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A critique of Byron Katie and her therapeutic technique The Work

For some years ago, when I was facilitating a philosophical café, and was talking about the important in asking philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way, one of the participants told me, that the American New Age guru Byron Katie had developed a method of self-inquiry, that did, that there from now on was no need of therapy, philosophy and religion anymore. The method is called The Work, and is said to be a revolutionary new way to resolve any problem at all, so simple that even a child can do it.

This statement made my cognitive alarm bells ring, because I had heard such statements before. It is namely a typical way that “new” theories within New Age are presented (see my article **Six common traits of New Age that distort spirituality**). And it made me curious: what have they now made up within this movement?

Byron Kathleen Reid (or “Katie” as she is often called) became severely depressed in her early thirties. She was a businesswoman and mother who lived in a small town in the high desert of southern California. According to Katie, for nearly a decade she spiraled down into paranoia, rage, self-loathing, and constant thoughts of suicide; for the last two years she was often unable to leave her bedroom. Then, one morning in February 1986, while in a halfway house for women with eating disorders, she experienced a life-changing realization. She called it “waking up to reality.” In that moment of enlightenment, she says,

“I discovered that when I believed my thoughts, I suffered, but when I didn’t believe them, I didn’t suffer, and that this is true for every human being. Freedom is as simple as that. I found that suffering is optional. I found a joy within me that has never disappeared, not for a single moment.”

According to journalist Allison Adato, soon afterwards people started seeking Katie out and asking how they could find the freedom that they saw in her. People from her own town, and eventually from elsewhere, came to meet her, and some even live with her.

Katie is not aligned with any particular religion or tradition. She is married to the writer and translator Stephen Mitchell, who co-wrote her first book, *Loving What Is* and her third book, *A Thousand Names For Joy*.

Katie calls her method of self-inquiry “The Work.” She describes it as an embodiment, in words, of the wordless questioning that had woken up in her that February morning. Adato further writes that as reports spread about the transformations people felt they were experiencing through The Work, Katie was invited to present it publicly elsewhere in California, then throughout the United States, and eventually in Europe and across the world. She has taught her method to people at free public events, in prisons, hospitals, churches, corporations, shelters for survivors of domestic violence, universities and schools, at weekend intensives, and at her nine-day “School for The Work.”

In the following article I will show how The Work is a simplified and biased form of therapy taken from Cognitive Therapy: a “single cause-single cure” approach to therapy, which has led many a therapist down a dead-end trail and has created no end of problems for clients. The typical scene is, that the innovators found themselves doing something: sitting in a hot tub, berating patients, or feeding them out of baby bottles. It felt good or worked for the therapists, so they made some assumptions in order to create an ideology that would support practicing the method on others. Without much thought, and little or no proof, the technique was expanded to become a “cure-all” for all people.

This is precisely how the innovation of the Work happened. As mentioned, Katie said: “I discovered that when I believed my thoughts, I suffered, but when I didn’t believe them, I didn’t suffer, and that this is true for every human being. Freedom is as simple as that. I found that suffering is optional. I found a joy within me that has never disappeared, not for a single moment.”

Another typical scene is that the innovation is based on therapist observation of the conduct of one patient. The therapist then teaches the method to countless others, professing that this is the best and only useful therapy to cure mental illness.

I will show the problematic in this. In life there can be many causes and contributing factors that might lead a person to seek therapy. Each person’s problems are unique.

I will also show this more general, and peculiarly, phenomenon within New Age, where “new” theories are exposed to have been taken (stolen) from something else, simplified/distorted, and then presented as something holy, new and revolutionary, often received in divine visions; that is: the illusion that a simplified psychotherapy

should be a spiritual/philosophical practice. Besides the “inspiration” from cognitive therapy, I will show another source from where Katie has got her ideas, almost word-for-word.

Very shortly said, then the Work ends up as a “single cause-single cure” mix between Cathartic psychotherapy and positive thinking.

There is of course no need for psychotherapy if you are not mentally ill; on the contrary, it would be harmful to think so (see my article **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it**).

I will use quotations from former Byron Katie devotee Janaki. Finally I will show an example from Cognitive Therapy that exposes where The Work comes from.

Problems with The Work

The Work consists in four questions you have to ask to a problematic thought of yours, and a turnaround technique. The four questions are:

1. Is it true?
2. Are you absolutely sure it is true?
3. How do you react when you think this thought?
4. Who would you be without this thought?

These questions can be a good idea to ask yourself if a problematic thought of yours actually is false. And there is nothing new in it. As mentioned they also use such questions in Cognitive Therapy, but not so simplified. So why not use that instead, or take a few lessons in philosophy?

Because the problem with The Work is that it has a conclusion in advance, namely that the thought is false, and therewith it is in progress, as with other New Age directions, of eliminating peoples' ability of critical thinking. Problematic, because the training of critical thinking is the first step in a true spiritual proces, and on the whole a primary condition for a healthy mind. In Cognitive Therapy for example, they also have questions to ask to problematic thoughts, that actually have some truth in them (examples in the end of this article).

When the conclusion is given in advance then The Work's four questions becomes so-called rhetorical questions; that is: questions which are asked purely for effect rather than as requests for answers. In that case the four questions function in

precisely the same way as persuader words (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

It is comparatively easy, and certainly unhelpful, to raise four seemingly deep questions on any problem (called pseudo-profundity) – and where the conclusion is given in advance. But that is precisely what The Work is doing. It is said to work on any problem, and that it has to be used precisely as Byron Katie herself is doing it. But what is difficult and important is to investigate problems, and find answers. In a true philosophical investigation a problematic thought can very well be true, but the problematic in it could be generated by, that the person for instance can't find any answers, any further solutions, or ways out. The investigation could then begin with finding other philosophical questions involved in the problem, for instance “What do I ought to do, or not to do?”, “How should I live in society?”, “What are feelings?”, “Is there a meaning of life?”, “Who am I?”

That is philosophical critical thinking, and such a critical way of thinking is eliminated in The Work.

Former devotees even say that The Work can get quite nasty with its turnaround technique. After that you, as expected, have “realized”, that your thought is not true, then you have to turn it upside down; you so to speak have to think the opposite thought.

