



Healing the Conflict of Wills

by Robert Perry

It is a fact of life that people often resist the very help that they need. This resistance tends to throw them into conflict with those who are trying to help them. As a result, what could be a joyous situation—one person offering loving aid to another—becomes a conflict of wills. What ought to be holy ground becomes a battleground. If you have been there, you know exactly what I mean.

Surely there must be some solution to this. How can we resolve this battle of wills? How can we place the relationship back on holy ground, so that help is lovingly offered and gratefully received?

The Course actually offers remarkably practical guidance for this exact situation. It does this as part of its counsel for Course teachers who are trying to guide their Course pupils along this path. This is not the place to show that such a mentoring relationship really does appear in the pages of the Course, but you can see it for yourself in the Manual for Teachers. Wherever you encounter the word “pupil,” remember that you cannot be a pupil of a *book*, only of a *person*—a teacher. If you remember that, all those passages that talk about pupils (and variations on that term occur twenty times in six different sections) will reveal themselves to be openly talking about one person (the teacher) guiding another person (the pupil) along a path of awakening; in particular, along the path of *A Course in Miracles*.

Two of the six sections that talk about teacher and pupil are 17 and 18, “How Do God’s Teachers Deal with Magic Thoughts?” (in the original dictation: “How Do God’s Teachers Deal with Their Pupils’ Thoughts of Magic?”) and “How Is Correction Made?” Both of these sections deal with the same question: What do you do when your pupil is entertaining “magic thoughts”?

To understand what these sections are really driving at, you first need to grasp that they are talking about a teacher working with his pupil, and also understand what a magic thought is. Perhaps more importantly, you need to ask what is meant by terms such as the “double wish,” “separate goals,” “single aim,” “divided goal,” and “one appeal” that these sections talk about. Only when I asked myself those questions a few years ago did I see the specific process described in these sections. Before then, I had no clue it was there.

In this article, I will present that process, complete with a diagram to illustrate it and an exercise to apply it. And then after the article, I will include stories from three teachers who experienced success in applying the process.

This article, in fact, is a page out of the Teacher of Pupils Training we are currently conducting. We are in the middle of an eighteen-month process of training long-term students of the Course in the very teacher role that the Manual describes—that of a one-on-one Course mentor. We believe this role is vital for fulfilling Jesus’ vision for how he saw his course being practiced. This article is an expansion of a handout that was the basis for one of our classes, and the stories are from three of our trainees.

In what follows, I’ll be talking about pupils, but you can substitute for this any person you are trying to help. And I’ll speak as if you are the teacher, which you can also broaden to mean any form of being a helper.

1. Magic thought: the pupil’s divided wish

What is a “magic thought”? In normal terms, magic is the exercise of a power that is outside natural laws. In the Course, magic means turning to a power that is outside *God’s* laws. More specifically, it means thinking that there is a power other than God that can save you. Examples of such a power are the power of money, the power of sex, the power of status, the power of one’s own ego, the power of material comfort and physical pleasure, the power of specialness, etc.

Thus, when your pupil is having a magic thought, he is thinking that some false power is the solution to his problems. And this means he is thinking that your work together—focused as it is on a higher Source as his solution—will *not* solve his problems.

Crucially, this means your pupil now has a “divided goal” (M-17.3:5): the wish to *receive* your help and the wish to *resist* your help. The fact that he is still coming to see you means he must want to receive your help. But the fact that he has a magic thought means he must also want to refuse your help.

2. Double wish: your wish to help and wish to hurt

In response to your pupil's magic thought, the easiest thing in the world is for you to acquire your own "double wish" (M-17.2:4), the perfect mirror image of your pupil's double wish. Whereas in his case it is a wish to receive help and a wish to resist help, in your case it is a "wish to help" (M-17.2:3) and a wish to *hurt*.

These sections do not use the phrase "wish to hurt," but what they do mention repeatedly is "anger," which results in "attack" (M-17.1:5, 3:3) and "hurt" (M-17.1:2). And what *is* anger but a wish to hurt? That is why being on the receiving end of anger can be so painful.

Where does this anger come from? On the surface, it comes from the fact that your pupil is thwarting your efforts to help and has appeared to break your contract, so to speak, by seeking the opposite kind of salvation from the kind on which you joined. But on a deeper level, the anger comes from the pupil's magic thoughts stirring to life your buried guilt over your *own* magic thoughts. As the Course puts it, your pupil's thoughts of magic "can but reawaken sleeping guilt, which you have hidden but have not let go" (M-17.7:2).

