

Week Three – Non-Stealing

REVIEW

In the first two weeks, we learned to listen to our perception of the world, asking, “is this really true?” We have come to understand that we have deceived ourselves. Life, as we know it, is a conglomeration of biased perceptions and expectations that we have inherited from the social DNA of time and place, mixed with our desires and repulsions. As we understand that our own reality is created through biased filters, we learn that others, too, are filtering reality to support their views, opinion, or worldviews. In this way, we harm others and ourselves by unknowingly perpetuating these misperceptions, by harboring expectations that leave us let down when they fall short of the true reality, or by missing out on the vibrancy of life by avoiding situations that appear to represent past pains.

VALUES

Harmlessness - compassion for self and others; observing self harm, recognizing deep needs for understanding and expression. By honoring and cultivating **harmlessness** as a personal value and ethic, we become more compassionate.

Truthfulness - seeking to understand what is true, correct, objective rather than subjective; Realizing how we cloud our perception through preferences, social conditioning, geographic location etc. Expressing distorted perspectives, we can cause others and ourselves harm, in that we create conflicting messages/ descriptions of realities between one another.

VALUE #3: NON-STEALING

Non-stealing - taking that which rightfully does not belong; claiming things for ourselves that have beneficial use beyond just our capacity; hoarding, obsessing.

First thoughts: Shoplifting; Theft, or thieves etc. What's happening in this scenario? People take and keep for themselves, or to sell for profit. When something of ours is taken, we naturally feel shocked, perhaps, or distraught. Why? Our realities have become familiar, we are used to objects, places, people and routines. Before we know it, we are comfortable with what's developed around us and we assume this to be normal, as it should and ought to be. So long as we are living healthy, why would it be a bad thing? As soon as we lose something familiar from our normal reality we experience loss, longing, mourning. When things are stolen, we experience this abrupt loss and are hurt having been harmed and in this way stealing is harmful. From the perspective of the thief: to steal warrants an investigation into their self-worth and how honest they are being about skills and talents that could earn for them fulfillment of their desires, rather than having to resort in taking.

JOURNAL DAY 1: Write about when you experienced loss – of a person, animal, or thing. What emotions did you experience?

Continue after one day of reflection.

HONORING ATTACHMENTS

As we can feel, attachments to things – familiarity with the people, places and things around us – can cause in us a feeling of pain, hurt, and loss when removed from our lives. Someone dies and we mourn them. Something is lost and we anxiously search. We move and our hearts still live in the old neighborhood. Let's face it, we are addicted to our attachments and I don't mean that in a negative way. We simply created a dependency on the familiarity of our lives – familiar aspects that allowed us to feel comfortable and at peace. We can even be attached to expectations and feel deep hurt when they do not come to fruition.

By recognizing this, we are better equipped to deal with life as we experience loss. We can cultivate empathetic compassion for others and ourselves as we "mourn" the reality that no longer exists.

WE'RE NOT KLEPTOS!

Perhaps we are not thieves. I mean, the majority of us can afford what we need and, so, we purchase or save. With our skills, we acquire jobs, which in turn pay for our needs. Simple. Actually, if we are to honor our commitment to **truthfulness**, we need to admit that we are thieves, whether we like it or not. Perhaps we did not steal a car, jewelry or shoplift but we did steal time and attention, other people's energy. Did you know that, according to a 2015 [Forbes article](#), 60% of employees wasted between 1.5hrs a day? With numbers like that a company of 100 can expect only 85% productivity, theoretically. That is a huge amount – 15 salaries could be put to other use.

JOURNAL DAY 2: Take note of how often you are not doing what you should be – at work or at school, etc. Estimate time lost for the day and multiply that by 5 (weekday's wasted time). Try and calculate a year's worth of wasted time.

WHO IS THE VICTIM?

The point here is to address the idea of passive stealing of time, or even thought of as leaching. Sure, it's easy to think of "non-stealing" like we mentioned above but a lot harder when we think of any selfish desire to control time, attention or focus. This falls back on the lesson of expectation - how we try to avoid what is harmful, or even boring, to focus on what pleases us. How guilty are we of stealing time? Imagine: a friend or colleague is talking to you and all of a sudden you have no idea what they are referring to. Or, you are just dying to quickly share your own idea that you don't remember the last thing they said. Another scenario: we are driving down the road and 30 minutes later you arrive at your destination. How aware of the drive were we? We have been constantly living in our heads following trains of thought, creating imaginary realities in our minds, and criticizing almost everything we come in contact with.

Everyone is the victim when we consider the broader aspects of stealing. We become victims by not allowing ourselves to experience the vibrancy of life – instead we

Building Personal Power: Week Three – Truthfulness

“steal” away time to passively think or daydream, to scroll through social media, or perform erroneous tasks that have no high value or purpose. People become victims when others don’t give them the attention appropriate for meaningful connection through communication.

