

THE WORK OF BYRON KATIE: *For the End of Suffering*

Anne Haug, Facilitator of The Work

Thought precedes emotion. Thought is cause; emotion and then body are effects. In order for true healing to occur, it is essential to question our stressful thoughts. What we *believe* about what happens in life is the cause of our suffering—not what actually happens.

This radical premise is the basis of **The Work**—a simple yet powerful method for identifying stressful thoughts and then inquiring into them through the four questions and turnarounds of The Work. Before we get into what The Work is and how it works, let me introduce you to Byron Katie.

Katie (that's what everyone calls her) was an ordinary woman—a wife and mother of three in her second marriage as well as a businesswoman—when she fell into a deep depression for ten years. Then one morning in February 1986, after spending the night on the floor in a halfway house, she woke up to what she calls “reality,” in a state of joy that has never left her. She realized that the cause of suffering comes from believing stressful thoughts, and that is when the four questions of The Work came alive in her. She would put each stressful thought that arose in her mind up against the four questions. For example, “People should be kinder.”

- 1) *Is it true?*
- 2) *Can you absolutely know that it's true?*
- 3) *How do you react (what happens) when you believe that thought?*
- 4) *Who would you be without the thought?*

She noticed that when she believed reality should be different than it is—“people should be kinder”—she suffered. Without that thought—compassion. Katie also noticed that who she was without the thought was someone who could proactively find solutions in life. The turnarounds of The Work show us other possibilities that are worthy of consideration. For example, in the turnaround to the opposite, “People shouldn't be kinder,” we are asked to find three genuine, specific examples where that could be as true or truer (one example: they're believing their stressful thoughts so how



B Byron Katie's Work is a great blessing for our planet. It acts like a razor-sharp sword that cuts through illusions and enables you to know for yourself the timeless essence of your own being....In Loving What Is, you have the key. Now use it.

—ECKHART TOLLE, *THE POWER OF NOW*

could they be kinder?). The turnaround to the self would be “I should be kinder” and once again, three genuine, specific examples where I should be kinder than I am in my life.

Acceptance of life as it is doesn't mean we don't make any effort—it means that the energy previously locked into resistance is freed up and we are more able to act out of our true nature of loving kindness with clarity and purpose. Katie's seminal book is called *Loving What Is* and I highly recommend reading it for a deeper understanding of The Work.

My Story with The Work

The Work came to me in early 2009 after a year of suffering over my then 16-year-old daughter's diagnosis of depression while away at boarding school. My world bottomed out—I was terrified and felt completely responsible and was filled with guilt and

shame. I did the best I could, but until I started doing inquiry with The Work, I didn't get much relief. As I learned to systematically question my stressful thoughts one-by-one, what happened was nothing less than miraculous. I noticed that my relationship with my daughter changed dramatically. The love that I had been longing for happened naturally as I truly learned to trust that she was finding her way.

In The Work, there are three kinds of business: my business, other people's business, and God's business; and when we go out of our own business, we suffer. As I got out of my daughter's business and took care of my own, my perception shifted into a more spacious, peaceful awareness. I experienced my daughter trusting and loving me. I was no longer giving her advice or even believing that I could possibly know what she needed. I saw her without fear and just came to cherish our time together, which is more fulfilling than I could have ever imagined.

The Work and Current Scientific Research

The Work has to be experienced. Katie's insight into how the mind works is corroborated by the latest neuroscientific research which identifies the part of the brain that believes its stressful stories. Prominent neuroscientist, Antonio Damasio, says, "*the left cerebral hemisphere of humans is prone to fabricating verbal narratives that do not necessarily accord with the truth.*" His colleague Michael Goznaniga adds, "*The left brain weaves its story in order to*

convince itself and you that it is in full control.... What is so adaptive about having what amounts to a spin doctor in the left brain? The interpreter is really trying to keep our personal story together. To do that, we have to learn to lie to ourselves."

No wonder we get confused! The self-inquiry that Katie discovered activates neural pathways in a lesser-used part of the right hemisphere of the brain, resulting in a more open mind, where painful stories dissolve and what remains is an ability to live with more clarity and peace. Katie says, "*A questioned mind drops into its sweet home in the heart.*"

Going Deeper into The Work

There is only so much space here to share The Work with you. Katie's website is thework.com and there is a wealth of information there including many free resources that you can download. There are videos of Katie doing The Work as well as a free *Do-The-Work Helpline* available 24/7.

You can also learn more about The Work and the services I offer at my website, KindReality.com. I am available for facilitation over the phone

or on Skype as well as in person in Paradise Valley. In my experience, it is very beneficial to be held in inquiry by a facilitator. The Work is not therapy or advice, but a self-inquiry where you access the wisdom inside of you that is just waiting to emerge.

The next article will explore why we fill out a *Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet* to take to inquiry. We've been taught for thousands of years not to judge others, yet if we're really honest, we notice that the mind is constantly judging. Writing our judgments on paper slows the mind down and allows us to discover what lies beneath those judgments and how they enlighten us to ourselves. ■

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