Abstract: Insights from study and clinical practice since 1981, recent findings relating to learning and memory in the brain, and 15 years as a student of the Diamond Approach (DA) have led the author to a theoretical understanding of the neurological relationship of learning and memory to the dissolution of the historical self. This paper explores how the recent finding that accessed memories are labile and subject to erasure may offer an understanding of what may be occurring in inquiry as practiced in the DA. The dissolution of ego structures, leading directly to the availability of experience of Space or Essential Presence may represent a distinct neurological process involving the erasure of somatic and emotional memory patterns. These patterns are the expression of the repetitive structures of ego. This process, when understood and correctly applied, may lead to greater understanding and categorization of therapies (like EMDR and EFT.) These therapies may be useful in hastening the path to realization, and assisting the student in moving through difficult times in the work. A rationale and method for incorporation of such therapies into inquiry is included.

In 1991, a new patient mentioned in passing that he did a spiritual practice called Ridhwan. “What’s that?” I thought, “I want to do it!” It took three years before that thought became reality. Much of my work since then has been noticing how my body, mind and emotions marionette through various, sometimes painful, dances of ego activity, regardless of whether or not I am buying into them. Other times, however, I am pleasantly surprised when, without knowing how it happened, it seems as if my soul has actually forgotten to react with some ego activity that had previously been automatic, as if it had been erased from my consciousness.

In 28 years of study and practice as a chiropractor and acupuncturist, the main job that I get hired for is pain relief. Over time, and with experimentation, I noticed that the exact same chiropractic or acupuncture methods, chosen by the kinesiology (muscle testing) system that I was using, that would relieve chronic knee or back pain, for instance, would also immediately, profoundly and often permanently change or seemingly erase a particular aspect of chronic grief, guilt or other painful affect.

I further noticed that patients would, often without dwelling on or understanding the feelings or issues that were present for them, nonetheless move to experiences of space or even essential states. This seemed to indicate, as A.H. Almaas described in The Void, that “rigid boundaries of the self” had been “made porous and dissolved.”

I became curious to find out just what were the specific principles that would allow bodywork to yield similar states to inquiry. None of my training and study could tell me why these things I was observing were taking place.

Then, in the year 2000 I heard an interview with Joe LeDoux, a researcher into memory and emotion. LeDoux was reporting about a discovery about how memory actually works, a discovery which has the potential to transform how we think of healing of mind and body and may reveal the neurological mechanism at play in inquiry within the Diamond Approach and even other healing modalities.

We have tended to think of our memories like files on a hard drive, with the current version on the screen and in the working memory of the computer, and the original safely stored on the hard drive. In fact, LeDoux revealed, memory access may be more like borrowing a one-of-a-kind book from the library. If it is not returned, it is gone forever – forgotten, in other words.

A second type memory alteration also exists, and understanding the difference between the two types of memory may be useful to both those in the Work and in other healing professions.

1. Purpose of this article, from the perspective of the Diamond Approach

Skillful function, as Hameed pointed out in the 2007 Diamond Pearl retreat, may require new learning - neurologically speaking the creation and consolidation of new brain circuits - even when the source of the function is experienced as True Nature.

He discussed soul deficiency, the condition of incomplete development of a particular functional
ability. If we have not learned a particular function, for instance relating skillfully around conflict, new learning and repetitive practice may be necessary to establish the function and implant it in our implicit (automatically functioning) memory so that it will be available to us when operating from the perspective of Presence of True Nature. Other necessary learning is the skill set of inner work, achieved by our sensing, meditation and inquiry practices, which build new pathways for focus, concentration body awareness, and foster the ability to stay with Presence through painful states.

The key to realization I would argue from my research is just the opposite – forgetting. Forgetting, in this context means something very different than the way it is often used in spiritual work schools - going to sleep to oneself – here it indicates the erasure of the life-long learned of reactions of ego activity, allowing one to become more transparent to True Nature.

We know the practices of the Diamond Approach (DA) applied over time effectively reduce automatic ego activity and foster ongoing Essential awareness. The psycho-spiritual mechanics of that process are precisely illuminated in the works of AH Almaas. We may see however, that an understanding of the neurological mechanics of memory can help us even better understand our work, and perhaps make it even more effective.

