

The Hoffman Process

A Path to
Personal
Freedom
and Love

by Bob Hoffman

Introduction

In the depths of their being, everyone understands that love is the essence of a fulfilling life. This message appears consistently in all of the world's religious traditions. So why, I asked myself, is there so much discord and negativity in human relations? There had to be something missing in our everyday understanding about love and emotions, and our actions and relationships that grew out of this misunderstanding. Feelings of love and affection have enormous power in every aspect of our lives, shaping and coloring our behaviors, and at times spinning them out of control. My work led me to uncover a very basic misunderstanding about emotional love and in the discovery I also found a path to recovering our innate ability to love, and becoming fully integrated adults.

For many years I worked by myself as a spiritual intuitive, with a small number of people who came to me for healing. Through contact with psychotherapists I learned that, while an enormous amount of work had been done describing the emotional effects of parental conditioning, very little had been done to understand the motivation of children in emulating the counterproductive and limiting behaviors of their parents. I had an intuition that this was what lay at the root of the unhappiness of those who sought me out. A more complete understanding came to me in 1967, whereupon I formulated the models and concepts that are the foundation of the Hoffman Process.

This booklet represents my particular insights into the workings of the human mind, which might seem familiar as I describe them. I coined the word *Quadrinity*[™] to represent the four aspects of a human being: the emotional, Intellectual, Physical, and 'piritual. The unique capacities and functions of each aspect can be considered separately, but it is the balance of all aspects working together harmoniously that fulfills us as human beings.

It has been my experience that most people do not live in this harmonious balance. Certainly those of us raised in Western culture give primary authority to the intellect – both our own and those of the authorities selected by our history, religions, or scientific world

view. To create balance, the other three aspects of ourselves need to come into partnership with the intellect. As Albert Einstein once said: “We should take care not to make the intellect our god; it has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality. It cannot lead; it can only serve.”

While we recognize that we have a physical body, and many acknowledge that we are spiritual beings, we generally downplay or even disregard any positive role for our adult emotional aspect of self. Even with all our training and education, we still tend to either neglect our emotions or cope with them by abusing substances or behaving inappropriately. Most often as adults we merely tolerate the infantile and pitiable existence of our emotions. This predicament is the basis of what I’ve identified as the *Negative Love Syndrome*[™].

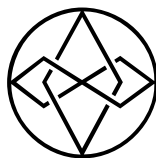
I saw that people really began to understand themselves in a new way once they recognized how the Negative Love Syndrome was active in their lives, along with its causes, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors that are, for the most part, just beneath our conscious, day-to-day experience.

I therefore invite you to relate to the ideas presented here in a personal way, as the child of your own parents. As you are introduced to the following information and do the exercises I’ve included, allow yourself to experience the emotions that arise as fully as you can. This will be the beginning of understanding, in an experiential way, your own emotional and spiritual truth.

Although we will be investigating the source of your negative emotional programming, this essay is not an indictment of your parents or you. What follows here may trigger and evoke early memories, including some you may have forgotten. It is intended to give you a taste of the personal freedom that is possible. At the very least, I hope that you find a deeper understanding about yourself and your parents. You may even have discovered something astonishing about yourself by the time you read through to the end.

Four Aspects of Self: The Quadrinity

To help understand the great complexity of the self, its development, and the problems resulting from the adoption of the Negative Love Syndrome, I use the Quadrinity as a framework. It is a simple yet powerful model for understanding ourselves and our behavior, that includes all four aspects of self: body, emotions, intellect, and spiritual self. The Quadrinity is our whole, integrated, balanced self, embodying all four aspects.



These four aspects are, of course, interrelated and form a complex interactive system. I use three distinct combinations of aspects of the self: the Duality, the Trinity, and the Quadrinity. The Duality consists of the emotional self and the intellectual self. They can be combined as one entity or be visualized separately.

I refer to the three aspects of our minds as the Trinity: the emotional self, the intellectual self, and the spiritual self. Again, they can be visualized as one entity or separately.

