

CHAPTER
2

Developing a Mindful Ego
The Power of
Emotional Intelligence

Steve Peterson

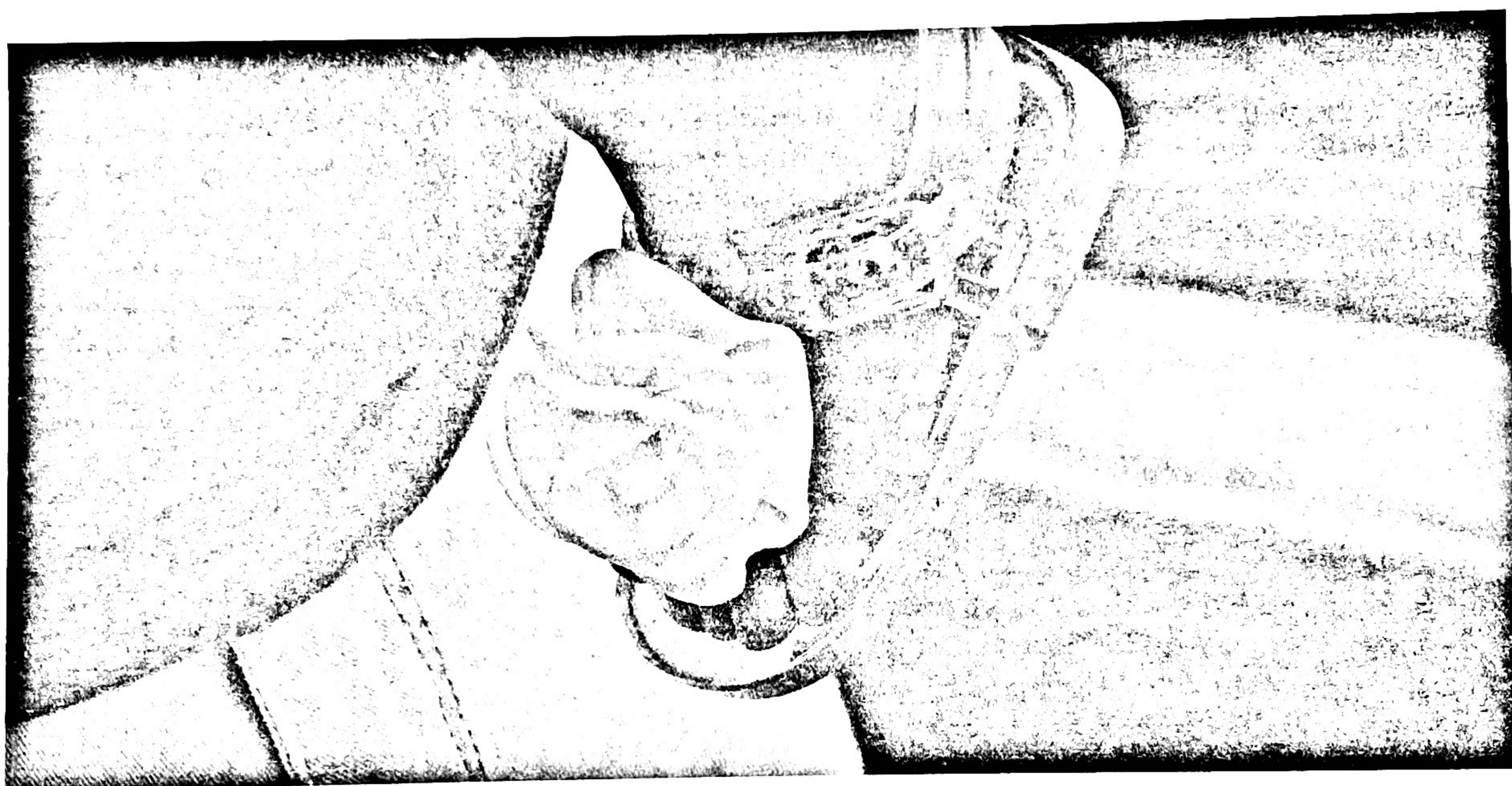


Photo courtesy of Maria Napoli

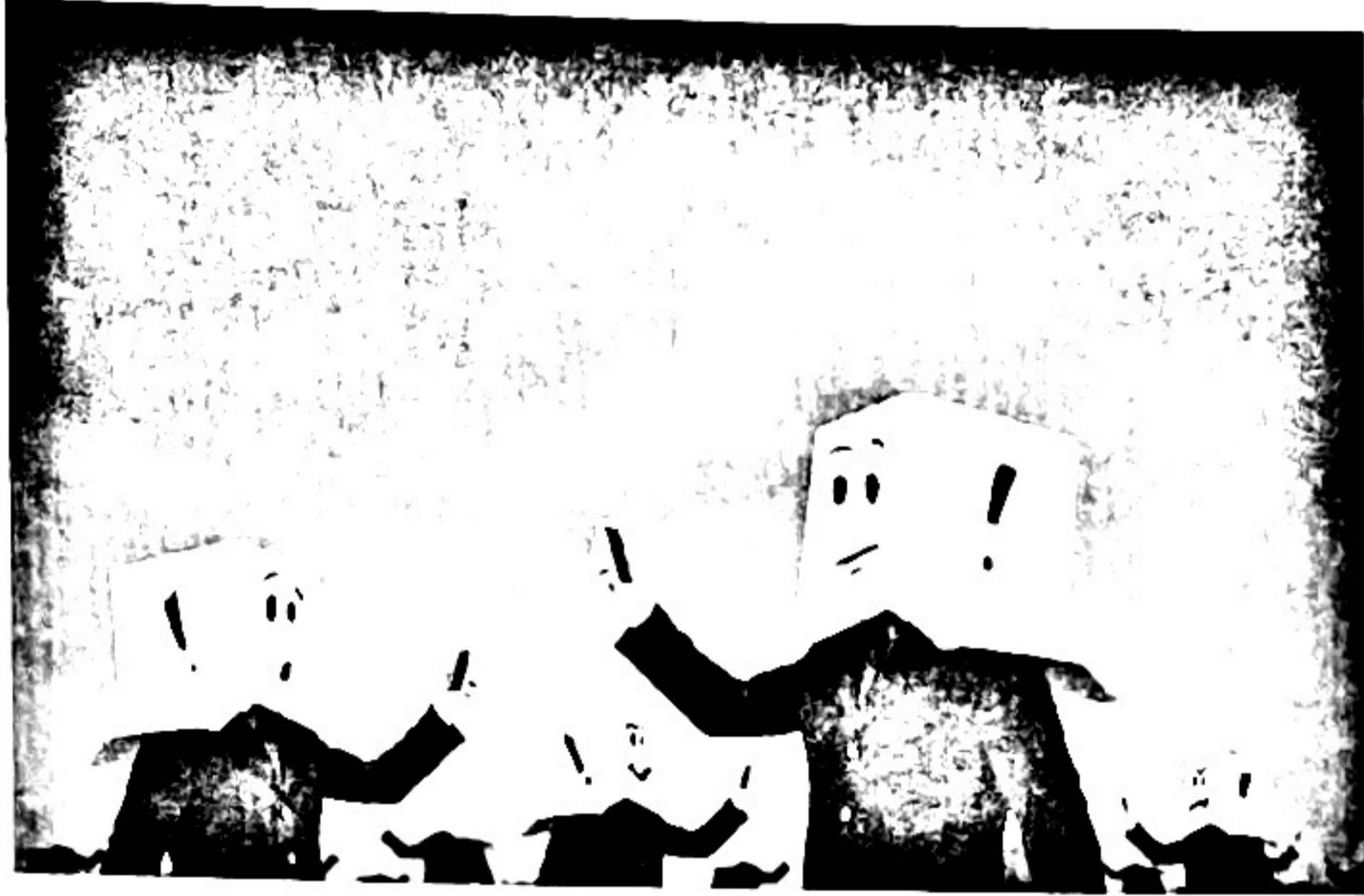
*There is no greater gift than to be loved
Receiving love naturally opens the door to giving love
How beautiful life can be*

Maria Napoli

"At best, IQ contributes about 20% to the factors that determine life success, which leaves 80% to other forces: forces grouped as emotional intelligence."

—Daniel Goleman¹

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There is often a negative social connotation associated with the word ego.

"Well THAT person sure does have a big ego!"

"Walk behind him because his EGO has to fit through the door first!"

We tend to associate ego with a personal superiority complex or inflated sense of self-esteem. There is a sense of judgment that we often pass onto the reference of some-

one's ego and compartmentalize that judgment into a place that we do not necessarily want to visit. We may label it as an unpleasant personality trait and disassociate ourselves from that person. Often overlooked is the presence of low or undeveloped ego strength, which may result in a lack of confidence in one's personality, thinking and motive in life; herein lies the possibility for long-term self-esteem issues, depression, and failure to connect and develop positive and healthy relationships.

It is unfortunate that the term *ego* has been misrepresented, and its true personal development value underestimated. Its role in our overall health and mental well-being is often seriously underrepresented. It is important that ego development be seen for what its true purpose is and that it is understood that one is not born with their ego intact: it is a learned and developed characteristic of the psyche that can be easily modified and brought into a healthy state of being.

How do we define ego? Ego is the organized mediator between the person and their perception of, and adaptation to, reality. The ego is responsible for reality testing and one's sense of personal identity.² The ego is molded and groomed by our emotional responses (tacit and explicit) to social-environmental events we are exposed to. I like to think of it as the psychological coping mechanism to situations and events that manifests itself as a physiological reaction. Most often at the root of an unhealthy ego (unusually high or excessively low) are unresolved emotional issues.³

Photo courtesy of Maria Napoli



Let's dial in on the ego, understand how it is developed, respect its role in our daily lives, and learn how to align it for health and happiness. Take a moment and follow this story.

Baby John is born. Aside from his basic reflexive capabilities such as breathing, most of his needs are met by his caretakers. He does not have any filters of what is good or bad; he only knows what he wants when he wants it. If his needs are successfully met, John learns that the world is a safe place. As he gets a bit older, he navigates away from his caretakers and experiments with meeting his own needs, feeding himself, feeling a sense of accomplishment when

completing a puzzle, and receiving a loving hug when he kisses his caretaker.) What is happening to John is the development of emotional intelligence. He is learning how to negotiate his environment and respond to or react to experiences. The most significant factor here is how John's experiences move him toward a healthy ego development through receiving consistent positive feedback and reinforcement throughout his developing years. As a result of these positive responses, John is able to deal with both negative and positive emotions, thoughts and experiences. He has developed good Emotional Intelligence.

