

1.

A Few Basic Principles

What I love about The Work is that it allows you to go inside and find your own happiness, to experience what already exists within you, unchanging, immovable, ever-present, ever-waiting. No teacher is necessary. You are the teacher you've been waiting for. You are the one who can end your own suffering.

I often say, "Don't believe anything I say." I want you to discover what's true for you, not for me. Still, many people have found the following principles to be helpful for getting started in The Work.

Noticing When Your Thoughts Argue with Reality

The only time we suffer is when we believe a thought that argues with what is. When the mind is perfectly clear, what is is what we want.

If you want reality to be different than it is, you might as well try to teach a cat to bark. You can try and try, and in the end the cat will look up at you and say, "Meow." Wanting reality to be different than it is is hopeless. You can spend the rest of your life trying to teach a cat to bark.

And yet, if you pay attention, you'll notice that you think thoughts like this dozens of times a day. "People should be kinder." "Children should be well-behaved." "My neighbors should take better care of their lawn." "The line at the grocery store should move faster." "My husband (or wife) should agree with me." "I should be thinner (or prettier or more successful)." These thoughts are ways of wanting reality to be different than it is. If you think that this sounds depressing, you're right. All the stress that we feel is caused by arguing with what is.

After I woke up to reality in 1986, people often referred to me as the woman who made friends with the wind. Barstow is a desert town where the wind blows a lot of the time, and everyone hated it; people even moved from there because they couldn't stand the wind. The reason I made friends with the wind—with reality—is that I discovered I didn't have a choice. I realized that it's insane to oppose it. When I argue with reality, I lose—but only 100 percent of the time. How do I know that the wind should blow? It's blowing!

People new to The Work often say to me, "But it would be disempowering to stop my argument with reality. If I simply accept reality, I'll become passive. I may even lose the desire to act." I answer them with a question: "Can you really know that that's true?" Which is more empowering?—"I wish I hadn't lost my job" or "I lost my job; what can I do now?"

The Work reveals that what you think shouldn't have hap-

pened *should* have happened. It should have happened because it did, and no thinking in the world can change it. This doesn't mean that you condone it or approve of it. It just means that you can see things without resistance and without the confusion of your inner struggle. No one wants their children to get sick, no one wants to be in a car accident; but when these things happen, how can it be helpful to mentally argue with them? We know better than to do that, yet we do it, because we don't know how to stop.

I am a lover of what is, not because I'm a spiritual person, but because it hurts when I argue with reality. We can know that reality is good just as it is, because when we argue with it, we experience tension and frustration. We don't feel natural or balanced. When we stop opposing reality, action becomes simple, fluid, kind, and fearless.

Staying in Your Own Business

I can find only three kinds of business in the universe: mine, yours, and God's. (For me, the word *God* means "reality." Reality is God, because it rules. Anything that's out of my control, your control, and everyone else's control—I call that God's business.)

Much of our stress comes from mentally living out of our own business. When I think, "You need to get a job, I want you to be happy, you should be on time, you need to take better care of yourself," I am in your business. When I'm worried about earthquakes, floods, war, or when I will die, I am in God's business. If I am mentally in your business or in God's

business, the effect is separation. I noticed this early in 1986. When I mentally went into my mother's business, for example, with a thought like "My mother should understand me," I immediately experienced a feeling of loneliness. And I realized that every time in my life that I had felt hurt or lonely, I had been in someone else's business.

If you are living your life and I am mentally living your life, who is here living mine? We're both over there. Being mentally in your business keeps me from being present in my own. I am separate from myself, wondering why my life doesn't work.

To think that I know what's best for anyone else is to be out of my business. Even in the name of love, it is pure arrogance, and the result is tension, anxiety, and fear. Do I know what's right for *me*? That is my only business. Let me work with that before I try to solve your problems for you.

If you understand the three kinds of business enough to stay in your own business, it could free your life in a way that you can't even imagine. The next time you're feeling stress or discomfort, ask yourself whose business you're in mentally, and you may burst out laughing! That question can bring you back to yourself. And you may come to see that you've never really been present, that you've been mentally living in other people's business all your life.

