stream of positive thoughts.
- Sometimes the negative thoughts are true. We respond by accepting this and bringing Yahweh and/or others into the process. This will tell your brain that it's going to be ok.
- Make it a habit to question all negative, painful thoughts. Ask if it's true or not. You can't wait for the pain to go away before putting these healing tools to work. Keep moving. Life is never free of pain. Keep believing that there is help and hope. Stay connected to the Lord and to friends. Acknowledge the fact that others love us and want us to stay in the fight.
- Hope tells us that it may be midnight right now, but the sun will come up in the morning.

#### THERE IS HOPE WOVEN THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURES

Job 13:15 "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.

Psa 31:24 Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who hope in the LORD.

Psa 33:18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope for His lovingkindness,

Psa 38:15 For I hope in You, O LORD; You will answer, O Lord my God.

Psa 39:7 "And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You.

Psa 42:5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And *why* have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him *For* the help of His presence.

Psa 42:11 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

Psa 43:5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

Psa 62:5 My soul, wait in silence for God only, For my hope is from Him.

Psa 62:10 Do not trust in oppression And do not vainly hope in robbery; If riches increase, do not set *your heart upon them*.

Psa 71:5 For You are my hope; O Lord GOD, *You are* my confidence from my youth.

Psa 71:14 But as for me, I will hope continually, And will praise You yet more and more.

Jer 29:11 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.

Lam 3:24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him."

Rom 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1Co 13:13 But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Heb 7:19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

Heb 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1Pe 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1Pe 1:21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope and love are in God.

## FACTS ABOUT YOUR MIND

Your mind is not your brain. How do we know that? Because doctors can monitor brain activity they have determined that there can be thoughts that occur in the mind that don't show up on a brain monitor. The same is true for people who have a near death experience. The brain monitor showed no signs of "life", yet the person comes back to life and shares details about what happened in the room when they were "dead".

The mind, will and emotions continue to exist even after the brain shows no activity or life! The bible calls that your soul (mind, will and emotions).

1. Your mind is shaping your brain—that's called neuroplasticity.
2. Science is learning that what we think matters so much more than we ever realized!
3. Your mind is not the same thing as your brain. Your brain is the hard drive. Your mind is the programs.
4. Yahweh designed our brain with neuroplasticity—the ability for the brain to be rewired.

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*A Foundational truth: I am loved and my brain can change!*

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## MIND IN SCRIPTURE

Mat 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

Mat 22:37 And He said to him, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’”

Rom 8:6-7 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mindset on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God, for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*,

Rom 8:27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.

Rom 11:34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?

Rom 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may approve what the will of God is, that which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Rom 12:16 by being of the same mind toward one another, not being haughty in mind, but associating with the humble. Do not be wise in your own mind.

Rom 14:5 One person judges one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

Rom 15:5 Now may the God of perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

1Co 1:10 Now I exhort you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1Co 2:16 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL DIRECT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

1Co 14:14-15 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is *the outcome* then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.

Eph 2:3 among whom we all also formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Eph 4:17-18 Therefore this I say, and testify in the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their mind, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.

Eph 4:23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

Php 1:27 Only live your lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear about your circumstances, that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind contending together for the faith of the gospel,

Php 2:3 doing nothing from selfish ambition or vain glory, but with humility of mind regarding one another as more important than yourselves,

Col 1:21 And although you were formerly alienated and enemies in mind *and* in evil deeds,

Col 2:18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, going into detail about *visions* he has seen, being puffed up for nothing by his fleshly mind,

Col 3:2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

2Th 2:2 that you not be quickly shaken in your mind or be alarmed whether by a spirit or a word or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

1Ti 6:5 and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

2Ti 3:8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these *men* also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, disqualified in regard to the faith.

Tit 1:15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.

Heb 10:16 “THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,”

2Pe 1:15 And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

## CRITICAL ACTIVITIES

The following are nine “nuggets” that have been proven by watching the brain through the new brain scans that are available. Many of the following facts are from a neuroscientist who was an atheist. Watching just the brain, he formed test groups made up of atheists, Christians, and middle eastern religions. After his research, he became a believer.