You may respond that you *don't* feel angry with your pupil. Yet the Course has a ready answer for this objection, pointing out that anger can be extremely difficult to spot. These sections speak of "anger in any form" (M-17.1:6), and make clear that it can be *slight*, *mild*, and *faint*:

It may be merely slight irritation, perhaps too mild to be even clearly recognized. (M-17.4:4)

If he [the teacher] senses even the faintest hint of irritation in himself as he responds to anyone... (M-18.4:2)

Thus, even "the faintest hint of irritation," "too mild to be even clearly recognized," means that you are harboring the wish to hurt your pupil.

3. Attacking the magic thought

The anger you feel, however mild, will be expressed in the form of attack, however subtle. The *wish* to hurt will manifest in the form of the *attempt* to hurt. Yet, like the anger itself, this can be very difficult to recognize: "It can, in fact, be easily concealed beneath a wish to help" (M-17.2:3). In other words, your action will present itself as an attempt to help, yet one that carries hidden fangs. The wish to help will be on the surface, yet just beneath that will lurk the aim to hurt.

What does this look like? We have this vivid—and no doubt familiar—description from Section 18:

If he argues with his pupil about a magic thought, attacks it, tries to establish its error or demonstrate its falsity... (M-18.1:2)

To understand this sentence, I think we need to catch its flavor. There is nothing wrong with demonstrating the falsity of someone's error when the other person *wants* that. The Course tries to demonstrate the falsity of our errors all the time. The flavor of this sentence is that you are using logic and reason to knock down the wall of the other person's resistance. Haven't we all been there? Someone is stuck in a self-destructive place, and we think that if we can just fire enough persuasive argumentation in her direction, she will surely bow to reason.

Of course, that rarely happens. Your double wish has poisoned the well: "It is this double wish that makes the help of little value, and must lead to undesired outcomes" (M-17.2:3).

4. Recognizing error by its outcome

We have been looking at two different levels of an error—the wish to hurt (anger) and the attempt to hurt (attack)—and both levels are described as difficult to recognize. And before you can correct an error, you first have to know it is there. How, then, can you spot this hard-to-recognize error? Surprisingly, the Course has an answer even here:

It is easiest to let error be corrected where it is most apparent, and errors can be recognized by their results. (M-17.3:1)

Even if our mistake is invisible to us when we look at our own feelings and actions, we can see it in the results it has on our pupil and ourselves. We can be sure the double wish is there, says the Course, "if the result is anything but joy" (M-17.3:4). Both sections, in fact, say a great deal about these results, these "undesired outcomes" (M-17.2:3).

On the pupil's side, even though you hoped to wrest this magic thought from him, your attack on the thought actually "reinforces it" (M-17.2:1). This is because it makes that thought real. The attack says the thought has really been done and is a real part of who he is. In essence, your attack on his magic thought says, "You have abandoned God. You are a God-abandoner." The natural outcome of this is *guilt*. You may have thought you were offering constructive assistance in measured tones, but the Course implies you were actually screeching an accusation of guilt. "Anger but screeches, 'Guilt is real!'" (M-18.3:1). And a person who feels guilty will also be afraid, as he expects his sins to catch up with him:

Each [magic thought] says clearly to your frightened mind, "You have usurped the place of God. Think not He has forgotten." Here we have the fear of God most starkly represented. (M-17.7:3-5)

This result of guilt and fear does not come only to the pupil: "Nor should it be forgotten that the outcome that results will always come to teacher and to pupil alike" (M-17.2:5). Therefore, just as you have proved to your pupil that guilt is real, so you have proved the same thing to yourself: "God's teacher can be sure that he is strengthening his own belief in sin and has condemned himself" (M-17.1:6). If your pupil is condemned for his magic thought, then surely you must be condemned for your hurtful help.

Now both teacher and pupil are depressed about the sin they are saddled with. How can they ever climb out of this pit when who they are *is* the pit?

Depression is then inevitable, for he [the teacher] has "proved," both to his pupil and himself, that it is their task to escape from what is real. And this can only be impossible. (M-18.1:3-4)

Your "help," then, has resulted not in joy, but in a feeling that both of you are stuck in your sins, and therefore in the prison of hopelessness and depression. This is the scenario that all helpers must be vigilant for, because this is the sign that they have fallen into the double wish.

