

## Conversations With Yourself

Do you have conversations with yourself? Be honest now. Sure, you've heard the old adage, "if you talk to yourself you're crazy", but nothing could be more wrong. That statement is part of the reason why we keep our self-talk in the shadows of our minds.

"Did you remember to get your lunch?" "What is your problem, dummy?" "Are you becoming senile?" "Why were you talking to her anyway?" "She'll only blab everything you said to everyone she knows?" "Wait a minute." "Are you being too judgmental?" "Maybe you should give her a second chance." "You are so forgetful." "Are you losing your mind?" "Settle down." "It's only a thing." "Don't get so worked up over everything."

**On and on it goes. Throughout the day we chatter with ourselves.**

Who are these people inside our heads, and what are they saying? These are the main questions we want to explore. In reality, each of us takes different perspectives, and examines our thoughts and behavior from different angles. In this manner we try to figure out how we should think and behave.

### **We Need To Know What We Are Saying**

Before we can examine and improve the way we communicate with ourselves, we need to gain some perspective on what we are saying. If we never look at our conversations critically, we will simply go on mindlessly chattering with ourselves, never reflecting on the quality of that communication. That's right. We need to reflect on the messages we are giving ourselves, because they may not be very healthy or helpful, to us or anyone else.

### **We Need To Know How Our Self-Talk Shapes Our Communication With Others**

Communication with others begins inside our own minds. This may seem like a revolutionary idea, but that's probably because your self-talk is something you've never thought about. Despite the fact that it's been in the shadows, *the quality of your communication with others, and especially your mate, is directly related to the quality of your communication with yourself*

In this chapter we will explore how your mind works. You will be asked to tune in to your mind, and listen to your own internal conversations. *In particular, you will be challenged to begin the process of learning to recognize and separate feelings, thoughts, and choices.* Unless you learn to separate these three, your feelings and thoughts will remain intertwined and indistinguishable. You will then tend to say and do things (choices) you regret. At the same time you will be unaware of how you are feeling, and how your words and behaviors are motivated by your feelings.

If this seems like a daunting task, you are right. Learning to recognize and separate thoughts, feelings, and choices is perhaps the most difficult task we can undertake on our pathway toward growth. We seldom are completely aware of the relationship between these three, and thus, at best, we will often stray off the path. But just gaining a beginners ability to separate thoughts, feelings, and choices requires a great deal of motivation and determination. Learning to do it well requires many years of practice. So, let's begin.

## **Feelings Are So Important**

*The ability to recognize and manage feelings in healthy ways is not only important, it is the key to healthy intimate relationships. This is particularly true with regard to negative feelings, such as anger, sadness, fear and guilt.* One of the main problems with negative feelings is that they often are unrecognized as such. Unfortunately, thoughts and choices can be destructively intertwined with feelings without our ever even knowing it. When words come out of our mouths, we often view them as thoughts, i.e. logical in nature. In reality our words are often driven and shaped entirely by our feelings. Importantly, feelings are irrational. When we fail to recognize that words are driven by feelings, we say things to ourselves and to others, and do things that are irrational and unhealthy, if not destructive to our relationships.

*The destructive power of unrecognized feelings, irrational by their very nature, is difficult to underestimate.* Over and over, on a daily basis, relationships are destroyed by the way couples communicate negative feelings. Nothing is more destructive to intimate relationships than the toxic expression of feelings.

*The key to managing feelings involves learning first to recognize them consciously, and second learning to experience them as such, separate from thoughts and choices. That's right, you can actually learn simply to feel, without thinking or acting out your feelings.*

*Recognizing and separating feelings from thoughts and choices is a learned and skilled behavior, not something we inherit.* Although it is difficult to learn, experiencing feelings separately is extremely important. Feelings are potentially volatile. They influence many of the thoughts we think and the choices we make, particularly in intimate relationships. In intimate relationships we first have to learn to find safe, or non-toxic ways of communicating negative feelings.

