



HEALING CIRCLES

Power: A User's Manual

A Power Literacy Resource

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Sharing is an act of power and it is my intention to share with readers my journey to understand power. I invite you to use these materials to start your own journey. In that spirit, I invite you to use this workbook individually, in group settings and as part of your own research and writing on power. I do ask that you honor my gifts and give me appropriate credit for the material. One of the challenges of research is that we are often asked to only use the most recent resources and this contributes to obscuring or deleting the original sources of ideas, concepts and theories. At the end of the day, there are really no new ideas but a re-working, re-imagining and a telling in the moment that someone is able to hear and understand what has always been present. There is a gift in bringing old ideas out in ways that they can be utilized by others. So, honor my gifts and give me credit as you offer your teachings that were informed by my work to others. This allows us to stand on each others' shoulders and to honor our connections.

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Why do we need a user's guide to power?

In spite of all of the funding thrown at “empowerment programs” over the past few decades, few human services workers have been trained to analyze power dynamics and even fewer have been given the space to struggle with power- power to, power over, power within and power with- on a personal level as part of their professional training. This leaves us vulnerable to frustration and power abuses as we attempt to ameliorate conditions for our clients without having a full understanding of how the problems were laid down, what maintains them and what collaborative actions need to be taken to remedy the power inequities.

This workbook is designed to help peer counselors, activists, counselors/therapists and mental health administrators engage in a personal process of analyzing power and how it impacts our own mental health and well-being. Personal clarity is a prerequisite to creating and sharing healing strategies for individuals and communities which have experienced violence (economic, physical, sexual, emotional, cultural, etc.), oppression, daily micro-aggressions, and economic under-investment and are manifesting emotional difficulties as a result of these experiences. We can build sustainable and effective programs by engaging root causes of distress, understanding context and by increasing our ability to identify and disrupt power transactions which compromise individuals and communities. We can invest our energy in co-creating prevention, early intervention and healing programs in collaboration with mental health consumer/survivors and affected communities to support emotional well-being. Together we have the power to transform our communities!

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Defining Power

1) What is your working definition of power?

2) How does this definition shape how your experience being powerful or powerless?

3) Think back to a time when you felt powerful. What was the context? Who was present? What was the nature of the interaction? How, if at all, does this event influence your life today?

4) Think back to a time when you felt powerless. What was the context? Who was present? What was the nature of the interaction? How, if at all, does this event influence your life today?

We can become truly visible to each other if we are willing to risk being honest and vulnerable in our discussions of power how it affects us individually and as communities. In fact, it is my belief that understanding and shifting power dynamics is the only way that we can heal as individuals and as a society.

Aspects of Power

Power-Over

Power-over is linked to domination and force (which includes the ability to withhold required resources). Power over enables one individual or a group to make the decisions that affect others, and to enforce control. This is the form of power that we are most familiar with and which creates negative attitudes about power for many of us.

Power-From-Within

This is personal power that celebrates our mastery of tasks and unfolding of abilities. This is our ability to make choices and take actions that positively affect our lives and the lives of others. Power –from-within does not even need to be manifested in actions- some of the most amazing examples of power-from-within are attitudes and beliefs which guide an individual.

Power-With

This is the power of a strong individual in a group of equals and is manifested in influence. This is not the power to command, but to suggest and be listened to, to begin something and have others join in that action. The source of this power is the willingness of others to listen to our ideas and our openness to their contributions. Power-with is dependent on personal responsibility, on our own creativity and daring and on the willingness of others to respond.

Adapted from Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority and Mystery. Starhawk. Harper and Row. 1987

The Healing Power of Storytelling

The Destorification of Our Lives

Just as clear-cutting an old growth forest leads to the phenomenon called deforestation-the stripping of the landscape of more than just trees- our culture has been devastated by the loss of storytelling as a tool for communicating, passing on values, learning and, most important, healing. I call it *destorification*. Its effect is as devastating as its ecological cousin's.

Richard Stone
The Healing Art of Storytelling

The Healing Questions

1. What happened to you (your people)?
2. How does what happened affect you (your people) now?

3. How, in spite of what happened have you (your people) been able to triumph?
4. What are the external factors that create or maintain the Power Wound (or a personal and/or community sense of injury)?
5. What needs to be healed?
6. What gifts have you (your people) received out of this wounding experience
7. What lessons/wisdom can you (your people) share with others based on your experience with power wounding and healing?

The Three Magic questions were provided by Pemina Yellow Bird. Additional question created by Vanessa Jackson with significant contributions from Makungu Akinyela, Elaine Pinderhughes , Vanessa McAdams Mahmoud, and David Anderson Hooker.

Guiding Principles for Using the Healing Questions

1. Clinical and organizing belief that ALL wounds can be healed.
2. The clinician/community organizer and the clinical client(s)/community must develop a vision of healing. This vision of healing, which may be related to wholeness or restoration, will be the goal of all discussions and activities.
- 3 . The process of naming and acknowledging the wound is fundamental in the healing process. It is impossible to heal a wound which has not been identified. A key goal of the clinical or organizing work is to create an accurate description of the power wound and how it currently affects the functioning of individual/family/community.

4. The creation of “safe enough space” within the clinical interface, the family system, the wider community and ultimately at the societal level ,to allow for a naming of the wound and the emotional vulnerability required to engage in an authentic naming and healing process. This requires releasing any illusions that there is an absolute safe space. Authentic healing and change requires a willingness to take a calculated risk to be vulnerable (and risk further wounding).