To that end, this article will touch on the following questions:

- When some aspect of our ego activity or an object relation no longer arises, what brain processes may make this transformation possible?
- Are there ways to utilize the neurological mechanics of forgetting to our advantage, using therapies that promote elimination of ego activity?
- What is it about ego activity that makes it susceptible to erasure?
- Can we speculate a relationship between Presence and this neurological process?
- Might this suggest a neurological component to the experience becoming transparent to the expression and experience of True Nature?
- Is this information useful to assess other forms of therapy, and how they might apply to the work?

I write this for several purposes, the first being to inform the inquiry that Hameed handed to us at the Diamond Pearl retreat: we, as a community, in some way, will sort through the cornucopia of therapeutic interventions to suggest some combination of therapies that may be useful in furthering our work.

A group of us got together on the last full day of the 2007 retreat to begin talking about how to begin the process of cataloging and examining what we may call Diamond Auxiliary Therapies. This discussion is open to anyone in the school, though at some point it will need to be left to a few to narrow down the choices and present an organized exploration. A discussion website has been set up at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DA_Therapies that will serve as a place where opinions and ideas can be expressed, and therapies can be listed and researched. (As of this re-write, over a year out, the spark has not caught fire.)

It feels like something between trespassing and presumptuous to suggest that I might have something to add to the DA, when looking at the breadth and depth of the Diamond Logos that Hameed has brought forth with such dazzling Brilliancy and precision to the world. It may be part of the reason that the fledgling group of us who got together has not found a voice or organization. Yet if the DA has taught us anything, it is that the expression of True Nature is not limited. Whether or not these or any other ideas or methods have a place within the scope of the school is not within my purview.

So, I write this article to add to the larger field of inquiry, regardless of whether its hypothesis is accepted or seen as useful, and, more personally, to fulfill a desire to open to and discover others who wish to engage in a larger dialectic. The conjecture supplied herein may also be found to be useful in discussing distinctions between therapies that may be used in conjunction with the DA.

The next section or two of this article may be review for some of you, though I have never seen these public domain understandings applied in the way they are presented herein. Those sections provide background understanding about how ego activity may emerge from brain function. Section 4 begins the presentation of newer information and understandings.

2. The learning and repetition of ego activity

Capacities for many activities are inherent in the human organism. Learning and memory are inseparable from the development and subsequent production of behaviors. Behavior includes every activity a biological entity does, from having thoughts and emotions, to secreting hormones, to throwing a ball. Every cell in the body learns, and every integrated function – i.e. every function - is formatted by learning. This learning is incorporated into both the original development of a function, or adopted later, as part of its ongoing development.

We can see learning as a quality of True Nature that is perhaps uniquely endowed to biological life. It permits the creation, evolution, repetition, development and even the refinement of complex behaviors; activity that may not exist in other forms.

What we call ego activity is no exception. Ego activity is the inherently painful process of establishing, maintaining and defending the illusion that
of separateness and duality, including the suppression awareness of True Nature. It includes thoughts, feelings, emotions, tensions and body postures, and patterns of hormonal and neurotransmitter activity as well. Automatic enactment of these reactions may obscure both awareness and direct expression of True Nature, although the same expression can be said, in realization to be an expression of True Nature. Elimination or transformation of Ego structures to the service of True Nature is a substantial part of realization in the Work, particularly the what is called the first journey, the journey towards Presence.

The entire world of internal experience along with all perceptions of outer forms and events are cues that may elicit ego activity. The cues may be anything at all - a glance, a thought, a posture or movement we ourselves make, a conflict, the color of a car, a bank balance, a tone of voice, or simply waking up in the morning. Most reactions occur entirely unconsciously. In the technology of the Work, the automaticity of our activity becomes revealed in the light of open-ended inquiry into one's present state that includes sensing the body.

Patterns of ego activity layer over one another, intermingle and augment each other, and an aspect of one can be a cue that elicits another. As an example of cues, I get angry at my manager at work for reducing my hours. This triggers guilt because anger was historically met with punishment in my house. The thought of my family unconsciously elicits a tension in my chest, changes my breathing and adrenal activity, among other functions, creating anxiety like I felt when I was a child. The body states automatically bring forth the internal feelings I had as a child including the lack of ability and resourcefulness that I felt.

Cues might be initiated from anywhere within that cycle. Tension in the chest, a ‘random’ thought or a change in breathing alone might be cues that evoke the complex of feelings, without external cues.

