

## Chapter 5

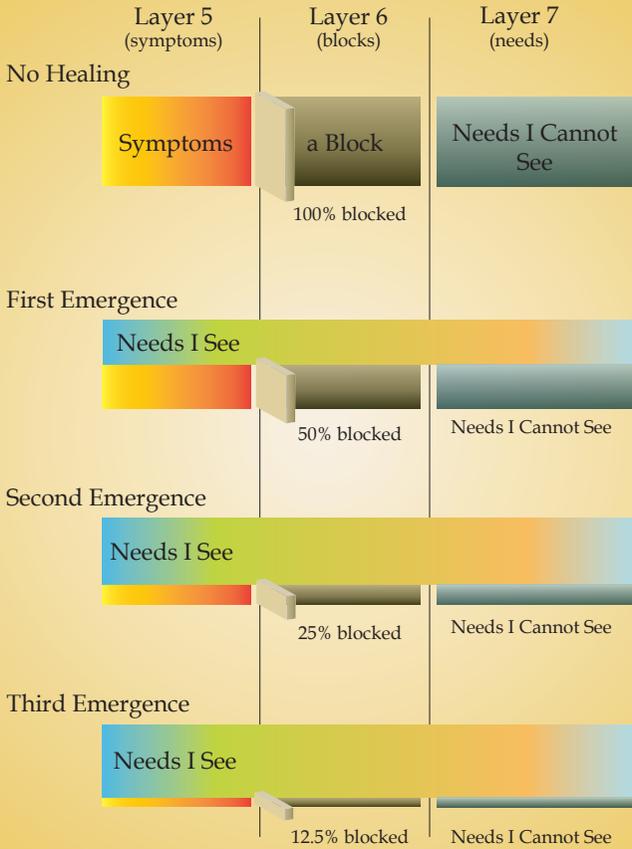
# Are We Ever Done With Therapy?

*I often hear confessions in first sessions. A common one is, "I'm so screwed up I'll probably be here for a long, long time." Sadly, these kinds of confessions reveal a lot about human nature. Including that many of us feel quite ashamed for our having problems. This then begs the question, so if people feel ashamed for having problems, and if therapists are people, then why go to a therapist? Won't the therapist's feelings about our shame get in the way of our work? In this chapter of Plain Talk about Talk Therapy, we're going to look at the shame we feel for still having problems. We're also going to look at why even the most dedicated and spiritual of people can never heal all their wounds. Do you know why? Let's find out.*

### Longing to Be Done With Therapy

Has a therapist ever told you that wanting to be done with therapy is healthy. Or that despite this wish, no one ever truly finishes. And yes, we may at times outgrow a therapist and be done working with this person. We may and probably should also take breaks from therapy at times. But no one is ever "done" working on themselves. Including therapists. In fact, if a therapist ever tells you he or she is done, run, don't walk to the nearest exit. And don't look back. Therapists who think they are done have little to offer other than to encourage

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 (according to Emergence Personality Theory)  
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Just as Zeno's paradox predicts, reducing anything by one half still leaves half of a half. Healing occurs this way. In other words, the first emergence adds one visual possibility to one non visual possibility, resulting in a 50% reduction in the block. Each successive emergence then adds one more visual possibility and thereby reduces what is left of the block by yet another 50%.

us to avoid feeling bad for not being done.

No one is ever done. Not even therapists. So how is it some therapists act this way? In a word, “shame.” We’ll talk more about this in a moment. Before we do, know that even the best of therapists behave like this at times. When? Whenever they make the focus of therapy symptom reduction rather than self exploration. This said, my point here is, looking like you have no problems is not an especially good way to conduct therapy. Moreover, the clients of therapists who act this way tend to feel really uneasy and ashamed. Especially those honest enough to say things like, *“I’ll probably be here a long time. I’m really that screwed up.”*

So if all therapists have unfinished business, why go to them? What if they turn out to have worse problems than you do?

First of all, as far as I’m concerned, the worst problem anyone can have is to think they are done healing their wounds. We humans make progress, not perfection. Which is why, I guess, that some pretty spiritual folks tell us we are *human beings “becoming.”*

If therapists have problems though, why go to them? For one thing, because if your therapist can openly admit how it feels to be still working on herself, then she has a lot to teach you. Certainly about how not to let feeling discouraged make you quit. And especially about how to deal with the shame we all feel for not being done.

