

**PRESENTER NOTES:**

In this video we will present a useful psychological model to help explain what we experience when we go from a spark to a forest fire. Although this is not an exact replica of what happens in reality, this model can be used to better understand your experience and gain greater emotional awareness. This graphic is based on the Atlas of Emotions by Paul and Eve Ekman. Each time you see [CLICK], advance the slide and it will build the next part of the model.

[CLICK] Every experience begins with a context or pre-condition. This is the state of your body and mind just prior to an event.

Next, [CLICK] is an event or simply put the next experience you have. This could be an external event or even an internal event, such as a thought or a sensation in your body. Every event is experienced through your [CLICK] Perception Database, a set of universal ways of responding to stimuli that is shaped by your own unique personal history. Because every person’s history is different, every person’s experience of an event will be unique to them. Most of what makes up our unique Perception Database is unconscious to us, but that does not lessen its impact on the way we see the world.

[CLICK] The event, perception database, and pre-condition all combine to produce the Trigger, or in our language, the spark.

The Spark, or Trigger, next causes [CLICK] an automatic emotional response, such as anger or frustration, that has associated [CLICK] physiological changes in the body, such as an elevated heart rate or increased body temperature. There are also [CLICK] psychological changes, such as thoughts and feelings, evaluations of the emotion and related physiological changes.

[CLICK] This new emotional state results [CLICK] in either a beneficial action or thought or a harmful action or thought. Remember, beneficial actions and thoughts tend to lead us toward greater well-being and harmful actions and thoughts distort reality and tend to lead us toward

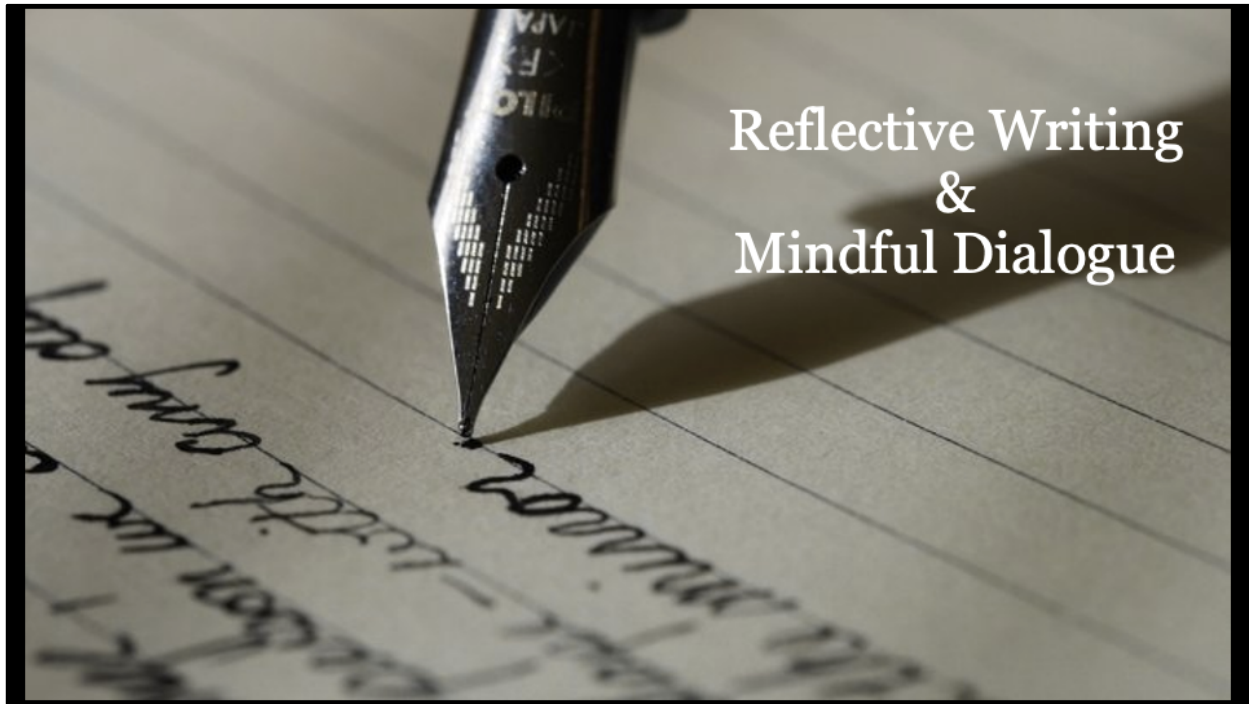
greater suffering.