### NINE NUGGETS THAT TRANSFORM YOUR BRAIN:

1. Spiritual practices enhance the neuro-functioning of the brain in ways that improve physical and emotional health. In other words, it's healthier to be a Christian than not to be. Your brain will be healthier because you're a Christian. Spiritual practices have the same effect even if it's not Christian-based, but worshipping another god as long as the person views their “god” as loving.
2. Intense long-term contemplation of Yahweh permanently changes the structure of the parts of your brain that control your emotions, mood and identity (prefrontal cortex). It also helps shape your perception of your environment and relationships. Meditating on Yahweh, where we are quiet and focused changes the structure of your brain. If you don't have that in your life, your perception of yourself, your mood and your environment tend to be negative.
3. Contemplative practices (like meditation) strengthen a specific neurological circuit that creates peacefulness, social awareness and compassion for others. It's interesting that believing in Yahweh and encountering Him in a quiet, internal, spirit to Spirit manner actually creates greater compassion and love for others and ourselves!
4. Only human beings can think themselves into happiness or despair without any influence from the outside world.
5. Your thoughts clearly effect the neurological functioning of your brain and body.
6. Optimism is essential to maintain a healthy brain.
7. Yahweh created our brains in such a way that positive thoughts neurologically suppress negative thoughts.
8. When you change the way you think, you begin to change your brain and your outward circumstances.

9. Consciousness, reality, your mind (thoughts) and your spiritual beliefs are profoundly interconnected and inseparable from the functioning of your brain. They create your reality.

#### PRACTICAL STEPS (TOOLS) TO HELP YOU HAVE A HEALTHY BRAIN

This list is posted from the most effective to the least. Every one of these steps powerfully effect the health and structure of your brain and your ability to be relational (your relational circuits being online).

1. Faith in a loving Yahweh
2. Loving Yahweh, others and yourself (being in relationship)
3. Exercise (walking, dancing, hiking, etc)
4. Meditating on a loving God (20 minutes per day)
5. Yawning 10 times in a row (even if they are fake)
6. Whole body relaxation (if you add peaceful music, it's even more effective)
7. Staying intellectually active (read scripture, meditate on bible truths, engage in discussions)
8. Smiling (more powerful than laughing. Joyful music is like a smile). Whistling is joy building.
9. Laughing (even if it's fake)

#### CHANGING YOUR NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

A SELF TEST:

1. Am I living in the present, or so focused on something that happened, or replaying my past?
2. Am I truly seeing the person in front of me, or are they out of focus because I'm stuck thinking about myself or my past or what they did to me?
3. Am I aware of the good things that are all around me or am I focused on the things that I don't like or on what's wrong?

If we want to change, it's critical that we are truthful about our present reality.

When you find yourself focused on anything other than the present, simply pause. Take a deep breath—then name 3 things that are true right now. This actually changes your brain.

Every time you bring yourself back to the present you weaken the neural circuits of worry and strengthen the ones that keep you grounded, peaceful and connected!

When a negative thought or self-defeating thought shows up, pay attention: (practice paying attention to what you're paying attention to).

1. Notice the thought
2. Ask if it's true, helpful and lined up with who you desire to become or how you desire to respond/act
3. If not, replace it with thoughts that line up with your desires

This is self-brain surgery. You just removed a harmful thought, which has anatomy in your brain! And you created a new neural pathway.

## PEACE OF MIND

Do you depend on other people “behaving” the way you think they should so you can have peace or joy or feel good? If you find yourself thinking: if only \_\_\_\_\_ would do this or that then I’d be happy and have peace. The truth is that even when others do change and act like we think they should act, our peace doesn’t last because peace that is based on circumstances or other people’s behaviors never last. They only last until someone else comes along and doesn’t act the way we think they should. The truth is that no one can change enough to make us happy.

