

TRANSFORMATION OF NARCISSISM: WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF  
TRANSFORMING NARCISSISM FOR MEN WHO HAVE BEEN ABUSIVE?

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## Abstract

Narcissism is an incomplete stage of development causing narcissistic rage and injury to oneself and others. The narcissistic self is one of humiliation and of being powerless. A phenomenological hermeneutic research format was used to investigate and understand the lived experience of men who have been abusive and are transforming their narcissism. The phenomenon being investigated was approached with respect and sensitivity in understanding the actual lived experiences of the co-researchers. Under this template, research interviews were conducted with six male co-researchers, which produced eight themes. A summary of the findings was provided along with a look at the limitations of this study and implications for counseling that this study may have. My hypothesis is that the incomplete development of the narcissistic person can be overcome through the restoration of feeling, and also through realization of one's most deepest and essential nature.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE .....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER ONE: EMBARKING ON THE JOURNEY .....	1
My Own Transformational Journey .....	1
The Purpose of this Study .....	5
Conventional Definitions of Narcissism.....	6
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	9
Overview of Chapter Two .....	9
Narcissism and Abusive Men .....	9
Contemporary Treatment for Abusive Men.....	11
Feminist and CBT Treatment for Abusive Men.....	12
The Development of Narcissism.....	19
Western Therapy Models .....	22
Therapy from an Object Relations Perspective .....	22
Therapy from a Jungian Archetypal Perspective .....	23
Wilber’s Transpersonal Perspective .....	29
Fulcrum 1: Sensoriphysical .....	32
Fulcrum 2: Phantasmic-emotional .....	32
Fulcrum 3: Representational Mind .....	33
Fulcrum 4: Rule/Role Mind .....	34
Fulcrum 5: Formal-Reflexive .....	36

Fulcrum 6: Vision-Logic.....	36
Fulcrum 7: The Psychic .....	37
Fulcrum 8: The Subtle .....	38
Fulcrum 9: The Causal.....	39
A.H. Almaa’s Diamond Approach to Transformation of Narcissism in Self Realization.....	40
Environmental factors in the Development of Narcissism .....	41
Development of Narcissism— Development of the False Self.....	43
Transformation of Narcissism.....	44
Applications to Abusive Men .....	45
Narcissism as a Transformational Process.....	50
Other Transformational Perspectives.....	51
J. Krishnamurti.....	52
Osho’s Existential Zen Perspective .....	54
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH.....	62
Approach to Research.....	62
Phenomenology.....	63
Hermeneutics Refinement.....	65
Narrative Within Phenomenological Hermeneutics .....	67
Research Procedure.....	69
Selection of Research Participants.....	69

Interview Format.....	70
Data Analysis .....	72
Validity of Phenomenological Hermeneutical Research .....	74
Ethical Considerations .....	74
CHAPTER FOUR: THE THEMES OF THE CO-RESEARCHERS’ TRANSFORMATIONS .....	76
Introduction of the Co-researchers.....	76
Childhood Wounding.....	77
Expressions of the False Self and displays of Narcissism .....	84
The Attempted Remedy .....	93
The Grandiose Self.....	98
Descent: The Road of Ashes.....	109
Shame: The Monster at the Basement Door.....	114
Traps of the Spiritual Path in Moving Towards Wholeness.....	125
The Gradual Awakening of Self-Awareness.....	140
Summary.....	147
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	151
Introduction.....	151
Summary of Research Findings .....	151
Limitations of this Study.....	156
Implications for Counselling.....	157

Revisiting the Implicated Researcher .....	162
Suggestions for Further Research .....	163
Conclusion .....	164
REFERENCES .....	166
APPENDIX A: Letter of Consent.....	176
APPENDIX B: Sample of Advertisement .....	177

## Chapter One: Embarking On The Journey

### *My Own Transformational Journey*

Today I looked at an old picture of myself standing alone on the front porch of our two-story home. He is a fourteen year old boy dressed in a tee shirt and jeans in bare feet—lanky, loose jointed, but it is his face, open and innocent, that moves me the most. His beautiful compassionate eyes, hides his painful sensitivity, his feeling of inadequacy. I do not see, but remember well, the loneliness, the uncertainty, a dispiriting and sometimes *raging sense of powerlessness*, which swirled from the haunting shadows of those vacuums of power, the sadness, the feeling of being both proud and ashamed. A few lines from Pablo Neruda's fine poem, "Melancholy Inside Families" (Bly, Hillman, & Meade, 1991, p. 103) captures the essence of my feelings.

But above all there is a terrifying,  
a terrifying deserted dining room,  
with its broken olive cruets,  
and vinegar running under the chairs,  
one ray of moonlight tied down,  
something dark, and I look  
for a comparison inside myself:  
perhaps it is a grocery store surrounded by the sea  
and torn clothing from which the seawater is dripping.

His clandestine life included many activities such as pretending to be his drunken abusive father or his saintly mother, spending hours alone exploring the nearby woods, longing for wilderness, running away from home and sleeping under the stars, masturbating and imagining seducing beautiful women, being a war hero or great athlete and exploring his dark moods. His innate temperament or core self may be considered to be moody, sensitive, slightly deviant, and self-conscious. He did not know it, but he had already set out on a pilgrimage, a quest to find the Grail.

I can remember many experiences of feeling insecure and unsure of myself, I was easily shaken by the slightest lack of understanding and was vulnerable to being hurt. To feel okay about myself, I needed support and positive feedback from others. If I did not get approval and admiration, my sense of self would get very shaky and fragile. I would feel worthless and ashamed, empty and unimportant and my life did not seem to have any significance. My mood would swing into one of heaviness and darkness, and I would slide into being envious, angry, and have fits of rage. My self-consciousness would increase, and I would become self-centered, anxious, and very egocentric. I felt lost; I either complied with others or reacted (rebelled) and never really had a sense of my real authentic self.

I began to search for a way of being more authentic and began to realize, through reading, experience, and the pain of alienation, that there was a necessity for a radical transformation. The reading helped me to make sense of the façade that I operated under---using others to enhance myself, especially women. I became very controlling and abusive in my marriage. I needed to separate myself from the world of women (alanon, mother, and wife) to find myself. I experienced a world collapse and lost my business and marriage, which deconstructed my ego and broke through the façade of my normal conventional lifestyle. I began to ask some fundamental questions (1) what is wrong with me, with society, what is the nature of my alienation? (2) what would it be like if I was whole, healed and actualized? (3) how do I move from brokenness to wholeness, what is the means of healing? I spent many years trying to change by pursuing other people's ideals and by practicing a method or a discipline. For example, I participated in twelve step programs, Christianity, and

men's groups, which led to some fulfillment and improvement, but these actions never led to a fundamental transformation of the center, the self, or the ego. I took the standpoint that I was special, "the chosen one," a twelve stepper, a new expressive male, and of course I felt superior, which created much arrogance. I still did not know who and what I was, and there was still a desire for my needy brittle sense of self to be shored up by external factors. Much of my belief systems were based on fear, and I would fight with fear, ego (especially judgments), greed, anger, rage, jealousy, envy, sex, and hatred; and the more I pushed, the deeper these behaviors went into my unconscious. Awareness of my unconscious or dark side began to come to me in glimpses through my participation in a men's group. Poetry gave me insight into my dark nature. Silent retreats, men's weekends and a pagan worship of nature brought me closer to existence. I began to love poets' like Rumi, Yeats, Dickinson, Kabir, Blake, Bly, Stafford, Rilke, Baudelaire and Machado. I was particularly influenced by Machado's poem about a man who takes a different route; he works to welcome back into himself his "male twin" whom he sent away early in his life (as cited in Bly, Meade & Hillman, 1991, p. 366).

"Don't trace out your profile—  
Forget your side view—  
All that is outer stuff.  
Look for your other half  
Who walks always next to you  
And tends to be who you aren't.  
Narcissism  
Is an ugly fault,  
And now it's a boring fault too.  
But look in your mirror for the other one,  
The other one who walks by your side."

I decided to return to school and was introduced to depth psychology and psycho-spiritual psychology. Intuitively, I had been attracted to a psycho-spiritual perspective and had read books on the subject. One such book introduced me to the path of self-realization, which involved emotional and spiritual self-sufficiency. I started to understand my experiences in a way that finally made sense to me. The real work has taken place in group therapy in Lethbridge. I have been very fortunate to have a guide to help me see the reality of my conditioning and the structure of the self. I became dependent on him as an external source of support, and he became an object of idealization. This reality was pointed out to me, and I was able to come to terms with truth. My narcissistic hurts have not been easy to confront becoming aware of and confronting my narcissistic reactions have been even more difficult. My outward orientation, primitive drive towards promising objects, and insatiable hunger can be totally governed by the attitude that all goodness and nourishment come from the outside, as if one is starving.

When I learn not to identify with the drives, then one is left with a weak, dependent, vulnerable empty self that is weak and deprived. A feeling of being limited and insignificant becomes evident, and I feel like giving up the striving and searching. I feel like disappearing into the wilderness on my two-wheeler...roll me away...gone, no trace. One begins to feel how empty one is. An awareness of all my attachments and that all my life I have tried to possess things, comes from self-interest, to protect myself from feeling the emptiness of myself. I am afraid of encountering the unknown emptiness, nothingness of the self, and this fear leads me to escape into the known (relationships, pleasure, concepts, comfort, security etc.),

but also, ironically, I am also afraid of remaining in the known, since I recognize the limitation of the known as enslavement of my past conditioning and thought patterns.

### *The Purpose of This Study*

The real problem for narcissists is our overwhelming feeling of inadequacy and extremely fragile sense of self worth. The grandiosity is just a cover up, and maintaining this illusion has kept us at a distance from being able to love and stay in a committed relationship. We seek admiration from others to maintain our grandiosity, but when criticized, we will maintain the grandiosity by devaluing the criticizing person. This maintenance of the grandiose self is of primary importance for narcissistic abusive men because we need to come to a place of genuine self-acceptance rather than being shored up by external factors.

Deep within ourselves we have a need to be real, authentic, and spontaneous rather than self-conscious. Almaas (1996) points out that being ourselves puts us in touch with our humanity and this helps us to be open with others, and that it is natural to be generous, kind and sensitive, and loving becomes a joy. Conversely, when we feel insecure within ourselves, we forget our humanity and become vulnerable to being hurt, we get defensive, and we become reactive (Almaas, 1996). The process of spiritual and emotional self-sufficiency is important in the transformation of narcissistic men who have been abusive because it restores us to our full humanity, and then we can be our authentic selves. In the transformation of narcissism in men who have been abusive, the journey in this study has eight basic themes. The process includes the actual transformational experiences that each co-researcher encountered in transforming his abusive behavior and narcissism. There were eight themes that

emerged from the stories of the co-researchers. The intent of this study is to illuminate these common themes as shared in each of the co-researchers journey towards self-realization thus transforming abusive behavior and becoming our authentic selves.

In this thesis it will be important that narcissism be defined and to distinguish between healthy and problematic narcissism. *Healthy Narcissism* would describe a person who has a cohesive self concept and positive self regard and is resistant to disintegration (Almaas, 1996). *Problematic Narcissism* would describe a person who has unrealistic ambitions and ideals disconnected from the person and magnified by disconnection from the body (Lowen, 1985). One is over identified with contents of consciousness or is self-absorbed and ego identity does not capture presence, so the person's identity becomes weak, superficial, and vulnerable (Almaas, 1996).

#### *Conventional Definitions of Narcissism*

The diagnosis of the Narcissistic Personality Disorder is prevalent in the male batterer population at the rate of 50% to 75%. Narcissistic Personality Disorder is estimated to affect 2% to 16% in the clinical population and less than 1% in the general population (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

According to Kernberg (1996) narcissists “present various combinations of intense ambitiousness, grandiose fantasies, feelings of inferiority and over dependence on external admiration and acclaim” (p.220). Some characteristics, in Lowen's (1985) opinion, are, “chronic uncertainty and dissatisfaction about themselves, conscious or unconscious exploitiveness and ruthlessness towards others.”(p. 10). The diagnostic criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder, in

accordance with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (2000)

include:

Five (or more) of the following symptoms present by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts: a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy.

- (1) has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements)
- (2) is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love
- (3) believes that he or she is “special” and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions)
- (4) requires excessive admiration
- (5) has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations.
- (6) is interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends
- (7) lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others
- (8) is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her
- (9) shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes. (*DSM-IV-TR, 2000, p. 658*).

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders serves as a guide for clinicians as well as identifies distinguishing characteristics of Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Certainly, narcissism, from this perspective, is a pathological condition, in which individuals are deeply unsatisfied with themselves, have difficulties in their relationships, and are intensely driven. However, Kohut ((1977) and Almass (1996) views narcissism as having a much more complex set of dynamics which go beyond the DSM-1V and have implications for all of mankind. They warn us that we all struggle with issues of narcissism, and it is a compensatory structure, a self-preservative force, responsible for the establishment of the self. We all have a propensity to believe we are the center of the universe, and our self-centeredness and refusal to accept limitations in our lives leads to addictions, as well as social, spiritual and psychological difficulties. Grof (1995), Stosny (1995), and Almaas (1996) agree that people with narcissistic tendencies experience a diminished or weakened sense of self and tend to fill the resulting internal regulatory power-void through external regulation of experience, usually through addictions, compulsions, or arousal-driven manipulation and abuse of others.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### *Overview of Chapter Two*

To come to a more complete understanding of the process of transforming narcissism in abusive men we will now look at different therapy and transformational models. An explanation will be given on contemporary treatment models such as the feminist and cognitive behavioral models, currently in use, work for abusive men. Researchers disagree on how to treat attachment abusers and how change takes place. Next, a review of the literature that is relevant to treatment and transforming narcissism which will include western therapeutic models, Wilber's transpersonal model, Almaa's Diamond Approach to Transformation of Narcissism and other Transformational Perspectives.

### *Narcissism and Abusive Men*

According to Wink and Gough (1990), contemporary formulations of narcissism do not differentiate between men and women; whereas women tend to be more preoccupied with themselves (e.g. beauty), men's narcissistic tendencies manifest as arrogance, aggression, and displays of superiority. The focus of this study will be on how to transform narcissism through the realization of the maturation of our humanness and to learn how these narcissistic tendencies contribute to violence. In regards to abusive men, contemporary treatment programs are weekly group counseling sessions that last from three to nine months and employ a psycho educational format based on feminist, social role expectancies, choices, and attitudes, which complies with state standards for batterer programs (Gondolf, 1999). Gondolf (1999) reports that the programs for batterers are primary recipients of court-ordered

men. The summary of a variety of studies about batterers, suggests that violence is most likely to be associated with an “inflated ego” (e.g. narcissism) rather than low self esteem.

The most common instruments used to describe the extent and nature of psychopathology among batterers are the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI-1or11or111), Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI). Psychological instruments have been shown to identify psychological factors in perpetrators of domestic violence (Saunders 1997, Gondolf, 1999; Hamberger and Hastings, 1986). Results from various studies include Rothschild’s (1997) study of 183 veterans entering treatment for perpetrators of domestic violence. Cluster analysis revealed personality profiles into three clusters, which were labeled Sub clinical Narcissism, Narcissistic Personality Disorder and High General Psychopathology/ Substance dependence.

This research was consistent with previous multivariate research done by (Saunders, 1997; Hamberger and Hastings, 1986; three subtypes). Results varied, but the most common personality problems, according to Gondolf, (1999) shows “clinical personality patterns” (BR score 75) are narcissistic (25%) with previous Canadian research showing (58%). In Rothschild’s et al study the only MCMI-11 clinical scale that reached a BR scale of 75 was the Narcissistic scale with a score of (BR=78). The high prevalence of narcissistic tendencies reinforces the distinctive qualities as acting entitled, privileged, and self-centered, thus indicating therapy that addresses the problem fully. Dutton (2003) suggests that assessing personality disorders with direct questions is not an optimal strategy because of patterns of defensiveness and

personality disorders may be underestimated by self-report in the context of unacceptable behavior such as hitting one's wife. Despite general acceptance and belief that treatment can work, self-referral is about zero (Dutton, 2003). Because of the devastating effects of domestic violence on partners, children and society and the limited success of many treatment programs other formats need to be considered (Dutton, 1998; Gondolf, 1997).

### *Contemporary Treatment for Abusive Men*

According to Wilson (1996), there are five clinical approaches in use to treat abusive men: include the ventilation model, the interaction model, the insight model, the cognitive behavioral model, and the profeminist model. Although many of the above programs consider themselves to be eclectic, most are primarily guided by one of these models. The ventilation and interaction models work on relationship dysfunction by working with couples on issues such as interpersonal communication skills, anger management, and stress reduction. Examples of the ventilation and interaction approach would be to respectfully assert oneself by using "I feel statements" in expressing one's own ideas and feelings in a direct, tactful manner. Effective communication would include using the disarming technique by finding some truth in what the other person is saying, using thought and feeling empathy, and inquiring by asking gentle probing questions to learn more about how the other person is thinking and feeling (Gondolf, 1999).

The insight model works on intrapsychic problems, resulting from developmental trauma, which include poor impulse control, low frustration tolerance, fear of intimacy, fear of abandonment, underlying depression, and impaired ego

functioning (Saunders, 1997). This model assumes that men learn to restrict their capacity to feel and view their need for intimacy as shameful. Underlying depression may come about because of childhood trauma, which results in turning anger inward (Dutton, 1998). Interventions include boundary exercises to develop an inner sense of control and discipline, letters of forgiveness, discussions of their abuse to ready the client to reveal the pain that the abuse has caused others (Saunders, 1997). Other interventions included acknowledging past disappointments while taking responsibility for intimacy in the present, the pain of living without intimacy, and the enactment of healthy boundaries (Saunders, 1997). Additional exercises included: ways of ending relationships with emotional integrity, acknowledging abandonment issues, and ways of staying emotionally open without self- diminishment (Saunders, 1997).

Group treatment, of two-hour sessions of ten to thirty six week duration, is the most common mode of treatment. The feminist movement of the 1970's compelled the criminal justice system to respond. The program that is most widely used and is mandated in most Canadian and U.S. jurisdictions is the Duluth model ( Pugh, 2003).

#### *Feminist and Cognitive Behavioral Approach*

The Duluth model takes a psycho educational approach incorporating a cognitive behavioral and feminist perspective whereas abusive men need to be trained to substitute non-controlling, non-abusive behavior for violence ( Pugh, 2003). It is based on a feminist critical theory paradigm and the premise, that men, in order to control women's behavior and reinforce male dominance, use violence.

From a cognitive behavioral perspective (CBT), the Duluth model treats men to help them ideally replace irrational thought patterns involving jealousy and control needs with more adaptive behaviors, thus helping them to abandon their egocentric worldview (van Wormer & Bednar, 2002). Behavioral contracting such as time outs, using I feel statements, learning to fight fair, and communication skills are all techniques that help batterers define non-abusive ways of relating. Cognitive behavioral therapy has been effective in male batterer groups. Participants in men's groups say that time outs, replacing distorted thinking, and using more adaptive behaviors have helped them to curb violence according to the John Howard Society (2001) batterer's treatment program report.

From a feminist perspective, Ellen Pence and Michael Paymar, who developed the Duluth model, view physically abusive men as having belief systems that legitimize and obscure their abusive behavior in various ways (van Wormer & Bednar, 2002). The curriculum is built around the power and control wheel created by 200 battered women describing the methods used by abusive men to maintain power and control in relationships (van Wormer & Bednar, 2002). The author has facilitated the Duluth Model groups for men for four years. The control wheel describes methods used by abusive men including coercion and threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, minimizing, denying and blaming, using children, using male privilege, and economic abuse (van Wormer & Bednar, 2002). Participants are challenged to identify their controlling behaviors and to replace them with a complementary teaching aid such as the equality wheel (van Wormer & Bednar, 2002). These aids also include methods of negotiation and fairness, nonthreatening

behavior, respect, trust and support, honesty and accountability, responsible parenting, shared responsibility and economic partnership (van Wormer & Bednar, 2002).

Although differing backgrounds are acknowledged, it is assumed that the central issue is always the use of abusive tactics for the purpose of gaining power and control (van Wormer & Bednar, 2002). Van Wormer and Bednar (2002) note that the facilitators are expected to avoid personal issues and to maintain a focus on power and control tactics and methods of changing them. Power and control issues are expected to be present in all participants and denial and minimization are expected behaviors, and confrontation is very frequent and continuous. Influential clinicians have roundly critiqued reeducation approaches that rely on a high level of direct confrontation, particularly in dealing with denial of abuse and minimization of its affects which may limit treatment effectiveness and harm vulnerable clients (Dutton, 1998). Dutton (1998) also states clients have to be confronted at some point, and confrontations need to come from a context of understanding and a warm supportive bond between therapist and client. From research gathered related to domestic violence between adult partners, Feldman and Ridley (1995) state there are six core treatment components common to partner abuse programs: a) direct education b) anger management c) conflict management, d) communication training, e) stress management and f) patriarchal power and resocialization. These views largely reflect behavioral, cognitive-behavioral, and feminist perspectives. The primary treatment according to Feldman and Ridley (1995) is changing the violent behavior itself rather

than indirect targets such as self-esteem, jealousy, dependency, personality defects or general marital dissatisfaction.

Jellema (2000) claims that for narcissistic members of the group, the therapist needs to provide a sufficient secure base and help members cognitively link narcissistic problems to be understood as defenses against attachment. She suggests that narcissistic members need to access unexpressed core pain to a greater degree than other group members. Rosen (1991) states that a narcissistically wounding experience or a sudden lowering of self-esteem may trigger violent behavior. To counteract feelings of devaluation, some individuals will resort to physical aggression, drugs, sexual stimulation, or risk taking to redress the balance; this behavior is an attempted remedy to maintain self esteem or a sense of self (Rosen, 1991).

According to van Wormer and Bednar (2002) reductions in both physical and psychological abuse were reported during the first three months of the men's domestic violence program. Although the program appears to have a short-term impact on the rates of abuse, the long-term recidivism is disturbing. Ritmeister (1993) reports 55% of shelters reports decrease in violence, 42% reported no change and 4% reported an increase. Furthermore, Ritmeister reports 46% showed no change in emotional abuse, and 42% reported an increase in emotional abuse and only 12% reported a decrease in emotional abuse. This theory leads to the notion that power and control are the underlying factors and motivation for violence while in fact it remains blind to the actual experience of the men and women in the programs.

According to many researchers and therapists in the field, violence may come about in many ways. Although it is still seen as a by product of dominance and inequality in relationships, more insights are being made to understand male and female violence from a more holistic perspective that takes in multiple views of reality (Van Wormer & Bednar, 2002). According to van Wormer and Bednar (2002) the Duluth Model has resulted in some unfortunate consequences for masculinity because of its ideological rigidity, and for therapists using the feminist model it can be a nightmare. The model insights a great deal of defensiveness and alienates the men from the person that is supposed to serve them. Van Wormer and Bednar (2002) claim that in this model, the therapist/facilitator fails to meet the batterer where they are at, to take into account their view of reality, which may differ from the feminist theory and may include a variety of different factors. This according to van Wormer and Bednar (2003), may actually create the resistance that is endemic in this population, thus lowering the probability of success.

The feminist theory that the author uses is Alan Jenkins (1990) invitation to responsibility by the therapeutic engagement of the men who have been abusive. Jenkins (1990) uses Michael Whites narrative therapy approach as a model of intervention for abusive men. Jenkins (1990) invites men, through therapeutic engagement, to address their violence, thus externalizing their shame while inviting the man to argue for a non- violent relationship and increasing the men's awareness of how the old blueprint of relating has been misguided and has led to the deterioration of the relationship over time. Jenkins (1990) helps abusive men externalizes patterns of reliance, oppressive feelings, avoidance of responsibility, and

male ownership. This strategy allows the men to observe their behaviors, and then Jenkins invites self-responsibility for feelings, promoting safety, trust, and respect which helps abusive men take responsibility for past abusive behavior. According to Jenkins (1990), this approach is much less confrontational and is more engaging and therapeutic.

From a social standpoint, male batterers are not to be seen as the enemy, but the emphasis here needs to be on a caring relationship to draw them closer to the prevailing society rather than alienating them from it. Clients may be helped by going beyond the feminist paradigm with the capacity to move a group of highly insecure, well-defended men forward on the path toward self-realization and change (van Wormer & Bednar, 2002). This process may help abusive men to discover where their fears and distrusts are coming from while discovering their hidden strengths, which helps redefine masculinity along less aggressive and more nurturing dimensions (van Wormer & Bednar, 2002). From my experience as a domestic violence men's group facilitator I have found that the men learn to love themselves, which leads to loving others. Learning to understand oneself is a first step to empathize with others and the men learn empathy and self-trust (van Wormer & Bednar, 2002). A 2002 study by Gondolf and several major studies examining treatment outcomes of the feminist based Duluth model found "no significant difference in recidivism rates between batterers who underwent treatment and those who did not" (Pugh, 2003, p.93). According to Dutton, who has written extensively on domestic violence, and Lorne Korman, head of Anger and Addiction Clinic in Toronto, along with researchers Sonkin and Rosenbaum, all agree that we need to

find better ways to protect victims rather than simply re-educating abusive men about power and control (Pugh, 2003). Korman, Dutton, Rosenbaum, Sonkin, Gottman, and Gondolf say that the focus needs to be on underlying personality issues and emotional regulation and that treatment needs to be comprehensive and address personal issues as well as contextual issues (as cited in Pugh, 2003). All these researchers also agree that the Duluth model is based on shaming and that there is no connection made between therapist and client in this model. Wallace and Nosko (2003), in their study on shame in male abusers and its treatment in group therapy, claim that group can provide a framework through which men's shame can be unlinked. They further state that the social relatedness that the group generates can repair earlier attachment anxieties. This permits men to achieve a non-violent means of dealing with shame-based responses that are at the core of violent and abusive behavior (Wallace & Nosko).

As noted, there has been limited success in the effective and appropriate treatment of narcissistic tendencies in abusive men. According to Stosny (1995), attitudes and social role expectancies serve not as causal factors behind abusive behavior, but as rationalizations for their cruel choice of pain-relief and self-enhancement. As a treatment approach, Kohut (the founder of Self Psychology) found the need to go beyond psychoanalytic theory, beyond the ego to explain a person's narcissistic vulnerability as being understood in terms of a damaged sense of self (as cited in Flores, 1997). Narcissism from this perspective is a misguided attempt at self-repair.

### *The Development of Narcissism*

The development of Narcissism from the perspective of Kohut's (1977) Self Psychology and Object Relations Theory, is that the self lacks a firm sense of who they are internally because of arrested emotional development and their developmental needs were not met. The following will discuss a sequenced view on how these needs are unmet and how narcissism develops.

Narcissism relates to abusive men in that people with narcissistic tendencies are incapable of true reciprocal mutuality in relationships. In relationships, they either need to be one-down where they idealize the other, or one up-where they need the other as mirroring self-object to furnish them with confirmation of their specialness (Flores, 1997). Mirroring self-objects are eventually held in contempt after they are used up. Shame and humiliation is always the driving force behind narcissistic defense (Flores, 1997). From this perspective, a false self or grandiose self guards against feelings of shame and low self worth.

Kohut's (founder of self psychology, major contributor to understanding narcissism and its resolution) emphasis is on developmental needs not being met, which in turn lead to arrested emotional development. Therefore, the psychic structure needs to be restored; otherwise, seeking reward from external sources will remain a problem. Lowen (1997) also differs from ego psychology's view that pathological narcissism is the result of failure to outgrow the primary narcissistic state. Lowen (1997), "regards narcissism as originating from disturbances in the parent child relationship" (p. 6). These explanations are based on object relational theory studied by conventional psychology and psychiatry.