5. It is important to create a container to hold and protect individuals during any process which uncovers shame and vulnerability. **What are the critical components of the container for THIS client or community?**

6. The identification of resiliency skills and unwounded spaces in the self/community early in the healing process are crucial to sustain and build hope for resolution and restoration to wholeness. There is a profound power in hope throughout the healing process and it is central to the healing process to identify these “footholds” of hope. This is the belief in the possibility of healing that is grounded in awareness that one has been able to triumph in some aspects of his/her life or the community has been able to preserve some sense of power and/or agency.

What is Power-based Therapy?

A model for transforming powerlessness into power in clinical and community work. It explains how the dynamics of power operate on all levels of human functioning, often simultaneously, create emotional distress and are implicated in power constriction or power wounding for individuals and communities. These dynamics complicate the traditional therapeutic and community process of problem solving. The model explains how healing can occur and effective power assumption restored.

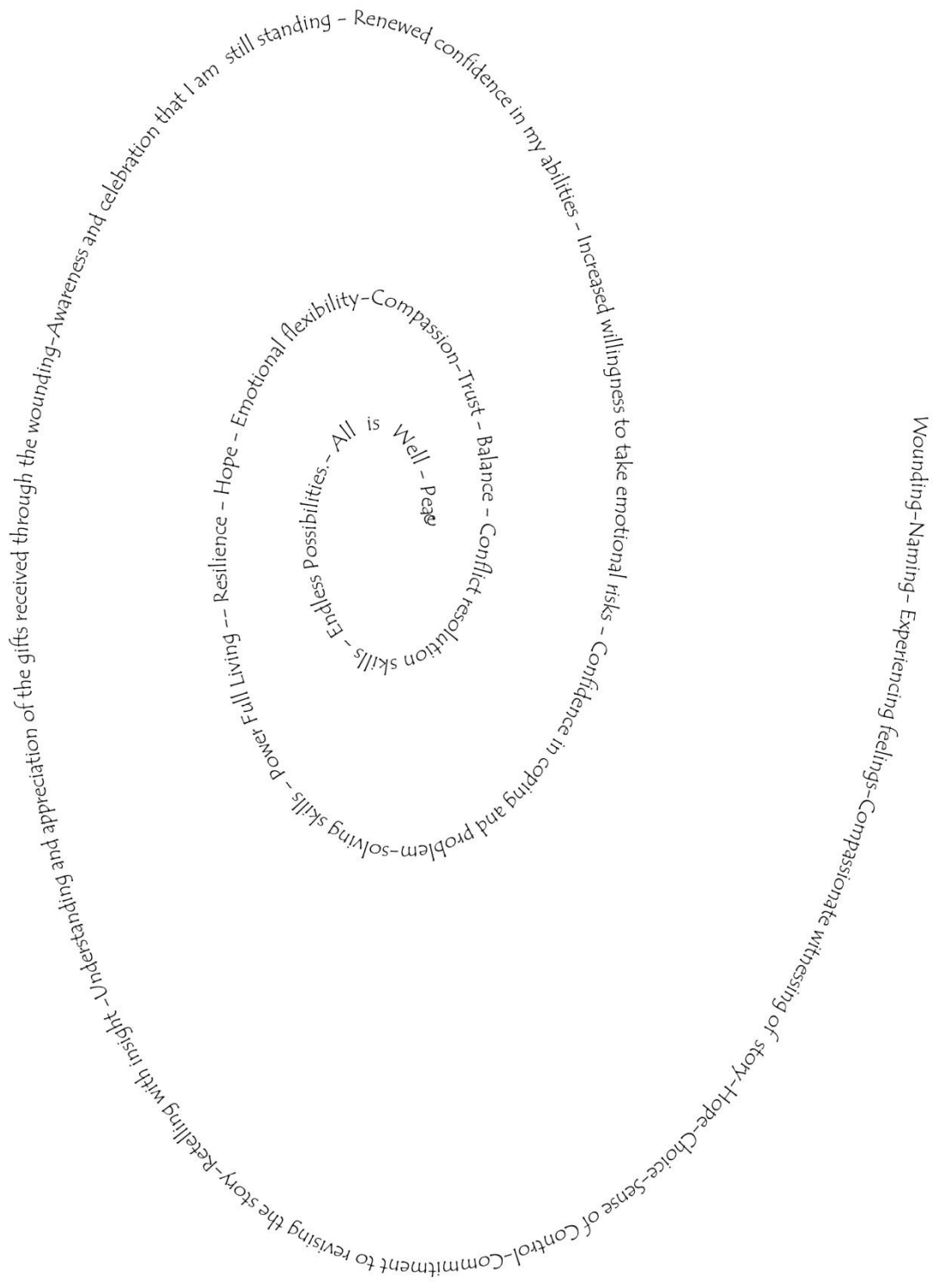
The Origin's of Power-based Therapy

Power-based therapy emerged over thirty years as I integrated personal and political experiences with my social work training. These key experiences had a profound impact on my analysis of power/

- Feminist activism- the personal is political and the political is personal
- National Black Women's Health Project- a self help model with focused on individual healing as a building block for community transformation. We can heal ourselves.
- Elaine Pinderhughes' work on Understanding Race, Ethnicity and Power. Power theory and facilitating discussions of Power
- Recovering from a descent/divorce/depression
- African American Psychiatric History project (professional crisis). Understanding the oppressive underpinnings of mental health services in America made me seriously question my willingness to remain in the human services profession.

What needs to be healed? What gifts have you received from this wounding experience? What lessons/wisdom can you share with others based on your experiences? What would life at full power look and feel like to you? Who can support you on this journey? Powerlessness has been transformed into Power. All is Well.

What external factors have contributed to your wounding? What happened to you? How does what happened affect you now? How have you been able to triumph? What happened to you? How does what happened affect you now?