Again it can be a good thing to look at problems from different sides, but that is not what you do with the turnaround technique. The turnaround technique actually sound a bit like the thought distortion called *Conversion to the opposite* (again: see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**). The turnaround technique must be a dream for any bully, liar or manipulator. If you are critical, then this is due to your own false thoughts. If someone have bullied you, and you feel hurt, then this pain is based on your own wrong way of thinking. Certainly not the bully's (the bully is actually a kind of guru; an example of the divine). And in that we find the main problem with The Work, and the reason why I would advice people to keep a long distance from it. It is similar to other New Age therapies where everything is psychologized. If you are critical, then you have a resistance problem, and must pay for some more courses. Because, as in other New Age directions, there is also the typical cult aspect in The Work, where it is about earning a lot of money.

Here is an example of Katie's use of the turnaroud technique. On page 35, of *Losing the Moon*, Byron Katie starts talking about Nazi's taking babies from Jewish mothers and throwing the babies into a firepit near the end of WWII.

Quote:

If Someone (God, 'what is'), pulls my baby from me - if that's what it takes, I'm there. Take the baby. Tear my baby from me. Throw it in the fire....My discomfort is my war with God. [...]

You see, there are NO choices. What is, is. [...]

But when we get to the baby thing, we're getting down to our sacred little concepts now....You take my baby from me, you're messing with the illusion of I'm the mommy, this is the baby, there's the daddy...

But tearing the baby away- that's the higher. That's the higher, because it snatches your story from you and makes it apparent in your face - nothing's real short of reality....

That's it. That's what is. That's love. That's absolutely Un-describable love. That you, God, would even give me that.

Can you know that Hitler didn't bring more people to realization than Jesus? On your knees - God. God! God! But our stories of reality keep us from the awareness of God is Everything. And God is Good. [...]

There has never been evil and there never will be. Evil is simply a story about what's not...

But I have trashed the baby when I have trashed the Nazi...

I am the baby going into the pit. I am the one throwing the baby in the pit...

Byron Katie just keeps going on and on from there.

So according to Byron Katie, Nazi's mass murdering Jewish women's babies by burning them to death alive while the mothers watch, is the loving work of God.

As a matter of fact, Byron Katie says that baby killers are "higher" than the illusion of mommy.

The book *Losing the Moon* from which the above quotation has been taken has now been removed, but aspects of this justification of all kind of unethical behaviour (in the name of love) are seen again and again in *The Work*. And this kind of subjectivism/relativism could of course never come from an enlightened

consciousness since enlightenment (spirituality) of course is absolutism and not relativism.

If you doubt that the above kind of “argumentation” not are common in Byron Katie devotees I will here provide a link to “Samsara”, a Katie devotee, who on his or hers blog demonstrates it in action. The blog **the-work-byron-katie.blogspot.com** is called *Abusive Partner is your Guru?* ([Click here](#) to read how the examination develops in the same way as Byron Katie herself could have done it. If the blog-author should decide to delete the blog, I have saved it on Archive.org ([click here](#)). I will return to this blog later.

I have several times myself discussed this kind of “examination” with Katie devotees (I have stopped with it now). Besides that it is extremely annoying to hear their “loving” voices and their use of the word love again and again, then it’s directly surrealistic how oblivious they are when demonstrating the monstrosity of their self-deceptive work, how uninterested they are in the truth and how indifferent they are to people they help destroy with their “loving examinations.”

So, the Turnaround Technique also involves the thought distortion called *Reductio ad absurdum*, which covers positions that would have absurd consequences if true. If you for example preach the relativism of The Work and are believing that everything is relative and for that reason equally true (or good), you have thereby accepted that nazism, fascism, dictatorship, popular murder, terror and violence, are as equally great blessings for mankind as democracy, negotiation and dialogue. Then you have no basis in order to criticize, because you haven’t got any rational frame to start from. You can’t criticize anyone for argumentation bungling, or to replace arguments with machine guns, because this presupposes, that there is a rational foundation in your arguments.

Many Byron Katie devotees would probably disagree with me, when I say that The Work is about realizing that your thoughts are false. Besides that this precisely is what Katie herself says - (“I discovered that when I believed my thoughts, I suffered, but when I didn’t believe them, I didn’t suffer, and that this is true for every human being.”) – then I have talked with several Katie devotees, both former and present devotees. I noticed how involved they were in the thought distortion called *Nondual bias* (see my book **A Dictionary of Thought Distortions**): Clear thinking, and therefore clear communication, involves, according to Taoism, an epistemological, a so-called gnoseological, dualism (Yin and Yang). Clear, or unambiguous, description, has the distinction between subject and object, image and reality, as a necessary precondition. We have to discriminate between subject and object, image and reality, in order to communicate unambiguous. And we have to discriminate

between a long line of other oppositions as well (superior seen: good and evil, true and false, beautiful and ugly): under one called Yin and Yang. And this discrimination is characterized by the knowledge that oppositions are complementary to each other, because they mutually exclude each other and at the same necessarily must supplement each other. If your thoughts slip out in one extreme you must remember the other extreme and bring it in. If you confuse oppositions, you must separate them.

What I noticed in these Byron Katie devotees was the constant confusion of opposites. They had trained their minds to a constant use of The Turnaround Technique. The Technique can give a temporary release based on a kind of escape from reality (escapism), but can of course not remove for example anxiety, depression, anger, or other problems/negative reactions to challenges. Therefore they must start using the technique again, often, paradoxically, on a conclusion they - only a few moments before - had reached after having done The Work.

They often spoke in terms like: “On the one hand I agree, on the other hand I disagree!”, “On the one hand it could be true, on the other hand it could be false!”, “On the one hand I consider myself as perfect, on the other hand I consider myself as a fiasco!” And then they always concluded such “examinations” with the final statement that concepts such as good and evil, true and false, beautiful and ugly – *both* are being good; that is: the evil, the false and the ugly are as equally good as the good, the true and the beautiful – or, said in another way: the evil, the false and the ugly simply don’t exist. It’s all a part of *What Is*, and *What Is*, is good. Therefore you should love *What Is*.

Such statements are a variation of the thought distortion called *False dichotomy* which involves a *Contradiction*, since they can’t both be true (or good) because one denies the other. In a true philosophical argumentation you discriminate between good and evil, true and false, beautiful and ugly, in order to find the philosophical virtues the Good, the True and the Beautiful.

An example of the variation: Byron Katie wrote on Facebook June 15, 2012:

"There's never a mistake in the universe. So if your partner is angry, good. If there are things about him that you consider flaws, good, because these flaws are your own, you're projecting them, and you can write them down, inquire, and set yourself free. People go to India to find a guru, but you don't have to: you're living with one. Your partner will give you everything you need for your own freedom."

