

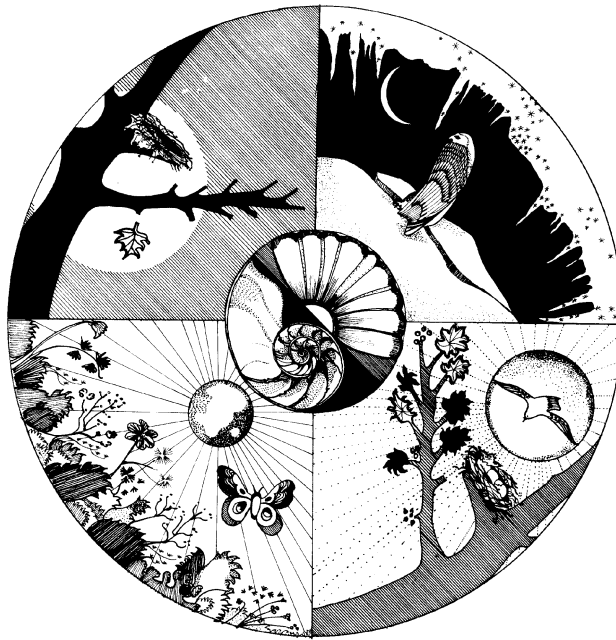


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A PSYCHOSYNTHESIS APPROACH TO THE TREATMENT OF DEPRESSION



In our culture today, there are a great many questions being asked about how the human unconscious operates and how its potentials might be developed. In this paper, Psychosynthesis is introduced--a discipline which provides both a model for understanding the complexity of the human psyche and techniques which facilitate the development of psychological and spiritual resources. A case study is presented which documents how Psychosynthesis is used in the treatment of depression.

INTRODUCTION: ONE OF LIFE'S PERFECT LESSONS

I was working in my office at home a few years ago, steadily whittling down the tasks piled up on my desk. It was mid-morning and I had been busy for a couple of hours. My wife and two children were up and stirring and, all of a sudden, I heard a big commotion outside my door.

I left my chair, opened the door and was met with one of life's perfect little lessons. "I *need* something!" my two year old daughter, Gabrielle, was saying. Solange, my wife, was tracking close behind her, trying to figure out what she needed. "I *need* something," Gabrielle insisted. She was already dressed but had no shoes on. Solange had her sandals in her hand and was offering them to our little sprite. But that wasn't it. "I need something!"

In about five seconds I perceived what was going on. Gabrielle felt need but had no specific object in mind the having of which would satisfy her. Solange, on automatic pilot as mother to a four and a two year old, was simply trying to meet this particular crisis the best she could and was hooked by our daughter.

I looked at Solange, she looked back at me, and we saw the lesson: here was life, ever restless, ever moving, hardly ever satisfied! We laughed and laughed, tears streaming from our eyes with the humor of it all. I do not believe Solange would have ever found the 'it' for which Gabrielle was searching. Seeing the truth of what was really happening, though, resolved the situation.

In a culture that is frantically extroverted, it is only logical that, when we are in a state of crisis, we should search outside ourselves for the answers to our problems. Like children, we run from option to option, looking here, looking there--maybe a new partner, maybe a new job, maybe a new house, new town--trying to fill needs we cannot name. This restless search might be appropriate behavior for a two year old who is just learning about the richness and diversity of the

world. But at twenty two, or forty two, this restless external search doesn't always bring us what we need.

We all do the best we can to sustain our careers, care for our families and friends, and hold our place responsibly in the world. But it seems that only when a crisis befalls us--a health problem, trouble in our marriage or at work, an economic disaster, the loss of a loved one--do we take ourselves off automatic pilot, shift to an internal orientation and begin to wonder who we really are. And then, more often than not, this turn to the inner world is motivated simply by the need to alleviate or put an end to pain. Once the pain is gone, we jump back on the horse and go galloping back into our already too busy lives.

We need to learn how to ask fundamental questions about our needs and values, about the meaning and purpose of our lives. The truth is, we know very little about ourselves. As a consequence, few of us have reached the heights of creativity or the limits of our capacity for loving and effective self-expression in the world. There are wonderful and amazing talents and abilities lying dormant within each one of us and we must find a way to tap and develop those resources.