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Telling Our Stories

Utilizing the Healing Questions, write a narrative of your life and of your community. We will spend some time in small groups sharing portions of our stories and you can choose what you share so try not to edit too heavily as you write out your story. Also know that the story will change with each new telling of it.

A Story of Self

A Story of Community

A Story of Our Transformed World Projecting into the future/conjuring

What are the healing aspects of Storytelling

- Re-membering
- Extending trust
- Giving voice to my experience
- Challenging “invisibilization”
- Experiencing compassionate listening
- The possibility of connection
- Creating opportunities to expand or modify the story (discovering new meaning)

Based on your experiences, what other healing aspects would you include on this list?

Power Cards

The Power Cards were designed to invite every day discussions about power and to increase “power literacy.” Power card can be used as a journaling tool for individuals or groups. The cards can be used for group discussion and in sessions with couples and families to help them understand how power dynamics influence their relationships. I encourage you to revisit the cards often and notice if your answers change over time.

1. How do you define power? How does this definition shape your life?
2. What is your earliest memory about powerlessness? How does it influence you today?
3. What is your earliest memory about power? How does it influence you today?
4. What messages did you receive about power from your family?
5. Where do you feel wounded in your sense of power?
6. What are some ways in which you give up your power?
7. What situations/people/emotions tend to trigger a sense of powerlessness for you?
8. What are some ways in which you most easily connect with your sense of power?
9. How, if at all, is your sense of power influenced by your spiritual beliefs and practices?
10. What is your best experience of sharing power with others?
11. Who/What are your models for right use of power?
12. How would your life be different if you could consistently stand in your power?
13. How do you exercise power over with integrity?
14. Who would feel threatened if you lived a Full Power Life? Who would celebrate you?
15. What are your Power Sparks (intuition) which have supported you when your sense of power was threatened?

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT)

What is EFT

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) is a form of energy therapy created by Gary Craig which can be used for fast and effective reduction or clearing of trauma. I frequently describe it as a powerful combination of acupressure and affirmations to support the healing of power wounds. EFT can be used for physical conditions, emotional distress and beliefs and attitudes. EFT is easy to learn and teach and there are amazing resources on the internet to assist you in becoming proficient in the technique.

I caution those who are new to EFT to start out with small issues. I highly recommend that issues related to severe wounding/trauma be addressed only with the support of a trained professional since it is not uncommon for feelings to intensify before they subside or clear.

THE BASIC RECIPE

1. Naming- What is the problem? What is getting in the way of you functioning? It is really important to accurately name the problem. Once you identify the problem, just check in again to see if it FEELS right (oftentimes we can call a problem "anger" when it is really is a more vulnerable feeling like sadness, hurt or fear). Sometime the problem is a thought or a belief so try to figure out what thoughts or beliefs are keeping distress in place.

2. The Setup...Repeat 3 times this affirmation:

"Even though I think/feel _____, I deeply and completely accept myself."
while continuously rubbing the Sore Spot or tapping the Karate Chop point.

3. The Sequence...Tap about 7 times on each of the following energy points while repeating the Reminder Phrase at each point.

TH EB, SE, UE, UN, Ch, CB, UA

The abbreviations for these points are summarized below in the same order as given above.

TH – Top of the **H**ead

EB = Beginning of the **E**ye**B**row

SE = **S**ide of the **E**ye

UE = **U**nder the **E**ye

UN = **U**nder the **N**ose

Ch = **C**hin

CB = Beginning of the **C**ollar**B**one

UA = **U**nder the **A**rm

Note: In subsequent rounds The Setup affirmation and the Reminder Phrase are adjusted to reflect the fact that you are addressing the *remaining* problem (ex. Even though I still....).

The 9 GAMUT Brain Balancer

Tap on the back of the hand on the groove between the little and ring fingers. Keep tapping while doing the below exercises.

1. Eyes open
2. Eyes closed
3. Eyes down left
4. Eyes down right
5. Circle eyes clockwise
6. Circle eyes counter-clockwise
7. Hum a tune
8. Count to 5
9. Hum a tune

EFT Sandwich Cookie- tapping-gamut-tapping.

Adapted from - www.emofree.com

Sample EFT Statements for Activists (“Even though, _____, I deeply and completely love and accept myself

- ◆ I feel overwhelmed by oppression
- ◆ I am angry at people who refuse to acknowledge their privilege
- ◆ I am depressed by the state of our country
- ◆ I am exhausted by the constant struggle
- ◆ I feel guilty when I enjoy myself when there is so much suffering
- ◆ I don't trust _____ and cannot work with them
- ◆ My soul feels so weary
- ◆ I cope by drinking and smoking
- ◆ It is hard for me to tell my comrades that I am really struggling
- ◆ I hate Donald Trump
- ◆ I feel hopeless about reclaiming all of the ground that we have lost

Living at Full Power Guided Fantasy

Get comfortable on your chair and shut your eyes. Slowly begin to block out the sounds of the room, the people around you and any stress that you brought in with you today.... You are moving into a space of relaxation and inner peace as you follow your breath as it moves in and out of your body....follow the natural flow of your breath until it is the only thing in your awareness....as you inhale...imagine that you are taking in a deep sense of calm....as you exhale...release any emotional and physical tension that is weighing you down...breath in peace....release anxiety and tension.....breath in slowly....release the breath slowly as you move into a state of deep relaxation....