On the other hand, if John's experiences have been inconsistent, negative, and worst of all, abusive or negligent, his ability to manage his emotions, thoughts, and experiences will most likely be erratic and reactive.

Let's look at a few examples throughout different stages of the lifespan of how the disconnect between psychological coping and physiological reaction (an unhealthy ego) can play a *part* in certain behaviors.

- Bullying: Outward harassment and belittling of another denoting repressed feelings of insecurity and lack of a healthy interactive social acceptance.⁴
- Abusive relationships: Anger and physical/emotional torment stemming from lack of personal control and failure in nurturing past relationships. On the part of the victim, blind acceptance and making excuses because of low self-esteem, feelings of guilt and fear of being alone.⁵
- Elderly depression: Feelings of loneliness and lack of self-worth because of personal social changes and fear of death.⁶

The manifestation of an unhealthy ego arises when our emotions direct and manipulate its ability to provide a healthy response.

For one's health and wellness, it is important to redefine the social construct of ego and begin developing it into a *mindful ego*. Developing a mindful ego is accomplished by harnessing our emotions in a responsive, not reactive, way.

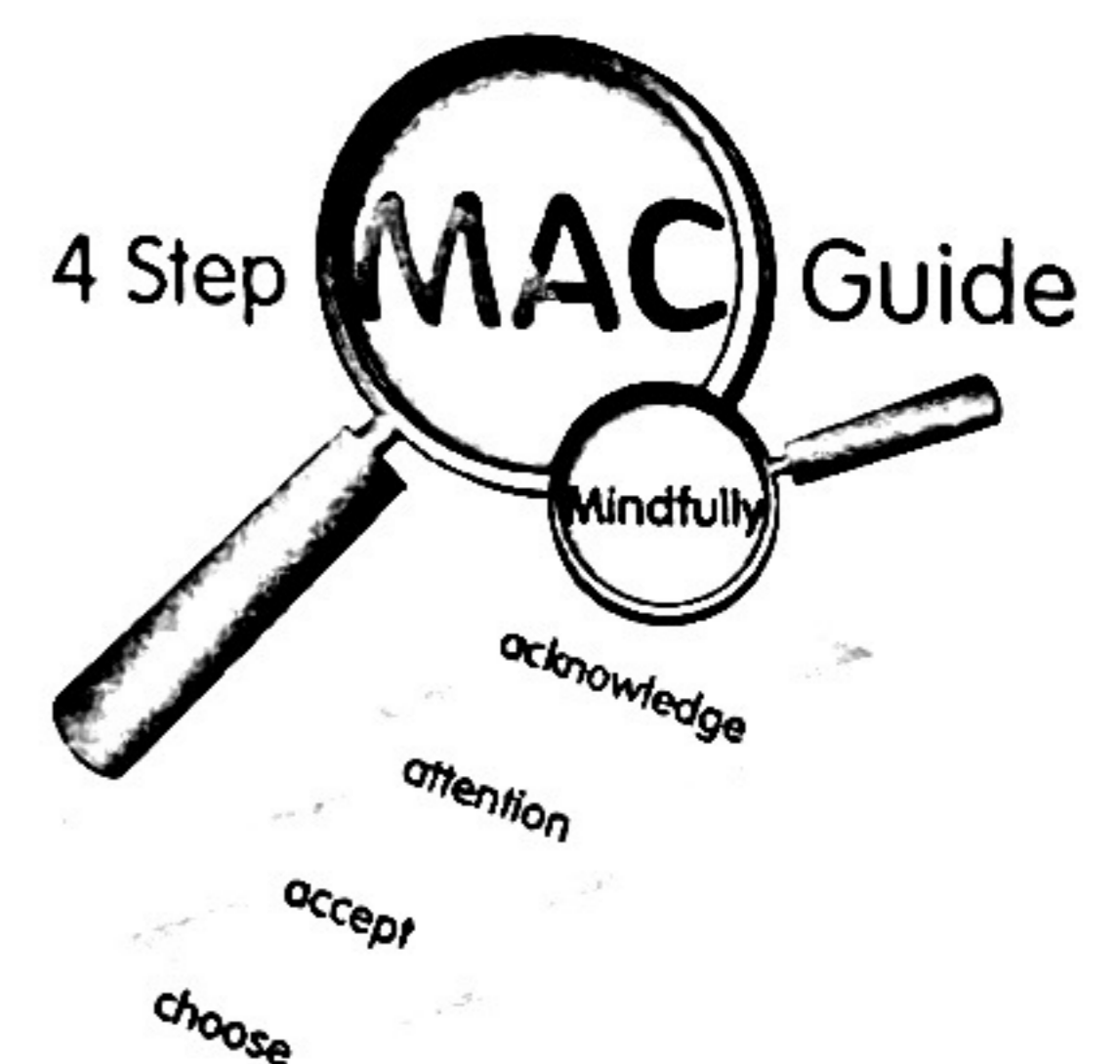
ACTIVITY: EGO IDENTIFICATION

"The ultimate aim of the ego is not to see something, but to be something."

—Muhammad Iqbal⁷

Select three people you feel possess an unhealthy ego. Perhaps one of those people is you.

Describe the way they react in certain situations and then identify what you feel is the ego-driven root cause of these reactions. Follow the 4 Step MAC Guide to assist you in harnessing harmony in how you are better able to respond to your experiences versus reacting to them.



Person #1: _____

How they react	Ego-driven root cause

Person #2: _____

How they react	Ego-driven root cause

Person #3: _____

How they react	Ego-driven root cause

What Is a Mindful Ego?

A mindful ego employs the strategies of mindfulness to restructure the emotional impact on our ego. It essentially requires the employment of basic tenets of mindfulness in our daily lives to affect our

psychological coping mechanisms; hence, resulting in a proactive, positive response to potential stressors and perceptions to reality that ultimately elicits our responses toward ourselves and others. Be genuine and honest with yourself. Only then can you be genuine and honest with others. Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is a practice that has been employed for over the past two decades to assist healthy individuals improve their coping abilities with the stresses of daily life.⁸ Mindful awareness is neither esoteric nor religious in nature; rather it is a “dispassionate, nonevaluative

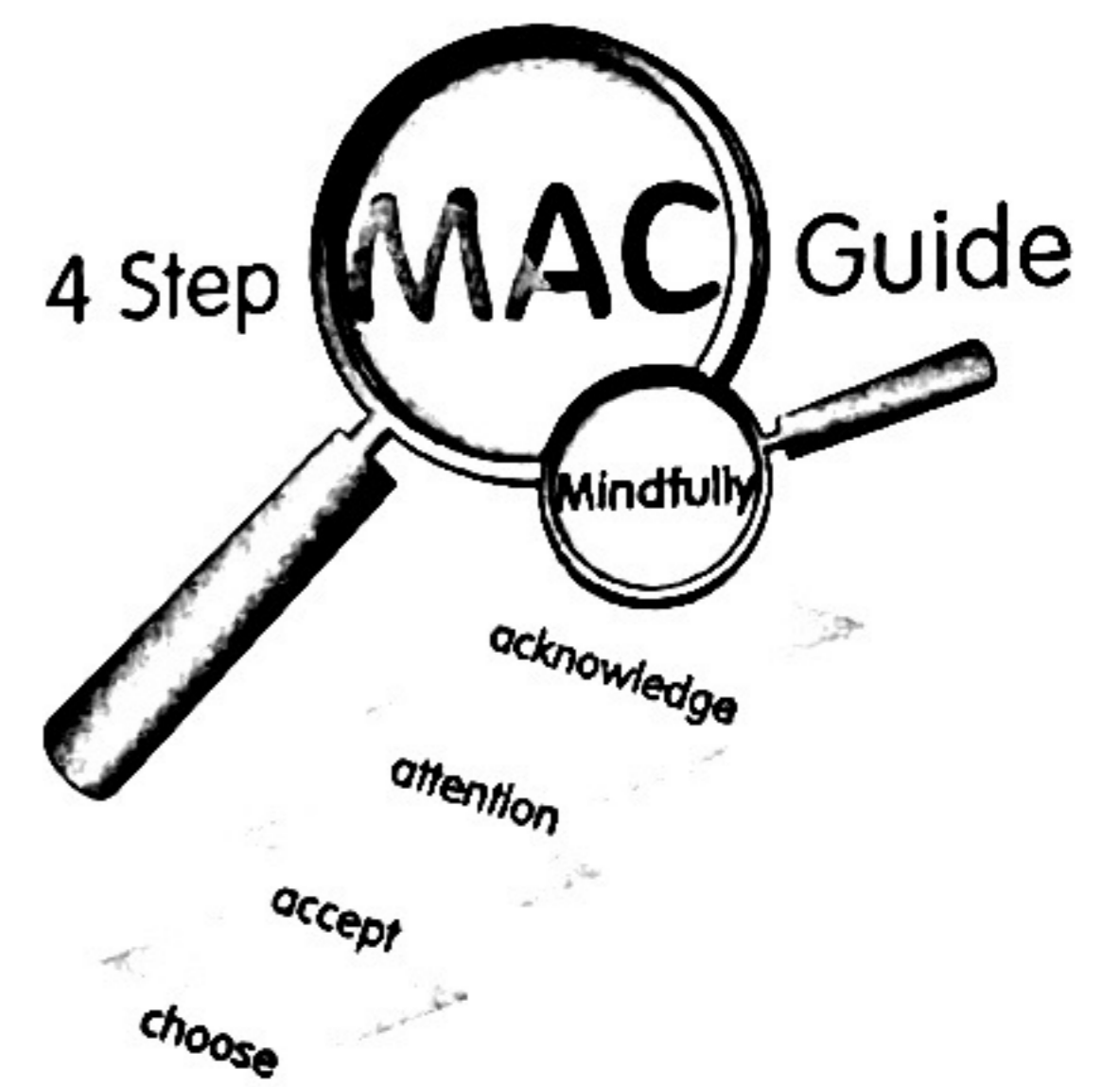


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and sustained moment-to-moment awareness”⁹ of a perceived mental state. It is nondeliberative and pulls one away from the daily “autopilot” of social-behavioral interaction. For the individual, a mindful ego affords a more accurate perception of one’s own mental responses to stimuli (both internal and external) and leads to a more prominent sense of control.

