

Essential Competency # 3: Discovering and Disengaging From The Roots of Vulnerability

What Are Our Roots of Vulnerability?

As a result of an inherited biochemical and physical energy system that has been conditioned by thousands of childhood experiences, every person develops a unique way of perceiving and responding to life situations. This system is responsible for our positive temperament and personality traits, as well as strongly influencing when and how intensely we experience difficult emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, guilt, impatience or embarrassment.

We call these predispositions our **roots of vulnerability**: “roots” because they are often so well-buried that we are unaware of them; “vulnerability” because, as long as we remain unaware of them they can continue to control our experience. They can also become faulty filters through which we see and judge the reality around us. As you know from the previous chapters, mindfulness assists us to become aware and allowing of as many unconscious behaviours and feeling reactions as possible. This essential competency enables each person to discover the source of their roots of vulnerability and learn how to mindfully and cognitively diffuse and disengage from them.

The roots of vulnerability that all humans share fall into the following categories, each of which we will discuss at length:

1. Outdated, hardwired survival and reproduction instincts that cause fear, greed, self-centredness and a sense of entitlement;
2. Imbalances of chemical and energy systems that contribute to mood and personality disorders;
3. Faulty future-past processing, causing mindlessness;
4. Society’s senility;
5. Outdated inner programming (filtering software) such as childhood-conditioned illogical beliefs about our vulnerability and inferiority.

One way to understand what this competency would be to use an agricultural metaphor. You arrive in Ontario as our ancestors did and need to plant crops for food. First you had to take down the trees and remove the stumps. Next the soil needed to be prepared through ploughing and planting. The garden then had to be nurtured and weeded. I see discovering and disengaging from the roots of vulnerability as sawing down the trees and pulling out the roots that could be removed. The big roots couldn’t be removed and had to be burned out (as in the fires of

purification from loss, illness, mood disorders, dying etc.). Mindfulness ensures both skillful use of the fire, prepares the soil and plants the seeds. Loving kindness nurtures and waters the seeds and shares the harvested crops with family and community.

The Critical Importance of Disengaging from our Roots of Vulnerability

Knowing and understanding more about how these roots of vulnerability drive and distort feelings and behaviours directly related to your role as a leader or caregiver is key to your becoming more emotionally mature. Discovering and disengaging from (not destroying) all of these roots results in the significantly enhanced feelings and behaviour that you require to consistently offer conscious and compassionate leadership, care and support. Many benefits will result for you. You will have new-found energy for your day and the work it holds. You will develop an increased capacity for compassion. Your self-knowledge will bring you a wisdom that will allow you to help others, and also increase your possibilities for new ways to provide leadership or support.

It is slow, painful, and difficult for an adult to reconstruct a radically different way of seeing life, however needlessly miserable his preconceptions make him.

Peter Marris

The person who is receiving your leadership or care will also benefit from your work to disengage from these vulnerabilities. A great teacher, Ram Dass, told me, “We will never work to break out of our prison until we know that we are imprisoned”. Not knowing about our vulnerabilities and therefore being unconsciously driven by inappropriate root feelings and behaviours is a constant threat for all of us. This is a serious barrier to offering optimal leadership, care and support to others. Feelings and behaviours such as exclusion, selfishness, moodiness, anger, indifference, prejudice, gossiping, uncaring, irritation and frustration are primarily caused by our roots of vulnerability mindlessly running our life. As a result, the vulnerable individual who is a care recipient may live in constant fear, loneliness or sadness because of our own unknown and unmanaged root system.

By discovering and disengaging from your unique roots of vulnerability, you will be freed from one of your greatest barriers in your leadership, care and support of others.

Some of the benefits your care recipient will gain include a new sense of being highly valued as you are not driven by your unknown and under managed feelings, thoughts and behaviour. These are benefits that feed the heart and soul of the person whom you are supporting in a way that is just as important—if not more so—than the time and care you give to their physical needs.

Our Roots of Vulnerability and Devaluation

It is quite possible that there is no greater cause than our roots of vulnerability as to why our society in general devalues marginalized individuals: for example, individuals with developmental disabilities or dementia. Have you ever read one of the countless news stories about an individual with a mental disability being devalued e.g. excluded? In all probability, the reason is the offender's completely unconscious roots of vulnerability.

These roots can be so well-masked that their impact is deeply and hurtfully felt by the individual who is devalued, while often the person doing the devaluing is not even aware of, let alone dissatisfied with, what has really happened in the exchange. Unfortunately, there are also many incidents where one person seems to devalue another very deliberately and feel entirely justified in doing so because of prejudices grown from these roots. Discovering and disengaging from these roots can radically change these tragic situations.

How to Discover Your Own Roots of Vulnerability and Disengage from Them

I'm certain that through the course of your life you have come across literally hundreds of excellent ideas about how people can be kinder and more compassionate, keep their cool and generally have a happier and more fulfilling life if they followed the suggestions made by friends, family, spouses, Dr. Phils, "O" magazines, self-help books, seminars, gurus and retreats etc. Have you ever wondered, given all of these excellent ideas, therapies, coachings, trainings, books and seminars, why most people don't really pursue a path or stay with it for the long haul? Think of all the useful knowledge and skills that you have learned over the years to improve your own physical, social, emotional and intrapersonal life. How many self-help books have you read? How many personal growth seminars have you listened to or even participated in? Now ask: "How many of these skills am I applying daily in my life?"

Some of the answers to why we react as we do and find it so difficult to change requires a little perspective on human nature's work to date. Mankind, as a species, is at least three million years old (some would argue that we are much older); in order to survive as a species, we had to develop this thing called human nature that comes to us at birth as a package deal. Then, to emotionally survive as individuals we are conditioned into another whole set of personal survival codes based on our upbringing. Nature's and nurture's work it seems most often keeps

us vulnerable, self-centred and generally discontent. We are too often mindlessly driven by nature's and nurture's survival instincts that are no longer necessary in our adult life.

I use a tree with five main root systems as a metaphor to describe virtually every person's roots. Whatever comes into the tree through these roots is what feeds the branches and shapes the fruit. This metaphor also reinforces the message that we do in fact reap what we sow; therefore, before we can grow and change we need some basic information on sowing and reaping.

If we are able to give ourselves to the pain, to move toward it – rather than recoil in an effort to escape, deny, distract, or obscure – our wounded hearts become full, and out of that fullness we will do things differently, and we will do different things. Our pain, our wound, is precious to us because it can wake us up to love, and to loving action.

