



We can make the distinction—between old feelings and present-day reality—no matter what feelings from the past have grabbed us. It looks like the human mind always has the ability to see reality and fight its way back to it.

Tim Jackins

Welcome to the April 2024 *Present Time*. This issue contains articles from around the world, including many reports from workshops, webinars, and other meetings. There is a new draft policy on disability liberation. There are four articles by Tim Jackins that keep us informed of our counseling practice and world change frontiers and suggest ways to move forward. We are also informed of recent developments in addressing the climate emergency. And much more!

For the July *Present Time*, please send us articles and poems by Monday, May 20, and any changes to the back-pages lists by Monday, May 13.

Katie Kauffman and Erin Huang-Schaffer, Editors

19370 Firlands Way North, Shoreline, Washington 98133-3925, USA • publications@rc.org



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LYNDALL KATZ

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“Deciding to Fight Back”

Tim Jackins at the West Coast USA and Canada Leaders’ Workshop—January 2024*

We’re still learning about the process of discharge and recovery, including about the difference between our mind and the recordings. We can be clear in our understanding of the theory, and then be confused in practice. We can be confused when the restimulation is large enough and the resource around us is small enough.

One of the ways to push in the battle for clarification is to decide that RC theory is correct—that we can use our minds no matter what happened to us. The more undischarged distress we have, the more confusing it is. But it doesn’t look like any accumulation of distress makes us powerless. It is still always possible to see what is real and head in that direction.

We can make that distinction—between old feelings and present-day reality—no matter what feelings from the past have grabbed us. It looks like the human mind always has the ability to see reality and fight its way back to it.

Many of us wake up in a swamp of restimulated feelings every morning. Some of us can recognize it as a swamp and can fight for reality. We can do that because we’ve done a lot of discharging and have seen things shift. However, many

of us, when we wake up in our swamp, can’t think about it; we can only live it. For example, if the restimulation has sad feelings in it, then we conclude that the sad feelings are about *now*.

Our vocabulary has never cleanly made this separation—that what we are feeling is what we felt a long, long time ago. We become trapped in a rerun, the rerun of a “film” we’ve seen a thousand times. The recording is real about the past but not about the present.

To stop living it involves making a decision in spite of distress. It means making a decision not to live out the past.

DECIDING AGAINST THE RECORDING

It is possible to decide against the recording every morning, to clearly and explicitly recognize that this set of feelings is just old. I’m not saying we can stop feeling it. To get rid of these things entirely takes a lot of discharge. But there’s something about not recognizing it as real in the present that’s important and doing that explicitly every time it comes at us.

Wanting to change right now

It can seem like we can’t decide against it unless we can change it

right now: “I should be able to liberate myself from it immediately if I recognize it.” Maybe you can. But in my experience, it takes a lot more work than that. It changes with discharge. It changes with a lot of discharge. It’s not a mistake that it takes time. We’re just impatient to get over things [recover from things] that never should have happened. That’s very understandable. But being able to recognize it does change our understanding of reality. And that makes a difference.

Challenging the distresses in the present

Of course, one way of challenging these distresses is to work on them as heavily as we have the resources to do that.

The other way is to challenge them in the present. We can stop living them out—we do that so everyone around us can see how we are hurting, as if there were some resource that would be drawn to us if we just acted it out fully enough. I don’t think we’ve been successful in those efforts, but many of us have made them. Before we gave up as young people, we tried desperately to get someone to notice.

Deciding to be happy

But now we can decide that this confusion is not going to last in our

continued . . .

* Tim Jackins is the International Reference Person for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.



LAC ROSE, SENEGAL • ERIN HUANG-SCHAFFER



... continued

mind. An extreme version of this is deciding that we are going to be happy. Literally, we can decide we're going to be happy. Whatever happened in the past in some important sense, doesn't matter now.

Can we decide to be happy? I see a question on most faces. Let's try it. Look around in the corners of your mind. Can you conceive of being happy? Can you conceive of that idea? That you could be pleased to exist and pleased with life the way it is. Not satisfied but pleased to be alive. Life in any form is just marvelous. And we are this special form of life at the end of a long evolutionary process where we get to interact with reality and each other in ways that are marvelous. Yet most days we're unhappy. We're unhappy because we are pulled to the hard things that happened that we never got to recover from.

What is it, really, to be alive as a human? What are the possibilities? What are the enjoyments? What are the things we treasure? There's a whole reality that our clouds of undischarged distress make it hard for us to stay aware of. I suspect that without distress, being alive is probably exactly the same as being happy.

What if we stop letting our distresses pull at us, just for one minute? That's not too much to ask, to not believe the distresses for one minute.