Put into practice, every day and with everybody, these thirteen basic tenets:

- Be in the here and now. Not yesterday. Not tomorrow.
- Practice nonjudgmental acceptance. Of yourself. And others.
- Pay attention. To the small, unexciting details of everyday experience and interaction.
- Have a clear conscience. It’s over. Move on.
- If you are feeling depressed, you are living in the past. If you are anxious, you are living in the future. If you are at peace, you are living in the present.
- Focus all of your attention in the present moment.
- Have clarity and focus in your immediate task at hand. Try not to multitask.
- Avoid vanity in yourself and criticism of others.
- Laugh and cry and dance and mope around as if no one cares.
- Love unconditionally.
- Forgive without looking back. Yourself and others.
- Minimize your expectations of others. Appreciate worth for worth sake.



It can be argued that a high level of self-esteem (positive ego) presents a greater level of personal health and efficaciousness than a disproportionately low level of self-esteem. But all too often either spectrum of self-esteem remains untethered by a level of mindfulness. Individuals that practice and present an elevated level of mindfulness possess an elevated level of self-esteem that is secure rather than fragile.¹⁰ Fragile levels of self-esteem are indicated by unusually high or excessively low egos, as they are directed by a lack of emotional control.

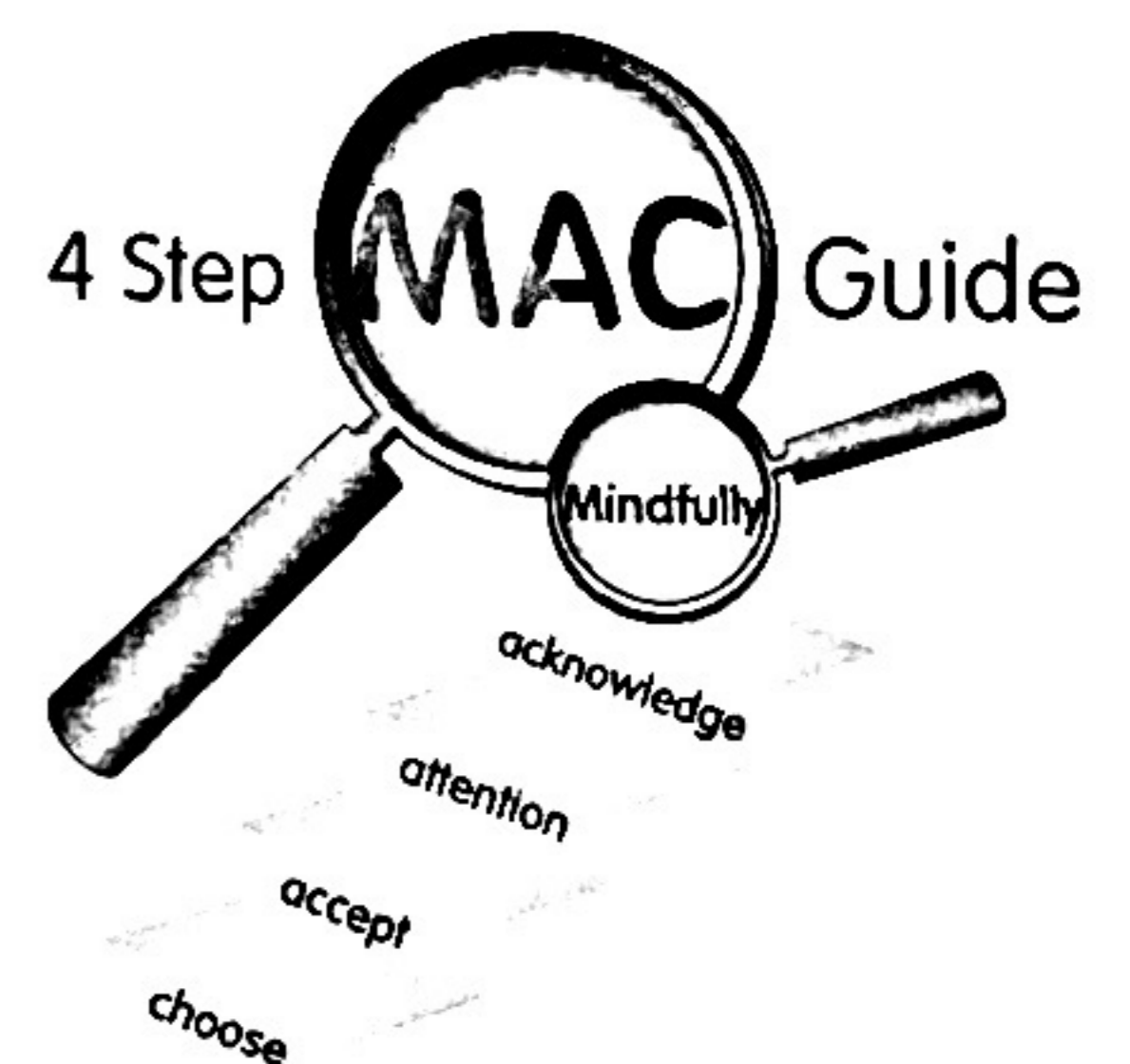
A mindful ego puts oneself *first* in the moment of personal solitude, yet affords others undivided and nonjudgmental attention *first* when in their company, a disciplined level of intrinsic and extrinsic control and so easy to accomplish!

How Do I Develop My Mindful Ego?

This is very simple. You develop your mindful ego by harnessing your *emotional intelligence!*

Yes, you have an emotional intelligence. It has never been measured. You can’t take a standardized test to assign a numerical value to it and compare it to a standard statistical deviation. It won’t get you into Harvard University if you do poorly on your SATs.

There are seven tools used to measure the human intelligence quotient (IQ), or more recently referred to as the “deviation IQ.” The Wechsler Intelligence Scales, Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, Woodcock-Johnson Test of





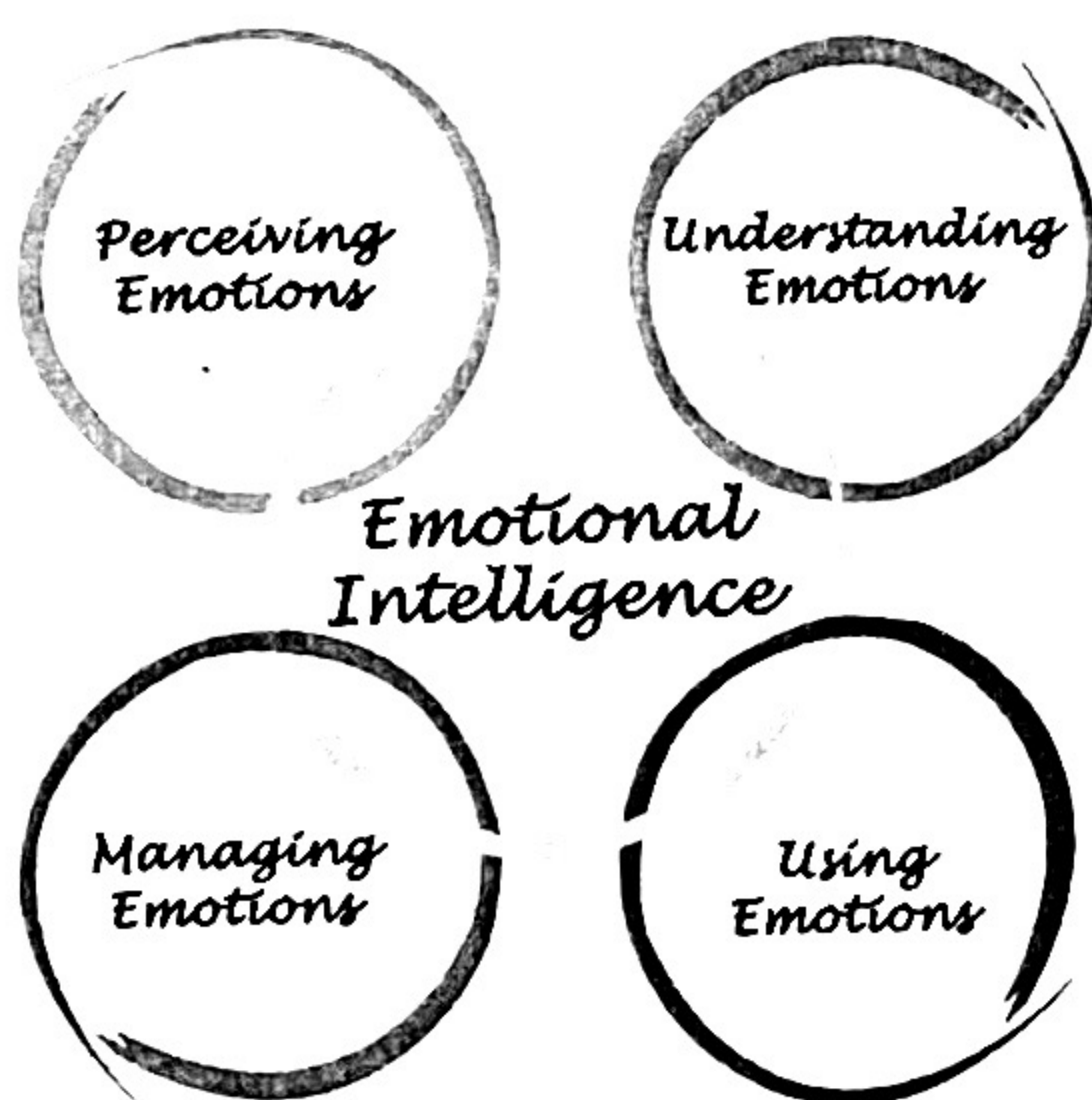
Cognitive Abilities, Kaufman Tests, Cognitive Assessment System, Differential Ability Scales and the Reynolds Intellectual Ability Scales. It is commonly held that intelligence quotient tests administered at an early age are generally a reliable predictor of lifelong IQ scores.¹¹

Although subject to scrutiny and academic challenge, let's just hold onto that broad brushstroke statement for a moment.

If it is safe to assume that most of us maintain a relatively stable level of measurable intelligence throughout the course of our lives; that means we cannot radically change our level of intelligence simply by waking up one Thursday morning, deciding we want a new IQ, and start doing something about it, and BOOM! by Sunday we are more intelligent! Wouldn't that be nice! Sorry, this is not going to happen. What we CAN change in the matter of a few days is our emotional intelligence (often referred to as EI or EQ—emotion quotient).

Emotional intelligence is, by standardized testing modalities, an immeasurable and personally-developed cognitive ability to evaluate, control, and perceive emotions. Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer defined emotional intelligence as “a subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.”¹²

The very nature of a lack of a standard measurable medium indicates that emotional intelligence is a fluid cognitive construct that is adaptive, can be developed, and can be changed over time, unlike the conventionally-held position of the intelligent quotient. We have the ability and capability to strengthen our emotional intelligence and, in the process, develop a healthy mindful ego!