Self-Object, in the terminology of object relations, can be seen as an inner need for the psychic presence of one's parents; expressions of this in the narcissistic lifestyle would be a craving for food, sex, or seeking gratification from outside sources (Flores, 1997). Also, the child needs mirroring and idealization, so her vigor, greatness, and perfection are acknowledged until she can be more realistic about herself. The child gradually can tolerate inattunements with empathetic understanding, which helps psychic structure organize into a realistic image of the self. The idealization of the parent helps the child integrate their parents calming soothing qualities. According to Kohut (1977), this process, which the primitive narcissistic structures become integrated into the self as psychic structures which is called transmuting internalization. The healthy response by the parents to the child's needs for mirroring and idealization help the child build a healthy structure that has its own ideals and goals. This structure is created through what object relation's theorists call good enough mothering, which allows the child to lay down psychic structure through optimal frustration, that is she does not completely gratify or completely frustrate the child. Failure of self-objects is unavoidable, when they are minor and nontraumatic, they lead to the healthy development of the bipolar self (ambition and ideals), when they are gross and traumatic, they lead to narcissistic pathology (Flores, 1997).

Winnicott (1965) viewed the child with the potential of a unique self when parenting was responsive, but when the child experienced disruption and trauma in the development of their sense of self then the child will defend themselves by developing a second personality organization called the false self (p. 41). This false

self becomes a protective exterior, so the true self can maintain integrity. This makes it extremely hard for a person to diminish his reliance on this False Self mode of functioning despite an awareness of the emptiness of life that devolves from such functioning.

The child's early experience with a distant, critical or cold mother shapes the nature of the internalized object relations; thus, the child represses the critical mother (Flores, 1997). This repression along with the emotional components of the relationship cause a self-representation that identifies with a critical bad object, so the child hates itself like mother hates it ( Flores, 1997). As an adult this parental interject operates to coerce objects in the external world to conform to one's inner world (Flores, 1997). These internalized objects and self-representations need to be worked through and altered otherwise it will be extremely difficult to let go of bad objects in the external world. We need to note that an overindulgent, over gratifying, and inconsistent mother can be as damaging to the child's development because frustration tolerance is never internalized and impulse control never mastered. The narcissistic rage manifests itself around needing others (object hunger) and the promise of hope and fulfillment. This rage gets directed at others who promise hope or love and also at oneself for needing and believing things could be different (Flores, 1997). This factor is very relevant as to why men abuse their spouses.

The reformation of healthy emotional expression from the approach of self-psychology is that the good enough mother will allow emotional refueling without engulfing the child or rejecting the child. This allows the child to maintain a healthy emotional contact with the mother (Flores, 1997). In addition, (Kernberg, 1996)

introduced the term, “splitting” to explain how the infant in the separation-individuation sub phase must be able to preserve the beneficial images long enough to tolerate the realization that the mom who punishes them when they are bad is the same mother that feeds them. Kernberg goes on to say that for children who are unable to tolerate their mothers being as both good and bad, they form defense’s and objects are idealized either as all good when gratifying or all bad when disciplining (as cited in Flores, 1997).

### *Western Therapy Models*

To come to a more complete understanding of the process of transforming narcissism in abusive men a look at different therapy models that are appropriate for addressing narcissism is necessary. These models include therapy from an Object Relations perspective, a Jungian perspective, a Wilberian perspective, and Almaa’s Diamond Approach to Transforming Narcissism.

### *Therapy from an Object Relations Perspective*

The basic premise of the object relations approach is for the therapist to be a guardian of the emerging real self by maintaining neutrality. According to Masterson (1990) objectivity and emotional neutrality help safeguard the patient and the therapy from the, “tidal wave of the patients false self-projections and creates the conditions for the emergence of the real self ” (p.191). Because narcissistically injured people defend against humiliation and shame by splitting and creating a wonderful self (false self), typical treatment would be to interpret narcissistic vulnerability. Treatment issues according to Lawson (2001) and Asper-Bruggisser, (1987) is for the therapist to form a real working alliance where shame and related feelings of anger,

helplessness and inferiority can be safely acknowledged and expressed. Empathy helps resolve shame and splitting and allows the client to leave the special/grandiose role to be truly oneself. Additional core issues include working through projective identification, helping the client being more comfortable with being all of their true self, rather than the aggrandized self or the devaluing of others. Another core issue is for narcissistic clients to adopt coping strategies to deal with relational disappointments such as unrealistic expectations and accepting love in different forms (Lawson, 2001).

Lowen's (1997) approach to treatment is focused on helping the narcissistic client restore lost feelings through bioenergetics and to help them regain their lost humanity. Lowen (1997) explains that the most important therapeutic responsibility is to understand the narcissistic client because they are in desperate need to be respected for their humanity.

#### *Therapy from a Jungian Archetypal Perspective*

“One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious” ( Jung, 1971, p. 275). Rage, jealousy, violence, resentment, lying, blaming are all forbidden behaviors and feelings, that arise from the dark, denied part of ourselves, our personal shadow. When we cannot see the shadow in ourselves then it is also removed from supervision thereby becoming destructive. Bly (1992) describes the creation of the shadow by using the metaphor of the long bag we drag behind us. Bly (1992) describes the child as a running universe of energy and when the child notices that its parents did not like certain parts of the universe then the child stuffs part of his or her energy in the bag and of course this

continues on with teachers, friends etc, until the child only end's up with a part of the universe later on in life (Bly, et al., 1992). This is how we lose our true self and the shadow (the persona or false self covers up the shadow but also freezes our universal energy) is formed and put in the bag. Our rigid and static parts of the personality, this is the shadow, that part that is despicable, those aspects of ourselves that are most painful and humiliating are the very ones that need to be brought forward and worked on (Hillman, as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991).

Most abusive men cannot experience their deep cohesive structures, they feel fragmented with various parts of their personality split off from each other, therefore these men feel like they can never quite get it together (Moore & Gillette, 1991). According to Miller (1994) repression of injuries endured during childhood is the root cause of psychic disorders and it is only the suppression of justified rage in childhood that makes a person violent and unaware. She goes on to say that it is not so much the cruel childhood but the total denial of this suffering and the flight from it into grandiosity drives people to become narcissists (Miller, 1994).

Because there is no or only pseudo ritual process in our society which is “capable of boosting us from Boy psychology into Man psychology we each must with help and support access the deep sources of masculine energy potentials that lie within us all” (Moore & Gillette, 1991, p.19). Jungians have reason to hope that deficiencies such as trauma in childhood, absent fathers, the lack of meaningful ritual process, and scarcity of ritual elders, can be overcome by tapping into our blueprints or hardwiring, which Jungians call archetypes (Moore & Gillette, 1991). As Kohut (1977) says, if our parents were good enough then we are able to access the inner

blueprints (archetypes) in a positive way, but if our parents were hostile and inadequate, then psychological problems manifest in our lives. “The devastating fact is that most men are at an immature level of development” (Moore & Gillette, 1991, p. 13).

Immature levels of masculinity can be expressed in us as a primal pattern such as the Divine child (Moore & Gillette, 1991). Freud suggests that it is the Id, Alfred Adler talked about it as the superiority complex that covers up our real sense of vulnerability, Kohut sees it as infantile grandiosity expressed as narcissism, but Jungians see a positive and negative side to the divine child (Moore & Gillette, 1991). According to Moore and Gillette (1991), the positive side of the Divine child renews us and keeps us young and enthusiastic while the shadow Divine child is the “high chair tyrant and the weakling prince” (p.23). To access the Divine child, we need to acknowledge him, but not to identify with him, we need to honor his creativity and enthusiasm for life within ourselves, and if we do not experience this primal energy we need to ask what is blocking us from it (Moore & Gillette, 1991). Closely related to the Divine child is the Precocious child who is the child that likes to learn, to share his knowledge, is curious, and can achieve cognitive detachment from his peers, which enables him to access the mature magician (Moore & Gillette, 1991).

All the immature masculine energies are tied one way or another to Mother, and are lacking in their experience of the nurturing mature masculine. The Oedipal child needs to stop experiencing his mother as the Great Mother and relieve her and all women (wives, girlfriends) from the burden of God-likeness. The “mama’s boy” needs to take responsibility of a real relationship with all the complex feelings

involved instead of using pornography and masturbating (Moore & Gillette, 1991).

In addition, our exploration includes the shadow side of the Hero, which is the Grandstander bully and the Coward. If people challenge the bully's inflation, he will respond with often-vicious verbal abuse and physical abuse to stave off any recognition of his underlying cowardice and insecurity (Moore & Gillette, 1991).

According to Miller (1994), what allows us to fulfill our real needs in a peaceful way is to resolve repression by releasing feelings that became blocked at the time of the original trauma thus transforming unconscious memories into conscious memories that remain available to us in the future (Miller, 1994). As with the narcissist, the shadow hero (the Grandstand bully) is inflated and has a difficult time to face true limitations. The coward usually manifests as allowing himself to be bullied emotionally and intellectually and caving in under pressure.

The four mature masculine energies are the King, Warrior, Magician and the Lover, which are experienced through art, poetry, religion, and in our thoughts and behaviors (Moore & Gillette, 1991). Given that we are in a culture of the individual rather than the institutional or collective, we need to do the psychological inner work ourselves and for ourselves. In relation to narcissism, to access King energy in its positive forms is to disidentify our egos from it (Moore & Gillette, 1991). The proper distance is important to keep grandiosity and inflation in check and one must become, "the steward or as a servant of a transpersonal cause" not for one's own benefit but for those within the sphere whatever that is (Moore, 1991, p.71).

The shadow warrior, the sadist who is abusive, and the masochist who is the compulsive workaholic, are quite evident in men's groups. As previously stated Alice

Miller (1994) sees aggressiveness arising out of infantile and childhood rage, Moore and Gillette (1991), see the truth in that but also see that, “Warrior energy is the basic building block of masculine psychology and is also in our genes” ( p.77). Because the positive Warrior is emotionally detached, a transpersonal reality is needed to relativize the importance of human relationships, the loyalty to a greater good, along with energies of the mature King, Lover, and Magician help to bring compassion and generatively, while creating justice and freedom for everyone (Moore & Gillette, 1991).

The archetype of the mature Magician has much to offer for abusive men. The energy of awareness and insight, helps in the quest for inner fulfillment and for life enhancement of our loved ones (Moore & Gillette, 1991). This is the archetype of the observing ego, which in a real sense is the leader and channeler of the Self’s power, it only malfunctions when it is possessed or identified with and inflated by another energy form (like the tyrant) that it malfunctions (Moore & Gillette, 1991). The Magician, in concert with the observing Ego, watches life and pushes the right buttons at the right time to access energy flows when they are needed and keeps us insulated from the overwhelming power of the other archetypes (Moore & Gillette, 1991). The mature Magician uses his detachment, “and aims at fullness of being for all things, through the compassionate application of knowledge and technology” (Moore & Gillette, 1991 p.110).

Tragically, for abusive men the unrelenting attacks on our vitality and the scars inflicted early in our lives have led to repression of passion and joy in our lives. The Lover, properly accessed, gives us a sense of spirituality—we feel related,

connected, alive, and compassionate—a sense of meaning, and the Lover harmonizes and humanizes the other mature archetypes (Moore & Gillette, 1991). In order for the Lover to be healthy (shadow lover is the possessive, insecure dependent self), it needs the King to define limits for him, (the Lover without boundaries has no container of his feelings and sensuality), and the Warrior is needed to act decisively and detach from immobilizing sensuality and the Magician is needed in order to reflect and get an objective perspective on things (Moore & Gillette, 1991).

Humility is needed, which allows one to see how the negative side of these archetypes, are manifesting in one's life. Some of the methods Jungians use to reconnect appropriately with the archetypes of the mature masculine is active imagination, where one can hold conversations with both the ego's thoughts and our complexes (Moore & Gillette, 1991). Another technique, which helps one access, the archetypes in their fullness, is called invocation, which is a focused way of calling up the images one wants to see (Moore & Gillette, 1991). The author has accessed the Warrior to get assignments done, and achieve goals, and the Lover to feel sensual and attractive. The King has helped me to be orderly and generous, while the Magician has helped me to stay detached and insightful in my counseling practice. Having a male mentor or role model helps, through active admiration, to adequately access their energy; therefore, changing one's inner world, which greatly enhances one's ability to deal with difficult situations. Also one can act as if he already has and act like the character and pretty soon he starts to feel like the king, lover, magician or warrior.

For abusive men, they must take responsibility for the destructiveness of the immature forms of masculinity. The enemy then is not the other sex, as abusive men like to point out, but infantile grandiosity and the splitting of the Self. The struggle of any transformative process is a psychological, moral and spiritual imperative (Moore & Gillette, 1991). Many spiritual paths are largely grounded in the vertical ideal of liberation and its structures are viewed as something to be transcended as quickly as possible rather than transformed. As a rule this “does not involve a concerted effort to work with the shadow and accomplish psychic integration” (Feuerstein as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p.148). This lack of integration may explain why many gurus and mystics are highly eccentric and authoritarian and have weak social integrated personalities. According to Feuerstein “integration makes sense only when the conditional personality and the conditional world are not treated as irrevocable opponents of the ultimate Reality but are valued as manifestations of it” (as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p.148). When we find the Divine in the depths of our own soul then we naturally find the Divine in all life.

#### *Wilber's Transpersonal Perspective*

Ken Wilber is a pioneer in developing a Transpersonal Psychology that integrates psychological, philosophical, and religious perspectives that pertain to understanding the human condition from both Eastern and Western perspectives. Transpersonal Psychology, from a Wilberian perspective, has provided a much broader and deeper understanding of human nature than Orthodox, Western psychology. Wilber has proposed a comprehensive model of adult development that synthesizes the major concepts of conventional and transpersonal psychology into

nine levels or stages along with the self that is developing through these stages (Wilber, 1986). The spectrum of consciousness model integrates aspects of human development from early childhood to adulthood and later stages of psycho-spiritual development such as those experienced by mystics and sages.

In Wilber's proposed model of psychological development there are three major stages, pre-personal, personal and transpersonal, each of which is identified by three further components of consciousness, which yields nine basic structures of consciousness in total. The self-system is important for development "which is the focus of identification, volition, defense, organization, and metabolism" (digestion of experience at each level of structural growth and development) (Wilber, 1986a, p. 67).

Fundamental structures surface into consciousness in sequential order so that the self-system traversing these structures also develop in a stage like manner through the pre-personal, personal and transpersonal stages. As each fundamental structure surfaces, the self-system identifies centrally with its features and integrates them, to give rise to a corresponding sense of self or self-stage that is affiliated with or supported by that particular structure. Development is escalated forward as the next fundamental structure surfaces and the self-system negates its exclusive identification with its present structure in order to identify with next structure on the developmental ladder. As described by Wilber (1986):

The self must accept the death, negation, or release of the lower level – it must dis-identify with or detach from an exclusive involvement with that level- in order to

ascend to the greater unity, differentiation, and integration of the next higher basic level (pp. 80-81).

A new and phase-specific, self-stage emerges, when one is identified with the newer and higher basic structure. Each basic structure is included but it is transcended by its predecessor; therefore, the lower basic structures remain in existence as a necessary rung in the ladder of consciousness (Wilber, 1986).

Wilber (1996) suggests that trauma at any of the fulcrums causes pathology and affects all subsequent growth. The type of pathology depends on the fulcrum in which the trauma takes place. Wilber (1996) states that these “sub phase malformations” at any level will “twist and distort growth in subsequent layers” (p. 161). Once this happens, a false self system begins to grow over the actual self, which goes into denial (into the unconscious) or is repressed, thus the personal unconscious begins its career (Wilber, 1996). One’s energy and awareness is exhausted, sabotaging further growth and development. In relation to Wilber’s nine stages of development, Wilber (1986) states that narcissism is used in the nonpejorative sense where narcissism is used to mean self, which simply means self-development. Wilber (1986) states that to clear any confusion we need to define the stages of narcissism and to recognize “that each stage of self development has normal narcissism (the amount of selfcentrism that is inevitable at each stage) and pathological narcissism (a defensive measure: the overestimation of self as measured against the devaluing of others)” (p.150). We will now turn to the Wilberian fulcrums of development and see how this happens.

*Fulcrum 1: Sensoriphsical.* This is the autistic stage, which Wilber (1999) refers to as the hatching phase whereby the physical and sensoriperceptual basic structures emerge. This stage is where the baby does not have the capacity to even recognize the object world and primary narcissism is normal at this stage (Wilber, 1986). With successful development at this level the child differentiates itself from the physical world and can recognize personal body movements (Wilber, 1999). The baby does not have the ability to differentiate between self and others; therefore, the inside and outside are fused and confused, thus treatment is at a very primal level (Wilber, 1999). Usually, pacification, either custodial or pharmacological, would be beneficial with psychotherapy as an adjunct (Wilber, 1986). In autistic individuals, core symptoms may include failure to establish friendships, lack of interest in sharing enjoyment, lack of empathy, and difficulty understanding another's feelings such as pain and sorrow. With early and intensive treatment most children improve in relating to others and enhance communication and the ability to help themselves, as they grow older. People with autism can have patterns of behavior that are abusive because of their difficulty in understanding another's pain and feelings.

*Fulcrum 2: Phantasmic-emotional.* This is called the narcissistic stage because the grandiose-exhibitionistic self/object fusion is normal but the selfcentrism is less than in the previous stage (Wilber, 1986). Should the individual not get his narcissistic supplies met (mirroring of his or her grandiose perfection) "then the narcissistic individual reacts with rage, outrage, and humiliation" (Wilber, 1986, p.110). During this stage the self must attempt to establish individual boundaries and differentiate its emotions from others (Wilber, 1999). Failure to move beyond this

stage results in an individual having weak emotional boundaries and one can become overwhelmed by the world, causing narcissistic and borderline pathologies.

Treatment at this stage is focused on structure building techniques that facilitate continued development through the separation-individuation process thereby allowing the differentiation of self and other to occur (Wilber, 1986). The therapist needs to gently reward all endeavor towards separation-individuation and confront or explain all steps not taken toward differentiating and those taken towards splitting (Wilber, 1986). Fear of abandonment and fear of engulfment issues need to be addressed also. A common feature of structure building techniques is aiding the individual to recognize that they can engage and activate themselves towards separation and individuation, and it will not be destructive for them or their loved ones (Wilber, 1986). Facing the fact that one is a separate and emotional human being who is going to be put into a world of pain and suffering and nightmarish hell one has two responses; to return to the previous fusion or to continue to grow (Wilber, 1996). Much domestic violence results from slights, which threaten the assailant's grandiose self or the immature ideal self. Violence may then occur as a result of the person's regression to the infantile grandiose self in those predisposed to narcissism, with the need to raise self-esteem (Rosen, 1991).

*Fulcrum 3: Representational Mind.* The rep-mind stage cannot yet take the role of others so it still possesses a substantial degree of narcissism or selfcentrism but it is less narcissistic than the previous grandiose stage (Wilber, 1996). If the self learns to repress certain aspects of the self, which are expressed as despicable by others, potential disturbances may include anxiety, compulsions, phobias, and the self system

may be burdened with an unchanged need for narcissistic mirroring, extension of self grandiosity, or rageful-sadistic domination (Wilber, 1986). Herein lies the false self where all kinds of defense mechanisms develop, where the growing self can begin to distance itself from its own being. This false self may collapse under its own suffocating weight (emotional meltdown), and then the individual is faced with several choices. Drugs are used as a coping mechanism to take the dilemma out of awareness, abusive behaviors reinforce actions that avoid the problem, or one can get into therapy to uncover the life of the lie (Wilber, 1996). Living in an intimate relationship with someone who lives in the psychotic lie, the borderline lie, and the neurotic lie, all these levels of insincerity in rageful sadistic domination, can be, a recipe for disaster. Wilber (1999, 1986) suggests uncovering techniques such as Jungian (integration of the shadow aspects), classical psychoanalysis, and Gestalt therapy to integrate shadow aspects back into cognitive awareness. A split may arise and the false self will (narcissistic defense) covers the true self if one cannot integrate those shadow aspects of themselves into the perceptions of the self. When the maintenance of self-esteem depends on the unconditional availability of other persons as admiring objects then threats to self-esteem can result in intimate violence. People with this narcissistic sensitivity are more at risk of intimate violence than others especially at times of stress because at this stage, they suffer from mood swings and extremes of affect.

*Fulcrum 4: Rule/Role mind.* As the mental self transcends the representational mind, it begins to assume the role of others, which signifies a desire for conformity and acceptance so that one does not lose face, or break the rules of society (Wilber,

1999). Thus, narcissism decreases with the role/rule mind since others are now recognized (Wilber, 1986). If the self is not integrated at this level, incongruence arises, de-selfing can occur resulting in depression resulting in devaluing societal roles and rules and inflating the grandiose self to overcompensate for the depression. Devaluing the self and de-selfing undermines psychic identity and can be expressed in a coded identity expressed as grandiosity. When somebody dares to devalue the depressed individual, then the grandiose self says “how dare you devalue me, I’ll show you who I really am”! This lack of maturity in the development of narcissism (self) can result in cruelty and aggression and the individual becomes oblivious of the consequences; one can be a man of violent character rather the image of the perfect man (Rosen, 1991).

The worldview of this fulcrum is living life’s social scripts and at this stage the individual is still very ethnocentric. Care and concern is shown to believers with the same race, beliefs, and ideology, but if one is different, then they are damned. Some of these scripts are distorted, cruel, and maladaptive causing distorted thinking. Some males can be so conformed and merged with patriarchal, religious, or societal roles that their partners are at the mercy of beliefs, which is manifested, in psychological, emotional and physical abuse. The person with these false and distorted social masks has a distorted view of themselves and believes that they are not good enough, label himself as stupid, or believes they can never do anything right, etc—all these scripts are self defeating and injurious (Wilber, 1996). The person with these false scripts is susceptible to wounding and self-diminishment. When intimate partners push these people’s buttons they have a tendency to wound

the other person back and get even. Cognitive therapy is used at this level to straighten twisted thinking and faulty beliefs about oneself. The therapist, according to Wilber (1996) helps the individual to identify these faulty beliefs and thoughts and replace them with a more truthful interpretation of ones interior, so that the false self can be replaced with the true self.

*Fulcrum 5: Formal-reflexive.* Once the self-system goes beyond social roles and conventional morality it can escape its own subjectivism by reflecting on alternative viewpoints (Wilber, 1986). This reflection can lead to identity neurosis (Wilber, 1999). The narcissistic defense can occur at this level because of discomfort of fully standing on ones own without the security of others to validate ones self and its philosophy. This can cause an identity crisis causing unease and or dis-ease resulting in conflict between self and intimate others.

One needs to engage in Socratic dialogue and introspection so that the formal mind can gravitate towards its own views (Wilber, 1996). The discomfort of erosion of self-trust and self- doubt can trigger diminution of self worth, and in this case then there is psychic access and regression to an immature, archaic, grandiose self. Some individuals may compensate for the poverty of their inner selves by their social and intellectual accomplishments (narcissistic grandiosity) but will remain sensitive and vulnerable to outbursts of anger and may rage in great distress in the privacy of their own homes.

*Fulcrum 6: Vision-logic.* At this stage, the self is attempting to integrate autonomy, authenticity, and self-actualization and struggles with issues such as being and non-being, fear of death, loneliness, anxiety, and freedom (Wilber, 1999). Egoic meaning

is no longer satisfying and narcissistic defense would be to stay in one's egocentric self and not transcend narcissism. The central healing commonality is for the self system to, "engage in concerned reflection and become transparent so that it can empty itself of egocentric, power-based, or inauthentic modes, the more it comes to an authentic stance or grounding" (Wilber, 1986, p.136). When one faces existence authentically all the former personal meanings go flat and this brings the soul to the brink of the transpersonal. When a person is not burdened by myths, or magical expectations or ethnocentric exaltations, one would be expected to be happy, joyous and free. But according to Wilber (1996), this is not the case if, "one is stuck with the existential worldview, which limits their perceptions to within its horizon" (p. 194). When this is the case, then the world goes flat in its appeal, one is integrated and autonomous but miserable. Misery likes company. Intimate others can be drawn into the darkness of the existential night by the hellish cries for help to find fortitude in the hemorrhage of despair.

*Fulcrum 7: The Psychic.* What defines this level is not so much the paranormal but the psychic structure is no longer exclusively confined to ego awareness (Wilber, 1996). One's identity expands and floats through towards unification and exists by virtue of a global awareness, a oneness with nature an identity with all beings (Wilber, 1996). Wilber (1996) explains this as a modest step from the previous level of the Worldcentric paradigm to what he calls the World Soul, whereas nature is part of oneself. Therefore, spontaneous environmental ethics surges from one's heart, and the world is never the same (1996). So one's soul is full of deep emotion and sentiment for the world, not mechanical or heartless. One is free

of the narcissistic wound and embraces all of nature and treats her with reverence. At this stage of development, the personality begins to transform into their wisdom or essence, which is the same as the tantric, Sufi, and Buddhist teachings (Wilber, 1996). For narcissistic abusive men, this stage is relevant because if one enters passion with awareness, he will find compassion, if one enters anger with awareness he will find clarity, and so on. What is important here is that there needs to be a whole set of background contexts which allow the self to use the tools in which the interpretation will proceed (Wilber,1996). Psychic inflation, at this stage, would be the narcissistic defense where an over valuation and the ego's over identification with the newly developed transpersonal energy results in a re-defined separate self-fixation, which serves to combat a unified, whole self (Wilber, 1999). These people can become belligerent and intolerant despising other strands in the web of non-duality as not being equal to their own.

*Fulcrum 8: The subtle.* This stage is process of union in its subtle forms such as extremely subtle bliss energies and cognitions, expansive states of love and compassion as well as subtler pathological suffering states such as cosmic evil, terror and horror (Wilber, 1996). Living with someone that is experiencing these expansive pathological affective states of terror, evil, and cosmic horror may be scary and difficult to understand. Nature mysticism gives way to deity mysticism (union with God or Goddess) and this recognition of one's own essence as the self becomes one with the archetype (Wilber, 1996). Here is the God within and one must integrate with all previous levels or this may result in pseudo nirvana, pseudo realization and integration identification failure (Wilber,1999). The self is one with the archetype but

if one overidentifies with the self as being the archetype then there is an imbalance whereas the self is overestimated resulting in narcissism. Living with a person that is “God intoxicated” or superiority, to the exclusion of individuality, separateness and achievement of individual goals may be difficult.

*Fulcrum 9: The causal.* At this stage, any manifestations of archetypal forms are not seen as an object but as pure Self, which is pure Emptiness (Wilber, 1996). “This happens by calmly resting in an observing awareness, witnessing nature, mind and body float by: you might to begin to notice that what you are actually feeling is simply a sense of freedom, a sense of relief, a sense of not being bound to any of the objects you are calmly witnessing. You don’t see anything, you simply rest in this vast freedom” (Wilber, 1996, p.222). This is freedom of bondage and one realizes that the non-dual is the natural state and has been present all along only to be covered by a false sense of self (Wilber, 1999). Non-duality allows one the freedom and liberation from attachments, from trying to control others, from the ordinary self with its psychic scars and hurts, suffering and “suddenly with the non-dual state there is nothing outside of you to smash into you, bruise you and torment you” (Wilber, 1996, p.229). Even at this higher level of consciousness one could find one’s self withdrawing from the world and human contact. From a relational perspective this non-attachment could affect the quality of the relationship, which is a form of stonewalling or emotional abuse.

Wilber’s model is a model of ego transcendence. Wilber explains the process of transforming the egocentric separate self (Narcissism), so all forms are treated with compassion. Wilber (1996) states that we can directly experience and contact our real

Self by sitting in the pure witness by imagining what it was like before one's parents were born. To the extent that one can sit as the timeless witness or primordial self, then one experiences a death of the separate self and realizes one's essential identity (Wilber, p.173). In this way one has found our formless, pure emptiness, and primordial spirit. Wilber (1996) explains that we can find our formless witness if we imagine the world after a century after we are gone. In other words, Wilber (1996) claims that this, "pure witness eventually discloses its own source, which is spirit itself, pure emptiness" (p.199). One can follow this observing self along the stages of transpersonal growth. Wilber (1996) explains the pure witness as a merging sensation of oneness like the experience of the wind blowing through you, within you, it does not blow on you. "So the entire sensation of weight drops, because one is not in the cosmos, the cosmos is in you" (Wilber, 1996, p.229). According to Wilber (1996), one sees that the one merges or manifests as the all, and so all forms are to be treated equally with kindness, compassion, and compassion is in fact, the very mechanism of manifestation itself (p.254).