When I say that no one can change enough to make you happy, I’m not saying that people don’t need to change. What I’m NOT saying is if you are in an abusive relationship (verbal, emotional, mental, physical, sexual, etc.) that you have to stay and just let that person continue to abuse you. Get help!

Whether or not someone changes doesn’t determine our state of peace. My strength and peace should never depend on someone else’s behavior. Peace comes from the Prince of Peace and we can access His peace even in the midst of storms, trauma, and upset. It’s our responsibility to step into His peace/shalom. And peace starts from within—in my own mind and heart. True transformation always happens from the inside out. Neuroscience states, “No one can think or wish our way into peace by rearranging the outside world.” We have to train our minds to generate peace from within. Don’t wait for life to get easier.

Start today rewiring your mind to access His peace, purpose and strength, no matter what’s happening around you. When you are frustrated with someone or something:

1. Stop, take a cleansing breath and ask yourself, “What part of this is within my control?”
2. Write the answer down or say it aloud (it’s important that you take at least one small action—mental or physical).
3. Simply think about something that’s pleasant.
4. Take a deep breath and choose to respond with lovingkindness instead of reacting.

Every time you do this, you are rewiring your brain to respond with love. That is how you create change!

## YOUR PROBLEMS START IN YOUR HEAD

Before you quit, lie, cheat, lash out, judge, gossip, or turn to addictive behaviors—those actions began as a thought. Your brain doesn’t send hurtful texts or lie—your thoughts do. Every thought you have begins as an immaterial event. Thoughts become things, literally. They change the chemistry of your brain, influence your hormones, modify gene expression, drive the choices that you make and so much more. So when life falls apart and all you see is dark, remember: the problem isn’t *out there*. It’s your thinking that has made it appear dark.

I’m not saying that bad things don’t happen. They do. What I’m saying is that even in the midst of the worst storm, you can have a positive, joyful response. How? By being aware of your thoughts, perceptions and attitudes. And that’s really good news!

## FOUNDATIONAL SCRIPTURE

Isa 43:18 “Do not remember the former things, Nor carefully consider things of the past.

Isa 43:19 “Behold, I will do something new; Now it will spring forth; Will you not know it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the wasteland.

*(Rhonda’s amplified translation)* Yahweh is saying, “Stop thinking about what was. Stop meditating and rehearsing the past. Stop! Look! See that I will do something new! It’s actually already begun—look, it is happening right in front of you. Will you allow yourself to see it and believe it? Can you see the road that I’m laying out before you? Even in the wastelands of your past, I’m making a way out for you. What once was a desert, I’m going to flood with My river of Life. I’m right now making a way for you!”

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## STEPS TO TRANSFORM YOUR BRAIN

1. What kind life do you want? What kind of life do you need in order to be able to endure trouble? I’m not talking about material things. I’m talking about the troubles that inevitably come as a result of living in this fallen world (Jhn 10:10; 16:23) In order to endure times of trauma, we must correctly view how life has been. We must look at and acknowledge the truth about how life has been and presently is. For example, you may need to accepted the fact that you are addicted to \_\_\_\_\_. Or perhaps, you may need to accept and own the fact that you haven’t been kind. Or that you’re depressed and feel hopeless. There’s no blame or guilt or unhealthy shame; this is about accountability and recognition. It’s ok to feel healthy shame—that actually can motivate us to change. Now that you’ve allowed yourself to see the truth about who you’ve been, get real about what you want—write it down. Be specific. This will make room for hope. Hope is a verb (an action word)—that means we must take action. First action: Write down what was and then write down what Yahweh has done and then write down the things you want to put into action. Hope takes us from where we are/have been to where we want to go. Hope is the path to freedom.

Psa 42:5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And *why* have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him *For* the help of His presence.