Then too there is the idea that no one heals without being connected to another. We simply cannot heal our wounds alone. Unfortunately, it’s hard as hell to connect to a therapist who acts like she’s done healing. Why? Because connecting to another requires we feel a commonality; a shared human likeness; a personal equality. And because the thing which satisfies these requirements best is sharing our faults with each other. Period.

Therapists who act like they are done healing offer us no place to connect to them. Nor do they offer us a model for what it’s like to still be healing, let alone what it should look like to be still healing after many years.

Know that most therapists are not this closed, albeit I’ve been to a few who were. Moreover, the few who are tend to attract folks who make being done more important than being real. And yes, I once was this screwed up as to believe I could some day be done. That’s why I went to those folks.

Fortunately, recognizing the good therapists is easy enough. Good therapists will be real right in front of you. How? They’ll admit their mistakes to you. And their flaws. Including both the logical parts and the messy stuff, like the tears and the anger and frustration.

Good therapists also tend to admire peoples’ work, openly and honestly. Including their own. This open acknowledgment, in fact, is one of the main

things good therapists have to offer their clients. This and their willingness to admit to their clients how painful it can be to still be doing this work.

Speaking of connecting, know that when I say *connect to*, I'm not merely talking about being fond of your therapist as in, "we really click, you know." Rather, I'm referring to something which more resembles two conscious people having a conversation on a clear phone line. You know. The kind of conversations wherein both people take up space. Wherein both talk and both listen. Honestly and without judgment. So much so, in fact, that you may find yourselves remarking on just how good the conversation is. And yes. I know. My saying this may sound to some like "my kind of therapists" take up too much space. They don't. It's just that in order to heal, you must connect. Not just therapist-to-client, but also person to person. Being to being, and heart to heart. This requires both people take up equal space in the room. Why? Because there simply must be enough of the therapist-as-flawed-human visible for the client to connect to.

How can a therapist do this though and still do therapy? Shouldn't the focus be on the client's healing?

Yes, it should be. However, if two people are both working on themselves and if they both keep in mind their roles, then both can grow and gain from the client's healing simultaneously. And yes, the client should never be the therapist's therapist. But this means only that the content of what the therapist brings up should always be connected and lead to possible healing in the client. Which in essence means only that both people take up equal space within the same agreed upon focus; the client's healing.

Said in simpler terms, good therapists know how to use their own work to inspire good work in their clients. Thus while in one sense the client's healing should always be the main focus, good therapists know how to make their healing the route to their client's healing. How? By sharing the stage as equally courageous but flawed human beings while at the same time never forgetting their role as guide to a self explorer.

All this said, my point is, we all long to be done working on ourselves at times. Clients and therapists alike. Moreover, despite this longing, we never do finish. None of us. Not a one.

Now let's look at why.

## Healing As A Forensic Event

One way to look at therapy (or personal growth of any kind) is to see it as a way to gain *an ever deepening sense of who you are*. Moreover, who you are is your wounds, as well as your triumphs and learning.

What I'm saying is, a person's character is the sum of everything inside him or her. Both the things he can succeed at and the things he fails to do. And since

wounds very much function like the source of what we fail to do, whenever we heal a wound, this wound does not simply cease to exist. We merely reclaim parts of our natural ability to do things we've been unable to do. And think. And feel.

So what is a wound anyway? Is it simply an inability to do something well? Unhealthy habits, or laziness, or downright acting rotten? Actually, it's none of these things. And the *inability* part of our wounds is merely the outer wrapping, something like having stale bread on a salmonella laden egg salad sandwich.

What is the real problem then, the real source of our failings and bad behaviors?

In every case, the real problem is that we were once startled into blankness by a painful event. Which then left our minds programmed to respond to any and all similar events as if they were the same painful event. Including that at some point, our minds will suddenly go blank.

In a very real sense then, being startled into blankness by painful events alters our very nature, after which this blankness renders us blind to our options during these kinds of life events. Which is why, when we relive wounds, we feel so certain there is nothing we can do to change the outcomes.

Can the nature of wounds really be this simple though? What about the logical reasons for the things we do badly? Things like that we get something out of doing them this way, or that we're looking to punish ourselves?

The truth? Despite the fact that thoughts like these do go through our heads, these shame filled ideas and self deprecating emotions are not the source of our wounded behaviors. They are merely the result of us having wounds. Moreover, the only reason we believe these kinds of terrible things about ourselves is because prior to this, no one has offered us a legitimate way in which to make sense of our faults without blaming ourselves. Certainly not one based on empirical evidence. And definitely not one based on fractal science.