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS WHICH NEED TO BE ADDRESSED

It is interesting that people from many different walks of life are beginning to ask similar questions but framed in different ways. In medicine, for instance, the question is framed in terms of health. Cigarettes, alcohol, diet and stress are the four great killers in this country, the great overuse and presence of which comes from our frantic, busy, and externally oriented life styles.

Stroke, heart attack, ulcers, migraine headaches, back pain, cancer, and a whole unholy litany of other illnesses result when we live in ways that are not good for us, in ways not aligned with our true values. How do we begin to take responsibility for the quality of our lives? How do

we begin to listen to and take care of our bodies and return to a natural state of physical excellence and well-being?

In the mental health profession, the question is framed in terms of psychological wellness. How do we confront and change negative emotions, limiting self-concepts, and neurotic patterns of interacting? What are the laws concerning transformations of consciousness? What is the relationship between our basic, primal needs, desire and drives, and the higher aspects of human awareness? How do we develop deep and loving commitments to our partners, children and community? How do we survive and prosper through the different stages of our lives? How do we connect with love to who we really are inside and begin to build lives on foundations that cannot be shaken either by inner turmoil or outer disaster?

In religion, the question is framed in terms of the spiritual life. There are more than 200 religious denominations in this country alone, each with its own (often conflicting) sacred texts, dogma, orthodoxy, mythology, and tradition. And it is estimated there are more than 5000 cults in the land, preying, many fear, on the naivete of our youth.

Why are traditional churches increasingly empty? Why do they serve an increasingly older audience? What are the relative benefits and potential dangers of eastern spiritual practice: meditation, yoga, breathing exercises. Why are kids using mind altering substances and taking journeys into altered states of consciousness? For what do they search? How can we move out of a dominantly rational approach to spirituality and experience the inspiration religion promises? How do we move away from separative identifications with particular religious institutions and touch the oneness about which each religion speaks?

In business, the question is framed in terms of productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness. While there is a necessary and increasing demand for better

sophistication in, and more use of, robotics and computers in U.S. industry, the core of the productivity issue has much to do with motivation and the human spirit.

It is clear that we do not put out our best effort if we are not excited about or believe in what we are doing, and money is simply not a sufficient reward for a life spent in meaningless activity. How do we develop human resources, increase our level of motivation and improve the quality of our work? What is the intrinsic value of the things we make or do? How do we develop a functional and realistic basis for ethics in business? How do we infuse our values into our work? How do we remain profitable and still care about employees? How do we retrain and retool people now employed in dying segments of industry and the economy to be productive workers tomorrow?

In the arts, the question is framed in terms of creativity. Neurophysiological research suggests to us that we only use about 15% of the potential of the right side of the brain--that part of us that thinks in images and symbols and is the source of imagination and inspiration. We must be willing to pay a high price to develop creativity and follow our inner muses in a culture which worships rationality and materialism above all else. The starving artist is a too real stereotype in our culture and the first items to get cut when educational budgets shrink are music, drama and art--those very subjects that teach our children how to be fully human.

What treasures might we create and share with one another if we could find the courage to develop our capacity for creative self-expression? What music, sculpture, painting, humor, dance, poetry would be born into the world to stimulate, excite, teach, and encourage us in living if we could develop this capacity. What are the dynamics of inspiration and how can we foster the development of our artistic potential?

In education, the question is framed in terms of learning. Each of us is different and unique and must find and pursue our own special

interests and concerns. But how do we become self-directed, enthusiastic, excited and impassioned about learning? How do we move away from production line education, create environments and curriculum that will help both children and adults unlock their minds and learn what they need to know to survive and prosper in an increasingly complex world?

All these questions and concerns boil down to a few fundamental issues: how can we become strong as individuals, develop the best within us, receive what we truly need to live, unite in fellowship with one another and live in peace?

In short, we must find out what it means to be fully human. Obviously these questions are not easy to answer, but the consequences of not framing them and actively searching for their solutions are awesome indeed. All the evil we experience and perpetrate on one another comes from either our inability or unwillingness to ask these important questions and search for their solutions.