And if you practice it for a while, you may come to see that you don't have any business either and that your life runs perfectly well on its own.

Meeting Your Thoughts with Understanding

A thought is harmless unless we believe it. It's not our thoughts, but the *attachment* to our thoughts, that causes suffering. Attaching to a thought means believing that it's true, without inquiring. A belief is a thought that we've been attaching to, often for years.

Most people think that they *are* what their thoughts tell them they are. One day I noticed that I wasn't breathing—I was being breathed. Then I also noticed, to my amazement, that I wasn't thinking—that I was actually being thought and that thinking isn't personal. Do you wake up in the morning and say to yourself, "I think I won't think today"? It's too late: You're already thinking! Thoughts just appear. They come out of nothing and go back to nothing, like clouds moving across the empty sky. They come to pass, not to stay. There is no harm in them until we attach to them as if they were true.

No one has ever been able to control his thinking, although people may tell the story of how they have. I don't let go of my thoughts—I meet them with understanding. Then *they* let go of *me*.

Thoughts are like the breeze or the leaves on the trees or the raindrops falling. They appear like that, and through inquiry we can make friends with them. Would you argue with a raindrop? Raindrops aren't personal, and neither are thoughts. Once a painful concept is met with understanding, the next time it appears you may find it interesting. What used to be the nightmare is now just interesting. The next time it appears, you

may find it funny. The next time, you may not even notice it. This is the power of loving what is.

Becoming Aware of Your Stories

I often use the word *story* to talk about thoughts, or sequences of thoughts, that we convince ourselves are real. A story may be about the past, the present, or the future; it may be about what things should be, what they could be, or why they are. Stories appear in our minds hundreds of times a day—when someone gets up without a word and walks out of the room, when someone doesn't smile or doesn't return a phone call, or when a stranger *does* smile; before you open an important letter; or after you feel an unfamiliar sensation in your chest; when your boss invites you to come to his office, or when your partner talks to you in a certain tone of voice. Stories are the untested, uninvestigated theories that tell us what all these things mean. We don't even realize that they're just theories.

Once, as I walked into the ladies' room at a restaurant near my home, a woman came out of the single stall. We smiled at each other, and, as I closed the door, she began to sing and wash her hands. "What a lovely voice!" I thought. Then, as I heard her leave, I noticed that the toilet seat was dripping wet. "How could anyone be so rude?" I thought. "And how did she manage to pee all over the seat? Was she standing on it?" Then it came to me that she was a man—a transvestite, singing falsetto in the women's restroom. It crossed my mind to go after her (him) and let him know what a mess he'd made. As I cleaned the toilet seat, I thought about everything I'd say to

him. Then I flushed the toilet. The water shot up out of the bowl and flooded the seat. And I just stood there laughing.

In this case, the natural course of events was kind enough to expose my story before it went any further. Usually it doesn't; before I found inquiry, I had no way to stop this kind of thinking. Small stories bred bigger ones; bigger stories bred major theories about life, how terrible it was, and how the world was a dangerous place. I ended up feeling too frightened and depressed to leave my bedroom.

When you're operating on uninvestigated theories of what's going on and you aren't even aware of it, you're in what I call "the dream." Often the dream becomes troubling; sometimes it even turns into a nightmare. At times like these, you may want to test the truth of your theories by doing The Work on them. The Work always leaves you with less of your uncomfortable story. Who would you be without it? How much of your world is made up of unexamined stories? You'll never know until you inquire.

Looking for the Thought Behind the Suffering

I have never experienced a stressful feeling that wasn't caused by attaching to an untrue thought. Behind every uncomfortable feeling, there's a thought that isn't true for us. "The wind shouldn't be blowing." "My husband should agree with me." We have a thought that argues with reality, then we have a stressful feeling, and then we act on that feeling, creating more

stress for ourselves. Rather than understand the original cause—a thought—we try to change our stressful feelings by looking outside ourselves. We try to change someone else, or we reach for sex, food, alcohol, drugs, or money in order to find temporary comfort and the illusion of control.

