

## Overcoming Self-Doubt & Shame

### The Mindfulness Cure for the Narcissism Epidemic

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## Self-Evaluation



## What Realms Define Me?

- Skills & Talents
- Accomplishments
- Pedigree or Group Membership
- Moral Standing
- Appearance



## Lake Wobegon

*Where all the women are strong, all the  
men are good looking, and all the  
children are above average.*

## The Failure of Success

- The pain of I, me, me, mine
- Narcissistic recalibration
- Impossibility of winning consistently

## Wrong Wall?



## Suffering in Isolation

- If we're not happy, it's our fault
  - Failure to buy the right consumer product
  - Inherent weakness
- Psychiatric diagnostic system can exacerbate problem
  - Only sick people experience pain

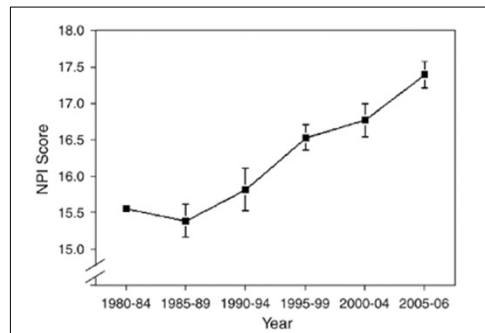
## It's Getting Worse



## Narcissistic Personality Inventory

- I just want to be reasonably happy
- I want to amount to something in the eyes of the world
- If I ruled the world it would be a better place
- The thought of ruling the world scares the hell out of me
- I am much like everybody else
- I am an extraordinary person
- I always know what I'm doing
- Sometimes I'm not sure of what I'm doing

## Egos Inflating Over Time: A Cross-Temporal Meta-Analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory



Journal of Personality, Volume 76, Issue 4

## Three Marks of Existence

- Anicca (impermanence)
- Dukkha (unsatisfactoriness)
- Anatta (no enduring, separate self)



## Anatta

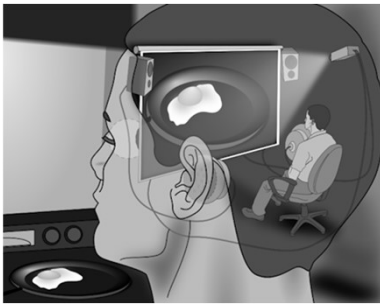
## Therapeutic Benefits of Glimpsing *Anatta*

1. Increased affect tolerance
2. Radical acceptance of parts
3. Freedom from self-esteem concerns
4. Deeper connection to others

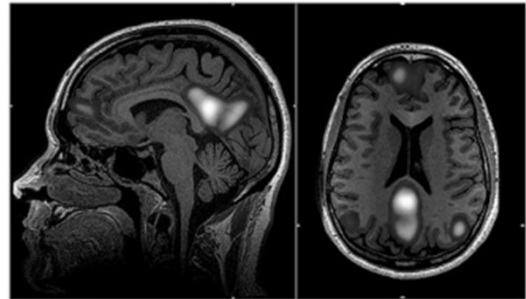
## Thinking



## Homunculus?



## Default Mode Network



## Who Am I?

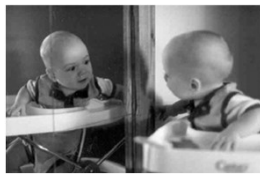
- Two types of self-reference

- Narrative focus (NF)

- Enduring traits
    - Talking to ourselves about ourselves

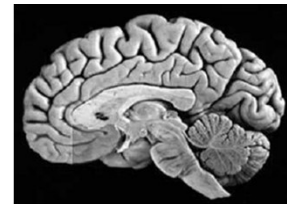
- Experiential focus (EF)

- Moment-to-moment experience
    - The mind-body in action



## Medial Prefrontal Cortex (mPFC)

- Links subjective experiences across time
- Holds memory of
  - Self traits
  - Traits of similar others
  - Reflected self-knowledge
  - Future aspirations



## No one Home

- Continuous flow of moment-to-moment experience
  - New "self" born and dies each moment
- Not even a stable witness
  - Just impersonal experience unfolding



## Copernicus of the Mind

- Identity is recreated moment by moment
- Continuity of self is illusory
- Like frames of a movie



A human being is part of the whole called by us universe ... We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest. A kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. The true value of a human being is determined by the measure and the sense in which they have obtained liberation from the self.