*A.H. Almaas's Diamond Approach to Transformation of Narcissism in Self Realization*

According to many authors, psychologists, mystics and sages A.H. Almaas's Diamond approach is the best example of a genuine path of self-realization that integrates psychology and spirituality. Almaas introduced a pioneering new approach, which outdated both traditional psychologies' avoidance of deeper dimensions of experience and the mystic's dismissal of psychology. Wellwood (2002) states that Almaas has explored in depth and thoroughly how the universal narcissism of

everyday life is an incomplete stage of development and can only be overcome through realization of one's deepest most essential nature.

*Almaas's Environmental Factors in the Development of Narcissism.* Depth psychology has explored specific factors such as encouragement and support to enable the child to grow in a way that integrates the full range of the child's potential and the child's capacity to be oneself as their potential unfolds (Almaas, 1996). When the child's actions, feelings, expressions, preferences, capacities, accomplishments, motives and observable qualities are not seen, recognized or appreciated by the important people in their life he or she is likely to become alienated from these elements (Almaas, 1996). Almaas (1996) notes, "The child needs to be recognized through their actions, feelings, expressions, preferences, capacities, accomplishments, motives, and their observable qualities" (p. 189).

Almaas (1996) goes on to say that this recognition in itself is not enough because the arising potential of the child needs to be related to in order for the child to be able to relate to it himself. These deeper levels of arising potential, are ignored by parents and most theorists of child development (Almaas, 1996). A reason for this lack of recognition is that a parent sees a certain quality in the child and cannot relate to it because they do not have the quality themselves; therefore, they do not know how to respond to it. A common scenario is that a parent might see the preciousness and brightness (freedom, joy and delight) of this essential presence, but not understand that is actually who the baby is (Almaas, 1996). The fact that the child cannot tolerate not being related to is appreciated in psychological theory because it results in the child feeling alone, isolated, ignored, rejected and unwanted (Almaas, 1996). This results in wounding

and the child is likely to end up feeling that there is something fundamentally wrong and becomes uncertain about him or herself (Almaas, 1996).

Most children end up blaming themselves for not being related to and end up hating the most precious elements in themselves (Almaas, 1996). Therefore, the child will develop only those aspects of the self that are seen and appreciated (Almaas, 1996). Thus, the child self and its essence develop empty of its center (individual qualities such as love, strength, self assertion, understanding, compassion, awareness, sensitivity, clarity, truth, value and joy), identifying only with his external manifestations in the false self (Almaas, 1996).

Almaas (1996) states “the feeling quality of relating to the child is also important because the child needs to be seen in a positive light, to feel welcomed, cherished, prized” (p. 193). This helps the child to recognize and establish their arising sense of who she or he is (Almaas, 1996). Almaas (1996) claims that the converse is true also, the greater the inadequacy of loving, valuing, and admiring and mirroring from parents, the greater the narcissism. Almaas (1996) also claims that adequacy of support helps make the child feel that there is strength, solidity, calm, certainty, and confidence that she can depend on. Almaas (1996) goes on to say that the soul of the young child is vulnerable; it cannot yet depend on its own resources to feel support and “needs to be bolstered by an external solid presence of confidence, certainty, strength and reliability” (p. 195).

According to Almaas (1996), children often experience parental expectations and demands to be something they are not. Most expectations are unconscious, but some levels are conscious and forcefully stated or enforced (Almaas, 1996). When parents do not see children for who they really are, and also want them to be a certain way, this is an even a bigger rejection for the child; not only is the child not seen, but they must mold themselves into an image to suit the

parents expectations (Almaas, 1996). Therefore, their identity is based on pleasing their parents. According to Almaas (1996) when the parent does not recognize the child's needs, then the child is not attuned to himself and is not authentic in his expressions and needs. An example of parents not seeing the child for who they really are or what they are experiencing would be if the child is feeling vulnerable for some reason. Instead of being sensitive to the vulnerability the parents would respond by teasing the child or trying to humor the child when the child is feeling hurt. "Lack of attunement involves lack of empathy, which is an expression of the parent's own narcissism" (Almaas, 1996, p. 199).

If the parents' lack of empathy is gross and chronic, the child might become depressed or even psychotic (Almaas, 1996). In less drastic cases, a child might become moderately narcissistic, or basically normal, with a narcissistic lack of sensitivity to his essential nature (Almaas, 1996). In summary, a child who is traumatized, by not being valued, or who is rejected experiences a loss of essential aspects of themselves and this loss leaves an experience of absence or emptiness.

*Development of Narcissism--Development of the False Self.* The specific narcissistic wound is the fundamental loss of the self from its essential presence along with all the other factors suggested by object relation's theory (Almaas, 1996). This alienation (the baby loses its primary self-realization as she begins to experience herself as an object) from the essential identity leads to a loss of value, which leads to a loss of self-esteem (Almaas, 1996). This loss feels like a deficient emptiness, an absence of the sense of self, and perhaps a feeling of being a fake (Almaas, 1996). Almaas (1996) refers to this as the "emptiness wound where the hurt and vulnerability are felt" (p.218). Reactions to the narcissistic wound are rage, which has

narcissistic components such as a lack of empathy, envy, depression, and a sense of entitlement. The narcissistic wound is shielded by self-identity (self-images, self representations), and is experienced as an empty shell around deficient emptiness (Almaas, 1996). This perception is recognized more fully when one realizes that ones identity is based on a structure (Almaas, 1996). “The greater the narcissistic injury in childhood—the greater the distance from ones Essential identity; resulting in a grandiose self”(Almaas, 1996 p.219). This is what Almaas (1996) calls the total of one’s images—the shell that is a very common way to experience the normal identity as it becomes conscious.

The disconnection of the self from its essential presence manifests as a profound and deep wound to the self. The disconnection is as if the very core of the self is yanked out from within it. This is the specific narcissistic wound, the hurt that expresses the pain of this fundamental loss, and reflects the actual state of loss. All of the factors, which contribute to narcissism, compounded by the self-turning away from its connection with essential presence, lead to this narcissistic wound. Centrally, the narcissistic wound is caused by the deathexis of the Essential Identity.

*Transformation of Narcissism.* Almaas (1996) states that it is important that the student have a teacher to help expose and experience directly that their sense of identity is not real, that it is nothing but an empty shell and this starts the process of self-realization. At this point in the process, it is important to be aware of and disengage from judgments and attitudes about this emptiness and deficiency. If one stays with the process without judgment, the process will finally reveal that the emptiness really is a lack of not having our own support (Almaas, 1996). According

to Almaas (1996), “This feeling of helplessness is the feeling of missing one’s own support, thus by letting go of bias and judgment the terror will subside leaving one in a free and clear present state” (p.255). Almaas (1996) says that we need to learn and realize that, “feeling that we don’t know what to do to be ourselves is the beginning of the insight that we don’t need to do anything” (p.257). Our own concept of ourselves that causes us to feel deficient and we need to let go of this delusion to liberate the emptiness from the pervasive feeling of deficiency. “When we do this emptiness reveals it’s true nature as a deep and peaceful inner spaciousness” (Almaas, 1996, p.259).

*Applications to Abusive Men.* At this juncture in the study, let us bridge our learning to include the transformation of narcissism in men who are abusive. We have learned that it is inherent in narcissism that we will do things such as identifying, repressing, idealizing, imaging and various self -manipulations to shore up our insecure sense of self. Stosny (1995) claims that instead of the temporary self-enhancement that addictions, compulsions, and abuse provide, an empowered self, through self-compassion, regulates powerful affect and lowers the narcissistic shell that precludes compassion for others (p.9). Stosny (1995) and Almaas (1996) use the same process; they guide the student’s attention to already existing resources. They both tap into deeper levels of human potential; Stosny (1995) calls it core value and Almaas (1996) calls it essence. Stosny (1995) claims that “anger is the temporary elixir of self-ache; arousal of anger fills in the cracks and holes within the self and gives one an artificial certainty” (p.53).

So, instead of shame-based methods of treatment, which only increase the shame in a person with a poor sense of self and also according to researchers (Gilbert, Lansky, Lewis, Retzinger, Tangney) shaming methods are more likely to increase rage and narcissistic styles than reduce them (as cited in Stosny, 1995, p.80). Instead of shaming, there is a need for mirroring which helps the self to develop a clear and objective recognition of oneself, integrate various manifestations of the self, not only the grandiose self (Almaas, 1996, p.191). There is a need to develop and recognize attributes, so awareness allows the self to grow optimally to be seen, with all the essential qualities, “which implicitly embodies love, strength, compassion, appreciation, and joy” (Almaas, 1996, p. 282). Almaas (1996) states that this later need for mirroring is an expression for the self to recognize and integrate the unintegrated elements of one’s potential and that this is an expression of the inherent movement of the self towards self-realization. According to Almaas (2004), when we recognize the real self, we recognize the soul, which is intuitively; know as the perceiver of all events, the center of functioning, and the agent of all experience.

Uncovering the false self and exposing the incompleteness of one’s self is necessary to realize one’s essential identity (Almaas, 1996). A significant portion of the process relates to Kohut’s view of integration of the grandiose self and Kernberg’s emphasis on uncovering and dealing with object relations and effects (Almaas, 1996). Almaas (1996) claims a person traverses these stages in a certain variation of order. Each of these steps involves an arising awareness of definite phenomenological elements of the true self. There is much fear and resistance in experiencing and acknowledging the fakeness of the shell (Almaas, 1996). The fear of

not being important, of being nothing and that one really is nothing and shame are experienced (Almaas, 1996).

With abusive men, resistance will arise if their defensive false self is dismantled too soon and shaming only leads to defensiveness. It is important to understand and appreciate that one is opening up to a deeper experience of oneself and have the empathic understanding of the teacher to help the men unfold their experience and open up to their true identity (Almaas, 1996). This empathic support helps the abusive men to tolerate their own hurt and woundedness and not close it down and also not to displace it onto others (Almaas, 1996). There is also a need for the abusive men to work through self-recrimination and self-hatred when one sees that they have betrayed themselves because they failed to recognize that they disowned their own essence (Almaas, 1996).

Narcissistic rage also needs to be worked through, because this is a reaction of entitlement that one perceives that we did not receive, thus resulting in indignation, which originates from self-identity structure (Almaas, 1996). The indignation seems to be completely justified and is, “held against the self-object who is held as an extension of the self” (Almaas, 1996 p.325). This rage is fueled by the narcissistic wound characterized by blame, insensitivity, punishing, a desire to inflict pain and tendency to devalue and demean the self-object (Almaas, 1996). The intention behind this is to displace or dissolve one’s wound on the self-object through an aggressive and punishing position (Almaas, 1996). This is very evident and is manifested by abusive men towards their live in partners.

Almaas (1996) states that dealing with narcissistic rage and hatred is important and that, “we must empathically understand these reactions, appreciate their defensive function, observe the situations that occasion such reactions, and explore their significance” (p. 327). “This needs to be done in order to make it possible to fully experience the narcissistic wound so that this leads up to the emptiness that leads to the realization of the core of the soul” (Almaas, 1996, p.327).

When the men are able to deal with and understand the hurt and resulting rage they become more open to the essential quality of loving kindness, which helps to tolerate the wound (Almaas, 1996). As this experience progresses, the men will come to experience no wound and thus no shell either (Almaas, 1996). What happens now according to Almaas (1996), is that there is a sense that something is missing, of no self-recognition, a sense of being lost, and a lack of center. “This absence of significance is a motivator which can lead the men to the process of self-realization” (Almaas, 1996, p.332). The emptiness is difficult to tolerate and brings up shame, an inadequacy in being oneself, so at this point the men need to deal with their emotion and separate the state of emptiness from their reactions to it (Almaas, 1996).

One needs to allow the emptiness to be, then it transforms into a truth which is Being which is the experience of peace, pureness, stillness, and transparency (Almaas, 1996). This loving quality of love helps to let go of the empty shell and the “melting action of love which actually acts, and not the self, which dissolves ego activity” (Almaas, 1996 p.344).

What is important here are that the men, according to Almaas (1996), trust the teacher and that the men do not judge or reject their experience. This trust helps one

take the witness position rather than identifying with the particulars of his unfolding experience (Almaas, 1996). This has been my own realization of my sense of phoniness and how unknowingly this had been the center of my experience rather than dis-identifying with it. Wilber (1996) explains the process of dis-identification therapy as being able to look at our distress impartially and because we are willing to witness them, look at them up front they no longer seize us from behind, thus we are able to transcend them. In my own case a teacher has been very important in helping me see how narcissistic issues manifest in my life, through re-experiencing childhood hurt and to understand precisely and objectively the narcissistic wound.

Just as narcissistic disturbance manifests in my life; also according to Almaas (1996), every individual suffers from a degree of narcissistic disturbance, which includes all forms of narcissism. Therefore, the insidious thing for us recovering narcissists is that we can be acutely aware of our condition, and all the while according to Wilber (1996) it is the water in which we swim. Once the individual has healed specific narcissistic difficulties, then other forms will be seen more clearly, but “central narcissism is the most fundamental and necessary work needed to be done on narcissism” (Almaas, 1996, p.360).

Central narcissism is important because it indicates alienation from the Essential Identity and underlies narcissistic tendencies such as the need for idealized and mirroring self objects, exaggerated self-reference and entitlement, grandiosity, propensity towards slights and hurts, superficiality and fakeness, and tendency towards narcissistic rage and devaluation (Almaas, 1996 p. 360). Other forms of narcissism that need to be eventually transformed are Individuation Narcissism,

Oedipal Narcissism and Oral Narcissism. Almaas (1996) works with central narcissism predominately, regardless on what form is focused on.

*Narcissism as a Transformational Process*

Understanding our inner conflicts and our attachments and realizing that our true nature does not depend on concepts, does not resolve our narcissism completely (Almaas, 1996). At this juncture, according to Almaas (1996), the shell softens its boundaries and an aliveness ensues, which tends to bring out primitive oral drives towards promising objects and away from itself and its beingness. This has been my own experience also, so for me, learning not to identify with the drives and staying with the vulnerable container that is hungry and deprived leads me to the realization that the ego self is nothing but a container that contains nothing. I know that for myself, and Almaas (1996) augments this experience that not being bound by habitual beliefs brings a weariness and a teary subtle longing to simply fade away and not to leave any trace, which would be the final release from a life of striving and searching.

Almaas (1996) states that one needs to remain in the state of surrender, letting go of attachment to security, comfort, knowledge, pleasure, essence, realization, enlightenment, ego, self, suffering and this will propel one into the direct and full experience of this deepest of all voids. Almaas (1996) goes on to say that this void is also the absolute depth of all Being, and this is a homecoming and one's poverty (narcissism) has been the doorway. Many spiritual traditions call this selflessness, which leads to nirvana.

At this point in the process, many insights and perceptions arise. We begin to realize that our outward orientation disconnects the self from the richness of our inner

self. Concepts such as relationship attachments are also barriers to self-realization, and the realization gives one a feeling of grief for having missed the depth of who we really are (Almaas, 1996). We start to realize that all our yearning and searching has really been a longing for and finding the beloved, which our love of truth has brought about this understanding and has dissolved these barriers (Almaas, 1996).

Truth itself has dissolved the barriers, and we have a sense of arriving home into the void of existence, which is an experience of oneness with everything (Almaas, 1996). One feels the still point of existence, utter spontaneity with no self-consciousness, with a dramatically less need for mirroring, and we reside in the Absolute (Almaas, 1996).

Because our prevailing psychological theories of narcissism have an impoverishing effect, a lack of appreciation of the deeper spiritual dimensions of the self, we need to turn to spiritual teachings to appreciate the importance of self-realization and spiritual liberation.

#### *Other Transformational Perspectives*

The true value of the transformative states is not in producing some new experience, but in getting rid of the egocentric consciousness, which experiences life from a contracted, self centered point of view, rather than the free radical understanding that gets to the heart of human experience. According to White (1985) self-realization leads to transformation of one's total being, both inner awareness and outer behavior, one needs to look around and see that everything is oneself—the illusion of the separate self melts away.

*J. Krishnamurti*

Jiddu Krishnamurti the eminent religious philosopher and teacher was born in India in 1895 and died in 1986. At age fourteen, Krishnamurti was chosen to be the new world leader by the Theosophical Society which claimed to have occult wisdom whereby enlightened beings direct the course of evolution by emitting thoughts and energy (Rodrigues, 2001). Also, the Theosophists would train Krishnamurti to be the new Buddha of compassion, but this conflicted with Krishnamurti's fathers more traditional beliefs, therefore a lawsuit was launched and Krishnamurti returned to his parents and was educated in Europe (Rodrigues, 2001). During this time, the Theosophical society continued to uphold Krishnamurti as world leader, but he matured in his thought and this distanced him from their teachings. Krishnamurti said that he desired those that followed him be free, "not to make out of me a cage which will become a religion, a sect" (cited in Rodrigues, 2001, p.14). For the rest of his life Krishnamurti traveled extensively and gave talks and facilitated dialogue intended to facilitate insight and truth in others.

Krishnamurti (1991) understands, as does Almaas, that when one is hurt psychologically from childhood one builds a false self or wall around oneself, protects oneself from further hurts, this in turn forms a process of isolation and neuroticism. "If one is able to become aware of and observe these wounds and conflicts, then instinctively one demands how one can prevent being hurt" (Krishnamurti, 1991, p.44). Krishnamurti (2000) states that the mind is the past, the whole structure of the brain, with all its associations, and we need to understand it as each reaction surfaces. He claims that by watching, observing our mind inwardly and

outwardly, its own reactions, responses, demands and compulsions without condemnation, justification, or rationalization, this allows us to live with the fact, understand it and accept what is.

According to Rodrigues (2001) Krishnamurti suggests inner conflict results from the dualistic state that exists between the real “ what is” and the illusory state of “what should be”. We can take the example of violence in abusive men; whereas, today’s therapy postulates an illusory state of non-violence, which fulfills the individual’s wish, but creates inner conflict because the man has not come to terms with his violence. According to Krishnamurti (2000), “one needs to look at and remain with the feeling of hate, envy, jealousy, ambition, etc., without the movement of the mind, the judgments, associations, and when we allow the facts to tell their story, then it begins to flower; then it shows itself fully, all the implications of guilt, it’s subtlety, where it hides” (p.183).

Krishnamurti (2000) points out that through will, we seek to dominate or control the movement of “what is” and this reinforces the self as the doer, and if we fail negative attributes of the self arise. Rodrigues (2001) analyzes Krishnamurti, by suggesting that Will, “ is a supreme act of separateness, is destructive to relationships and that acts of Will are acts of violence” (p.80).

To discover oneself, Krishnamurti (2000) maintains, it is essential to remain with “what is” rather than move away from it. Movement away from "what is" is the action of the ego. Such observation, “of what is requires tremendous energy and sincerity towards the understanding of truth” (p.184). According to Krishnamurti (1991), total insight comes without the distortion of conditioning and by remaining

with a particular phenomenon, observing its activity through choiceless awareness; one will definitely have insight into the whole structure of the phenomenon. This is the pivotal event that liberates the mind from past conditioning. Krishnamurti (1991) suggests that choiceless awareness allows the mind to be free from the limitations of space-time models created by thought and thus this freedom allows silence and space. According to Rodrigues (2001), this is crucial in Krishnamurti's teachings because thought is a material process, whereas emptiness is not just related to, but is actually all energy (p.125).

If we were to give our total attention, to observe with all our senses awakened in our daily life, in our relationship with our wife, with our neighbor, in our relationship with nature, then we can get rid of our center (Krishnamurti, 1991). Krishnamurti (1991) goes on to say that, "We can only be related to another if we have no image about ourselves or another; then you are directly related" (p.161). This freedom from fragmentation brings about compassion, and when there is compassion there is clarity and from that clarity comes skill in communication, and skill in action, skill in the art of listening, learning, and observing (Krishnamurti, 1991). For abusive men, this freedom brings about genuine relationship where self-will and violence are no longer needed. "Meditation is the awakening of that intelligence that is born out of compassion, clarity and the skill that intelligence uses (Krishnamurti, 1991, p.161).

#### *Osho's Existential Zen Perspective*

Osho is one of the best-known and most provocative spiritual teachers of the twentieth century. Beginning in the 1970's, he captured the attention of young people from the west who wanted to experience meditation and transformation. More than a

decade after his death in 1990, the influence of his teachings continues to expand reaching seekers of all ages in virtually every country of the world.

Osho or the guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, as he was formerly known was a fascinating and rather mesmerizing man with a long and controversial history. He was a man of extra ordinary intelligence, erudition, charisma, and he provided the clearest map of the road to enlightenment of anybody in the twentieth century (Realization.org, 2006). His ashram (teaching center) in Pune India became known as the biggest and most intense growth facility on the planet and attracted many big name therapists (Global Serve.com, 2006). Central to all processes that he taught was meditation, peering into one's inner nature and discovering one's inner truth, and this was facilitated by the richness and diversity of the approaches, the largest spiritual health club in the world, and by Osho's presence (Global Serve.com, 2006). His unique active meditations were designed to first release the accumulated stresses of body and mind, so that it was easier to experience the thought-free and relaxed state of meditation (Osho, 1999).

He graduated in 1955 with a M.A. in philosophy and later taught philosophy as an assistant professor at the university of Jabalpur. He began to give public lectures on controversial and sensitive subjects especially socialism, orthodoxy, and the primal divine energy of sex. He insulted just about every ethnic and religious group in the world and his purpose was to make people aware that national, religious, gender and racial divisions are destructive (Religious Tolerance, 2004). According to many of his followers the key teaching was freedom and this came about by destroying the expectations and belief structures we hold as a result of our conditioning.

Osho gives us a classic story of the Ten Bulls of Zen. Osho here relates a story of men's search to find themselves, their essential life force, to be released from the burden of rigid beliefs, to know one's self intimately, to use discipline and awareness, so we can be transformed from our abusive egocentric selves to a more relaxed relatedness with all of existence.

Osho (1973) sees self-realization as man's search and relates a metaphoric story, the ten bulls of Zen, which is a down to earth story of man's search for his essential life force. The first sutra is the search for the Bull. Thus, we start in the pasture of this world and we endlessly push aside the tall grasses in search of the bull (Osho, 1973). Osho (1973) refers to the bull as man's energy, and says we need to search within without the burden of beliefs to find our own essential energy (Osho, 1973). According to Osho (1973), if we continue to search focused on finding the bull, dropping the mind, we will find the footprints—"along the river bank, even under the fragrant grass"(p.3). We encounter a paradox here in the first sutra because the prose states that the bull has never been lost, it is only lost because of the separation from one's true nature (Osho, 1973). Osho (1973) notes that Zen says that everything is divine, and man has this divine potentiality; therefore, how can anything be special. This is an unpacking of the grandiose ego of specialness. If we were to apply this transformational process to narcissistically abusive men then non-empathic responses and entitlement would be challenged because everything is equal. "People are not divided which brings about immediacy a moment to moment immediacy" (Osho, 2001 p. 24). Osho (2001) goes on to say that Zen does not believe in being arrogant, aggressive towards reality, it believes in love. As stated in this study when

one is unconsciously influenced by ones beliefs, the beliefs can make us become loveless, our hearts shrink and we can become violent because we are moving more and more in our head. The second sutra states that when we understand we will see the footprints of the bull and Osho (1973) claims that if we follow someone else we will miss the bull, self-understanding needs to be very deep. Osho (1973) refers to this understanding as silence, in ones silence you feel you know. This simply means that one is more sensitive towards the beautiful, a feminist perspective arises, and this very sensitivity becomes ones morality.

The third sutra speaks about perceiving the bull by merging our six senses, thus we begin to attain a unity whereas the slightest thing is not apart from the self (Osho,1973). This unity helps us to know who we really are rather than “thoughts, images and being worried about what people think of us” (Osho,1973, p.87). It is very narcissistic to be so concerned about convincing others that we are a certain way, but rather we have to know ourselves immediately, directly, not through anybody else’s eyes (Osho, 1973). “If you shift your energy from mind towards awareness, you will be immediately aware of the footprints of the bull” (Osho, 1973, p.93).

In the fourth Zen sutra, the bull wanders away, longing for sweeter grass, his mind is stubborn and undisciplined, thus, submission comes from raising the whip (Osho, 1973). The whip in Zen means to be alert, awake, and to say yes to life, then the mind will lose its hold on you (Osho, 1973). Osho (2001) states that the mind is conditioned and wants to possess, especially when we fall in love, we want to possess and then we kill the love that was there. He goes on to say that the moment one

“understands that we cannot possess it and drop the possessiveness; then a great understanding arises and you have love and you will have it forever”(p. 35).

In the fifth sutra we need to tame the bull by knowing that delusion is caused by subjectivity. According to Osho (1973), Zen teaches us how beautiful life is and that we can go beyond our doubt and at our deepest core we find our core center, which is life—objective truth. Inner awareness, effort and discipline are the most fundamental thing for a seeker. The sixth sutra suffices that the struggle is over, one realizes that the real treasure is within—“onward I go, I sing the song of the village woodsmen, astride the bull” (Osho, 1973, p. 171). Osho (2001) suggests that if we go on being aggressive one will come to the point where the sheer struggle, out of tiredness one will yield, but we need to realize that this is a false serenity. This is another form of violence and is easier being willful, than doing the same thing through love and understanding (Osho, 2001). Therefore, delusions cannot attract me any more—once you know what life is, tremendous beauty rises in oneself (Osho, 1973).

The seventh sutra is the bull transcended. Once the mastery is experienced through discipline and awareness, then divisions dissolves, “there is a oneness that arises, in that oneness, the bull is transcended” (Osho, 1973 p. 218). Osho (1973) points out that only our ego was the problem in the first place; the idea of trying to be somebody, to prove something, was the real problem. Now, we can rest and enjoy our interrelatedness with everything. This simple waking up by unpacking the ego, the self as a manufactured thing, the social by-product, this identification with the function, can be let go of in deep humbleness (Osho, 2001). We come to a place of

surrender, we do not have to perform, or manipulate and we do not have to impress anyone anymore (Osho, 2001).

The eighth sutra is where both the bull and the Self are transcended. The bull is the mind energy that is transcended, then oneself is transcended (Osho, 1973). If one exists in a non-dual reality, then the ego disappears, specifically the struggle is gone and a great nothingness arises which is the source of all being. Alas, one is free of the limitations of the mind (Osho, 1973). From this state then one is not warring, there is a deep embracement of existence, emotions become sensitivity, compassion, love and reason becomes understanding, awareness, and meditation (Osho, 2001). A transformation of self-centered abusive behavior happens.

The ninth sutra is reaching the Source. According to Osho (1973), one realizes that it is possible to reach the source in one step. Osho (1973) sees the problem as being in our conditioning, and we have been trained to go only into the known. If we go into the unknown undistracted, we remain tuned to our own nature, nothing calls it away from itself (Osho, 1973). We need to remember we can only be ourselves. Truth has always been there, “something has gone wrong with you, not the truth” (Osho, 1973, p.280). We realize, according to Osho (1973), that our religion, our culture, our society and our conditioning have blindfolded us. The beauty of Zen is its uniqueness; it gives no ideals, does not identify with any forms and it is completely natural (Osho, 1973). In regards to our study, it is important for abusive narcissistic men “not to be identified with anger, by simply watching it—then you do not identify with it—you are either angry or non angry—neither violent nor non violent—you are the watcher” (Osho, 1973, p.283).

In the tenth sutra, one comes back into the world. We come full circle back to the ordinariness of life and everything is divine. If one identifies with the witnessing soul, as awareness, if you are not identified with the body then there is no death (Osho, 1973). The truth of one's being becomes so vast that it becomes a mystery not a problem to be solved, and the more one enters it, the more mysterious it becomes (Osho, 1973). Only enlightenment exists, one finds God, or the Source in the all, the ego disappears then one becomes the all (Osho, 1973). According to Osho (2001) this process leads one to wholeness and when all is included then there becomes equilibrium—things are equal. Given our study on abusive relationships, equality is the antidote for abuse.