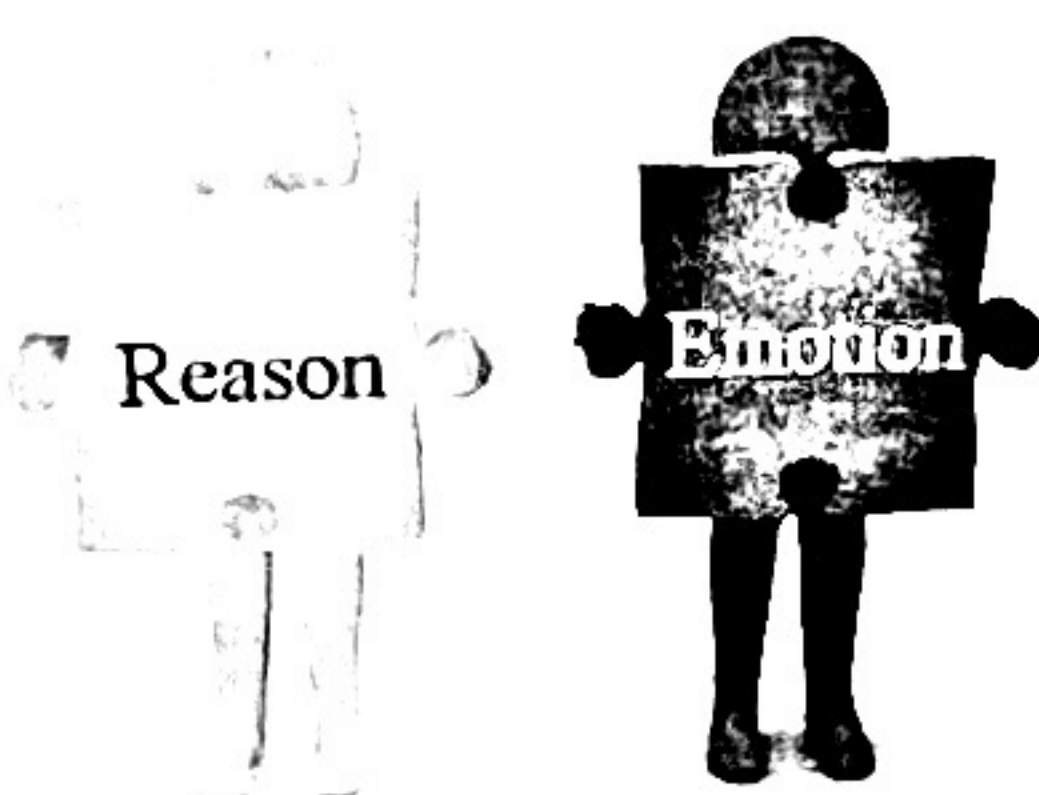
There is a model, as proposed by Salovey and Mayer, that identifies four factors of emotional intelligence: perceiving emotions, reasoning with emotions, understanding emotions, and managing emotions.¹²

Perceiving emotions is the first step in understanding and processing emotions. Here we are referring to perception not only of others, but also of our own emotions. This begins by picking up on nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, and personal communicating mannerisms.

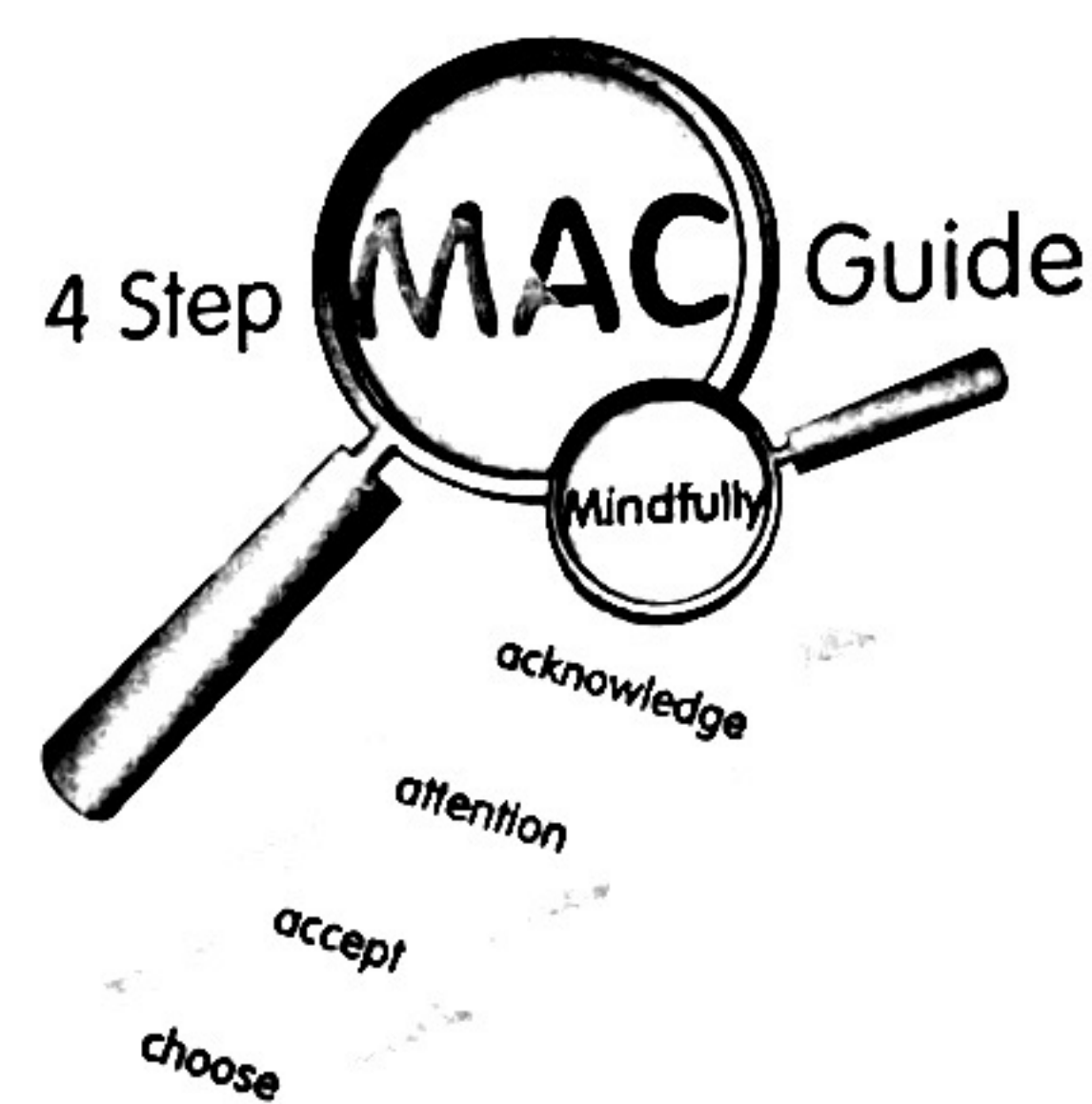
Remember, emotional perception is just as applicable to ourselves when we are attempting to mindfully monitor our present experience, so don't be afraid to glance in a mirror, and definitely pay attention to your own reflection in public spaces. You can learn just as much by paying attention to the subtleties of yourself just as you can in others.

Mindfulness begins with you. Only after you can be comfortably mindful with yourself can you be effectively mindful toward others.

Reasoning with emotions is, in effect, prioritizing what we pay attention to. We tend to respond to things that grab our emotional attention. The key is to allow ourselves to *respond to*



instead of *react to* those events regardless of the positive or negative emotion that we are experiencing. Understanding that responding to emotions instead of reacting is of paramount importance in practicing mindfulness. Remember, all of our emotions are important; it is how we are mindful in expressing them that makes a difference. It is a fundamental premise of stress management. Therefore, when encountering a potentially stressful event, ask yourself:



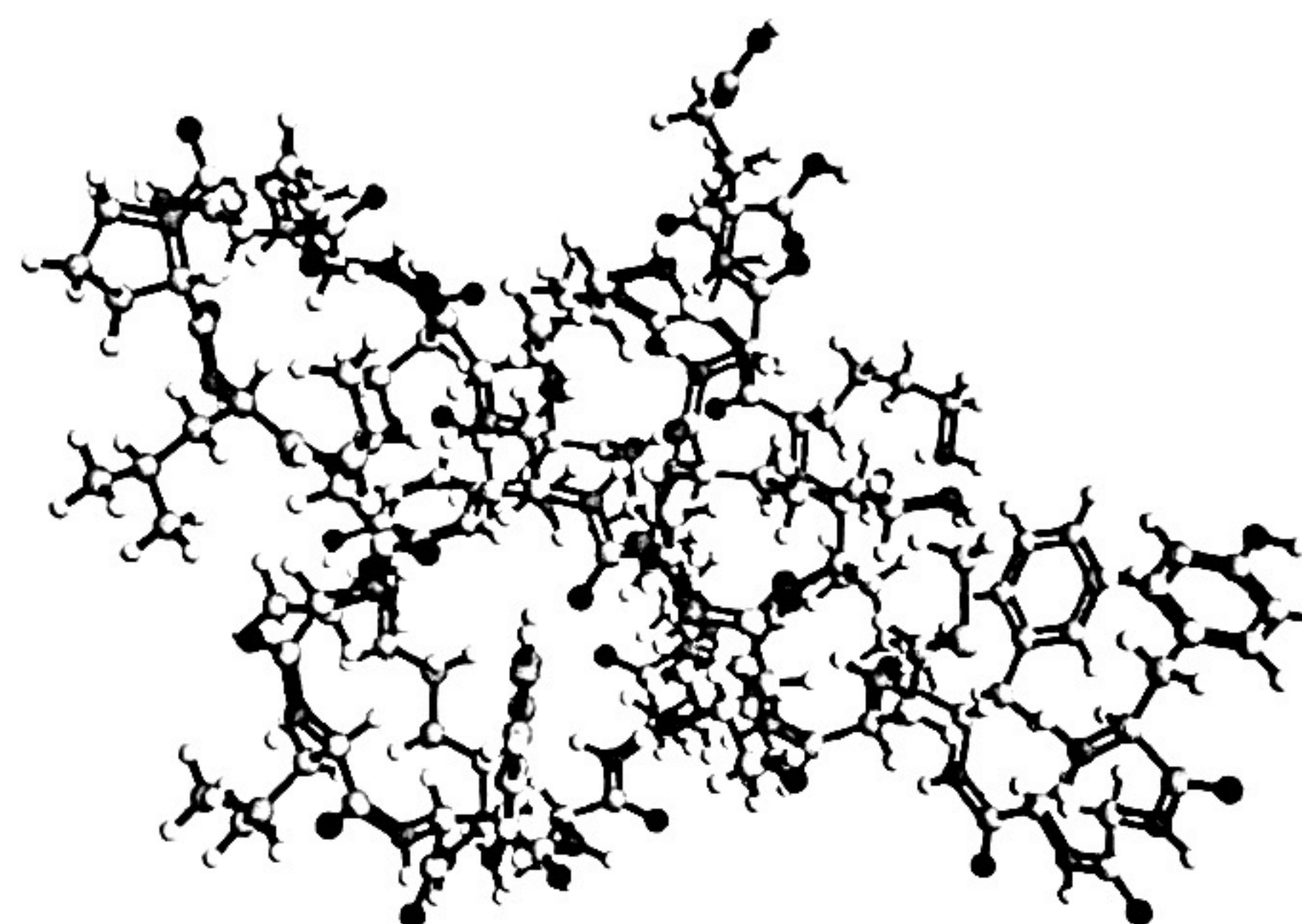
“Am I responding to the stressor or reacting to it?”