Physical Self



The body, which includes the brain, is the physical dwelling place for the mental aspects of the self. Through the body we act out and manifest the thoughts of the Intellect, the feelings of the Emotional Self, and the essence of the Spiritual Self. The following are qualities of the Physical Self:

- Experiences the world through our senses
- Communicates with others through voice and gestures
- Connected with the mind via neurological and biochemical feedback
- Carrier of genetic information
- Repository for the memories of all experiences
- Manifests physical symptoms of unresolved mental conflicts (e.g. pains of stress)
- Acts out emotional and intellectual behaviors both positive and negative, and can express the Spiritual Self

Emotional Self



The Emotional Self contains feelings expressed through the physical body. It is where negative patterns first show up developmentally and, along with the Intellect, where these patterns reside. The negative emotional self is defined as childish. It has no sense of time or space. It regresses readily.

Positive characteristics

- Curious
- Playful
- Joyful
- Creative
- Spontaneous
- Adventurous
- Feels grief

Negative patterns

- Rebellious
- Ashamed
- Anxious
- Defensive
- Rigid
- Fearful
- Depressed

Intellectual Self



The Intellectual Self, our logical and problem solving thought-processor, includes what and how we think, our world views, values, and beliefs. Along with the Emotional Self, the Intellect is where patterns reside. Shoulds, shouldn'ts, dos, don'ts, can'ts are in the Intellect and can be either positive or negative. They are negative when they are compulsive.

Positive characteristics

- Rational
- Understanding
- Knowledgeable
- Creative
- Logical
- Analytical
- Discerning

Negative patterns

- Critical
- Over-rational
- Judgmental
- Defensive
- Argumentative
- Making excuses
- Controlling

Spiritual Self



The Spiritual Self is the pure, non-programmed, non-mediated aspect of self that is a positive, pure, open presence, yearning to embody our larger, true nature in this world. It is our essence, our strong, clear sense of self that is untouched under all our negative experiences, memories, and actions.

- Intuitive, responsive, unconditioned, and connected
- Wise, growing, moving toward wholeness
- Intentional, courageous
- All-loving, compassionate, and forgiving
- Peaceful, grounded, and centered
- Aspires to goodness, truth, and justice
- Mediator, integrator
- Moral and completely ethical

For thousands of years, human beings have attempted to understand and come to terms with the mystery of life and of creation itself. One enduring notion maintains that the source of everything is a non-physical, intelligent, loving spirit or being, and that we are connected to that spirit. Aldous Huxley called this the *Perennial Philosophy*. Though the exact manner in which people have experienced this higher intelligence varies from age to age and culture to culture, the belief in its existence persists.

Ken Wilber described the *Perennial Philosophy* in the following way:

“Reality, according to the perennial philosophy, is not one-dimensional; it is not a flatland of uniform substance stretching monotonously before the eye. Rather, reality... consists of different grades or levels... . At one end of this continuum of being, or spectrum of consciousness, is what we in the West would call ‘matter’... and at the other end is ‘spirit’ ... or the ‘superconscious.’” (i)

Human beings have always searched for ways to connect and to have communion with this presence. They have used many names to describe this experience. Some call it God; some call it the Infinite. Many describe ° experience as ecstasy, joy, clarity, bliss, inner peace, wholeness, and love. Even a moment of such an experience can be life transforming. Ralph Waldo Emerson said: “Our faith comes in moments; our vice is habitual. Yet there is a depth in those moments which constrains us to ascribe more reality to them than to all other experiences... I am constrained every moment to acknowledge a higher origin than the will I call mine.” (ii)

The Light

The experience is often reported as being in a powerful, brilliant – though not blinding – pure light where fear of death is eased. Much has been written about those who, near death, recall emerging from darkness into a magnificent, loving light, with peace and love awaiting them.

Many people have searched for ways to connect and have communion with this Light through various forms of spiritual practice. In 1976, I came to understand that because we are of this Light, we should be able to communicate and make contact with it directly and at will, without intermediaries. To facilitate this, I developed the *Light Journey Visualization*, through which anyone can enter the Light of peace and compassion.

This experience has proven to be deeply moving. If desired, virtually anyone can experience being in the Light, and their Spiritual Self as being of the Light. Visualizations can give us access to the underlying truths of our Quadrinity.

Ordinarily, we are as unaware of the Light as we are unaware of the sources of our negative emotions. In the Hoffman Process, we use guided visualizations (guided imagination) to make conscious contact with our unconscious mental processes in order to gain access to our true feelings.