*Anger, sadness, fear, and guilt are stirred up because our self-esteem, self-image, and sense of emotional safety and security are open and vulnerable to influence by our intimate partner.* It is natural and unavoidable for these feelings to be stirred up when we are vulnerable.

When you read the chapter about biological differences between men and women you will realize that hormones (testosterone, estrogen, and progesterin) have different

influences on the emotions. Thus, you will see more clearly how men and women experience emotions differently, both for biological reasons, and because we are socialized differently.

**Men and feelings:** Men are socialized to orient to tasks. In other words, men first have the inclination to try to figure out what is the problem, and how to fix it. This reflex is not a feeling. When men are unable to fix a problem, they become frustrated. This is a feeling. Frustration is a mild form of anger, and is the most commonly expressed male feeling. *It is socially acceptable for men to feel and express anger. On the other hand, men are not particularly comfortable with the negative feelings of fear, sadness, and guilt. Thus, men tend to keep these emotions hidden, even from themselves.*

**Women and feelings:** Women are socialized to express feelings through talk. This is the main way women feel connected to others, and is directly opposite to the way men connect. *Women are particularly comfortable with sadness, fear, and guilt, but not so much with anger*, though contemporary women are learning to express anger more comfortably.

The different ways that men and women experience and express feelings is often confusing. We cannot be carbon copies of each other. Instead we need to learn to appreciate and accommodate our differences. This appreciation and accommodation begins within ourselves, by learning to recognize our feelings before we communicate them in a disguised form to our partner.

*In intimate relationships when we are vulnerable, we are volatile. This volatility triggers negative feelings, which men and women experience and express differently. If we don't know how to safely communicate negative feelings, gender differences become walls instead of pathways to intimacy.*

## **Thoughts Are So Important?**

Thought most often determines action. That is, hopefully, we think before we act. We develop a certain analysis of a situation. Then we develop a plan of action. Thus, thought is the process by which we determine our actions.

Theoretically, our thoughts are logical. At least, that's what we like to think. If this were entirely true, our lives and our relationships would be so much easier. However, even though we like to think our thoughts are logical, they are often determined by our feelings. *Herein lies the greatest problem we face in our intimate relationships.* While thoughts frequently reflect a certain internal logic, they are seldom completely independent of our feelings. That's why it is extremely important, albeit very difficult, to learn to look at our thoughts and feelings separately. If we don't begin to at least gain some perspective on how the two are related, we will continue to think we are being logical, while in reality our feelings are in the driver's seat.

**Men and Thoughts:** Biologically, we now think of the left hemisphere of the brain as the location of language and logic, and the right hemisphere as the location of feelings and abstract thought. On a conscious level, men are much more in touch with their left hemisphere. That is, men are much more comfortable in the world of thoughts than feelings. Men often dwell in the world of mathematics, and the relationship of physical objects in space. Men have no trouble aggressively pursuing argument, or defending their point of view. Because of their preoccupation with the physical world, and the world of argument, or dialectics, men often view the world of feelings at best as bizarre and difficult understand. At worst, men see feelings as inferior to the world of thoughts and logic.

**Women and Thoughts:** Women are perfectly capable of dwelling in the world of thoughts and logic, witnessed by the fact that we are seeing more and more women in engineering and the physical sciences. As a general rule, however, women tend to be much less comfortable than men dwelling exclusively in the world of logic and thoughts. When powerful feelings are stirred up in the communication process, women tend to see logic as less important than feeling. That is, when women feel disconnected by negative feelings, they are seldom comfortable continuing a logical discussion or debate with their male partner. *While men pursue argument aggressively, they often alienate their female partner without even realizing it.* In these alienated states, women are in touch with their feelings, and much less in touch with the logic. Men, on the other hand, are stuck in the logic, completely unaware of how their partner feels, or how their own feelings are determining what they are saying.