Norman Fischer

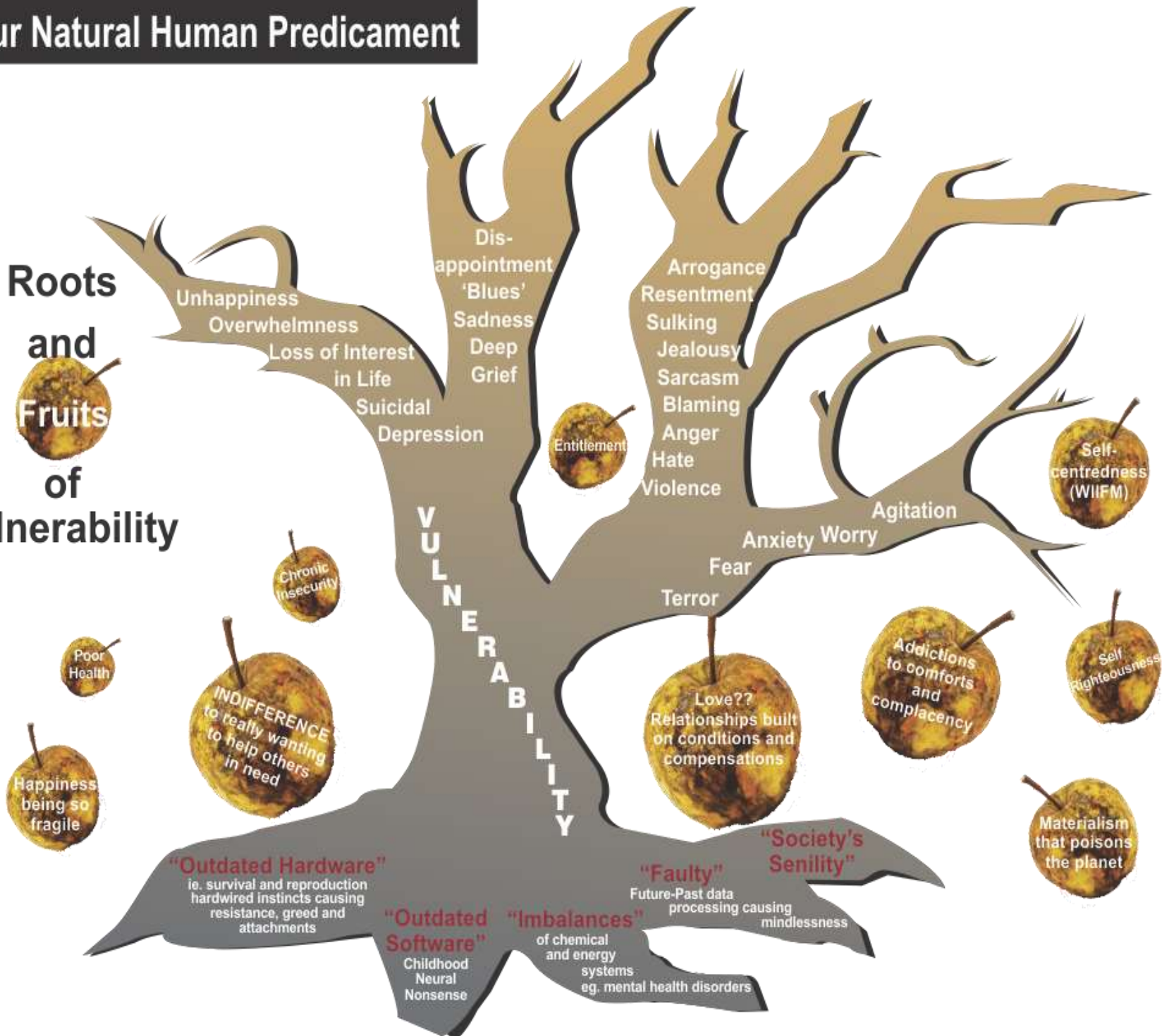
For now, let's just look at exposing the unhealthy aspects of human nature's root system. Left to only our own natural growth as humans, we will attain limited growth and reap an incomplete and perhaps even unhealthy harvest. However, don't forget our goal: through the development and nurturing of our positive roots, we have the potential to be happy, fulfilled, and spontaneously compassionate.

The following graphic describes the natural human predicament. Every person comes with his or her own version of the roots of this tree. Even though the specific shapes, size and qualities of these five roots will vary from person to person, if left to grow wild, these roots will yield very similar unhealthy trees.

Take a moment to study the tree graphic on the next page, noticing how each "root" cause results in very unhealthy growth patterns within the tree. Notice also how this unhealthy interior growth can only result in sickly, unhealthy fruit—yet this fruit represents what we give to the world, what we bring to our role as a leader or caregiver. That's why managing these roots is an essential competency for caregivers and human services workers in all fields. We can't control the roots of the tree, but we can manage its growth and tend in back to health.

Our Natural Human Predicament

Roots and Fruits of Vulnerability



Root # 1—Outdated Hardware for Survival and Reproduction

The first root is probably the deepest simply because it is the oldest; it includes all influences associated with our physical and instinctive make-up resulting from our inherited gene pool. Remember that this pool goes back millions of years and is made up primarily of the qualities that have allowed us to survive as a species. The problem is that survival instincts are, of necessity, “me first” instincts, exactly what we are trying to weed out as caregivers. These qualities combine to give each person genetic, inherited predispositions that trigger both helpful and less than helpful emotional reactions, as we have just seen. These are physical responses that manifest themselves as resistance and attachments that we unconsciously experience or consciously over-ride. We can discover the insights and learn the skills to disengage from age-old, outdated tendencies. By doing this we will ensure that this root does not contribute to our and others’ suffering.

Up until quite recently, we have believed that our survival code is actually hard-wired into our brain, and so it is impossible to change—it’s just part of being human. However, recent research highlights our potential to change our brain’s basic circuitry; the hardwiring isn’t really as “hard” as originally thought. We know, for example, that normal brain development includes two distinct hemispheres, each having very specific functions. Yet, children born with only one hemisphere can develop normally with all functions being provided with only half of the brain.

The body’s nervous system, with miles of nerve fibre and millions of circuits, processes the perceptions brought in by the six senses. This system routinely sorts out thousands of pieces of information; it shunts messages up and down millions of cells, each containing pieces of data. Much of this data has been accumulated by our ancestors and passed on genetically. Some is also learned after our birth. All of this data works to determine whether any new situation presents a threat or a promise of a good outcome, and all of this happens in less than a second.

As a result, we are genetically predisposed to be overly vigilant and sometimes misperceive situations as threats, making it difficult for us as leaders and caregivers to live in accordance with our highest values and intentions. This system always defaults to seeing a possible threat in unfamiliar situations. We may therefore react negatively to change or to even mildly unpredictable moments with others, as if there is a threat. It’s not difficult to see how dangerous this could be when we are suddenly confronted with a supported individual’s agitation, anger or aggression: **we are actually programmed to react inappropriately.**

As I mentioned above, some of this programming can be imprinted after birth, and still be just as destructive. A well-researched and published example of this particular root of vulnerability is life in New York City since the attack on 9/11. On that bright, sunny day a plane flew into the highest towers of New York, and they fell in pieces to the ground, literally filling the sky with dust and debris in one of the most terrifying moments in our collective experience. As a result of that terror, tens of thousands of New Yorkers now have a social anxiety disorder triggered

by a bright, sunny, blue sky (like the day the towers fell). Many of them cannot leave their homes when their newly hard-wired nature illogically reacts to this trigger. On a much smaller scale (usually) this same kind of reaction and processing of feelings is happening throughout most hours of most days in our everyday lives. The practice outlined in this chapter is designed to help us manage this root better.