According to Osho (1973), the mind needs to be completely dropped because as far as the mind is concerned, everything appears in the mind as a thought. One must remain centered in one's witnessing and just be the watcher and sooner or later, when one is really centered, the whole mind disappears: dreams, thought, reality, all (Osho, 1973, p.243). Osho (1973) urges us to be more centered in the witnessing soul and eventually silence will prevail, and this brings one closer to one's true self. One's true self is the opposite of the egocentric narcissistic self, and a healthy love of oneself is a great spiritual value (Osho, 2001). If one loves oneself, then one is less susceptible to psychological or emotional wounding and is better able to love one's partner. According to Osho (2001), transformation is going to be from the self toward a state of no self and the agony is very deep. Love is the fire that takes one to a higher level of consciousness, so to suffer in love is creative, and the man who is without love is narcissistic, he is closed (p.33). Therefore, one needs to drop one's façade, his

armour, (this is especially true for abusive men) one has to be vulnerable and risk (Osho, 2001). Therefore, if the ego is dropped, one can go into love and Osho (2001) claims that the ego identification with being separate from existence is untrue. Each person is not a person but a presence. Osho (2001) claims that the whole of humanity is suffering from a narcissistic stagnancy, their illusion of having a separate self.

Osho (2001) sees love as a spiritual experience, but first we need to be ourselves by gaining back our center through meditation, penetrating deeper into the realms of feelings, into the recesses of being, and the facets of ones personality. This is true men's work. Through the exploration of consciousness, lovers can know themselves and become mirrors to each other and then love becomes a meditation (Osho, p.57). The key to a healthy relationship, according to Osho (2001), is a, "certainty achieved at one's innermost core which then becomes a certainty about everything that you do and everything that happens to you" (p.76). Osho's teaching is similar to Krishnamurti and Almaas in that negation is the most positive thing that one can do; removing all that hinders love, so love becomes the undercurrent of one's being.

## Chapter Three: Methodology and Research

### *Approach to Research*

In exploring narcissism as a transformational experience in abusive men, a phenomenological hermeneutic approach was used with research participants. This particular approach was used to fully capture the essential nature of the experiences of the participant researchers. Phenomenology is utilized in this research because it serves to ground the research in the lived experiences and, “captures the experience of human beings from the inside” (Osborne, 1990, p. 180). This approach focuses on men’s accounts of their experiences, while at the same time potentially offers alternate possibilities for understanding narcissism.

The use of qualitative research method is used to capture the full experience of the subject being investigated to understand their lived experience. According to Rogers (1961) and Osborne (1990) this approach is more human oriented and understanding comes from lived experience rather than quantitative natural science approaches where perception is from a distant biological organism revealing cause and effect relationships (Van Manen, 1990). Compared to the natural science approach Rogers (1961) and Maslow (1968) advocate a humanistic perspective of open-mindedness, a need to probe and explore the unfamiliar, a need to work through meaning, and embracing a self-actualizing or growth paradigm. The humanistic scientific approach sets aside detached observation, quantitative measurement, and experiment, and instead attends to the actual lived experience of the participant. The value of using the human science research approach, is created from openness to experience (Van Hesteren, 1986). Within this study and in the field of counseling,

Van Manen (1990) is supportive of humanistic science research because it involves description, interpretation, and self-inquiry or critical analysis, which are important in understanding a person's lived experience. In reference to the quest for transformation of narcissistic abusive behavior sought out in this thesis, the value of this research will enable an increased understanding of the co-researchers derived from their lived experiences.

### *Phenomenology*

Osborne (1990) describes the aim of phenomenological research as striving to understand a phenomenon through the data as it is, and by the researcher putting their preconceived notions of the phenomenon to the way side to develop a more conscious awareness of ones assumptions and developing a transcendental attitude. In this sense, Osborne (1990) indicates that, "if there is a structure to the phenomenon it will transcend particular interpretations" (p.81). Husserl (1973) proposed a method of study that attempts to integrate the lived experience of life with the world of science. To Husserl (1973) exploration of the world as we immediately experience it differed from every other science, which conceptualizes and categorizes. Van Manen (1990) claims that all we can ever know presents itself to one's consciousness and whatever falls outside of one's consciousness falls outside the bounds of lived experience. Phenomenology is an exploration of a lived experience, what that experience is, and serves as a reflection of the ambiguities of life. Phenomenology is a way to explore our human nature to become more aware of one's self, which offers the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more contact with reality (Van Manen, 1990).

Van Manen (1982) describes phenomenological research as a process of studying lived experiences where the essence of the experience is described and captured through language, reflecting the lived meaning in a deeper context. We want to know ones real nature that which is most essential to being (Van Manen, 1990). According to Van Manen (1982), phenomenological research is interplay between:

1. turning to phenomenon which seriously interests us
2. investigating experiences as we live them as opposed to how we conceptualize it
3. reflecting on the common essential themes of the phenomenon
4. describing the phenomenon through writing and re-writing (p.46)

Central to phenomenology is the notion of intentionality brought forth by the works of Edmund Husserl recognized as the founder of phenomenology. Husserl focused his inquiry on descriptions of the essential structures that are inherent in consciousness (Osborne, 1990). From this framework the notion of intentionality was introduced to explore the depths of consciousness. Husserl's notion of intentionality is a reflection of the idea that consciousness always has an object, and that even when one thinks that they are not conscious of anything, one is in fact conscious of not being conscious (Osborne, 1990). Husserl's notion of intentionality, "is in fact synonymous with the existential-phenomenological view that we are of the world rather than in it" thus eliminating the subject-object dualism (Osborne, 1990, p.80). According to May (1974) one cannot isolate psychological reactions (the individuals experiences) in and of themselves, rather one needs to understand, "the psychological

being of the living man who is doing the experiencing” (p. 15). This framework serves to unite science and ontology to gain a deeper understanding of human as being and human as being in the world. Phenomenology wishes to see what exactly our lived experience is and can be described as qualitative research that substitutes individual descriptions for statistical correlations and interpretations resulting in experiences lived.

### *Hermeneutics Refinement*

Hermeneutics is known as the art of interpretation. A person’s lived experience is expressed through the use of speech, writing, or art for the purpose of uncovering and reconstructing the held meaning (Van Hesteren, 1986). In order to fully capture the transformational experiences of men who were abusive, a hermeneutics refinement to the phenomenological approach is called for. The emphasis of hermeneutics is on interpretation and understanding (Van Hesteren, 1986). Heidegger and Gadamer suggest, “meaning in a dyadic relationship is generated by language and resides not in the mind of the individual but in the dialogue itself” (as cited in Chessick, 1990, p.269). Jardine (1990) warned of attempting to follow Husserl’s notion of looking to extract fixed essences. It is impossible to step outside of the world as a transparent witness since we are always as Heidegger stated, “being-in-the-world” (Heidegger, 1962).

Heidegger (1962) felt that hermeneutics was at the core of being itself, “the phenomenology of being is a hermeneutic in the primordial significance of the work, where it designates that business of interpreting” (p.65). Interpretation occurs through the use of language, which is a shared aspect for understanding. Heidegger (1962)

considered language and understanding to be inseparable aspects of being and being in the world; language serves as the basis of the framework for which we understand. Heidegger (1962) assumed the stance that all human knowledge is interpretation because it is based on our historical-cultural context. Our experiences are based on our previous understandings, and as such our meanings that we associate with these experiences are continually a reflection of such biases and prejudices.

Central to hermeneutics is conversation. Chessick (1990) states that according to Gadamer, we must discover the standpoint and outlook of another person in order for the ideas of that person to become intelligible. Truth comes out of conversation that is given to us, and our willingness to examine and risk our prejudices as we test it (Chessick, 1990). This leads to more understanding and a more interpretive account. Chessick (1990) states that an important aspect of Gadamer's work in hermeneutic philosophy was to show the historico-temporal qualities of human experience, which is indicative of the way we engage the future. Gadamer was eager to expose the fact that humans come to a place of understanding in terms of their past prejudices and judgments (Chessick, 1990). Historical and cultural factors play a role in how participant researchers face future transformation.

In order for the conversation to be shared and generate new insights and shared realities, Jardine (1992) indicates that, "in the midst of such potentially deadened talk, new life interrupts, causing a rupture right in the middle of things"(p. 120). Through this, we can arrive at new understandings and interpretations of experiences by thoughtful savoring and reflection that possibly challenge our previous judgments and assumptions.

Communication through language leads us to understanding the meaning of experience. Language is a means by which our cultural traditions are embedded, understood, interpreted, and shared. Due to the nature of communicating and understanding the meaning of experiences, we are as such “always already biased in our thinking and knowing by our linguistic interpretations of the world” (Gadamer, 1975, p.64). As such, we are engaged in narratives that identify our understanding of our being, and our understanding of our being-in-the-world through the use of language and stories.

To further support the use of hermeneutics in this thesis, Ricoeur (1995) notes that interpreting text is not to realize or understand the intentions of the narrator, but to understand the meaning of the text itself. Ricoeur (1995) goes on to say that we must be open and willing to abandon our own assumptions and positions and be willing to be open to new perspectives, which will dramatically change our perspective. At this point true interpretation must begin. Thus hermeneutics provide a means of uncovering and understanding narratives that have been presented to the researcher, not as intellectual or theoretical understanding, but as a revelation of understanding and interpreting the co-researchers stories in a dialectical interaction whereas meaning and understanding is circular.

#### *Narrative Within Phenomenological Hermeneutics*

Due to the nature of this research it is paramount to consider narrative aspects because it is the stories of the research participants that are central to this research. According to Corey (2001) stories seem to be a fundamental aspect of lived experiences. We are always creating an ongoing narrative that is a reflection of our

past, present, and future and as such, our experiences are grounded in our stories. Corey (2001) states that in order to capture the unique experiences, we must engage in a dialogue so that these experiences can be shared, understood, and interpreted using language. The use of language serves as a means for an individual to communicate their story as experienced by them. “Human beings make meaning expressed in language and narratives” (Corey, 2001, p. 243) and as such these stories provide guidance in understanding and interpreting the individual human essence and truth. Within these narratives, individuals create meaning, and according to White (1985) individuals construct the meaning through interpretive stories that are treated as truths. Using narrative in a phenomenological hermeneutics framework allows for a close encounter between participant researchers to better enter their life world and to understand their experience from the inside (Osborne, 1990).

Using narrative within a phenomenological hermeneutics framework allows for a look at the topic of using our essence to overcome narcissism through the stories of research participants in all their interconnectedness, theories, and ambiguities. Using narrative in this approach is similar to engaging in a counseling relationship that is based on equality, connectedness, and respect. To employ this method, embracing a person-centered approach is fruitful. The qualities and skills outlined by Rogers (1961) call forth a relationship that is based on equality, respect, and growth. Techniques derived from this approach such as paraphrasing, summarizing, reflecting both feelings and meanings, posing questions and linking themes through verbal tracking (Corey, 2001) will all be beneficial in extracting the stories of participant researchers. This research uses hermeneutical phenomenology to bring out hidden

meaning, to understand the co-researchers experience from the inside, and to interpret stories in a dialectical interaction between the whole and the parts, between my research participants and myself as each gives the other meaning and thus, understanding is circular.

### *Research Procedure*

*Selection of Research Participants.* The selection of research participants involved ensuring that they met the research criteria to participate in this study. The emphasis on the criteria was on welcoming male participants who have been on a journey of transformation of narcissism and abusive behavior for at least two years and can identify and articulate the process through an interview process. Participants have experienced a transformational process and used that as an opportunity to alter their experience of narcissism.

A research participant recruitment advertisement was the means for the participant researcher to recruit 6-10 participant researchers to participate in an interview. The participant researcher is also aware that additional participant researchers may be required to further illuminate emerging themes brought forth by the interview process.

Upon selection of the participant researchers, a letter of consent was given and completed with an understanding of the research format. Each interview is taped and the data is collected.

Each participant researcher did exercise the option of providing themselves with a pseudonym to establish, maintain, and respect confidentiality. Participant researchers, were informed that the data collected is only to be seen by this

participant researcher, a transcriber, and the thesis supervisor. Transcriptions are available for each participant researcher and the data analysis has been completed. Contact numbers are available for not only the distributions of transcripts, and also for the potential of collecting further clarification of the data.

*Interview Format.* An interview procedure is adopted from Cochran's (1975, Nixon, 1992) dramaturgical method for eliciting the stories and experiences of the participant researchers. The interview did consist of three phases in the form of a story with a beginning, middle, and end. The beginning of the interview emphasized when the participant researcher was abusive, when they began their journey of transforming narcissism, and how this transformation occurred. The middle of the interview accounts for their experiences and turning points, and the end represents what is happening for them at the present time.

To facilitate this process and acquire the dramaturgical account of their stories, the participant researcher did employ Rogerian (1961) skills such as empathetic listening and paraphrasing. Using these skills the writer did, for hermeneutic enquiry, develop a close, and open relationship with each of the co-researchers. By utilizing a person centered, empathetic, and non-judgmental approach, the writer is confident that the participant researchers did feel comfortable and at ease in sharing their stories and experiences with the writer.

In this way, Gadamer (1975) suggests that meaning needs to be wrested from its hiddenness. Meaning, therefore, is hidden in the stories one tells, and it becomes the task of the researcher to uncover and make meanings explicit. Questions throughout the interview did consist of, but not be limited to highlighting the onset of

their quest, highlighting the transformational experiences of narcissism, identifying barriers and struggles in their journey, and the ongoing experiences of their non-dual path. Once their initial stories of their quest were told, participants were asked more specific questions in order to move into deeper understanding and obtain a deeper richer description of what happened and how it happened.

Furthermore, during the analysis of the text, questions were asked of the text to move further into the interpretation and meaning of the participant's world (Gadamer, 1975). As a researcher, I understand that I have my own cultural understanding and therefore it is important to understand that the participant's experiences and practices cannot be separated from their culture, history and tradition (Gadamer, 1975, Heidegger, 1962). As suggested by Haggman-Laitila (1999) the researcher did put his own views aside, describe the subjects experiences objectively and avoid guiding the subjects expressions or asking questions that would contain the researchers own interpretations. The co-researchers were given time to describe their own views and within the interview the researcher did genuinely attend to the co-researcher to guide him in moving beyond his own assumptions (Haggman-Laitila, 1999).

One of the risks of phenomenological hermeneutical research is that the researcher asks leading questions thus limiting the boundaries that are being explored, and the researcher will impose his own perspective, theoretical or otherwise, into the interviews and onto the text (Gadamer, 1975). Nevertheless, the aim of this study, reified by Van Manen (1990) is to "transform lived experience into a textual expression in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive appropriation

of something meaningful, a notion by which the reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience” (p. 36). The interviews was tape-recorded utilizing the orientation and skills noted above to fully capture the essence of their stories and experiences.

### *Data Analysis*

At the starting point of the in-depth audio taped interviews it was important to establish good rapport, a high level of trust, and a sense of partnership between my fellow participant researchers. Understanding needs to include language, discourse, and dialogue through means such as reactions, imagery, emotions, sensitivity, and cognitions. In these interviews, I relied on my counseling skills to foster a non-judgmental atmosphere and to open conversation up to a deep level of disclosure and discussion, to facilitate deeper meanings about the topic in a non-threatening manner.

Each interview is transcribed, and all identifiable information is omitted. Each participant researcher was given the opportunity to receive a copy of the transcription for the purpose of deleting any further revealing information and also to provide another opportunity to correct or expand any areas that they feel are relevant to their story. Given this opportunity, the researcher will have a clearer and more accurate description of the participant researcher’s stories and experiences and will have an “opportunity to pursue existentially relevant questions (Osborne, 1990, p.169). In honoring anonymity, transcripts as well as the final report will use the selected pseudonym of each participant researcher.

The researcher did also utilize notes in conjunction with the transcriptions to identify essential themes throughout the interviews to present a fuller, richer

description of their experiences. The notes used were beneficial when compiling the final report. At the onset of obtaining consent, it was clarified to the participant researchers' that each tape-recorded interview will be destroyed once the analysis of the data is completed.

The interviews lasted up to three hours, and the text of the transcripts was used to develop preliminary themes about the topic. I took notes on the major themes that stood out. From second and third readings, related clusters were combined into units of meaning. In each re-reading of the transcripts, a deeper level of analysis unfolded in which the text spoke on its own terms and the dialectical exchange became alive within the process. There were unique yet common themes, contractions that reveal a deeper understanding, and that the text was read for meanings behind words and events (Jardine, 1990). The final stage of interpretation involved interlacing the themes and embedded meanings together with relevant literature to produce a new text about the topic itself.

I self disclosed my own personal experience with the topic as deemed appropriate. I took the hermeneutic stance that I needed to participate in the conversation from a position that honors difference and multiplicity of meanings, as well from a position that is suspect and investigates whether the interpretation offered is something other than itself (Chessick, 1990). As the researcher, I was aware of my own biases towards the research topic as I worked towards extracting the meaning of lived experience. Interpretation included locating elements in the stories that could be found and those that were hidden but could be illuminated by changing my own perspective in order to reveal what could be seen and what was hidden. I am attuned

to and involve myself in practices such as meditation, body movement, and artwork and different forms of contemplative practice and therapies to more fully understand the experiences myself.

*Validity of Phenomenological Hermeneutical Research.* To validate this research it is essential to focus on the two components of this research: 1) to explicate the lived experience of the co-researchers working through the process of transforming their abusive behavior and narcissism; and 2) to interpret these lived experiences. Madison (1988) notes that validity “is nothing but the harmonious unfolding and reciprocal confirmation of successive experiences” (p.15). In other words something is believed to be valid only when others readily accept it. The researcher wishes to refresh the readers memory that this research does not undertake on a process to develop a concrete theory or causal explanation for the transformation of narcissism in abusive men. Instead it is guided by the subject matter rather than methodology itself. If it were the intentions of this study and research to seek exact knowledge or casualty, clearly it would be important to apply a research methodology that is guided by the method itself (Madison, 1988). This researcher will defend his judgments and interpretations by arguing that they embody or conform to certain generally accepted criteria, norms, and principles. This will help to ensure that what I interpret is not based on my own subjectivity (Madison, 1988).

*Ethical Considerations.* Prior to information gathering the research was reviewed and approved by the University of Lethbridge research ethics committee and co-researchers were given the opportunity to sign a consent form. Prior to signing the consent form, any questions or concerns that co-researchers had were

answered and addressed. The consent form indicated the aims and methods to be used, the responsibilities of both myself and the participant researchers, time commitment required to adequately participate in the study, and reassurances that there was no risks to the co-researchers. Each participant researcher was advised that they had the right to, at any time, withdraw from the research, and the researcher had the right to terminate the involvement of participant researchers at any time.

As previously mentioned, the tape-recorded interviews were transcribed using a pseudonym chosen by the participant researchers. Confidentiality and further guarantees of anonymity were provided with the opportunities of participant researchers to change or delete any information on the transcripts that they felt identified them in any way. However, none of the research participants acted upon this offer. Confidentiality and anonymity will also be guaranteed further as once the transcriptions are complete, all interview tapes will be erased and disposed.

## Chapter Four: The Themes of the Co-Researchers Transformations

### *Introduction of the Co-researchers*

This chapter will address the emerging themes within each co-researchers transformational journey. In this chapter it will be beneficial to begin with how narcissism originated in each of the co-researchers lives. As a recovering narcissist, the author is also implicated in this research. We will seek to plumb the early childhood beginnings of the false self and uncover the true self or “I am” that was lost in earlier childhood wounding. Many families according to Firman & Gila (1997) “can be pervaded by toxic nonempathic responsiveness, manipulation, and instability that later manifest in emptiness, compulsions and violence of the adult children” (p. 3). In other words it is not so much that one is sick or crazy, it is that one has been wounded. The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken.

This chapter will outline both the basic themes and contextual variations. The basic themes evolved from the narrative and were embedded in the co-researchers stories. From a phenomenological hermeneutics perspective, the interpretation of these themes included: childhood wounding, expressions of the false self and displays of narcissism, the attempted remedy, the grandiose self, descent: the road of ashes, shame: the monster at the basement door, traps of the spiritual path in moving towards wholeness, and the gradual awakening of self awareness. The contextual variations embedded in the co-researchers stories included the co-researchers suffering of early wounding and trauma; the resulting defenses, compensations, and addictions; the confrontation with non-being and life meaning;

the freedom and responsibility of self actualization; the realms of the paranormal, archetypal, and spiritual experience; and the challenge of Self realization. These are areas that may need to be addressed in the healing of narcissistic injury (wounding) and the healthy development of one's journey towards wholeness. Basic themes will be approached and examined through contextual variations, different lenses and angles. I will draw upon various theoretical orientations only as they are relevant to these main themes. Instead I will concentrate on the human being, the effects of the wound, the healing of this wound and the growth of the human spirit. Evading the narcissistic wound we desperately throw ourselves into addictions of all sorts—from sex, romance, drugs, to wealth, power, and violence—building the false self that we know in our hearts are destined to crumble.

### *Childhood Wounding*

In the first theme, the beginnings of a journey, unfortunately, often manifests in childhood wounding opening to the experience of neglect and abuse, which resulted in experientially sharing what they discovered. The first co-researcher Adam's childhood's instability and non-empathic responsiveness by his father was a result of his father medicating himself with alcohol on a daily basis. Adam explains it as deep sense of unpredictability in the house that was prevalent all through his childhood.

Mom would cower to Dad's strong anger, and I felt helpless and powerless like Mom. I realized she was unable to offer protection. This created a split in me where one side of myself had to hide my real expressive side with Dad, because of Dad's controlling behavior, and one side of me expressed power

over Mother like Dad and I manipulated her. Mom bought into my sulking, crying and playing the victim and I would get what I wanted on a surface level. Mom stayed remote and detached from me but was very connected to her brother. I got my attention needs from acting out, by being hyper, screaming and hollering.

This behavior may be a result of the absence of recognition of Mom and Dad and is an outright demand to be seen and heard in a consistent or in a special way (Almaas, 1996). Almaas (1996) explains this as the “original childhood hurt about not being seen or admired and on a deeper level the narcissistic injury results from the loss of connection with the Essential Identity” (p. 313).

Brandon the second co-researchers childhood memories relate to a Mother who was present to him but never carried through because she wanted her husbands approval. Brandon relates:

Dad was either gushing love, which was inappropriate, or he would become extremely abusive. I never felt safe and felt there was no opportunity to develop a voice and be creative because my creativity was smashed and crushed. If Mom stood her ground, she would be hit, and if I showed any defiance, it would be beaten out of me. I felt like a scapegoat, there was no such a thing as balance. I just sort of fragmented in my sense of self. I hated life, hated myself and dreaded getting out of bed. I was rageful towards Dad and had a couple of chances to beat the fucking shit out of him but never had the balls to do it.

Brandon's self hatred may have been an interjection of what his scornful father said and did to him and found that if he was not worth loving, it was not worth getting out of bed (Golomb, 1992). Furthermore (Firman & Gila, 1997), state that in moments of neglect and abuse people experience a feeling of not being human, as objects with no freedom, a feeling of non-beingness. This threat of nonbeing, so central to self-destructive attachments arises by the unintentional or intentional acts of those around us. The core experience of being human arises from our relationships in life, so it makes sense that a threat of non-being (betrayal, loneliness, isolation, worthlessness, impotence, powerlessness, etc.) arises when these relationships are disturbed (Firman & Gila, 1997).

My third co-researcher, Cliff, states that his Mother spoiled him and substituted a lot of the attention that she should have been paying towards her husband onto him. This drove a wedge between himself and his Dad. Love (1990) calls this emotional incest in the form of the romanticizing parent. In essence, the child becomes the surrogate husband and the parent adores the child. Cliff recalls:

I felt that Mother did not respect me and felt like a love object. My relationship with Dad in the early years was very close and intimate but changed when I was hospitalized for a repair operation on my testicle, which turned out to be serious. I was devastated when Dad never came to see me at the hospital. It took me twenty years to forgive him and in my worst moments I think Mom told Dad not to go to the hospital because of her own jealousy. I can remember screaming and being absolutely terrified. The simple operation was more severe than the doctors indicated and I almost died during the

operation. During this time I had this sense of abandonment terror. This really switched my alliance towards Mother. Mother had a skewed negative view of all men and this attitude affected my view of masculinity. This led to all sorts of horrible relationships because of my own poor self-image and strong sense of self-hatred. I had mostly women teachers and in looking back I realize now how I seen women as having a lot of power. I remember being terrified of their power. I wanted to please Mom, so doing well in my studies became an important way of pleasing Mom, and I experienced the high side of euphoria of winning the exclusive love of Mother.

According to Love (1990), this situation can result in fluctuating self-esteem; one side of the mood swing is grandiosity and the other side is self-hatred. My fourth co-researcher Darren had a mother who was closer and showed more affection and loving care towards certain antiques and objects in the house than to him. Darren recalls:

I felt that I did not belong and never felt a connection to mom and dad. Dad was similar to mom and any expression of weakness or emotion was met with abrupt indifference. I learned very early not to expect any empathy and my emotional expression became constricted. Once I got my first bicycle, I got comfort in roaming the streets, looking in windows, looking for comfort in some ways, looking, imagining what was going on behind the warm glow of the lights. It was a lonely time. I remember a time in the winter when I was feeling pain in my abdomen, it hurt and I was buckled over and I was looking for a little area of sun, but I could not tell them about my pain. I just suffered

through it. I started to look outside of my family to heal some of my wounds and this was to become a metaphor for much of my life.

Darren states that he became a loner in his teenage years and according to Golomb (1992), through the experience of a parent's rejection, one becomes well versed in the art of submerging oneself. He became a co-leader in a gang where bullying, vengeance, terror, and pleasure became familiar, but it felt like his home. Darren himself may have acquired the traits of his parents' emotional contractedness attacking his own weakness. It is extremely painful for the child of narcissistic parents to discover that he has become what he hates (Golomb, 1992).

My fifth co-researcher, Frank, describes his early life as painful. These painful life situations or early psychological wounding led to compulsivity and the inauthenticity of the false self.

My mother was very distraught during her pregnancy with me. She tried to commit suicide by taking pills before I was born. I had a twin brother whom mother kept, but I was put in an institution for crippled children for the first five years of my life. I had a clubfoot and back in the sixties the orphanage as actually a hospital for crippled children. Mother met a fellow and he offered to take her to New Brunswick. She asked social services if she could take me but they refused, so she left me in British Columbia at the orphanage. A family adopted me at age six. My adopted father was very abusive and I recall being very much a survivor. To survive I became a manipulator and controller to try and get my love needs met. I developed a strong survival personality, which manifested in the need for immediate gratification, wanting

to fit in all the time, wanting to escape from myself and especially wanting to be like everyone else. My adopted mother was very much in the background and my father dominated.

Frank's desire for love led him to choose friends that escaped and socialized through the use of drugs. Thus consequently (Firman & Gila, 1997) concur that Frank's unhealthy toxic responsive dynamics in his family can later manifest in the compulsions, violence and emptiness of Frank's later experiences.

Gene, my sixth co-researcher's Dad was in the military and was abusive during Gene's formative years. Gene saw himself as quite spiritual and became his oversensitive Mom's protector and confidant. Gene describes it this way:

My father was involved in having affairs and I played the role of Mothers counselor, especially as I got older. I can recall laughing at Mother's emotional weakness. By the age of 14 my brother and I had a standoff with Father and forcibly got him to quit being abusive to their Mother. I became The protector (confrontational) and spiritual leader (sensitive) from a fairly early age. I had a strong spiritual connection to Mother and at age 15 started having multiple affairs with other girls my age to get my gratification needs met.