JOURNAL DAY 3 & 4: Pay attention to your conversations with others. Take note of how often you, or someone else interrupts the conversation to make their own point, rather than letting the other person finish the story or statement.

*Remember not to judge **why** we or someone else might interrupt.*

Continue after Day 4.

NOBLE SILENCE

As we have noted, a great many times are we either interrupting, or witnessing an interruption, during conversations. This happens during board meetings, client/customer interactions, family conversations etc. Pretty much at any given time we are liable to interruption. These interruptions occur because we so often want to express ourselves and solidify a reality that we want. There is nothing wrong with expressing or desiring ideal circumstances – but how effective are we at creating that reality or really sharing and expressing our thoughts and ideas?

Getting the most out of our conversations, relationships and work/school environments when everyone is busy interrupting one another can seem like a hard task. To help we can set 3 rules for interactions with others that should help us be authentic, true, and inspiring.

- Is it Noble? – Before talking, think about the quality of the content that you are about to share. Is it worthy? Does it uplift, inspire?
- Is it True? – Last week’s theme; does what we have to say embody the whole truth of the situation? If not, make sure to clarify that it is an opinion, why, and acknowledge the other perspective. Try using the NVC model to identify **feelings, needs, and requests**.
- Does it improve the Silence? – Our lives are full of noise. Thinking, speaking, sounds, music etc. we cannot get away from “noise”. Yet silence really means letting the present moment be as it is, accepting the subtle, sometimes boring or bland, background noise as a valid theme song of right now. So when we speak, does it improve the silence? Does it leave us more at peace, with deeper understanding and clarity?

JOURNAL DAY 5 & 6: Notice the *quality* of conversations. During the next two days, pay attention to the core of communications. Try to only speak using the rules above. Listening to others, (and without telling them the rules), how much of what they say is Noble, True, or improves upon the Silence?

EQUAL EXCHANGE

A very interesting experiment it is when we sit back and are afforded the time to observe our conversations with others, the body language used, and the depth and relevance we really express. I notice, when practicing this exercise, is that at first there is the overwhelming tendency to share my thoughts and perspectives. A tangible, yet subtle, anxiety is felt when, during a conversation, I want to follow up a remark with my own. I am also aware of the depth of meaning and find conversations to typically remain superficial, about who's doing what – the latest talk of the town – hen house type gossip. Or the latest movie, TV show, or weather topic. Above all, most conversation tends to: Support or verify our interpretation of reality; be about who we are as individuals/ social groups, or; be egotistical / egocentric.

To create an equal exchange with others, we first need to cultivate inner contentment, or satisfaction. (We will learn more about Contentment during Week Five) We can start by keeping our opinions to ourselves and practicing the 3 Rules for Noble Silence + Nonviolent Communication's Empathetic Listening and Communicating model.

Question: "How do I stop conversations about gossip if that can harm another person, make them feel ashamed or even give me a feeling of superiority, which is kind of violent?"

When we express ourselves, or listen to others expressing themselves, it is important that we mindfully try to find the heart of the message. To do that, I have personally found the NVC Model to be a tremendously useful tool. If someone you notice that a conversation turns to gossip, you can try the NVC Empathetic Listening model. Identify how the person is feeling by pointing out what they observed (devoid of judgments, naturally). Try to uncover their needs not being met and then, if possible, make suggestions to remedy the situation. If you really find the person to simply be enjoying their gossip, either try to direct the conversation to something constructive, or simply and politely excuse yourself. We must be honest with ourselves by admitting a situation is toxic and respectfully leave. Otherwise, we are committing harm to psyches and reinforcing the other person's conversation tactics.

Question: "What if someone I am talking to wants to hear my opinion?"

As mentioned above, expressing ourselves should be a mindful practice. We want to be understood, right? So try your best to be observantly objective as you internally identify those feelings experienced and needs that you have. When communicating opinions, tell why what you observed makes you feel a certain way and what you would ideally like to feel resolved.

BUILDING TRUST AND RESPECT

So far, we have only mentioned stealing the physical property of others as the obvious reference of this week's theme. Now, let us pay attention to building trust and respect from others by observing this natural law of non-stealing. As you finish out the week and into the following weeks, try a few of these courtesies to ensure you are not causing unnecessary distress in others.

Saying "Please/ Thank you."

Asking someone's permission to use something you know belongs to him or her.

Letting others know in advance any last minute schedule changes.

Practice Noble Silence.

Communicating internally with InnerSpeak® and externally with NVC.

Promptly doing what is required of you; work, school, family tasks etc.

Congratulations! We are now finished with Week Three – Non-Stealing and able to immediately recognize the deep hurt we feel when experiencing loss. Understanding this, we can be empathetic with others when they are experiencing loss and mindful not to create undue stress by respecting other people's property. Also, it became apparent the amount of time that we leach away from constructive endeavors. Finally, we learned to utilize Noble Silence and Nonviolent Communication methods to be as optimal as possible with other's time.

Keep up the great work!