Root # 2 – Imbalances of Chemicals and Energy Systems

Hundreds of chemicals, hormones, neurotransmitters, minerals, vitamins and amino acids course through our bodies and minds daily to feed and protect us. These chemicals must maintain a delicate balance to ensure our emotional and physical energy and well-being. Levels above or below an optimal balance cause serious physical illnesses and mental distress that literally take over our life. As an example, if we have too much adrenaline, we can become anxious, irritable or abusive. Imbalances of neurotransmitters are both the result of and the contributor to many mood and personality disorders such as clinical depression. Interestingly, these chemicals appear to guide our feelings and behaviour.

Two years into my own totally debilitating clinical depression, with a weight loss of sixty pounds, and nine out of ten of the diagnostic symptoms still severe, I was dying. Then, after just three to four weeks on a therapeutic level of antidepressant medication, I was 75% of the way back to my old self. What happened? Welcome to the world of hundreds of thousands of us who thank chemicals, together with our support systems including families, doctors, proper nutritional supplements and aerobic exercise, for saving our lives.

Chemicals (food, herbal remedies, vitamins and minerals, pharmaceuticals, hormones, neurotransmitters) are the building blocks of our fluids, cellular tissue and brain-firing mechanisms that make up our bodies, mind and heart (in both the physical and emotional sense). Imbalances in these chemicals have destroyed countless lives. Leaders and caregivers with chemical and energy imbalances will not be able to adequately, let alone optimally, fulfill their intentions and responsibilities.

This is not to say that chemicals alone are the ideal way to prevent and manage the moods and even severe, life-threatening mental health disorders that accompany this root of vulnerability. Our dual path approach is based on a **holistic** approach to life. In our view however, “holistic” must include an intentionally nurtured and balanced biological system.

Feelings and Chemicals

Feelings are significantly influenced by our reactive thinking and body sensations. When feelings are first activated by a situation, and our own subjective interpretation of the situation, the feeling is activated at, say, Intensity I. This Intensity I feeling takes one of two potential directions. When the reactive feelings, thoughts and body sensations (B-FIT) are infused with insights, awareness and allowingness, the intensity of the feelings often stays at Intensity I or begins to decrease, depending on whether the situation becomes more or less threatening. When the reactive feelings, thoughts and body sensations are **not** infused with insights, awareness and allowingness, they naturally cascade

(faster, stronger and more intense) and force Intensity I feelings into Intensity II, III, IV: worry becomes anxiety, anxiety becomes terror; or irritation becomes anger, anger becomes rage – even though the situation has not become worse.

Neuroscience research shows that all levels of feelings are associated with chemicals: for example, adrenaline being manufactured and distributed throughout the body. However, when B-FIT is infused with insights, awareness and allowingness, the manufacturing of these harmful chemicals is reduced. The feelings then begin to lose their gripping power and fade away.

Because the chemicals have been distributed into the body, the related negative feelings may not totally disappear even after they have been mindfully processed. Activation of all of the Essential Competencies can, however, maintain the intensity of the feelings at an intensity level 1 and promote a faster recovery time and appropriate leadership and caregiver responses.

Root # 3 --Faulty Information Processing: How the Past and Future Distort the Now

The most simple things in life are the most difficult things. Just getting through a day well is not easy. The most difficult thing in life, I think, is living. I mean, really living. A lot of the time I'm doing something and I'm thinking about the past or scheming about the future and missing every present moment, instead of actually partaking of the sacrament of every present moment. And that is the healing factor.

R.D.Laing

Being present—that is being aware of being HERE, in the moment-by-moment unfolding of events and fully experiencing sensory perceptions as they happen—is quite rare. Most untrained minds almost always function in the future or past. How often have you been sharing a beautiful meal with your loved ones and found yourself thinking ahead to whether there will be time to complete some unfinished work? How often have you been helping your care recipient with his meal while your mind was somewhere else, planning the rest of your day? We are all much too guilty of this mental absence. As a result, most people are seldom joyous and fulfilled, even with positive experiences because they are not fully experiencing them.

In threatening or unpleasant situations, getting trapped in future or past thinking will cause your body and mind to react as they always have: Intensity I automatically escalates to Intensity II and so on. Most of these reactions of worry or anxiety are absolutely not necessary; in fact, they can be dangerous because at Intensity II or higher they negatively impact judgment and behaviour. They also entrain team members and

care recipients to experience the same intensity. Learning to **catch** your mind in past or future thinking and gently but firmly bring it back to the present moment—HERE—is one highly effective way to escape from this pattern (ref. CCS Step 1).

This root of vulnerability is directly linked to the other roots that were embedded in our ancestors to keep them safe and secure, and then passed on to you. Your hardwiring directs the six senses naturally to be one moment ahead and at the same time to be looking behind: to scout out what's coming towards you and compare this situation to your database of past situations to see if this new experience will hurt or help you. Every second, a new decision-making process is activated. With so much of your finite mental energy tied up in scouting and evaluating each moment, you are seldom HERE to experience the present. Unless you disconnect from this root of vulnerability, it will continue until you die.

However, if you consciously work with B-FIT Mindfulness, you can redeploy some of your mental energy to paying attention to what you are doing as you are doing it; paying attention to what your body, mind and heart are experiencing as you are experiencing it, and knowing that you are HERE, now, doing and experiencing. B-FIT Mindfulness offers several powerful strategies to eliminate the potentially harmful influence that this root can have on your life and your ability to be mindfully present as a competent leader or supportive caregiver.

Root # 4—Society's Senility

Society's "senility" is our normalizing, accepting and valuing of lifestyles that breed poverty, violence, sickness, war and self-centeredness.

The first three roots of vulnerability are reinforced by our western culture that normalizes negativity and greed because the brain circuits that fire most get wired most. For example, as we are encouraged by our culture to over-consume, we reinforce the illusion that we need bigger, better and more to be happy. As this circuit gets wired more strongly, we become even more me-centred instead of us-centred. We reward self-centeredness and self-righteousness and many, many more feelings and behaviours that lead to suffering for self and others in our local and global communities.

Crime is a logical extension of the sort of behaviour that is often perfectly respectable in legitimate business.

Robert Rice

This root of vulnerability—society’s senility—is a powerfully sedating drug that leaves us blind to what is happening around us. We do not live in an intentionally hurtful, self-centered, and over-consuming culture. Nevertheless, terribly unjust and harmful behaviours happen every day because they have been made to seem normal, legal and even moral when they are none of those things. For example:

- At 10% of the world’s population, North America consumes 40% of the earth’s natural resources;
- Studies estimate that over 70% of the people we jail are victims of untreated mental health disorders, developmental disabilities, fetal alcohol syndrome, racism, etc.;
- Fundamental health care and needed medication in many parts of North America, let alone the world, are denied because of poverty;
- Etc. etc. etc.

Doing this to get that

One of the most harmful examples of the senility that is keeping our society vulnerable and asleep is the notion of “doing this to get that”. From an early age we are taught to do something to get something: we study to get good grades; we get good grades to get a good job; we work to get more money and power.

So many moments in the lives of the average child and adult are unnecessarily directed towards what’s next rather than staying in the moment. This constant focus on “what’s next” and “doing something to get something” although it is useful to promote action, actively discourages mindfulness. As leaders and caregivers, if we normalize the focus on “what’s next” as a way of being with care recipients, we virtually guarantee less than optimal care because we are not experiencing the present moment.