Being more and more human now

One of the battles against distress is to not let them keep us from being more and more human now. For example, it can be something as simple as looking at the person next to us and being delighted with them and with ourselves. We can do it now. Turn and be human with someone for a minute. Be delighted with them.

Now let's do a mini-session in which you head in that direction as best you can. I want you to be as fully alive as possible with someone else. Try being entirely pleased with yourself and with being alive together with this group of people.

Distresses are confusing, and it's always amazing how much discharging clarifies reality.

No longer a victim

What can we do with our minds now? What can we think instead of letting the distress recordings determine anything about our thoughts?

A lot of us work on early hard distresses from the victim's perspective. We were the victim. And it's like we're not going to give that up until somebody recognizes it. But it might not be the most effective or powerful perspective to work from. It doesn't really challenge what happened. We just live through it repeatedly. What's a different perspective?

One is that it was a mistake that it happened. It happened, but it was a mistake. Another is your opposition to it. Whether or not you could change it, you could oppose it. You could say no. You could look right at the thing as it came at you and say no. Whether or not you could change it. That you don't have to agree to it even if you can't stop it.

Another is that you intend to change it. You intend to change that

part of your life, where you're still hobbled by that distress recording. Whether or not you can change it right now is a different question. There may be limits to how effective we can be in any circumstance. But I don't know that there's a limit to what we can decide in our minds in any circumstance.

We can stand in opposition in places where we can't do anything—and being in opposition is much better than being victim. For almost all of us, the victim position includes giving up. And that's different from being defeated while staying in opposition.

Defiance and fighting back

Another possible position is defiance. That's a more familiar one. "Oh yeah?" It's like what are called the "terrible twos" when a little one won't give up even though they can't win, even when they're wrong. This position is much more powerful. It isn't about being right or wrong. It's about setting our mind's perspective now in a position that lets us work on material more effectively. And the way we work on things in defiance is much different from working on them as victim. It's much closer to where we want to end up.

It's your mind. Who else is going to change it? It's yours. Either you do it, or distresses get it all jumbled in familiar ways. You have the ability and can choose to fight against the feelings and confusions from distress recordings, and such perspectives will make a difference in your counseling.

You can decide to fight back. That's underneath all of this. We were forced to compromise or capitulate when we were small. We never got to discharge it, so we still lean in that direction. We can go back and finish the work so we can choose our perspectives and not be stuck in the ones that were inflicted on us.



DOLOMITIC ALPS, ITALY • LYNDALL KATZ

An Online Introduction to RC

The following is from a talk by Azi Khalili [International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People] at an online introduction to RC for people who attended Sustaining All Life events at COP28. Many people from Arab countries attended.

A warm welcome to everyone. Please introduce yourselves in the chat. Write your name, country, and organization.

We will be speaking slowly today because we will be interpreting this event into Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu.

This is an interactive workshop. You will have a chance to speak with others. We will put you into groups of three for listening exchanges.

If you would like to be involved in a listening exchange with Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, French, or English speakers, please rename yourself on Zoom as follows (described in more detail).

Again, a warm welcome to all of you.

Sustaining All Life uses the tools of Re-evaluation Counseling theory. These tools can help us fight the effects of oppression on our minds. They help us to move toward liberation and away from being manipulated and confused by forces of oppression.

You can use these tools in your personal relationships, in your workplace, or in building movements. I have used them for the last thirty-seven years. They have changed my life for the better. And I am a stronger and more effective activist because I use them.

This workshop is designed to give you information about Re-evaluation Counseling theory. You already know some of this. And you already use a lot of these tools in your everyday life. So what you will hear is probably not so new to you. I invite you to take the information, analyze it, try to experience it, and see if it makes sense to you.

There are many ways to explain what these tools are. One way is to say that people of all ages, countries, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, sexes—all kinds of people—can learn how to exchange effective

help with one another to make our lives go better and to make our activism and movement building more effective.

Over the last seventy years, we have developed, expanded, and improved a system for people to liberate their minds from the forces of oppression.

Our goals are for more and more humans to stand with one another and reach for one another.

We want more and more humans to move toward unification and stand against systems of oppression; to reject and eliminate injustice, war, colonization, and greed.

Over the last seventy years, we have learned that listening to one another is a radical activity. Something significant happens in our brain when another person listens to us without interrupting or judging us.

continued . . .

COUNSELING PRACTICE

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Let me ask you a question: What happens when you run into [encounter] a friend on the street? You both want to talk and to say how things are going. We are hungry [desperate] to be listened to. We are waiting impatiently for a chance to interrupt our friend who is talking so that we can talk and be listened to.

However, we are seldom listened to because the other person is preoccupied with being listening to themselves.

In this organization, we learn the art of listening and, most importantly, how to take turns to listen to one another. We have each other's agreement that I will listen and pay attention to you if you agree to give me a chance to do the same. We exchange equal listening time.