## 1) Affect Tolerance

## And I, Sir, Can Be Run Through with a Sword



## Selfing & Affect Tolerance

- Not "my," but "the"
  - Anger
  - Sadness
  - Fear
  - Joy
  - Lust

## 2) Acceptance of Parts

## Our Polytheistic Mind



## How Was Your Meditation?



- Part trying to attend to the breath
- Part fantasizing about the future
- Part judging myself
- Ask the committee!

## Jung's Shadow

- We identify with some parts while rejecting others
- We become defensive when shadow is illuminated



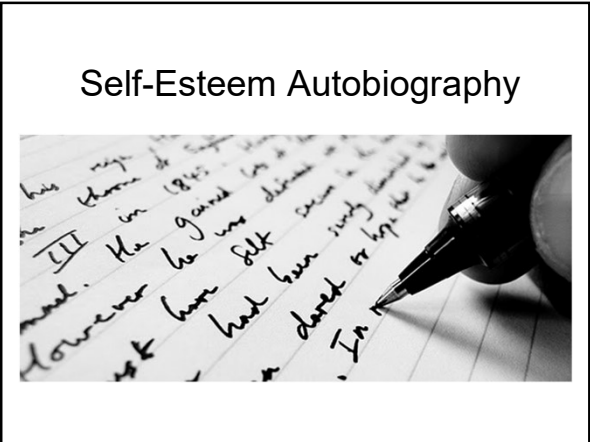
## We're all Bozos on this Bus

- Dandelions in a field
- Not a path to perfection, but a path to wholeness
- Boundary of what we can accept in ourselves is the boundary of our freedom

– Zen Patriarch

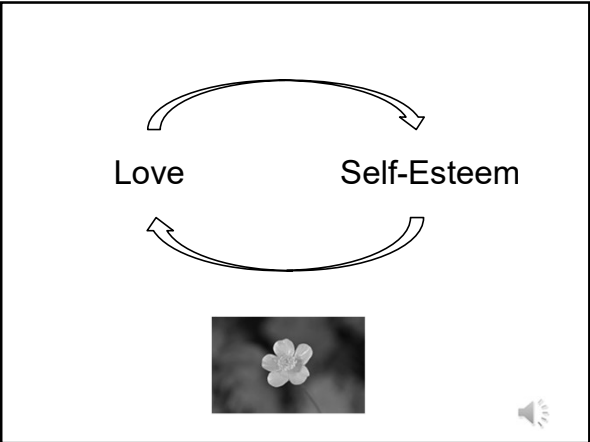
## 3) Freedom from Self-Esteem Concerns

*He's just an ordinary kid.*  
-- Barry Magid (*Ordinary Mind*)



*I get my money from Mommy.*

### 4) Connecting to Others



*“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”*

It's not just a commandment, but a law of nature.

## Judgments



*Make a connection, not an impression.*

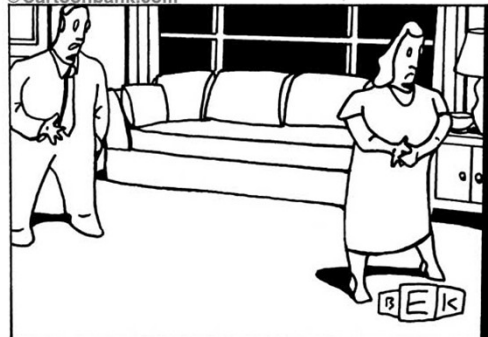
## It's About Other People



## Service



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*“Of course I care about how you imagined I thought you perceived I wanted you to feel.”*