It is easy to be swept away by some overwhelming feeling, so it's helpful to remember that any stressful feeling is like a common passionate alarm clock that says, "You're caught in the dream." Depression, pain, and fear are gifts that say, "Sweetheart, take a look at what you're thinking right now. You're living in a story that isn't true for you." Caught in the dream, we try to alter and manipulate the stressful feeling by reaching outside ourselves. We're usually aware of the feeling before the thought. That's why I say the feeling is an alarm clock that lets you know there's a thought that you may want to do The Work on. And investigating an untrue thought will always lead you back to who you really are. It hurts to believe you're other than who you are, to live any story other than happiness.

If you put your hand into a fire, does anyone have to tell you to move it? Do you have to decide? No: When your hand starts to burn, it moves. You don't have to direct it; the hand moves itself. In the same way, once you understand, through inquiry, that an untrue thought causes suffering, you move away from it. Before the thought, you weren't suffering; with the thought, you're suffering; when you recognize that the thought isn't true, again there is no suffering. That is how The Work functions. "How do I react when I think that thought?" Hand in the fire. "Who would I be without it?" Out of the flames. We look at the thought, we feel our hand in the fire, and we naturally move back to the original position; we don't have to be told. And the next time the thought arises, the mind automatically

moves from the fire. The Work invites us into the awareness of internal cause and effect. Once we recognize this, all our suffering begins to unravel on its own.

Inquiry

I use the word *inquiry* as synonymous with The Work. To *inquire* or to *investigate* is to put a thought or a story up against the four questions and turnaround (explained in the next chapter). Inquiry is a way to end confusion and to experience internal peace, even in a world of apparent chaos. Above all else, inquiry is about realizing that all the answers we ever need are always available inside us.

Inquiry is more than a technique: It brings to life, from deep within us, an innate aspect of our being. When practiced for a while, inquiry takes on its own life within you. It appears whenever thoughts appear, as their balance and mate. This internal partnership leaves you free to live as a kind, fluid, fearless, amused listener, a student of yourself, and a friend who can be trusted not to resent, criticize, or hold a grudge. Eventually, realization is experienced automatically, as a way of life. Peace and joy naturally, inevitably, and irreversibly make their way into every corner of your mind, into every relationship and experience. The process is so subtle that you may not even have any conscious awareness of it. You may only know that you used to hurt and now you don't.

2.

The Great Undoing

The one criticism of The Work I consistently hear is that it's just too simple. People say, "Freedom can't be this simple!" I answer, "Can you really know that that's true?"

Judge your neighbor, write it down, ask four questions, turn it around. Who says that freedom has to be complicated?

Putting the Mind on Paper

The first step in The Work is to write down your judgments about any stressful situation in your life, past, present, or future—about a person you dislike or worry about, a situation with someone who angers or frightens or saddens you, or someone you're ambivalent or confused about. Write your judgments down, just the way you think them. (Use a blank sheet of paper; or, if you have access to the Internet, you can go to <http://www.thework.org>, to the section called "Do The Work,"

You're either attaching

to your thoughts

or inquiring.

There's no other choice.

where you'll find a Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet to download and print.)

Don't be surprised if you find it difficult at first to fill out the Worksheet. For thousands of years, we have been taught not to judge—but let's face it, we still do it all the time. The truth is that we all have judgments running in our heads. Through The Work we finally have permission to let those judgments speak out, or even scream out, on paper. We may find that even the most unpleasant thoughts can be met with unconditional love.

I encourage you to write about someone whom you haven't yet totally forgiven. This is the most powerful place to begin. Even if you've forgiven that person 99 percent, you aren't free until your forgiveness is complete. The 1 percent you haven't forgiven them is the very place where you're stuck in all your other relationships (including your relationship with yourself).

If you are new to inquiry, I strongly suggest that you not write about yourself at first. If you start by judging yourself, your answers come with a motive and with solutions that haven't worked. Judging someone else, then inquiring and turning it around, is the direct path to understanding. You can judge yourself later, when you have been doing inquiry long enough to trust the power of truth.

If you begin by pointing the finger of blame outward, then the focus isn't on you. You can just let loose and be uncensored. We're often quite sure about what other people need to do, how they should live, whom they should be with. We have 20/20 vision about other people, but not about ourselves.