BACK AT HOME

"I need something!" Gabrielle kept saying as she ran restlessly around the house. Solange ran right behind her trying to figure out what her need was until she realized that Gabrielle was stuck in a rut, like the needle on a scratched record, and couldn't get out. She laughed, gave Gabrielle a big hug and ended the drama (for the moment...!).

Too often we get stuck in ruts like this and we hope, by turning our lives over to the professionals or the experts--in medicine, mental health, religion, business, the arts and education--that somehow they will rescue us from our patterns, solve our problems and get us back on track. One way or another, we *must* learn to see where we are, acknowledge the truth when we are stuck, lift the needle of our restlessness off the record of too worn patterns, identify our true needs, and meet them in a realistic way.

"Gabrielle, close your eyes, go inside and get in touch with what you really need." Somehow this wouldn't have worked very well with our two year old. "Monica, close your eyes, go inside and get in touch with your real needs." All too often this doesn't work with adults, either. The sad fact is, too few of us know how to tune inward, connect with our own best wisdom, inner guidance, and human resources. But we have to learn how.

It is obvious that a source of deep wisdom is needed if we are to wind our way successfully through the labyrinths of life, if we are to identify and fulfill our personal and collective needs. Where can we find such wisdom? Our greatest task in life is to discover and nourish the deep springs of wisdom which flow *within* us. We must learn how to frame our questions and search for their answers in the depths of our own inner space. One approach to framing these important questions and searching for their answers comes from a discipline called Psychosynthesis.

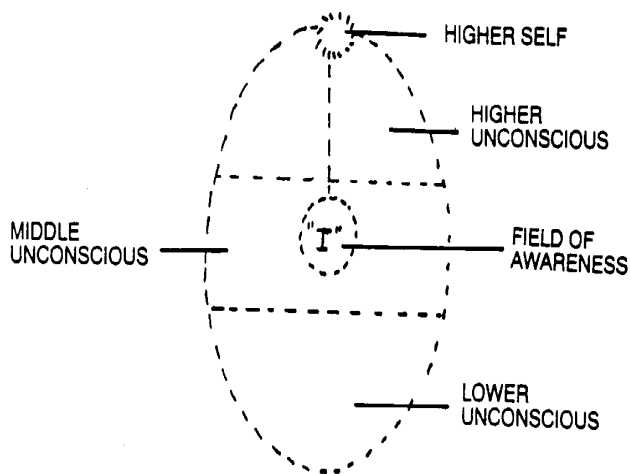
PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

Psychosynthesis is a psychological and educational approach to human development first articulated by the Italian Psychoanalyst Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974). Psychosynthesis asserts there is a principle of growth within each one of us with which we must align, and an inner genius, which might be called the Higher Self, to which we must connect, to find the energy and wisdom necessary to understand more deeply, work more creatively, love more authentically, and successfully meet the challenges which confront us at each stage in life. By cooperating with the natural growth process in a purposeful way, and through the ongoing exploration and development of three basic levels of consciousness, we learn not only how to improve our daily functioning in the world, but also how to move beyond mere coping levels toward a state called Self-actualization--the highest stage in growth.

Psychosynthesis provides a theoretical framework and a wide range of practical methods with which to connect to the Higher Self and align with principle of inner growth. An essential part of the work is to recognize and transform the unconscious and automatic patterns of thinking and behaving, called Subpersonalities, that limit our creative Self-expression. We transform these patterns through the mediation and utilization of higher psychological and spiritual resources. As we become involved in the process of transformation, we begin to assume greater responsibility for our personal, professional and spiritual growth and develop the basic human qualities that link us to one another.

THE MODEL

The following description of this model, called the egg diagram, comes from the book, *Psychosynthesis*, by Robert Assagioli (New York, The Viking Press, 1965, pp. 17-19.)



THE LOWER UNCONSCIOUS. This contains the elementary psychological activities which direct the life of the body; the intelligent coordination of bodily functions. The fundamental drives and primitive urges. Many complexes charged with intense emotion. Dreams and imaginations of an inferior kind. Lower, uncontrolled parapsychological processes. Various pathological manifestations, such as phobias,

obsessions, compulsive urges and paranoid delusions.