These reactions are, by definition, conditioning. Conditioning is the association of a stimulus to a specific response. In the above example, each of the cues - anger, tension in chest, change in breathing - are stimuli that had become conditioned to evoke a particular response. In the laboratory, animals are often experimentally conditioned by, for instance, ringing a bell immediately before giving them a shock. After one or several trials, those animals will show signs of fear when the bell is rung even in the absence of the shock.

3. Ego activity, object relations, inquiry and the brain

In our Work, we learn the skills of inquiry, sensing and meditation which tend to make the conditioned reactions of ego activity conscious. Specific phenomena of ego activity are revealed, including tensions, emotions, thoughts, altered body sensations, increased or decreased energy, and so on. We become increasingly aware of the triggers which may evoke the conditioned response of the activity. Psychologically, we call some of these trigger/reaction associations object relations. A person, place, thought or thing (object) is the conditioned stimulus for a feeling (relation), based on past experience.

Inquiry brings understanding, and in that understanding we often find that activity ceases, perhaps returning with less intensity, and thus it becomes successively easier to disidentify from the activity. Sometimes however, we may find that an object relation may seem to disappear completely and immediately, never to return.

The brain distributes its activity. Conditioned reactions coordinate many areas of the brain. Following is an oversimplified view of the possible brain activity of object relations. The limbic system in the temporal lobe of the brain is central to psychological conditioning. In the limbic system, the hippocampus holds the plain facts, the objects of object relations - this happened, in this place, in this order, with these people. The amygdala, a small almond shaped area about 1 inch in and ½ inch in front of each ear, holds much of the emotional conditioning, the relation to the object. The amygdala in general evokes movement towards pleasure and away from pain, by stimulating reactions in the hypothalamus and other brain areas where behavioral strategies are coordinated and commands for implementation of behaviors are issued. The cerebellum and possibly the basal ganglia contain some of the coordinated motor (movement and posture) programs elicited by the amygdala and coordinated by the hypothalamus.

The resulting behaviors or impulses to behaviors are what we experience when we sense our bodies. We experience them as contractions, emotions, energy in one area or not in another, alterations in body sense, or any other experience that we might have are all based on learning.

The right amygdala in particular we may liken to a dumb security guard with a photographic memory. Whenever reminded by internal or external cues of past stress or failure, (it may ‘remember’ every failure or stress we ever had,) the amygdala’s alarm will be triggered automatically, without regard for what we presently understand as true from subsequent experience and learning. When it holds a memory, it evokes the historically conditioned reaction, NOT the presently appropriate, more mature response, even if we know without a doubt that the conditioned reaction is not based on reality.
Such triggering happens before the conscious mind can be aware of it, though activity in the **frontal cortex**, home of more reasoned thought, may override some of the emotional activation. The more the frontal cortex is active, in general, the less the amygdala will react. Understandings and conscious awareness achieved through psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapies, inquiry, meditation and sensing are likely to build the frontal cortex. But understanding and awareness alone often do not, we know from experience, necessarily eliminate the conditioned behaviors of ego activity.

So how do we eliminate the imprinted conditioning of ego activity? There are two main mechanisms that brains use to forget (no, not Alzheimer’s or electro-shock therapy) recognized in behavioral neuroscience. They are 1- **extinction** and 2- **failure of reconsolidation**, which I call **neurontogenesis**.

### 4. Extinction: Remembering, to forget

Until about 2000, **extinction** was the only form of memory alteration recognized. Somewhat of a misnomer, the mechanism called extinction does not eliminate conditioned memories; rather it lays down new memories that conflict with existing conditioning. With repetition the new memories may override or provide an addendum to the older memories, making them appear to be gone.

Extinction works in the following manner: In experimental procedures, an animal hears a bell ring followed by shock. After one or more trials, the bell alone will cause a fear reaction; the conditioned reaction has been learned. The trigger for evoking that learning is stored in the amygdala.

If the bell is then rung a number of times but **not** followed with a shock, the observable behavior of the conditioned reaction gradually diminishes. In the brain, however, the previous memory is not erased; rather, a new memory - ‘bell does not equal shock’ - is formed, eventually overriding the old memory. So while the behavior is extincted, the conditioning is actually still very much alive, just obscured.

Depending on many variables, extinction may be overridden in certain contexts, like for instance, our unfortunate mouse being put back in the cage where shocks were administered.

The principles of extinction are used in our work, as in this example: You find that whenever your spouse offers you advice, you react internally as you learned to do with your mother. Your spouse’s advice is the cue that triggers your behavior - ego activity with its familiar set of feelings.