When you do The Work, you see who you are by seeing who you think other people are. Eventually you come to see that

everything outside you is a reflection of your own thinking. You are the storyteller, the projector of all stories, and the world is the projected image of your thoughts.

Since the beginning of time, people have been trying to change the world so that they can be happy. This hasn't ever worked, because it approaches the problem backward. What The Work gives us is a way to change the projector—mind—rather than the projected. It's like when there's a piece of lint on a projector's lens. We think there's a flaw on the screen, and we try to change this person and that person, whomever the flaw appears to be on next. But it's futile to try to change the projected images. Once we realize where the lint is, we can clear the lens itself. This is the end of suffering, and the beginning of a little joy in paradise.

People often say to me, "Why should I judge my neighbor? I already know that it's all about me." I say, "I understand. And please trust the process. Judge your neighbor, and follow the simple directions." Here are some examples of people you may want to write about: mother, father, wife, husband, children, siblings, partner, neighbor, friend, enemy, roommate, boss, teacher, employee, co-worker, teammate, salesman, customers, men, women, authorities, God. Often, the more personal your choice is, the more potent The Work can be.

Later, as you become skilled in The Work, you may want to investigate your judgments about issues such as death, money, health, your body, your addictions, and even your own self-criticisms. (See chapter 6, "Doing The Work on Work and Money"; chapter 7, "Doing The Work on Self-Judgments"; and chapter 11, "Doing The Work on the Body and Addictions.") In fact, once you're ready, you can write about and inquire into

any uncomfortable thought that appears in your mind. When you realize that every stressful moment you experience is a gift that points you to your own freedom, life becomes very kind.

Why and How to Write on the Worksheet

Please avoid the temptation to continue without writing down your judgments. If you try to do The Work in your head, without putting your thoughts on paper, the mind will outsmart you. Before you're even aware of it, it will be off and running into another story to prove that it's right. But though the mind can justify itself faster than the speed of light, it can be stopped through the act of writing. Once the mind is stopped on paper, thoughts remain stable, and inquiry can easily be applied.

Write down your thoughts without trying to censor them. Sit with your pen and paper and just wait. The words will come. The story will come. And if you really want to know the truth, if you're not afraid to see your story on paper, the ego will write like a maniac. It doesn't care; it's totally uninhibited. This is the day the ego has been waiting for. Give it its life on paper. It has been waiting for you to stop, just once, and really listen to it. It will tell you everything, like a child. Then, when the mind is expressed on paper, you can inquire.

I invite you to be judgmental, harsh, childish, and petty. Write with the spontaneity of a child who is sad, angry, confused, or frightened. Don't try to be wise, spiritual, or kind. This is the time to be totally honest and uncensored about how

you feel. Allow your feelings to express themselves, without any fear of consequences or any threat of punishment.

People who have been in The Work for a while get pettier and pettier on their Worksheets, as they try to find the sticking-points that are left. Beliefs just get more subtle, more invisible, as problems dissolve. They're just the last little children calling out, "Yoo-hoo! Here I am! Come and find me!" The more you do The Work, the more uncensored you become and the pettier you like to get, because it becomes hard to find something that will upset you. Eventually, you can't find a problem. That's an experience I hear from thousands of people.

Write down the thoughts and stories that are running through you, the ones that really cause you pain—the anger, the resentment, the sadness. Point the finger of blame first at people who have hurt you, the ones who have been closest to you, people you're jealous of, people you can't stand, people who have disappointed you. "My husband left me." "My partner infected me with AIDS." "My mother didn't love me." "My children don't respect me." "My friend betrayed me." "I hate my boss." "I hate my neighbors; they're ruining my life." Write about what you read this morning in the newspaper, about people being murdered or losing their homes through famine or war. Write about the checker at the grocery store who was too slow or about the driver who cut you off on the freeway. Every story is a variation on a single theme: *This shouldn't be happening. I shouldn't have to experience this. God is unjust. Life isn't fair.*

People new to The Work sometimes think, "I don't know what to write. Why should I do The Work anyway? I'm not angry at anyone. Nothing's really bothering me." If you don't know what to write about, wait. Life will give you a topic. Maybe a friend didn't call you back when she said she would,

and you're disappointed. Maybe when you were five years old, your mother punished you for something you didn't do. Maybe you're upset or frightened when you read the newspaper or think about the suffering in the world.