**The difference in awareness of the relationship between thoughts (as they are expressed) and feelings is the main reason men and women have so much difficulty communicating.**

## **Choices Are Extremely Important**

Why do we use the term extreme to describe the import of choices? We use extreme because choices translate into actions, or behavior. **When we speak of choices, we are talking about decisions to act in certain ways in relationship to our partner.**

We make thousands of choices every day. Most of these are necessary decisions to act in our world so that we can accomplish the myriad of tasks necessary to make a living and tend the details of our increasingly busy lives. Therefore, logical thought related to effective action is critical to our survival. We cannot live effective lives without it.

**Toxic Choices:** Toxic choices are choices that are damaging, first to ourselves, and second, to our intimate relationships.

## Choices That Are Toxic To Ourselves

While self-talk is many things, there is a certain category of self-talk that judges or evaluates. **Evaluative self-talk takes on a great deal of importance.** It is particularly important because evaluative self-talk both constructs and reinforces *the way we imagine our self to be*, which in turn greatly influences *the way we imagine others see us*. Look at the following experiment conducted by one of the world's leading experts on how we think and feel about our bodies.

### An Interesting Experiment

**Thomas Cash, a psychologist interested in how our self talk interacts with our view of our own bodies, describes the following experiment. “Using theatrical make-up, (the) researchers constructed a facial scar on women prior to their interaction with a stranger.” “Unbeknownst to the women, however, the ‘scar’ was removed before the face-to-face conversation occurred and the stranger was really a confederate of the study.” “Relative to the control group, those women who *believed* they had a disfigurement reported more discomfort and alterations of gazing behavior *in the partner* during the interaction.” “Thus, our body images can alter our information processing and cause us to ‘see’ what we expect to see.” (Kleck & Strenta, 1980, in Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990, p. 345)**

That's right. This and other research about body image confirms that what we think and feel about our body actually determines how we believe others think and feel about our bodies. That is one of the reasons extremely attractive people often have very negative thoughts and feelings about their bodies. *We may think certain people are beautiful or handsome, but our assessment can differ radically from how these same people see themselves.*

Albert Ellis speaks about the relationship between self-talk, emotions, and self-image in his book, Humanistic Psychotherapy. “Unlike the orthodox psychoanalytic and the classical behavioristic psychologies, rational-emotive therapy squarely places man in the center of the universe and of his own emotional fate and gives him almost full responsibility for choosing to make or not make himself seriously disturbed.” Speaking of rational-emotive theory, Ellis states that although it weighs biological and early environmental factors quite importantly in the chain of events that lead to human disorganization and disorder, it insists that nonetheless the individual himself can, and usually does, significantly intervene between his environmental input and his

emotionalized output, and that therefore he has an enormous amount of potential control over what he feels and what he does.” (Ellis, p. 4).

Optimistically, constructive self-talk affirms our intrinsic value or worth as a human being. Our self-talk is extremely important because it is instrumental in constructing more complex patterns of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that persist over time and resist change. It is especially important that we affirm our self-worth without comparing ourselves to others. When we engage in affirming our self-worth by comparison, we may feel better or worse about ourselves in the moment, but we set ourselves up for destructive outcomes. Consider the following life-scenario.

**Bill was a prodigious student who had progressed through higher education to become a successful anesthesiologist. He had established his own practice, and for several years had been making a lot of money. His work was respected by many of the surgeons who preferred to work with him. Bill drove an expensive car, lived in a beautiful house, and, by all appearances, should have felt very good about himself.**

**However, many of the surgeons with whom Bill worked graduated from more prestigious universities than the university where Bill received his medical degree. They often spoke of their university experiences. Privately, Bill’s positive self-talk began to turn negative. He began to think of himself as inferior to the surgeons, who valued their educations highly. Since Bill had previously established a pattern of reinforcing his self-image through social comparison, he was unable to escape his own thought process. As feelings of inferiority grew, Bill became more and more reticent to participate in conversations with other physicians. He imagined that they too were seeing him in an inferior light. Gradually Bill became more and more depressed. Rather than feeling good about his own accomplishments, he unknowingly had become a victim of his own self-comparisons.**

### **Choices That Are Toxic To Our Relationships**

*Allowing feelings to determine choices is the cause of many problems in interpersonal relationships.*

**Words can violate, or be violent to our relationships.** When we allow negative emotions to determine what we say, we often create defensiveness in dialogue with others. If our choice of words is particularly harsh, our words become toxic, destroying the very intimacy we long to establish and maintain. We may later regret the toxic effect of harsh words, but when we use them, we have great difficulty reversing the damage to our interpersonal relationships.