Psa 42:11 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

Psa 43:5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

Act 24:15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

2. Be clear about what you need to do in order to get where you desire. You *can* change your mind. Ask yourself, “What is it going to take for me to get there?” You must recognize that whatever you’re doing, you’re getting better at it—good or bad. Because neurons that wire together, fire together and when that happens it means your beliefs become automatic. We respond to what we believe as if it’s true. If you want tomorrow to be different, you’re going to have to change some things. What you choose not to change, you’re choosing to accept as truth. You wish this, you wish that, but never do

anything about it—that means you won’t get there. Instead of thinking about why you’re not getting where you want, think about what you’ve been thinking about—that is extremely important! Pay attention to what you’re paying attention to—this is called Selective Attention. Our brains are wired for Selective Attention, which means that we can simply *decide* to change from one train of thought to another and it will happen. Metacognition is our brain’s ability to stop thinking about what we’re thinking and choose to think differently. For example, we can choose to say to ourselves those thoughts are negative and not true. I’m actually a great person! Stop focusing on why you’re not where you want to be. Instead think about the fact that you’re changing the way you think. What you think about, you get better at.

3. Realize and decide no one can do this work for you and no one can prevent you from changing your life except you.
4. Choose brain systems over goals. If you want to do something once, set a goal, but it won’t change who you are. In order to make an identity level change, we must choose systems over goals. When you empower your mind by changing the way you think and respond, then you create a system that has the power to transform you.
5. Realize that your “upset” or your mindset/attitude is not about what happened to you. The trauma, diagnosis, abuse, etc. isn’t your problem or the cause of your pain. Our “upset” is about what we *believe* to be true about what happened. The truth is what we need is to look at what happens next this builds a system in your brain. Build systems over goals!
6. Be a regular part of a loving positive community. Build joy bonds in 3 areas: community; three-way bonds (you plus two people) and two-way bonds (you plus one other person). This increases your joy capacity and builds a healthy system in your brain.

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1Ch 28:9 “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a delighted soul (*mind, will, emotions*); for Yahweh searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.

2Ch 7:13-14 “If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the grasshopper to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their evil ways, then I will listen from heaven, I will forgive their sin, and I will heal their land.”

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## RETRAIN YOUR BRAIN

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*If you don't manage your mind, it's going to manage you.*

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Your brain is rewiring itself every day. The only question is what input are you giving it for those changes? Whatever you are feeding your brain determines the structures your brain creates.

### FACTS ABOUT RETRAINING YOUR BRAIN:

1. I don't have to allow my mind to control me. I can retrain my brain. What do brains do? Your brain is constantly looking for ways to reduce the metabolic flow in order to save energy so that you can think while your brain manages the heavy things—like keeping your heart pumping, lungs breathing, etc.
2. I must believe that I'm getting better at whatever I'm doing.
3. Your brain says to you, "This situation reminds me of a past situation and back then you told me to \_\_\_\_ (fight/flight or freeze). Is that what you want me to do this time?" I hear this in my own voice. I have the thought, but it's really my brain getting consent to go into "automatic behavior mode". If you want to create a new response, your mind must answer your brain and give it permission to establish a different automatic behavior. If you do that, your brain will lay down a new neural pathway (rut) which will eventually become automatic. Neurons that fire together, wire together, which creates a habit. For example: if you tell yourself that you're not going to \_\_\_\_ (eat ice cream and chips). The next day you get home and you're tired, or frustrated or angry, etc. Without even thinking, you go to the freezer and pull out get the ice cream and chips and crawl into bed. Habits are formed because of the choices you made, which gave your brain consent to automate. This is the way your brain and mind works together. Automatic behavior controls your heart, lungs, etc. Focus on gratitude and your brain will automate that. Once it becomes automatic, and you find yourself in a difficult, painful event, your automatic response will be gratitude. But if you rehearse/practice fear, shame, etc. that will be your automatic response. If you spend a lot of time scrolling on your phone, you will find yourself craving that dopamine hit. Practice praying and meditating and your brain will experience peace and joy and good feelings, which causes your hippocampus to grow.
4. My brain doesn't determine if something is good for me or not. Brains are like computers—they operate according to the program we establish/build based on our choices and thoughts.
5. I must believe that I'm getting better at what I'm doing.
6. My mind is the trainer, the boss of my brain. My brain is the apprentice, the employee. Your brain is tissue and electrical; it follows habits and thoughts. Neuroscientists haven't been able to locate your mind. No one can see our thoughts. Thoughts don't come from neurons. Mental activity (thought) is not the same as brain activity. I Cor 2:16 says that we have the mind (not neurons) of Christ. This gives us the ability to decide to think differently; neural science now proves that is true.
7. Consciousness—whatever you think about repeatedly becomes more stable. Your brain keeps things the way that your thoughts are asking it to be. The neurons then become wired together—that's how you make changes in your brain. What you observe (think and see) repeatedly, your brain will reinforce. Your brain will rewire itself to reinforce the new habit/pattern you are beginning to practice/observe.