Put on paper the part of your mind that is saying these things. You can't stop the story inside your head, however hard you try. It's not possible. But when you put the story on paper and write it just the way the mind is telling it, with all your suffering and frustration and rage and sadness, then you can take a look at what is swirling around inside you. You can see it brought into the material world, in physical form. And finally, through The Work, you can begin to understand it.

When a child gets lost, he may feel sheer terror. It can be just as frightening when you're lost inside the mind's chaos. But when you enter The Work, it is possible to find order and to learn the way back home. It doesn't matter what street you walk down, there's something familiar; you know where you are. You could be kidnapped and someone hides you away for a month and then throws you blindfolded out of a car, but when you take off the blindfold and look at the buildings and streets, you begin to recognize a phone booth or a grocery store, and everything becomes familiar. You know what to do to find your way home. That is how The Work functions. Once the mind is met with understanding, it can always find its way back home. There is no place where you can remain lost or confused.

The Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet

After my life changed in 1986, I spent a lot of time in the desert near my home, just listening to myself. Stories arose inside me that had been troubling mankind forever. Sooner or later, I witnessed every concept, it seemed, and I discovered that even though I was alone in the desert, the whole world was with me. And it sounded like this: "I want," "I need," "they should," "they shouldn't," "I'm angry because," "I'm sad," "I'll never," "I don't want to." These phrases, which repeated themselves over and over in my mind, became the basis for the Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet. The purpose of the Worksheet is to help you put your painful stories and judgments into writing; it's designed to draw out judgments that otherwise might be difficult to uncover.

The judgments you write on the Worksheet will become the material that you'll use to do The Work. You'll put each written statement—one by one—up against the four questions and let each of them lead you to the truth.

On the next page, you'll find an example of a completed Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet. I have written about my second husband, Paul, in this example (included here with his permission); these are the kinds of thoughts that I used to have about him before my life changed. As you read, you're invited to replace Paul's name with the appropriate name in your life.

1. Who angers, confuses, saddens, or disappoints you, and why? What is it about them that you don't like?

I don't like (I am angry at, or saddened, frightened, confused, etc., by) (name) Paul because he doesn't listen to me. I'm angry at Paul because he doesn't appreciate me. I'm angry at Paul because he makes me at midnight and doesn't care about my health. I don't like Paul because he argues with everything I say. I'm saddened by Paul because he is so angry.

2. How do you want them to change? What do you want them to do?

I want (name) Paul to give me his full attention. I want Paul to love me completely. I want Paul to be considerate of my needs. I want Paul to agree with me. I want Paul to get more exercise.

3. What is it that they should or shouldn't do, be, think, or feel? What advice could you offer?

(Name) Paul shouldn't watch so much television. Paul should stop smoking. Paul should tell me that he loves me. He shouldn't ignore me. He shouldn't criticize me in front of our children and friends.

4. Do you need anything from them? What do they need to do in order for you to be happy?

I need (name) Paul to listen to me. I need Paul to stop lying to me. I need Paul to share his feelings and be emotionally available. I need Paul to be gentle and kind and patient.

5. What do you think of them? Make a list.

(Name) Paul is dishonest. Paul is reckless. Paul is childish. He thinks he doesn't have to follow the rules. Paul is uncaring and unavailable. Paul is irresponsible.

6. What is it that you don't want to experience with that person again?

I don't ever want or I refuse to live with Paul if he doesn't change. I refuse to watch Paul ruin his health. I don't ever want to argue with Paul again. I don't ever want to be lied to by Paul again.

Inquiry: The Four Questions and Turnaround

1. Is it true?
2. Can you absolutely know that it's true?
3. How do you react when you think that thought?
4. Who would you be without the thought?

and

Turn it around.