Now allow yourself to tap into a knowledge that has been deep within you.... This is the knowledge that you hold of your most authentic self... before any hurt.....any abuse....any abandonment....This is the part of yourself that operates at full power.... Imagine for a moment that you are connected to that authentic self....and you can feel and experience your life at full power....As the energy moves through you...take a moment to notice how you feel in your body...is there a place where you feel the energy...the power.... the most? Now imagine that you are moving through different aspects of your life here and now.....How would you experience your work if you were operating at full power.....again, be sure to notice the feelings that come up....the sense that you carry of yourself as you move through the world at full power...How do significant people in your life relate to you when you show up in your full power....family members...friends...colleagues.... What is different about your friendships when you are operating at full power?...Now imagine what your intimate relationships would be like if you met your partner or began a relationship at full power...what kind of partner would you attract...what would be the challenges of loving at full power? ...What would be the gifts of loving at full power? What would your partner most admire about your powerful self?....Now expand your view to consider how you would live your life at full power...what would change compared to the way that you are living now?....What aspects of your self would need to be healed before you feel that you could fully connect with that powerful self?...How do you begin that change?....Or how is that change already manifesting in your life? What relationships would you need to leave behind or really distance from to live fully in your power?

Are you ready to make those changes now? Just imagine yourself standing in a place that you love...and feeling this power moving through your body and radiating through every cell and deep into your spiritual core. Feel the sensations and know that you always have access to this power....and that it is yours to tap into at any time....feel this knowing deep in your heart....as you become aware of shifting back into this space and time...back into this room...as you connected with the sounds and smells of this moment....as you become more aware of your breath and when you are ready...open your eyes.

Process Questions

1. What was your vision of living at full power?
2. What would be the impact on your relationships?
3. How would living at full power influence your work?
4. What blocks you from living at full power right now?
5. What needs to shift for you to move closer to living at full power?

Power Philosophy

What values are reflected in your Right Use of Power?

What actions reflect your commitment to Right Use of Power?

Where do you feel most challenged in your commitment to Right Use of Power?

What are three behaviors/attitudes/beliefs that you would need to release (especially related to your work) to live out your commitment to Right Use of Power?

My Power Manifesto

Use the space below to write out your Power Manifesto, or the values and commitments that you embrace to support you in walking through the world conscious of the power that you hold. This statement will also serve as a vision statement for you work in the wellness and emotional well-being field to ensure that you engage in power conscious interactions with the individuals and families who come to you for support.

Questions to consider

1. How do you address issues of power in your clinical and/or community work?
2. How do you address issues of power, difference and culture in your clinical and/or community work?
3. How do you invite people to question and explore the nature of power, how to access power, how to build on power, how to gain or regain power; how to transfer powerlessness and hopelessness into power?
4. How do you address the systemic nature of power, whereby people's reactions, including violence, stem from efforts to deal with powerlessness?
5. How do you address the fact that persons with a great deal of power can easily be reduced to a sense of powerlessness whenever they lose any of it? If you do, how has this concept been helpful?
6. Do you address the fact that lack of power in the community affects an individual's or a family's personal sense of power, agency, pride, and competence? If so what strategies do you use to make that more transparent?
7. A sense of power, or lack of it, affects a sense of power, or lack of it, on any other level of human functioning/behavior. Have you found this in your practice and, if so, what strategies do you use to address this?

Reflections on Power

Power Wounding.

A power wound is the emotional reaction to an injury to one's sense of power. This emotional response often continues long after the injury or threat of further injury is gone. A power wound creates a constriction in the area of the injury which compromises flexibility, flow, and recovery from subsequent injuries, which include but are not limited to acts of violence, emotional threats, and restrictions of resources (poverty, racism, sexism, etc.) or minimizing or ignoring harm done.

I use the example of my challenges with my divorce which triggered an emotional descent/clinical depression. I experienced profound spiritual, emotional and financial wounds from that experience. Part of why these wounds stayed active/unhealed for WAY too long is that it disrupted some mechanism that "controls" my sense of self and agency and made it nearly impossible for the normal healing process to proceed. In retrospect, I see that part of the challenge was my refusal and ambivalence about actually naming/acknowledging that I had been injured. There was also a period in which I was waiting for acknowledgment of my injury from the person whom I perceived as creating the wound. The longer the wound stayed unhealed and the more energy that I directed toward securing external confirmation, the more compromised and powerless I felt regarding the situation. What I realized recently was that there were still aspects of the story of the wounding (What happened) that I was still reluctant to admit (fear of being perceived as weak or foolish), pushing feelings into the closet in an attempt to "move forward." The unacknowledged parts functioned as an irritant or infection which prevented full resolution. Without resolution, I was compromised in my ability to process, adapt and strategize when other potentially wounding situations occurred.

Are ALL wounds power wounds? Do some wounds spontaneously heal? What is the process by which an emotional injury becomes a wound? What facilitates the natural healing process?

I do not think that all wounds become power wounds. Maybe I need to distinguish between an injury and a wound. I can be injured (bruised, cut, and punctured) and while there is pain and a temporary impairment of my functioning, with appropriate care, attention and time, I may be able to return to my pre-injury state of functioning. When one is wounded, it brings to mind the image of the Fisher King, with an injury which will not kill but neither will it heal. Added to this unhealed nature is that emotional wounds can frequently be outside of our conscious awareness to that we may experience the

symptoms of the constrictions but not have a full sense of what is creating the impairment.

It seems to me the emotional wounds which most easily heal are those which are relatively minor, do not hit previously compromised areas (multiple trauma, already weakened condition), are quickly attended to and where appropriate accommodations (emotional crutches, rest or active emotional processing) are applied consistently. This allows for the Healing Questions to be examined soon after the injury which allows the injured person to explore the meaning, identify ways to repair the emotional injury, create new coping skills and determine new understandings which have emerged from what may have previously been viewed as a negative experience.