([Click here](#) to read it on Facebook where you also can follow the comments. Note how most of them – except a few clear-sighted comments - uncritically celebrate the statement as an example of fantastic wisdom, without even considering the - quite obvious - terrible consequences it would have if you took it for true).

The blogger “Samsara” commented on this message on the above mentioned blog *Abusive Partner is your Guru?* under titles such as *Your Abuser is your Guru?* and *Did Byron Katie Lose Her Noodle?* She writes:

”let's travel this statement and see what we can find. Maybe Katie did lose her noodle. And if she did, let's see if we can find it. If she did not lose her noodle, well that is great news, too.”

And so on...

Many former Katie devotees have been in counseling for years in order to remove this way of confused thinking.

As other self-help and New Age theories The Work shows its roots in postmodern intellectualism (see my article **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry**). For example you see the same in Marshal Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication – see my article **Nonviolent Communication is an instrument of psychic terror**.

Many former devotees of Byron Katie precisely describe The Work as a kind of inquisition, when it is performed. For example when it is used to eliminate people’s critique, often in a large group, with Byron Katie sitting on the stage, looking down at the critic with the whole audience on her side.

A serious problem with The Work is the feeling of guilt, or shame, it is creating. Not surprisingly. Former devotees are, as already shown, also telling about how confused their minds were getting, which again indicates, that it is based on especially two kinds of thought distortions, namely *Rhetorical questions* and *Conversion to the opposite*. The problem with Conversion to the opposite is, that it, in connection with the turnaround technique, tries to eliminate one part of a pair of opposites, namely true thoughts (which of course can have negativity in them, since suffering is a reality), and only are working with false thoughts. In this way we see, that The Work actually is a special version of positive psychology (which try to ignore all negativity by focusing only on positivity – there is no evil), and therefore has it roots in the New Thought movement (see my article **The New Thought movement and the Law of**

Attraction). Negativity is, according to The Work, due to your thoughts. Positivity is first arising when you realize that your thoughts are false.

But in this biased way of thinking The Work actually produces a false dichotomy because it is not possible to eliminate the negative opposition. We have already looked at the special variation of false dichotomy Byron Katie devotees are ending up in. The variation is that the devotees constantly swing from one pole of a pair of opposites to the other. This is due to *Conversion to the opposite* (the constant use of The Turnaround Technique), and the result is *Contradiction* (about opposites, see my book **A Portrait of a Lfeartist**, the section *On Dualism* in the chapter *The Lfeartist as a Rational Being*).

You can for example convert your insecurity and anxiety for not being good enough to exaggerated self-confidence. Such a conversion is of course a kind of *Compensation*, escape, self-deceit, and will lead to a false and imbalanced way of life.

Sadly enough, it seems like the movement of positive psychology (again: see my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**) directly is using Conversion to the opposite as a central part of its training. Positive psychology is marked by its attempts, through thinking, to eliminate all negativity by converting it into something positive, or simply by ignoring it, or saying it doesn't exist. But a thought is always defined by its negation; that is: what the thought *not* is. This means that a thought always contains a pair of opposites. So, you can't by the force of thinking (and therefore not by force of will or choice) convert negativity to positivity. If you nonetheless try to do this you will end up in focusing on the one extreme of a pair of opposites, which is an unbalance. The energy-laws within the wholeness will therefore seek to bring the thoughts back to the balance of middle. They do this through a contra-balancing movement; that is: a swing over in the opposite extreme. That is what is meant with compensatory karma (see my article **What is karma?**). Existentially seen Conversion to the opposite causes a conflict between what you are and what you want to become, or between being and becoming.

Conversion to the opposite, and the above-mentioned problems, characterize The Work, and the Turnaround technique, and are the reason why the devotees again and again need to do the technique. It actually also involves another thought distortion, namely *Endless split of the thought*, because that the devotees, each time they have turned a thought around, are discovering that this is causing new problems. Therefore they have to do the turnaround one more time, and so on, indefinitely. I have investigated this in my book **A Portrait of a Lfeartist** in the section *On Analysis*.

In a true spiritual practice the transformation happens, partly through art of life, where you are dancing between the opposites (as in the teaching of Yin and Yang), and through deep meditative-existential inquiry.

False dichotomy is a misleading conception of possible alternatives. A dichotomy is a division in two alternatives. Often seen in the expressions Either/or – If/then, as for example: "Either you are with us, or you are against us" – "if I'm not always a success, then I'm a fiasco". Similarly, someone who says that you must either believe that God exists or else that God doesn't exist is setting up a false dichotomy since there is the well-known third option of the agnostic.

A false dichotomy appears when somebody sets up a dichotomy in such a way, that it looks like, that there only are two possible conclusions, when the facts actual are, that there are many other alternatives which not are being mentioned. Many inappropriate rules of living and life-strategies are based on false dichotomy. False dichotomy is thinking in extremes, and leads to a false and imbalanced way of life. The false dichotomy, which the turnaround technique creates (the conversion to the opposite), is: "If I am thinking that something is true, then this thought is false." And, in connection with positive psychology: "If I am not always positive, then there is something wrong with my thoughts.", and "If I am not always a success, then I am a fiasco." And thereby it induces in people a vulnerability for guilt, shame and depression; that is: people are certainly not getting happy from using The Work, though the thought distortion *Subjective validation* probably will make many claim that they are. Another aspect of this is the suffering provoked through the use of cathartic psychotherapy (see below).

Another interesting aspect of The Work is that it also involves the thought distortions *Self-refuting arguments* and *Reductio ad Absurdum*. We have already looked at the Reductio ad absurdum, because we can see that The Work could be used by any bully, liar or manipulator. If we take the self-refuting arguments then The Work involves the problem of subjectivism/relativism, which considers all views as subjectivistic/relativistic, and therefore equally true (or equally good); what of course indicates that the views in absolutistic sense is false (not good). The Work is therefore logical fallacious, because it of course considers itself as being true – remember Byron Katie's own words: "I discovered that when I believed my thoughts, I suffered, but when I didn't believe them, I didn't suffer, and that this is true for every human being."

But it can precisely, in accordance with its own built-in subjectivism, not itself be regarded as more true/good than the thoughts of the clients. For that reason it is followed by a long line of self-contradictions. The self-contradiction is that

subjectivism makes an exception of its own position: the very assertion of subjectivism is itself nonsubjectivistic. Is the Work true? Are you absolutely sure it is true? – and so on. And you could make the same contra-examinations on almost every other sentence made by Katie or her devotees. They contradict themselves almost in every word they're saying; that is: they are constantly telling what they think is true and false, good and bad.