Now, using the four questions, let's investigate the first statement from number 1 on the example: *I don't like Paul because he doesn't listen to me.* As you read along, think of someone you haven't totally forgiven yet.

1. Is it true? Ask yourself, "Is it true that Paul doesn't listen to me?" Be still. If you really want to know the truth, the answer

will rise to meet the question. Let the mind ask the question, and wait for the answer that surfaces.

2. **Can you absolutely know that it's true?** Consider these questions: "Can I absolutely know that it's true that Paul doesn't listen to me? Can I ever really know when someone is listening or not? Am I sometimes listening even when I appear not to be?"

3. **How do you react when you think that thought?** How do you react when you think that Paul doesn't listen to you? How do you treat him? Make a list. For example: "I give him 'the look.' I interrupt him. I punish him by not paying attention to him. I start talking faster and louder, and I try to force him to listen." Continue making your list as you go inside, and see how you treat yourself in that situation and how that feels. "I shut down. I isolate myself. I eat and sleep a lot, and I watch television for days. I feel depressed and lonely." Notice all the effects of thinking the thought "Paul doesn't listen to me."

4. **Who would you be without the thought?** Now consider who you would be if you couldn't think the thought "Paul doesn't listen to me." Close your eyes and imagine Paul not listening to you. Imagine you don't have the thought that Paul doesn't listen (or that he even should listen). Take your time. Notice what is revealed to you. What do you see? How does that feel?

Turn it around. The original statement "I don't like Paul because he doesn't listen to me," when reversed, could become "I don't like myself because I don't listen to Paul." Is that as true or truer for you? Are you listening to Paul when you're

thinking about him not listening to you? Continue to find other examples of how you don't listen.

Another turnaround that could be as true or truer is "I don't like myself because I don't listen to myself." When you're mentally out of your business and thinking about what Paul should be doing, are you listening to yourself? Do you put your own life on hold when you believe that he should listen? Can you hear how you talk to Paul when you believe that he should listen?

After sitting with the turnarounds, you would continue a typical inquiry with the next statement written in number 1 on the Worksheet—*I'm angry at Paul because he doesn't appreciate me*—and then with every other statement on the Worksheet.

The turnarounds are *your* prescription for health, peace, and happiness. Can you give yourself the medicine that you have been prescribing for others?

Your Turn: The Worksheet

Now you know enough to try out The Work. First you'll put your thoughts on paper. It's not time to inquire with the four questions yet; we'll do that later. Simply pick a person or situation and write, using short, simple sentences. Remember to *point the finger of blame or judgment outward*. You may write from your present position or from your point of view as a five-year-old or twenty-five-year-old. Please do *not* write about yourself yet.

1. Who angers, confuses, saddens, or disappoints you, and why? What is it about them that you don't like? (Remember: Be harsh, childish, and petty.) I don't like (I am angry at, or saddened, frightened, confused, etc., by) (name) because _____.

2. How do you want them to change? What do you want them to do? I want (name) to _____.

3. What is it that they should or shouldn't do, be, think, or feel? What advice could you offer? (Name) should (shouldn't) _____.

4. Do you need anything from them? What do they need to do in order for you to be happy? (Pretend it's your birthday and you can have anything you want. Go for it!) I need (name) to _____.

5. What do you think of them? Make a list. (Don't be rational or kind.) (Name) is _____.

6. What is it that you don't want to experience with that person, again? I don't ever want or I refuse to _____.

[Note: Sometimes you may find yourself upset without knowing why. There is always an internal story, but occasionally it can be hard to find. If you feel blocked with the Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet, see "When the Story Is Hard to Find," pages 203–205.]

Your Turn: The Inquiry

One by one, put each statement on the Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet up against the four questions, and then turn around the statement you're working on. (If you need help, refer back to the example on pages 18–19.) Throughout this process, explore being open to possibilities beyond what you think you know. There's nothing more exciting than discovering the don't-know mind.

It's like diving. Keep asking the question and wait. Let the answer find you. I call it the heart meeting the mind: the gentler polarity of mind (which I call the heart) meeting the polarity that is confused because it hasn't been investigated. When the mind asks sincerely, the heart will respond. You may begin to experience revelations about yourself and your world, revelations that can transform your whole life, forever.