This agreement is profound. We have learned that we can move mountains [overcome challenges] when we exchange listening time with one another in our families, in our workplaces, or in our climate activism.

Now, let's try it. We will put you in groups of three. One person will talk and the other two will listen. Do not interrupt or offer advice to the person who is talking. Just listen and look pleased with that person. Do not look worried or bored. Each person will speak for two minutes while the other two listen. Please divide the time equally among yourselves. Anything that is spoken among the three of you will remain confidential. You cannot repeat [what you heard] after this listening exchange is over.

During your two minutes, please introduce yourself and tell the other two about yourself and your involvement in the climate movement.

Listening exchange (mini-session) in three-ways for eight minutes total

The theory of Re-evaluation Counseling was originally developed by a small group of people. The theory came out of their everyday life experiences. It has been added to and modified as more people get involved in Co-Counseling and explore new terrains. The theory has remained essentially consistent over time.

It is based on a model of what humans are like. We believe that babies and young people are the closest model to what a human being is like because they have experienced less oppression and have accumulated less hurt.

We believe that by nature, humans are smart, loving, warm, caring, cooperative, and intelligent. We believe that humans are born feeling powerful.

We believe that humans like human contact or physical contact. For example, babies like to be held all the time. They like to sit on your lap and hold onto you.

Humans like to share resources.

Our essential characteristic as humans is intelligence. We have an ability to create and use brand new accurate responses to each new situation. When we function well, we do not use any pre-fixed inherent responses to our environment. We use our flexible intelligence to solve problems. All human beings—men, women, children, Arabs, Americans, Africans, Muslims, or Jews—we are all born intelligent.

So, if this is a model of what a human is, why don't we act lovingly, powerfully, or intelligently? Why do we go to war? Why do we destroy our environment? Why do we act based on greed? Why can't we stop using fossil fuels when we know that they are destroying our environment?

The bad news is that we get hurt. Our intelligence is interrupted by being hurt, for example, by the stress of living in oppressive societies. When we get hurt, our intelligence shuts down. We can't think. We don't understand. A pattern of behavior develops out of the hurts. This pattern will become a way of responding to any new situation that is similar.

There are three situations that interfere with our intelligence:

1. Accidents (for example, a fire)
2. Cultural distresses or family distresses (for example, children being disrespected in their family)
3. Systemic oppression (for example, racism, sexism, Islamophobia, poverty, and the effects of colonization)

The hurts that we have accumulated need not affect us permanently.

None of these hurts are our fault. However, it is our responsibility to heal the effects of them. When we don't heal, we can struggle to have good lives, to have good judgment. We can make a lot of mistakes, can't connect with reality, and we struggle to build effective movements.

THE DISCHARGE PROCESS

How do we get rid of our hurts? We are born with a natural healing process. We call this process the “discharge process.” If we allow this natural process to happen, our minds can resolve the feelings connected to the hurts.

Discharge seems to melt away the rigidities of our distress patterns. It frees our flexible intelligence to function well again. It is the inherent way humans heal emotional hurts that were caused by oppression and other hurts.

How do we heal grief? We cry!

How do we heal fear? We shake or laugh; we sweat, or we talk very fast.

How do we heal from physical pain? We yawn and yawn and yawn.

How do we heal from anger? We scream and shout.

The discharge process is not the same as getting hurt. In many societies, we confuse the two. Well-meaning adults make the mistake of stopping children from crying. For example, if a child falls and cries, the adults try to stop them from crying, thinking this will stop the pain. That’s a mistake. The child needs to cry to heal from the grief and fear that they just experienced.

Re-evaluation Counseling is a structured way for people to reclaim the use of the healing process, to get rid of the effects of past emotional hurts.

Every human is intelligent and can figure out what we need to do to make our lives go better and to make our societies function well for everyone. We are intelligent and can figure out how to stop the destruction of the environment. In this organization, we agree to exchange effective help with one another to regain our full humanness—to regain our intelligence, our power, our sense of caring, our zest.

We exchange listening time with one another. We don’t interrupt each other. When feelings surface, we encourage each other to release the emotions by crying, shaking, laughing, and yawning.

Listening exchange (mini-session) in three-ways for eight minutes total

Now we will do another listening exchange.

Each person will take turns and speak for two minutes. Please do not interrupt each other and do not judge each other. Pay full attention to the person who is talking.

Talk about your earliest memories of using the discharge process.

Return from the mini-session

Let’s take a five-minute break to rest our minds and change interpreters.

Now, is anyone interested in speaking in front of this group? You can speak and we will listen to you. Please raise your hand.

