

Stage 1: Suffering

"I am helpless right now"

"Right now nothing works"

To quote Bernadette Roberts in The Path to No-Self:

"Here begins the cauterizing, the burning through to the deepest center of being, which is painful and shattering to all aspects of self. The deep deterministic reins of self control have been taken away and the will power that glued together this fragile unity has dissolved. From here on, the reins of our destiny are in the hands of a greater power... With no place else to go, nowhere else to turn, we have no choice..."

Logic or linear reason does not work when you are suffering. Only one thing works, and that is acknowledging that you are suffering: your situation appears terminal. It appears that there is no way out. No one can help you. You are experiencing the most horrendous experience anyone can have. Confirmation from another person that something is indeed very wrong, and that you have been violated or hurt is exactly what you are seeking. You need to amplify the voice within that is attempting to tell you: "NO! This is not working, Wake up!" There is interference in the connection between the infinite You, and the way you are living. When you or another person does or says something that is incompatible with the awareness that nothing works, and there may be no way out, life will intensify your suffering.

Yet when others acknowledge the "terminal" nature of our situation, we feel a slight sense of peace. When they acknowledge our suffering and despair, they are helping us find resolution with the only spiritual and mental reality that can help liberate us. This reality is "Nothing is working now".

According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of the English Language, to suffer is *"to be made to bear, to be the victim of, to put up with, to undergo or be subjected to; to allow; to experience pain or injury, to experience loss, deterioration, etc."*

When we suffer, we feel deep inside that something is terribly wrong with our life and that there is nothing we can do about it. In other words, the outer event activates a raw place deep within our being. We feel paralyzed, helpless, victimized and obsessed with getting out of "it".

In Rapunzel, we read about the prince's suffering when the witch tells him that he will never again be with his beloved:

"The king's son was beside himself with grief, and in his agony he sprang from the tower; he escaped with his life, but the thorns on which he fell put out his eyes. Then he wandered through the wood, eating nothing but roots and berries, doing nothing but lament and weep for the loss of his dearest wife. So he wandered for several years in misery..."

It is important to note that the prince first experienced suffering, which was followed by the loss of sight. Therefore, the symptom of blindness was not the cause of his suffering, but was a consequence of it. If he were not blinded, he would have suffered nonetheless.

Moving Through Suffering

As we give ourselves over to the suffering, we are no longer a person, but are in a space between the thoughts, the space between the contractions and the pain, the place of not being alive, yet not being dead: we are just suffering. We are not a person experiencing suffering, but all we experience is the loss, all we experience is the pain, all we experience is the injury.

We may discover that the energy behind the pain or fear, the suffering itself, has a rhythm of its own.

To do anything to compete with the suffering will indeed prolong the experience. There is a difference between competing with the pain by taking the pain away, and taking away what is behind the pain.

What we may say during Stage 1:

When we experience suffering, one or more of the following statements usually come to mind:

- *"Something is really wrong"*
- *"God, when will this stop?"*
- *"I'm going to die"*
- *"Why isn't anyone listening?"*
- *"What if he (she) never comes back?"*
- *"I can't stand this _____ - it's killing me!"*
- *"Nothing works"*
- *"There is no way out"*
- *"It seems like it is NEVER going to end".*

Breath (Stage 1):

- **In nose**
- **Out mouth**

Hand positions:

Both hands, palms facing downward, on top of each other.

1. Three basic regions to begin with:

- **Position #1: Upper chest**
- **Position #2: Gastric region**
- **Position #3: Navel region**

2. Then additional regions (for use on movement back into stage 1 after Stage 4 has been reached)

- **Position #4: Lower throat** (voice)
- **Position #5: Heart region** (love)
- **Position #6: Lower abdomen** (sex)

- Note the region(s), which you can and cannot easily:
 - a) Touch with both hands, one on top of one another
 - b) Focus breath specifically into (without generalized breathing)
 - c) Focus your movement specifically into
 - d) Elevate your elbows so that a greater surface area contact between your hands and body occur
 - e) Keep your attention focused into this area
 - f) Feel connected/peaceful

- For many individuals, the arms will not bend to accommodate for the hand position, or the hands will not be able to fully flatten in order touch the body area. This may be associated with a shoulder, arm, or neck distortion, or may be because of the presence of Stage 1 (active or latent).

- For some, there may be a lateral swirling or serpentine type motion of the body, where the individual can touch the region but moves the body, distorting the spine in order to make this connection. This is especially common in individuals who have been physically and sexually abused.

In the latter case, there also may be a movement of the spine into flexion (fetal position). If this is the case, you will most likely clench the hands and arms across the body part extremely tightly, where a facilitator physically could not even move the arm or hand away from the region.¹ In this case, you will most likely be out of the appropriate breath rhythm.