In addition, even if I were to now offer you proof (which I will do in later chapters), you would still have hard time believing me. Why? Because the event in which we get programmed to respond to life like this is impossible for us to remember. At least directly. When did it happen? In the Birth Separation Moment. After which, the pattern we experienced then; [1] feeling profoundly connected, [2] suddenly disconnecting, and [3] feeling utterly needy, became the basic pattern from which our personalities form. Including that this pattern becomes the script for what will wound us in life.

Said in other words, whenever we relive what we felt in the Birth Separation Moment, we get wounded. Including that we become unable to recall most or all of what happened.

This is why we struggle so when asked to picture being born, even when

asked to make this up. Including in re birthing. Know we'll talk about this pattern and why we cannot see it at length in later chapters. As well as about how this pattern in reverse reveals the nature of healing.

For now my point is simply that none of us can recall the event in which this programming took place. And because we can't, we posit blaming possibilities for why we do the things we do.

Fortunately, there is a way we can learn to see this pattern. We can learn to see it by consciously witnessing someone heal. Before you can though, you need to first learn to see this pattern and how it plays out in life. Some actual examples.

For me, the example that stands out is getting startled by a flash camera. Thus before getting startled for the first time, people find it hard to believe they'll be blinded. Afterwards, however, and from that time on, people cannot face a flash and imagine it will not blind them. So strong is this belief in fact that even imagining themselves in this predicament will make them wince or blink.

How do I know for sure people do not wince the first time? Because if you watch people in wedding photos, there will always be someone who has not had this happen. Someone who has never been blinded by a flash camera. And if you study their faces, what you'll find is that they actually look curious and open before the photo. So much so in fact that not only do they not wince in anticipation or scrunch up their eyes, they actually make the injury worse by widening their eyes.

The important thing to see here is that before we get wounded by being startled by the flash, most of us will neither blink nor brace in anticipation.

Once we get startling even once by the flash though, most of us will blink and wince *even before the next flash goes off*.

What does this mean? It means that being wounded by a flash camera so programs us that our bodies and minds react as if the flash has gone off *even before it happens*. Moreover, should the photographer never actually get to take that photo, people still would have reacted as if he had.

This then is a perfect example of how being startled into blankness by a painful life event programs our bodies to brace and our minds to go blank. Moreover, we do this even in times wherein the flash does not go off. Merely from anticipating it may go off.

Now let's consider what this means by looking at a more serious real life example. Let's look at how we get programmed to react by having been in a car accident.

Imagine now that you are driving on a busy four lane highway. At sixty five miles per hour. On a clear sunny day. On a dry straight road.

Now imagine you're approaching an intersection wherein you once had an

accident. An accident you never saw coming. An accident wherein someone ran a red light and plowed right into you.

Most folks, after having experienced this kind of a car accident even once will brace themselves in intersections for the rest of their lives. More so at intersections which resemble the scene of the first accident. And especially at the actual scene of the first accident.

So what is happening when people do this? Of course, they are involuntarily reliving what all babies go through in the Birth Separation Moment. Including that they have no warning it will happen and that they never see it coming.

They will also, just like babies, at some point, suddenly go blank. After which they will become very needy.

Now think about it. If you brace yourself and then suddenly go blank each time you approach an intersection, how vulnerable have you become to having this happen again? Especially to having another similar accident?

In truth, this is what happens to us after all wounding events. We become more likely to experience these kinds of painful events. Moreover this holds true regardless of what kind of event wounds us. A car accident. A failed test in school. A first screaming match with our spouse.

This is also why we cannot keep most of the promises we make to not react badly again. Our anticipatory reactions are simply this powerful. Along with our desires to avoid more suffering. Which is why, when a therapist asks us what happened, most of us brace ourselves and suddenly go blank.

If this blindness is the essence of being wounded then, what is healing like?

My favorite working metaphor for healing is to treat healing wounds like forensically reconstructing a crime scene. Here, the details of the crime scene are buried in the blinding flash of an unexpected life event. Thus, by its very nature, wounding creates holes in our ability to recall what happened.

The goal of the therapy then is to help people to picture what happened. Not just logically. Literally picture. After which, they become *naturally* able to make better choices. Why? Because by becoming able to picture what happened, they become able to see their choices. Choices which were previously buried in the blankness of the event.