Understanding emotions calls upon a mindful interpretation of what is really occurring whether within yourself or when interacting with someone else. When someone has experienced a positive, happy, or exciting event, they tend to immediately want to share that with others. If you were to ask them why they are so happy, they can often give you an immediate and concise answer. Positive emotions tend to remove judgmental opinions and frequently make people very approachable, allowing for clear and concise thought processes. There are two chemicals responsible for this response: endorphins and dopamine.



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Endorphins are neurotransmitters that act upon the opiate receptors in the brain to reduce our perception of pain and cause a “euphoric” emotional state.¹³

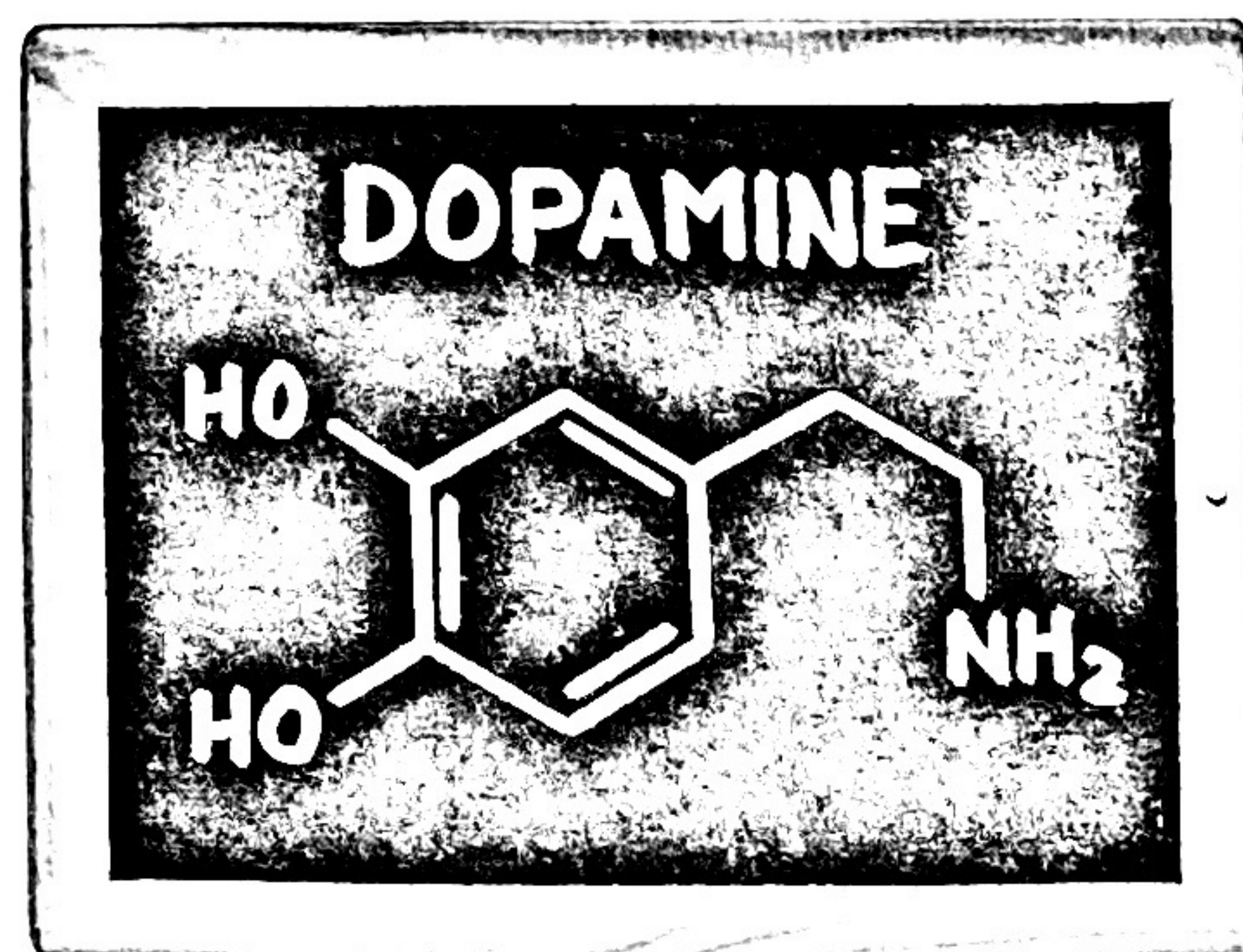


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Dopamine is both a hormone (released when the body is in parasympathetic mode) and a neurotransmitter. Dopamine provides us with a feeling of enjoyment and acts as a motivator to continue to pursue said feelings of enjoyment.¹⁴

By contrast, it is incredibly difficult to “pin down” exactly what the root cause is of negative emotion or anger. For example, if a supervisor exhibits anger or hostility toward a subordinate, can you explain why simply by observing?

Compare that to someone who is holding a soft, snuggling puppy. They have a big smile on their face and their eyes are lit up. By simply observing can you explain why that person is happy? Precisely. On the other hand when trying to answer why the supervisor is demonstrating anger/hostility, we are unable to identify the root cause because there are many possibilities:



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The subordinate may be a poor worker and dropped an expensive piece of equipment.

Or the supervisor received a speeding ticket on the way in to work that morning.

Or the supervisor is having a fight with his/her significant other.

Or the supervisor had their vehicle stolen the night before.

Or it could be this.

Or it could be that.

Or the supervisor could just be a mean-spirited person.

There are a myriad of possibilities.

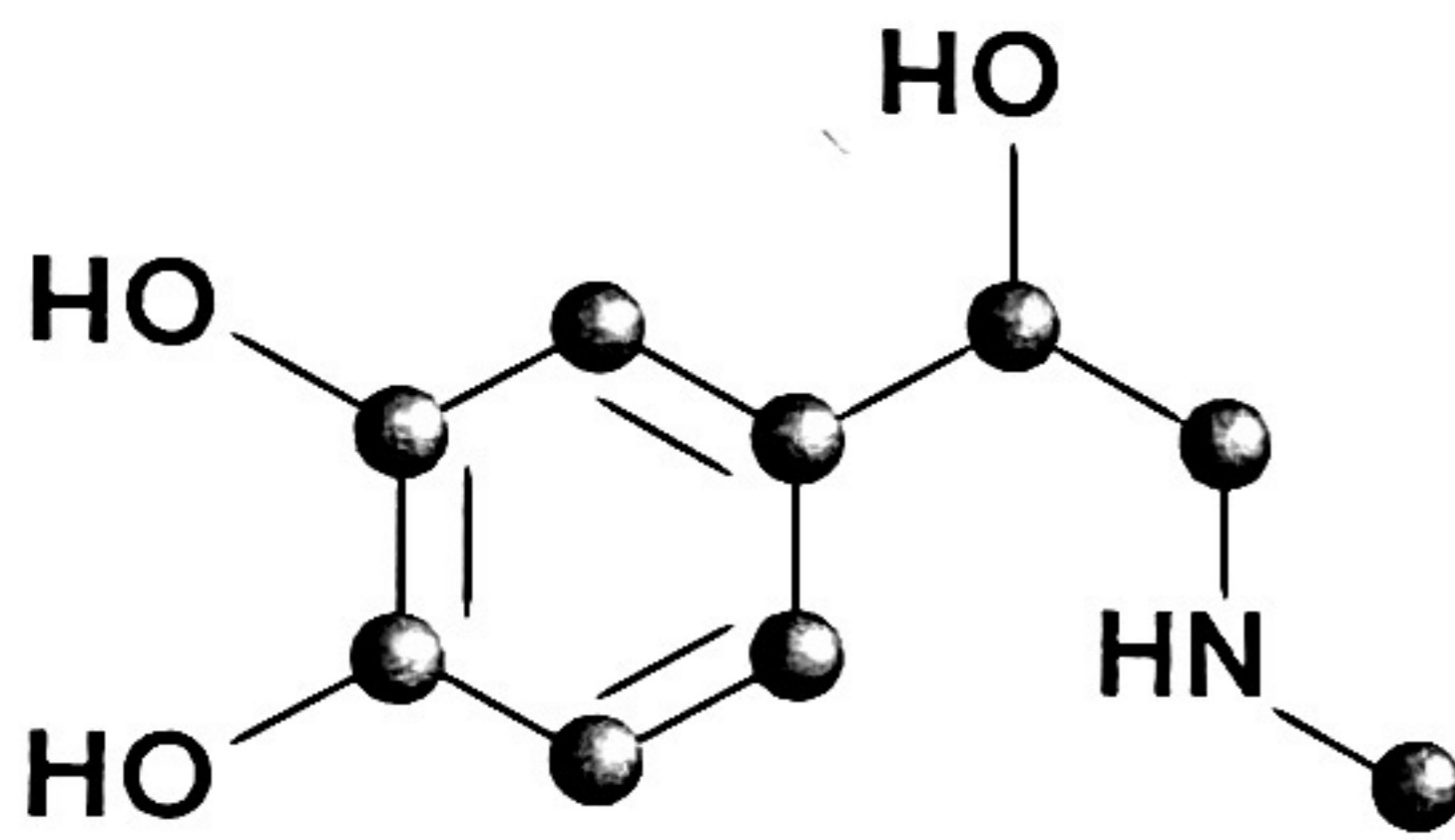
See what I am getting at? Positive emotions are often identifiable and easy to perceive, reason with, and understand, where negative emotions are often not.