THE MIDDLE UNCONSCIOUS. This is formed of psychological elements similar to those of our waking consciousness and easily accessible to it. In this inner region our various experiences are assimilated, our ordinary mental and imaginative activities are elaborated and developed in a sort of psychological gestation before their birth into the light of consciousness.

THE HIGHER UNCONSCIOUS OR SUPERCONSCIOUS. From this region we receive our higher intuitions and inspirations--artistic, philosophical or scientific, ethical "imperatives" and urges to humanitarian and heroic action. It is the source of the higher feelings, such as altruistic love; of genius and of the states of contemplation, illumination, and ecstasy. In this realm are latent the higher psychic functions and spiritual energies.

THE HIGHER SELF. The conscious self is generally not only submerged in the ceaseless flow of psychological contents but seems to disappear altogether when we fall asleep, when we faint, when we are under the effect of an anesthetic or narcotic, or in a state of hypnosis. And when we awake the self mysteriously reappears, we do not know how or whence--a fact which, if closely examined, is truly baffling and disturbing. This leads us to assume that the re-appearance of the conscious self or ego is due to the existence of a permanent center, of a true Self situated beyond or "above" it.

There are various ways by means of which the reality of the Self can be ascertained. There have been many individuals who have achieved, more or less temporarily, a conscious realization of the Self that for them has the same degree of certainty as is experienced by an explorer who has entered a previously unknown region. Such statements can be found in Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*, in Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum*, in Underhill's *Mysticism*, and in other books. The awareness of

the Self can also be achieved through the use of certain psychological methods, among which are Jung's "process of individuation", Desoille's "Reve Eveille", techniques of Yoga, visualization, etc.

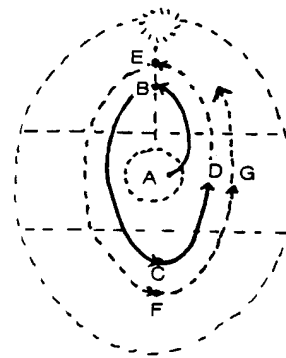
...This Self is above, and unaffected by, the flow of the mind-stream or by bodily conditions; and the personal conscious self should be considered merely as its reflection, its "projection" in the field of the personality. At the present stage of psychological investigation little is definitely known concerning the Self, but the importance of this synthesizing center well warrants further research.

In blending the perspectives and methods of Eastern and Western philosophy, psychology, and religion, this discipline offers a comprehensive view of man that reflects a positive, hopeful, and productive attitude toward life. It stresses the development of authentic individuality and asserts that this development is fundamental to the evolution of a better society. There are 45 Institutes worldwide which offer training in Psychosynthesis. A growing number of colleges and universities offer courses or degree programs, on both the undergraduate and graduate levels, with an emphasis in Psychosynthesis. And there are hundreds of dissertations, books, articles, and monographs about the application of Psychosynthesis in a great many fields of human endeavor a catalogue for which can be obtained from Psychosynthesis Distribution, PO Box 575, Amherst, MA, 01004-0575, (413)256-6369.

THE SPIRAL OF EVOLUTION

From many years as a Psychosynthesis practitioner, I have learned that, when guided by the inspiration of the Higher Self, personal growth, professional development, and spiritual renewal tends to follow something of a spiraling progression of unfoldment. Crisis catalyzes the process of growth. Crisis breaks us out of the comfortable, often automatic routines of our lives,

shocks us into a clear and focused awareness of the present moment, alerts us to the need for change, and challenges us to develop new inner resources in creative and adaptive response. When we turn our attention to the present moment in an attempt to resolve a crisis at hand, there are four essential questions which must be asked, and answered, to keep our energies moving purposefully along this spiral of evolution. These



four questions move us through a thorough and comprehensive exploration of the three levels of consciousness described by Psychosynthesis.

Point A: Where am I now?

Point B: Where do I wish to be?

Point C: What dynamic energies or forces within might prevent me from realizing my vision, dream or goal?

Point D: What specific steps must I take to move from the present toward the realization of my goal?

When one turn of the spiral has been complete, when we have realized a cherished goal, the journey of growth and evolution continues to unfold, over time:

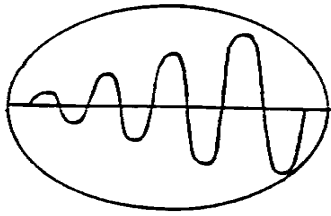
Point E: What is the next vision, dream, or goal I might strive to manifest in my life?