Looking at Gene's background, one can glean the power struggle between himself and his father as authoritarian with the authority being the barometer of its dysfunctionality (Kramer & Alstad, 1993). This may be a story of the split between the good self (spiritual protector) and the bad self (using power to control and get immediate gratification) and the escape of comforting beliefs in the form of

spirituality. The view that Kramer and Alstad (1993) take is that this is the tragic core of fragmentation prevalent in the contemporary human psyche. This conflict between higher and lower parts of oneself often binds people with conflict making them unable to accept themselves as whole human beings. This concludes the brief beginnings of our co-researchers.

There is an increasing collective realization that suffering is not necessarily an aspect of being human, but that it derives from our wounding. We may feel this wound as a sense of falseness, estrangement, or perhaps the fear of intimacy and commitment in our relationships. Evading this wound, “we desperately throw ourselves into addictions of all kinds—from sex, romance, and drugs to wealth, power and violence—building inauthentic lives that we know in our heart are destined to crumble” (Firman & Gila, 1997 p.1). We all suffer from wounding in various ways: child abuse and neglect, sexist and racist culture and bonding to wounded caregivers violates our intrinsic, sense of self and we are plunged into the experience of annihilation and non-being. This is a betrayal of trust and from a psychological perspective, our connection to our deeper Self is wounded. We become strangers to ourselves, our connection to ultimate reality is broken and the pain and chaos of human existence may flow primarily from this wounding to our essential selves (Firman & Gila, 1997). From an object relations perspective the underdeveloped Self and lack of interpersonal boundaries are normal for the first three years of life. One needs the help of parents, caregivers to recognize who we really are, to help us contain rage and manage shame, and to help us live in the world of others (Hotchkiss, 2003). When the caregiver is unable to help the child complete

the separation individuation process, the child can suffer from significant narcissism. Some children become clones of narcissistic parents while others are drawn into relationships that require a familiar sacrifice of self. Our co-researchers wounding reveals a trail of abandonment and abuse caused by a lack of empathy.

*Expressions of the False Self and displays of Narcissism*

“When the father-table, the ground water, drops, so to speak, and there is too little father, instead of too much father, the sons find themselves in a new situation. What do they drill for new father water, hoard it, distill mother water into father water?” (Bly, 1990, p. 93)

In the second theme, the violation to the fundamental sense of self, expressions of the false self and displays of narcissism, can lead to narcissistic tendencies and pathological narcissism, chaotic affective and cognitive states, addictions, inability to be intimate, lack of empathy, depression, and anxiety, which indicates a violation of relational bonds. As we can see, some of our co-researcher’s relationships with their mothers was close and their relationships with their fathers was distant and fragmented. Mother’s expectations for our co-researchers were realized by mothers’ dreams of my son the doctor, the engineer, the artist, the teacher, the therapist/yoga teacher, and the musician. But very few of the mothers dreamed of my son the Wild Man. This is the true radiant energy of the male, the true self. But the story of our six men is not an easy path nor is this journey of transformation, for the frog is thrown against the wall a few times before he becomes a prince.

The beginning of our men’s stories, show the path of inner fragmentation, despair, power/control issues, and confusion. Just like most men, our co-researchers

want this radiant energy back through the gentleness of Jesus or some Asian Guru, but this is not the true radiant energy of the true self. First, there must be the pain of trauma, loss of love, narcissistic tendencies, expressions of the false self, and fragmented identity.

This is evident in Adam who was abusive by exploiting his lovers through intimidation and pretending to love them for the reward of sex. His early relationships involved dominance and power struggles. Adam demanded love and attention and narcissistic tendencies such as jealousy and being envious was evident from a young age. Adam recalls:

This played out in bullying behaviors and being jealous of people at school who received attention, I would devalue others to keep my self-esteem up. My first girlfriend was very much like mom in that she never gave me the attention that I needed so I used self-pity to get attention. This did not work, so I became more like dad in my second relationship and used intimidation and physical abuse or I would self-harm to scare her. This relationship was manipulative as I used my girlfriend because she was like a “sugar mama” whereby I exploited her for her money. In another relationship, my girlfriend was dominant and when I would try to dominate she would self-mutilate so that she would get her way. At this time, I was a heavy user of marijuana and this led to the covering up of the most unbearable feelings of shame.

This narcissistic injury suggests the misery of a pervasive personal flaw inflicted by mom’s remoteness and disapproval. Adams need for power and importance was shattered at a young age by his mother’s disapproval and he became

sensitive to shame, suffered from chronic low self worth and reacted with rage and anger when wounded or shamed (Hotchkiss, 2003). His abusive tendencies can be seen as a need for power (arrogance) so that it would secure him a distance from the tarnish of personal defect and shame. His narcissistic tendencies of envy can be explained as a need to secure a sense of self; by soiling others he would re-establish his superiority. Brandon, the second co-researcher expresses his narcissistic tendencies this way:

I would draw attention to myself through the jock star approach and by womanizing. I can also remember getting into fights to achieve status even though I despised fighting. I was willing to damage myself for some kind of approval. Brandon further recalls: I realized that when I was teaching that I was acting out the scapegoat with my principal, so I brought on the wounded warrior energy. I recall being abusive with my principal and with my wife in the form of name-calling, judgments and being physically abusive. I reinflated myself by being grandiose and debasing as expressed in an arrogant bossy manner.

Life for Brandon has had a way of doling out regular doses of humility, which may not have been of any comfort to Brandon. There is always someone more handsome, brighter and better. One gets the sense that Brandon needs to stay pumped up in order to keep these harsh realities at bay. According to Hotchkiss (2003) this behavior involves a certain amount of illusion which psychologists call “magical thinking.” He wants people and friends to be summoned to his command performance. This rock star fantasy (being in the limelight) may well insulate him

from his inner emptiness. I had this feeling during the interview that I was sitting with Cinderella after the clock struck midnight, sitting there in the rags with the pumpkin and the mice. He presents with a superficial charm, which can be enchanting, which appears exciting, complicated, colorful and one feels drawn into his narcissistic web. His wounded warrior energy, narcissistic tendencies, and the false self, may be seen as arrogance, which manifests as being bossy, judgmental, and driven to power.

Cliff experienced problems with intimacy with men as he had adopted his Mother's hate of men. This self-diminishment of his own masculine self created a false self, and self-hatred played out in Cliff's early teen years. He recalls:

I was terrified of women and also I was afraid of what Mother's reaction would be. My first real relationship was at the age of nineteen. It was a clandestine relationship with a woman of a different ethnic background. I recount that she was an extension of my ego as I had very high ideals and was working towards social justice issues.

The split between being inferior and superior may be evident in the fact that he had to conform to her rules because her family would not accept a white boy as a suitor. The relationship was hidden from her parents and he conformed to her wishes but on the other hand, he felt superior to her because of her lack of ambition and also devalued her family for being affluent and materialistic.

I felt I came from a place of higher ideals and had a sense of purpose whereas she did not. I realize now that narcissism played out when I got on my soapbox and preached about the ills of society and materialism. I was into drugs such as marijuana, hash, and LSD in my early twenties. This was seen

by me; as an expansion of my expanded consciousness, and part of the counter culture scene. I experienced a world collapse when my best friend became a Christian. I felt abandoned when my friend left because of my use of drugs.

This is a revival of Cliff's original wound. Cliff was in a few relationships with women at this time but was unable to have an equal relationship. In order for him to feel equal he would boost himself with his superior knowledge. This expression of importance through being more knowledgeable and important may be a narcissistic tendency of a sense of entitlement and that one must attend to my needs. Cliff stated, "It was a demand to get what Dad did not give me." He states that his feelings were difficult to access and to share and that he had difficulty having fun. Basically, Cliff's rigidity and his need to be right, his self-righteousness, amounted to his grandiosity. Bly (1990) describes this behavior as the need to be seen and the son attempts to redeem the endarkened father by becoming enlightened. Alice Miller (1994) remarks that if we take the grandiose road, we rise above the wound and the shame. As in Cliff's case he got good grades, became an expert in martial arts, history and enlightenment. Bly (1990) describes the woundedness of the absent father this way: "each of us takes the grandiose and the depressed road (shame and depression) and some take a third road; the road of paralysis, robot behavior, seriously pursued numbness—a hollow in the center, no affect, with no emotion upward and downward" (p. 34). Hotchkiss (2003) explains the superiority complex as a, "mask of arrogance that hides the fragile sense of self that is never satisfied with being good—if they are not *better than*, then they are worthless" (p. 11). It appears that Cliff identified mostly with the third road. Cliff says, "I was not able to feel emotion, or

even physical feeling, walking around pushing the world away, just floundering, every direction was blocked, no way to go forward and as being hemmed in on all sides.”

Darren got his narcissistic supplies (validation and admiration) and his sense of maleness met on the basketball court and in the conquest of seducing young women, which helped create the false self. He describes it this way:

Mom and Dad never noticed my basketball prowess, but the girls at school did. It felt exhilarating being so powerful on the court and having one sexual encounter after another. I would literally die rather than give up my position under the basket. This gave me a charge, a high, and I would become a total showoff for the girls. In my first long term relationship, I was dumped by my girlfriend for another man. That was devastating for me and I suffered for almost a year until she broke up with her lover and we married. I can remember being more attracted to the bridesmaids than to my wife at the wedding. I was an intern and this pattern of sexual conquest continued with the nurses at the hospital. During this first brief marriage, my wife and another doctor were quite close and I went over to his office and beat the shit out of him—this ended the 6-month marriage. I did not take a huge fall into internal conflict this time as in the first time. My anger and vengeance was a gift that may have relieved me of the abandonment fear or being shocked to the core.

Who is to know when a boy’s penis becomes the pole around which one’s consciousness revolves? He may have been too hooked on the proof of his potency to enjoy the flowers. Darren is getting laid and keeping score, and he is like most young

men; he is horny to the core. This is the immature masculine lover according to (Gillette and Moore, 1991). For Darren, considerations of the nature and the destiny of the penis like most men, it was close to the heart; indeed it frequently replaced the heart (Keen, 1991). We could say that Darren's behavior is a product of narcissistic parenting. Craving for admiration made him clever at capturing the spotlight and his need to be the best, in command, winner of any chosen competition. For narcissists this can be a way of reaffirming superiority and counteracting shame. Admiration seeking for such narcissists means they are feeling a little unsure of their superiority and in the need of refueling. According to Hotchkiss (2003) the false self is formed that appears more competent than it actually is to garner validation from others. As a doctor he was able to seduce and have sex with a variety of nurses on the night shift while he was married. This misuse of power in the service of his narcissism has become all too familiar in many work environments. Darren presented as superficially charming, but underneath one could feel a deep cold streak or a powerful hunger, that according to Hotchkiss (2003), comes from never having known empathic love from one's parents.

Frank's need to fit into some kind of family setting led to social friendships with friends who used drugs. The satisfaction of his need for intense pleasure and escape from pain and fitting into a peer group led him to choose this lifestyle over relationships with women. For him, this was an inauthentic false self, which manifested in narcissistic tendencies. His description follows:

My first relationship followed this pattern and my girlfriend was devastated that I could not respond to her need for love. Subsequent relationships were of

short duration, characterized by coldness, indifference, lack of empathy, the protective wall and the avoidance of weakness at all costs. I recall being very demeaning in these short relationships.

According to Jaxon-Bear (2001) avoidance of weakness, and the bluff of their armor, the warrior personality learns to spot weakness and attack before the person one is in relationship with can attack. “The warrior is hiding a scared incompetent, emotionally dependent little child under the bluff of their armor” (Jaxon-Bear, 2001, p. 76). For Frank this hard shell was a necessary protective feature because he had to grow up fast and had to take care of himself. He recalls, “having always been pushed into the background, being physically and emotionally abused convinced me that the world is a jungle and that I needed to survive by whatever means.”

As I was interviewing Frank, he was suspicious that someone was listening to our conversation on the phone, and I got the sense that he was ashamed of his past behavior. This reaction also may be explained as hyper arousal, which reflects the persistent expectation of danger. Herman (1992) explains, “after traumatic experience the human system of self preservation seems to go on permanent alert as if the danger may return at any moment” (p. 35). He apologized for being paranoid but this may have been an avoidance of feeling shame. From an object relation’s point of view Hotchkiss (2003) says shame is one of the most unbearable of human feelings resulting from the unexpected disapproval of Mother the primary attachment figure. “When one is rejected from Mother’s care it can only be because one is bad” (Hotchkiss, 2003, p.5). His demeaning and devaluing of his girlfriends via shame dumping and belittling contempt explains his narcissism as an avoidance of feeling

defective and insignificant. The immature masculine arrogance can manifest here also in the form of self-repair by showing someone else to be inferior.

With Gene, bragging about his misusing the essence of his power seemed to be quite satisfying for him. This came out in talking about his sexual conquests and multiple affairs. For him it was ok to be a bad guy and he loved to tell stories about himself. We could say that his engine ran on lust, making love excessively or lusting for the next encounter. Gene puts it this way:

I was basically using women for my own gratification. It was bloody shocking. It was like there was no human being there. There was a pattern of desire that was out of control and then there was the conquest of obtaining the object of desire. This continued in my marriage and I was driven, was never free to rest, lust engaged me from an animalistic point of view and would not leave me alone. Being monogamous was not for me. One of my affairs involved a family friend's daughter, and this blew up publicly. I felt a lot of guilt and shame and the intensity of this helped me to be more aware of my behavior.

From an outside observer's point of view this admiration seeking, lack of empathy and exploitation was an obvious narcissistic tendency of having conquered or of winning the love object. Hotchkiss (2003) explains this behavior of the narcissist to reflect back their importance by possessing them, offloading shame, pumping themselves up by using others all expressions of the false self. For narcissists, all relationships are about exploitation and the idea of being vulnerable is no more than an invitation to be used (Hotchkiss, 2003). Gene stated he never felt the

women's humanity or any guilt for the multiple relationships previous to getting caught with his friend's daughter. The narcissist has this tendency to use their partners, "selfishly and without guilt and they tend to objectify their sex partner as the Madonna (idealized) or the whore who can be freely enjoyed without love or admiration" (Hotchkiss, 2003, p.129). Gene's exploitiveness appears to have from his compulsiveness with some aggressiveness a crisis in the masculine self.

### *The Attempted Remedy*

Let us explore what our co-researchers are attempting to experience in their compulsive behaviors, addictions, intolerance to shame, which is often well disguised, internalized set of values—apart from mitigated self interest, and an exaggerated sense of importance without the ability to recognize the separate existence of the feelings of other people. In this study we have used such major theories and theorists as Winnicott, Kohut, Kernberg, Jung, Transpersonal Psychology and a Psycho-Spiritual approach who recognize that psychological disturbances are best understood not as regression or fixation but as damage to the primary state of the relationship. The damage to the essential relational sense of being can lead to painful experiences such as depression, anxiety, chaotic mental and affective states, dissociation, narcissism and self other boundaries (Firman & Gila, 1997). From this point of view, the human being is seen as essentially relational and this arises and develops by the nurturance of empathic relationships. According to (Firman & Gila, 1997), when one is wounded through neglect or abuse the traumatic effect on the human personality results in a threat of non-being.

Almaas (1996) refers to this as the “emptiness wound where the hurt and vulnerability are felt” (p.218). From this we form a survival personality, a false self, and feeling the undercurrent of emptiness in our lives we become addicted to sex, drugs, relationships, grandiosity, fame and fortune, in order to feel fulfilled and purposeful. For the narcissist, the feeling and positive reward is a feeling of personal power and for the person engaging in addiction, “people reported feeling not the threat of nonbeing, but touches of acceptance, freedom, positive selfhood and personal power” (Firman & Gila 1997, p.18). Adam describes his need for personal power and acceptance this way:

I controlled my first girlfriend by using self-pity so that she would give me the attention I needed. In my second relationship I became more like my father and intimidated her by pretending to hit her, I would throw things, I would punch the walls, I would posture towards her or I would bang my head against the window in the car and hurt myself in front of her.

Narcissistic rage is evident, which is fueled by the narcissistic wound; featured by demeaning, punishing, blame, insensitivity, and a tendency to devalue the self-object (Almaas, 1996). This is evident in our study as an attempt to displace or dissolve their woundedness through a punishing position towards their partners. Brandon describes this well:

My dad is in so many ways was a totally pathetic man and I despised him and have so much anger at his tyrant and I had a couple of chances to beat him up, to so beat him up. Because of his abuse, there was no opportunity for me to find my voice. But if push ever came to shove he would hit me.

The primal wound caused by neglect and abuse, is a desperate attempt of being untouched by this wounding, such as addictions, attachments, and compulsions, this really is an unconscious avoidance of non-being (Firman & Gila, 1997).

Whitfield (1991) describes it this way, “From trauma there develops such feelings as abandonment, shame, and emptiness which finally break into expressions such as chemical dependency, eating disorders, and relationship addiction”(p. 25). Cliff describes his emptiness and shame when I asked him how he goes into self-diminishment around his masculinity:

Oh yes absolutely. Mom used to say men are only interested in one thing, men are ignorant, men are callous and it just goes on and on. So it ended up with me with a very poor self-image and a strong sense of self-hatred. I denied my own sexuality.

Kohut (1977) takes this relational view a step further in describing how the self can remain cohesive even in the face of non-beingness (annihilation of the self) in realizing a cosmic narcissism (sense of self), which has transcended our individuality. This is a shift in our narcissistic cathexes from the self to a supraindividual and timeless existence, which offers a continuity of being.

The co-researchers expressed this continuity of being in different ways. Adam says, “I can focus on my heart or just focus within me and then I find internal stability. Boy I can really connect with people when I fell whole.” Brandon describes beingness as, “that part of me that is creative, staying on the path of bliss in creating music and not seeing it as a waste of time and being more present to my children.” Cliff describes it this way, “and so the business of the mind is clearly an automatic

function, its just doing its own thing, but we have this witnessing self or this capability of observing that and not necessarily buying into that, of course this is a great gift.” Darren describes his experience as, “I see the fiction of my personality and the betrayal to self. It was like such a transformation, there was no thought, no intention, it wasn’t there, it just happened. It was so neat to see the sort of gift of what can be, if you let go of the fixation.” Frank states, “I am able to see without dramatic effect, I can just see where I am, not where I need to be or where I’ve been, that’s easy enough to do.” Gene claims, “I can now embody love, virtue, essence, god, it’s all heart, it’s all the same. Different names it’s all the same.”

From a Jungian perspective, archetypes operate through lived human relationships as well as within the individual psyche. In the case of our co-researchers, just like all human beings one’s reaction to society’s edicts and parental influences is to hide forbidden unacceptable behaviors which forms the imaginary parent in one’s head that psychologists call the superego. Whenever forbidden thoughts or behaviors come up a person experiences anxiety, which is unpleasant. This internal conflict is avoided and repressed, which results in a loss of wholeness (Hendrix as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991). To fill the emptiness a false self is created camouflaging the repressed shadow parts of oneself and offers protection from further injury. In Darren, Gene and Brandon’s stories a distant mother may cause a patterned response of a tough guy, or of being emotionally distant, and an attitude of making it on one’s own. Frank and Adam were deeply wounded and needed someone to take care of them. Darren describes his emotional distance this way, “I was bedding down with a nurse just about every time I was on call. I was

fucking lots of women but I really didn't think." Gene is similar, "I would never have a deep affair with anyone but I would have lots of sexual affairs." Brandon states, "I hated fighting but that's how I got attention, I played the tough guy and the jock star approach to get attention." Cliff became a hoarder holding onto every bit of love that came his way never believing there is enough. He says it this way:

"So, I was a momma's boy and I was a pleaser. I've been trained to please women and I've done the best I could my whole life, to try and do that, and its got me in tremendous trouble and its not why I'm in a relationship now."

Eventually, they apply this patterned response to all situations causing further wounding because of negative traits such as neediness, being distant, cold and self centered. These responses are forged out of pain and form an assumed identity and alias needed to survive in a complex, sometimes hostile world. The life of the false self then is to minimize the pain of losing part of the child's original essential wholeness. Today, the dark side is everywhere. Nobody in our society escapes being conditioned by this violence, and we all harbor inner turmoil, a private shadow of anger, neurosis, terror, lust and pain, and this is just a microcosm of the greater darkness of society, which shows itself in war, oppression, and starvation. Everyone is in the emergency ward. Our co-researchers are dancing like puppets on the strings of nihilism, meaninglessness, suffering, and heedless despair at the impersonal nature of the cosmos. Butler (as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991) states that there may be no end to our struggle with our shadow and says that, "Both darkness and light are illusions, underneath lies nothing but Being, Bliss, and Consciousness" (p.137). We can secretly add fuel to the grandiose rocket to overcome childhood shame, or we can

sink down into shame becoming a slave and an addict and never be in charge of our life. This inner split makes us attached to the war of good vs. evil, and we must learn to love the enemy within ourselves, this is the path towards vulnerable humility and Beingness. Next, we travel on the road of grandiosity.

*The Grandiose Self*

“In the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted.”

--C.G. Jung (as cited in Hillman, 1996, p.86).

Because of a shaky identity some of our co-researchers might have a strong need to be seen, appreciated, and admired because this helps shore up their sense of self (Almaas, 1996). Not all of the co-researchers have taken the path of the ascenders some have taken the path of descent. Grandiosity is already in us and in order to keep that feeling, we and our co-researchers may refuse to remember the ugly facts of childhood, may be blind to the indifference, abuse, abandonment, lack of protection, and skip over our parents addictions or dark side (Bly, 1990). When we are not well grounded we do not inhabit our bodies well, and if we do not accept limitations fully, we are open to terrible shocks of abandonment. Thus, according to Almaas (1996), narcissistic personality functions as a defense against intolerable affect. In adult narcissism one is deluded about one's human limitations and defends against vulnerability or helplessness with omnipotent grandiosity and specialness (Almaas, 1996). The psychologist Alfred Adler describes the “hidden power drive” in each of us as infantile grandiosity as a hidden superiority complex that covers up our real

sense of vulnerability and Kohut describes this as an expression of our narcissism (as cited in Moore & Gillette, 1991). Jung, however, saw the split in the display of two aspects of energy—the shadow side and the divine child who keeps us enthusiastic and young at heart.

We could say that Adam is an ascender searching for cracks of light, trying to find a way out of his pain searching for peace at any price. He describes it this way:

I have been searching for this love like the incredible hulk, trying to find this way out of anger and pain, wanting peace at any price. I would lose my mind by smoking pot, being obsessive in relationships, land up in the Psychiatric ward and would shut down, in that way I could escape. I would get into these power struggles and eventually my bluff would be called and I would lose my sense of self—this happened in all my relationships. I would end up in drug rehab centers and would actually tap into the wellspring of myself. I would start to be okay with feeling the pain. Then I would go back to keeping all my feelings bottled inside—ah, I would feel I'm great an angel, I'm a great person, I'm totally enlightened and I don't need my feelings, I am enlightened, I am above it all. I have angel wings made from plastic and I feel OK except for the pain inside.

Adam describes an incident that takes place: a white dog that attacks him in his back alley and Adam interprets the white dog as his shadow (Mr. Hyde) and he tells how he is sick of this white dog always attacking him.

The dog would continue to lunge at me, and I identify this as a mirror of

myself—my bluffing my way through life, and the dog loses his plastic wings it's only barking is not the real thing, it's inflated. The dog is exposing me for not being real, pretending to be something I am not. I would lie to my girlfriends and fake my way through the relationship, and I experienced a lot of shame and guilt. We would shame and guilt each other. I was afraid to be my real self in a relationship for fear of rejection. I would become obsessed with the girl and it would keep going around in circles and circles and I could not get rid of these obsessions for the girl. It was difficult for me to be real and honest in primary relationship with women and that being real and honest exposed me to a terror, and I would lose my sanity and end up in the Psyche ward. I had to come to terms with standing on my own two feet and let go of the façade of strength, my egocentric self. I began to practice guided meditation focusing on my heart, and I found lots of pain. From this point, I also began doing body mind work with a therapist to open me to feelings. I am also am going to a spiritualist church where I communicate with loved ones. I am not good at grounding myself and keeping a balance and it is only when I focus on my heart within that I get a sense of internal stability.

It is amazing, looking at Adam's tyrannical behavior with his mother, and how this is played out in his life. He harms himself with his grandiosity, his demands, his pretensions to godhood, wanting to be the center of his girlfriends attention, that the universe exists to fulfill his every need (immediate gratification, drug use), arrogance, because he rejects the very things he needs for life; love. This reminds one of the story of Icarus; the gods always bring down those humans who get too

arrogant, demanding or inflated. Firman and Gila (1997) would say that Adam's own sense of his personal experiences of neglect and abuse and his addictions left him in a state of avoiding being untouched by his primal wounding, which is dominated by his unconscious desperate avoidance of non-being. When his relationships were disturbed, his threat of non-being arose (he felt like he was going insane) and his addiction to marijuana brought him to a place of a tiny glimmer of goodness buried in the annihilation of the addiction (Firman & Gila, 1997). With his addiction, he was induced into a circle (obsessive circle of relationship and marijuana addiction) in which he cycled through negative and positive modes of being—seduced by moments of connection and peace and then plunged into despair by the next round of abuse. With marijuana, he felt the bliss of intoxication, feeling free and confident and then sliding into a negative mode of being when sober—into remorse, isolation, shame and disconnection. His relationship and marijuana addiction according to Firman and Gila (1997) are not simply habits acquired over his life; “They are desperate strategies by which we attempt to avoid the unimaginable terror of nonexistence”(p.172).

We can see that Adam is taking steps to recover his real self by meditation practice and doing therapeutic bodywork. Meditation, according to Firman and Gila (1997) will help to increase awareness by beginning to be open to the fear and helplessness underneath the abusive rage and anger and to be able to see the control that rage has over one's life. Bodywork also helps to open up one to other modes of experience and feelings, so they will not be remote and this will enable Adam to “enter fully into and move through, this difficult healing work” (Firman & Gila, 1997, p. 59).

Brandon states that his addiction to marijuana created a lifestyle, which was apathetic, with no goals or aspirations, in which the inebriation removed him from shame and feelings of inadequacy. Brandon explains that he gets off on the trip and the fantasy that his mind creates while high, the enticement of the infatuation. He tells it this way:

It's like getting high on the high. Then I lose the connection to the inspiration. The next day, I feel exhausted. I can see the pattern as a form of rebellion and defiance. I have a lot of contempt for my father and his values. Nobody is going to tell me that I am fucked up anymore. I am dancing between the rebel and tyrant—this manifests in my relationships. I see my rebel behavior as leaving a residue and that I am trying to embrace positive king energy. This is due to my lack of responsibility, which is the immature King. This rebel tyrannical immature masculine king side has manifested in being abusive, sarcastic, demeaning, physically violent, having affairs, betraying my common in law partner, employers and my family. This resulted in my getting fired from my teaching job and separation from my partner and children. This brought me into the dark night of the soul—a place of introspection.

This brought Brandon to a place of awareness of limitation and being able to see when he was not being accountable. Brandon recalls:

I was able to examine my abuse in the relationship. I would get side tracked and create a new narcissistic image of myself—the rock star musician, doing drugs, getting laid, pretending to be Bob Marley—I would go off and be that for awhile. Then I would hit the wall again and just sit in the emptiness. I

would sit in the emptiness and then something new comes along and off I go again. I feel I am writing the last chapter of my addiction story by accepting responsibility. When I am responsible, then this is an antidote, because I am at one with others.

Experts in the field of addiction readily agree that pervasive shame is the feeling that fuels addictive and compulsive behavior, giving narcissism and addiction an emotional link (Hotchkiss, 2003). Experiencing oneself as flawed is a deep narcissistic wound that can create an overwhelming need for mood alternating experiences. Marijuana acts to trigger narcissistic fantasies and feelings of grandiosity and omnipotence that relieves shame (Hotchkiss, 2003). As Brandon points out, his father's inconsistent discipline, self-absorption, poor boundaries failed to provide the combination of firmness and love that allows Dad to be used as a model of conscience thus the immature masculine king energy and wounded warrior energy. Whatever moral structure Adam had in childhood falls apart in his teen years. Drugs provided the pleasure, a substitute ideal normally provided by his developing internal sense of meaning, goal directedness and values (Hotchkiss, 2003). Tripping on hallucinogens for Brandon paid off in his fantasy fulfillment of wishes for union, reunion, and fusion with lost or yearned-for others. When Brandon tries to control his addiction and compulsions (sex addiction, control freak) he bumps up against his underlying shame and he then takes another trip with marijuana or into magical thinking. Brandon fancies himself the object of idealization and likes to bask in the glow of attention of a rock star and also projects (shame dumps) his own tyrannical

behavior onto his father. It sounds like Brandon sits in his emptiness feels the shame and then exits into drug use or magical thinking.