Negative emotions often elicit anxiety, which may inhibit our inability to cognitively discern these emotions. Anxiety and stressful events put our bodies in a reactive mode and causes the release of other neurotransmitters, adrenaline, and cortisol. During these periods we may become unapproachable, lack those clear and concise thought processes, and react in a very judgmental and blaming way. All mindfulness is “out the window” at this point.



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Epinephrine

The two chemicals responsible for this phenomenon are epinephrine and cortisol.

Epinephrine (known as adrenaline) also carries the role of hormone and neurotransmitter. Unlike dopamine, epinephrine keeps the body in the “fight or flight response.” This is the sympathetic response mode of self-preservation during times of physiological duress.¹⁵

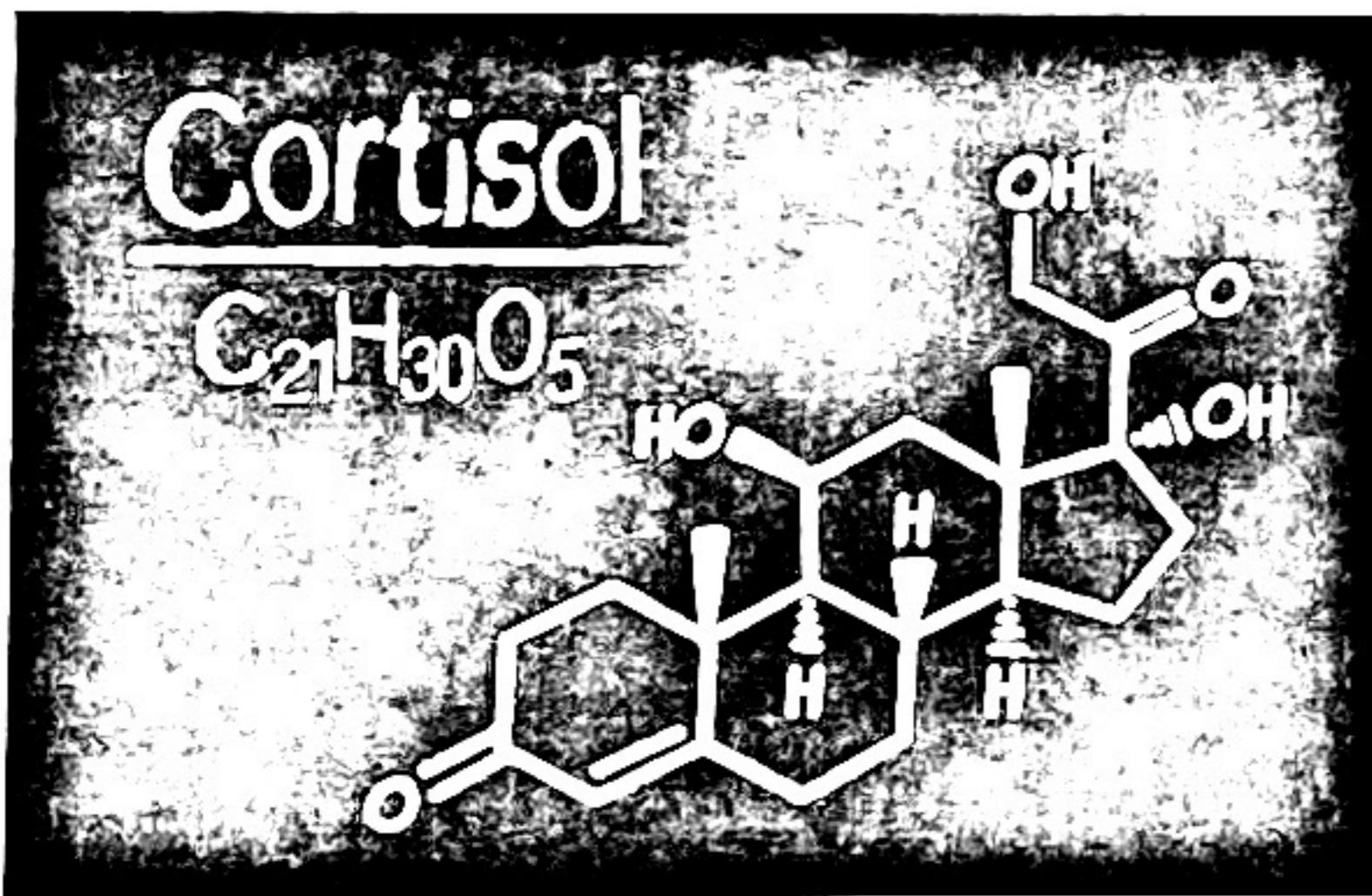
Cortisol is a hormone that acts as the body’s natural “anti-inflammatory” chemical. Cortisol is a fast-acting chemical that is released in preparation for tissue damage and in response to a physical trauma.¹⁶ There is a lesson to be learned from this: positive emotions and negative emotions cannot function at the same time. The body cannot be in sympathetic mode and parasympathetic modes at the same time. The hormones and neurotransmitters mentioned previously fundamentally act to balance the body, which means the two groups operate independently of each other.

The key to discerning the two is having a mindful approach to responding...not reacting...to emotions. Yours. And others.

The final component of the model is managing emotions.

This is perhaps the crux of emotional intelligence. It is important to have a mindful approach to perception, reasoning, and understanding of emotions in order to effectively manage your response to them. In the regulation of one’s own response and determining the appropriate response, not reaction, to what is often overlooked is our fundamental desire to multi-task, because we are often so busy. Mindfulness requires a strict absence of multi-tasking. One must be in the moment and pay strict attention to the emotion at hand, not focusing on anything else.

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Take a moment and practice your mindful ego on yourself. Invoke your emotional intelligence as a “self-diagnostic” exercise.

Do this by backing into the question of whether you are happy or not.

Ask yourself responsive diagnostic questions.

- Am I feeling social?
- Are my thoughts clear?
- Can I clearly and concisely articulate what is making me feel what I’m feeling now?

If you can answer affirmatively, then you are in a positive state of emotion. You have mindfully recognized your own ego.

If you cannot, then you know what needs to change. Turn off the sympathetic reactive mode and put yourself into a parasympathetic response state of mind.

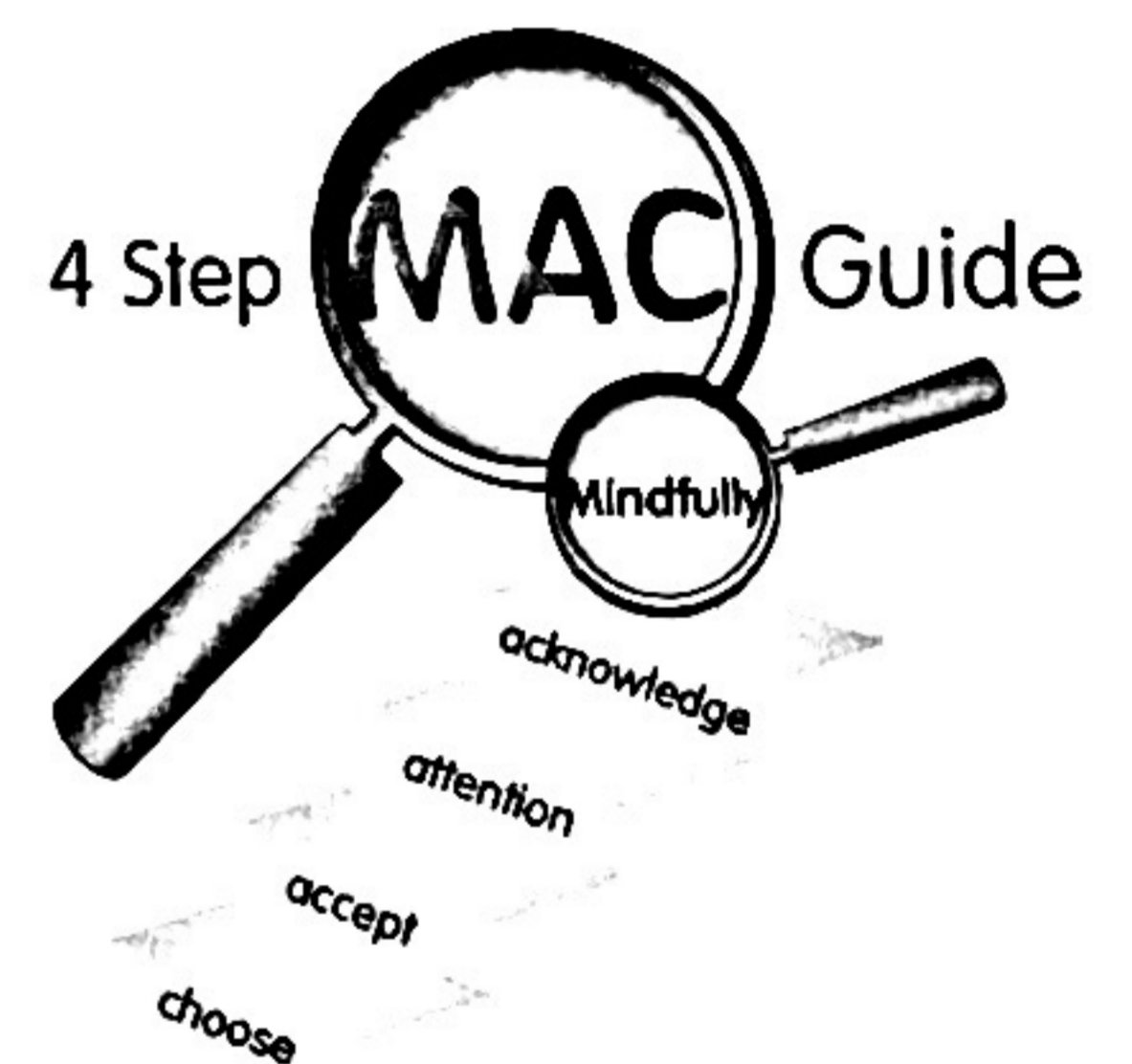
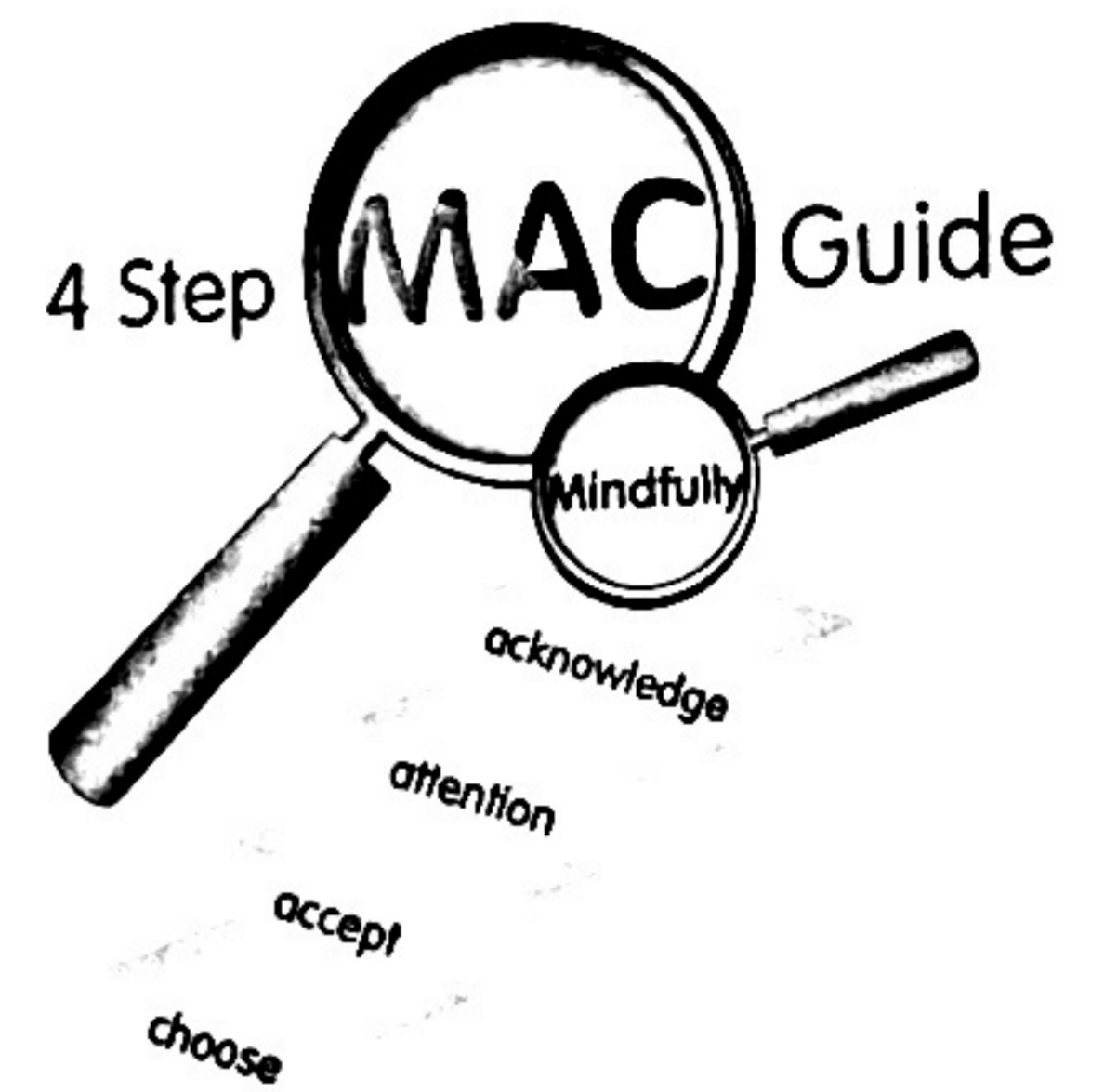
Mindfulness is growth. And growth is change. And change can be scary. It is scary because it is not something we are necessarily accustomed to and requires personal effort.

