

Please read through this entire packet first. There are daily exercise and journal suggestions. By no means are you required to do what is enclosed; however, you may not derive any benefit. Please do not hesitate to email with any questions. We are here to support, not criticize.

Week One - Harmlessness

Harmlessness, or perhaps better thought of as **non-violence**, is probably the most fundamental concept. So, thusly, it will be the first aspect we focus on. There are many different ways we can think about harm – physical, mental, and emotional – and while it might be obvious to start by thinking of physical harm, we will start by considering internal self-harm – the harm that is caused by our inner dialogue.

Our first goal for Week One: Harmlessness is to recognize how negative we are towards ourselves and learn cultivate a more healing, compassionate outlook. Sure, we can be more mindful and avoid those physical mishaps – like stubbing our toe or bruising our elbows – but to find real success through these next 10 weeks, our only source of help is an internal awareness that is unbiased, or non-attached. We want to pretend that our personalities are not our own, but rather a friend, of whom we have the distinct advantage of being with 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We are going to watch our friend – their thoughts, actions etc. – and use this vantage point to help us learn more about ourselves. Before we get into any of the concepts of harmlessness, we are going to stop today and focus on our first journal entry:

Journal Day 1 & 2: Take your journal throughout the day and write down every negative thought you have, especially when it involves you.

Journal Day 3 & 4: Write all the positive thoughts you have.

You can use the space provided below, or a notebook/journal of your choice. Suggested practice: Sit for meditation (as outlined in the introduction). Take a moment with the technique and as the mind becomes more focused, “step back” mentally and observe your thoughts. Using momentary pauses, write. Then settle back into the focused mind. Continue for 10 minutes.

MENTAL / EMOTIONAL HARM

Mental anguish and emotional unrest are just as harmful as physical injury, often being the precursor to illness and disease because of the stress we unknowingly bring upon ourselves. So how effective are we at gauging, mitigating and reducing the more intangible areas of harm and stress - our emotional and mental bodies? Maybe we would go to a counselor, or psychologist. Most of us are strong and can overcome many obstacles. However we should not shy away from seeing professionals for help, which is why they exist. If a problem becomes too large, we should seek out reliable help from others. Otherwise, we are committing harm to ourselves by allowing these problems to exist.

Since we are working alone, we should seek to find the root of harm – which actually lies with our perception of self. Harm can occur by accident; we stub our toe or clumsily hit our elbow. Real self-harm comes from inside our own heads.

CULTIVATING COMPASSION

So, our thoughts are not as positive as we first thought, huh? This is a quite interesting self-observation. Why? Each one of us will have a different answer. For me, self-criticism originated during those early formative years and was only reinforced throughout school. We live in such a competitive society that I was always being held against the standard of excellence – excelling in sports, academics, etc. Perhaps you are familiar with these sorts of expectations? What were some of the responses we received from our peers or parents when we did not perform as expected? *“You must be so dumb to fail that test.” “Look at this room! You are as filthy as a pig. Why didn’t you clean like I told you?” “Your ugly for wearing those shoes (or some ridiculous comment from school).”* So over time, we learned to criticize ourselves with internal comments such as these: *“Man, I am so stupid for not doing XYZ.” “I must be a complete failure for not having enough in savings like everyone else.” “Why I am I not attractive to the men/women I like?”*

We need to communicate within our self in a more non-violent manner. But how can we do that? With a technique I call InnerSpeak: InnerSpeak® is an adaptation of Marshal Rosenberg’s *Nonviolent Communication (NVC)*. The only difference is that we use our introspection to identify our self-dialogue whereas Mr. Rosenberg’s concept is focused on the external world, our daily communication with others (which will naturally occur after we turn within).

INNERSPEAK®

This technique consists of 4 stages: OBSERVATION → FEELINGS → NEEDS → ACTION. The first stage is what basically what we practice as our **introspection** during meditation. It requires that we **observe our inner dialogue “as it is”** without prejudice, bias, or judgment. By listening to our inner dialogue, from the perspective of a friend, we attempt to **identify our hidden feelings**, which the second stage.

*Don't be fooled! Identifying our feelings/emotions can be very difficult, especially for us Westerners who lack sufficient vocabulary. Example: “I feel like such an idiot for not sending out those thank you notes.” What do you notice? The expression *I feel like* leads us to a wrong sentiment – of course we are not idiots, rather we feel *displeased* with ourselves.

Stage three: Acknowledging our Needs. Using the example above, we can perhaps say that we need to maintain a level of **integrity** by **showing consideration and appreciation**. By not sending thank you notes, we didn't sufficiently meet our need for **integrity, consideration, or appreciation of others**.

Finally, by acknowledging our needs, we can appropriately **act**. In the example used, we have various choices. In the future, we can keep reminders about upcoming celebrations and holidays, prompting us to prepare with cards or gifts. We could send out a spontaneous letter or gift to show someone we care and appreciate him or her.