Suppose for a moment that you have an important evening commitment, so you decide to give your care recipient her bath in the afternoon instead of early evening. You are now fitting something extra into the afternoon, so while you are careful and thorough, your attitude may be brusquely efficient, focused on getting it done so you can be free at night. Compare this scenario to another one in which the bath still takes place in the afternoon, however your whole attention is focused on providing your care recipient with the comfort of his bath, talking softly with him, making him feel comfortable and unhurried as he moves from bath to bed. Both activities take the same amount of time. The problem, of course, is not the doing; in both cases you might be equally careful. The problem is in the mindless, in-the-future focus that happens when we are not conscious about this moment.

Our culture endorses and promotes many ways of thinking that unintentionally train our minds to miss being here. Worshipping the “false idol” of efficiency can be extremely poisonous to leadership and care giving due to the total preoccupation with just getting the work done quickly so we can get or do more.

Root #5--Faulty Filters

“I can win an argument on any topic against any opponent.
People know this and steer clear of me at parties.
Often as a sign of great respect, they don’t even invite me any more”.

Lily Tomlin

This last root is planted, nurtured and grown in the gardens of our first learn-to-be-a-somebody school. For most of us, this school is our family, classrooms and backyard sandboxes. According to Dr. Alfred Adler (the grandfather of Humanistic Psychology), in these schools the child:

- gropes for ways to feel secure;
- gets a sense of self worth, or not;
- learns to “count for something” or not, and,
- always, always prowls for ways to insure inclusion.

With these deeply-rooted primary directives, the child observes and makes quick (usually very incomplete) judgments about how to win this game. The child learns very quickly what will bring reward and what will bring punishment and acts accordingly. Here many highly subjective judgments are made that soon become **filters** through which all adult life situations must pass and be tested. For example,

- I cannot make a mistake or else I am in trouble (banished, or put into solitary confinement). And/or,
- I must get and keep the approval of others in order to feel worthwhile and valued. I will therefore be very pleasing. And/or,
- I must avoid conflict at all costs, including giving away some of my rights as a person, because conflict is painful and threatening. And/or,
- I must never let others control me.

These judgments and many, many more make for very personal and unique filters that each adult is unknowingly driven by until the filters are discovered. Once discovered, they can be released or reframed in order to correct each person’s “Filters Rule Book.”

The deception to our self goes deeper. As we lock onto these filters, we become unconsciously identified or defined by their meaning. Being **identified with** means this is how we feel about our self; it's what dominates our sense of who we are. For example, in our careers we are identified with being a support or healthcare worker. We also all have a personal identity that we believe is who we are (see below).

Examples of Unconscious Filters that Become Our Identity and Keep Us Separate and Suffering:

In the following list, the left side identifies an unconscious, illogical and private filter through which we interrupt our life situations. The right side identifies the resulting response:

- I must not look bad to others - Others become my audience to please.
- Needing to be right-- Others are related to not simply as another, but according to how right or wrong they are, and their potential to judge, threaten or criticize me.
- Feeling inferior-- Others are judged as superior or inferior--both judgments keep me stuck in and anxious about my misperceived inferiority
- Being lonely-- Others are used positively or negatively to keep me from solitary confinement--not to become closer.
- Being bored-- Others are used positively or negatively to bring excitement.
- Being angry-- Others become someone to compete with or win over.
- Being afraid-- Others are judged (usually incorrectly) on their potential to hurt me.

Every subjective, unconscious identification reinforces the tragic misperception of destructive separateness

“When a Pickpocket meets a Saint all they see is the Saint’s pockets.”

Ram Dass

“When a Saint meets a Pickpocket all they see is an opportunity to share!”

P & J

Childhood Neural Nonsense

I thank Dr. Alfred Adler, and numerous generations of students and practitioners of his Humanistic Psychology for their invaluable contributions in understanding this root of vulnerability, faulty filters, or childhood neural nonsense. Dr. Harold Mosak, one of my graduate school professors has been a most influential ambassador for this science.

Childhood neural nonsense filters are seriously outdated because they were installed at the time when we were most dependent and vulnerable, before the age of twelve. We as children pay very close attention to learn what to do, say and feel in order to get our physical and emotional security needs met in the unique environment in which we live with parents and siblings. This environment is critically important. Research shows that identical twins separated at birth and raised in very different families will develop quite different feelings and behaviours and adult personalities because their environments as children were different.

The baby needs food and stops crying when Mom responds, or smiles at Mom when she delivers, depending on what works—and so it begins. The child with hardwired instincts for the vital importance of being accepted (i.e. protected and nurtured in the “herd” or family) fears isolation and will learn how to be kept included by socially positive behaviour. If, however, the sibling competition is too great, or the socially positive behaviour doesn’t get the desired response, then socially negative behaviour becomes Plan B to avoid isolation. Either way, the goal is always to stay connected with our “herd.” This connecting gives us a sense of security that we translate into significance and specialness.

As we grow from childhood to adolescence to adulthood, we learn that in order to keep these good things coming we must get better at controlling our more complex social environment. As adults we learn quite sophisticated ways to secure our sense of worth, meaning and security in our unique social world. So now instead of just crying to get others to acknowledge us, we learn to please, control, do things right, be good, be bad, trust or not trust. Our personal, mostly unaware filters result in our very biased and often incorrect perceptions through which all messages about others, life and our self are decoded. Humanistic psychology sees most feelings and behaviours that are consistently felt and used by an individual as purposeful. This purpose is to achieve our present-day version of our “I count for something” goal.

Below is a brief description of faulty and fruitful filters that we may have adopted. As children we learn one or two of these filters and age-appropriate ways to perfect them and to operate in the world: to get what we mistakenly think we need to feel secure, accepted and loved.

Dr. Adler called this our “subjective, private (il)logic:”

- “subjective” because the goal that we unconsciously believe that we must attain in this situation most often has little or no objective validity in our current environment. Still we go through life as an adult thinking and feeling and doing the same things that, in our faulty perception, seemed to work for us in our childhood.
- “private” because mostly, unless we discover the logic, the filter remains unknown to us. The fact that the chosen subjective private (il)logic was often an inferior way to interpret events and needs, even in our original environment, is almost irrelevant. Dr. Adler would say, “kids are excellent observers but very poor interpreters”.

Not surprisingly then, people who do not work to discover and disconnect from their faulty root filters and accentuate their positive fruitful filters use the same subjective illogic throughout their entire life.

Most often, even when we get poor results, we keep trying to achieve our goals of security and inclusion with the same old thoughts, feelings and behaviours. As an example, a child raised in a family where being right won acceptance would get rewarded through treats, privileges or approval for meeting the parents’ definition of rightness. However, being wrong would often result in criticism, punishment, or worst of all, being sent away to what felt like solitary confinement. This child would reach adulthood with a distorted perception of the importance of being right and not being criticized. She would believe she must be right or be above criticism in order to be okay, and that most of life’s situations must be judged in accordance with their standards of rightness. As a result, she would screen many of life’s situations through this faulty filter. She would remain unaware of the fact that there are no fixed objective criteria for rightness for most situations and relationships. Most solutions are truly unique. Further, as an adult, self worth need not be dependent on getting it right or not being seen as wrong. For people with this faulty filter, stress builds until they find a distraction that is strong enough to temporarily remove this cause to feel inferior from the mind. This process then is repeated again and again throughout life. Those fortunate enough to have grown up without rightness and perfectionism as a major preoccupation of one or both parents are far more likely to develop a standard for right and wrong that is balanced and reasonable.