A former devotee writes on the Cult Education Forum (<http://forum.rickross.com>), under the username jj52, how she attended Katie's 9 day school. They were sworn to secrecy about the events that go on there so as not to "spoil it for others" who would attend in the future. She offers a small list of things that happened there:

- 1) A forced 36 hour fast.
- 2) A day long "outing" where we were left to beg for food among homeless people in the streets of Los Angeles. We were instructed not to take any ID, or anything with us but the clothes we had on.
- 3) A rich organic diet that sent many people's bodies into shock. Vomiting was a regular occurrence, and was offered as "evidence" of cleansing, and of how powerful The Work really is.
- 4) Long days with brief breaks for meals. (7 am to 11: 00 pm most days).
- 5) Long, intense confessional sessions
- 6) Deep, excessive probing into one's past traumas. (She used violent Korn music to trigger our worst memories).
- 7) No contact with family or the outside world. (We turned our cell phones into the staff).
- 8) Not allowed to wear make-up, to exercise, or to eat outside of the diet given.
- 9) Eating meals and taking breaks in complete silence.
- 10) Going at least 2 full days as a "silent one", unallowed to talk with others.
- 11) Being invited to criticize Katie and The School, and those who did were silently, subtly shunned by the group and Katie.

12) Having every doubt and concern about what was going on at The School questioned and “turned around”, until no one could trust their own perceptions anymore.

It is interesting, that this “School” is using precisely the same methods as in James Arthur Ray’s seminars. In July 2009, Colleen Conaway attended a seminar hosted by James Ray International in which the attendees were directed to dress as homeless people. She fell to her death at the Horton Plaza Mall in San Diego. She died as a result of injuries, and according to police, she had no identification on her person.

It is also interesting, that the length of the fast is precisely the same as in Ray’s spiritual warrior workshop (36 hours), where 3 people died, and several were hospitalized (see my article **James Arthur Ray and the sweat lodge tragedy**). It is also interesting that there is used a combination of cathartic psychotherapy and New Age psychotherapeutic confessional sessions (see my articles **Cathartic psychotherapy**, **The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy**, and **A critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork**).

Why does Katie use the same methods as in numerous other New Age psychotherapies, when claiming her method is so unique? These methods are used in order to provoke negative feelings and thoughts, which the participants then shall use The Work on. It is clear enough, that when the participants return to a normal life again, then all the physiological and psychological negative symptoms are disappearing, and then the participants will say that this healing is due to The Work. This is a typical persuasion trick used in several cult environments (read more about this in my article **The devastating New Age Turn Within Psychotherapy**).

A person tells the following story from a “School for The Work.” weekend intensive, which gives a picture of The School’s use of humiliation known from confrontational theories and Attack therapy, and where violation of ethical practices are obviously (again: see my article **Cathartic psychotherapies**):

The participants: In addition to a group (approx. 250) impressive in the number of newbies to The Work and repeaters (seeking Certification or to reprise their previous experiences in bliss), there were a remarkable number of people who were obviously mentally ill. Depression and Anxiety (Social phobias, Specific phobias, Generalized Anxiety, etc.) were to be expected, as were a fine spread of the more benign Personality Disorders (Obsessive-Compulsive, Hysterical, Dependent were all well-represented). And there were participants with milder forms of Impulse Control Disorders (ADD/ADHD and hypomania). But there were also a scattering of the scarier Personality Disorders (Anti-Social, Paranoid, Schizoid and Schizotypal).

Bipolar I and II, while not admitted, were apparent. And there was undoubtedly a few people who were hallucinating, delusional, or delirious.

I'd have thought Katie would have screened more carefully to reduce her liability in these cases, but she actually seemed to welcome the more severely disturbed. I was aware that no deliberate or careful screening of mental and physical problems appeared in on-line registration. Signing up involved giving demographic info, sending money that would not be refunded, and not much else. We was not asked about diagnosis or medication until we arrived...a bit too late to shoo away people who had come from all over the world. And there was that Surrender exercise at the beginning, where the message was very mixed: give us your supplements, vitamins, medications you don't really need (as if the truly sick could make that decision well) AND if you are prescribed meds, you should take them. Several people gave up prescribed sleep medications and anxiolytics and this was applauded with comment from Katie, "If you can't sleep at night, contact the staff member on call and they will sit with you. If you experience discomfort, do it here in the room with us during the day. If you have to sleep, do that here, too." It didn't take long before moaning, crying, agitated behaviors were the norm in the room well before fasting and 15-hour days of intense emotional work took their toll. And most staff and participants just left the suffering alone, ignored it or staffed it by listening to the sufferer do The Work again and again. Some people cried off and on throughout the entire school. Often people were crying so hard or were so anxious, they could not be understood when they took the microphone and tried to tell their experience. And sharing those experiences was an expectation. If you hadn't taken the mike yet, staff asked you why. I'm unclear on this, but I believe one repeater either had to go the mental hospital during this school or had done so in a previous school. In other words, the mentally ill and the neurotic, alike, decompensated and this was encouraged under the philosophy of The School.

The Shame module was perhaps the most disturbing unit in the School. I believe this took place in the morning of Day Three, although I admit to losing track of what day it was (we were always either in the windowless conference room, on the 30-minute silent and led walks around the blocks nearby, or, briefly, on the grassy lawn in front of the hotel or in the halls of the hotel when we were set free to do The Work with a partner). In the Shame unit, we were instructed to write down the thing we'd done in our lives that we were most ashamed of, then take the mike and tell the whole group, then do The Work on it with a partner. Shaming is a subtle but powerful component of psychological abuse used in every torture and mind control process. People stood up and, sobbing or preening, revealed everything from bestiality and zoophilia to embarrassing physical features, infidelity to poor parenting that bordered on abuse. Many people told of having been abused and shamed by that. The reward for

producing a novel or particularly painful shame experience was Katie's cooing, warm approval and attention. This was such a powerful exercise that, for the next few days, Katie would interrupt whatever exercise was in process to say that so-and-so desired to tell about their shame. Folks who had kept quiet during the Shame module apparently could not resist being part of it all, taking that microphone, and joining Katie's "family." Although Katie said, after the confessions had begun, that we should not reveal anything illegal, many seemed not to understand that bestiality, child abuse, etc., were illegal in the US.