Take the time now to give yourself a taste of The Work. Look at the first statement that you have written on number 1 of your Worksheet. Now ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is it true?

Take your time. The Work is about discovering what is true from the deepest part of yourself. It may not coincide with anything you've ever considered before. But when you experience your own answer, you'll know it. Just be gentle, sit with it, and let it take you deeper in.

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. You are listening for *your* answers now, not other people's, and not anything you have been taught. This can be very unsettling, because you're entering the unknown. As you continue to dive

deeper, allow the truth within you to rise and meet the question. Be gentle as you give yourself to inquiry. Let this experience have you completely.

2. Can you absolutely know that it's true?

This is an opportunity to go deeper into the unknown, to find the answers that live beneath what we think we know. All I can tell you about this realm is that what lives beneath the nightmare is a good thing. Do you really want to know the truth?

If your answer to question 2 is yes, you can simply move on to the next question. But you may find it useful to pause and rewrite your statement in order to uncover your interpretation of it. Often it is the interpretation, which may be hidden from you, that causes you pain. For a detailed explanation of rewriting, see pages 86–89.

3. How do you react when you think that thought?

Make a list. How do you treat yourself, how do you treat the person you've written about, when you think that thought? What do you do? Be specific. Make a list of your actions. What do you say to that person when you think that thought? List the things you say. How do you live when you believe that thought? List how each reaction feels physically inside you. Where do you feel it? How does it feel (tingling, hot, etc.)? What is the self-talk that goes on in your head when you think that thought?

4. Who would you be without the thought?

Close your eyes and wait. Imagine yourself just for a moment without the thought. Imagine that you didn't have the ability to think the thought as you stand in the presence of that person (or in that situation). What do you see? How does it feel?

How is the situation different? List the possibilities for living your life without this concept. For example, how would you treat that person differently in the same situation without the thought? Does this feel kinder inside you?

Turn it around.

To do the turnaround, rewrite your statement. First, write it as if it were written about you. Where you have written someone's name, put yourself. Instead of "he" or "she," put "I." For example, "Paul should be kind to me" turns around to "I should be kind to myself" and "I should be kind to Paul." Another type is a 180-degree turnaround to the extreme opposite: "Paul shouldn't be kind to me." He shouldn't be kind, because he isn't (in my opinion). This isn't an issue of morality but of what's actually true.

You may come to see three or four or more turnarounds in one sentence. Or there may be just one that feels true for you. (The turnaround for statement number 6 on the Worksheet is different from the usual turnaround. We take the statement and replace "I don't ever want to . . ." with "I am willing to . . ." and then "I look forward to . . .") See pages 94–103 for help with turnarounds.

Consider whether or not the turned-around statement is as true as or truer than your original statement. For example, the turnaround "I should be kind to myself" does seem as true as or truer than the original statement, because when I think that Paul should be kind to me, I get angry and resentful, and I cause myself a lot of stress. This is not a kind thing to do. If I were kind to myself, I wouldn't have to wait for kindness from others. "I should be kind to Paul"—that too is at least as true as the original statement. When I think that Paul should be kind to me and I get angry and resentful, I treat Paul very unkindly,

especially in my mind. Let me begin with myself and act as I'd like Paul to act. As for "Paul shouldn't be kind to me," that is certainly truer than its opposite. He shouldn't be kind, because he isn't. That's the reality of it.

The Inquiry Continued

Now it's time for you to apply the four questions and the turn-around to the rest of your judgments, one at a time. Read all the sentences you have written on your Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet. Then, one by one, investigate each statement by asking yourself:

1. Is it true?
2. Can I absolutely know that it's true?
3. How do I react when I think that thought?
4. Who would I be without the thought?

and then

Turn it around.

If your first experience of The Work doesn't seem to work for you, that's okay. Just move on to the next chapter, or try filling out a Worksheet on a different person and come back to this one later. Don't worry about whether The Work is working or not. You're just beginning to learn how to do it. It's like riding a bike. All you need to do is keep wobbling on. You'll get a better feel for it as you read the dialogues that follow. And you won't necessarily be the first to notice that it's working. You may find, as many people have, that it doesn't seem to have any effect now, but you have already shifted in ways you can't feel yet. The Work can be very subtle and profound.