Birth order accounts for another very significant factors in the development of filters. A first-born child, or a child born more than five years after other siblings receives the full force of his parents' attention, love, standards and attitudes—or the lack of any of those. He also receives the full force of the parents' discipline and protectiveness. Therefore, he will have a great respect for authority and achievement, sometimes to a fault. Whatever the parents value and expect—for example, education or work ethic—he will try to comply with in order to have a meaningful place in the family. If he has younger siblings and is expected to help out, the first-born child will learn to value responsibility and independence. However, if a younger sibling, particularly of the same gender, challenges his first-born position, he may struggle with self-confidence and modify some his previously-held positive values and behaviours.

Of the first twenty-three American astronauts, twenty-one were only children or eldest children.

An only child or youngest child may also grow to be independent, responsible, intellectual and dominant, but if she is over-protected or spoiled, she may as an adult have a self-centered, entitlement attitude or an expectation to be taken care of and made comfortable. She will learn to do things by herself and like solitary projects and being alone. She will have a very high respect for authority—sometimes too high.

Second or middle children learn to try harder. They are good negotiators with the strong social skills needed to compete against older, more competent siblings. They are often the best at maintaining good relationships; because their parents are generally more relaxed and less demanding of them, they tend to be more flexible themselves.

All other filters have a similar ability to drive or even distort your feelings and behaviour without your being aware of it. Your filters give your behaviour purpose and meaning: if I do ____, then I will feel good, be safe and not feel inferior. Remember that we are talking about your subjective and subconscious thinking here and not objective reality. However, once you learn about the illogical message of your filters, you can discover the purpose of and pay-off from many of your behaviours and their associated positive or negative feelings.

Each person's filters are unique.

So then, five different people may choose to do or say the same thing. In a particular instance they may all do their absolute best to get something right. One may be doing this because he just feels really good in getting it right, one may do it right to impress others, one will do it right to be completely fair, another to gain dominance or control of a situation and still another mainly to avoid criticism. The behaviour is identical for all five, but the pay-off is totally different based on each person's filtering system that gives meaning to the action.

Your own faulty filter is the main reason why, even when you know better, when it is clearly logical for you to change a behaviour that is causing you problems, frustrations or disconnects, you continue to repeat it—with the same negative consequences. This is why many problem-solving, talk-counseling and behaviour-modification programs are ineffective in the long term unless filters are discovered through these

cognitive insights. These driven and distorted filters must be discovered and disconnected because the wires and circuits in our brains that are used the most will get replayed the most. Reusing the same circuit is like driving down a muddy road again and again: eventually, you create a rut, and the rut in the road must be eliminated or the wheel will get stuck every time.

Good News and Bad News

Using western psychology to identify our subjective private logic and to learn how to “rethink” is potentially as powerful a growth strategy as could be developed. Regrettably, my strong belief is that if in the moments preceding or during an emotional hijack, we cannot be conscious of what is really happening—if we can’t be Here Now—we will not make optimal choices and not implement known insights and skills necessary to prevent and control the damage.

B-FIT Mindfulness, being highly aware of and non-attached to what is happening when it is happening, enables us to activate these cognitive insights and skills. In fact, without this awareness the natural neural wiring often dominates and the basics of freeze, fight or flight (activated by filters) take over as they have for years. Filters have been given many other names like schemas, gremlins, tapes, convictions, illogical beliefs or complexes: these terms all basically mean the same thing. In the next section I outline some of the most prevalent faulty filters that need no longer drive and distort your feelings and behaviour. Each filter has many sub-filters, but just discovering even one of your main filters will contribute greatly to disconnecting from harmful thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Remember, filters are kept private from us and control us throughout our entire life unless we discover and disconnect from them.

Essential Considerations:

1. We must practise, practise, practise—especially the B-FIT exercises—in order to optimally perform this disengaging process.
2. Mindfulness practice also develops capacity to outgrow the mind/body predisposition to be driven and gripped by filters in the first place.
3. Practice and performance require maximum effort as well as a gentle self-forgiveness and compassion for not getting it right or for becoming hijacked in spite of our best efforts.

Filters Self-Assessment

Take the time now to complete the filters self-assessment below. You will find the self-assessment particularly helpful to you if

- you logically know that you are over-reacting to a certain situation or person but just can’t pull yourself out of it;

- throughout your life you have had difficulty feeling close to another or have fallen out of a relationship with someone and really can't explain why (except to blame others);
- you realize that what upsets you wouldn't or doesn't seem to upset others nearly as much as you, or that different things upset them but not you and you don't know why;
- you feel that certain situations need to be changed now; others would generally agree that it is important, but your urgency is a little over the top. This is often a clue that you are being driven by your filters in this situation.

Discovering And Disengaging From Faulty Filters

(a.k.a. Childhood Neural Nonsense)

Instructions for Self-Assessment:

1. Just read this list of filters and highlight any statements that you relate to as “often me” or “always me” (4 or 5). Do not judge the “goodness” or “badness” of any statement.
2. After reviewing all 12 themes, go back and, using the highlights as a guide, give yourself a rating of 1-5 as to how much each of the 12 themes as presented with their faults and fruits is part of your makeup.
3. A possible positive, mindful reframing is offered below each faulty filter. In general these positive reframe statements are the way that relatively emotionally-balanced people without this faulty filter view the world, others and themselves. To the extent that you identify with most of these reframe statements, this filter theme is likely **not** about you. If, on the other hand, you feel that the reframe statement is **what you would like to be, feel or do** but are not, then this is one area where a filter may still be controlling your life.
4. One very, very important “heads up” on making your assessment: you will probably—up until now—think that almost everyone thinks like you do about the faulty filter statements that you most relate to. In so doing, you unknowingly convince yourself that your belief and typical emotional reactions on this are normal and not in need of changing. This is also a clue that this may be one of your faulty filter beliefs.
5. Similarly, note how you don't really relate that strongly to most of the other filter statements listed. Guess what? In general, most others do not have as strong a support for your faulty filter theme as you do.