We can then discover both our non-conditioned self and our conditioned self. As we begin to experience our Spiritual Self, we recognize our fundamental goodness and begin the journey toward integration and balance.

Negative Love Syndrome

Negative love is inter-generational pain that is passed down from one generation to the next. Everyone is guilty and no one is to blame. We all have negative moods, attitudes, and behaviors that come from a very deep emotional place. Created by childhood programming, we act out these negativities every day, over and over again. The pain, the feeling of being unlovable, and the conflict caused by these negative attitudes, feelings, and behaviors result in personal suffering and social injustices that affect each of us every day.

Among mammals, humans require the longest period of care and nurture until they achieve independence. In our early years, our survival depends on intensive and continuing physical and emotional parental care. So, as a result, children need to feel that they will not be abandoned and that they are loved and valued by their parents or parental figures. In fact, as newborn babies, love and affection are as vital to us as food and shelter. In order to thrive, we need a continuous flow of unconditional love from mother and father. We are born with these needs that must be satisfied by our parental relationships. The British psychoanalyst John Bowlby, in the 1950s, developed what he called *attachment theory*, which is discussed in the remarkable book, *A General Theory of Love*. The authors, Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini and Richard Lannon, explain:

“Bowlby theorized that human infants are born with a brain system that promotes safety by establishing an instinctive behavioral bond with their mothers. That bond produces distress when a mother is absent, as well as the drive for the two to seek each other out when the child is frightened or in pain.

“Mothers shape their children in long-lasting and measurable ways, bestowing upon them some of the emotional attributes they will possess and rely on, to their benefit or detriment, for the rest of their lives.” (iii)

In every situation that we, as children, experienced our parents' love being cut off (e.g. through depression, anger, abandonment, death), or their love becoming conditional, the parental bond was broken for us. We felt unlovable, as if a part of us had suffocated and died. The basic cause of our inability to relate to ourselves and others with love is this very state of feeling unlovable, which I call negative love.

To understand how this feeling of unlovability leads to negative programming, we have to see the world through the eyes of a child, the child we once were before we had any choice or options, before we had a mediating intellect. John Bradshaw explains why babies need unconditional love in the following way:

“Children are... egocentric. This doesn't mean that they are selfish in the usual meaning of the word. They are not morally selfish. They are not even capable of moral thinking until about seven or eight (the so-called age of reason). Even at that age their thinking still has definite egocentric elements in it.

“Egocentric thinking means that a child will take everything personally... . The impact of not having one's parents' time creates the feeling of being worthless. The child is worth less than his parents' time, attention, or direction. The young child's egocentricity always interprets events egocentrically. If Mom and Dad are not present, it's because of me. There must be something wrong with me or they would want to be with me.

“Children are egocentric because they have not had time to develop ego boundaries. An ego boundary is an internal strength by which a person guards her inner space. Without boundaries, a person has no protection. A strong boundary is like a door with the doorknob on the inside. A weak ego boundary is like a door with a doorknob on the outside. A child's ego is like a house without any doors.

“Children are egocentric by nature (not by choice). Their egocentricity is like a temporary door and doorknob, in use until strong (healthy) boundaries can be built. Strong boundaries result from the identification with parents who themselves have strong boundaries and who teach their children by modeling. Children have no experience; they need their parents’ experience. By identifying with their parent, they have someone on whom they can depend outside of themselves. As they internalize their parent, they form a dependable guide inside themselves. If the parent is not dependable, they will not develop this inner resource.

“Children need mirroring and echoing. These come from their primary caretaker’s eyes. Mirroring means that someone is there for them and reflects who they really are at any given moment of time. In the first three years of our life, each of us needed to be admired and taken seriously. We needed to be accepted for the very one we are.” (iv)

As we looked to have our need for love met exclusively within the family, parental abandonment or rejection literally raise the fear of death for the helpless, dependent child. So, as children, we emotionally emulated (i.e. adopted and internalized) our parents’ negativities in order to guarantee the continuing protection against abandonment or rejection by our parents. Children cannot recognize or acknowledge the inadequacies and faults of their parents, because that recognition would evoke unbearable anxiety.