Cliff describes himself as being up tight; his anal retentiveness was expressed as a need for tight control and a need to be right. During his early twenties Cliff used marijuana and LSD which helped him loose some of his rigidness and this was part of the counter culture also. His internalized moral code was expressed through furrowed brows, thin lips of anger, and moral superiority as expressed through judgment. He expresses it this way:

I felt I could never get the upper hand in a relationship and that to boost myself up I would win the power struggle by being intellectually superior and being right. I stood on this idealization of being right and avoided anger because that would mean a loss of control and this led to the trap of perfectionism. I felt I was never good enough, was afraid of being wrong, and kept up the appearance of being perfect in every thing I did. I was armored and this would push people away from me and this led to becoming a mediator and yoga instructor. I have had a lot of fear and hostility towards women. I started working in the field of healing and met a woman who was to become my wife who worked in the same field. She was a doctor and more educated than I was. Power struggles and inequality in the relationship were evident and I would gain superiority by being her guide (guru) in meditative practice and the path of enlightenment. This brought about endless battles for control and I would be hypercritical and with a self righous very fine posture, thin lips and judgmental eyes I would be looking down my nose at

her new age beliefs and her choice of guru's. I would judge her teachers harshly, devalue her, and their beliefs, and claim that the teacher should listen to my advice.

This behavior came across in a preaching style such as noticing imperfection and becoming sarcastic. Cliff says he gets stuck in this place of lecturing. His wife left him for another teacher/guru and this led him to the insight that his thoughts (judgments) were quite destructive. He would get into self-loathing and despair when he would meditate after his break up with his wife. He was able to stay with this and become the witnessing self, which gave him the capacity to observe the spacious emptiness that arose without judgment. He was able to be aware of his tendency to preach to me about east/west philosophy during the latter part of the interview.

Cliff's use of marijuana, LSD and love/hate relationships with women is similar to Adam and Brandon in that it may have developed from his trauma: such feelings of abandonment, shame and emptiness, which broke into expressions of chemical dependence and relationship addiction (Firman & Gila, 1997). Narcissism is expressed in the need to hide shame (the false self), "through being right which places him in a imagined moral superiority in relation to the person being judged" (Tolle, 2005, p. 67). This functioned to strengthen his ego in order to get a stronger sense of self. Cliff's choice of LSD and similar hallucinogens, which according to Hotchkiss (1997), is mood food, or the instant mommy and suggests an attempt to regain the oneness with mom. Underneath the superiority complex or arrogance is a fragile sense of self, which always needed to be "reinflated by debasing, diminishing or degrading someone else" (Hotchkiss, 1997, p.11). Cliff described himself as being

judgmental, perfectionist and controlling. According to Hotchkiss (1997) these narcissistic traits are a way of trying to secure the kind of position that will furnish them the most distance from the tarnish of personal defect and shame. This exploitative idealization and the devaluation of others by shame dumping caused barriers to intimacy and acceptance in his relation to others. With Cliff's story one also gets this picture of entitlement in that his views are more important, he is more knowledgeable and better (moral superiority) than anyone else. This may have resulted in the erosion of healthy self-esteem in his wife. This could be a holdover from the egocentric stage of early childhood wherein the bubble of specialness with his mother (emotional incest) was never popped (Hotchkiss, 1997).

Through meditation, Cliff states that he began to discover an inner spaciousness. He says he began to observe how judgmental he was from a higher vantage point without being attached to judgment. Tolle (2005) says this peace or serenity is derived from not making demands or having expectations. For Cliff being right and knowing are expressions of his egocentric self and meditation unburdens the mind through the willingness to experience what is. Then there is a willingness to surrender all knowing, all concepts and all powers of conceptualization the mind drops into the limitless bliss of being (Krishnamurti, 2000).

Darren's grandiosity was expressed in his split life of being the responsible engaged father to his four children, yet having this double life at the hospital. He realized this duality when he was promoted to chief resident of orthopedics and he did not have to take night calls anymore. He tells it this way:

I was quite unhappy about giving up night call because I could not hook up

with women anymore. I felt entitled to live a double life and have sex with other women. I read a book called *The Hazards of Being Male* by Herb Goldberg and this gave me some insight into myself. I got into therapy and started to become aware of hidden feelings—I went to psychoanalysis sometimes three times a week and this was difficult because I had to schedule surgery around these appointments. I also did Bio Energetics and this further helped to be open to feelings. The infidelity on my part stopped but my wife just wanted sex on a physical level. I wanted to cultivate intimacy. There was no love behind the sex and the marriage ended after 27 years. I was single again and at that point I was involved with the work of Byron Katie. Through this, I was able to realize that I projected my own issues, onto others, this led me to face my shame. At this time I was also able to cultivate a friendship with myself. This took at least two years. I met a woman at a Byron Katie workshop who was very openhearted and we both were able to inquire about our own issues.

What psychologists call “by-passed shame” hiding behind a protective barrier of denial, coldness, or the absence of conscience, sounds like Darren’s behavior of having sex with the nurses at the hospital while keeping up the façade of being the responsible father at home. Lowen (1997) describes narcissistic injury as a force that shapes one’s personality as a response to being hurt, rejected or humiliated in one’s childhood experience. He goes on to say one, “projects an image of invulnerability and enjoys the exercise of power and control over others” (Lowen, 1997, p. 77). Darren got a promotion to head resident and was no longer on call on the night shift.

His supply of nurses shrunk; he could no longer be pumped up inside and draw nurses into his narcissistic web. Having observed Darren as a retreat participant, he presented as having charm and good looks, so, in this case, his seduction and manipulation would be coming from a less disturbed narcissistic character. But, from a more psychopathic narcissistic personality he tended to lure admirers by his power of position and he also presented as being overtly seductive. He also portrayed a narcissistic image of the macho male, with his exaggerated show of virility and according to Lowen (1997) this image arises to compensate for a fragile sense of male self, but it implies sexual potency, thus holding out the false promise of sexual fulfillment for women (p.102). We can well imagine these nurses were never loved for who they were. According to Lowen (1997) if a person is only pursuing another as an objective, then the other is seen as an image, thus the other's selfhood does not emerge, which is difficult for the narcissist to see the humanness of the other because the other becomes more important for the moment than ones goal.

Darren recalls being very disturbed by the fact that he was no longer able to have the opportunity to exploit the nurses on night shift. This according to him was hard on his ego, took away his passion for lust (the more the better) and sex, may have infringed on his gangster energy, his fun of breaking the rules, and the enjoyment of lying. He also enjoyed bragging about being in a gang, getting laid, keeping score and being tough. This brought him to a place of descent from his grandiosity. The break through for Darren came when he went to therapy for five years and became aware of his real needs and desires and got back in touch with his

feelings and his body. Darren explains it this way: “What I learned is that I was so disconnected from my feelings other than anger.”

Clearly, Darren had little authentic tolerance for his emotional expressiveness. Lowen (1997) states that his initial approach with narcissistic clients is to facilitate them to get in touch with their sadness and claims this is not a easy undertaking because the patient is defended by expression of anger as a defensive maneuver intended to frighten the therapist or whoever is threatening them. This has been the case in my own therapy practice as well. Therapy, Bioenergetics, and reading helped him to access his feelings. Goldberg (1976) explains the dilemma of trying to live up to the demands of a meaningful relationship as being aware of their gentle restrained behavior with their wives and that they are starved for nonobligating, aggressive free sexual abandon. He liberated himself sexually and his wife never went along for the ride so they got a divorce.

#### *Descent: The Road of Ashes*

The co-researchers stories revealed experiences of descent into shame but also into humility. By inquiring into there pain and their self-centered behaviors the co-researchers began to heal in various ways. The loss of his family and divorce brought Darren into a descending arc; he found himself on the road of ashes and at night he was holding the ashy hand of the “Lord of Death” (it was difficult to let go of the family) and the “Lord of Divorce” (Bly, 1990, p. 95). This brought about a shift from the autonomous strong achiever whose success in the working world was predicated on the repression of self. Darren states he wanted intimacy not just sex and his sexual acting out stopped. Darren began to explore the path of self realization and this

opened up a new world for him—bringing wild flowers to a princess and loving her—volunteering his talent as a surgeon in the Congo--engaging in life more fully.

One could feel and see the intensity of Frank's eyes—pervasive sadness, fierce anger and fear. Frank is an artist and poet. One could say that Frank was in the second layer of human interaction; the territory of anger, rage, outrage, jealousy, envy, contempt, disgust and acrimony. Bly (1992) would call this layer the “field of conflict, the via negativa, the plain of discord and the hills of discord” (p. 285). This angry stew was evident at the workshop that Frank and I attended. Movements beneath the surface spewed out like hot lava from a volcano. The wonderful poem by Cesar Vallejo describes this well.

#### The Black Riders

There are blows in life so violent—Don't ask me!  
Blows as if from the hatred of God; as if before them,  
the deep waters of everything lived through  
were backed up in the soul...Don't ask me!

Not many but they exist...They open dark ravines  
in the most ferocious face and in the most bull like back.  
Perhaps they are the horses of that heathen Attila,  
or the black riders sent to us by Death.

They are the slips backward made by the Christ's of the soul,  
Away from some holy faith that is sneered at by Events.  
These blows that are bloody are the cracking sounds  
from some bread that burns at the oven door.

And man...poor man!...poor man! He swings his eyes, as  
when a man behind us calls by clapping his hands;  
swings his crazy eyes, and everything alive  
is backed up, like a pool of guilt, in that glance.

There are blows in life so violent...Don't ask me!  
(as cited in Bly, Hillman, Meade, 1992, p. 289).

Frank is traversing the battle scarred and dog invested terrain of the dark fierce emotions that permeate his life. Thus Frank is approaching and entering the third layer of human interaction, the layer of the underlying fundamental oneness of human love, deep unity with all things and peaceful coexistence.

Frank went into a descent after his wife and children left him and he was not able to find them even to this day. He describes this as an utter hell. The breakdown of their marriage came as a result of abuse and drug use and Frank's shadow issues such as denial, rage, blaming, and stuffing away negative feelings. Frank describes it well:

Shortly after separation I was involved in a horrific accident in which I was hospitalized. The pain of not having my family visit me in the hospital was greater than the seven broken bones and twisted limbs I received from the accident. This brought me to a place of broken heartedness but not to a place of spiritual surrender. I got into a second relationship in which I was a very passive follower. When my partner got pregnant, I responded by becoming abusive. The failure of this relationship brought about an awareness that I could not blame her for the deterioration of the relationship, I had to look at myself. I stopped doing drugs and cut down on my use of alcohol. After this breakup I went to anger workshops and started to go to other workshops. I am still bitter towards God and I tell him to fuck off any time I get into my anger and that I realize that I have a lot of rage towards women. In my second relationship of nine years I decided that it would only be sexual, which was

my first interest, and not be intimate because of my fear of being dumped. I accomplished this by turning this relationship into a sexual fantasy so I could get my sexual needs met. There were eight other partners at this time, which was very difficult for my partner, but she kept opening her door to me. We finally broke up and I got into a relationship with a woman, who used me and cheated on me like I had done in the previous relationship. This broke my heart wide open and I realized she was a mirror of myself. I went into the deepest depression of my life. I am presently enjoying a friendship with the previous woman that I was in a relationship with. This relationship has been very meaningful for me.

Frank explains because he is an artist and poet, he has always been a seeker—this has brought him to many workshops. He says he has been searching for years and years.

I have been more aware and insightful of what works for me—deconstructing the need to be right, my egocentricism—going into my drama--the shame—the need to meet my joy—my fear of authentic intimacy—the gravitation towards shadow issues of jealousy, envy, power, control and anger—my fear of being alone--the avoidance of the deeper pain inside, and the need for human interaction. I still have places to go so that I can meet the monster at the basement door—my shame. At the Gangaji and Eli workshop I was able to access “that still place within” and by being calm and still I do not have to curb my anger so much because I am not driving so fast. I am better able to be self aware to see himself clearly instead of coming from the grandiose drama

child.

In interviewing Frank and spending time with him at the Gangaji/Eli retreat, one could feel that he may have felt the strain of maintaining a false image and underneath one could feel the experience not as a grandiose self-state but as a depleted shamed self state. Colomb (1992) notes that narcissistic individuals have trouble cooperating with people as their attention is on themselves. This characteristic was quite evident during the interview and he showed a lack of sensitivity and arrogance towards me. Frank's cold seductiveness and promiscuity, his incapacity to stay in love, his inability to respond to his partners with true empathy and using his partners to sustain his self esteem furthered by incapacity to contribute nothing for the gratification he seeks is said by Golomb (1992) to be a grave concern regarding individuals with NPD. Franks says that in his most significant relationship the one that lasted for nine years that there was "incredible beauty, incredible intelligence, incredible gifts that he was swayed by, but I was unable to be empathic towards these qualities that my partner possessed." In Frank's relationships abuse is quite apparent as well as heavy drug use. According to Beck and Freeman (1990), "narcissists often behave with contempt with intimate partners and if their superior position is challenged their self-concept may degrade, for a while, degrade to self criticism or they may engage in a outburst of rage" (p. 244).

Frank's use of marijuana and alcohol may have served the function of escapism, immaturity, the autistic stimulation of hallucinogens, to escape the feeling of being profoundly lost and alone and the offering of respite from threatening experiences (Firman & Gila, 1997). Frank's account shows that he has compulsive

behaviors in relationships, drugs and sex. Firman and Gila (1997), notes that compulsive behavior serve not only of an avoidance of a negative sense of self, but can function as a way of feeling good about oneself, about life, a feeling of freedom, confidence and connection to oneself and others. From their perspective, Frank's three addictions serve a purpose, addiction to a relationship, however destructive, gives Frank a sense of belonging, he stays in its pull, pushed by the threat of abandonment and enticed by the promise of belonging, only to be plunged into despair by the next round of abuse. With his addiction to alcohol and drugs, he experiences the joy and well being of the intoxication but also the remorse and self-loathing of waking to reality. In his sexual compulsivity (his affirmed first interest in his relationships), his underlying worthlessness/shame (non-beingness caused by childhood trauma) is an attempt to climb out of this negative experience into the realm of self-acceptance (Firman and Gila, 1991, p. 18-20). This seems to be the last frontier that Frank is struggling with now because he stated that; "I still have to face the monster at the basement door---shame".

*Shame: The Monster at the Basement Door*

In the sixth theme, for the co-researchers there is a desperate attempt at avoiding shame, abandonment, emptiness, isolation, fear, loneliness, powerlessness, or to generalize a sense of non-being. Many of the authors and theorists in this study link early emotional deprivation to such personality disorders as borderline and narcissistic personality disorders. Engels (2005) notes that child neglect which is much more prevalent than abuse seems to be much of a potent factor causing later aggression and she also notes that physical abuse breeds abusers and victims. Frank

was left in an orphanage for weeks on end in the care of others, he was neglected because of his mothers leaving with her boyfriend and leaving him in the orphanage. He was also rejected by her openly preferring his twin brother taking him to New Brunswick while leaving Frank in the orphanage in B.C. Later on Frank was adopted and his adopted father was physically abusive. Frank explains it this way:

There were two adoptions. The first one was very difficult, very painful and terrifying at times, isolating humiliating. I've had to work with trauma, to think I'm over it I don't know. I can now see some of the relationship between my own depressions, and when I do get depressed it is not a pretty picture. And so, yes at the tender age of 15 or 16 I became involved in drugs and found that to be an escape, a way to get out of myself. I was an incredibly boring child, a dependent child and a kind of con I guess without being a criminal. Conning people I would always want to fit in and be, oh yeah, I saw that show on TV even though I hadn't, and did that for a long time and I got caught and probably did it afterwards even. So trying to fit in and be like everybody else. I did have a girlfriend for a short time, maybe a month and it didn't work and so I was very mean to her. And that is the key I think, if we're to look to anything in this conversation it would be this indifference, this coldness, this wall that goes up when I decide it's time to go off.

Engel's (2005) would say physical abuse causes abusers or victims; that Franks physical abuse towards his partners and his victimhood are indications of his aggression and also of turning his anger inwards and becoming deeply depressed and self-destructive by abusing alcohol and drugs. This could be said of Adam and

Brandon also, whereas Cliff and Darren abusive tendencies came from more subtle power and control issues. Adam describes it this way:

I had a dad that medicated himself with alcohol daily and mom was very detached, meaning that whenever she would go into an emotional state, she would detach from it and fly off somewhere, she would not hear me for awhile. The first time I was abusive was in kindergarten. I was envious of this kid because he was nice and he was a little late for something and I remember telling him he really wasn't nice or something like that. I remember when lunch came I pushed against the car and made him feel how I feel, that's what I got from it, I wanted him to feel pain like I feel pain, how dare you feel nice. When I asked Adam what pain he was feeling at the time—he responded by saying. I was feeling like I wasn't allowed to be like that kid, my dad wouldn't allow me to be like that, so how dare he be like that.

For all of our co-researchers it was very frightening to lift the veil of intense feelings and when the suppressed emotions were triggered they all lashed out to the one's closest to them. Brandon puts it this way:

Uh, I hated life and I hated myself, there was nothing at home and there was nothing at school. When I played music my dad you know became a fucking prick you know. He beat me and my brother and sister watched that. So I acted out at school, getting into scraps, doing anything to get scraps of attention, fighting, the jock star approach, and then later on you know womanizing. But you know as I'm moving into fatherhood that's when I first started utilizing my that's when first brought forth the warrior energy—head

on and said no fuck you this and this and this—it was all wounded warrior stuff. I look back, wow this is all wounded warrior coming from a wounded place, but at least I wasn't letting myself be the scapegoat.

Darren describes his wounded warrior energy in this way:

I found comfort in roaming the streets. If I had pain I just suffered through it and whatever it was it just passed in a few hours, I couldn't tell them. In the eighth grade I became a co-leader in a gang and we had this whole hierarchy and well there was this bullying thing, you know on the streets. And other kids were chasing the other down side. You know, terrorized by the big brother of the kid you beat up.

According to Kaufman (1980), the interpersonal bridge is the critical event, which can induce shame in children. In Frank's case when his mother became emotionally unavailable by withdrawing her love and support according to Engel's (2005) there is a betrayal of trust and the child experiences shame as abandonment. She goes on to say that belittling is another form of shame. Frank's mother accepted his twin brother who does not have a clubfoot so Frank as a boy may find himself deficient in the comparison and function under the assumption that there is something wrong with him and this guarantees he will be constantly subjected to shame. Further to Frank's shame is the humiliation of receiving beatings from his more powerful stepfather. According to Engel (2005) hatred and vengeance can result from being humiliated and these revenge fantasies of the wounded person can salvage a person's dignity. This seems to be the case with Adam, Brandon, Darren and Gene who exhibit warrior energy whereby Cliff comes across as being self righteous to cover shame.

Gene's shame is covered by being the spiritual warrior and expressed his experiences of shame this way:

I seemed to be the family's spiritual leader from the time I was just a young boy. I found my mom as quite emotional. She would break down at the drop of a pin and we found that pretty funny, you know being in a military family and everything. My father was very abusive and when my brother and I got older we threw him down on the floor and told him that if he did not stop being abusive that we would beat him. He stopped. I started having multiple affairs at the age of 15. So then the guilt wasn't enough to make me stop. Involved with guilt was also shame. In one particular affair it was a family friend's daughter. And that blew up publicly. It was very shameful, so humiliating.

Kaufman (1980) notes that hostility rises to protect the individual against further shame and can become a generalized reaction directed towards others. During the interviews and in spending time with Brandon and Frank, I was aware of this bitterness and hostility. With Cliff and Gene instead of striving for power like Adam does these two co-researchers fight against shame by striving for perfection; thus, by being perfect the vulnerability to being shamed is diminished. This according to Engel (2005) is self-defeating because it sets one up for disappointment and damages one's sense of self. Transferring blame is also a form of shame dumping, and abusive males blame, thus avoiding responsibility for wrongdoing and mistakes.

We can see this happening in the abusive relationships of Adam, Brandon, Darren, Frank and Gene. Cliff tended to go into self-blame and judgment, making himself the reference point of all events. He describes his shame:

I was always very nervous with women, I was always very insecure um you know it was going from pillar to post I was um guess this power differential, I always felt less than, I always felt I could never get the upper hand. It was it was never meeting as equals and I don't think I ever had a relationship with a woman where it was meeting as equals. I really had one pillar to the attempt, which was always that I read more books than they did and that I studied more. I never liked to lose an argument. It seemed like when I got into a relationship I would cling to it, I didn't want to be out of there.

I see all of our co-researchers tapping into their essence (compassion) and providing an antidote to shame. They are trading the compassion of the essential self for the tendency to be impatient and self-critical. Our co-researchers must replace the interjects with a more nurturing compassionate inner voice. Krishnamurti (1991) claims that if we attend to ourselves and to others with total attention by observing, learning, and listening, with all of one's senses awakened, then the egocentric self disappears. Krishnamurti (1991) goes on to say that out of this full use of our senses comes compassion (passion for all), which is a quality of love not based on desire, pleasure, and is not the activity of thought (p. 161). Krishnamurti (1991) claims that being naturally easily attuned to others, is a true blessing, which brings about order and order means no conflict (p. 162).

At the workshop, Frank went into the shame and says he is realizing that this story (by observing the story—the drama in which Gangaji called me on) can be let go of and disidentified with. Frank states that when he was able to let go, he entered into an incredible joyful place that lasted for a couple of hours. Firman and Gila (1997) explains the situation this way: if we overly identify with a feeling, we will distance ourselves from other feelings such as joy and from thoughts and obscure oneself from rationality and the potential for happier emotions as well (p. 58). Burns (2006) believes that distorted thinking such as emotional reasoning is an illusion and that the moment we put the lie to our distorted thoughts, one's fears will disappear (p.15). In a recent workshop attended by the author, Burns went on to state that he sees this freedom from distorted thinking as enlightenment. Tolle (2005) believes that when a person sees clearly that what we think or feel is not really our true self, then “we need to negate or undo the illusion of self and sense our essential Beingness, the I am, in the background of our lives at all times” (p. 79). Krishnamurti (2000) notes that “the mind likes to live in a rut and is lazy and this rut is belief, opinion and conclusion” (p.31). He goes on to say that the brain lives in the security of abstractions, which become more important than the facts (Krishnamurti, 2000).

Frank has abstained from using marijuana for several years and drinks only on occasion. Frank states that as an artist he has naturally reached inside of himself to create and through this process he has become a seeker and is finding a calm place inside, a place of oneness. According to O'Connell (1998), the narcissistic person needs to develop a more stable cohesive sense of self by integration of grandiosity and self-loathing thus identifying the core traits of narcissism. This integration,

according to Almaas (1996), can lead one to be more realistic and satisfied, but he says we need to go further and explore the actual nature of the self. Frank seems to be on this path as he states that he is realizing that wholeness comes from within. Almaas (1996) claims that the feeling of an essential presence is a felt knowingness, a quality of consciousness a feeling of identity. Tolle (2005) notes, “instead of the ego controlling motivation such as the need to stand out, to be in control, to be special, for attention, and the need for power, and also the need for enemies or the need for separation: all these egoic needs are governed by fear” (p. 80). Firman and Gila (1997) along with Tolle (2005) believe this is the fear of non-existence or non-being the fear of being nobody. This conclusion makes sense in the case of Frank given his childhood abandonment issues.

My sixth co-researcher Gene was not able to give up his sexual acting out because of guilt, he needed to be caught with his friend’s daughter and be shamed and humiliated in public before any change in his behavior took place. He states that it was this experience that changed things for him.

This caused me so much pain that I lived in darkness and searched my soul for five years. I lived in the darkness of my uncomfortable thoughts and shameful emotions until slivers of light started to come through. At this time in my life I collapsed physically and had ideations of suicide. I realized that the attachment and attraction to affairs had a tremendous pull in my life but I abstained. I recall not moving towards desires and just sitting in a heart centered beingness and abiding there. This would bring me to a place of deep grief and the catachresis would bring me to a place of peace to a much more

expansive presence. I was able to observe my lust arising and not to move towards any desire and in this way I was able to trust myself. Once I had self-commitment then I was able to commit to my wife. Lust was converted into passion a passion for all of humanity and when I desire either a woman or a man I use my wife to make love with the all. Staying in the stillness helped and it became easier not to move towards outside attachments.

Gene talks about how he lost his innocence because of being beaten by his father, and he was ashamed for many years to talk about it. His stillness and open heartedness is a return to innocence and the stillness of his heart according to him is the antidote to every form of addiction. He sees the opposite of this innocence as being predatory in which he relates to. Gene notes that he has been in the service of his egoic self and that it has been very ugly and that much of his life was lived in the service of his own needs without regard for others. He now is able to recognize his arrogance when it's there and allows himself to experience humiliation when he acts from a place of arrogance. Gene states that his narcissistic tendencies have been the opening that has allowed him to experience shame, process shame and thus sit in stillness, not move towards attachments and experience heart centered joy. He sees this change as an expansive awareness and this awareness has allowed Gene to realize that he has self-loathing that he has hidden for years. The stillness has helped Gene also to see the other side—a felt sense of his essence and he claims he has been able to come from that place more and more rather than from the self centered place.

Gene's sexual acting out with his friend's daughter shamed and isolated him from his family and community. Gene's tendency to dehumanize can be seen as an

empathic failure to respect the personhood of most notably women, although he did sexually exploit men also, and this led to dire consequences. According to Firman and Gila (1997) Gene's darkness may be explained as a situation where the empathic holding is broken, and he is dropped and falls into the experience of annihilation and non-being. Gene puts it this way: "The pain was so great, so uncomfortable, so humiliating, at that point I could not do anything right not even die right, it was a total disintegration of my ego and I collapsed physically too." Dante says it this way:

Midway upon the journey of our life  
I found myself within a forest dark,  
For the straightforward pathway has been lost...  
So bitter is it, death is little more.  
(as cited in Zweig & Adams, 1991, p. 238).

Gene is recognizing and feeling the constricted effects of denial, watching the illusions of the self shatter and is feeling the hollowness of his sexual drives. He is starting to be accountable for his destructive side. Joseph Campbell believes that this process is how the cracks of light come in:

One thing that comes out of myths is that at the bottom  
of the abyss comes the voice of salvation.  
The black moment is the moment when the real message  
of transformation is going to come.  
At the darkest moment comes the light.  
(as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. 238)

Lowen (1997) points out despair is the cure for our delusions, without despair we cannot transfer our allegiance to reality—it is a mourning period for our fantasies.

Gene experienced his intense drive towards sexual compulsivity as quite shameful but according to Dodes (2002) "the underlying sameness of sexual addiction and other addictions such as drugs and gambling when understood as

mechanisms of the mind explain the unity of all addictions” (p. 97). If we were to work out the purpose and drive behind Gene’s sexual addiction, it may not be a simple expression of a sexual drive but rather the addiction may fit the pattern of the psychology of addiction. Gene acted out when he was working out of town for the most part and Dodes (2002) notes that the intensity of the drive behind addiction reflects the basically healthy insistence on not being helpless—for Gene this was his being alone. We can recall from Gene’s account there were many occasions of feeling powerless and helpless because of his military father’s physical abuse and his multiple affairs with other women and long leaves of absence. This situation may explain Gene’s drive to have some form of sexual activity—also a need to be seen and admired—the need for the power to overcome the feeling of helplessness (loneliness). According to Dodes (2002), “If a person suffers from sexual addiction we can trace the meaning of the addiction back to issues of helplessness that have little to do with adult sexuality itself” (p. 221). By sitting in stillness and not moving towards his intense drive towards outside gratification Gene may have been able to internalize enough of a sense of empowerment. Tolle (2005) notes that by, “watching one’s thoughts that justify addictive behavior as they arise in one’s mind is the key to being the observer of one’s mind and this will help one from being tricked into what the mind wants”(p. 248).