At all times, there was a staff member in the back of the room speaking very softly into a dictophone, recording every story and event. Katie's books are largely made up of these stories and a release is signed at the beginning, giving permission for your stories to be used. One could literally feel the next book taking shape in that room. It might have been a "voluntary" exploitation, but exploitation it was, nonetheless.

The short conclusion to the above investigation is that The Work ends up as a “single cause-single cure” mix between Cathartic psychotherapy and positive thinking. There is used confrontational theories and attack therapy in order to provoke negative feelings and memories (Cathartic psychotherapy). Positive thinking is then introduced via the four questions and the turnaround technique (The Work). The question of the truth of the evoked negativity is hereby ignored. Subjectivism and relativism justify this ignorance.

Janaki

On my website (www.mortentolboll.weebly.com) you can, on the page for this article, download a 74 pages long booklet (PDF version) by former high ranking Byron Katie devotee Janaki, who exposes Byron Katie as a typical New Age guru ([click here](#)).

In the following I will repeat the most important aspects of this booklet in order to show what is so typical about New Age gurus. There are especially two typical traits:

- 1) Truth by authority
- 2) A closed world

1) Truth by authority

Truth by Authority is a thought distortion (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**). It is about taking statements to be true simply because an alleged authority (experts, teachers, divine sources, paranormal abilities, etc.) on the matter has said/justified that they are true. A level of critical thinking is always appropriate in a true spiritual practice, because the statement may be based on false premises, faulty reasoning, wishful thinking, vested interests, and a lot of other thought distortions.

And spiritual teachers, who in their arguments/teaching, again and again, have to defer to some authority (experts, teachers, divine sources, paranormal abilities) in order to justify their arguments/teachings, are hundred percent on the wrong track, even if they should have some paranormal abilities. In Byron Katie it is her tendency to talk about herself as perfect and untouchable. True enlightened masters never do this. I here quote from Janaki, page 33-34:

Katie says, 'I am here for your projection', and 'I am what it looks like on the other side' (of doing The Work), and 'You are what is left of my story'. For me this always meant that she had risen above and beyond all earthly vices and negative emotions (she has become perfect and untouchable). If she is here for our projection, it surely must mean that she no longer projects herself. If she is what it looks like on the other side, it surely must mean that I still have a long way to go, since I am nowhere near that point. Then she would also say, 'It's not called The Work for nothing'. So in all appearances, I still had a lot to do.

This is being reinforced by Katie's stories about her personal life in A Thousand Names for Joy and in the various Katie-isms booklets and newsletters. It paints a picture of a woman who is never unhappy, who has no negative emotions left and who can deal with any situation in a peaceful way, because she is the living example of Loving What Is. I have heard Katie say several times (on stage), that she hasn't been angry ever since her awakening experience. To prove this she will ask Stephen who sits on the front row, 'honey, have you ever seen me angry?'. His answer is always the same, 'No, I haven't'.

In private, I have rarely seen Katie go in and make turnarounds. Not with any of the feedback she ever gave me, or with any of the feedback I ever gave her. If I would give her feedback, she would immediately call me on the turnaround and want examples.

She told me in her feedback that there was a smelly flavor in the way I compare myself to other trainers, yet she says The School is unlike any other school on the planet. Is this not a comparison?

I have seen Katie get irritated and angry at people. I have seen her stressed out. I have seen how she doesn't stay in her business, every time she gave me feedback, she went into mine. I have heard her defend, justify and explain. I have often seen her as someone who goes into a story and doesn't question it. I have experienced how she believes the stories reported back to her by her staff members and doesn't question those stories, or checks with the person involved.

As the above-mentioned former devotee, jj52, writes on the cult education forum:

“Although The Work is presented as for anyone of any religion, once I became a part of Katie's captive audience, it became very clear that was no so. Katie claims to have no beliefs, because she is 'clear' and lives in 'reality' or 'heaven', her belief system is actually very strong, very distinct, and very anti-Christian. And, anyone whose belief system doesn't match hers is treated like the 'unenlightened' sap who needs to keep questioning his/hers thoughts until they can see things Katie's way.”

And jj52 continues: “I kept in touch with several people after The School, and when I made the decision to throw out all of my materials and abandon the process altogether, I met a lot of resistance. That was about the time her new book came out *A Thousand Names for Joy*. I bought it, again out of dire curiosity. I read through it one evening, and that was all it took for me to toss it out. Hearing her tell about watching a man having a stroke, and feeling no concern for his well being because she was 'in love' ...was crazy. Since when did apathy become love?”

And jj52 ends her account: “But, I think it was the passage where she said that she likes pretending to be human and called it her 'disguise' that really put the whole thing over the top. Apathy I could probably handle...but inhumanness is going too far. I can't even express the disturbing way I've felt watching all of these people (there were about 300 at The School) throwing away a normal, healthy range of emotions for 'bliss'. And, I find it interesting that none of them have ever actually become like Katie. I guess psychosis is pretty hard to self-induce...?”

Another example is about how Byron Katie never has read any books, and that her teaching came as a kind of awakening inside her. Here I again quote from Janaki, page 28-30:

After these emails, I spoke with to an old friend who used to know Katie from years before I met her. He said, 'And she got most of The Work from the Course in Miracles, because they were all reading that in the halfway house, that is where the

turnarounds come from. She also told us that she was reading books by Ken Keyes when she was at the halfway house'.

I had never heard that name before and I became curious. I Googled him, and learned that Ken Keyes had a personal growth center in the 70's in Oregon. I found some quotes by him on the internet, that could have been Katie quotes. Quotes like, "A loving person lives in a loving world. A hostile person lives in a hostile world; everyone you meet is your mirror." And "Everyone and everything around you is your teacher." and "I have everything I need to enjoy my here and now-unless I am letting my consciousness be dominated by demands and expectations based on the dead past or the imagined future".