If you really think about it, change can be quite reactionary. Reaction often stems from an event or experience that did not play out the way we expected. It may have caused us some personal duress. It was a stressor. Or...in this particular case that I am trying to present to you...it is something that you have never thought about. It is new. It is uncharted waters.

Which means it might be scary for you. But that is all right. Because, as Jack Canfield once stated, “Everything you want is on the other side of fear.”

In order to effectively realize our mindful selves and embrace our emotional intelligence, we need to integrate that fear, not necessarily give power to that fear, but identify it as a source of emotional dissonance and make the mindful determination to manipulate it into a responsive emotional outcome; instead of allowing that fear to make us bitter, we are going to move into the fear and then let it go!

There is no shame in acknowledging that we have fear, negative emotions, and pain. The key is to accept them as very human experiences and be done with them, never allowing them to have power over our new-found emotional intelligence.



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Let's differentiate between the brain and the mind.

Everyone knows where their brain is. The brain has a fixed position in the body, can be removed, and examined. There is no doubt what the brain looks like; it is scientifically measurable and can be medically modified.

But where is the mind? What does it look like? Where is it? Can you hold it? Measure it?

Therein lies the greatest fascination and power of the mind. Unlike the brain that is fueled by blood at its core and electrical connections throughout the grey matter, the mind is a bit more ethereal and is fueled by experiences and interpretations and memories that guide the brain to carry out certain physiological functions.

The brain is composed of nerve cells and blood vessels. It is an organ, the center of the nervous system, and is responsible for coordinating movements and carrying out thoughts and expressing feelings.

The brain requires no input from us for it to carry out rudimentary and reflexive events such as breathing, heartbeat, and blinking.

The mind is a conscious collection of thoughts, experiences, emotions, and feelings. It is existential and the vehicle for daily experiential existence. The mind requires no input from the brain and relies solely on our psychological thought processes to function. This is where the ego resides.

The brain cannot "unlearn" how to carry out its physiological duties. Breathing. Blinking. Digestion. Only through a medical or biological event can the brain be crippled and no longer able to function. The brain does not take commands to breathe or blink.

But the mind. Ahhh...the mind. The mind CAN take commands to change its habits and behaviors because the mind is fueled by interpretations of experiences. And we have absolute control over whether we allow the mind to accept those interpretations as positive or negative. We have control over our egos. We can change them. We can nurture them; however, we cannot utilize our IQ to affect such change. We use the resounding power of our emotional intelligence. No machine or medical procedure can make a healthy, mindful ego. Harnessing and utilizing our emotional intelligence is the tool, a tool that we are all equipped with, regardless of what a standardized test told us our IQ was. Just like the mind and the brain are separate, so is IQ and EQ.

Your brain houses your IQ.

Your mind is your EQ.

Mindfulness versus BrainFULLness

"Pain of mind is worse than pain of body."

—Latin Proverb¹⁹

A mindful ego is ultimately about personal development, building confidence, self-growth, overall health, and wellness. In essence, a mindful ego and emotional intelligence equates to emotional resilience. Resilience is the ability to embrace the positive and discern the negative; the ability to identify what is negative and make the personal decision how it will impact you. Search for the positive and allow it to manifest within you for the good of not only yourself, but for others. It is the lens through which our mind perceives reality that, in turn, shapes our behaviors and perceptions of reality. It is not the reality itself that shapes us because that is merely a resilient, transient perception. Let mindfulness keep that lens free of smudges and dust.



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Imagine yourself walking across a hillside on a beautiful spring afternoon. It is perfectly warm weather, sun melting upon your skin just enough to balance the crisp breeze that is carrying the amazing scent of iris and lillies and daisies. Every step you take through the bright green carpet of wild grass lifts small scented seedlings that catch the slight breeze and dance effortlessly to their final resting point elsewhere along the hillside. You happen upon a lightly forested area and notice dandelions scattered beneath your feet. Sit down, lift a handful of dandelion seed bundles, and blow gently to release the Pods. They float all around you and dance over your shoulders, arms, and gently glide to the ground. Close your eyes, lean back into the sea of white and golden dandelion. Smell the scented air. Feel the warmth upon your skin. Lose yourself in the moment. Not a thought or a care in the world. This moment is yours. All yours.



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BOOM!

The sound of a gunshot in the distance. The lingering echo of something very wrong breaks the hillside silence. You instantly sit up, heart pounding. You feel the deafening thumping in your ears as blood is racing to your head.

What just occurred is an example of mindfulness versus (what I like to call) brainFULLness.

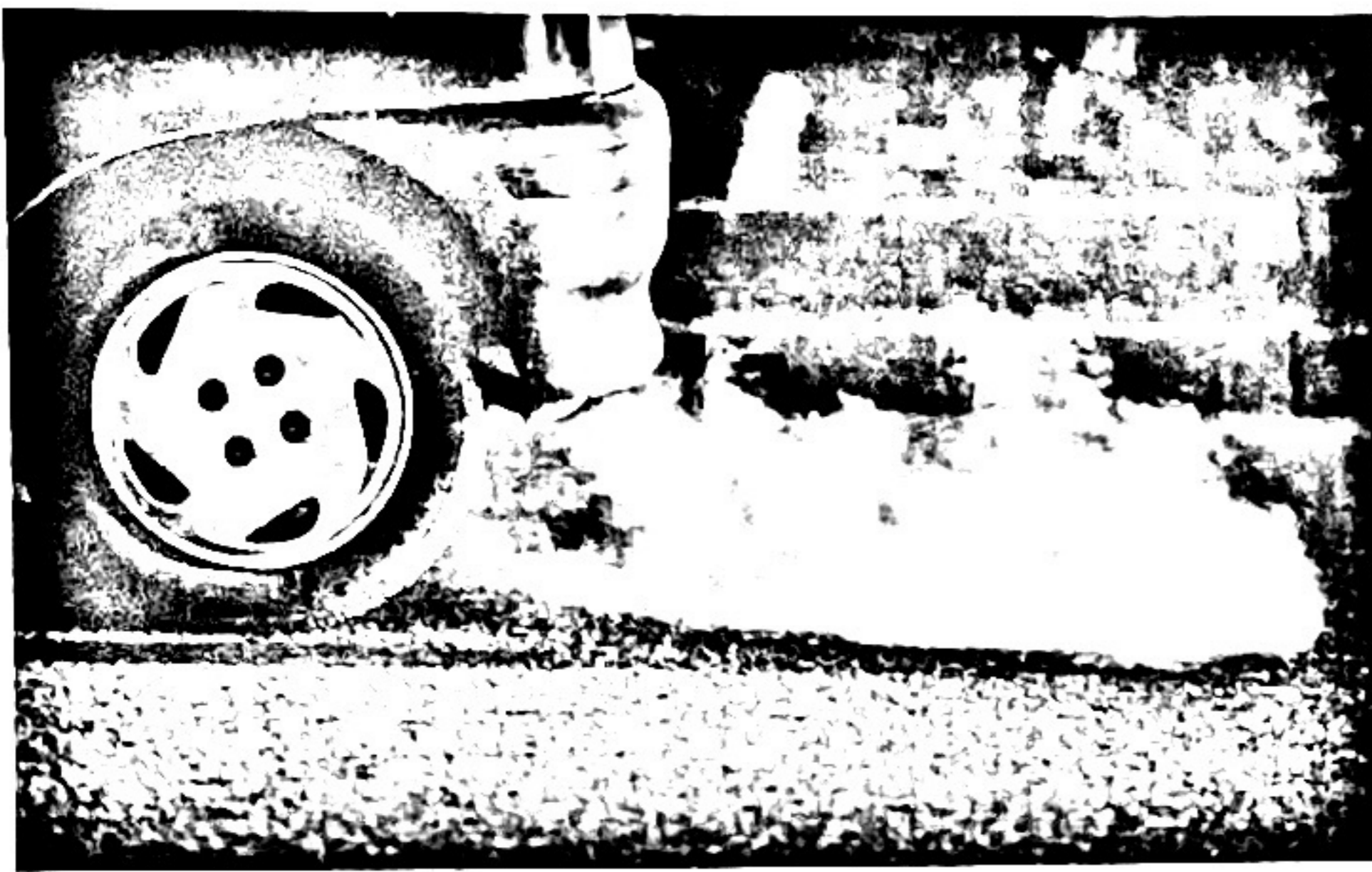
Mindfulness was the hillside experience. BrainFULLness was the instantaneous disengagement of the mindful experience and immediate reactionary state that occurred with the gunshot.

