

MARJORIE

“Deep, unresolved grief has been in my family as long as I can remember,” Marjorie reveals to the True Self Class, “and depression. I was raised with the message that everything is sorrow, but you cover it up with fear—fear of the world. Something bad was always expected to happen. Instead of a world of ‘goodness,’ I was raised in a world of ‘fear of badness.’ Badness was the norm.”

Her voice resigned, as though used to carrying the weight of her past alone, Marjorie continues, “My brother tended to be angry, so I took the role of peace maker, but underneath I really felt sad, angry, and unfulfilled. Since childhood I’ve always been the one who placates, the pleaser, the good girl, the one who tries to keep everyone feeling okay – everyone other than myself, of course. Who *I* am has gotten lost. To cope, I’ve learned to retreat.”

Marjorie’s energy is low, but her authenticity is riveting. Usually timid and reluctant to talk “too much,” say anything “too depressing,” or take up “too much time,” she has a history of holding back, not letting us know the full degree of her suffering. Now, her talking so freely and deeply about herself is a gift. We listen carefully as she continues.

“There was love in my family but no joy. Now, as an adult, even after years of therapy, there’s no joy in my life. I don’t remember ever having joy or what it might feel like. In fact, right now I find it hard to think of *anything* that brings me joy.”

She pauses, and then confesses, “I’ve created a similar household of fear, depression, and no joy for my son. I’m afraid I’m passing it all on to him. That’s heart breaking for me.”

This background is emerging because Marjorie's brother, from whom she has kept distant, caught her by surprise in a conversation yesterday, verbally lashing out with judgments and accusations she feels she didn't deserve.

"My brother's anger startled me," Marjorie goes on, "and jolted my body. I felt hurt, sorrow, and blamed by him. His accusations about things I'd supposedly said and done years ago seemed distorted and unjust.

"Yet I did what I always do in that situation with my family, and with anyone else who gets upset with me: I took the blame. His treatment of me felt unfair, but I automatically blamed myself anyway. I didn't stand up to him, outwardly or within myself. I felt his anger coming toward me, and I took it in, absorbing it and feeling awful."

I ask Marjorie what she wants to feel instead of awful. "Safety," she begins.

"Before you continue," I interject, "let's pause with *safety*. As you name each feeling you want, a tap root of energy instantly finds that feeling where it already exists unconditionally within you, in true self.

"As you tell me each feeling, give yourself some silent time to receive the experience of it. Assume that the feeling you've named is rising from true self through the tap root, filling and nurturing you. The feeling might be very subtle, even microscopic, because it's coming from deep within you. That's okay. Receive and enjoy it, no matter how subtle or tiny the sensation.

"Start again with *safety*, and after you feel the safety for awhile, do the same with the other feelings you want."

Marjorie closes her eyes and slowly repeats, “Safety.” She takes a deep breath, releases it, and is quiet as she opens inwardly to safety.

After several moments, Marjorie names the next feeling she wants, “Joy.” Her breathing slows as she waits for the tiny, delicate vibrations of joy, the joy she thought she didn’t have, to gently fill her.

Next Marjorie quietly announces, “Strength.” Her posture adjusts, curled shoulders rolling back and spine lengthening slightly upward, like a plant greeting morning light.

“Creativity.” Marjorie’s voice is still quiet, but a new vibrancy is awakening within it. I wait during her silence.

“And my true spirituality.” After just a brief pause, a burst of sentences breaks free, “I want to be comforting and compassionate toward myself. I want to allow myself to discover the goodness in me and around me. I want to feel that it’s okay for me to discover my own desires and preferences.”

Often when we say we want something, we are really saying that we don’t have it and can’t have it. We are reinforcing our lack. If someone responds by trying to tell us how we *can* have it, or that we already have it more than we think we do, we might argue, trying to convince them that they are mistaken. While the other person shows interest in our *having*, we remain fascinated with our *not having*. As long as we hold that position, we are not receptive to the goodness we want.

Other times, we say we want something as a way of opening a door to it, becoming more receptive, and beckoning it into our life. That’s what Marjorie is doing. To deepen her receptivity, I suggest that she let herself sink into feeling each of her

phrases as I say them back to her. She nods, eyes still closed, and I begin, “Comforting and compassionate toward myself.” I pause, giving her time to receive her true self’s deep, subtle feelings of comfort and self-compassion as they rise to her awareness.

When she nods that she has been feeling them, I continue, “Goodness in me and around me.” I wait, enjoying the openness I sense in Marjorie. When she nods again, I add her final phrase, “My own desires and preferences.”

Until now, all these qualities Marjorie wants have been present deep within her, unnoticed. The way fish idling at the bottom of a rushing mountain stream go unseen by someone standing on the bank, Marjorie’s personality couldn’t see through its constant rush of distress and self rejection to the calmer, abundant depths of true self. Today she is calming the water and peering under the surface.

When Marjorie nods that she is ready, I continue, “I want you to imagine something with me. Imagine that the substance that makes everything, even words, is nurturing life force. *All* words, no matter their meaning, are made of nurturing life force and, therefore, are little carriers of it. With this image, let’s revisit your conversation with your brother.