Although the movement from Step 3 to 4, from State to Action, seems at times automatic and uncontrolled and it can seem we go from spark to forest fire in an instant, there is a [CLICK] Selective Filtering Process possible at this moment where we can exert greater control over whether we choose a beneficial or harmful action. This is the moment when the spark can either begin to become a fire or when it can be stamped out. This is also where the skill of Emotional Awareness and equanimity come in. It is important to note that like all CIT skills, we all already have the capacity for emotional awareness and are putting out potential forest fires on a regular basis. We simply want to strengthen this skill..

As you will see when you start to apply this model to your own experiences, [CLICK] the steps from a pre-condition to a post condition are happening in subtle and not so subtle ways in rapid succession in your life. Every experience is impermanent, shifting from moment to moment, even if only slightly. You will learn to break down your experiences into smaller and smaller units to see the way you can intervene in your experience earlier and earlier to gain greater emotional awareness.







**PRESENTER NOTES:**

1. Be totally present for the other person. We rarely have someone's undivided attention during a conversation. It is a gift. This presence can manifest through maintaining eye contact and verbal and nonverbal gestures that let your partner know that you are following what he or she is saying. Please turn off any electronic devices to prevent unexpected distractions and interruptions.
2. Try not to ask questions. Although we are not always conscious of it, questions have a tendency to drive a conversation in the direction the questioner wants it to go, rather than where the responder wants to take it. If you feel you must ask a question, make it something like, "Is there anything more you would like to add?"
3. Try not to give advice. The purpose of these conversations is to allow your partner to vocalize important experiences or insights, and to have someone honor them by listening attentively and without judgment. Often, instead of truly listening, we spend time thinking about what we would give. While this urge can be motivated by compassion, it can also interfere with our ability to actually be fully present to what the person is saying.
4. Keep everything your partner says in total confidence. Nothing creates safe space more effectively than trust. Knowing that each of you will keep everything you hear confidential will build that trust.

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**PRESENTER NOTES:**

The practice we will do to cultivate equanimity is called Resting the Mind in the Natural State. The rest of the slides explain this practice.

What does “resting the mind in its natural state” mean?

Resting the mind in its natural state means settling the mind by allowing thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations to arise and dissipate according to their own natural rhythms. As we observe the mind nonjudgmentally, we may find that we get less caught up in the thoughts, feelings and emotions that arise. To do this, we simply observe these thoughts, feelings and emotions and let them come and go naturally, without clinging on to them and without pushing them away. We observe our minds with an open curiosity, without trying to manipulate or change anything. At the same time, this practice is not like daydreaming, because in daydreaming we do become caught up in our thoughts and lose the awareness that we are daydreaming. The technical name for this “awareness of awareness” that we are cultivating is meta-cognitive awareness. We do not have to push things away to clear the mind. Like a vase filled with sand and water, if you keep stirring the water, the sand (the different thoughts, feelings, emotions, and sensations that appear in the space of the mind) will never settle to allow for clear, calm water (the natural state of the mind). By simply stopping the stirring (observing the objects of the mind without grasping or pushing away), the sand will settle (and the mind can become clearer).

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In this practice we will relate to the mind as an expansive blue sky. The sky does not prevent clouds, bird, planes, etc. from appearing in the space of the sky, nor does it hold onto any of these things. It simply allows whatever appears in the sky to be there and stay there until it passes through in its natural course. The clear, calm sky is always present even if we can't see it. Similarly, in this practice we will attempt to simply allow our thoughts, feelings, emotions and sensations to simply arise and pass without getting attached to them or pushing them away. We are cultivating our equanimity towards our mental experiences. Equanimity is the ability to just observe.

One realization we may come to through this observation is that the moment-to-moment experience of the mind and body are constantly changing, just like the clouds in this short video. In Skill 4, we will introduce the idea of Thinking Traps, which are cognitive distortions that can lead us to afflictive mental states. Seeing our circumstances, the world around us, others and ourselves as permanent, when everything is, in fact, in constant flux, can be a Thinking Trap. Furthermore, change occurs largely due to causes and conditions beyond our control. We can explore this firsthand during this practice, as sensations in the body, sounds, thoughts, emotions all arise and pass away, without us having scripted them. We will go into this further in Skill 4.

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