8. When you focus on your problem, you strengthen the circuits related to it. When you put these retraining steps into practice, there's no need to focus on the problem or the past. Instead focus on the future and ask, what is this for? Where am I going? What kind of person do I want to become? The answers to those questions will train your brain to look forward. Your brain will wire the neurons for whatever you rehearse/practice/repeat. Ask yourself, "What am I rehearsing? What am I dwelling on in my thoughts?"
9. Our brains filter reality. They don't create it. About 90% of neural connections between left and right hemispheres and frontal lobes filter input based on what we tell our brain to pay attention to. What's important to you? The brain is focused far more on filtering information rather than creating information. For example, two people can have the same experience, but have two different views of that experience. We can train our filter. Be careful how you listen, what you see, take every thought captive. Think on those things that are eternal.
10. If you listen to what the bible says through the lens of neuroplasticity and mind training (by thinking positive thoughts), you will be amazed. Isa 48:10 "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction." Yahweh refines us in a furnace of suffering. When we go through something painful, we have a choice. We can allow it to define the rest of our life and our future will be defined by that. Or we can be refined by it.
11. The parasympathetic nervous system helps us calm down. When we're calm, we are learning and neuroplasticity rewires us and stabilizes us and works in our favor. We get stronger even in the midst of stress and trauma.
12. When you focus on your body, your troubles, and who's to blame, then fear increases. If you focus on those things, you will feel worse. When we focus on helping others, we feel better, and believe that things will get better and healing will increase.
13. Be intentional, not reactive. That's learning to train your brain.
14. 2Co 5:13 "For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you." How do you get a sound mind? You train your mind to work on your behalf.
15. Everything you think about becomes real. Be made new in the attitude of your mind. 1 Cor 2:16 "For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ." That is my truth. I can be changed in my identity by believing that I will be renewed when I don't conform to my former thinking. Take action. Stop the negative, destructive thoughts and replace them with life-giving thoughts, scriptures and choose to believe them! This will reframe your life. If you keep doing things the way you've been doing them, you will have a bad outcome—unless you are thinking according to life and love and hope and the truth. If we are stuck in negative thoughts/beliefs, we can be transformed if we retrain our minds, which is the right way to live.
16. Do you have a junk drawer in your house? Does your junk drawer get more organized overtime or more chaotic? More chaotic, unless you are constantly tending to it. That descent into chaos is what your brain does automatically. Retraining your mind/brain must be intentional. This means you're choosing what you want to think about and are practicing being less reactive. If you don't do this, your brain will follow your instructions/thoughts and reactions according to your old, automated patterned responses. Retraining changes old patterns of thinking.

17. Neuroplasticity never turns off. Your brain is constantly changing, rewiring itself. It's up to you to make sure it's being rewired according to truth and life!

Simple exercise:

1. Notice a thought that you tend to have. Write it down.
2. Label that thought—give it a name
3. Now, redirect your attention to where you would rather go rather than what you've been thinking. For example, you find yourself thinking negative thoughts about your life. Stop and verbally express something you're grateful for, a plan for the future, a better story, etc.

This retrains your brain because you're changing your attention. This is so powerful! When you let the system work the way Yahweh designed it to work, and you intentionally take every thought captive and focus on things that are life and peace, you will be transformed from the inside out.

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*You can retrain your mind and your brain will rewire itself and your life will change.*

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Isa 30:15 For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength."