

# THE WHITE PERFECTIONIST

## Living in the Now

### Lesson Two



my **map** to freedom

## THE OUTER LAYER OF THE MAP

### YOUR PERSONALITY TRAITS

Let's be clear here. Learning to Live the in the Now is learning to FEEL! Or more accurately it is *remembering* how to feel. This programme is about learning to feel the immediacy of life. ALL of it. Not just the good bits. The problem is that long ago you decided that this was not a safe way to live and you closed down your contact with the present moment. Developing awareness of the ways you avoid feeling your everyday experience is the first important step to living in the now. One of the biggest problems in our modern society is that we think our everyday ways of existing are normal, to be expected, are as good as it gets. They are not. When we develop mindful awareness of our immediate experience, we get back to who we were before the world got its hands on us and remember what we long ago forgot, who we really are.

In this session, we are exploring the outer layer of your map. Your personality traits. Your aim is to learn to recognise how these traits have become conditioned patterns of closure to living in the now. Your traits developed because you do not want to feel your own depths and taste life directly. Unconsciously you believe it is not safe and you would rather be safe than be happy. Eventually, your traits became ways of being that increasingly distanced you from the immediacy of life so that you gradually lost intimacy with it. This is why you feel so much dissatisfaction with yourself and your life. Is that normal? No, of course not.

The more you flee the present moment, the smaller and more isolated you become. You experience what I think of as an 'inner shrivelling'. You become dogmatic, inflexible and self-protective, and you become a victim of fear, anger, distrust, and neediness. You lose your sense of delight in life and instead of feeling full, alive, and energetic you feel depleted, empty, and dissatisfied. When you are not in the moment, you are in a reacting and avoiding mode of living. Even though you may not be aware of it, when you are acting out your habitual patterns of behaviour, thought, and emotions, most of the time your breathing becomes tight and muscles become armoured. You become tense and have negative feelings. At such times you have dropped out of the present moment and are likely to think reactively, behave poorly and make bad decisions.

# THE OUTER LAYER OF THE MAP

## WHAT THE PRESENT MOMENT FEELS LIKE

So what does the present moment feel like? Present moment awareness is experienced and recognised through your three centres. Your head centre, your heart centre, and your body centre.

**Present moment awareness or nowness is experienced in the head** centre when your mind is clear and spacious, and is free from clutter and busyness. You feel an unmistakable lightness of mind that feels clear, responsive and agile. Remember how your mind feels when you are on holiday, like you have left the cares of the world behind? That's it!

**Present moment awareness or nowness is experienced in the heart** centre when your heart is open and warm. You experience an outpouring of love for everyone and everything and there is an absence of tightness and defensiveness. When your heart is open there are no barriers or walls of protection. Remember how you feel when you look at someone you love or cuddle your pet? That's it!

**Present moment awareness or nowness is experienced in the body** when your body is grounded, centred and present. This is about being really aware of your body its immediacy, the humming vibrance of your body and the exquisite joy that exists within every moment. Remember a time when you felt fully alive? That's it!

When these three centres are operating in the present moment you will recognise it as feeling relaxed, peaceful, and joyful. Anytime you are not feeling these things you have abandoned the present moment. (Which for most of us is most of the time!)

So, let's explore your everyday experience starting with the outer layer of your map. Your aim with this is to directly experience the ways you leave the present moment through your habitual patterns of behaving. We will do this through an exercise at the end of this lesson. But first, let's get familiar with your personality traits. Read the description of your personality traits on the next two pages. These are describing what is detailed on the outer layer of your map. Do not be discouraged if you do not recognise ALL the traits described. It often takes some time to own all aspects of yourself. Once you have read the description and had some time to digest it all move on to the exercise.

## THE OUTER LAYER: YOUR PERSONALITY & DESIRE FOR PERFECTION

As a White Perfectionist, your key driver is your desire for perfection.

The ways that you ensure you keep everything in your world perfect is by seeking to maintain high standards for yourself and others. You work hard at maintaining a lifestyle that is conscientious, orderly and ethical. You want to be accurate, thorough, fair and objective. More importantly, you want to be respectable, to do what is right and what you feel is appropriate. You see yourself as rational, orderly and principled. You would like others to see you as reliable, responsible and virtuous. You are great at judging the world around you and work hard to make it right and your idealised image is that you are hardworking and productive.

Conscientious and methodical, you focus on paying close attention to detail. You can quickly see what needs to be fixed and excel at organising, executing and applying expertise. You like to follow protocol, policies and procedures and flourish in environments that have clear rules, the opportunity for advancement, a pecking order, and consistency. Earnest and hardworking, you constantly strive to improve.