You know of course, that your spouse isn’t your mother, but still, each time the advice is offered the resulting ego activity is automatic. By witnessing and reminding yourself ‘no, this is not my mother’ you gradually learn another, competing reaction – ‘this is my spouse, and my spouse is not attacking me.’ The initial learning however is not gone, it is just covered over by the new learning, which, practiced enough, will become the norm.

In The Work, we employ various methods that may promote extinction. Meditation increases frontal cortex activity, which serves as a brake for the amygdala. Put another way, observation of one’s thoughts and feelings without following and ‘buying’ the reaction, may build new learning of non-reaction to ones thoughts and feelings.

Inquiry provides understanding that supports disidentification, a practice of establishing a new reaction to ego activity. Sensing the body, where the tensions play out, is a crucial part of the disidentification process and is also crucial to the awareness of Essential Presence. Taken together, these practices can create new behaviors of **not reacting** to triggers. The more these practices are employed, the stronger the new memories get, further overpowering the old ego activity.

As this cover-up continues, more and more ‘circuits’ become devoted to the new learning and to supporting postures, feelings, thoughts and hormonal or neurotransmitter activations of that constitute the new behaviors. Over time the new learning becomes the preferred reaction.

While this process may be effective at improving a person’s ability to live in greater harmony, and it builds neurological pathways that are certainly supportive of the truthful understanding that we are not our history, deductive reasoning suggests that it has built in limitations to becoming transparent to True Nature. To the extent that these newer pathways are in place as a compensation for underlying older conditioning, they are still a form of automatic behavior, healthier, but still limiting. They remain a **doing** for the nervous system, a reified activity, not a spontaneous arising.

Fortunately, (true) nature provides the brain a much better way to move towards realization.

### 5. Neurontogenesis: Forgetting, to remember

We have seen that extinction is a process of adding new learning on top of past history, and how some practices may foster extinction, but it is hard to imagine that adding more, albeit healthier, layers of conditioning to the nervous system alone could make us more transparent to True Nature. (Throughout, I use ‘transparency to True Nature’ from among various ways of describing realization. It implies the place of emergence of realization, as opposed to its development. The principles described herein may apply mostly to the ‘first journey’ - journey towards Presence. Applied to my patients who may not (consciously) be on a path towards spiritual realization at all, it seems to brings them to
the door of conscious awareness of True Nature, a
door that they may or may not ‘choose’ to move
through. The principles may apply to the journeys
with and as Presence as well, but that is outside my
field of experience.

Our culture, if not our experience, fosters the
notion that emotionally reactive states are fairly
indelible. Psychotherapies are often based on the
extinction model of change, especially cognitive-
behavioral models. There are useful and necessary
life skills that require new learning, and healthy ego
development is partially, at least, based on the
learning of new and healthier behaviors that override
the older more chaotic or destructive ones. But while
this learning is a natural part of maturation and can
be useful within the context of the Work, it is only an
intermediate step in movement towards realization.

In 2000, a surprising new understanding about
memory was revealed. New research showed that
memories could not only be erased, completely
removed, but that this may actually be the default in
the brain! Researchers found that every time a
memory was activated it was actually removed from
storage, or at least made labile (unstable) and, if it
was not actively stored again - reconsolidated, in
neuroscience terminology - it would be lost. So
rather than being like the file on your hard drive,
which, if opened, would still be present in its original
form even if your computer crashed, memory was
found to be more like the file in your filing cabinet –
if taken out and not put it back, it is gone, for good!

Reconsolidation has been shown to occur in many
brain areas, including the hippocampus, amygdala
and cerebellum. Therefore, it applies to factual
memory, emotional memory and motor memory. The
erasure of memory when reconsolidation is
blocked is so complete that, in one experiment, a
mother sheep actually forgot her own lambs.

The discovery of reconsolidation has profound
implications not just for the Work, but for all healing,
even to the point of reevaluation of the very
meaning of healing. As stated earlier, all physiology
is behavior, and subject to emotion, motivation and,
particularly learning. The activity of every organ,
endocrine gland and muscle, is formatted by history.

We are well acquainted in the Work with how
even instinctual drives become conditioned to
express in ways specific to our history. We are also
aware that our history is the cause of most of our
emotional pain. This carries over to a large
proportion of physical pain and dysfunction as well, I
can state from my experience treating patients using
methods that putatively erase memory. When
conditioned memory is eliminated, physical and
emotional (if not existential) pain goes with it.