**Physical violence destroys intimate relationships.** In the most extreme form, choices motivated by negative feelings can cause violent behavior. In fact, many of the murders committed in the United States are “crimes of passion” that occur between intimate partners. Sadly, when some of us are hurt and angry, we resort to physical intimidation. Sometimes we lose control of our behavior and attack our partners physically. While men do this more often than women, women can also be quite violent.

**Stopping Toxic Choices:** The key to stopping the use of toxic words or toxic actions involves learning to separate feelings from thoughts and thoughts and feelings from choices. First, we have to learn to experience feelings in a pure form. Anger, sadness, fear, and guilt are very uncomfortable feelings. But in and of themselves, they are not toxic. They only become toxic when we act them out in destructive ways

**STOP HERE AND DO EXERCISES ONE AND TWO AT THE END OF THE CHAPTER.**

### **Your Choice of a Partner is Oh So Important!**

We make especially important choices regarding our level of commitment and involvement in intimate relationships. First, we choose the person or persons with whom we become intimate. Second, we make choices about the degree to which we become involved and committed in intimate relationships. Third, we choose whether to continue or discontinue relationships. All of these choices are pivotal regarding the level of happiness and satisfaction we find in interpersonal relationships.

We are not only vulnerable to the influence of *negative emotions*. Importantly, we may also make irrational, or feeling-based choices in response to *positive emotions*. For instance, we might overlook severely negative personality traits when choosing an intimate partner because we find her/him attractive. Later, after the initial attraction becomes less compelling, we find ourselves overly involved with someone who is incapable of sustaining an intimate relationship. Consider the following life scenario.

**Bob was very attractive. He was intellectually challenging, an interesting conversationalist, and had a promising career. He was also quite polite and charming. As their**

relationship progressed, Julie found herself falling in love with Bob. Privately, she engaged in wonderful fantasies of what her future might be if they married and raised a family together. As their relationship evolved, Julie noticed that when Bob's feelings were hurt, and/or when he felt challenged by her in some way, he withdrew physical affection, refusing to talk with her about why he had withdrawn. Moreover, following these episodes Bob made unwarranted and critical comments about her appearance. Bob always seemed to get over his feelings in time, but he was never willing to talk about why these episodes occurred.

Julie overlooked Bob's behavior because she loved him so much, and felt in other ways he was exactly right for her. It was only much later, after they had married and were raising their first child, that Bob became progressively alienated. He felt neglected by Julie's involvement with their child. She was often too tired for intimacy, and preoccupied with motherhood. Instead of trying to talk through his feelings of isolation with Julie, Bob stayed later and later at the office, leaving Julie alone with child care responsibilities. Bob claimed he needed to work more hours in order to pay for the extra expenses. Much later Julie discovered Bob was having an affair with a co-worker. She felt tremendously betrayed, not only by this discovery, but by Bob's criticisms of her as justification for his behavior. Bob refused to participate in counseling, as he believed everything was Julie's fault. Their marriage ended bitterly.

Your choice of an intimate partner is extremely important. If you chose someone who is unable to join you in working toward a healthy relationship you will be stuck in a bad situation. If you are stuck in a bad situation, you and your partner need to get into therapy in order to figure out if you should stay together. If your partner will not join you, either in therapy or personal growth, you need to consider whether or not it is worth it to you to continue in this relationship.