Your integrity, wisdom and adherence to sound procedure can bring clarity and guidance to a confused world. You are a pioneer with the ability to envision utopia and the discipline to put in the hard work necessary to make it happen. You are not afraid to act according to your strong convictions, even if your actions go against the beliefs of your parents, boss or society. With a special gift for teaching you enjoy helping people learn and improve. Gifted with a strong sense of purpose, and with high ideals, you value honesty, integrity and objectivity. You are sincere, earnest and diligent and act from your heart because, for you, the heart is the only thing that is truly perfect.

As a White Perfectionist, you feel that if something is worth doing, it is worth doing right. As a result, you are only satisfied with what appeals to your strong sense of what is moral, idealistic. You naturally wish to educate others to help them improve themselves.

## OUTER LAYER: YOUR PERSONALITY & AVOIDANCE OF MISTAKES

As a White Perfectionist, your desire for perfection and your avoidance of making mistakes is central fear that blocks your ability to live in the now. To avoid making mistakes, or doing anything imperfectly you want to know what is considered appropriate and you tend to do things by the book. Continuously striving for self-improvement, you expect others to do the same. You need to know what is expected of you so that you can act accordingly and so that you can excel. You have a strong internal critic that constantly reminds you of what you should and shouldn't do. You always act in accordance with your high standards and moral self-justifications. You prefer what is practical, grounded and stable and avoid appearing silly or frivolous to others. Your tendencies toward perfectionism mean you can become obsessive, self-critical and cause yourself a great deal of inner anxiety and unnecessary stress, particularly when you become obsessed with detail which can bring the added problem of losing sight of your goal. Life for you is about adhering to your strong internal set of standards. Sometimes, this can make you rigid and obsessive and you often wish that you could let go and have more fun, but because of your strong work ethic, this is hard for you.

You avoid impropriety, irresponsibility, high risks and/or extremes. Most importantly, you repress your anger, feeling that to express it is wrong or inappropriate. Privately, you may criticise yourself for being so controlled, far more than you ever criticise anyone else. Because of this tendency to be so hard on yourself, you can be thought of as guarded, but underneath you long for positive feedback, serenity and happiness. Your vice is resentment because you work so hard to repress your negative emotions. You feel that showing overt anger demonstrates a loss of control, so you suppress your wrath when others are not working as hard as you and can feel self-righteous when others don't feel the same level of responsibility that you do. Your righteous attitude often makes you seem like you are all work and no play and at times you become overly strict and rigid. You can become irritable, nit-picking and critical when others don't abide by your lofty moral code and your efforts to reform them or their environment are often met with resistance and can lead to friction with your peers as you are seen to be casting judgment or being too critical. Yet, underneath your attitude of moral superiority and need for correctness, you have a deep fear of being wrong, bad, evil or corruptible.

# EXERCISE

Congratulations, you are now ready to begin your first exercise.

- Give yourself some quiet time, have your map open in front of you and bring yourself into a state of mindful awareness with a few deep breaths.
- Choose one personality trait from the outer layer of the map it can be a 'good' trait or a 'negative' trait.
- Using the trait you have chosen, 'answer' the three inquiry questions below.
- For one, or even two of the questions you may get the answer "It doesn't." That is fine, move on to the next question
- Avoid rushing through these questions with your thinking mind. Mindful Awareness is needed here.
  - **How does this trait create distraction and busyness? (meaning I lose contact with the feelings and immediacy of my body)**
  - **How does this trait create overthinking? (meaning my mind is cluttered and full)**
  - **How does this trait create avoidance and withdrawal? (meaning I feel closed off and unavailable.)**

**Remember, anytime your mind is not clear, your heart is not open, and your body is not grounded you are avoiding or fleeing the present moment.**

You may not always find this inquiry easy because your traits have become so normalised. Simply remain with your mindful awareness and notice whatever arises into the space of inquiry. It is important that you stay open and curious and not judge what arises. **It is also important that you do not do anything or try to change yourself.** People often think they have the change their behaviour, do things differently, nothing could be further from the truth...**there is nothing to do but simply hold the space of mindful awareness.**

Spend a week or two doing this exercise **choosing a different trait each time.** Choose traits that you have noticed popping up in your day. When you choose traits that you notice in your everyday life you are learning to catch yourself in the act of fleeing or avoiding the present moment. The more you do this the faster your awareness grows, the more spontaneous and authentic you become, the more you develop a growing connection to the present moment.

Listen to the guided meditation called 'Your Traits'. It will support you with this exercise.