*I became more curious and ordered some of his books. I was amazed. He called his process *The Inner Work*. He worked with worksheets that consist of 6 uncompleted sentences. I found a list of all the questions that are on the worksheet from *The Work*: I want, I need, he should, what I never want to happen again. I also found some of the questions, especially the 3rd question was literal, including the answers that are given to that question. I found the turnarounds, exactly the way they are done in *The Work*. And there was a lot more.*

*I scanned everything that is relevant to *The Work* into a pdf document and sent it to Katie. I emailed her: "Recently someone told me that you were reading books by Ken Keyes Jr., while you were at the halfway house. Having read several of his books, I put together this document, since it is highly confusing to me. The confusing part being that you always told us that you never had any teachers, or read any books, and the fact that it says on your bio on your website that: "Katie's process of self-inquiry, called *The Work*, didn't develop from this experience; she says that it woke up with her, as her, that February morning in 1986". Would you please explain this?"*

*Katie replied with, 'As to the Ken Keyes pages, I love that there are so many ways of saying the same thing as we all journey through our own experiences. I think the big difference is the four questions and turnarounds. That is *The Work*.*

Stephen also wrote me a note, P.S. from Stephen: Dear Janaki, My goodness! Anyone who knows Katie knows that she doesn't read books. Furthermore, even if someone had been with her at the halfway house, even if that someone had given her homework assignments from Ken Keyes, how could he know that she actually read the books? Was he hiding underneath Katie's bed? It must be painful to believe that Katie is a liar and a rip-off artist. In addition to the Keyes books, I could find a hundred books on spirituality or cognitive psychology where there are echoes of

Katie's words. And I could find even clearer echoes in the words of the Buddha. But nowhere are there the four questions and turnarounds, which are The Work. If you can't see Katie's astounding originality from comparing the passages that you sent in the pdf, then you're not seeing very clearly, in my opinion.

Very surprised, very amused, and with love, Stephen

I answered him with, Hi Stephen, Painful? No. Confused? Yes. That is why I asked. If it were just echoes, I probably wouldn't be confused. Liar and rip-off artist are your words, not mine. I love that you are amused. Janaki

I let Katie know exactly who had given me the Ken Keyes information. After that, I received an email from my friend, saying that upon reflecting, he and his wife could not confirm that Katie had actually told them she read the Ken Keyes books. But that back in the early days, they kept pointing out the similarities to her, between Keyes' work and her own.

I never got a response to my answers to her email.

About half a year after posting this weblog, I spoke to someone who used to live in Barstow in the early Katie days. This person told me that the basement of one of the houses was filled with boxes of books. He found all kinds of books: The Course in Miracles, all the Ken Keyes books, books by Ramana Maharshi, books by Richard Bandler, just to name a few. Many of the books had underlined sentences in them and contained notes in Katie's handwriting.

So Katie used to read books, and why not? What I don't understand is that Stephen Mitchell tells me that anyone who knows Katie, knows that she doesn't read books. So he either didn't know about the basement filled with books, or he just wanted to mock me in his email response.

Another interesting piece of information was that Paul (Katie's second husband), used to talk about how she was reading all the time in the early years.

You can find examples on Ken Keyes quotes in Janaki's booklet.

2) A closed world

It is clear enough that Byron Katie devotees must live in a very closed world in order to maintain their belief. What are they doing if confronted with the realities of the world (which mainly are negative and evil)? Turning them around? I don't think a

child molester, a thief, a murderer, a psychopath, a terrorist, etc., etc., then will stop their activities.

As in other New Age directions it must be an incredible experience for any scholar, to see the arrogance and incompetence of the people within this area. Here is a quote from Janaki, page 39:

It seems to me that The Work has become a religion that is now taking on global forms, especially when I see how it is being marketed through Katie's various websites and her weblog. The four questions have become the holy bible. I get that thought when I hear Katie say that Loving What Is is the text for The Work. I get the feeling that the word text has an scriptural association, as in Holy Text. I also get that association with the Judge your Neighbor worksheet. When I needed to translate this phrase into Dutch, I told Katie that we have 2 translations for the word neighbor. One is literal and applies to the guy living next door, and the other has a biblical connotation. She chose the biblical one.

Many years ago, I sat with Katie in her room one morning. She was talking about the future of The Work and she said, 'I have seen it Janaki, it is going to be like the Sermon on the Mount'. I felt so in awe of her at the time. Here I was sitting with someone equal to Jesus Christ, having tea on the balcony.

As in other New Age directions, as for example The Secret, you also see how the authors are peppering their thoughts with quotations from spiritual traditions (taken out of context), in order to make it sound holy. What is incredible is how Byron Katie and her followers are totally oblivious of how they are demonstrating the monstrosity of their ignorance about how everything in the Work already is known, and much better worked out, and also scientific investigated, in Cognitive Therapy. Here is a quote from Janaki on page 34-36:

Katie emphasizes very strongly that The Work is not therapy. She has always done this. On the Release of Liability form for The School it says, It is not therapeutic in design. I was always completely in line with this, and whenever anyone would compare The Work with therapy, I would argue against it quite strongly. The comparison that I heard most of all was with Cognitive Therapy. Last year I realized that I actually had no clue about Cognitive Therapy, (or any therapy), so I decided to buy a book and see for myself. I ordered a book called Feeling Good by David Burns. I was amazed, and I came to the conclusion that The Work indeed comes very close to Cognitive Therapy. I have to keep referring to Cognitive Therapy, because I know nothing about any other kind of therapy.

Personally I don't see any harm in this, but I can understand why Katie needs to emphasize that The Work is not therapy. After all, she is not a licensed therapist and nor are most people who are licensed by her to facilitate others with four questions, and America is the country of the 'Sue you, Sue me' culture. So precautions need to be taken.

In Cry in the desert, there is a story where Katie would say to Paul, 'take me to my people'. He would then drive her to Los Angeles, to the area where homeless people used to hang out. Later I learned that she was in fact looking for a lady therapist that she knew from the halfway house. I also heard that this lady lost her job at the halfway house over Katie and was now homeless and living on the streets. This last piece is just hearsay, and I can't know that this is actually true. The story has it that Katie would then stay with her for a couple of days before Paul would collect her again. During the first Certification training in the Netherlands, this therapist came and attended. There was a little buzz going around the staff, because it was quite unusual to have people around from Katie's past. At the end of the Certification Katie stood on the stage. All the participants were standing in half a circle, waiting for their names to be called (it was quite small in those days, only 60 participants). When your name was called, you would walk up to the stage and Katie would hand you your certificate. When Hannah's name was called, she remained where she was. She looked at Katie and said, 'Katie, I want you to step down to me'. Katie said, 'Hannah, I already have'. Hannah just stood there and didn't say anything. Katie did the same, but finally stepped down from the stage and handed her the certificate. Only Katie and Hannah know what the reason was for this behavior.