Point F: What dynamic energies or forces within might prevent me from realizing my vision, dream or goal?

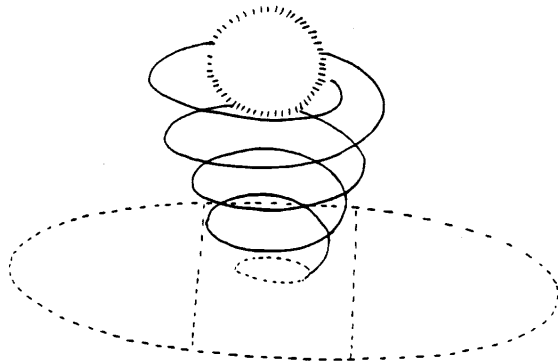
Point G: What specific steps must I now take to move from the present toward the realization of my goal?

INCREASED AMPLITUDE

Through the image of the spiral, the model of Psychosynthesis offers a way of understanding



how consciousness evolves. Each cycle expands our awareness of what it means to be fully human and, as we continue growing, helps us develop our latent talents and abilities. If we flatten and view this spiral from the side, we see a sine wave that increases in amplitude over time. As we continue to grow, we can experience greater productivity, fuller living, deeper love and the realization of our most cherished goals. That's the good news! The bad news, and the challenge, is that this gradually unfolding process depends on our willingness to dig ever deeper into the lower unconscious and confront that which we fear, that which gets in the way of growth.



Psychosynthesis helps us realize the importance of exploring both the lower and higher unconscious. The model helps us realize that the journey of life is fundamentally about the expansion of consciousness and the actualization of latent human resources. After we have experienced these cycles consciously a few times, and begin to understand how the process of growth and transformation operates in us, we begin to trust the process. We begin to trust that bleak days do, in fact, give way to sunny days. The hard times become the testing ground of our intention, courage, and commitment. They strengthen and challenge us to always be creating new forms that will embody and reflect the authentic movements in our hearts and souls. Through this process we learn to build on the firm

foundation of our deepest truth and gradually, over time, approach the realization of our individual and collective potential.

Each technique is useful by itself or in conjunction with others to help us use a wide array of human resources to identify, illuminate, understand, address and transform our issues and concerns. The ever widening image of the spiral reflects the dynamic process of Psychosynthesis in action, a process which leads us in a gradually unfolding way toward the realization of our full potential, a state called Self-actualization.

CONCLUSION

We live in an ever changing, ever challenging world, a world to which we must be constantly responding and adapting. The patterns of thinking and behaving that get developed at one stage in life, whether or not they are functional and help us get our needs met, must ultimately give way to new ones as we mature. Psychosynthesis asserts that growth is a natural process and that there is a wisdom within us, an inner genius or guide--the Higher Self--with which, through the development of our human resources, we must connect to be all that we may be in life.

Psychosynthesis has application in all fields of human endeavor because it provides a model or way of understanding the process of growth and it offers specific methods and techniques for facilitating it. As we face the challenges which confront us, asking fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of our experiences in life, we begin to develop the deeper and higher dimensions of our human nature. Gradually we become more centered, healthy, creative, productive, wise and loving. We begin to more fully express our true Selves in our lives and, in this way, make increasingly significant and positive contributions to the worlds in which we live.

CASE STUDY: A PSYCHOSYNTHESIS APPROACH TO

THE TREATMENT OF DEPRESSION

On the 22nd of February, 1991, a 46 year old white female, Mrs. Margaret Stevens, was referred for counseling by her Family Practice Physician (all names have been changed). She had been suffering from persistent anxiety and depression and had been on and off the medications Xanax, Inderal and Desyrel for eight years. A recent major depressive episode mobilized her will to seek counseling.

In our initial interview, Mrs. Stevens acknowledged multiple complaints. She suffered from nervousness, stress, an inability to relax, low energy, tiredness, depression, insomnia, memory and concentration problems, procrastination, trouble making decisions, stomach and bowel trouble, unhappiness, marital problems, conflict with her children (Mary, 13 and Joan, 17), multiple fears, low self-control, anger and bad temper, over eating and weight problems, inferiority feelings, and disturbing thoughts. The diagnosis which seemed appropriate was DSM III-R 296.33: major depression, recurrent, severe without psychotic features.