## **Feelings, Thoughts, and Choices Determine Your Attitude About Your Body**

Men and women vary greatly in their attitudes about their bodies (Cash, pp. 92-94). In general, women worry more about their bodies being too large and men worry about their bodies being too small. In other words, men and women often relate in



exactly opposite directions to our bodies. Women and men are acculturated in very different ways regarding the ideal masculine and the ideal feminine forms. According to Cash and numerous other authors, contemporary women are expected to be thin and well toned. Men are expected to be tall and muscular.

Kim Chernin, in her book Reinventing Eve, traces how the ideal feminine form has changed historically. Throughout much of human history the full-figured feminine form was most valued. However, with the advent of Twiggy in the 1960's, American culture shifted from the ideal represented by Marilyn Monroe and Jane Mansfield to a thin ideal largely out of sync with normalcy and health. Did you know, for instance, that healthy women have twenty-five per cent body fat, while healthy men have only eighteen per cent body fat? Undoubtedly, contemporary culture sets women against healthy standards for body fat.

Much less has been written about body image issues for men. Cash's research shows, however, that many men suffer in silence from negative body images created by unrealistic and ungrounded ideals. For instance, when Ross Perot participated in the presidential debates with Bill Clinton, his campaign committee demanded that he stand on a podium that made him appear approximately the same height as the other candidates. Camera angles were also required to avoid showing his podium height. Perot's campaign committee reflected the American public's association of height with authority. Corporate presidents, for instance, tend to be taller than the average male. While height has no correlation with intelligence or innate leadership capacity, we associate tallness with effectiveness in leadership. Male pattern baldness occurs in a high percentage of aging males. Notice the Rogaine commercials on television. What do they say about the self-image and male pattern baldness? Should men pursue hair transplants or cosmetic remedies to baldness?

Clearly, the mass media portrays ideal body types that are abnormal and unachievable for most of us. These unrealistic ideals foster negative body images and low self-esteem. In the extreme, eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia (as well as many cosmetic surgeries), are attempts to comply with these unrealistic standards.

### **How Do You Think, Feel, and Act in Relation To Your Body?**

Cash refers to body image as the interplay of how we think, feel, and behave in relation to our bodies. Remember that we earlier identified feelings, thoughts, and choices as important characteristics of intrapersonal communication. These same characteristics of intrapersonal communication parallel Cash's characteristics of body image. Interestingly, those of us who have the least trouble with our bodies are somewhere in the middle as regards the cultural ideal. Those of us who are considered most attractive, such as professional models, and those of us who are considered ugly, or least attractive, display the most trouble with body image.

How you think, feel, and behave in relation to your body is a very important determinant of how you relate to an intimate partner. All of us are sensitive about how

our bodies are perceived by intimate partners. If we think and feel negatively about our body, we are more likely to react defensively in a myriad of ways. Men can foster and exacerbate negative body images in women when they egocentrically, intentionally or unintentionally, laud unrealistic ideals of feminine beauty and neglect the natural beauty of their partner.

It is very important that you first realize how you think and feel about your own body so that you can take this into account in how you communicate with others. *Exercise Three* will give you a rough idea of how you think and feel about your body.

## **Which Way Do You Need To Go To Grow?**

In “Alice In Wonderland” the caterpillar, while sitting on a mushroom, directs Alice’s attention inward toward the self when it spells out the question, “*Who Are You?*” The caterpillar, just as appropriately, could have followed with the question, *And Which Way Do You Need To Go To Grow?* In order to decide which way we need to go to grow, we need to engage in introspective, or evaluative self-talk. Each of us has both the right and the responsibility to decide in which direction we “need to go in order to grow” or move forward with our lives. Growing, or choosing and moving in positive directions in our relationships with self and others necessarily means we use self-talk to evaluate and formulate our own growth paths. *Growth begins, and is, moment by moment, directed by intrapersonal communication.*

When using self-talk to evaluate and formulate growth paths it is especially important to remember that growth-oriented self-talk is not punitive. Punitive intrapersonal dialogues are described in the following excerpt from Richard Carson’s book, Taming Your Gremlins.