Journal Day 5 & 6: Using the thoughts from first journal entries, try constructing a InnerSpeak* review.

Example: “I feel like such an idiot for not sending thank you notes.” – Observation

I was really feeling displeased. – Feeling Identified

I need to maintain integrity by expressing appreciation and consideration. – Needs Identified

I will call them tomorrow and verbal express my appreciation. – Action

*The links at the bottom of this page will assist you in identifying Emotions/ Feelings and Needs.

Further Reading for InnerSpeak / Nonviolent Communication (NVC):

[Model](#)

[Feelings List](#)

[Needs List](#)

For more information about learning NVC:

[Learn NVC](#)

PHYSICAL HARM

Physical body and harm, pain, injury, etc. We don't want to feel pain; we go to the doctor or related specialist to heal ourselves, rid ourselves of discomfort. Similarly we tend to avoid that which might cause us harm. This avoidance of pain or injury is a natural evolutionary trait that aids us in staying alive so that we may continue to live life to the fullest potential.

Identifying the desire to avoid pain, to reduce the likelihood of our own injury, we can apply this to others - we feel troubled when someone we care about who is in pain, or upset. Leaving personal relationships aside, we can say that all people will try to avoid pain and suffering and we feel sympathy when confronted with images of that in others. Just think of the infomercials that advocate for the poor and resource-deprived children of the world. They know that seeing images of physical suffering will inspire those who are more fortunate to help.

By acknowledging that we try to avoid that which is harmful, and that others will do the same, we can say confidently that avoidance of pain/ suffering is a natural human trait (heck, all living things aspire to avoid unfavorable sensations!).

Incorporating Harmlessness into Our Daily Lives

We can only do so much with a weak, ill body and emotional depression. When we fail to maintain our health, we are committing harm to ourselves – maybe not in the immediate future, but in the distant future. For example, being involved in the fitness and wellness industry, I see many clients who have spent years silently abusing their bodies through poor posture, limited movement, and toxic eating habits. Fortunately, the body has remarkable resiliency and can improve dramatically, if given the right conditions. Choose one of the following 10 goals – then choose one at each new week, trying your best to incorporate them throughout the Program:

- 1) Drink water – daily, drink $\frac{1}{2}$ your body weight in ounces of water using this formula: body weight (lbs)/2 (Example: 180lbs/2 = 90 oz of water)
- 2) Eat the Rainbow (not Skittles!) – Try to incorporate as many fruits and veggies in your meals. Make the dishes colorful and explore new foods.
- 3) MOVE – 10 minutes of movement per hour. Recent research has shown that sedentary living can lead to increased risk of illness and disease – and that working out 3 times a week does not necessarily help. Every hour, take 5-10 minutes of brisk activity – walking up stairs, office workouts, jumping jacks etc. to get the heart rate up.

Building Personal Power: Week One – Harmlessness

- 4) Hygiene – imagine that today you are going to meet a world figure, role model, or future spouse. Take daily care to make yourself presentable by washing up, brushing teeth, and maintaining good appearance – you will feel better and more confident!
- 5) Mobility – Over time, wear and tear in our bodies can cause the fascia, inter-connective tissues, to become rigid, reducing our range of motion, and possibly leading to injury. Constantly test your range of motion in the morning and evening by warming the body up and stretching. Choose postures that feel good, are challenging, and practice each day to open the body and increase or maintain range of motion.
- 6) Good Night's Rest – aim for at least 7 hours of sleep. If you can go to bed and wake up early, you may feel more productive.
- 7) 5 a Day – Eat five meals a day. Generally, eat one palm-size portion of protein and two palms of veggies. (Check out [Precision Nutrition](#) for great guidelines)
- 8) Take a Deep Breath – Try breathing deeply, through your nose during the day. Our nervous system is deeply connected with our emotional states. By keeping awareness of the breath and consciously choosing an even inhale and exhale, we can balance out negative emotional mindsets.
- 9) Gratitude – Your life is 100% unique; no one else has lived your life. Take a moment each day to reflect on the places you have been, the people who have enriched your life, and the various experiences that have given you the wisdom of today. Feel or imagine a sense of gratitude growing in your heart.
- 10) Sharing is caring – share a kind thought, action or deed. Many of us can feel down or depressed and all we needed was a simple smile, hello, or treat. Helping others, we cultivate empathy and feel emotionally better by doing so.

Journal Day 7: Having chosen a health goal – write a plan or schedule that you will follow for the following week. Mark it in each journal entry, or on a calendar. Try and remain consistent. You will feel happier for it in the end!

Congratulations! We have just completed the first week and hope you are settling into a regular routine of Meditation / Contemplation and Journaling. If not, don't be hard on yourself. New habits are, at first, hard to form. Give yourself honest credit for effort and acknowledge where more effort is needed. Remain confident!

Remember, you can email me with any questions or concerns at anytime during a weekly section – BUT – I cannot do the inner work for you.