The well-known psychiatrist Karen Horney identified this feeling of childhood insecurity as *basic anxiety*:

“A wide range of adverse factors in the [child’s] environment can produce this insecurity in a child: direct or indirect domination, intolerance, erratic behavior, lack of respect for the child’s needs, lack of guidance, disparaging attitudes,

too much admiration or the absence of it, lack of reliable warmth, having to take sides in parental disagreements, too much or too little responsibility, over-protection, isolation from other children, injustice, discrimination, unkept promises, hostile atmosphere, etc.” (v)

Along with the feeling of insecurity is the sense many parents have that mistreatment is good for children. Alice Miller, in *For Your Own Good*, has observed:

“ ... we were not even allowed to be aware that all this was happening to us, for any mistreatment was held up to us as being necessary for our own good. Even the most clever child cannot see through such a lie if it comes from his beloved parents who, after all, show him other sides as well. He has to believe that the way he is being treated is truly right and good for him and he will not hold it against his parents.” (vi)

Our early experience with our parents has a profound effect on our lives, shaping our self-image, attitudes, moods and behavior. We develop our survival strategies and life orientations as a result of our conditioning. Not only are we unable to recognize or acknowledge our parents' faults and their abuse of us, we imitate their faults and inadequacies (attitudes, moods, and behaviors) in order to be accepted by them.

More than merely role models, parents are everything to little children, looming so large as to be godlike. As children, we identified with our parents absolutely. But parents are only human, with negative behavioral patterns as well as positive ones. How often have you thought or said, “I sound just like my father.” “My goodness, I’m becoming just like my mother.” “My God, why am I doing this? My mother (and/or father) used to do that. I hated it when she did it, and now I’m doing it.”

Of course we are not our parents, but what then drives the powerful unconscious compulsion to be like them? It is the primitive but innocent attempt to end the sense of separation from them that we experienced as children when they were being negative. This occurred unconsciously. Knowing no better, we adopted their patterns as our own. We wanted to be like them so we could earn their acceptance and love.

The Negative Love Syndrome is the adoption of the negative behaviors, moods, attitudes, and admonitions (overt and silent) of our parents to secure their love. It includes the subsequent compulsive acting out or rebellion against those negative traits throughout our adult lives.

In an essay about the Hoffman Process, psychiatrist and noted author Claudio Naranjo wrote:

“Hoffman’s idea that the child adopts parental traits in order to be loved.... [both] acknowledges the love need as the basic source of identification, [and] implies an assumption in the child’s mind that by being like his parents, he would obtain the love that he is not experiencing by merely being himself.” (vii)

Later, in our adult lives, we continue to compulsively act out negative patterns from our childhood in an ongoing attempt to be loved. Even though we know that there are alternatives to our negativities, and even though we recognize on some level that these behaviors cannot bring us happiness, we continue to act them out. Negative love patterns, though unconsciously motivated by our deep need for love, produce alienation and/or rejection.

Then, when our negative behaviors don’t produce the love we want and need, we blame others and become vindictive. In effect, we want revenge for not being loved and accepted and, thus, we become even more hurtful toward ourselves and others. This leads to remorse, guilt and shame, which reinforce the belief that we are essentially

flawed. In due time, our own children adopt our patterns in order to secure our love, and the Negative Love Syndrome passes on to the next generation.

In living out these adopted negativities, we obscure our innate and true loving essence, just as our parents did. For transformation to take place, we must first become aware of the negative aspects of our lives. Only then does a way out become possible. The key is in the awareness that we adopted our parents' negative traits. Anything adopted can also be released.

The Hoffman Process teaches us how to release and resolve the persistent negative feelings of being unloved and unlovable. The way out is a daunting task: we must somehow transcend our parents' negative traits without feeling inner conflict. To achieve this we must have the courage for honest self-examination and accept that challenge wholeheartedly. We will return to the transcendence of the Negative Love Syndrome after we have further considered the mechanisms by which we adopted the negative love patterns.

Adoption of, and Rebellion Against, Negative Love Patterns

The adoption of our mother's and father's patterns of feeling and behaving begins in Mother's womb and accelerates after birth. The negative programming continues until puberty, by which time we've adopted – or rebelled against – virtually all of our parents' and surrogate parents' behaviors, moods, and attitudes. We then carry them into adulthood as our own.