Mrs. Stevens said that her first husband, with whom she was married for eight and one half years, ran around with other women throughout their marriage and she finally had to divorce him. She married her 2nd husband, Dennis, in 1973. Unfortunately, he was an alcoholic. A home maker, Mrs. Stevens spent her time by day worrying about Dennis's lack of caring and concern. By night she fretted about his whereabouts and drove around the countryside searching for him at the various bars and clubs where he hung out to make sure *he* wasn't running around on her and, secondarily, to see that he got safely home.

Mrs. Stevens had seen a psychiatrist for three visits while hospitalized for depression in 1989 but, although she had also spoken to her preacher several times about her troubles and concerns, she had never undertaken any formal or

comprehensive counseling program prior to her interview with me. She cried openly toward the end of our initial interview, grateful to have found someone who really listened to and heard her.

Mrs. Stevens was referred to counseling for relief from anxiety and depression. According to the model of Psychosynthesis, she would have to take a number of very specific steps to find this relief, to reduce her suffering and achieve more satisfaction in life. First she would have to align with the principle of growth within and begin to connect to the wisdom and guidance of her Higher Self. Then Mrs. Stevens would have to become aware of, experience and explore three distinct levels of consciousness: the Middle Unconscious--issues in her life about which she felt burdened, hopeless, and overwhelmed and which resulted in physical, mental, and emotional pain; the Lower Unconscious--underlying negative patterns and internal dynamics of which her difficulties, issues and depression were an overt expression; and the Higher Unconscious--psychological and spiritual resources necessary to illuminate and transform these dynamics, their patterns and effects. Achieving this, Mrs. Stevens would become more integrated, Self-reliant, and fulfilled.

METHODS

Below are described some of the techniques employed in Psychosynthesis counseling. An explicit process for using these and others methods is outlined at the end of this article.

DEEP RELAXATION: to help clients learn how to release their stress and tension and thus become more calm, centered, present and effective at home and work.

REFLECTIVE SKILLS: to help clients increase their ability to focus and concentrate, set priorities, and make sound decisions. Clients are required to obtain a journal in which to document their counseling work and in which to do specific homework assignments.

VISUALIZATION AND IMAGERY TECHNIQUES: to help clients train their imagination to create clear mental images of their troubles, issues, goals and priorities so they can perceive them from many levels of awareness and points of view.

SYMBOLIC DRAWING AND MANDALA ART: to help clients capture mental images on paper so they can be remembered, studied and understood; to improve their capacity for creative self-expression and interpersonal communication skills.

ROLE PLAYING, PSYCHODRAMA, AND MOVEMENT WORK: to help clients become more spontaneous physically, trust themselves more in action, communicate in more effective non-verbal ways, and develop new patterns of behavior.

ACTION PLANS AND HOMEWORK: to help clients fully utilize the insights and inspiration of the Psychosynthesis process between sessions in grounded, specific and behavioral ways so they can improve their personal, interpersonal, professional and spiritual lives.

SESSION SUMMARIES

Unfortunately, a thorough discussion of the application of Psychosynthesis with this client is not possible in this brief case study. A summary, however, follows.

I met with Mrs. Stevens from the 22nd of February to the 29th of May, for a total of 15 sessions. A period of 10 minutes was used for relaxation training at the beginning of each session. This helped her put aside her chronic worries and concerns at the beginning of each encounter, release her stress and tension, calm down, relax, and become focused on the topic on which she then chose to work. Deep relaxation, which Mrs. Stevens began to practice at home, was immediately helpful to her both in getting the most from counseling and in increasing her

satisfaction at home where she immediately began to assert more control.

March 6th. In the third session, we began to more thoroughly explore elements within Mrs. Stevens' Middle Unconscious. She explained that in early February, while on a vacation to Florida with her family, she had an overwhelming period of anxiety and depression for 11 days straight triggered by her husband's alcoholic behavior during the trip. This had been so traumatic for her that she lost 30 pounds and resulted in her desire to get counseling to effect some change in her life. Mrs. Stevens said she had felt for a very long time that she should divorce Dennis. Her daughter, Joan, told her she should have left him years ago. But she had been unable to leave him, felt trapped and desperate at home, and could not improve the situation in any way. Hence her chronic depression.