As I have done the Work over the years, I have
noticed sometimes that certain chunks of ego
activity, identities, object relations or other reactions
seem to have just disappeared. Others, observation
suggests, seem to have had similar experiences. The
experience is not one of making a better, ‘healthier’
more logical choice, or catching myself and
disidentifying, (as memory extinction would suggest
is occurring), it is, rather, a feeling of being
unconditioned (or, we might say - Being,
unconditioned.) There is, in those moments, zero
reactivity on a zero to ten scale, not a one or two.

In the research literature, the elimination of
conditioned learning, as occurs when reconsolidation
is blocked, lacks a name. I have coined the word
neurontogenesis from the words neuron, onto (from
the Greek word ontic - having real being) and
genesis (origin). The word ontological is used in
philosophy to mean relating to the origin, essence or
fundamental nature of an organism or object.
Neurontogenesis, then, means to restore the
nervous system to a fundamental functional state,
before conditioning, a state, I suggest, where it
becomes transparent to True Nature.

As in the quote "calmness or harmony is a
natural aspect of the mind," (Sakyong Mipham
Rinpoche) there is a fundamental state of function
that the nervous system presents when freed from
conditioning. This freedom, which may be called a
‘neurontogenic state’, represents the underlying,
innate, healthy function of the body and mind. As
Almaas puts it, “contentment, uncaused.” It is the
pre-stress, pre-trauma, and potentially even a pre-
duality state of the nervous system. Of course
calmness is also an aspect of True Nature, so
perhaps it is more accurate to say that calmness or
harmony is a natural aspect of True Nature which
may pervade awareness when the nervous system is
free from conditioning.

Neurontogenesis, more than simply the
neurological fact of removal of conditioning. It also
implicitly includes certain concepts, which I state
below, derived from observation of clients. While
these observations may overlap those of other forms
of work, in my practice they arise from physical or
energetic body treatment done in specific sequence,
which I will elaborate later.

1. Experience of Space: When un-conditioning is
first achieved, relative to the issue that is being
addressed, the presumptive freedom from
conditioning is experienced as a non-deficient
emptiness or space, a sense of peace or
relaxation, and a clear, unemotional response to
an attempt to return to the previous issue or
memory that moments before had been charged
with reactivity. This state, of course, has been
well documented in the DA, particularly in
Almaas’ The Void, and will be familiar to students
from their own experience. From the perspective

of the nervous system, this may be called the
neurontogenic state.

2. **Layering of reactions:** There may be many layers of conditioning that need to be addressed before one reaches the neurontogenic state regarding a particular context or issue (rending the veils, as it is sometimes called.) An individual may move through different emotions, feelings and awareness, one dissolving into the next. This experience is common to inquiry in the context of the DA.

3. **Immediate change:** Immediacy of changes is a hallmark of neurontogenesis. No new learning, needing repetition, is required. It is an immediate shift to non-reactivity to a particular issue, where before there had been reactivity.

4. **Transparency to True Nature:** Freedom from conditioning may be a neurological prerequisite to Transparency to True Nature.

5. **Applies to varieties of conditioned behavior:**
   - 'reptilian' conditioned motor behavior (based on observation and research) (cerebellum),
   - 'limbic' conditioned emotional reactions (based on observation and research) (amygdala),
   - 'limbic' context and place associations and factual memory (based on research) (hippocampus),
   - 'pre-frontal' conscious thought patterns or beliefs (based on observation),
   - and may also apply to function of internal organs.

   The experience of space seems to be the hallmark of the neurontogenic state, and it may be experienced as a result of many practices. As Almaas points out in *The Void*, “This is a very consistent phenomenon in persons involved in psychotherapy or spiritual work.” (p18)

   Treatments based on neurontogenic principles are particularly valuable in dealing with trauma, as they can fairly rapidly reduce the associated repetitive and destructive reactions of PTSD. EMDR, for instance, is accepted as a trauma therapy by the American Psychological Association. PTSD is essentially a problem of memory. It is a condition of overconsolidation; too much of the traumatic event is remembered. Elimination of such pathological learning is a key to resolving the sequella of trauma.

6. **Inquiry, Presence and Neurontogenesis**

   We have seen how neurontogenesis, the elimination of conditioning that comprises ego activity and other adaptive phenomena, may be a neurological prerequisite or at least component of becoming transparent to True Nature.