There are two basic ways we take on negative patterns, behaviors, moods, and admonitions:

Adoption

We unconsciously adopt our parents' negative traits and mirror them back to be like them so they will love us. For example, when adopting the negative trait of being critical, we become self-critical, critical of others, and/or set it up for others to be critical of us.

Rebellion

We unconsciously adopt our parents' negative traits, but we dislike the traits and their consequences. So, we suppress overtly those traits we dislike and our feelings about them, and in an attempt to be more like our parents, we learn to act out compensatory behaviors.

This provides the illusion of freedom and self-development. To continue our example, imagine you adopted the trait of being critical, but at some point attempt to be non-judgmental and accepting. Then at some point you meet a critical person. Your first reaction, from a self-righteous moral standpoint, may be to criticize that person for their actions and behavior. Thus we find ourselves back in the original pattern.

Acting out the alternative does not quiet the negative voice within us. Instead we are pulled in two opposing directions; we get two

patterns instead of one. On some occasions we act out the adopted behavior, and at other times the alternative behavior. This see-sawing creates even greater anxiety and conflict.

To be loyal to each parent, we must play both roles, adopting each of their traits. This produces conflict, especially if your parents are very different from each other. For example, suppose your mother was quiet and placating. She never expressed anger. Father, on the other hand, was hostile and aggressive. Outwardly, you may behave like your mother, but the suppression of Dad's hostility is like a latent volcano rumbling inside, waiting for the appropriate moment to erupt. Moreover, you might recreate Mo©'s situation of being incompetent at dealing with anger by having angry people around you.

Any adoption of negative traits inevitably brings internal conflict. This is clearly demonstrated in extreme examples. People with abusive parents can often find themselves in abusive relationships. It has the pull of something familiar, but then there is also the unconscious hope that "this time it will be different, this time I will change the situation and get the love I didn't receive as a child." It is a way of trying to heal an old wound. However, while these old emotions are looking for love, the reality created is actually a misery of living through more abuse in the present. This is an inner conflict – a drive toward peace and lovability, not felt in childhood that actually creates the opposite.

This conflict can turn into a vicious cycle. In an attempt to resolve a situation and the underlying belief of unlovability, we act out an adopted parental pattern. When this fails, it leads to us acting out another set of behaviors or beliefs to compensate or correct for the previous ones. This continues with more negative patterns, and each trip around this cycle of patterns takes us even further from our goals and reaffirms our unlovability. We can become very trapped as we move through the circle of ever more negative beliefs and actions.

The Conflict of Negative Love

Our compulsive behaviors set us up to be rejected and unloved by the very people whose acceptance and love we most desire. If we win, we lose. This is the inevitable result of the Negative Love Syndrome. The Negative Love Syndrome has a stranglehold on us. It cuts off our ability to love freely.

As adults, we pay dearly for our negative identification with our parents. In effect, we sell our souls. For example, in our relationships, we unconsciously try to recapture Mommy or Daddy's love, choosing partners who manifest traits like Mommy or Daddy, or both. Projecting our parents unconsciously and automatically onto our lovers, authority figures, bosses, friends, colleagues, or teachers is known as *transference*. This recreates our early family system and projects the horror of the Negative Love Syndrome into the present time. The result is resistance, conflict, rejecting or being rejected, heartbreak, and loss.

As adults we act like frightened eight-year-olds who would do almost anything to avoid pain, yet resist help. As adults we do not really have to withdraw or to pretend the pain does not exist, but Negative Love Syndrome causes us to believe that we cannot deal with difficult tasks. We spend our lives avoiding the causes of the problems in our lives, afraid that facing our pain will hurt too much and hoping that it will somehow just disappear. By modeling that, our parents were incapable of dealing with suffering however, they misled us. It's not true.

Our attachment to negative love programming can be released, and our positive real self is always there. Due to their own childhood programming, our parents did not know how to nourish us, our perfect essences. Their own essences were not nourished by their parents. They were never taught to honor, respect, and love themselves, so how could they give to us what they never had? Had they been able to honor themselves, they would have honored us, and we would have been nourished with love and developed a strong sense of inner security.

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