By inquiring into his self centeredness Gene is exposing his narcissistic tendencies and he is realizing a self loathing which according to Almaas (1996) may be explained as the “increasing awareness of the fundamental weakness and emptiness of the normal identity” (p. 156). This is a deep sense of low self-esteem,

which is the underlying state that manifests, in the feeling of being deficient, and worthless (Almaas, 1996). Awareness of these narcissistic manifestations tends to predominate the further we progress towards self-realization, and according to Almaas (1996) can be reminders of the barriers of self-realization. Wilber (1996), notes that many paths lead to a witnessing orientation, especially that of self-inquiry. This inquiry is the result of Gene's meditative practice, marked by freedom from ego identity and has created an expanded state of awareness into a state of heart centered openness. This allows Gene to observe all of his thoughts and desires from the background of awareness without being identified and carried away by them. In particular his destructive desires which have led to dire consequences.

#### *Traps of the Spiritual Path in Moving Towards Wholeness*

In the seventh theme, in the lived experiences of the co-researchers there were some pitfalls along the way. Fully understanding themselves helped the co-researchers to have their own experiences instead of being dependent on some higher authority to have answers for them. Kramer and Alstad (1993) suggests that with some seekers it is in vogue to denigrate reason and elevate intuition in an attempt to transcend the dryness of science and linear thought. A more balanced way of living would be to combine passion with reason so that one could live more creatively. Understanding would come from this practice and the pitfalls of being a "true believer" who takes on beliefs to generate wanted emotions would be avoided. This can cause dependency and erodes self-trust according to Kramer and Alstad (1993) and Krishnamurti (2000). One needs to understand and trust that there is no fundamental difference between oneself and the guru, but some guru's present as all

knowing and state that they are self realized and that one needs to aspire to that level. One cannot depend on this to attain happiness and peace of mind because we are not having our own experience; we according to Osho (1985) become like sheep and never really ever experience our own essential self.

Given the above, understanding the dynamics of one's thoughts and experiences is important. Adam would crash after each failed relationship and get into treatment for his addiction to marijuana and one of the last times he did this he was treated by a Psychiatrist who helped him stand on his own two feet. Adam puts it this way:

I have this fear of facing me, I think it's a fear of letting go of that egocentric part of myself. I feel I am able to release myself through meditation, which is a heart centered guided meditation. I belong to a Spiritualist church and a psychologist that is affiliated with the church is helping me with releasing emotions. In this way I am meeting unexpressed hurt and pain. She is teaching me to feel the biggest pain in my body and to go into it and release the trauma that is stored in the body. Visualization is used to facilitate change. The Spiritualist church is similar to John Edwards' beliefs of communication with loved ones and angels through mediums, séances, paranormal phenomena, and psychic mediumistic phenomena.

Adam describes himself as a medium and spiritual leader. He finds that this is another way to find truth and guidance. When I asked Adam how he keeps his plastic wings from melting he says that it is very difficult to keep balanced as he realizes he still wants gratification from external sources. He further states that when he

focuses's on his heart in the heart centered meditation, he feels centered. From this place of heart centered beingness he says he can really be in authentic relationships with other humans.

The trap of believing séances and mediums is that, according to psychic researcher Allen Spaggett, it is full of deception and trickery. In Spaggett's book *The Psychic Mafia*, a well-known medium Keene provides details on how mediums use fraudulent means to trick people (1977). When a person is seeking relief and not trusting one's intelligence then acceptance of trickery as real can happen. Keene states that if he were caught in deception, he would blame it on mischievous spirits. He and his fellow mediums at Camp Chesterfield Indiana plainly despised their clients whom they labeled as marks, suckers, dupes, fools, etc. In contrast, mediums like John Edwards, Leonora Piper, or Eileen Garrett have all been extensively tested none of whom have been caught cheating.

As we have seen, Adam becomes overly involved in his romantic relationships, based on idealization of his partners with the hope of being rescued from a neglectful childhood, engendered by abandonment, fear, shame, guilt and emptiness which according to Firman and Gila (1997), are lower unconscious qualities. Without these lower unconscious primal wounds, Adam would not be clinging and anxious in his struggle for being, bringing him under the thrall of addiction. This may be so in the form of spiritual love also which can backfire because it abdicates personal power and responsibility. During my time with Adam one got the sense that he may have been entirely attached to the phenomena of mediums and had fallen into perverted views. The obsessed spiritual athlete is a

manifestation of this—Adam had posters of spirit guides all over the walls—mainlining on speaking to the departed and séance’s—believing he is a medium with special powers—and the underlying feeling under all this is that I experienced in Adam was a underlying primal wounding found in all these states of consciousness. Firman and Gila (1997) notes, that, “the repression of the traumatic supports naïve optimism, otherworldly spirituality, and unrealistic idealism.

Adam relates having had a peak experience similar to Bill Wilson of AA fame in that an aesthetic experience of shimmering white light, and experiencing a felt connection to the universe suddenly uplifted him. According to him, this event helped him to experience joy and bliss and a connection to a larger realm than his former dry lifeless existence. Adam is also doing work on his repressed feelings, trauma and pain through a professional connected to his spiritualist church. Adam says that this process helps him to stay grounded which is difficult for him. Firman and Gila (1997) claim that the union with the divine and awareness of the trauma and wounding keeps the person engaged in both the depths and heights of human experience. Thus through an increasingly intimate relationship with Self, Adam may become more able to experience the wonder and bliss, as well as the pain and terrors of existence. According to Firman and Gila (1997), “This increasing emphatic connection between “I” and Self also leads to the surfacing and healing of primal wounding” (p. 148). This lack of empathic connection is what derails authentic personality, which is the false self with its attachment and narcissistic compliance to environmental expectations. Therefore, survival personality or false self is developed to protect from the fall into the pit of nonexistence. This survival personality,

according to Firman and Gila (1997) is not a one-dimensional façade, an empty shell devoid of depth and richness but may allow one to function with truly impressive talents and abilities. This is similar to Almas in that one must deal with ones psychological wounding and Self Realization entails an openness not only to the joys of life, but to the pain, uncertainty, and limitations of life as well. Adam appears to be on this path.

Brandon is realizing the importance of building accountability into his life by being humble but at the same time he states that there are many more realizations to come. This can be a trap for Brandon because of his narcissistic tendency to go from one new experience to another. This can be a high functioning survival personality which helps him feel esteemed which covers rage, feelings of anxiety, worthlessness and isolation. This is described by Firman and Gila (1997) as a survival trance, covering rage which is a violent energy flowing from the primal wound. This permeates Brandon's life as it manifests in his obsessive enjoyment of hating his father and his joy of devaluing him. According to Firman and Gila (1997) this expression of rage towards another is experienced as acute threats to the self, which indicate vulnerability and reflect past wounding experiences. Brandon expressed it this way: "he was a fucking tyrant, things were non-negotiable, and he drove me deeper into shame, he violated my deepest values, and I lost my fundamental sense of self and world. I became a tyrant." His lower unconscious was created and there was a split between the lower unconscious and his higher unconscious. Brandon states:

I am angry at the tyrannical legacy father has left and this is expressed as a narcissistic fit when things don't go my way. I see my narcissism as holding

me back from having this life of devotion because when I meditate I go into deficient emptiness, which is shame. Now the emptiness is being transformed because I am just allowing it without judgment. I am experiencing the higher consciousness as this movement up the vertical; represented by awareness of unity, co-operation and universality. Through meditation, music and poetry I am able to commune with this higher more unitive dimension of existence. This co-operative unitive self has recently been expressed with my father. During the Christmas holidays, my father was being critical of his grandchildren and I was able to address this directly by saying, is there anything you would like to talk about right now. For the first time I came from a place of co-operation instead of coming from a place of the shadow warrior thus avoiding being abusive.

Firman and Gila (1997) explain that when one is even slightly criticized this negative energy tends to destabilize the positive identification of the devotional critical top dog sub personality and triggers the threat of non-being. Further, the underlying threat of non-being is evident in the shame based underdog sub-personality because of the deep void or inner emptiness and no sense of self at all (Firman & Gila, 1997). The two sub personalities reflect the higher/lower split. Brandon was the rejected child with the need for an empathic mirroring connection resulting in repression and the underdog and then channeled into the extroverted top dog transpersonal sub personality. This movement up the vertical scale of the transpersonal has led Brandon to be more aware of his own feelings of hatred and revenge towards others and this may obstruct the expression of compassion. Brandon

notes that he spends a lot of time developing along the transpersonal dimension by doing intensive periods of meditation, feeling wonderful only to lose it all—feeling bad about himself, the same old shit surfaces again, the anger.

Almaas (1996) believes that one feels deeply hurt and reacts with extreme anger in the perceived failure of the response of another person and terms this as more accurately narcissistic rage. Almaas goes on to say that one feels justified in their indignation, which originates from self identity, comes from a sense of entitlement, the stakes of integrity are involved, sensitivity to narcissistic insults, insincerity to others feelings, devaluing and emotional hardness, a tendency to displace ones wound onto others and being envious of others narcissistic success are all elements of narcissistic rage that need to be addressed (p. 325-327). Brandon displays these reactions of narcissistic rage and understands as well as experiences them in relation to others and sees the role of aggression (the wounded warrior) but by being too identified with the transpersonal he may not of metabolized the narcissistic rage. Almaas (1996) notes that even with deep experiences of essential identity, the resolution is not secure until one works through the narcissistic rage. He still cannot be in a relationship and is in a lot of pain. Brandon turns away from individuality and responsibility by attempting to maintain an exclusive unitive consciousness. Wilber (1996) calls this the ultimate pathology in that it is a failure to integrate the manifest and unmanifest realms. Firman and Gila (1997) note that this may involve a difficult disidentification from giving up the quest for enlightenment or detaching from unitive states and working through some amount of psychological

wounding to attain a new level of personal integration so that one can express transpersonal awareness in all walks of life.

Cliff stated that he is more able to integrate his self-awareness into daily life by realizing the powerful effect that his thoughts have on him. He explains this as the thoughts being the small self or ego, which is trying to hang on to its position of power.

This is the superior grandiose self or false self. Clinging to these thoughts just causes me more pain—the pain of self-loathing. Self loathing and narcissism are one and the same and I recognize it and judged it as shame or self loathing and I get stuck in despair—the last home of the ego. The witnessing self has the capacity to observe this automatic thinking and I do not necessarily buy into it—this is a great gift. This is where therapy and spiritual practice meet but both have a different purpose. I do not want to talk about the role of therapy and I take the stance you know more about therapy than I do so therefore I do not want to discuss it.

After the breakup of his marriage Cliff received an inheritance from his father and sold his business. Cliff is according to him doing what he always has wanted to do—going to retreats as a cook, but also spending intensive periods in meditative practice. As stated, his fear of women and getting into relationships may be expressed in a debilitating anxiety of losing his spirituality. Firman and Gila (1997) conclude, “the fear of losing one’s spirituality is expressed as a desperate need to withdraw from conflict and turmoil, or a fear of being overwhelmed by interpersonal relationships—all issues of traumatic roots that will need to be addressed in some

way” (p. 189). This situation could be a spiritual trap for Cliff. Cliff expressed being self-conscious and shy with women. Almaas (1996) observes that one of the main characteristics of narcissism is self-consciousness, which can be dissolved by the quality of the depth of our being rather than the normal self’s reflection. Normal self-reflection is to be identified with self-concepts that greatly limit oneself in the world as determined by ideas and images that define us. The actual nature of the self then according to Almaas (1996), provides freedom of our need for mirroring and we need less and less recognition.

Cliff has more of an orientation towards the transpersonal and away from the personal—a crisis of duality. He has a connection to the transpersonal through spiritual community and retreats, but when I invited him to come to a psychotherapy group he expressed fear of being overwhelmed by his personal issues in regards to his interpersonal relationship with his former partner. He is quite consistent in avoiding talking about personal matters and prefers to talk about states of consciousness—a true dharma bum. According to Firman and Gila (1997), “Self-Realization is less a state of consciousness than a state of will—a commitment to be true, come what will” (p. 193).

By doing self-inquiry work, Darren, my third co-researcher, was able to be more honest with himself. One of the monsters at the cave door that Darren had to meet was his loneliness and he overcame this by cultivating a friendship with himself. He met a lady at a workshop and each one of them are and have been able to do their own self-inquiry work. An important step, as explained by Darren, was to read Gangaji’s book *The Diamond in Your Pocket* and her husband’s book *The Enneagram*

*of Liberation* and then to go and experience a workshop with them as facilitators. During the workshop Darren with the help of the facilitators and others was able to identify his personality type as the Warrior. Most warriors are proud to be warriors unlike other types—I relate to this myself—our ego may get attached to the power, intensity and lust of the type. During this time a facilitator asked him. What do you really want? Darren responded that he wanted peace. Darren notes that this really hit him hard with the realization of how his personality type was a betrayal of what he really wanted—he felt embarrassed in the realization of the self-betrayal. He explains it was such a gift, a transformation to let go of the fixation to the warrior personality and to be present without thought and to be connected to the other participants without intention to be nice—just to be.

I was thankful for Gangaji and Eli for providing the space so that I could go beyond his fixation. This is a slowed down Zen heart space, a felt experience of resonating with nature and the other human beings that were present.

This according to Gillette and Moore (1990) this is the “Warrior in his fullness, the warriors dharma, or Tao a spiritual or psychological path through life” (p. 79). Darren has honed himself into an efficient spiritual machine organized around a transpersonal commitment going beyond his own concerns to serve a transpersonal goal in the African Congo as a doctor.

From Darren’s story, we can see that he has been looking in other people’s window to find a feeling of connection, warmth and peace. As Gangaji (2005), Tolle (2005) and Almaas (1996) claim that there is a fundamental core truth at the heart of religion that mystics have pointed out that is within each of us—the truth of the

essential self. As stated by Darren at the workshop, when thought was stopped if only for a moment the peace that was present within revealed itself to be the essence of being. Darren realized the great betrayal of his fixation on the warrior typology with all the tendencies of the warrior. We could relate this to Darren's ceaseless activities of running toward pleasure and away from pain. His misidentification was recognized as the root cause of his suffering and this recognition opened the space to experience peace. He exclaims:

I was running this fiction movie and getting juice out of it and well I just realized the betrayal of myself. I arrived at this through direct inquiry exploring the concepts and beliefs that he may have assumed to be reality.

Darren's freedom of the bondage of being so fixated in his personality, liberates him to be in direct experience of who he is. Darren states it this way—"just to be". Gangaji (2005) believes that when "ones true nature is recognized as presence then wanting to be better or being something better is seen in all its absurdity, a great deep laugh follows" (p. 117). This was quite evident with most of the participants at the workshop including Darren. Darren was able to meet his pain by doing therapy for years, understanding the emotional, mental and physical contraction around pain, the history, justification, blame and attachment to his story through psychological process. Spiritual inquiry of the true self has led to the willingness to simply and directly experience life.

There may be a spiritual trap in all of this—chasing peace; it may remain out of reach (Gangaji, 2005). Past history for Darren may repeat itself—the avoidance of what haunts him and the grasping of what he desires. Gangaji (2005) warns us that

one of the pitfalls of the “spiritual life is the ego’s attempt to escape heartbreak, difficulty, patterns of narcissistic rage, revenge and the desire for transcendence becomes bigger than the willingness to let the heart open to it all, the totality of human beauty, as well as the totality of human catastrophe” (p. 231). There is no running from any aspect of life including escape through infantile images of enlightenment (Gangaji, 2005).

Frank, the fifth co-researcher, seems to be avoiding fear and avoiding thinking about the pain that is inside. Frank says:

I want to be open to what’s going on—my recent girlfriend is going to a wedding with one of my friends and I am feeling jealous, weak and needy. I am a gypsy right now and relates to a recent movie about a guy my age that gets laid off his job and he discovers his family and other values. I am better able to be more calm and still and this helps me to be aware that I do not have to jump out of the car with my machine gun. Gangaji and Eli’s words have helped me to be more aware and to observe my own drama, to see myself and where I am at and to have comfort in that. The workshop has heightened my awareness and that I realize how I identify with this story of pain, the trauma, sadness, grief and despair.

We closed the interview with the reassurance that I would not use his story against him and just for the study.

With Frank, there seems to be normal developmental conflicts over his own autonomy, which leaves him in a place of shame and doubt. One gets the feeling that there is a conflict between the will to tell the truth about the atrocities in a

contradictory and fragmented manner which undermines the creditability and serves the imperative of truth telling and secrecy (Herman, 1992, p.1). One can feel in Frank that the basic trust in the world, the positive value of the self and also the systems of attachment are missing or fragmented. Frank has attended numerous workshops and the wounded soldier may be calling out for mother, or for God.

According to Herman (1992) traumatized people feel utterly abandoned and thereafter a sense of alienation and of disconnection pervades every relationship, be it abstract divine systems of care or intimate family bonds. When interviewing Frank, I got the sense that he doubted me, he had a difficult time to trust me and he also doubted himself. Frank states that he avoids experiences of inner pain and Almaas (1996) suggests it would be easier for Frank to be with his pain if he realized that it had also to do with the disconnection from a genuine part of him, which was abandoned in early childhood. Frank has fixated on the warrior personality to protect against vulnerability. This came out in the workshop that Frank and I attended. So one may become a warrior to protect oneself from an unsafe world. This is the aftermath of trauma. Many researchers and Psychologists have recognized the tremendous pervasiveness of the survival trance. This is unconscious, unless one is able to stop and observe ones thoughts, concerns, and desires and become aware of one's everyday trance (Friman & Gila, 1997).

One gets the feel from Frank's story of this great ghostly fog—order blends into chaos, love into hate, ugliness into beauty, law into anarchy, civility into savagery and the vapors suck one in. This is the trance. From this point of view awareness and to be awakened to ones widest range of experience would be

beneficial (Firman & Gila, 1997). Frank has stated that his awareness of his desires, thoughts and his rage has helped him to come to a place of peace and a more authentic self. Gangaji (2005) notes that this awareness can help us to break free of conditioned existence “by meeting these horrors, freshly, innocently, surrendering everything to the force that calls you home” (p. 232). In practical terms, according to Gangaji (2005), this awareness means telling the truth, a willingness to bear the pain, and just to be oneself only in this moment. Frank stated he is more content to accept himself and just to be. Frank’s search for home is beginning to be realized.

Gene my last co-researcher stated he was the family’s spiritual leader, which according to him helped him to be an empathic person. He was sensitive to helping the underdog but at the same time he was having multiple affairs with men and women to get his sexual gratification needs met and as stated he was not able to see the person he was having sex with as human. Gene recalls:

That where I live it is very shiny, everything shines. This happened when I died in the last life, all emotional, mental, and physical body was dropped and an illumination occurred, and I embodied virtue perfectly not imperfectly.

This is an oneness with essence, love, virtue, and god.

During the retreat that I attended with Gene, I observed Gene communicating the wonder of these experiences to others. This may have subtly reinforced his specialness to others and made this group of people more apt to listen. One could observe Gene continually reinforcing images of his difference and superiority. Some common themes emerged as explained by Firman and Gila (1997): a great energy breaks through boundaries, ordinary separateness disappears, and felt oneness with

love and the cosmos is felt; it feels like you have already died and have been born again with no fear, and there is a recognition that one is an aspect of god and that the cosmos is perfect. This is to be not self-centered at all—it is possible for a few special people to be above it all. This need for Gene “to see images of perfection and omniscience goes back to the whole guru/disciple relationship being predicated on surrender” (Firman and Gila, 1997, p. 52). It would be difficult to surrender to a person in this case Eli the workshop guru who was not perceived to be self centered and to put self-interest first. It is interesting to note that the characteristics that I have pointed out in Gene’s personality are also manifested in Eli. In Eli’s case this adulation led to abuse of power by using his exalted position to seduce women sexually while preaching monogamy. Firman and Gila (1997) go on to say that from this “experiencing of unity it is difficult to feel the realness of normal reality and it is not difficult to become Oneness intoxicated” (p. 305).

Gene seemed to be turned on when he had an audience. Firman and Gila (1997) explain this as narcissistic in that one is enamored with oneself and from a psychoanalytic perspective, the infantile stage of autoeroticism, boils down to being one’s own sex object. His power seemed to be in capturing attention through his intelligence and skill. From Gene’s past history Gene could be more prone to narcissism and psychoanalytical (childhood lacks) explanation would say adulation is the experience a narcissist most craves because it is addictive (Firman and Gila, 1997).

By undertaking spiritual practice, Gene encountered his dark side; seeking truth means experiencing pain and darkness, which blocks the path of the esoteric

student. Gene's story tells us that his first reaction upon seeing his shadow side was to experience guilt and shame and the feeling that he was the darkness. According to Eichman (as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991), this darkness or evil is a false idea and needs to be seen as a wound or injury, caused by cruel programming during childhood. Wallowing in shame and guilt do no good, and dwelling in the light does no good either because according to Eichman (as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991), "both light and darkness are illusions; what lies underneath them both is nothing but Being, Bliss, and Consciousness" (p. 137). This conclusion should always be in our awareness.

*The Gradual Awakening of Self Awareness*

The "I" as I conceive it, is irreducibly a unity and invariably a subject.

It is, I postulate, the essential being.

James Bugental

(as cited in Firman and Gila, 1997, p. 23)

For the co-researchers a penetrating insight into the nature of the conditioned self is observed as the essential cause of all suffering. This obscures and limits the realization of ones true self or one's Beingness. This shocking limitation has been evident in all the co-researchers in the form of subpersonality or survival personality whether it has manifested in the lower unconscious or in the higher unconscious. In identifying with a particular role or life script, this moving unconsciously among different states of identification and different levels of dissociation is the way most of us live out our lives (Firman & Gila, 1997). The co-researchers all related to being taken over by their personality as the situation demands.

Adam describes his true self, “as a open hearted beingness which he claims helps him to stay grounded, keep his balance and stay connected to people”. This view is important because the antidote for the shielded passive aggressive warrior is innocence. From a therapeutic point of view, Adam notes that this, “openness to my heart’s pain helps me to meet my hurt and pain which releases me from unexpressed feelings.” In this way, according to Almaas (1996) one can experience the truth in the intimacy of our personal experience. Almaas (1996) goes on to say the person will actually feel wounded, not only emotionally, but the wound feels like a gash or wound to the heart. Adam has the empathic support of a teacher so it is easier for him to trust and surrender to the process. For Adam this breaking from narcissistic tendencies begins with awareness of his narcissistic issues in his present life, which he did with this interviewer and also working with a psychologist remembering and re-experiencing the original childhood hurt. He is starting to recognize what is genuine in himself as a “internal stability, which comes from a heart centered beingness.”

Meditation practice helps Brandon to experience the positive and negative aspects of narcissistic rage. Meditation is a way of disidentification with, for example rage and, “one would begin to realize the control rage has over one’s life and begin to open to the fear and helplessness beneath the rage”(Firman & Gila, 1997 p. 59). Brandon states that he “does not judge the emptiness and just allows it.” Brandon describes very well in his story the loss of mirroring and the resulting rage. Almaas (1996) claims this rage has a hardness, and that is not seen in other kinds of anger. The author was able to feel the hardness of Brandon’s rage and also to see how

meditation has helped Brandon to come from a place of loving kindness and hence develop a greater tolerance for the wound. Brandon is also very aware of the need to dissolve the narcissistic defenses of idealization and grandiosity. He states that, “he can get on a narcissistic gig of being a rock star and having women idealize him, but claims that it gets in the way of him being responsible.” This capacity for self-awareness will help Brandon transform his narcissism. He goes on to say that it is his ego and through meditation he experiences the emptiness of his ego—“the negative—feels like a loss, aloneness—no judgment opens to more space—mind goes on a trip—lost—confusion deficient emptiness.” Brandon states he lives in the paradox of feeling like he is a social failure and that he is fulfilling transpersonal qualities facilitated by a music career such as creativity, aliveness-process, playfulness, richness, calm, bliss, and effortlessness. Firman and Gila (1997) believe this response is how the world appears to a person during or after a peak experience. The opposition of the higher and lower levels of consciousness is described both as a level of ecstasy and then the opposed qualities of desolation.

With Brandon, the rock star gig would produce a vast chasm separating these two realms of humanness. For feelings of contact, we find feelings of loneliness and contempt by all: appalling self-centeredness—exiled. According to Firman and Gila (1997), “the higher and lower unconscious contain and separate the sublime and traumatic experiences that a person has deemed too stimulating for a stable and consistent mode in the world” (p. 134). This can be played out addictively in the positive and the negative with rage. One could ask oneself why do I rage? This may be to avoid feeling small and helpless (lower unconscious) and to feel strong in

oneself (higher unconscious) (Firman and Gila, 1997). During the interview, Brandon spontaneously picked up his guitar and started playing—it was so simple, peaceful, and inclusive.

Cliff has taken the path of the spiritual warrior through the discipline of marital arts, meditation, and yoga. Cliff states he gets, “stuck in lecturing people on what he thinks should be the right practice, things like picking the right teacher for his wife and telling people they are wasting their time reading Osho.” He says he is aware of the need to get past this and that his own thoughts are a dangerous thing. He claims he still judges the emptiness as shame and self-loathing and feels despair, which Cliff claims as the last home of the ego for him. He goes on to state that the, “mind is clearly a automatic function, it’s just doing it’s thing and that he is able to come from a witnessing self and has the capacity to witness his mind and not necessarily buy into self definitions.” Almaas (1996) believes that once a person learns to be aware of these judgments then they will fall away. According to Osho (1973) the path of yoga is suppression with awareness and this “creates a fighter to stop desiring—fight desire and create a integration in you that is desireless” (p. 18). Cliff is ascetic in that he has embraced celibacy and meditation through going to constant retreats since his wife has left him. If one looks into his eyes, into his face, the fight and the turmoil is still there. From Cliff’s history of a devouring mother he could still be “battling against everything soft and relational and the influence of the shadow warrior: unsure of his legitimate phallic power” (Gillette & Moore, 1991, p. 92). Cliff sees a danger in therapy and spiritual practice meeting; he says “they should have clear-cut boundaries and that they are different and have a different purpose.”

He refused to elaborate. From a non-dual perspective Tolle (2005) would say that embodiment of all forms of experience leads to awakened consciousness.

The Warrior's transpersonal cause can help one to hone himself into an efficient spiritual machine, relinquishing personal needs and wishes to bear things in the service of a transpersonal goal (Gillette & Moore, 1990). As stated previously, Cliff has been somewhat emotionally detached and this may be because of his transpersonal loyalty which relativizes the importance of his human relationships. Cliff speaks out against, tyranny, oppression, corporate hierarchies, greed, and unfulfilling lifestyles and he is helping to create new retreat centers and spiritual ventures for humankind. Cliff is fighting the good fight to make the world a more fulfilling place. The disidentification from his judgmental thinking leads Cliff to be warm, compassionate, appreciative and generative. This has been my experience with Cliff.

Darren is able to see the betrayal of the fiction story of being fixated on his story of being a warrior and the resulting adrenaline rush and power that this gave him. He needed to stop and ask himself what he really wanted. The betrayal to the self was realized. This stopping allowed Darren to just simply be and he experienced in this stillness a pure presence. Darren explains it this way:

After being a little embarrassed of how I was always acting from the warrior personality point I awoke the next morning and went outside and the trees were in a fourth dimension not three. Yea, wow I could resonate with nature, walking so slowly, just a little movement with no thought. I was just there. There was no

thought or intention of wanting to be nice to people. It wasn't there. It was so neat to see the sort of gift of what can be their, if you let go of the fixation. Gangaji (2005) states, "when we stop frantically searching for conformation in the wrong places and trust life, it is possible to discover within the wellspring of our own heart true peace and fulfillment" (p. 220).