6. Faulty filters are usually completely unknown to you, so read and ponder each one slowly and fully to help discover your filters. Consider what the family motto in your home was when you were growing up. What were several characteristics of your mother and/or father that most affected you, which you liked or hated? What would a vulnerable child learn from these influences, rules, models, and motivations?
7. Another clue to help you find your filter: if someone does or says something to you that bothers you or upsets you, unless it is an extreme violation that objectively anyone would be hurt or emotionally harmed by, then whatever was said is probably in the domain of some of your filters. For example, if someone excludes you from a conversation at a party and it really bothers you, you may have a filter around exclusion. Without an exclusion filter, the average person might notice this occurrence (or maybe not), but would shrug it off as no big deal, or they would just honestly forget it.
8. Your main theme will also be more accurately assessed after you have considered all 12 filters and seen how many are “Generally Not Me.”
9. Research strongly suggests that each of us has a little of most of these themes (both faults or fruits); however one or two will be most predominant and responsible for most of your positive and negative perceptions, feelings and behaviors with others and about life in general.
10. Try to recall real life examples to support your assessment of “often me.”
11. Remember as well that your filters are also responsible for many of your great qualities. All filters have some validity and are useful sometimes; however, when they unknowingly dominate our interpretations and perceptions of most situations, they are seriously faulty, even though we don’t realize it.
12. Just discovering your faulty filters and being aware of when you are being hijacked by them can bring much freedom and fulfillment to your life and the life of others that you know—particularly the person you are supporting.
13. Finally, reference is made to (B-FIT) **B**ody, **F**eelings, **I**mage way of thinking and **T**alk way of thinking mindfulness skills, especially in the positive reframe references. Remember, the problem isn’t that we have a particular filter with many sub-themes; everyone learned their filters in their childhood “learning to be a somebody” training. The problem is that the filter stays private from us while it drives and distorts negative feelings and behaviours, thereby truly limiting our potential as caregivers and as people. Our task in developing

personal and professional emotional maturity is to discover and learn to disconnect from the gripping power of these filters through B-FIT mindfulness and positive reframes—in the moment—to prevent harmful or even subtle hijacks from happening over and over and over.

A suggestion: walk lightly and play with the possibilities here; have some fun with them, just as you did as a child discovering something new and wonderful about the mystery of a butterfly.

Faulty Filter #1: Need to be in Control In Order to Feel Normal	Usually not me (1)	Sometimes me (2-3)	Often me (4-5)
I must be in control of life’s situations in order to feel secure, normal and happy. Life in general is worrisome and fearful if I don’t know or am not in control of what is happening. I really need predictability, order, and structure not to feel anxious.			

Recall in detail specific examples of how you are unknowingly (in the moment) driven by this filter.

Now consider these examples of a more useful, fulfilling and mindful reframing of this faulty filter:

The nature of life is that it is ever-changing. I will always work skillfully to influence and change things as appropriate. However once I have done all that I can, my sense of worth, security and/or comfort will depend mostly on my awareness and skills to be subjectively allowing of the outcomes and trusting enough to just let it be.

I still get feelings I don’t like when my life seems out of control, however I now can mindfully observe their B-FIT reactions and be non-attached to them so that they don’t grip, drive and distort my feelings and behaviour as much any more.

Examples of assets that accompany this filter:

- excellent problem solver intellectual good decision maker
- well-organized articulate

Faulty Filter #2: Need to Perceive Myself as <u>not</u> Being Controlled	Usually not me (1)	Some-times me (2-3)	Often me (4-5)
It is really important to my well-being and good feelings that life or other people do not control me. If they do or I perceive they do, I can feel irritated, anxious, fearful or somehow imprisoned. No matter what I accomplish or contribute in life, I still feel inferior and often feel that I must do or be more to stay ahead of the pack.			

Recall in detail specific examples of how you are unknowingly (in the moment) driven by this filter.

Now consider these examples of a more useful, fulfilling and mindful reframing of this faulty filter:

In some circumstances in my life, other people and situations such as health, disability, financial hardships etc. will have significant influence over me. When this is necessary or unavoidable, I can accept this control, knowing that this too shall pass, or this too is necessary for now or maybe even forever. I work skillfully and sensibly to change what should and can be changed. I also know that although my B-FIT is relating to this situation as being trapped, my B-FIT responses are only tools to support my existence, similar to seeing and hearing. **They are not me.**

As I observe and become non-attached with B-FIT mindfulness in this situation, I am more and more subjectively (internally) free, satisfied and joyous, even though objectively (outside reality) I am still being controlled in this unavoidable situation.

Examples of assets that accompany this filter:

excellent problem solver caring well-organized
 thoughtful decisive

Faulty Filter #3: Need To Be Right	Usually not me (1)	Some-times me (2-3)	Often me (4-5)
<p>I need to be right. One benefit of this for me is avoiding criticism (which can be awful). Perfectionism (my perception of it) in several or even most parts of my life is very important. I procrastinate and avoid making decisions in order to avoid making mistakes. “Better to not run in the race than lose it.” In my secret life, I am often highly self-critical.</p> <p>I don’t accept criticism well. Criticism makes me angry or gives me hurt feelings. I sometimes lie to avoid criticism.</p> <p>Others have referred to me as “anal”! I have developed an unconscious habit of being judgmentally critical of others. I am constantly affirming my rightness in life to help me feel good, normal and even sometimes self-righteous. It sometimes seems that I am still that child, fearful of not living up to Mom’s or Dad’s or someone else’s expectations of me.</p>			

Recall in detail specific examples of how you are unknowingly (in the moment) driven by this filter.

Now consider these examples of a more useful, fulfilling and mindful reframing of this faulty filter:

Being right and doing my best is important in many parts of my life, and I will always give my best effort to learn to be skilled and proficient. My self-worth and good feelings, however, do not depend on proving that I am right (or that someone else is wrong). I know that I am now not a vulnerable child who will be yelled at or punished if I make a mistake or don’t do something just right. I am a mature, self-reliant person capable and willing to learn and grow, especially by trying what I am not good at. Therefore I expect and accept failing as part of learning something new.

Recall in detail specific examples of how you are unknowingly (in the moment) driven by this filter.

Now consider these examples of a more useful, fulfilling and mindful reframing of this faulty filter:

It feels great when I receive compliments or acceptance from others; however, my self-worth, self-esteem and feelings of being okay no longer depend on the opinion of others as they did when I was a vulnerable child.

The healing, maturing and transforming person that I am now expects my B-FIT responses to react negatively to criticism due to thousands of moments of conditioning. I now can and do become aware each time these reactions surface and thereby am less and less identified with them. During these mind-full moments I repeat, "Ah, there is B-FIT reacting to perceived disapproval, and here is the real me watching it all. Far out! Great show! (As in a mind movie).

Examples of assets that accompany this filter:

extremely thoughtful

giving

excellent social skills

non-critical of others

intuitive

considerate

above normal fairness to others

Faulty Filter #5: Need To Be Treated Fairly	Usually not me (1)	Some- times me (2-3)	Often me (4-5)
<p>If life treats me unfairly (as I determine fairness), I have a right to feel irritated, vengeful or un-cooperative. As I came from a home where I was somewhat pampered or over-protected, my judgments about what I am entitled to are often mistaken (but I don't generally realize this).</p> <p>My parents controlled my behaviour by spoiling me.</p> <p>I believe I have worth mainly when I am being served—especially one on one. I have genuine anxiety, anger or sadness when I perceive unfairness or rejection if I am not being served enough.</p> <p>I generally feel that I am entitled to more of whatever I want and feel irritated or rejected when it doesn't happen. When I don't get it, I often react powerfully (aggressively or passively) to get or even take it! To get it I may act weak, vulnerable, or sick so that others will come to my service, which I often interpret as the only way I can be loved.</p>			

Recall in detail specific examples of how you are unknowingly (in the moment) driven by this filter.