When this natural process is interrupted an emotional injury can become a power wound. Frequent barriers are lack of emotional safety, denial or minimizing of the injury by self or others or external survival issues which divert energy or attention away from the emotional injury. If I can acknowledge my injury, experience the emotions that arise from re-telling the story, experience compassionate witnessing, I can begin to imagine new options for responding the injury, experience hope, make choices, elicit support, allow adequate time and support to recover, reflect on the experience and identify new knowledge or skills which emerged from the experience and even be able to share that knowledge in a manner which benefits others.

The most significant barrier to resolution or healing or the creation of a wound is my unwillingness to experience the pain that a re-telling of the story will create for me. So I will tell pieces of the story which are tolerable or which I feel that I or others can handle. My capacity to compartmentalize and hide the aspects which feel too overwhelming consistently slows down my healing process. Now the good news is that it is never too late to go back and revisit the injury and create conditions which will allow for a full healing. Sometime, it may not even be the most traumatic aspect of the story which we are avoiding (example, in a recent re-visiting of my divorce and subsequent clinical depression, it was not the issue of infidelity and abandonment which was maintaining a serious constriction over a decade later, what I discovered was a footnote to the divorce story in which I blamed my enthusiasm for my work (aggravated by over working, poor boundaries, procrastination patterns) as a behavior which undermined my marriage and created the space for the affair to happen. This was not a conscious narrative but it created a significant constriction which compromised by belief in my ability to balance commitments, created a sense self-blame and even punishment but which was not

available for me to analyze or challenge since it had dropped underneath my conscious radar.

What are some examples of Power wounds? Is Emotional Injury synonymous with Power Wound? If not, how are they different?

An emotional injury is the event/experience which creates emotional pain which can include anger, hurt, disappointment, betrayal, fear, anxiety, etc. It is something that I am aware of and may even be observable by others. Emotional injuries are an inevitable part of the human experience. An emotional injury can crystallize into a power wound when it is unattended to or aggravated in such a manner that emotional energy is diverted to obscuring the injury (and thereby is unavailable for routine and emergency need) or to trying to function in spite of the wound even though one's sense of efficacy, worth, decision-making and hope may be severely compromised.

Examples of Power Wounds include physical/emotional/sexual abuse (and almost any life threatening experience), poverty, or extreme anxiety about money to a level at which the majority of your emotional energy is tied up in money related concerns (again, this often feels life threatening), relationship betrayals or disappointment where one feels that they do not have control or choice in the situation, chronic states of overwhelm where there feels like no option for retreating to rest or strategize to achieve a more desirable outcome. Any event which results in a sense of lack of control, immobilization or helplessness has the potential to create a Power Wound. It is a very individualized experience in that an event which could completely compromise one person may result in minimal impairment in another person.

WHAT ARE SOME SPECIFIC EXPERIENCES OF POWER WOUNDING FOR ACTIVISTS?

What are some of the ways that people have been damaged by the historical roots of oppression in the mental health system?

Power wounds are rampant in the mental health system and range from who has the power to define and "treat" mental illness to very personal levels of violence which result in individuals coming to the attention of the system and which occur under the guise of treatment (think ECT or seclusion and restraints) or the abuses which occur because the individual is vulnerable (physical/sexual/emotional/financial abuse). That the system grew out of a misrepresentation of the ability of psychiatrist to identify and treat mental conditions and with considerable economic interest in creating a huge client base combined the need to control those who did not fit into society due to behaviors, membership in a marginalized or despised group make psychiatric patients extremely

vulnerable to wounding. Others are given the power to name your experience and determine if they are legitimate or even real, patients are stripped of control of how, when, where and to whom they tell their narrative of injury frequently resulting in a cut-off from one's emotions (since they cannot be trusted to be accurate in describing emotions). The mental health system is actually a perfect incubator for the transformation of emotion injuries into power wounds since the first step in treatment is to give control of the story to others. In addition, the dominant narrative regarding mental health systems are that they are places of healing with an investment in returning people to a healthy state of emotional functioning in spite of all the evidence to the contrary. When c/s/x activists attempt to share their alternative narrative, they are ignored or actively vilified or attacked. This is an inherently crazy-making and power restricting experience.

How are power disparities most often discussed in human service training programs?

I think that power is alluded to a lot in our training but it is typically presented in the form of an "empowerment intervention." Amazingly enough this can happen over and over again without any kind of analysis regarding the disempowerment process. I think that oftentimes human service students are given pieces of a puzzle and in two years can gather empowerment tools that profess to address micro level power issues or macro power issues and these students are frequently literally on different tracks. If we fail to help students understand how power operates at all levels then we leave them floundering around with disconnected ideas and then we toss them into communities experiencing multi-layered wounding and wonder why individuals and communities do not heal.

We give lip service to addressing and challenging power disparities in the clinical interface without offering any historical analysis as to how we, as therapist, acquired this power and what we imagine would happen if we engaged in authentic power sharing or actual client/consumer directed services. We would have to acknowledge our fear of losing control and even of losing our jobs. We would have to deal with the oppressive history of mental health in America and the profound ways in which clients, especially members of marginalized groups, have been harmed, ignored or both in our quest to heal them. We would also have to deal with the reality that we pursued a course of treating individual mental health problems because we became overwhelmed by the effort to engage in social justice practices to name and address isms-based inequities. We could have to deal with our own shame, helplessness and disappointment at abandoning the vulnerable in order to elevate our own status in the mental health field. We would need to re-vamp human services graduate education programs so that they included historical perspectives on the related field and amplify the voices of marginalized people, most importantly the voluntary and involuntary users of our

services. We would need spaces that assisted us in engaging challenging ideas of power, aid and healing.