Here then is the truth about how therapy heals wounds. Therapy heals wounds by first defining what is missing. What we cannot picture. It then forensically restores this wounded ability to picture what happened and in doing so, reveals alternate endings to this previously painful story. Some of which are happy endings. All of which enable us to make alternate choices.

Said in other words, therapists help clients to heal their wounds by helping them to fill in these psychovisual blank spots. This is similar to how forensic

pathologists construct a picture of what happened in a crime scene and by doing so, understand what happened. As well as how to respond to it.

No coincidence so many of us feel natural urges to do this very thing; to forensically fill in with logical ideas what is missing in our ability recall painful events. Unfortunately, since most of these *natural* urges look to fill in missing visual information with non visual information, and since the wound is always a blocked ability to visualize something, logic can never heal.

What is so bad about doing this? The idea that we base our choices on what we *can* see. And yes. These choices often do involve logic. Sometimes a beautiful and perfect logic. However, since the nature of wounds is that they startle us into blankness, logically rearranging what we *can* see never works.

This then is what leads so many of us to hypothesize such great sounding logical explanations for why people behave badly. We think we are doing these bad things for reasons. And we are. We do these things whenever we anticipate pain, whenever our bodies brace, and whenever our minds go blank. More often than not, we also do this in times wherein nothing was about to happen. Which then leads us to have the “you did so say that; no I didn’t” kinds of arguments. Arguments as to what did and did not happen.

Now I’ll offer proof for this in future chapters. Proof that these flaws in our abilities to visualize are the nature of all psychological wounds. As well as proof for that healing is visual restoration. For now, all I ask is that you allow for the possibility that these explanation may be true. Moreover, that our failures and bad behaviors may not be deliberate. Rather they may in fact stem from nothing more than a very narrowly focused loss in our ability to picture certain kinds of life events. Which then causes a tendency in us to try to anticipate the bad thing before it happens. Causing us to physically brace and mentally go blank. Even when nothing actually occurs.

## Healing As An Example of Zeno's “Distance Paradox“

Now let’s look at why we can never completely heal a wound.

We’ll do this by talking about an ancient Greek philosophical dilemma, Zeno’s Distance Paradox. What the heck is Zeno’s “Distance Paradox” (also known as his “dichotomy paradox)? And what does it have to do with *the ever deepening progression of therapy*?

Basically Zeno says that if you travel a distance by moving in increments of one half of whatever distance remains, that you will always have some half of a half remaining. A half of a half of a half. This means if you were to try to touch your computer screen by moving your hand in increments of half the distance,

you would never be able to touch this screen. Even if it was only inches away. Why not? Because your hand would always be some half of a half of a half of the distance away from touching this screen.

Of course, in real life, we know Zeno was wrong despite his perfectly logic statement. We do arrive at destinations, and we can touch things. We do it every single day of our lives. Ironically, when applied to wounds though, this paradox actually is true. In other words, each time you heal your ability to see, you heal only about half of what you previously could not see. Ad infinitum. A half of a half of a half.

What does this look like when we actually heal?

First, remember that wounds are the parts of painful events we cannot picture. Even when we are asked to make them up. Which means there is always a part of our wounds that we cannot see. Even if this part occurred the day before or the day after.

So if wounds are the parts of painful events which we cannot picture, then healing is reclaiming these parts. Visually. This, in fact, is why we say things like, *"I finally see what happened; It's clear to me now,"* after we heal something. We literally do see something we never saw before. We see the part or parts of what we previously had been unable to picture.

How then does Zeno's Paradox apply here? It turns out that healing very much resembles Zeno's Paradox, in that in each time we heal a part of what was missing, we heal about half of what was missing. Half of the half that was left. This happens because when we heal, we add visual alternatives, one by one, to what we previously could not see. Things like, "maybe he'll yell at me, maybe he won't." On and on and on.

The thing to notice here is that all wounded possibilities are non visual. In other words, if asked to anticipate what will happen here, we will likely be able to offer some possible outcome. Something which may even make sense. But if asked to literally picture this possibility, even if we are given time, we will be unable to do this.

In essence it is as if the possibility exists only in the mind. In other words, regardless of whatever possible outcomes we may conjure up, it is as if the mind exists independently of present day sensory sources. Logical sources? Yes. But present day sensory input? Only what existed in the wounding event.

This then is what makes gaining a visual possibility to important. Why? Because the first thing to emerge in a healing moment is a previously unseen a visual possibility. A possibility with a good outcome as opposed to a bad one. Then each time we heal, we add yet one more non wounded possibility to the original bad outcome, in essence diluting the pain of the expected bad outcome every time.