   As stated earlier, the DA applies methods that foster extinction. More than any other practice in the work, inquiry (particularly, it seems, when practiced with a teacher), will engender a state of non-

deficient emptiness or Space as is experienced when ego structures are erased.

   Can some of the transformative effects of inquiry, particularly as we notice them in the DA, be understood neurologically in terms of the blockage of reconsolidation and neurontogenesis? How might experience of Presence figure into the equation? There are a number of 'energy psychotherapies' whose primary effects, I believe, are based on their invocation of neurontogenesis. These include Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, (EMDR), Emotional Freedom Technique, (EFT) and others. All likely operate by the same principles.

   To understand how this works, we must dive still deeper into the physiology of memory and emotion and examine what I call the 'reconsolidation loop'.

   In the work we are quite aware that we know our emotional and feeling states by sensing our bodies. This is echoed in a model of emotion put forth by brain researcher Antonio Damasio which states that the brain knows our feelings because it 'reads' the body. He calls this the body loop. Though emotional reactions may be initiated in the brain, the body loop suggests that we don't experience them directly in the brain, it is only when they play out in the body that we can know them.

   When we perceive something we have previously coded as a threat (or potential reward, but we will just focus on threat here), a signal is sent from the amygdala to areas of the brain in charge of developing reactions defend from the threat. These reactions are likely to evoke pre-determined reaction patterns in the body, as illustrated earlier. These body patterns, perceived by the brain, then become the signal to conscious and unconscious parts of the brain that all is not well. (If I am defensive, there must be danger!)

   These tensions (which we can call ego activity), are necessarily associated with arousal. Arousal, in the brain, is mediated by the neurotransmitter norepinephrine (NE), the higher the NE levels and other stress hormone levels, the greater the arousal and the more likely it becomes that whatever is taking place at that moment will be remembered. (Remember the overconsolidation of PTSD. Interestingly, however, chronic elevation of stress hormones causes degeneration of the hippocampus, a major area of non-emotional, just-the-facts learning, which tends to counterbalance the emotional triggers held in the amygdala.)

   Similar to adrenaline, released by the adrenal glands, NE increases arousal and stimulates the sympathetic (fight-flight) branch of the nervous system. It also enhances consolidation (establishment) of memory, and without it, consolidation and reconsolidation are blocked completely. In other words, memory cannot be
stored when NE is absent. Studies that (chemically) block NE cause reconsolidation to fail, effectively erasing any conditioned memory that was activated when the NE blocker is in place.

So the reconsolidation loop is as follows: trigger/cue (object is perceived) → associated conditioned memory activated (relation) → memory ‘pulled out of storage’, and becomes unstable → associated brain defensive reaction activates defensive postures in body including changes body chemistry → defensive reaction ‘read’ by brain → arousal (production of NE) → reconsolidation (re-learning) of the trigger memory. (See figure 1.)

In other words, triggering an historical association, an object relation, causes a reaction that includes arousal, and causes it to be stored again. That arousal, it would seem, re-validates the historical association, and causes its re-storage. If this were an internal dialogue it might be: ‘This memory still bugs me, therefore it must still be an actual problem, therefore I will keep watch for it next time.’

If the arousal, or possibly other aspects of the physiological response are altered while the memory is still ‘off the shelf’ the re-storage is interrupted and the object then fails to trigger the relation. It may be the relation that actually ceases, because the object, in the form of a factual memory is still available, it just no longer causes its expected reaction.

Neuromodulation, the successful erasure of the memory/reaction or object/relation connection in therapeutic settings, occurs when certain conditions are met. Those conditions are, purposely (if unknowingly) induced in therapies such as EMDR and EFT, and other methods:

1- Activation of focus - attention is placed on a memory, thought, emotion or feeling (or area of pain). This can be referred to as targeting.

2- Immediate therapeutic input - in EMDR the therapeutic input is alternating right-left brain activation created by using right to left eye movements, sounds or sensations. In EFT, a series of acupuncture points are tapped, though there are many other methods and modalities that are may be effective including the ones I use which are treatments of various body areas.

3- Recalibrate - Determine if the therapeutic input has changed the focus activated in step 1, and determine the next activation to be addressed. Following these procedures, the intensity of reaction to the difficult issue will generally be reduced, changed or absent. EMDR, EFT and similar therapies may reduce NE and therefore arousal, or they may simply interrupt the reactive activity, and/or the body states associated with arousal.