- Find the region of maximum peace and then move up and or down from this region, slowly, until all regions can be touched and breathed into with relative ease.
- At times although you can hold the region and breathe into the region without pulling away, or distress, there is a form of rigidity, or resistance in the arm positioning or in the hand in making a flat contact.²

¹ If this occurs, then advise the person that breath is their tool to getting back to their center, and peace. Ask them to breathe in the nose and out of the mouth, and to move the arm to ANY region they can, helping the body to remember the sense of its own rhythm and peace. This may be on head, neck, face, arms, or legs. It is the region from which that individual has accepted the basic rhythm, distracting that person from the rhythm of peace.

² Often, resistance moving the arm into position and holding the hand totally flat is an indication of a Stage 1 rhythm.

Some rigidity or resistance is natural as one moves towards the Throat area, from the inherent tension many individuals have in the shoulder cervical-upper thoracic region.

If the Stage 1 exercise fails to fully eliminate this resistance, but a full breath is possible into the region, consider moving to the next later stage, which seems appropriate.

In most cases, this will bring you more classically into stage 1. And you can more easily get out of something once you are fully into it. In this case, this would be considered a dormant, latent, or implied stage 1, until further clinical action is taken.

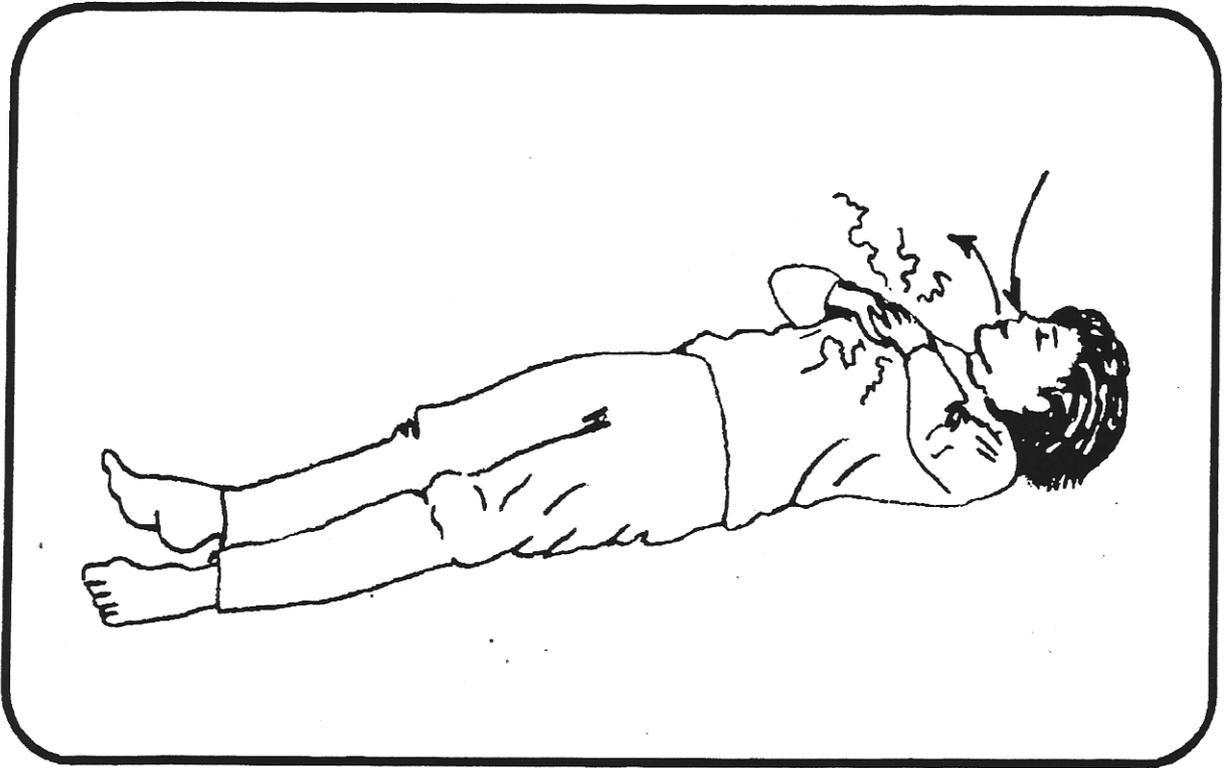
Declaration:

"Right now, nothing works."

"Right now, I am totally helpless."

"It seems like it is NEVER going to end."

(Repeat)



Stage 1

Stage 1: Personal Awareness Exercise

1. When I place both hands in Position # 1 and breathe in my nose and out my mouth I feel: (tension, breath, movement, emotion, thoughts)

2. When I place my hands in Position # 2 and breathe in my nose and out my mouth I feel: (tension, breath, movement, emotion, thoughts)

3. When I place my hands in position # 3 and breathe in my nose and out my mouth I feel: (tension, breath, movement, emotion, thoughts)

4. When I place my hands in position #4 and breathe in my nose and out my mouth I feel: (tension, breath, movement, emotion, thoughts)

5. When I place my hands in position #5 and breathe in my nose and out my mouth I feel: (tension, breath, movement, emotion, thoughts)

6. When I place my hands in position #6 and breathe in my nose and out my mouth I feel: (tension, breath, movement, emotion, thoughts)