Of course the essence of these non wounded possibilities is that they are visual in nature. As opposed to the wounded possibility, which was non visual in nature.

In the end then, we end up with one non visual possibility and a slew of non wounded possibilities. Moreover, what this amounts to then is that the first healing event cuts our original wound in half. How? By dividing what was once a complete and totally blank response into a response wherein we can see one half of what had been blank.

And the next time we heal?

Since the essence of healing is the same every time, each time we heal, we heal half of the remaining blankness. How? Again, by becoming able to see yet another visual alternative to the blankness that is left. In other words, one half of the remaining blank half once again becomes visual.

The thing to notice here is how this plays out over time. You see, because our wounds are literally “what we cannot see,” we can never know consciously how much is left. Moreover, since we can always learn more about things by focusing on the unnoticed details, we can always heal yet another *half of a half*.

So if the nature of healing is that we heal about half of the visual blankness each time we heal, then what does this mean about our ever being done?

Well, think about it. Each time, we heal, we heal a half of what we could not see. And so on. And so on. And so on. Until eventually we end up with so little left, we cease to suffer.

At the same time, our increased visual awareness to these parts of life renders us more and more sensitive in these events. Which, when it comes to suffering, in some ways makes healing a wash.

What I mean is, yes, as we heal, we become more visually attuned to life. More spiritual; more compassionate; and more able to make healthy choices. At the same time, because we become increasingly attuned and sensitive to life, when we do experience the half of the half which is always left, we suffer, at times, at almost the same level of pain.

In other words, the smaller the wound becomes, the more sensitive we become. And the more sensitive we become, the more we suffer from small wounds. This is simply the nature of wounds, healing, and health. This means that even the most spiritual of folks suffers, albeit from smaller and smaller wounds.

Here then is why I refer to what we do in therapy as *gaining an ever deepening sense of who you are*.

## This Chapter's Session Notes

Admittedly, much of what we've spoken about in this chapter can be hard to swallow. After all, we humans have been referring to our wounds as the suf-

fering we feel for as long as we've been speaking in words. And probably even before that. This makes describing wounds as holes in our ability to visualize life a heck of a leap. None the less, describing wounds this way is more than mere metaphor. It is literally true. More on this to come.

So what about what I spoke about at the beginning of this chapter; why some therapists act like they're done. My guess? Underneath it all, they feel even more shame about not being done than we do. Which is sad, really. Especially since many of these folks genuinely want to help.

The thing is, no one can ever fix something without first knowing the nature of the problem. Thus, by teaching people to detach from the suffering they do feel, they remove the one thing we can use to forensically define our wounds; the parts we can still see.

In other words, if wounds are visual holes in our ability to picture life, then we can define these holes only by noticing what surrounds these holes; the parts of life we can still picture; the things which define the perimeters of these holes.

And what best defines the perimeters of these holes? One thing only. Our visible suffering.

This then is why teaching people to look like they are done is so destructive. The suffering we can see is what defines the perimeters of these holes. This suffering is in fact the primary symptom of our anticipatory bracing. As well as the primary symptom that our minds have gone blank.

This is why removing peoples' symptoms is such a bad thing. Whenever we do this, we ruin our ability to define the wound and by doing so, obscure the trail toward healing. This then leaves us with mere logic as the therapeutic tool. And if you were to even once try to find your way through a dark room with logic, you would forever know what makes logic such a bad way to try to heal.

Finally, there is one more thing to consider. Consider how shame is one of the main symptoms of our suffering. Including the shame we feel for not being done. Thus, to therapists who define healing as symptom removal, avoiding this shame is a positive step. A step toward healing even. Unfortunately this erroneous assumption also guarantees they and their clients will rarely know where their healing work lies. Let alone that they have unhealed wounds. Which of course then leads them to falsely conclude they are done healing.

Detachment is not being "done" and no human being is without wounds left to heal. Not even those of us who daily work on ourselves. Not even the folks whose names end in "Lama."

[1] Visible suffering as symptoms. [2] Invisible holes as wounds. [3] Healing as reclaiming one's lost abilities to visualize. And [4] Zeno's Paradox as the nature of this healing.

Certainly I've given you a lot to think about in this chapter.

Hopefully it was not too much.  
Until the next chapter then.

I hope you are well,

Steven