5. Restoring the single wish to help

Once these results have led you to recognize your error, you can at last remedy it. The remedy is to unify your mind behind "the single aim" of help (M-17.3:5), which you do by letting go of your anger. How do you let the anger go? This is the overriding message of these sections, a message that is clear and repeated, as you can see by the phrases I have put in bold:

Perhaps it will be helpful to remember that no one can be angry at a fact. It is always **an interpretation that gives rise to negative emotions**, regardless of their seeming justification by what *appears* as facts. (M-17.4:1-2)

If **anger comes from an interpretation and not a fact**, it is never justified. Once this is even dimly grasped, the way is open. Now it is possible to take the next step. The interpretation can be changed at last. (M-17.8:6-9)

Remember, then, teacher of God, that **anger recognizes a reality that is not there**; yet is the anger certain witness that you do believe in it as fact. Now is escape impossible, until you see **you have responded to your own interpretation**, which you have projected on an outside world. Let this grim sword be taken from you now. (M-17.9:7-9)

Correction of a lasting nature,—and only this is true correction,—cannot be made until the teacher of God has ceased to **confuse interpretation with fact**. (M-18.1:1)

You but mistake interpretation for the truth. (M-18.3:7)

If he senses even the faintest hint of irritation in himself as he responds to anyone, let him instantly realize that **he has made an interpretation that is not true**. (M-18.4:2)

How do you let go of your anger? You recognize that it comes from an *interpretation*, not a *fact*. Having recognized this, you now are free to change the interpretation:

If anger comes from an interpretation and not a fact, it is never justified. Once this is even dimly grasped, the way is open. Now it is possible to take the next step. The interpretation can be changed at last. Magic thoughts [in the pupil] need not lead to condemnation [by the teacher], for they do not really have the power to give rise to guilt [in the teacher]. And so they can be overlooked, and thus forgotten in the truest sense. (M-17.8:6-11)

6. The call for help

Your now-unified wish has a powerful effect on the pupil, which is captured in this key line:

The single aim of the teacher turns the divided goal of the pupil into one direction, with the call for help becoming his one appeal. (M-17.3:5)

Understanding this one sentence is key to understanding the entire process, so let's unpack it. We know what is meant by your "single aim": You have let go of anger—the wish to hurt—so now you have only one aim: the wish to help. Your single aim then "turns the divided goal of the pupil into one direction." Well, we know what that divided goal is: the pupil's wish to receive help and to resist help. For this to become turned "into one direction" must mean that he is left with only one of those: the wish to *receive* help.

But *how* does your single aim turn the pupil into this one direction? Here, we have to draw upon our experience of human dynamics. If someone is in front of you trying to help you, and you sense within her "help" a concealed hurtful intent, do you want to accept that help? Of course not. That would be like eating an apple with a razor blade in it.

If, however, someone is totally on the side of our happiness, chances are that we will sense that. When all someone wants for us is happiness, we can feel it. And when we do feel that, what happens? We relax, we feel safe with that person, and we welcome her help. Love is incredibly disarming. That is what the Course says will happen with our pupil: He will lay down his arms, his wall will come down, and he will open his hands to receive.

Finally, his wish for help will then be expressed as a *call* for help: "with the call for help becoming his one appeal" (M-17.3:5). Somehow or other, your pupil will outwardly ask you for your help. The request may be subtle (or it may not), but when you see it, you know that the battle is finally over. You are on the same side once again.

Note that the "call for help" here is different than the Course's usual meaning for that term. Normally, we are meant to see a *hidden* call for help within another person's attack. Here, we are meant to listen for an *actual request*—either overt or subtle—for our help.

7. Answering the call for help

Now that you've actually been asked for help, how do you answer your pupil's request? These two sections give the same answer to that question in different words:

This then is easily responded to with just one answer, and this answer will enter the teacher's mind unflinching. From there it shines into his pupil's mind, making it one with his. (M-17.3:6-7)

Then let him turn within to his eternal Guide, and let Him judge what the response should be. (M-18.4:3)

Once the two of you are again rowing in the same direction—you only want to give help and your pupil only wants to receive it—the way to help your pupil will enter your mind from the Holy Spirit, as naturally as light streaming through a suddenly open window. So turn within and look for that answer shining into your mind. It will be there.