**Your already have some sense of your gremlin though you may have never focused your awareness on him or labeled him. Your gremlin is the narrator in your head. He has influenced you since you came into this world and he accompanies you throughout this entire existence. He is with you when you wake up in the morning and when you go to sleep at night. He tells you who and how you are, and he defines and interprets your every experience. He wants you to accept his interpretations as reality, and his goal from moment-to-moment, day-to-day, is to squelch the real, vibrant you within. I am not sure of the factors that contributed to the make-up of your particular gremlin. I am sure, however, that he was created, at least in part, by your past experiences.**

**Your gremlin wants you to feel bad and he carries out this loathsome pursuit via sophisticated maneuvers, which we will discuss later, and by convincing you to waste time reliving the past, worrying about the future, and analyzing the relationships between all sorts of people and things. He wants you to believe that he has your best interest at heart and that his primary purpose is to serve and protect you. His motive is actually much less honorable. He is intent on making you feel lousy. His caution about life and living is inordinate and his methods of control are overzealous. If by chance you are familiar with theories of psychotherapy, take note that your gremlin is not the parent ego-state of Eric Berne's transactional analysis, the Top Dog of Fritz Perl's gestalt therapy, or the super-ego of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. He is not merely a part of your psychological make-up. He is a GREMLIN and his personality, like his dastardly intention, is all his own. One thing is for certain, as you begin to simply notice your gremlin, you will become acutely sensitive to the fact that you are not your gremlin, but rather his observer. You will see clearly that your gremlin has no real hold on you. As this awareness develops, you will begin to enjoy yourself more and more.**

### ***Food For Thought***

**Tibetan monks, who occasionally travel in the United States, engage observers in a poignant drama illustrating the relationship between growth and pain. At public gatherings the monks create, on a dais or round table, a large and beautiful mandala, or wheel of life. Over approximately two weeks the monks labor meticulously. The mandala is created with colored sand deposited through cylindrical metal cones. These cones have tiny holes in the bottom and small notches on the side. Moving a wand over the notches, the monks cause the cones to vibrate. In this way sand of different colors is deposited in narrow lines. The monks draw with the sand, forming exquisitely intricate symbolic patterns representing the many phases of life. People coming to watch often lapse into meditative silence. During this two-weeks onlookers are spell-bound by the intricacy and beauty of the mandala. The spell is painfully broken at the end of the two weeks, however. At an**

**appointed time, the monks enter the room with buckets. Marching up to the mandala, they destroy it in a matter of seconds. The mandala is destroyed with such abruptness that loud gasps are often heard in the audience. The monks then lead participants in a procession to a nearby river. There they ritualistically pour the sand into the river, returning it to the sea. Embodied in this ritual is a central tenet of Buddhism: “Attachment is the source of all grief”. Buddhists point out that everything in nature is always moving and changing. Change is interwoven in the nature of all things. Therefore, when we cling to ideas or ways of seeing things, material possessions, or relationships, eventually we are torn away by change. Buddhists suggest we live life with an open mind, not clinging or holding on to ideas, possessions, or people. In this way, we become more flexible, open to change, and aware of what is happening in the present moment.**

## **Growing Involves Grief**

In life, growing necessarily involves the pain of letting go. At each stage of growth we give something up in order to move forward and claim the advantages of the next stage. As adolescents, for example, we think that when we leave the control of our parents we will have unmitigated freedom. We soon realize, however, that with this new freedom comes responsibility. If we accept responsibility for ourselves, grieving and letting go of the comfort of parental support, we gain the benefits of autonomy. If we cling overly long to parental support, we forfeit our freedom. Later, if we marry, we give up a measure of autonomy and freedom to form a primary relationship. In order to reap the benefits of marriage, we give up a certain amount of independence, or autonomy. If we refuse to do so, we forfeit the benefits of a good marriage. When we reach mid-life, we mourn the loss of our youth. If we bargain with this loss, pretending to be younger than our age, we forfeit the benefits of adulthood. Growth and grief are inextricably connected. In order to grow, we have to grieve. If we are unable to grieve, we do not grow.