We would also have to wade into the murky waters of spirituality, faith, hope, community and love in which there are few clear answers. We would have to throw away the idea that complex life issues can be medicated away or addressed in short-term individual consultations. We would have to own our own confusion and helplessness and be vulnerable with our colleagues and clients. We would have to accept that sometime we just do not know the answers, feel temporarily helpless, burnt out or angry or that we need to partner with clients in ways that we were never taught to collaborate. We would have to acknowledge that there was some payoff in the power imbalance that allowed us to look more competent than we actually feel most of the time.

How do I define Power Transformation? What are some examples of this process?

An example of Power Transformation came from my own experience with a power wound related to money. Soon after I went in to private practice, I was invited to participate in a psychiatric history research project. I clearly misjudged the amount of time and energy required and soon exhausted both the small stipend I was paid and the majority of my savings account. I felt panic, outrage and shame for finding myself in a situation where I feared that I would not be able to pay my mortgage. My first step was acknowledging the feeling and also noting that the situation also triggered a moderate clinical depression which made it even more difficult to problem solve. As I finally faced my feelings and my rather dire financial situation, I felt a small bit of relief since I had clearly named the problem- I was broke. I also decided to take an over the counter remedy for my depression since I was unable to think clearly due to the increasing depression. After taking these initial steps, I was able to identify a few new income generating options and stop shaming myself for my overreliance on credit cards. I chose to be grateful for the stellar credit history that allowed me to have funds during my cash flow crisis. Reframing the situation was essential to my transformation process since it is nearly impossible to engage in change when mired in shame and disapproval of self. I also decided to start talking with others about my situation and received validation and reality checks. Reaching out to others broke through my isolation and shame. I eventually began to talk with my clients about what I called "fiscal trauma" and found that many of them were struggling with similar issues. At the same time, I was invited to write a chapter on women and poverty and I was able to use my own situation as a starting point for researching the emotional challenges of low wage earning women. I then began to speak on the topic and was able to take what was once a shameful secret and turn it into a useful clinical tool for myself and others. I continue to work on fiscal trauma in my own life and as theoretical construct.

How do I define Healing/Healed? Is it synonymous with Power Transformation?

My definition of healed would be the development of knowledge and skills which allows one to feel that an emotional injury or wound has been resolved and that s/he could reasonably deal with future life challenges (optimism). Healed indicated that what was once a wound or constriction has been resolved and flexibility, hopefulness and a sense of agency and competency had been restored or established. I think that that Power Transformation is an aspect of healing. Certainly, healing is not possible without power transformation. Where there is a sense of powerlessness (which also can include high levels of confusion, immobilization, anger, etc.) there is no healing. Healing is also an active process and each step is important because each success inspires more hope which often brings with it openness to new problem solving strategies.

What makes Power Transformation possible?

Power transformation requires an acknowledgment of the wounds and some degree of understanding about how it occurred and what continues to block the natural healing process. It always requires a change in attitude and behavior. I have to think and act differently to bring about a transformation. I have to cultivate some level of optimism that change is possible (hope) and I need to feel that I have choices and a willingness to exercise those choices. I feel that identifying gifts from the trauma, new feelings, ideas and behaviors that can also be shared with others is central to the healing process. There is a communal aspect to healing in my world view and healing is incomplete until there is some sharing of the new knowledge. This helps us to create a sense of meaning which transforms the original wounding narrative. It's very much like the elements of the Hero's Journey which shows up cross-culturally in most stories. We get pushed out of our comfort zone and have to embark on a journey on which we encounter enemies and allies, find the key/potion/nourishment, and confront some choice between selfish desires and the greater good and ultimately the return to the drive so that other can benefit from the key/potion/nourishment. It is a process that requires honoring our wholeness as we are confronted with whether to seek benefits solely for ourselves or acknowledge our connection to another individual, family, tribe/community or human kind. It is a test of moving more fully into being ourselves while balancing to need for connection with something outside of ourselves.

What is MY definition of HOPE?

I believe that hope is the ability to hold onto the belief that things can change to a more positive situation and that I have the ability to take the actions necessary to transform the situation. I really like C.J. Snyder's definition of hope as the will power and way power to achieve a desired goal. I think we have overlooked how many people are

blocked on the waypower aspect of hope (often connected with wounding experiences) and too much effort is directed toward creating alternative vision with less effort directed toward even asking people if they have any idea how to get to the new vision or if they know of anyone who has demonstrated way power. This is especially important in marginalized community where there are huge “hope deficits” because so many people seem to have given up or are so trapped in painful and negative situation that there are limited models of waypower. In addition, the culture over-values certain models of way power, education, status, winning the lottery, monetary, etc. that more subtle forms of change, power within and power with related change models are devalued even when there are more accessible and can serve as scaffolding to support other forms of change.

How do I define Power Spark? Is it an aspect of hope? How does it work? Is it always present when power transformation occurs?

I came up with the term power spark to try to describe these moments in therapy when a client would share a story or have a spontaneous knowing that there was another more positive and powerful way for them to live. It often came in the form of suddenly understanding that the expectations or behaviors of others were the problem versus always assuming that they were lacking in some way. It was a knowing that persisted in spite of having no external support or validation. It was Power from Within in its purest form. It has a very spiritual or magical feel to it and at the same time it can feel very logical (ex. “of course there is something wrong [and possibly evil] with this person who is abusing me.”) It serves as an anchor and blanket of support pointing the person in a new direction and offering comfort and some emotional protection.