Frank's increased awareness of his attachment to drama, the many faces of meeting the monster at the basement door can be an ego trip as realized by Frank. When he was called on his drama (Frank called out in a primal scream which Frank realized may have been his ego attached to his pain) by Eli and Gangaji during the workshop Frank says he began to realize that:

I have done a lot of work on shame and there is a place deep inside where the shame seems to evaporate and I am in a place of moving towards; not the small self but a higher Self. The next day at the workshop I found myself in this incredible joyful place—one of the most joyful places of my life which lasted for a couple of hours but I need to remember that place. When I slow down that I find a still place within and without dramatic effort, I can just see where I am, not where I need to be, or where I've been, that's easy enough to do. It's about where I am and being at peace with that.

Tolle (2005) suggests that whenever we are in a negative state that there is an attachment and the ego believes it has a useful purpose. "When a person becomes aware of this then there is a switch from ego identity to awareness and this means the ego is shrinking and awareness is growing" (Tolle, 2005, p. 111). Frank seems to realize that being the victim and being wronged by so many people has a payoff, it

makes him feel special and that this is the egoic mind. Frank is able to realize that he is creating his own suffering and that the ego is pathological. Frank is learning to slow down and make peace with the present moment and in his hours of joy he experienced what the Buddha called the suchness of life.

Sitting still in the meditative heart space has heightened Gene's awareness of his narcissistic tendencies. Gene explains this as "very humbling and sobering when I realized how I betrayed my family and friends when I had a sexual relationship with my friend's daughter." By sitting in stillness he was able to allow this insight to penetrate him deeply. "I realized how ugly my arrogance and self-centeredness was and allowed the humiliation to break me open further into a place where I realized I did not really like myself and that was when the true narcissism was revealed."

As previously stated, Gene recalls five years of darkness. Eichman et al (1991) explains that meditation practice releases repressed dark material, ego reactions, feelings of terror, and embarrassing manifestations, and ultimately transforming these frightening visions into usable psychic energy, "is the only way to deal with them"(as cited in Zweig & Abrams, 1991, p. 136). He goes on to say that reasoning has no effect on healing our shadow but that meditative practice and grounding exercises can be beneficial. Faced with his humiliation, shame, physical collapse, discomfort and helplessness Gene had no option but to surrender, and he lived through it. Gene stated that: "I could not even die right and that I did not want to live with myself anymore and from this staying in the stillness I realized that I did not have to move to my attachments to objects outside of myself."

Tolle (2005) states that acute emotional pain helps one to disidentify from ones mind that perpetuates the unhappy self and one starts to embrace inner peace. Gene explains this as “being in touch with essence, love, virtue, god, and its all heart, it’s all the same.”

### *Summary*

In looking back at the co-researchers themes I noticed how childhood primal wounding has had an affect on their lived experiences. In their search for intimacy there were many pitfalls along the way and many realizations to be had. In the section on world collapse and the paths of grandiosity and descent, one can see how pain can be a great teacher. On the path towards wholeness through increased self-awareness one can see how each co-researcher comes to realize their core essence or Beingness.

We looked at how primal wounding affected our first co-researcher, Adam, and how he defended against this by feeling powerless and helpless in his relationship with his abusive father, which led him to manipulating his mother to get his love and attention needs met. Brandon’s childhood was characterized by a lack of balance in regards to his father’s abuse and gushing love towards him and his mother’s inability to protect him from his father. Brandon defended by being a tyrant himself and being a rebel. Cliff who was mother’s special boy, was abandoned by his Dad and the wound manifested in abandonment terror, self-loathing, and a drive towards perfectionism to ward off criticism. Darren never felt any empathy from either of his parents because of their abrupt indifference toward him. He responded by looking outside of the family for connection. Frank’s early childhood wounding led to compulsivity, a need for immediate gratification, a need to fit in, and the escape from

pain through using drugs. Gene became mom's protector because of his abusive father and he responded to dad by being the warrior and sensitive towards mother. This behavior led to a lower unconscious (the warrior) and higher unconscious split (the hopeful spiritual athlete).

In the expressions of the false self and displays of narcissism section, Adam demands love through intimidation and being manipulative with abusive tendencies. Brandon gets his narcissistic supplies met by being grandiose, the inflated self, and also responds to criticism by being abusive, rebellious, and arrogant. Cliff has an inferior/superior split that plays out in his relationships, which tends to diminish self and others. Darren uses power to cover vulnerability and to refuel narcissistic supplies. Gene misuses his power, lacks empathy for others and pumps himself up at the expense of others.

All these traits collapse in the experiences of grandiosity, descent and shame; painful lessons are learned. Adam loses his sanity and sense of self when his entitlement needs are not met through relationship addiction and addiction to marijuana. Brandon's addiction to marijuana creates apathy, an escape of the mind into infatuation, and his rebel and tyrant side destroy his relationships with his family and co-workers. Cliff gets relief from his rigidity by taking LSD and smoking pot only to hide his shame by being superior and losing his wife to another guru. Darren led a split life of being the responsible doctor and father only to feel entitled to live a double life of seducing women and projecting an image of invulnerability. His convenient relationship collapses and he is met with vulnerable loneliness. Frank suffered from shame and covered with rage towards women and would lose himself

in relationship addiction, drug addiction and sex addiction. This may have served the purposes of getting a nucleus of belonging, the joy of intoxication to cover remorse, and an attempt to climb out of negative experience to a realm of self-acceptance. These escapes did not work for Frank, and he was compelled to meet his shame. Gene's descent came from his sexual action and his tendency to dehumanize his objects of desire, which brought him to a place of isolation, self-loathing, and despair.

Traps of the spiritual life for Adam included seeking peak experiences and becoming the hopeful spiritual athlete who may have become obsessed with otherworldly experience so that he did not have any balance in his life. Magical thinking is the trap for Brandon—seeking one new experience after another—which for him was a form of being high especially when marijuana was added to the mix. Brandon seems to be too identified with the transpersonal, which is a failure to integrate the individual and unitive realms. Cliff escapes into intensive periods of meditative practice, which can be seen as a crisis of duality; that is going more towards the transpersonal and away from the personal. This behavior would be a block to being open to all of life, come what will. Darren could be a driven, goal oriented, seeker towards peace, with the exclusion of the heart not being open, to all of human experience. Gene seems to be “Oneness” intoxicated by special experiences of oneness, thus getting his narcissistic supplies met, by being grandiose, to be enamored by others.

Self-awareness has increased for all of the co-researchers. In the gradual awakening of self-awareness, Adam is starting to recognize what is genuine in himself by doing mind bodywork, being open to his narcissistic tendencies and being

open to and experiencing his painful feelings. Brandon's awareness comes through with being more humble and this has been the antidote for his narcissism, which has also led to more accountability in his life. Cliff's observing self has helped him with the awareness that his thinking and judgments are not necessary his real or true self. Darren has slowed down and his increased awareness has enabled him to see how he has performed to get the acceptance of others. Now, he is content just to be. Frank is aware that when he is living in the present moment, he is able to feel the joy of existence. Gene is aware of the peace and unity that underlies existence by staying in a still place and not moving towards his desires—this has led to an experiencing of his essence. The next chapter will address each of the themes along the journey towards transforming abusive narcissistic behavior and the implications of self-realization.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

### *Introduction*

This study explored the experience of those along a journey towards transforming their narcissistic abusive tendencies. It focused on investigating their transformational experiences leading towards a heightened awareness to their essential true nature, which resulted in a less self-centered egoic state. I incorporated a transpersonal orientation, a Jungian perspective, a psycho-spiritual approach, an existential/Zen perspective, a psychodynamic objects relations' perspective, self-inquiry and total insight into the nature of our conditioning. In the discussion of the limitations of this study I will endeavor to explain how spirituality is embedded in daily life and how reason can foster self-trust. This chapter will begin by summarizing the major themes identified in Chapter Four. Following this, limitations of the study will be discussed. I will then explore possible implications of the research for the counseling field and end with my concluding remarks.

### *Summary of Research Findings*

This study investigated the experiences of those who are on a journey to find their true self. It explored the transformational experiences needed in order to change lives of those on a journey to becoming more authentically themselves. It was a means of engaging and connecting with those who identified themselves as being on a journey and inviting dialogue through which the lived experiences are revealed. This study was achieved by interviewing six co-researchers who have been on a transformational journey for two years or more. From the interviews, I analyzed and interpreted the findings, which resulted in the emergence of eight major themes. I

then presented their accounts in narrative description. The structures of the themes have their roots in transpersonal development, object relations, and Jungian analysis, psycho-spiritual development, self-inquiry, mind, bodywork, and increased awareness by shifts in consciousness.

In the first theme, the beginnings of a journey, unfortunately, often manifests in *childhood wounding* opening to the experience of neglect and abuse, which resulted in experientially sharing what they discovered. In moments of neglect, they felt unseen, unheard, and unacknowledged in their humanness. In experiences of abuse, they recall being used in violent and humiliating ways. This powerful threat to non-being led all of the co-researchers into addictions and self-destructive attachments and they all felt cut off from the life-giving communion of human relationship. They felt they were at the mercy of unconscious forces.

In the second theme, the violation to the fundamental sense of self, *expressions of the false self and displays of narcissism*, can lead to narcissistic tendencies and pathological narcissism, chaotic affective and cognitive states, addictions, inability to be intimate, lack of empathy, depression, and anxiety, which indicates a violation of relational bonds. The narcissism for the co-researchers was an *attempted remedy* against the underlying negative sense of self represented by being humiliated, attacked, feeling emptiness, and the self loathing cellar lined by the affect of the abandonment depression. From this experience, we can see, in the co-researchers that the failure of the environment to mirror the wholeness of the co-researcher caused empathic failure within their relationships, bipolar swings between the inflated self—"I am God" and the lows of depression, between grandiosity and

inadequacy, as well as masked rage and aggression towards the parents and the world for emphatic failure. From this wounding, our co-researchers felt a sense of estrangement and became strangers to themselves (crisis of masculinity), and the defenses against the wound manifested in addictions of all kinds building inauthentic lifestyles, which were destined, to crumble.

In the third theme, *the attempted remedy*, I explored what our co-researchers were attempting to experience in their compulsive behaviors and their narcissistic tendencies. This compulsive behavior led our co-researchers into painful experiences. The emptiness wound, survival personality, or false self led to seeking a positive nucleus of power, acceptance or positive selfhood through addictions, *grandiosity*, and self-pity to help minimize the pain of losing part of their original wholeness. I discussed the need to hide childhood wounding (shame) by either adding fuel to the grandiose rocket or by taking the depressed road of addiction and self pity and how this inner split leads to attachments of all kinds. From this point our co-researchers journey on the road of grandiosity, descent and grief.

In the fourth theme, *the grandiose self*, important dynamics of psychological wounding comes the experience of the search for intimacy in various ways: through manipulation, through the path of *grandiosity* and drawing attention to themselves, by being a perfectionist, through power and conquest, using charm and seduction, through sharing the commonality of using drugs, sharing intense pleasure and escaping pain, and by misusing the essence of their power.

The fifth major theme, *descent: the road of ashes*, explored the journey in relation to experiences of and expressions of grandiosity, ascension, through

addictions to drugs, relationships, power, sex and narcissism. This theme brought about experiences of descent into shame but also into humility. This process helped to deconstruct the egocentric self and restore the co-researchers to authenticity. By inquiring into their pain and their self-centeredness the co-researchers began to heal in various ways. They began to recover their real selves through doing therapeutic bodywork, meditation practice, sitting in the stillness, discovering an inner spaciousness, using the witnessing and observing mind to disidentify from mind judgments and shame, allowance of experiencing of the reality of just being, seeing their shadow issues, befriending themselves, and facing their shame.

In the sixth theme *shame, meeting the monster at the basement door*, for the co-researchers there is a desperate attempt at avoiding shame, abandonment, emptiness, isolation, fear, loneliness, powerlessness, or to generalize, a sense of non-being. The varied effects of childhood wounding for the co-researchers revealed itself in alcoholism, drug addiction, sex addiction, relationship addiction, workaholism, codependence; and the list goes on to illuminate the many destructive ways the co-researchers attempted to secure being in the face of non-being. Ultimately, they were faced with their shame in various ways.

In the seventh theme, *traps of the spiritual life in moving towards wholeness* in the lived experience of the co-researchers there were some pitfalls along the way. Understanding one's own mind and fully understanding themselves helped the co-researchers to have their own experience instead of being dependent of some higher authority to have the answers for them. I discussed how each of the co-researchers fell into generating wanted emotions, which caused an imbalance in their lived

experience. Spiritual traps were diverse and were expressed in the co-researchers as unrealistic idealism, otherworldly spirituality, naïve optimism, a failure to integrate the manifest and unmanifest realms, failure to detach from unitive states, a crisis of duality, avoidance of pain and grasping at peace through spirituality, the pervasiveness of the survival trance and wallowing in shame and wanting to be saved by some higher authority. The importance of each co-researchers understanding of the dynamics of their thoughts and experiences were discussed, which leads into the next theme.

The eighth theme, *increased gradual awakening of self-awareness*, was presented as a penetrating insight into the conditioned self. This insight helped alleviate internal suffering for the co-researchers. The identifying and realization by the co-researchers of how they moved unconsciously among different states of personality as the situation dictated helped them to realize they were the cause of their own suffering. Some of the practices the co-researchers embraced were meditation, visualization, a slowed down Zen meditative state, and embracing an heart centered stillness which helped the co-researchers to have a internal locus of control and not move towards outer attachments such as addictions and narcissistic tendencies to shore up their sense of self. Other ways of growth included having a transpersonal cause, increased awareness of attachment to ones own dramatic story, transforming repressed dark material, awareness of ego reactions, transforming feelings of terror into useful psychic energy. All these processes have helped in the healing of the co-researchers.

The research was not intended to prove anything as such, but rather to engage with the co-researchers who have been on the journey of transforming their narcissism in the realization of their true authentic selves. I will now consider the limitations of this study.

#### *Limitations of this Study*

There is a combination of limitations and strengths existing within this study that need to be acknowledged. Upon reflection, I noticed that a potential strength of this study is its primary focus on the different transformational experiences in consciousness as it applies towards the realization of one's true self. The study provides a detailed account of each co-researcher and their lived experience with self realization and supports these by linking them to the already existing extensive literature on the development of the true self and the transformation of narcissism.

Another strength of this study is my understanding of each co-researcher during the interviewing process. I am personally familiar with two of the co-researchers through psycho-therapy groups and spent a week with three of the co-researchers during a retreat. I am very much implicated in my own process of transforming my narcissistic abusive tendencies and mixed with my own transformative experiences these factors helped me be empathically attuned to each co-researchers story. Such an engagement allowed for a deep discussion about the emerging major themes and sub themes along the journey.

Limitations of this study may be my own projection onto the co-researchers journey of transformation being similar to my own transformation of narcissism by embracing self-realization. Although I felt I was empathically available to each co-

researcher, all of my personal biases could not ultimately be eliminated. However, hopefully, this research will invite readers who have narcissistic tendencies to consider the expansive nature of self-realization and help one realize one's authentic self.

Also, the sample size of co-researchers is relatively small my purpose was to limit the sample size, so I could get a qualitative deeper understanding of the emerging themes along the journey. Honoring the spirit of phenomenological hermeneutics is important to the author. This bias may be a limitation as I realize that no universal generalities can be made.

An interesting point to discover and would add to the validity of this study would be to see if women would have similar transformational experiences. The co-researchers were all white males except for one whom was of North American aboriginal ancestry. There did not appear to be differences in their transformational process, but a comparison of different cultures is beyond the scope of this study. These are some of the limitations to the study.

One must also note that the themes outlined in this study are not a fixed portrayal for what it is like for everyone to be on a journey towards transforming narcissism and abusive behavior through self-realization. Thus, no claim can be made that everyone will resonate with these experiences.

### *Implications for Counseling*

As an emerging existential-transpersonal counselor, I need to affirm that this study does not address the qualities and the necessity of the counselor's own self-actualization. The findings do appear to show the importance of and implications of

the counselor's own growth when dealing with this population. Nixon (1992) emphasized the critical importance of counselors being on their own journey. Counselors can better facilitate transformation in their clients by being familiar with essential self-realization literature rather than falling into the predictable traditional counselor expertise. The themes presented are a challenge because narcissistic clients are very sensitive to misunderstanding; therefore empathic attunement is necessary, which can be facilitated by counselor self-awareness.

There are good examples of a number of counselors who have embraced their own transformational journey while integrating it into their own practice. These include my main theorist in this study—A.H. Almaas, and his personal application of the diamond approach. Teachers/Therapists include Osho (1973), Wilber (1996), and the woman therapist/teacher Gangaji (2005). On a more personal level I know of and work with the therapy and teachings of Steven Stosny (1995) using his compassion workshop to transform abusive men in attachment relationships. I also use the materials of therapist/teacher Gary Gibbons a recovering narcissist, in group counseling for abusive men. Nixon (1992), a therapist/teacher, has an intimate connection between western counseling practice and eastern spiritual practice, and he continues to be a guide in my own transformation and skill enhancement in my counseling practice.

If the counselor is able to get rid of his egocentric consciousness, which experiences life from a contracted, self centered point of view, this will enable him to come from a free radical understanding that gets to the heart of human experience. The counselor is better able to understand activity in the present; his past issues are

not a filter in the counseling process. When the counselor is self-realized, he/she is able to give his/her total attention with all his/her senses awakened; thus, he/she is able to be in full relationship with his client and to get rid of his/her own center (Krishnamurti, 1991). Krishnamurti (1991) goes on to say, “we can only be related to another if we have no image about ourselves or another; then you are directly related” (p. 161). While considering transformation of the self, we need to see how images distort our perceptions, conversely they have a valuable protective function, but when we look at the world with preconceived ideas, judgments and evaluations, it can destroy our relationship with others (Krishnamurti, 1991). This freedom from fragmentation brings about compassion and when there is compassion, there is clarity and from the clarity comes skill in communication, skill in action, skill in the art of listening, learning and observing (Krishnamurti, 1991).

For a counselor, a healthy love of oneself is a great spiritual value. When one drops one’s façade and his armour, one is able to be vulnerable and risk being available and open to all the client has to offer. This open vulnerability according to Osho (1998), overcomes narcissistic stagnancy, and when the ego is dropped, one can go directly into love. From this point of view, the counselor has much to offer the client in that negation of faulty beliefs and thoughts is the most positive thing that one can do, removing all that hinders love so that love becomes the undercurrent of one’s being.

According to Almaas (1996) and many other authors on self-realization, we must disidentify with whatever self-representation that we have. This loosening of identification will loosen the rigid structure of the personality and more space will be

created within the counselor. This results in healthy narcissism where the sense of self is stable and this stability is resistant to self-disintegration. This practice takes the counselor out of his/her central narcissism, thus this leads to inner freedom and trust in essence as the path to inner transformation; “then this leads to compassion, freedom, based on truth, not on control” (Almaas, 1996, p. 154). It is important for the counselor to be aware of and disengage from judgments and attitudes about the client’s process and allow the emptiness to reveal itself in the form of the client’s own lack of self support. This procedure helps the client arrive in a state of freedom released from the previous rigidity and heaviness of the ego structure (Almaas, 2004).

There are a number of different strategies transpersonal counselors can utilize with clients when facilitating the journey towards self-realization within the therapeutic setting (Wilber, 1996, Almaas, 1996, Firman & Gila, 1997). Meditative techniques, including mindfulness meditation and Zen approaches, are readily used to expand consciousness beyond the conditioned body-mind. In meditation, one is invited to adopt and embrace a witnessing position in which one simply watches what rises in the moment. This allows for a dis-identification from habitual thought patterns and emotional states (Tolle, 2005). Self-inquiry is a similar approach used by existential/transpersonal therapist in facilitating dis-identification from the body-mind. The more one practices self-inquiry, the more they experience the unconditional mind for longer periods of time.

Another approach that transpersonal therapists use is “shadow work” commonly used in Jungian Psychology. According to Zweig and Abrams (1991), uncovering the content of our projections, that is what we hate in others, examining

our “slips” of the tongue, considering our sadistic sense of humor, and studying our dreams, allow us to become increasingly aware of how we have denied undesirable aspects of ourselves” (p. 105). The therapist’s job would be to identify the client’s shadow in order for the client to become aware of his or her own shadow and integrate it into their awareness.

Therapists who facilitate clients to experience the present moment awareness are inviting clients to observe the benefits of letting go of unhealthy belief systems of the past and fears of the future. Tolle (2005) points out that to be identified with one’s mind is to be trapped in one’s own suffering. To rest in the internal present moment is to surrender the compulsive activity of the mind. The Now moment contains the unfoldment of life. Accepting the present moment means accepting existence as it is. This teaches clients on their journey, that there is nowhere to go and any form of seeking takes one further from the unconditional present moment. This helps the client to live fully and embrace life.

From a cognitive perspective, acceptance by the counselor of his/her own imperfections helps clients to stop blaming themselves and others and the realization that disturbed thoughts and faulty beliefs have the power to control our emotional destiny. By deconstructing early indoctrinated irrational thoughts and dysfunctional attitudes, one is free of irrational thoughts and thus become unburdened and enlightened. The transpersonal therapist, when using CBT with narcissistic clients, must be aware that it ignores influential factors such as shame, ego defenses, split off emotions, lack of empathy, narcissistic rage, envy, devaluing others and an inferiority complex.

There are legitimate reasons for using an integral holistic or psycho spiritual healing experience approach, which allows for internal transformation. This model is holistic in nature blended with conventional models to complete the process of transforming narcissism. The need, in many quarters, has been felt for a psychologically grounded spirituality. The transpersonal psychologist needs to have a multifaceted understanding of the nature of human beings, with the adoptions of depth psychology and relevance for the pursuit of deeper truths about human nature. The pursuit of truth by psychological investigation leads to an openness, and if pursued deeply will penetrate into the realm of the spiritual, religious or mystical understanding (Almaas, 1996). In the, “course of such exploration, one discovery is that many currently prevalent psychological dysfunctions, such as some forms of narcissism and schizoid isolation, are revealed as direct consequences of spiritual alienation, which therefore cannot be truly resolved by traditional psychotherapy” (Almaas, 1996, p. iii). The experience of transformation is like spring; it is a journey out of the death of winter into a new life. It is like leaving the tombs of emptiness and coming into new life.

#### *Revisiting the Implicated Researcher*

The process of completing this thesis has been a transformational in its self. As the implicated researcher I was very close to the process and I was aware of my already existing bias regarding the journey of transforming abusive narcissistic tendencies. With this in mind, I understood the importance of remaining open to the interview experience as it unfolded. To be present to the experience of others and to

be alive in the moment-to-moment experience of self and other allowed for the personal transformation of the researcher and co-researchers alike.

The connection to the co-researchers was very heartfelt and close as I am on the same journey of self-realization myself. The ability to hang loose with each other brought moments of empathic connection and respect for their unique journey and how it is playing out in their lives. The understanding of the pain, the struggle to find one's true authentic self was very humbling for me. My, just to be! This is quite a blessing!

#### *Suggestions for Further Research*

One would wonder whether women would share similar transformational experiences as the men. It would be very interesting to see if women would have different experiences than the men. In my counseling practice I have noticed that women have the same narcissistic tendencies as men and the only difference I have noticed is that they are more self conscious about their physical appearance or especially body image. In the theme *spiritual traps*, I explored some of the pitfalls of how depending on a higher guidance or authority can erode self-trust. This is fascinating to me because experiencing an underlying unity can increase empathy and compassion, and bring the capacity to see oneself as a player in an eternal drama. It is also paradoxical whereby each one of us is merely a speck of awareness in the scheme of existence and yet we feel so connected to the universe. To say that we are all God seems great, but not at the cost of denying our humanity with all it's conflicts.

Another exciting suggestion would be the aspect of surrendering or deconstructing our self-centeredness. This for me, and many of the co-researchers, is

one of the most powerful forces and emotional states that we humans can tap into. Surrendering to the present moment is so potent precisely because it frees a space to an arena that is free from ones inner dramas. I wonder, as is my case, if surrender can be unhealthy, if it is a part of authoritarian control? A study of people, who have surrendered their lives to spiritual realization, and if they have been able to realize that surrender is a part of life, as is control, would be fascinating.

Recognizing the idea that there is no greater intelligence that knows what is best for us is crucial. One must be careful of the spiritual life because the paradox lies in the fact that having one's own spiritual advancement as the focus of ones life is totally self absorbed and hence self-centered and therefore narcissistic at a hidden level.

### Conclusion

This thesis has been the story of six co-researchers and their different transformational experiences in transforming abuse and narcissistic tendencies. Completing the thesis has been a journey as well. I am so grateful to have had the experience of sharing the intimate journey of each of the participants. The hope of this researcher is that the sharing of these experiences has allowed the reader to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be one's true authentic self. As stated by Firman and Gila (1991) "in Self Realization, a conscious ongoing relationship to Self develops that will—as with all relationships—entail an openness not only to the joys of life, but to pain, uncertainty, and limitations of life as well. Here enlightenment does not mean attaining a particular type of higher experience or developmental stage, but developing a committed relationship to the source of our being, a

willingness to follow the call or vocation of our deepest truth no matter what circumstance in which we find ourselves” (p. 181).

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## Appendix A

### Letter of Consent

#### **Transformation of Narcissism: What is the process of transforming Narcissism for men who have been abusive?**

**Lucien Renard, Master of Science Degree in Health Science student  
University of Lethbridge**

You are being asked to participate in a study about the transformation of Narcissism through self-realization: A Phenomenological Hermeneutics Approach. The focus of the study will be on men who have been abusive and were Narcissistic and have embraced a path of inner self-realization path towards wholeness for at least one year. This study will involve an in-depth interview exploring your experiences with Narcissism through to the path of self-realization from the beginning of your journey to the present time. The purpose of the study is to illuminate the themes that emerge throughout the journey which will help us further understand the journey of self-realization from Narcissism to wholeness and may lead to significant theoretical and treatment implications.

The Research will require each individual to participate in a 1-2 hour initial interview with a follow up interview of approximately one hour. If necessary, additional interviews may be required. Participation is voluntary and individuals who wish to discontinue the interviews may do so at any time. If you do wish to withdraw, all information that has been gathered up that time will be destroyed.

Participant's responses will be kept confidential. The data collected from the interviews will be shared only with the thesis supervisor and myself. The tapes will be destroyed upon publication of research. To maintain anonymity, you will be identified by a self-selected pseudonym, a copy of the transcript will be given to you and you will be given the opportunity to delete any identifying information. The results of this study outside of the thesis may be published in academic journals and/or presented at conferences and/or university classes.

If you have any questions about this study, or if you would like to obtain a copy of the research results please contact Lucien Renard at (403) 502-3988 or via email at [lucienr@shaw.ca](mailto:lucienr@shaw.ca). Questions may also be directed towards Dr. Gary Nixon, thesis supervisor, of the Addictions Counseling program at the University of Lethbridge, (403) 329-2644. Questions of a more general nature may be addressed to the Office of Research Services, University of Lethbridge, (403) 329-2747.

I have read and understand the above information and I consent to participating in the study entitled, "Transformation of Narcissism: What is the process of transforming Narcissism for men who have been abusive: A phenomenological Hermeneutics Approach.

Print Name: -----Signature: -----

Date: -----

## **Appendix B**

### **Advertisement**

**Research into the Transformation of Narcissism in Abusive Men  
Lucien Renard, Master of Science Degree in Health Science student  
University of Lethbridge**

Lucien Renard is a student in the Master of Science: Health Sciences Program at the University of Lethbridge. He is conducting research on men who have been narcissistic and have chosen to embrace a path or inner self-realization as a transformational journey from narcissism to self-realization. Male research participants who have been on a transformational path of self-realization from narcissism to wholeness for a minimum of one year are wanted for a research interview that will take approximately 1-2 hours. Participants will be provided with transcripts of their interviews. If you would like to participate in this study, please call Lucien at (403) 502-3988 or (403) 527-8147. Interviews will be conducted throughout central and southern Alberta.