## **Feeling, Choosing, and Growing**

*Exercise Four* asks you to engage in an intrapersonal dialogue about growth. When you do this exercise, keep in mind that in choosing a direction for growing, you must give something up. It is in this process where you will first employ your newfound ability to separate feelings and choices. When you make a choice to grow, you intentionally separate this choice from the feelings you must experience in order to grow. Grieving involves experiencing the basic feelings of loss (anger, sadness, guilt, and fear). We must be able to choose and then feel in order to grow.

*With the completion of Exercise Four, and the self-knowledge you have gained from this chapter, you are ready to move your self into a path of growth and development in your intimate relationship. Intimate, gendered relationships, because of the vulnerability they produce, are the most difficult proving grounds for personal growth. Hopefully you have now done the internal work necessary to allow you to successfully begin a life-long process of growing together with your partner.*

## Exercise One

### *Explore Your Self-Talk*

**Directions:** *Keep a journal of your self-talk for two days. Each time you become aware of a conversation within your own mind, make a journal entry describing the nature of your conversation with yourself. After two days of journal entries, analyze your own intrapersonal communication process.*

1. Describe the different perspectives taken in your conversations with yourself.
2. How much of your self-talk is positive, negative, or neutral? Do you have any interest in changing the nature of your self-talk.
3. What feelings did your self-talk evoke?
4. Did you talk with yourself about your body?

What relationships do you see between thoughts and feelings in your self-talk.

## Exercise Two

### *Experience Your Feelings*

**Directions:** Find a quiet, private place where you will not be disturbed. Let your eyes close. Take a few deep breaths, exhaling slowly. Notice any tension in your body, and let that tension go, as if you are breathing out the tension each time you exhale. Imagine that you are sitting in an empty room. Ask yourself, what do I feel? Let a feeling come to you vs. trying to think what you should be feeling. When you identify a feeling, sit in the midst of it for a minute or so. Then let that feeling go, and ask yourself what other feeling might come to you. Repeat the same process until no more feelings come. Then look deeper, as if you are looking down within yourself. Ask yourself if you recognize any deeper feelings which are there, but you are not ready to fully experience. After you have finished this process, gradually open your eyes and re-orient to your surroundings. Take a pencil and paper and list all of the feelings you discovered. Do the same process several times over a couple of days.

1. Make a master list of your feelings.
2. Identify feelings you encountered more often than others.
3. Identify deeper feelings, which you are not fully ready to experience.
4. Identify situations which evoked your feelings.

## **Exercise Three**

### **Describe Your Body Image**

Directions: Thomas Cash indicates the body image consists of what you think and feel about your body, as well as behavior patterns which are reflections of your thoughts and feelings about your body. This exercise is designed to provide you with an overview of your own image of your own body.

1. Keep a journal of all the thoughts you have about your body in single day. Don't edit your thoughts. Write them down as they occur. Pay special attention to the thoughts you have when you look in the mirror, and when you are interacting with same and opposite sex friends and partners.
2. For each thought you recorded in your journal, ask yourself if you have a feeling associated with the thought. Write down the feelings associated with thoughts. Comment on these feelings. Have you discovered anything you didn't know before doing this exercise? Are there any thoughts and feelings you would like to change? List those you would like to change.

Describe your own behaviors which are logically linked to the thoughts and feelings you listed above. Have you discovered anything new about your body behaviors? Are there any behaviors you would like to change?



## **Exercise Four**

### **Which Way Do I Need To Go To Grow?**

Directions: This exercise challenges you to summarize what you have learned about yourself in this chapter, and make specific learning goals designed to foster personal growth. Answer the following questions, and lead yourself through the process of making your own goals.

1. Which way do I need to grow to recognize and experience my feelings?
2. Which ways do I need to go to grow in separating my feelings from my choices?
3. Do I need to alter the nature of my self talk? If so, how?
4. Do I need to change my body image? If so, how?

Which way do I need to grow in orienting, intrapersonally, to gender opposites?