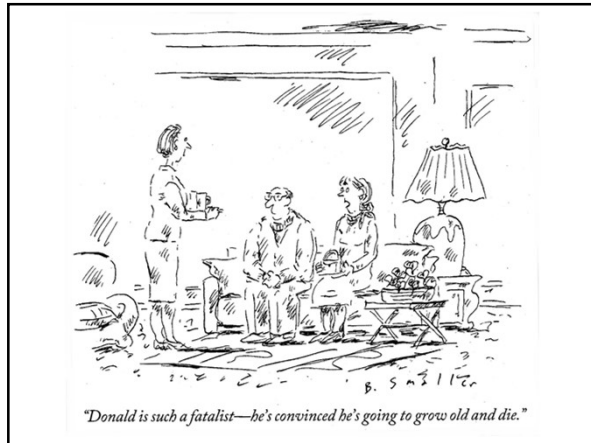
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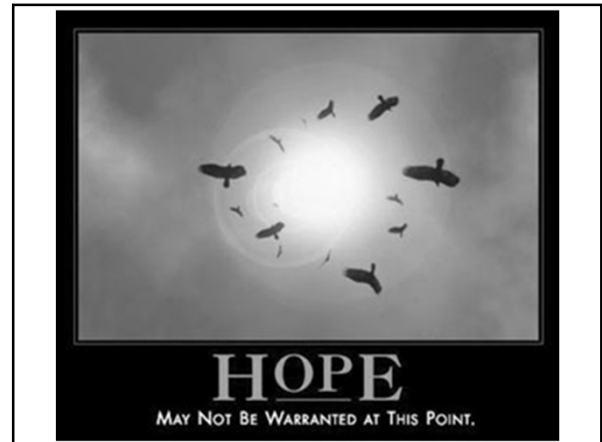
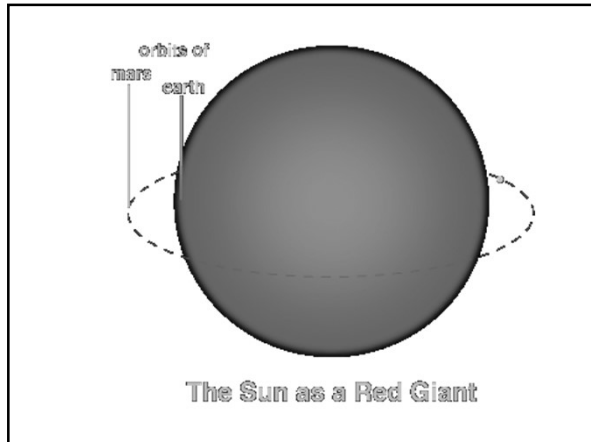
Krabi, Thailand



King of England, 1387

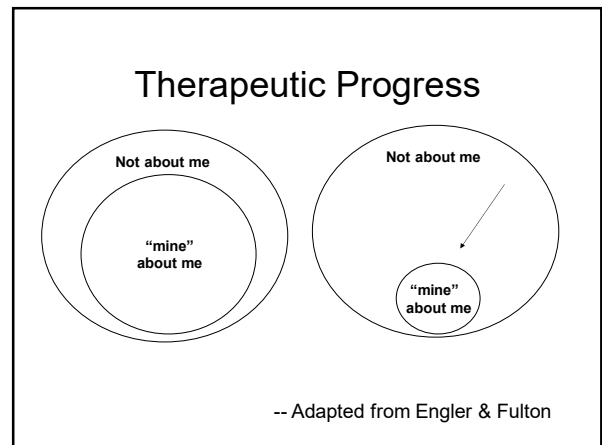






### Implications for Treatment

- Psychotherapy can help us move beyond self-esteem
  - Embrace ordinariness and insignificance
  - Foster connection, acceptance, and psychological flexibility

### Why Are You Unhappy?

*Because 99.9% of everything you think, and everything you do, is for yourself. And there isn't one.*

-- Wei Wu Wei

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