Having identified and discussed some of the troubling dynamics in her present life, it then seemed important to help Mrs. Stevens get in touch with her Higher Unconscious, to connect with her strengths and positive qualities and begin to mobilize her energies for change. In a reflective thinking exercise, Mrs. Stevens identified 16 aspects of herself about which she felt proud. The top three were that she felt she was a very loving person, a good house keeper, and smart. Her depression lifted and her mood was much improved at the completion of this process.

To crystalize and make explicit this positive energy, I asked her to allow an image or mental picture to come to mind that would depict the way she felt at the end of the exercise. Into her field of awareness came an image of herself as being thin, happy, in a beautiful black strapless dress holding 2 dozen pink roses. "From where had the roses come", I asked? She gave them to herself, in imagery, as an expression of appreciation and self-love. Her homework assignments were to write up a summary of the session in her journal, as usual; to reflect on the list of positive qualities, and add to it if possible;

to practice deep relaxation for 10 minutes at least twice a day; and to try to make a sketch or drawing of the mental image.

March 13th. In the fourth session, Mrs. Stevens reported feeling much better as a result of the previous session and mentioned how helpful the relaxation process continued to be. She had done a lot of reflective writing during the week. In her journal she wrote: Other people seem to see more potential in me than I do. But I have begun to realize that I am worth more than I thought and it feels good to realize that I am special and just as good a person as everyone else.

Psychosynthesis asserts that the process of growth is a spiraling journey of unfoldment. In the previous session Mrs. Stevens connected to insights and energies of her Higher Unconscious. Now it was necessary to help her bring her good feelings and positive energies back into explicit rapport with Middle Unconscious realities and dynamics.

We discussed her chronic self doubt, fear of judgement, lack of confidence, and perfectionism. She said her interactive pattern was to get overwhelmed, then angry, then explosive, then walk out of a situation, calm down and, after a long while, return to face the issue at hand. We outlined a four step process for her to practice whenever she felt herself becoming overwhelmed: 1) Awareness: notice when she begins to be upset, 2) Choice: disengage from the situation before the anger starts to build up or explode, 3) Self-management: practice relaxation even for just a few minutes, then 4) Action: return to face the situation more centered and clear about what really needs to happen. The session closed by Mrs. Stevens stating that, although she hadn't worked in 20 years, she was ready to consider getting out of the house and look for work again.

March 20. In the fifth session, Mrs. Stevens said that upon returning home her husband had mocked and insulted her about the

slim possibility of her finding work. Undeterred, she went out and began to look. With much enthusiasm and excitement, Mrs. Stevens reported that she had stopped in on her former employer, had asked for and had gotten back the job she had done for him as a medical transcriptionist 20 years ago!

Much stimulated by this turn of events, for the next three sessions Mrs. Stevens dealt with the sources of stress at home and work. She said she was getting along far better on all fronts than she ever might have imagined she could. For instance, she used to take Inderal every morning to slow down her rapid heart beat, and Xanax four times a day, but was now down to Xanax once a day, a sign of some improvement, and was off Inderol altogether. We also discussed her need for regular exercise, to which she made and kept a daily commitment, and how she used food as a tranquilizer and source of comfort.

April 24. In the tenth session, uplifted to a significant degree, Mrs. Stevens was empowered and ready to move into an exploration of the Lower Unconscious--to identify and confront some of the primal conflicts and inner dynamics of which her present troubles were an expression. She discussed in some detail the negative and self-abusing thoughts that constantly ran through her head. Employing a technique of visualization, I had her get an image for what in Psychosynthesis is called a Subpersonality, the automatic and unconscious part of her that caused her feelings of guilt, concern, and self disgust. Below is a pen and ink rendering of her colored pencil drawing of this Subpersonality and what she wrote about the creative interaction she had with it.