Now consider these examples of a more useful, fulfilling and mindful reframing of this faulty filter:

Life and others often inadvertently treat people unfairly, and I am no exception. Although unknowingly, my childhood B-FIT was conditioned into believing that I am generally entitled to what I want. I now know that I am special and worthy whether I get what I want from others or not. I now do not take it personally if my wishes are not granted.

Feelings of “less than” that come when I don't get what I feel that I deserve are now experienced as passing B-FIT reactions that the real me can become aware of and non-attached to, and therefore not driven and gripped by. When I don't get treated fairly, or don't get acknowledged or served by others, I no longer take it personally.

I know that I am lovable regardless of how I am treated.

Examples of assets that accompany this filter:

- above normal fairness to others
- sensitive to other's needs
- thoughtful
- excellent social skills
- advocate for the underdog
- openly appreciative when (perceived to be) treated fairly

Faulty Filter #6: Need To Feel Self-Righteous	Usually not me (1)	Some-times me (2-3)	Often me (4-5)
I must be good as I define it (morally and socially) in order to feel self-righteously worthwhile. I therefore often become addicted to an ideology, career or belief with clear and simple do's and don'ts, good or evil and self-righteously relate to others as good guys or bad guys. Being good or right often unknowingly elevates my feelings of superiority that I need to feel normal and happy. I often find myself judging others.			

Recall in detail specific examples of how you are unknowingly (in the moment) driven by this filter.

Now consider these examples of a more useful, fulfilling and mindful reframing of this faulty filter:

Yes, being a morally good person is very important to me, and when I violate universally accepted values I need my B-FIT to acknowledge my less than optimal feelings, thoughts and/or behaviour in order to change or make amends.

I do not need the feelings of self-righteousness that often accompany the judging behaviours that I have used for years to affirm my superior self-worth. I and others behave in moral or immoral ways due to countless B-FIT conditionings. For some people, these behaviours are beyond their immediate control. This does not make them evil or bad; however, correction is often required to prevent them from doing further harm. I prevent and help them, but now my heart stays open.

As part of my responsibility to contribute in my family and local and global community I will enjoy doing and achieving whatever I can that is helpful to sustain my and other's life and that which is environmentally friendly.

My doing will be done consciously, however, not just to get it done or avoid the terror of boredom but equally as a process to awaken my consciousness. This awakening consciousness will in turn reduce and eventually eliminate my obsessive attachment to activity or doing for the sake of doing.

I mindfully become aware of my B-FIT's insatiable appetite to do, stay busy, and consume mainly for its own sake or often to avoid the perceived emptiness and isolation of boredom. Now I can experience joy, pleasure and satisfaction from just being as well as doing.

Examples of assets that accompany this filter:

- a high achiever
- boundless energy
- highly committed to non-profit organizations
- broad range of interests and skills
- the team "doer"

Faulty Filter #8: Need To Be Included	Usually not me (1)	Some- times me (2-3)	Often me (4-5)
I must be included and respected in most social interactions or else I will feel excluded, hurt and unimportant. I unconsciously feel that people who exclude me do it on purpose, so I have a right to be angry with them (which is one way that my mind protects me from deeper hurt). I must be emotionally accepted by most people I know.			

Recall in detail specific examples of how you are unknowingly (in the moment) driven by this filter.

Now consider these examples of a more useful, fulfilling and mindful reframing of this faulty filter:

I will enjoy being included and respected in social situations, however feel equally satisfied in my aloneness. I mindfully experience the occasions of non-inclusion that many people experience in groups as just unintended and unskillful communication skills on the part of others. I now do not take it personally. In these moments I observe my conditioned B-FIT reactions that would have caused feelings of

inferiority, rejection or anger and now gently welcome these “guests” to stay as long as they need. I know that they are not me, as I am the observer of them.

Provided I am well-intended and conscious in my interactions with others, I know, really know, that being rejected or not included has absolutely nothing to do with me but often is merely an indicator of another person walking and talking in their sleep (unconsciousness). Depending on my awareness in the moment and their readiness, I may softly ring a wake-up bell or let them sleep: either action coming from a place of unconditional wisdom and compassion, not dependent on getting their inclusion or acceptance.

Examples of assets that accompany this filter:

- highly sensitive to other’s needs
- generous
- champion of the underdog
- a true and loyal friend
- above average ability to see the best in others (unless they exclude me)

Faulty Filter #9: Need For Ongoing Proof of Others’ Worthiness of Trust	Usually not me (1)	Some- times me (2-3)	Often me (4-5)
<p>Others must continually prove to me that they can be trusted and that they like me. I often can’t be sure.</p> <p>Possibly abandonment, (perceived or real) by my mother, father or other important childhood influence taught me not to trust and not to get close to someone special because they will likely just leave and hurt me.</p> <p>Being intimate is a challenge for me. I therefore may have many friends but guard against getting too close or dependent with one or two due to fear of rejection or betrayal.</p>			

Recall in detail specific examples of how you are unknowingly (in the moment) driven by this filter.

Now consider these examples of a more useful, fulfilling and mindful reframing of this faulty filter:

I feel good when I know that I am in a trusting relationship with another even though I know that they will (because of their own roots of vulnerability and faulty filters) let me down sometimes. I do not, however, need ongoing reassurance of their fidelity, devotion or allegiance to me.

I recognize my B-FIT's resistance and reluctance to enter into intimate, trusting relationships due possibly to my hurt in losing or not having a special person in my vulnerable childhood. With mindfulness, however, I also have learned that I can be authentically intimate and trusting, and experience a special kind of joy and closeness.

I know that I am not this reactive, conditioned B-FIT "small self" but more the "big self" who knows that the B-FIT small self is attempting to hijack the real me. Because of this knowing, I am able to risk building unconditional, intimate relationships, with the full knowledge that some of these relationships can prematurely and hurtfully end, as is the case for everyone.

Examples of assets that accompany this filter:

strong, above average social skills

a broad range of friends

very, very loyal, trustworthy

thoughtful and generous

an achiever and doer in life

Faulty Filter #10: Need For Excitement	Usually not me (1)	Some- times me (2-3)	Often me (4-5)
<p>In order for me to feel good and normal I need excitement, things happening around me.</p> <p>Obsessive thinking, feelings and behaviour or even regular angry outbursts are used to make me feel calm, normal, good and alive (emotionally and bio-chemically).</p> <p>As illogical as it seems, I know that I sometimes “look for trouble,” for example by starting an argument, but I just can’t help myself.</p> <p>I plan many (more than average) exciting events for months in advance and would feel uneasy and restless without them to look forward to.</p>			

Recall in detail specific examples of how you are unknowingly (in the moment) driven by this filter.

Now consider these examples of a more useful, fulfilling and mindful reframing of this faulty filter:

Doing new and exciting activities is enjoyable. I can, however, be equally content to just be alone with little or no stimulation, reading, listening or sitting in silence. With mindfulness I am experiencing that less really can be more.

When I observe that my B-FIT is driven with anticipation, I can skillfully bring it to a non-driven state and still feel the full excitement. I can just “be” without being driven by excitement.