However, Katie does make a comparison between The Work and therapy. On one of the forums on the Institute for The Work website, there is a 'topic of the month' forum. Katie posts a new statement each month, and people get to discuss this, or reply to her question why she is saying this. In February 2009 the topic of the month was, 'What happened? If someone has had panic attacks for years, and they have done therapy and many self-help methods, and then they do one or two one-hour sessions with you and never have another panic attack, why would this be? From your own experience, internally what happened?'. From what I read here, it seems to me that she is making a direct comparison between The Work and therapy (and self-help methods), by claiming that The Work is far superior, even though it is not said in so many words. (Ah... this is where the power of literal listening and literal speaking steps in!).

This is very interesting. What comes to my mind is this: when I look at an infomercial on the television, I hear only the benefits and all the reasons why I need to have this item they are advertising. And to be honest, I want to have nearly everything that I

*see on nearly every infomercial! When I see the little movies, I am fully convinced, the proof is right there in front of my eyes, and all these people that tell their experience, surely they can't be lying? Then when I look up the so much wanted item on Google (and my husband thanks me for this!), I get to hear all the other sides and the downfalls. In the infomercial they say, if you get this grill or turbo oven, you can throw away all your other pots and pans. And basically what I hear Katie say here is, if you do *The Work*, you can throw away all therapies and selfhelp methods.*

It is also interesting, that when Janaki is speaking about therapy (as such) on page 37, she is only mentioning a lot of different New Age therapies, as for example Avatar, NLP, Bio Energetics, Satsang, the Journey, the Great Freedom, Deeksha, being hugged by Amma, Landmark, Tony Robbins, etc. But she is not mentioning any scientific based therapy forms. It seems like this is a closed world, where everybody are reading the same literature, and are ignoring everything else.

It is the same with the Law of Attraction followers, who repeatedly teach people in wrong interpretations of Quantum mechanics, without seeking any other knowledge about it, than what they have read in New Age books (see my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**).

Don't these people even consider the thought, that if their teachings have to be spread out to the whole world, then they have to meet, and argue, with people with scientific knowledge about these things?

In my articles **The Sokal Hoax** and **The new feminism and the philosophy of women's magazines**, I show how dangerous the naive faith in subjective attitudes and rejection of scientific methods and content can prove to be for all, who are involved in these things. You can mention a vast number of crazy New Age therapies, which are taken at their face value. Just try to follow an Oprah Winfrey show. These people are often breathtaking in their combination of self-confidence and absurdity, where they with no hesitation are bullying highly educated experts and scientists if they are critical. Subjectivism namely opens them for the danger of magical thinking and Ego-inflation (see my article **The ego-inflation in the New Age and self-help environment**).

The Socratic Inquire technique used in Cognitive Therapy

In the following I will give you an example of a Socratic inquire technique, which I use as a help in my supporting exercise **The Philosophical Diary** (see my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**). This inquire technique is also used in Cognitive Therapy. As you can see, it implies Byron Katie's four questions, but

also many other questions, which are necessary so that the technique can be so flexible, that it doesn't end as rhetorical questions. You can also see where Ken Keyes has got his ideas from (see examples on Ken Keyes quotes in Janaki's booklet). And even this is not enough in a spiritual practice.

In order to understand spirituality, you must focus on the thought-process, you must understand, that spirituality is philosophy and philosophical practice, not psychology and psychotherapy (see my article **Philosophical counseling as an alternative to psychotherapy**). You must focus on the form of consciousness, not on its content; you must turn your awareness towards the observer, and not the observed. Therefore spiritual questions are philosophical questions, such as *Who am I?*

To ask philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way has nothing to do with those enquire techniques used in psychotherapy and coaching. Its quite central that the true masters of spirituality are using philosophical questions, because such questions ask for what is common to all mankind, the universal - what you could call the essence of Man and reality. This is because that the Source, the essential in Man and in reality, precisely is something common to all mankind, or universal. In other words: philosophy directs itself towards the essence, and not towards the content. Psychotherapy and coaching are only able to ask for the personal (or the content), and therefore they can never open the consciousness in towards the Source (the essence).

The following exercise is therefore only a supporting exercise turning around your personal history, and which you eventually have to leave behind, when you reach the collective and universal areas of history (see my article **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with spiritual practice**):

Investigative and transforming questions

Questions to investigation and analysis of the problem-situation

- What happened in the situation? (who said/did what, when?)
- What did you feel then? How were you? (how angry/sad etc. were you on a scale 0-10?)
- What did you say to yourself, immediately before you felt that? What were you thinking? If it is true, what does it tell about you? About the other?
- What did you then do in the situation?
- Which of these thoughts are specially affecting your feelings, burdening you the most? Central thought.

Questions to transforming and restructuring the central thought

- How convinced are you, that this thought is true?

Argumentation

- What do you base the thought on? What substance do you have for it? What is the evidence for it?
- Is there anything in the situation, which can point in another direction?
- Is there anything in your life, which can point in another direction?
- Do you have experiences, which could suggest, that this thought is not completely true?

Alternatives

- Could you think different in this situation? (More self-supporting and constructive?)
- What would a more realistic/self-supporting way to think be in this situation?
- Does it feel different, when you imagine, that you were thinking in that way?
- What is most realistic to think?
- When it feels better, and also more realistic, to think alternately, what would you then choose to think?

Worst and best

- What would the worst be, if your thought is true?
- Would it be so bad?
- What could there come out of it, that would be beneficial/good for you, if it is true, what you think?

Problem-solution

- If your interpretation/thought is true, what could you then do in order to manage the situation better?
- Could you lay a plan, so the situation is getting better now/onwards?

Distancing

- What would you tell your best friend, if he, in the same situation, was thinking in that way?
- How would you perceive the situation in three months/six months?

Thought distortions

Which distortions characterize this thinking? Examples on the most spread distortions (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions** for more examples):

Dichotom thinking: which means that you arrange the surrounding world in a pair of opposites (for example life and death, past and future, subject and object, good and evil, justification and condemnation, love and hate, power and powerlessness, perfect and fiasco). This is a degraded and one-sided division, which happens when the Ego, through evaluations, splits the more universal images of time in pieces. These images are in themselves a kind of syntheses, because they always include the opposite pole. But the dichotomous thinking expels the opposite pole, removes it, and by doing so you are coming to live on postulates, without asking or searching for contra-conceptions and alternatives. Dichotom thinking – or thinking in opposites – is the central thought distortion. All the below thought distortions arise on the background of dichotom thinking.