It is far better to rely on this answer, one that is in you but not *of* you. After all, your "answer" amounted to your offensive in the battle of wills.

8. New outcome: unity and release

Whereas your pupil put up one wall after another to block out your old answer, the Course implies that he will welcome your new answer. A passage quoted above said that from the teacher's mind, the answer then "shines into his pupil's mind, making it one with his" (M-17.3:7). Rather than being something that divides you, this new answer is something you can join on. Now your minds are one.

The situation has turned around completely. You and your pupil have set aside warring purposes and have instead joined in "one intent" (M-17.3:2), and have even joined in the same specific answer. So your minds are now at one.

And now, rather than feeling cemented in the concrete block of sin, what could the two of you possibly feel but joy and release?

A lesson truly taught can lead to nothing but release for teacher and pupil, who have shared in one intent.
(M-17.3:2)

This is the new outcome, which is as light and happy as the old one was dark and depressing.

Conclusion

What I love about this process is that it offers a cogent, viable way through a problem that plagues helping relationships and capsizes a great many of them. There can seem to be no way out of this battle of wills. Our pupil (or patient, or client, or child) keeps on resisting us—what can we do? Our hands seem to be tied. The beauty of this process is that it places power back in our hands, power to free up the logjam. It provides a rational explanation of how we are contributing to that logjam—through the hidden attack in our actions—and a practical way to spot that error. It supplies an effective method for undoing the undercurrent of anger that propels our attack: the method of realizing that the anger is based on an interpretation, not a fact. It offers a realistic account of how letting go of our anger can prompt the other person to ask for the very help he or she was resisting. And it tells us how to respond to that call for help once it comes, how we can reach to a truer answer beyond *our* answer, which, after all, was part of the problem.

The whole thing makes sense. And while it may not work every time, at least not immediately, it often has visible and even dramatic results, as we will see in the stories after this article.

In order to make those results your own, I invite you to go through the exercise below. Even if you don't see yourself as being in a helping relationship, you might be surprised at how many relationships this process applies to.

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Exercise for Healing the Battle of Wills

Please take one interaction in which you are trying to set right someone (it need not be a pupil) who has fallen into a magic thought, and a battle of wills either has ensued or threatens to ensue. Then go through the following exercise. Steps 1-5 (which refer to a prior encounter with this person) can be done now, and then you'll need to fill out 6-8 once you have seen the person again (though you should read through them now). I would be happy to print in the next newsletter any stories that you send in.

1. Magic thought: the pupil's divided wish

What was the thought the other person was hanging onto?

2. Double wish: your wish to help and wish to hurt

Were you aware of anger? If so, can you put words to it?

3. Attacking the magic thought

Do you feel you attacked the magic thought? If so, what form did that take? Did you argue about it? Did you try to overcome your pupil's resistance by convincingly showing how wrong he or she was?

4. Recognizing error by its outcome

Are you able now to recognize your error by its outcome—by the feelings it left in the two of you and between you? How would you describe that negative outcome?

5. Restoring the single wish to help

Say to yourself with conviction:

*My anger came only from my interpretation, not from the facts.
 This is true regardless of how justified I felt by the facts.
 If anger does not come from facts, it is never justified.
 My anger thus recognizes a reality that is not there.*

Feel yourself letting go of your anger, realizing it had no basis in the facts. Feel a pure and unadulterated wish to help arise in you, be restored in you. Feel your mind united behind this loving wish.

6. The call for help

When you see the person next, let your single wish to help shine through your demeanor and your words. See if it has an effect. Listen carefully, and see if you hear this person ask for your help.

In that next encounter, did you hear the call for help?