Everyone is a mirror image

of yourself—

your own thinking

coming back at you.

3.

Entering the Dialogues

In reading the dialogues in this book, it's important to understand that there is no essential difference between what the facilitator does (in these examples, it happens to be me) and what a person doing *The Work* alone does. You are the teacher and healer you've been waiting for. This book is designed to help you do *The Work* by yourself. It's not necessary to work with a facilitator, though that can be very powerful. It can also be useful to watch someone else do *The Work* with a facilitator and, as you watch, to look inside for your own answers. Participating in this way helps you learn how to question yourself.

Many of the following chapters contain dialogues with men and women doing *The Work*. These are edited transcripts of conversations taped during workshops that I have given over the past year or two. At a typical workshop, several participants volunteer to sit with me, one by one, in front of the audience and read what they have written on their Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet. Then they are guided into the power of the four

questions and the turnaround, and thus into their own self-induced realizations.

I have discovered that in every language and every country I have visited, there are no new stories. They're all recycled. The same stressful thoughts arise in each mind one way or another, sooner or later. That's why anyone's *Work* can be your *Work* also. Read these dialogues as if they were written by you. Don't just read the workshop participants' answers. Go inside and discover your own. Get as emotionally involved and as close to them as you can. Discover where and when you have experienced what you're reading about.

You'll notice that I don't always ask the four questions in the order you've learned. I sometimes vary the usual order; I leave out questions, zeroing in on just one or two, and sometimes I skip the questions entirely and go directly to the turnaround. Even though the usual order of the questions works well, eventually it may not be necessary to ask them in order. You don't have to begin with "Is it true?" You can start with any question; "Who would you be without that thought?" might be the first one, if that feels right. Just one of these questions can set you free if you inquire deeply from within. After you do *The Work* for a while, the questions will become internalized. But until this happens, the deepest shifts happen when you ask all four questions and the turnaround in the suggested order. That's why I strongly recommend that those new to *The Work* stay with this form.

Sometimes I also ask two subsidiary questions: "Can you see a reason to drop that thought?" and "Can you find one stress-free reason to keep the thought?" These are follow-ups to the third question, "How do you react when you think that thought?" They can be very useful.

When I feel it's appropriate, I'll help someone find the story that is the real cause of their suffering and that may be hidden from their awareness. This may involve looking more deeply at the original statement to find the statement behind it. Or it may involve shifting the inquiry from the written statements to a painful statement that they've just spontaneously made. (When you do The Work on your own, and a new painful thought or deeper story appears, you may want to write it down to include in your inquiry.) Sometimes I'll share my own answer to a question or I'll tell a personal story. Please understand that I'm speaking from my own experience and that my answers are not intended as suggestions for how *you* should live.

The Work does not condone any harmful action. To hear it as justifying anything that is less than kind is to misinterpret it. If you find anything in the following pages that sounds cold, uncaring, unloving, or unkind, I invite you to be gentle with it. Breathe through it. Feel and experience what arises in *you*. Go inside yourself and answer the four questions. Experience inquiry for yourself.

Read these dialogues as if they were your own. Go inside for your own answers. Get as emotionally involved and as close to them as you can. Discover where and when you have experienced what you're reading about. If you can't relate to one of the following examples, try substituting someone who is significant in your life. For example, if the participant's issue is with a friend, and you substitute the word *husband*, *wife*, *lover*, *mother*, *father*, or *boss*, you may find that his Work turned out to be your Work. We think we are doing The Work on people, but actually we're working on our *thoughts* about people. (You can write an entire Worksheet on your mother, for example,

and later find that your relationship with your daughter has dramatically improved, because you were attached to the very same thoughts about her, though you weren't aware of it.)

The Work allows you to go inside and experience the peace that already exists within you. That peace is unchanging, immovable, and ever-present. The Work takes you there. It's a true homecoming.

[Note: To help you follow the process of inquiry, the four questions are printed in boldface in chapter 4.]