Given these neurological mechanics, we can now propose a mechanism by which the DA may erase object relations and their ego activity through inquiry.

Inquiry into our lives combined with body sensing activates memories, whether or not we are consciously aware of them. When we sense the bodily experience of ego activity, implicit or explicit in that experience is the memory of the historical reason for its existence. In the Work, we are activating these memories in the context of a field of Presence, (transmitted by the teachers or directly experienced by the student.) The field of Presence may have the effect of decreasing arousal and thus NE, preventing reconsolidation. The experience of Presence then, may be the universal ‘therapeutic solvent’ reducing NE, and eliminating the reconsolidation-inducing arousal.

Figure 1
7. Application of these principles to the DA

When used along with inquiry, therapies that support neurontogenesis may speed the process of rending the veils of ego activity. In my clinical experience, it is not uncommon for clients to rapidly, with only brief focus on their state of conflict or present feeling state, reach a state of equanimity with an issue that moments before may have been highly charged. Diligently staying with the feelings around the issue, and even understanding is not integral to the process as it often is in traditional inquiry, though noticing whatever thoughts and feelings that arise may be a necessity.

Clarification of complex states happens as a matter of course, and what needs to arise in terms of understanding may arise of its own accord, as in a traditional inquiry, and understanding may help to distill the specific aspects or feelings involved in the conflict. As a particular issue, memory or feeling is addressed, again as in traditional inquiry, the next layer of emotions or feelings may arise. The end result, is often the arising of space, peace or perhaps even more defined Essential states.

Patients generally come to me for a solution, often relief of pain, be it physical or emotional, and so that is both the focus and the bar that I measure success by. As much as it may drive us at certain times, pain relief is not the goal of the DA. Shortcuts to awareness Essential Presence, (if that is what these methods in fact are), may not prove advantageous or even necessary as a tool in the work.

Often, addressing a specific emotional issue is part of treating a physical pain. A specific habitual defensive posture for instance, may play a part in the creation of the pain. For physical healing, at least, the approach I use often addresses problems that have not resolved with other good work. The same is true for emotional healing, but of course these are individuals who have not had the benefit of the DA.

I am not a DA teacher, and my patients are not often coming to me for the direct purpose of realization, although I find that some of them take on that attitude once they experience and understand the possibility. I am not doing DA work with clients and I am not conscious of using direct transmission of Essential states. That said, the spirit and rhythms of open-ended inquiry as I have absorbed them in my years in the Work certainly play a part in my work with clients. That said, if their interest is in Essential development, however, I do recommend for them the DA.

In the work I do, which I call NeurOntogenics, I use a more complex algorithm with kinesiology (muscle testing) that acts as a guide to the priorities of a multi-layered inquiry. It will indicate, for example, when a compensatory defensive layer needs to be addressed before moving on or when a particular memory from an earlier time in life needs to be accessed, and then suggest when to do a therapy, what therapy to do, where on the body to apply the therapy, and indicate when that therapy is done. I consider it to be an open-ended inquiry, guided by both what the body is displaying moment-to-moment via the muscle testing, and the immediate experience of the client. My experience therefore, may not translate to inquiry as practiced in the DA, but the basic principles described here will still apply.

Still, it is possible to apply a simpler method, one that can be immediately available to all who do or lead inquiry. The physiological activations of EMDR (side to side sensory stimulation via eye movement, sound or touch/vibration), EFT (tapping a series of acupuncture points) or other similar tools could be added to inquiry.

The physiological stimulation would best, I think, be applied during inquiry where the teacher might say "stay with that feeling". This is a simple way of incorporating the power of neurontogenic principles of erasure of conditioning into inquiry to the charge that is arising at that moment. It would most likely accelerate the movement of the inquiry, and possibly unconsciously address some of its historical antecedent at the same time.

I liken the difference between using such therapies and not to using a calculator to do a series of math equations vs. using a pencil and paper. It seems to offer a faster way to eliminate ego activity, but is there an advantage to doing the long division?

To engage in discussion about these concepts, I welcome your emails at drWeissfeld@gmail.com, or to engage in the larger discussion of auxiliary therapies to the Diamond Approach, sign on to http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DA_Therapies. More information, including more detailed neurophysiological exploration, the scope of neurontogenic work and other info can be found at www.neurontogenics.com.