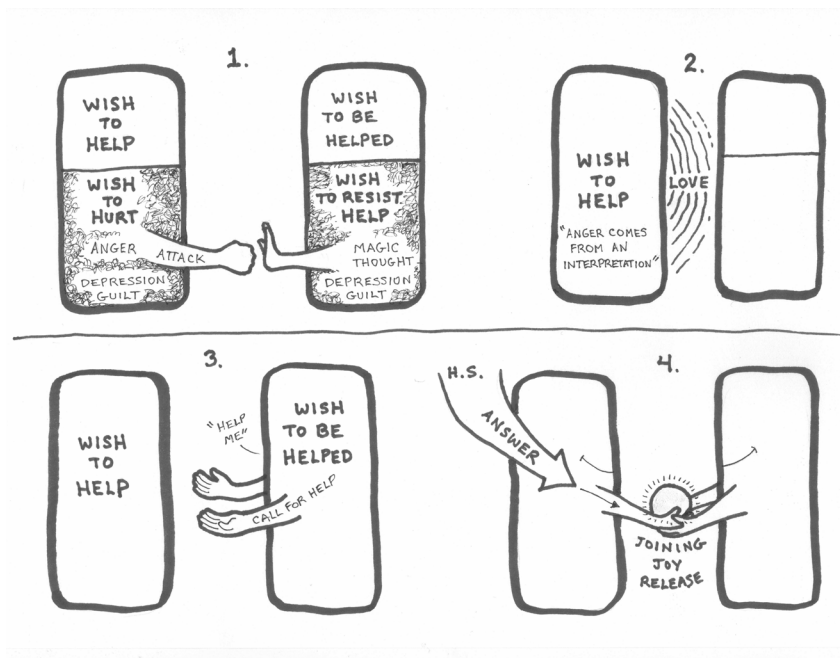
7. Answering the call for help

Be ready, when you see this person next, to respond to the call for help. Be ready to turn to your eternal Guide, so that His answer can shine into your mind. You might want to do it now, in fact, when you can devote yourself more fully to listening.

If the call for help came in your next encounter with the person, how did you answer it? Do you feel that the answer shone into your mind from somewhere else, or that you just figured it out yourself?

8. The new outcome: unity and release

What was the end result? Did you both join in the new answer? Was there a sense of the two of you being unified in a common goal? Was there joy and release?



1. Beneath the wish to help, the teacher (on left) also carries the wish to hurt, which expresses as attack. The pupil wants to receive the teacher's help, but also wants to resist it. As a result, they are locked in conflict, with the teacher attacking and the pupil resisting, and both of them feeling depressed and guilty (Steps 1-3 in article).

2. Having recognized his error, the teacher lets go of his anger (wish to hurt) by realizing it came from an interpretation, not a fact. This unifies his mind behind the single wish to help. And this loving intent radiates from him and becomes plain to the pupil (Steps 4-5 in article).

3. The teacher's single wish to help unifies the pupil's mind, so that his only wish is to receive help. He expresses this as a call for help. In short, he asks for his teacher's help (Step 6 in article).

4. In response, the answer the pupil needs shines from the Holy Spirit into the teacher's mind and is then communicated to the pupil. The two join on this answer, experiencing joy and release (Steps 7-8 in article).



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Healing the Conflict of Wills

Three Teachers' Stories of Successfully Applying This Process

The following accounts of healing the conflict of wills are real-life examples from teachers in the Circle of Atonement's Teacher of Pupils Training program.

Kathy Chomitz

I did not have the opportunity to try this with any of my pupils, so I have an example from my work as a palliative care nurse.

I think that I have a pretty nonjudgmental personality, so it is difficult for me to get in touch with the double wish. I have become aware over the last two weeks of my tendency to be the "nonjudgmental friend" [a term we used in the training to describe a teacher who is supportive of every direction the pupil wants to take, in order to appear nonjudgmental and avoid conflict], but underneath is sometimes a subtle irritation that I wouldn't have been aware of in the past. This irritation is quickly covered up and smoothed over to look like a gentle correction in the guise of a devoted teacher. As I have become more and more aware of the irritation and the ensuing guilt, I have found my interactions with my patients have become much more loving and profound.

My example is of a young woman who has been on our floor for two months. She is dying and has been dealing with that, as well as struggling to understand why she should deserve the kind of care she is receiving now, since she has come from a very abusive childhood. On the surface she could be judged as demanding and difficult, and I have to admit that sometimes when I see her call bell go on I am aware of irritation. This I have smoothed over in the past and have been able to become seemingly devoted.

Since we have been working on this, though, I have seen a difference in my reaction. On Thursday night I was working with a nurse who isn't used to our floor, and she had expressed some difficulty with what she saw as this patient's manipulative behaviour. I told her that what the patient needed was to have the nurse just listen to her. I said, "She doesn't need us to fix her; she just needs us to listen to her." Later on I went into the patient's room with this other nurse to check her medication pump. The patient wanted to talk, and even though we had a job to do I gave her the time she needed. She is now having trouble finding the words she needs to express herself, so it can be a bit tortuous to try and let her have the time she needs. I was aware of a slight irritation but decided to let go of the double wish. I repeated my lesson for the day and opened up to really listening to her.