“Yesterday your ears heard a string of hurtful and unfair words, but right now let’s see those words as a string of tiny formations of nurturing life force coming through the air to you. Your brother related to the meaning of the words, but now you’re relating to the words in a deeper way. At the true self level, the real purpose of the words is to carry nurturing life force to you. That is the purpose of everything.

“With each breath, take in the nurturing life force carried in the words. As each word arrives, no matter its meaning, its nurturing life force gives itself to you, helping you to be kinder to yourself.”

I pause to give Marjorie time. When I sense she is ready for me to speak again, I add, “Each word makes you feel kinder and sweeter to yourself, and more trusting of your goodness, than the word that arrived before it.”

Marjorie continues silently, letting yesterday’s words transform from harmful to healing. Then, with a long exhale, she volunteers, “I feel stronger about myself.”

Her chest expands with a fresh intake of air, and she says slowly, as the awareness awakens within her, “This feels like pure being. It’s a simple, easy state: I’m just being. Nothing’s causing it; it’s just my natural state of being.” She is quiet again.

A few moments later, eyes still closed, she elaborates, “It’s fundamental, primal. I feel this is the formless state I came into the world with. It’s just pure being. I can tell that I had it up to age one or two, prior to defining who I was, before so much of my personality got formed. It was my original feeling state!

“It’s a relief to uncover it and know, by feeling it, that this pure being was the state I started with. Now I want to nurture it, not cover it up any more.” She opens her eyes and looks at me with calm certainty, “I can still have this pure being state. It’s *me*.”

“Yes, you can still have it,” I agree, “and it is you. Now, while you’re here talking to me in your pure being state, think of the world. Tell me what it is like to be in your pure being state and think of the world.”

“I feel like I’m starting all over as an infant,” Marjorie answers. “I want this original, pure being state—the state I began this life with—to remain strong, safe, and

creative for me. I want *it* to define me and my life now, not externals like other people and circumstances.”

Marjorie and I talk about how she might support this important choice in her daily life, and she comes up with a standard: *If something doesn't make me feel as good about myself, as whole, and as safe in the world as this original, pure being state, I won't take it as an imprint or let it define me.*

The next day I get a call from Marjorie. “I am amazed. *Amazed.* I've got to tell you what happened to me today. First I have to mention that yesterday, a few hours after class, I meditated on my original, pure being state. Then this morning I woke up feeling connected with it.

“Second, you have to know that for the past three years I have felt awful about a situation in which I really let down a client. She had hired me to do a project that took me to her office a lot. All was good in the beginning, but then my client's office manager started being rude to me. His rudeness escalated into undermining my work and my positive relationship with my client. I didn't know how to stand up for myself or handle the situation. I became more and more intimidated by the office manager until finally I couldn't muster the courage to go back there. Instead I retreated, procrastinating so long that I didn't finish the job. Without even telling my client or giving her a reason, I just faded away. I'd always been responsible and professional before, so I felt terrible about how I handled this situation.

“Finally, after several months, I returned to the company to apologize to the client, but I never got to say a word. As soon as I walked into the client's office, she snapped at me, ‘Don't say *anything.* I don't want you to ruin my day. Just get out!’

“Even though I had been in the wrong, I hadn’t expected her to be so mean. I didn’t know how to respond, so I didn’t speak up for myself or try to diffuse the conflict. I took in all her bad feeling about me and left feeling weak and awful. For three years I let it all fester inside me and continued to feel awful. I also became afraid of running into that client around town. Seeing her was my worst fear.

“Well, today it happened. As I came around an aisle in the grocery store, there she was! Her back was to me as she talked to a clerk in the produce section. She didn’t see me, but I knew she might spot me somewhere else in the store.

“At first I was scared, so I took a few breaths to center myself into the state of pure being I felt yesterday in class. I felt calmer right away, and then some peace, balance, and well-being spread through my body. I decided that if she and I did come upon each other in another aisle or in the check out line—and even if she was mean to me—I would respond from my state of pure being. My pure being felt bigger than the conflict, so I chose to put my pure being in charge.

“Sure enough, a few minutes later the woman rolled her cart next to mine. She said, ‘Hello!’ and was all smiles, ‘How nice to see you!’ Her warmth was genuine, and I instantly was happy to see her, too. Right away she told me that she had come to understand the situation differently over time, even making a point to say, ‘And that office manager no longer works there.’ She had extended a bridge between us, so I stepped onto it with her.

“I apologized for not finishing the job, and we talked easily, resolving the old issue and confirming our good feelings about each other. As we said our Goodbyes, she opened her arms, and we hugged.

“It felt like a miracle to me. I believe it was no coincidence that the meeting I had dreaded for three years occurred the day after I discovered my state of pure being. What an amazing synchronicity! For three years I suffered because my personality didn’t know how to handle that situation. Then as soon as I found my pure being, the part of myself that *could* handle the situation, the opportunity manifested.

“And I’m proud of myself. I used that opportunity by dropping into my pure being and choosing to face my client and our unfinished business from that place in myself. In my pure being, there was no conflict, no shame, and no feeling awful – just different kinds of well-being. I decided to stay in that well-being no matter what happened, even if she was still mad and wanted to chew me out. I was rooted in my well-being, and the situation manifested well-being.”

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