

## Overcoming Self-Doubt, Shame and Inadequacy

### Discovering the Extraordinary Gift of Being Ordinary

Ronald Siegel  
Harvard Medical School

## It's Darwin's Fault



## 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

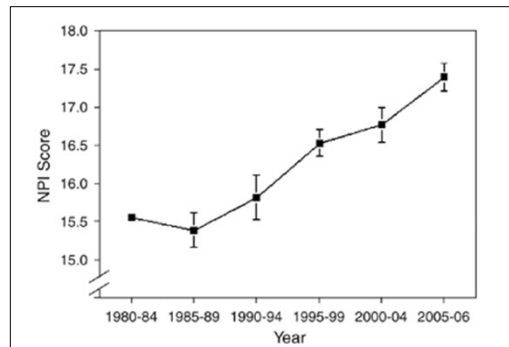
## It's Getting Worse



## 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

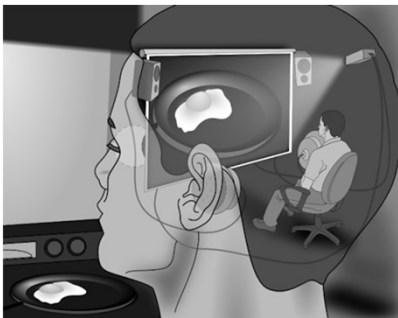
## Therapeutic Benefits of Glimpsing *Anatta*

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

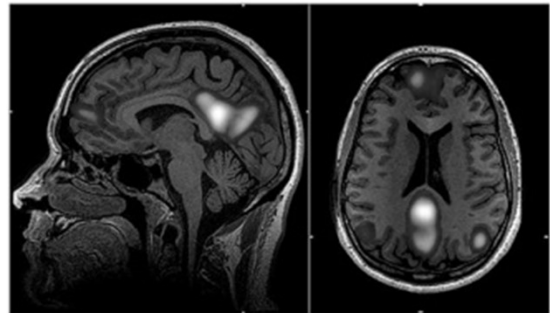
## Thinking



## Homunculus?



## Default Mode Network



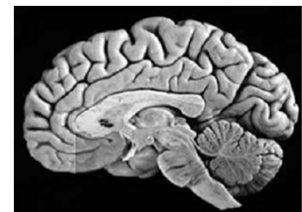
## Who Am I?

- 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



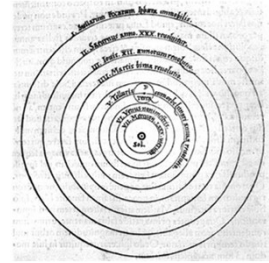
## No one Home

- 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



## 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



## 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

## To Receive Free Materials

Send a blank email to:

[handouts@yahoo.com](mailto:handouts@yahoo.com)

Subject line: HTI

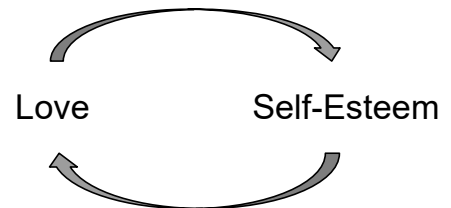
## 3) Freedom from Self-Esteem Concerns

## Self-Esteem Autobiography



*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.*

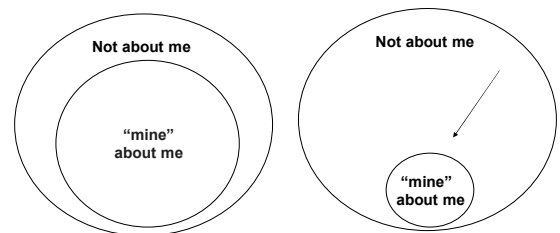
## It's About Other People



## Service



## Therapeutic Progress



-- Adapted from Engler & Fulton

## 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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For recorded meditations, visit:  
[www.DrRonSiegel.com](http://www.DrRonSiegel.com)