As she talked I found myself responding to her in a playful easy manner, and she started to really have fun. After about twenty minutes (which is a short time with her), I realized that she was really missing the ritual of going into the kitchen and looking over her food, imagining what things would taste good, putting it together in an appealing way, and then enjoying the taste and presentation. As we explored the things that she thought were important in this ritual, I could hear her plea to be seen as she is with no judgment. I could see her need to be a delightful child who could just be silly and frivolous because she is beautiful and loved.

At the end of our exploration she took my hand, looked at my coworker, and said, "You see why I long for her to be at work?" I went to the kitchen and took my time looking at all of her food, remembering what we had talked about, what she was craving in taste. I gathered the things I thought she would enjoy, all the while knowing that she would likely not have any more than a bite, or that she might even just have the fun of looking at it. I put all the things I chose

for her onto a pretty plate, and poured her some juice that took the place of her fantasy of going to downtown Toronto to her favorite juice bar. When I took it into her I told her how I had selected her food with as much care as she would have a few weeks ago, and told her how much I had enjoyed doing that for her, knowing that this was a big part of the enjoyment she gained from her ritual. She was so happy that I took the time to do this with her.

My coworker had occasion to go back into the room later and spent a long time with her. When my coworker came out she told me she was grateful for my telling her about listening, and my demonstration earlier. She said she found that her thoughts about the patient had completely changed!

As I look back on this whole interaction I have seen that in refusing to accept my interpretation of this patient and deciding to listen to the call for help, I was able to hear it. I was able to understand that even though she seemed to be moaning about her inability to enjoy her food ritual, she was really asking for my love. Because I was willing to listen to the question behind the behaviour I was able to provide her with the understanding that regardless of what she thought her requests should bring her—condemnation and frustration from me—I could only see her as God’s guiltless Son.

Since we have begun this training I have been struggling with my own ego attacks. I have felt that I am not getting anywhere with my practice and have been failing more than succeeding. I have continued to try, and I have found the training to be truly transforming in my interactions not only with my pupils, but also within every relationship I am a part of. On looking back on this interaction with my patient I can see that even though I seem to be floundering and constantly making an enormous effort with very little gain, I have really been moving more and more into a balanced connection with the Course. I am gaining a taste of the freedom that keeps me accountable.

Barb Hembling

Recently, as part of my participation in the teacher-pupil training, I had an experience which changed my concept of my own helpfulness, and opened new possibility for me. We were learning how to handle the conflict of wills which may arise when a pupil continues to use non-Course methods of dealing with things despite our advice as teachers. It falls under “How Do God’s Teachers Deal with Magic Thoughts?” in the Manual (Section 17 and also 18). When the teacher becomes angry at the pupil a conflict of wills results. The teacher now needs to heal his mind before he can offer healing to his pupil.

I came to my appointment with my teacher, Greg, very stressed. I had two difficult situations in my life and one worrisome issue in my work, and I was so stressed that I had even asked the Workbook teachers to pray for me. I summarized my situations for Greg, disappointed that I didn’t have much of a conflict of wills to deal with. He said, “I think all these situations could qualify.”

I presented the problem of making a remark with an edge to it to my patient (I am a psych nurse). When the patient missed his appointment to work on a problem, I said, “When you are ready to work on this let me know,” with an edge, rather than “Oh I missed you. Can we work on it now?” Not big, but I can be sharp if I fear I am being ‘blown off.’ Greg is aware of that, and said, “We need to think about this,” and suggested we ask for guidance together. When my mind settled down, I heard, “You are not serving him [the patient]. You are serving yourself.” Yes, I was serving my ego’s thought that I wasn’t doing a good enough job, and my fear that this patient thought that I wasn’t a very good nurse. Greg heard, “Just love him.” First I clarified that I didn’t think what I heard was guidance, just good logical thinking. Greg thought it was likely guidance, carrying the same idea...just love *him*. Then I let in the enormous relief I felt at the idea that I didn’t have to correct him. I could JUST LOVE HIM. The feeling of relief I felt seemed like what Helen expressed in the priestess vision, when she saw the priestess rising, her chains falling off, and looked with dread at the priestess’s eyes, expecting condemnation, and was met with love. Helen danced around the room, exclaiming, “You mean I can have my function back?” I felt that joy.