Power sparks can also show up externally, when an individual connected with other affected people, for example the psychiatrically-labeled person who connects with a psychiatric liberation group. They feel validated, connected and are provided with tools to analyze their situation and call out power imbalances and abuses.

I do believe that power sparks are required for Power Transformation. It is a matter of whether they emerge from inside the person and work themselves out or if they are ignited by an external experience which the person internalizes and uses as fuel (goals, waypower and/or willpower for future actions)

What is the result of this particular approach to therapy? How do you know it is working? How do you know when the clinical work is complete?

Power transaction/power based therapy really embraces the idea that the means is the end. You cannot empower people but you can help create conditions were a person

become increasingly adept at identifying and challenging power imbalances and wounds. Power transaction therapy requires that the therapist and client become fluent in power language and be able to shift seamlessly between intellectual, emotional, spiritual and political conversations. It is multilevel and it may be as much an educational process as it is a therapeutic technique. In fact, it is similar to Friere's popular education strategy since we are constantly analyzing what's going on internally and externally and creating language to understand the interactions and inform others (whether a partner, family members, or a larger community). Knowledge is central to the process. What is also unique about how I work is that there is an open invitation for sacred or spiritual aspects of the problem/wound to be explored. Too often we leave this central and powerful tool for naming, bearing and transforming wounding experiences outside of the consulting room. Engaging the spiritual is one way for people to activate hope and create meaning from the experience. I make clear that all tools and knowledge which have been helpful in dealing with past injuries and are not harmful to self or others can be included into a recovery plan.

What stories are important to tell to help people understand the transformation of powerlessness into power?

I think it is important to prime the imagination and nurture hope by helping people connect with their previous experiences with power transformation which they often forget or minimize. In the absence of personal experiences, it can be helpful to explore how other people have transformed wounds but caution should be used here to avoid unhealthy comparisons or feed hopelessness. Stories can be useful as a tool to fire up the imagination and help uncover power sparks or previous transformation efforts.

Why was it necessary to expand on the Healing Questions?

The original three Magic questions were really very powerful. In fact, they were absolutely transformative for me. It was a combination of simplicity, the invitation to tell a story and inspiring belief that healing was possible. The triumph question (how, in spite of this wound, have I been able to triumph) came out of the Black church tradition of testimony which invites the telling of how faith brought the individual through trials and tribulations. Testimony is an excellent way of unfolding a narrative which summarizes the problem, identifies failed and successful efforts to remedy the problem, circles back to deep gratitude and renewed faith and offers the story up in a public setting as a cautionary and celebratory tale for others. Through my own healing processes, I found that I did not feel fully resolved until I could find some greater meaning in my pain and healing. This included discovering new strengths and

knowledge and then sharing my story to inspire others (and to release the shame). I was assuming that people were always attending to the external factors which created or maintained the wounds but soon found out that was not a useful assumption (for therapists or clients). We have become so use to an individual problem model that we can really forget that a person is constantly interacting with an environment which may not always support health and healing.

Expand on the spiral metaphor. How essential is that metaphor to my concept of change? What is a good case study of this process?

The spiral image is a recurrent theme in my work and is also my logo. It is a universal symbol spiritual journeying and also represents the sun, centering and a journey with many perspectives. I use it in my work to remind clients that they are on a journey to their center or core and while they may feel as though they are “stuck in the same place” they are really viewing the problem from multiple perspectives with more and more clarity and resolution. I use it (I keep a metal spiral in my office) as a symbol of hope for healing and resolution and as a reminder for clients to keep track of where they are on the journey. The case study that I used in Poverty as Trauma was a great example. The client kept losing sight of wounds which were actively healing because she kept encounter new wounds which FELT very similar. Using the spiral imagery gave her a tool for appreciating that she was dealing with multiple wounds at various stages of healing and to track her own journey where she could more easily reflect on how she previous handled problems versus her use of new tools. It was really powerful when she kept confusing her childhood sexual trauma with her currently struggles with finances and the impending foreclosure on her home. We had to tease apart the fear, shame and anxiety so that she could see that she had retained the gains she had made on healing the sexual trauma and was dealing with economic vulnerability. This allowed her to stop globalizing her problems which was fueling depression, hopelessness and despair and start focusing on concrete steps to change her economic situation and grieve the loss of her dream home.

Expand on the identify, analyze, strategize formula for change. Which Healing questions correlate with each step?

Identify, analyze and strategize is my way of conceptualizing the problem-solving process that I utilize with clients. It is not a strictly intellectual or cognitive process since some of the steps are addressed in multiple levels (spiritual, emotional, mental, financial, physical, etc.) Identifying the wound allows us to focus our attention and really understand what is happening, how it affects us, external factors at play and direct us toward what we need to mobilize to move us toward healing. The analysis phase takes

us back over all of the questions but invites a deeper evaluation and includes ascribing meaning to the experiences, investigating barriers to change, identifying new facilitators of healing. The strategizing stage really focuses on the double-natured “what do I need to heal” (what is still wounded and what needs to be brought to bear to facilitate healing). I like offering of the three part frame since it supports clients in tracking the therapeutic process and taking charge of exploring these questions beyond the presenting problem. It invites people to engage in processing and action. We just do not turn feelings over and over (but that is also important) but we are always on the lookout for ways to break out of the problem and to always keep an eye out for what meaning the problem and its resolution has in our lives. The fabulous part is that we have to power to create the meaning!

How does “conjuring” fit into this model? Is there a better way to describe the process of identifying and moving toward power transformation?