Examples of assets that accompany this filter:

a make-it-happen person

fun-loving adventurer

a visionary and idea person

a motivator

an excellent short and long term planner (not necessarily a completer)

Faulty Filter #11: Need To See Myself As A Victim	Usually not me (1)	Some-times me (2-3)	Often me (4-5)
<p>Life and others will always let me down or hurt me.</p> <p>Bad things happen to me much more than others. I am a magnet for trouble.</p> <p>I feel normal when I am a victim in life. I misperceive that I am victimized (and have no other choice) much more often than others.</p> <p>When my “noble suffering” serves to exalt me, I can sometimes get normal feelings from my martyrdom and the supportive attention that I now receive.</p>			

Recall in detail specific examples of how you are unknowingly (in the moment) driven by this filter.

Now consider these examples of a more useful, fulfilling and mindful reframing of this faulty filter:

I recognize that I, like everyone, have difficult or distressing times—sometimes just events and sometimes an ongoing part of my everyday life. I also accept that some people (possibly me) experience much more difficulty in life than others and it is absolutely not fair – it’s just the way it is. I mindfully prepare myself to manage, prevent and change that which can and should be changed.

I often watch my B-FIT “ain’t it awful” or “poor me” responses; however, I recognize that these messages are just conditioned responses to difficulty that at one time served me well to cope or get help and attention when I had no other choices.

For that which I can't or shouldn't change for now, I now consciously and intentionally select appropriate emotional and social responses that include not resisting or pushing away the victimization B-FIT reactions, so they now naturally, more quietly and gently leave on their own.

As I become non-attached, more and more I can see the gifts brought to me by difficult circumstances and difficult people.

Examples of assets that accompany this filter:

sensitive to other's pain

risk taker in relationships

highly able to express emotions

helpful to other

Faulty Filter #12: Need to and Deserve to Have Comfort	Usually not me (1)	Some-times me (2-3)	Often me (4-5)
<p>Getting and keeping physical, emotional and psychological comfort is my main goal. When life conforms, I am most happy. When it doesn't, I have a right to feel bad or even to take what I need.</p> <p>I like to keep the peace and avoid constructive conflict, as it is very uncomfortable for me. I am skilled at avoiding conflict by making light of conversation that gets too serious or by not making decisions.</p> <p>One of my favourite hobbies is to “veg out.”</p> <p>I try to hide it, but mostly I think of myself first.</p> <p>I like immediate gratification, so I don't tend to plan or think too far ahead.</p> <p>I let others plan and do for me, but they better get it right or I will feel and show my “justifiable” upset—often by becoming moody or sulking.</p> <p>When these comfort goals are met, there is no one more likeable and loveable than me.</p>			

Recall in detail specific examples of how you are unknowingly (in the moment) driven by this filter.

Now consider these examples of a more useful, fulfilling and mindful reframing of this faulty filter:

I do like being physically and emotionally comfortable. I feel special when others are thoughtful or kind to me. My feelings of self-worth, however, do not depend on others taking care of me.

Although it is not natural for me, in mindfully being thoughtful I am fulfilled by helping and being kind to others. At these times my B-FIT will sometimes protest, “but what about me,” and I can now laugh at that conditioned response. I learned so well as a vulnerable child that this reaction would bring others to my service. Now, although I still really enjoy being “comforted,” I do not need or expect it.

Examples of assets that accompany this filter:

Gregarious, fun loving, life of the party

strong social skills, liked by many

peace maker, conflict preventer

above average performer at work

positively responsive when needs are being met

Summary

Each of us will probably relate to one or two of the above themes much more than the others. We all have very personal, unique subjective private (il)logical filters and are driven by them when we are not mindful and non-attached with them. The good news is that with practice we can become highly proficient at immediately being aware of faulty filters when they happen. We can skillfully disconnect from them (that is, not be gripped or driven by them). These B-FIT reactions will eventually come much less often and our recovery time will be much quicker.

For many of us, probably hundreds of less than optimal or downright harmful decisions are made every month regarding partnering, parenting, friendships, work, loving, and change based primarily on unknown faulty filters. These outdated programs result in unknown, unnecessary resistances, greed and attachments to habits such as over-consumption, jealousy, anger or fear. With skill these can be brought into awareness and significantly neutralized. Only then will we become reliably able to clarify the situations we are confronted with and choose the best response.

Fortunately, those who are prepared to invest some time and effort to discover their mind's illogical default programs can install a circuit breaker to disconnect from this negative source of power that keeps them so vulnerable to imagined lightening strikes.

To assist in our authentic compassion for all others (even the most difficult and harmful people we know) always remember that they too have their own subjective, private, illogical faulty filters that are unknowingly driving and distorting their reality (thoughts, feelings and behaviours) in most situations. Even in the depth of their need or illness, the person you are supporting is being driven by the insane filters: e.g. the need to have comfort, the need to be in control. These are the moments when we can best assess our own progress on the path of healing, maturing and transforming.

People with development/multiple disabilities I have found have 1 of 4 distinct filters. In most cases they have found that this brings supporters to help them:

- They are overly 'pleasing'
- They are generally hurting/in pain/sick
- They are chronic complainers
- They have chronic guilt and too often apologetic

How soon and how skillfully we compassionately change what we can and should, and how well we simultaneously keep our heart open to their predicament is yet another manifestation of our wisdom and maturity.

Resource Recommendations:

The following are excellent resources to continue your all-important life task of discovery and disconnecting from your artifacts of Childhood Neural Nonsense.

1. *Taming Your Gremlin*, by Rick Carson
2. *Emotional Alchemy*, by Tara Goleman
3. *Understanding Human Nature*, by Dr. Alfred Adler.

We say, “Seeing is believing,” but actually . . . we are all much better at believing than at seeing. In fact, we are seeing what we believe nearly all the time and only occasionally seeing what we can’t believe.”

Robert Wilson

Action Required

1. Discover as much as possible about your main faulty filter that unconsciously distorts your perceptions about others, life situations and your own self-image. Learn how this faulty filter drives many of your feelings and behaviours in less than optimal or harmful ways.
2. Become highly informed about the purposes and pay-offs of your feelings and behaviours.
3. Select one or more situations or people and become aware of how and when your faulty filter hijacks you in these situations. It would be very helpful to include the person you are supporting as one of your choices for awareness.
4. Using the insights that you now have from this exploration of filter, take ten minutes each morning and mindfully reflect on recent hijacks. This will be necessary to develop the vital wisdom to outgrow the emotional upsets of these situations. This is your inner work. It is also your responsibility to change what should and can be changed. Continuing to choose to play the blame game (of others) as you have since childhood is now not an option.
5. As part of this reflection, practise the positive self-talk offered with your faulty filter. Change it to make it your own. Repeating the reframed, positive self-talk each day for 4-6 weeks would not be too much!
6. Practise B-FIT Mindfulness skills to build the ability to be aware in the moment that a faulty filter hijack is occurring and maintain that awareness. Be able and willing to disconnect from your driven B-FIT hijack into a more conscious healing and transformative process: for example, make amends, recommit, change behaviour and celebrate progress.

View [youtube.com/petermarksccs](https://www.youtube.com/petermarksccs) video 3 of 3

“Happiness for No Reason”