One of the situations which so concerned me was my ex-husband’s current rapid decline, after a long illness of limited function following a stroke. This had exacerbated the emotional problems of my daughter and exposed the conflict between my son and daughter, which was being dealt with by neither speaking to the other. It had blown up in my face. When I talked to my daughter I said, “You don’t realize how exhausted your brother is” (looking after his father). When I talked to my son I said, “You don’t realize how hard it is for your sister to perceive things correctly.” My belief was that I have to convince each one to see the situation better and be kind, while I was actually defending the other and subtly blaming the one I was talking to for how they saw it. Meanwhile, regarding myself, I was thinking, “You will never have a family if they keep depriving you by being so self-centered.” I really thought it was up to me to convince them to change their behavior and solve the problem to my liking.

You mean I can just love them, and be guided, maybe to say *nothing*? What joy!

Shortly after that, my son phoned. He doesn’t do that much anymore. I said, “You know however this works out, and I know it is not working out very well now, I want you to know how much I love you. I really love you.” (I never say

that to my son.) The whole problem diminished for me, and my son seemed perhaps less distressed. I now had the option of loving him, and listening for guidance for what else to do or say. Maybe nothing. So wonderful!

What I was able to let go of was my assumption that it is up to me to get someone to change their thoughts and behavior to solve the situation. I let go of the idea that the change in them was up to me. My job was just to know the truth, be guided, and do what is loving for this person in front of me. It makes a remarkable difference. If only I had known this earlier. My whole life may have been different.

There is an amazing power at work here. It is the value of having a teacher. I so could not have come to this without Greg's help. I thought I had little to offer from my experience to the discussion about the conflict of wills. I was blind to my misunderstanding. I am grateful. And I am glad to review it now by writing about it. It is so easy for me to think it is up to me, instead of learning to do my part in God's plan for this situation.

Paula Fraser

Since my daughter graduated from University a year ago with a degree, she has only been able to find a minimum-wage paying job. For the last year she has complained about her job whenever we have spoken on the phone.

Her magic thought is "When I get a better paying job in my field, I will be happy." My double wish of wanting to help her yet hurt her became very clear as I was doing this exercise. I am angry with her and will avoid calling her sometimes. I judge her as foolish for getting a degree instead of a college diploma, which was what she originally was going to do. She asked me what I thought, but then didn't listen to me.

I attack the magic thought by redirecting conversations to not talk about her employment problems. I also attack myself with guilt because I cannot send her much money to help her out, and I think, "If I had made better choices in my life, I would have more money to help her—what a lousy mother I am."

I recognize the error because I feel angry, distant from my daughter, and there is an underlying tension in the conversation. I don't feel loving and joyful when I get off the phone.

I now realize that my anger has been coming from an interpretation not a fact. My daughter's call for help is to be consoled and I have not done this due to my anger.

So on my next chat with my daughter I need to let go of my anger and really turn to the Holy Spirit to guide this conversation.

The thing that has really struck me is that if I am not joyous I am responding with my own interpretations and not facts.

Postscript: Now having recognized my anger, I have been able to accept my daughter's choices, love her where she is at, and not blame myself and guilt myself for being a lousy mother.

CIRCLE MAILBOX

The following is feedback from Greg's article in A Better Way #121, entitled "Unloosening the Chains of Time: The Practice of Letting Go of the Previous Hour and Blessing the Hour to Come."

Hi, my name is Patty Fletcher, and I have just read your article in *A Better Way* called "Unloosening the Chains of Time: The Practice of Letting Go of the Previous Hour and Blessing the Hour to Come." I truly enjoyed it. I am usually the bedraggled person you describe in your article. Reading that article, I have truly been inspired to finally read *A Course In Miracles*.

I have been exposed to the Course through various newsletters and other sources, and even attended a class at a Unity Church member's house about it, but never was ready or willing to make a commitment, but now I am.

I wanted to let you know that your article has also inspired me to start making some serious changes in my life as to how I live my daily life. Thanks so much for taking the time to write it and share it with others.

— Peggy Fletcher

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I find your idea of an hourly practice beautiful and very helpful. It goes with the basic aim of the Course, which is “removing the blocks to the awareness of love’s presence.” Any time I let gratitude and trust swell up in my heart, more “blocks” melt away. Letting go of past upsets always makes room for awareness of Love, too, so this idea of releasing the burden of every passing hour is delightful. Thanks a lot.

— *Joan Bachmann*