Truth is, I just like the term “conjuring” since it evokes the spirit of magic, transformation and root work (as in the old folk healing ways and getting down to the root or essential nature of the problem). Conjuring also reminds me that things are always a process. Healing is rarely a magical “poof” (although with EFT it can get pretty close) and is more a process of putting ideas and new understandings together with actions to create something more useful. Conjuring allows me to take the painful or even mundane and turning it into something miraculous. I love the theatrical nature of the word “conjuring.” It’s bold, powerful and transformative-all the elements of great therapy. I like that is a marginalized word, a word used by mystical people who rarely conform to societal standards. Conjuring is the work of people who are not valued by the ruling classes and is even feared. It is a dangerous and powerful word and it invites magic into the room. Now, I get that magic is not often invited into the consulting room and can even get you labeled mentally ill. It is a way that I center my spiritual work in my clinical work. It still is very much a process for me and I occasionally get worried that people will reject or devalue my ideas because they spring from a spiritual world view but that is becoming less of an issue for me these days

How does healing at an individual level impact community healing?

It is my belief that a family, organization, community or world is only as healthy as is its most wounded member. The more flexible, emotionally available, creative and courageous individual community members are the better for the entire community. Healthy members allow for a more resilient community where people collectively problem-solve, engage in mutual assistance and can create new standard for success and well-being which may differ from what mainstream capitalist society tells us is best

for us. There is a constant exchange between the individual and his/her community (even if it is negative like ignoring, fearing or being disappointed).

My relationship with my community is a central component of my emotional wellbeing. Do I feel like I belong and am valued by others in the community? Am I contributing to the community? Is the community contributing to my emotional well-being? How does my membership in this community impact how I perceive myself? How do others outside of the community perceive me? What happens to individuals and families when their communities get sick (few jobs, poor housing, food desert, bad reputation, etc.)? How aware are most members to the decline of their communities? Do they feel like that they have any control? How can they avoid the surplus powerlessness traps which can keep them from taking action?

Explain the privilege and power inherent in the therapist role.

Unless a therapist is vigilant about naming, monitoring and creating a clear process for power sharing, the client-therapist relationship can be one of the most profound cases of power inequity (and that is without focusing on obvious abuses like sexual and financial abuses). We have the power to label people and even incarcerate them in psychiatric hospitals with very few questions about how our own personal biases and lack of cultural consciousness colors our perception of their sanity. There is a huge amount of power in the basic fact that our clients come to us in crisis after they have exhausted their own coping skills. This makes it very easy for a therapist to take on a savior role. Over the years, I have been stunned at comments therapists make to clients including “you will fuck your children up if you get a divorce”, “if you are bisexual you must have some hidden sexual trauma which makes you confused”, or more appalling, the engagement of clients in sexual relationships. We need to educate clients about what is appropriate for therapy, the risk of giving over their power, even while in crisis, to anyone. We have to create a therapeutic culture which values the wisdom of clients, invites clients to identify their history of success in working out problems, the very temporary nature of our relationship with the goal being to return the transformative power back to the client and his/her support circle or community. We need to talk explicitly about the inherent power imbalance and the proactive steps that we take as therapists to minimize the imbalance (written contracts, transparent processes, and educational component to demystify therapy, skill building as a key healing strategy and (re) connection with family and community where possible.

Final Musings

As I was typing this out, I kept circling back to the question of “who do I think I am as a therapist/healer? How has the process of writing this workbook and really analyzing my practice and then attempting to explain it to others informed my current work? I am feeling more comfortable embracing the term healer since it is inclusive of the holistic

healing techniques and my community connection strategies. It also distances me from a profession for which I am pretty ambivalent because it feels that we are overly concerned with generating fees and guild protection.

In addition, we love BIG names and ideas even when they are appropriated from other sources (substance abuse, sexual assault counseling, and mindfulness) without giving credit to the non-professional groups which created the interventions and understandings. It's all part of the mystification process and instead of trying to transform these skills in to every day healing options, we try to make them more complex to confirm that only a chosen professional few are capable of engaging in the healing techniques. Following my research on African American psychiatric history, I have really struggled with my field and our failure to acknowledge the abusive roots of our work or to create authentic power-sharing relationships with consumer/survivors/ex-patients. This power workbook is my apology to all of the consumers/survivors/ex-patients who have been wounded by the power abuses in mental health systems. More importantly, it is my promise to be conscious of my power as healer/therapist and as a fellow human on our planet.

Power Resources

Books/Articles

Guinote, A. and T. Vescio, Editors. (2010) The Social Psychology of Power. New York: The Guilford Press.

Hahn, T.N. (2007) The Art of Power. New York: Harper Collins.

Lerner, M. (1986) Surplus Powerlessness: The Psychodynamics of Everyday Life...and the Psychology of Individual and Social Transformation. Oakland, CA: Institute of Labor and Mental Health.

Mehl-Madrona, L. (2010) Healing the Mind Through the Power of Story: The Promise of Narrative Psychiatry. Rochester, Vermont: Bear and Company.

Pinderhughes, E. (1989) Understanding Race, Ethnicity and Power: The Key to Efficacy in Clinical Practice. Washington, DC: Free Press.

Pinderhughes, E. Jackson. V. and Romney, P. Understanding PowerXXXXXXXX

Tew, J. (2006) *Understanding Power and Powerlessness: Towards a Framework for Emancipatory Practice*. Journal of Social Work 2006 6:33. London: Sage Publications

Web Resource

Power: A Practical Guide for Facilitating Social Change
<http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/getattachment/f4cd28e9-8518-4d7b-9c9b-119e555d79df/Power---A-Practical-Guide-for-Facilitating-Social-.aspx>

Creative Interventions: Resources for Everyday People to End Violence
<http://www.creative-interventions.org/about/>

Dulwich Center (Narrative Therapy)
www.dulwichcentre.com.au