"When I first pictured the demonic looking monster it was huge and hairy with a large ugly mouth and many large razor-like teeth. His eyes were a deep red and they glowed like hot coals. His eyes were piercing and I felt as if they were looking deep down into my soul. He was terrifying. In reality I found that it was a part of me--the part of me that controlled the many scary,



bad and ugly thoughts that I habitually have been thinking. It also was, and most important, the part of me that didn't love me. Once I realized this, I felt angry at this monster who had hurt me so badly. I told him that I would not allow him to do this to me any more. I care too much for myself to have him destroy me. I then noticed that his appearance wasn't as menacing as it had been. He started to grow smaller and smaller until he was, in my mind's eye, no bigger than a pea. His demonic look changed into a pitiful, helpless look. What I then saw was someone who was nervous and stressed out--the hurt and unloved child in me that has never been able to grow. Someone who was crying out for love!"

May 1st. Imagery carries much complex information to the conscious mind for exploration and integration. In the 11th session, I felt the need to help Mrs. Stevens explore more deeply the meaning of the Subpersonality she discovered in her Lower Unconscious. I asked her about her childhood, in general, and about her relationship to her father, in particular. I suspected his patterns of interacting with her might have been, as an introject, the source of her self-abusing Subpersonality.

With a great emotional release, Mrs. Stevens said her father had been a Commander in the Navy, then the Principal of a High School and an alcoholic. Her mother divorced him when Mrs.

Stevens was in the 2nd grade and she was forced to live with her paternal grandparents for a year and a half. She constantly craved attention and did poorly in school. Mrs. Stevens tried to run away from home at age 9 but her father caught and severely punished her. Later, after her father remarried, her step-mother totally ignored her. Mrs. Stevens cried all the time and "ate because food was my best friend". Her father repeatedly beat her until she was 18 years old at which time she escaped by marrying the first man who paid her any attention. "He treated me like everyone else and ran around on me until I couldn't stand it any more and divorced him."

May 8th. In the 12th session, Mrs. Stevens continued to talk about the physical and emotional abuse she experienced in childhood. She said she herself began an abusive parenting style with her first born child, a son, but went the opposite way with her daughters, providing too little discipline and accountability, too few boundaries for them. As a result they were now "hard to manage".

In another visualization exercise, Mrs. Stevens again connected to her inner child Subpersonality. Below is a pen and ink rendering of her colored pencil drawing of the image which emerged. A comparison of her drawings and journal notes provides a clear reflection of the process of growth and transformation taking place



within her.

"This child was crying out for someone to love her. Everywhere she turned someone always needed something from her before they would give her attention and/or love. She feels like she isn't worth anyone loving her. So she gives and gives but never gets the kind of love she needs. I wanted to reach out to her and tell her I would love and care for her--but I don't know if I am capable of doing this. Don't believe what they are telling you. You are a beautiful child both inside and out. You have so much love and goodness to give to only those who will love you unconditionally. I love you. I hurt for you. I feel all of the pain you have inside. What they did to you was wrong. It has been done. I feel all of your helplessness. You don't know which way to turn, what is good for you, who is good for you. There is nobody to tell you these answers. But I will try to help you. I don't know how but I will try. I see your face, your pretty hair--I see the want in your face and the love. I want to hold you close and make it all better. I want to take you away from them and keep you with me. You are a special little girl. You need to know that."

After the Subpersonality work, with its resulting catharsis, her feelings of depression completely disappeared and her use of medication ended. Mrs. Stevens came in for three more sessions and then discontinued counseling. In these integration sessions she became a little more aware of how she used food as a replacement for the love she lacked in her life. She said her energies were totally focused on improving her living situation. She was now too busy reconstructing a life based on career development and better self care to be overly obsessed by or concerned about her husband's dysfunctional behavior.

I followed up with a phone call to Mrs. Stevens in July, September, and then in mid-October, when I received permission to use her story for this case study. Her career continued to

develop in positive ways. She remained free of depression, off medication, more centered and self-confident. She had regained the 30 pounds she lost in February, and her relationship with Dennis had improved, but only, she said, because her attitude about it had changed. While she acknowledged the fact that she still had many problems to confront, and wished to continue making improvements in her life, when last we spoke Mrs. Stevens was pleased to be enjoying the fruits of this counseling experience.