Selective abstraction: selections and exclusions - which means that you, usually unconscious, choose to perceive special parts of reality and leave out other.

Generalization: which means that you expect, that something, which has taken place in one situation, also takes place in other situations, without asking or searching for contra-conceptions and alternatives.

Personalizing: which means that you see independent incidents, which happen in the surrounding world, as related to yourself. To take something personally, without asking or searching for contra-conceptions and alternatives.

Enlargement and reduction of elements in the surrounding world: To make a problem much larger than it in reality is, or to make the number of your life-possibilities much lesser than they in reality are. You overestimate or understate - exaggerate or understate, without asking or searching for contra-conceptions and alternatives.

Catastrophe-thinking: Unrealistic thoughts that are being connected with a harmless fact. For example when you under a dizziness-attack think: "I am going to die", "I am going mad". Or when you receive a bill a bit larger than expected and you think: "Everything is lost". Catastrophe-thinking is out of proportions with reality, and you don't ask, or seek for contra-conceptions and alternatives. Follows often from black and white thinking, and is closely connected with anxiety-development.

Attribution: Misleading way to explain incidents. One-sided ascribing the reason for, or the responsibility for, negative incidents, to yourself, or to other people or circumstances, without including other elements in the situation. Is closely connected with sense of guilt or anger.

Black and white thinking: To classify all situations, incidents or things, as an example of one of two extremes, when the facts actual are, that there between the two extremes exists a complete spectrum of other possible viewpoints. Black and white thinking is a variation of false dichotomy. Black and white thinking arises when you try to get the world to fit into very simple prejudiced categories. Words characterized by black and white thinking are words such as *must, shall, never, always*, as for example "all of it is hopeless", "it cannot possibly succeed", "I have to be better than the others", "nobody likes me". Often the most basic assumptions about yourself and the world, are based on black and white thinking. Black and white thinking is thinking in extremes, and leads to a false and imbalanced way of life. You come to live on postulates, without asking or searching for contra-conceptions and alternatives.

False dichotomy: A misleading conception of possible alternatives. A dichotomy is a division in two alternatives. Often seen in the expressions Either/or – If/then, as for example: "Either you are with us, or you are against us" – "if I'm not always a success, then I'm a fiasco". A false dichotomy appears when somebody sets up a dichotomy in such a way, that it looks like, that there only are two possible conclusions, when the facts actual are, that there are many other alternatives which not are being mentioned. Many inappropriate rules of living and life-strategies are based on false dichotomy. False dichotomy is thinking in extremes, and leads to a false and imbalanced way of life.

Arbitrary inference: which means, that you make a causal linking of factors, which is accidental and misleading.

Thought reading: You are convinced, that you know, what others think about you. You don't investigate if you are right by asking or searching for contra-conceptions and alternatives. Without deeper reflection you just conclude, that others for example are critical.

Rhetoric or subjective argumentation: an unethical way to convince others about your opinions, because it doesn't show, what in reel sense is appropriate or inappropriate about a case, but manipulates with it. Contains some of the following elements: innuendoes, distortions, generalizations, over-/understatements, sarcasm, satire, irony, postulates, emotional affections, coloured diction, choices and exclusions, subjective style. - **objective argumentation** therefore is a more ethical way to convince others about your opinions, because it actually shows, what in reel sense is appropriate or inappropriate about a case. Contains some of the following

elements: summary or abstract, information, description, reasons, concrete diction, nuanced objective statement.

Wishful thinking : To think, that because it would be nice, if something was true, then it actual must be true. This thoughtpattern is very common, and very seductive because it allows us to avoid unpleasant truths. But it's a form of self-deceit. Wishful thinking for example often ignores the possibility of plausible alternative explanations on exactly the same observations.

Prejudice: a belief held without good reason or consideration of the evidence for or against its being true. Philosophy – that is: rationality and critical thinking – is opposed to prejudice. We are all riddled with prejudices on a wide range of issues, but it is possible to eliminate some of them by making an effort to examine evidence and arguments on both sides of any question. Human reason is fallible, and most of us are strongly motivated to cling on to *some* beliefs even in the teeth of evidence against them (see wishful thinking); however, even making small inroads into prejudice can transform the world for the better.

Ad hominem move: A Latin phrase meaning “to the person”. The devious move in debate, where you shift attention from the point in question to some non-relevant aspect of the person making it. Calling someone’s statement *ad hominem* is always a reproach; it involves the claim that the aspects of the arguer’s personality or behaviour, which have become the focus of discussion are irrelevant to the point being discussed. Often ad hominem move is simply based on prejudice. It can also be a rhetorical move. Ad hominem move is a very widespread, and problematic, move among psychologists and psychotherapists, who can’t limit their theories to clients, wherefore it can be very difficult to have a normal discussion with these people.

Could you catch yourself in the above distortions? Try to do it by observing the pain-body’s negative feelings in your body. Remember that the thought distortions are false, while the feelings are true. Be aware, that these thought distortions try to lead you on the wrong track. If you can catch them in misleading you, what could you then do to change them?

Dilemma-training

- What can the advantages and disadvantages by doing so and omit to do so, be? Use for example a sheet of paper which you with a vertical line divide in the middle. Arguments, both for and against to *to do* so, are written on the right side, and arguments, both for and against *omitting* to do so, are written on the left side.

Supplementary questions to inappropriate assumptions and rules of living

- How is that assumption/life-rule good for you?
- How is it hindering or obstructing for you?
- How should a better, more functional, and less obstructive, assumption/life-rule be?
- Setup of behavioural experiment to investigation of the new assumption/life-rule.

Questions to activation of alternative thoughts by anxiety

1. Is your evaluation-basis correct? Is there evidence?

- What do you base your assumption on?
- What speaks for and against the assumption?
- Could there be other ways to perceive the situation?
- What would another person think in the same situation?
- Do the assumption build on selffocus and feelings rather than on outside facts and logic?

2. Do you overestimate the probability?

- How convinced are you, that your assumption is true?
- How probable is it, that the feared will happen?
- How often has it happened in earlier situations?

3. Do you overestimate the negative consequences?

- What is the worst, that could happen?
- If the worst imaginable happened, what would then happen?
- Could there happen something else?
- What will most realistic happen?

4. Do you understate your ability to manage the anxiety?

- What have you done in other similar situations?
- What could you do, if the worst imaginable happened?
- What would you propose, that another person did in a similar situation?

All articles and books referred to are available in free PDF Versions. Links can be found on my blog: www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com

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