Short demonstration of listening

If you are interested in learning more about the tools of Re-evaluation Counseling, you can sign up to be in a twelve-week class. Please click the link in the chat to sign up for a class. There are a few requirements to be in a class:

1. We are trying to create a safe space for people to come and work on their hurtful experiences. So, you must agree that anything that is said in listening exchanges will remain confidential. You will not repeat what people said ever again.
2. In our organization, we make a commitment to only have Co-Counseling relationships with one another. This commitment is meant to stop us from socializing, borrowing money from each other, or starting a romantic relationship. You have to agree to not socialize with people that you meet for the first time here.
3. We agree to not use drugs or alcohol for twenty-four hours before attending the class. These substances affect our central nervous system and ability to use the discharge process.
4. And finally, we agree to only practice the theory of Re-evaluation Counseling and not mix this theory with other theories or methods.

If you have any questions, please raise your hand.

Questions-and-answers

Thank you for attending this event. Again, please sign up if you’d like to be in a class. The link is in the chat.

We wish you the best. Goodbye.

*Azi Khalili
International Liberation Reference Person for
South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People
Brooklyn, New York, USA*



THOMAS DAMBO'S BRUUN IDUN TROLL, IN LINCOLN PARK, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • TIM JACKINS

The Benefits of Re-evaluation Counseling

The goal of total awareness and complete rationality is a real one for all of us who have used and enjoyed the benefits of Re-evaluation Counseling in any continuing manner. There seems to be no reason why complete recovery should not be possible. The process certainly accelerates as it is applied, with larger gains being made more easily as the functioning capacities of the human emerge.

... each step a human takes in this direction is satisfying and worthwhile. Each gain in rationality is a gain in our enjoyment of living. The achievement of short-range goals and progress toward long-range ones becomes a dependable process. Awareness of the environment and enjoyment of it become better and better instead of fading as they do for the typical adult. Relationships with other people become more enjoyable and productive. Our children have better models to learn from and more intelligible sources of information and show it promptly in their flourishing progress.

Harvey Jackins*
The Human Side of Human Beings, page 95

* Harvey Jackins was the founder and first International Reference Person of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.

Much of the RC Literature Now Available in PDF Format

To address the challenges of distributing literature internationally in this era of COVID-19, we at Rational Island Publishers have been converting as much RC literature as possible to a PDF format that can be purchased and downloaded from the Rational Island Publishers website.

Almost all the literature in English, and the most basic literature in many other languages, is now available in PDF format and can be purchased and downloaded from the Rational Island website at <www.rationalisland.com>.

Please note that orders for downloadable literature may take several days to process. You'll need to allow for this brief time lag when ordering.



Taking a Position in Opposition

Tim Jackins at the West Coast Leaders' Workshop

We can often recognize restimulated feelings, even if we can't escape them. Once we understand where those feelings come from, we can make choices about how much attention we should pay to them and when we do that. Those feelings do contain information. They give us a sketch of what was inflicted upon us in the past. And that's useful, especially when we have the resources and time to do something about it, like in a session. It's also useful just to recognize that we have that pressure on us, that we have to be leaning against it all the time so that those restimulations don't blow us off course.

WE CAN ACT

We know we can take positions despite the way distresses can make us feel. We can use our thinking ability despite anything that ever happened to us before. We can look at the present situation and figure out the best thing to do and what attitude to take at that moment. Almost always this is in opposition to the feelings we have coming at us.

Most of us have feelings that push us to be passive. But we can always try to figure out something to do. I suspect in every situation there's always something good to do. It might be tiny. It might be you are just leaning two degrees to starboard [to the right-hand side of a ship as you face forward]. I think that it's always possible and always beneficial to our minds to be trying to figure out possible paths forward even in the face of big opposition. It may be little thoughts like, "When they look away, I'm going to. . . ." Our restimulations make it seem like we get in impossible situations because we feel again all the lack of power that was real when we got those hurts as young people. It can feel like there's nothing we can do that will move things forward. That's probably never true. There's probably always some little move we can make that will help the next move after that be easier. We can always be figuring out some move as a contradiction to the helplessness that was pushed on us. It can be a tiny move. Deciding to decide is a start—to not allow our mind to believe it has no choices. If your mind can begin thinking of little things, then it is headed down the right path.

Our distresses also make us want to wait. We were told to wait. We were forced to wait. Without explanation. We had no chance to discharge these distresses. So one of the decisions we get to make now is to never wait again. We never have to wait.

When we are stuck in an unbearable, unmovable, unworkable situation, we can hunt for some little thing to do, defying the recorded feelings. I have a version of this from when I was twelve years old. It's to look straight at people and think, "What can I get away with?" It has a nice tone. It is defiant of the helplessness. It doesn't take it seriously, but it doesn't pretend I have all the power in the situation. But it always lets me move.