The mindful experience lasted 20, 30 minutes on that hillside. You were responding to your experience. The brainFULL experience will last as long as it takes to process the fear of the unknown, and react to your experience, having a physiological “fight or flight” reaction, run down the hill to safety. That brain-FULL experience will be the one thing you talk about amongst friends and social gatherings for the rest of your life. That gunshot in the distance is what you may carry with you whenever you think about that hillside experience. You may not talk about the “moment that was all yours.” You will remember and rehash the sound of the gunshot that ended your moment.

To further complicate the matter, every time you see that hillside, or another similar hillside, you may not remember the beauty of the flowers, the scents or the breeze or the dandelions. Your brain will rekindle that terrifying experience.

This is human nature. This is the construct of a lack of mindfulness.

The mind was lost in the moment on that hillside. And the brain was the reactionary response to the unknown; this is where emotional intelligence comes in.



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It wasn't a gunshot at all. It was me in my old car on the backside of that hill. The engine is in need of repair and it frequently backfires. It was the backfire of my car that you heard.

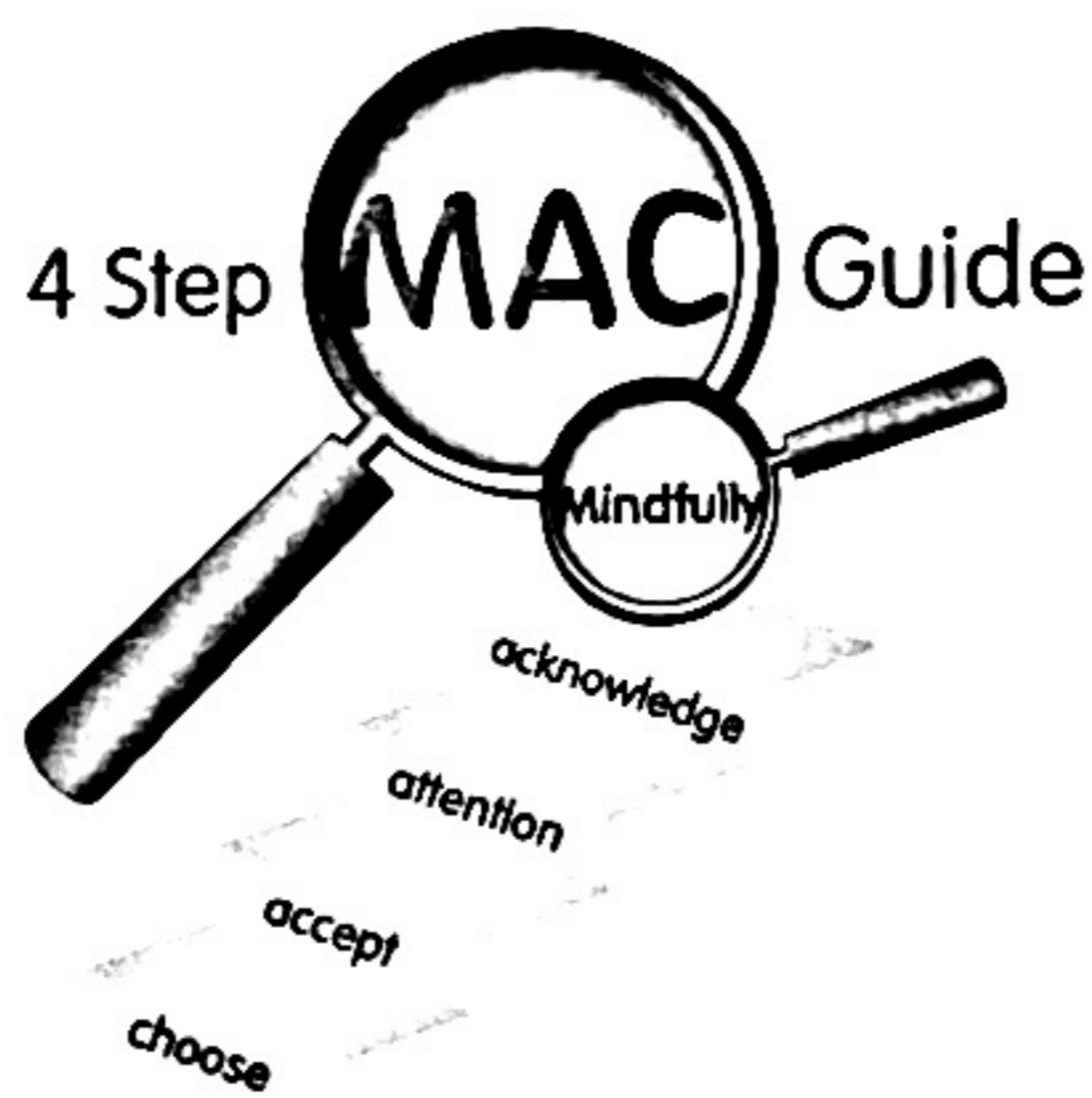
Having a mindful ego, and exercising one's emotional intelligence, would have prevented the destruction of the beautiful hillside experience.

By simply acknowledging that there is information out there that is unknown and allowing the ego to assume it had all of that information to draw a conclusion based on the brain's reaction, the healthy mindful experience was lost.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, it is possible to strengthen our emotional intelligence and develop our mindful egos. It requires practice, however. Allow me to share with you a very simple exercise to jumpstart your mindfulness and set the course for the construct of your new-found ego and emotional intelligence.

First, the stage needs to be set with some background on how effective this technique can be.

One Christmas I brought home a tiny Morkie puppy for my girlfriend. After many months of searching for this particular tiny breed of puppy and doing all of the homework to ensure that the puppy was provided a healthy living environment, two weeks before Christmas I handed Toby over to his new owner. You can imagine how her eyes lit up! I cannot explain to you, without choking up a little, how attached I became to that little guy. He contracted Parvo.



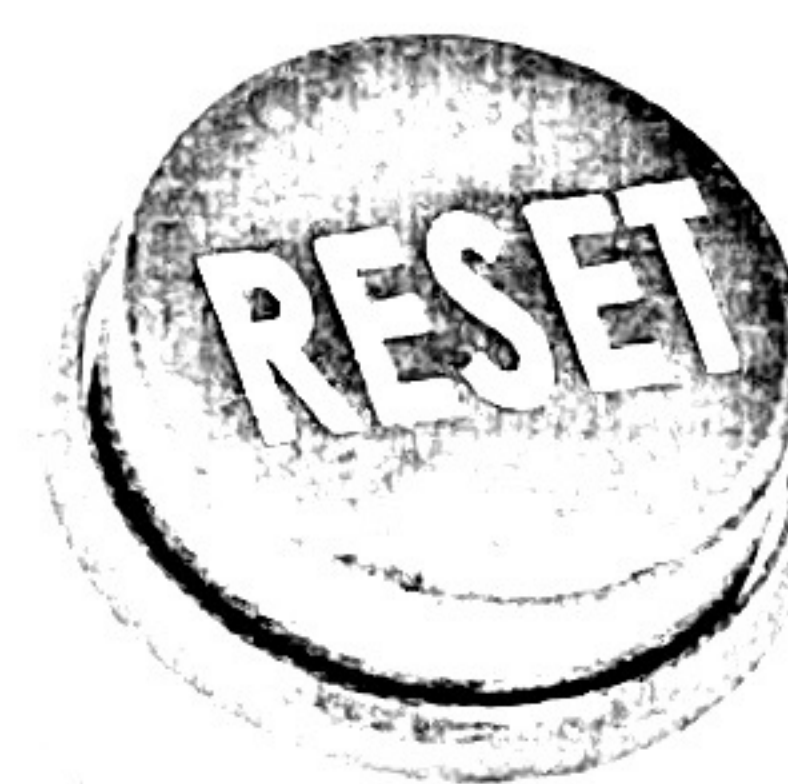
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This tiny little puppy was seen by a veterinarian, given medication, was under constant hydration therapy and spent his last week being fed wet food from a syringe. Toby died Christmas morning. In her hands.

I dreaded that next Christmas. My first thought was to avoid the holiday altogether and pretend it didn't exist. Instead, I controlled my emotions and put up a tree, and restrung the holiday lights around the outside of my house. It was Christmas as usual, but every time I walked into my living room, all I saw was that dreadful event that occurred a year ago in that very space. I was overcome with emotion and it overwhelmed me. My brain would NOT let it go! As much as I employed all of the strategies to respond to the virtual emotional "monster" standing in my face, I just could not separate my mind from my brain. For the first time in my mindful adult life, I felt myself crumbling and ill-equipped to respond. I was in full reaction mode. It was clearly the physical proximity to the "monster" that was the problem. So much so that it wouldn't allow the separation between mindfulness and brainFULLness. Something needed to change. I walked upstairs, went outside, and climbed atop my roof. No, don't go there. I wasn't going to do a swan-dive from two stories up.

I sat on my roof and looked around, and what I saw was the absence of anything Christmas. I couldn't see the lights around the edge of my house that greeted me every time I walked toward the front door. I couldn't smell the scent of pine needles as I walked in the house. I couldn't see the tree itself. As I sat on my roof, next to my A/C unit, I was alone. There was no "monster" up there. Instead there were the tops of trees that I had never seen, other rooftops, smoke billowing out of chimneys. There were no visual or sensory reminders for the brain to pick up on.

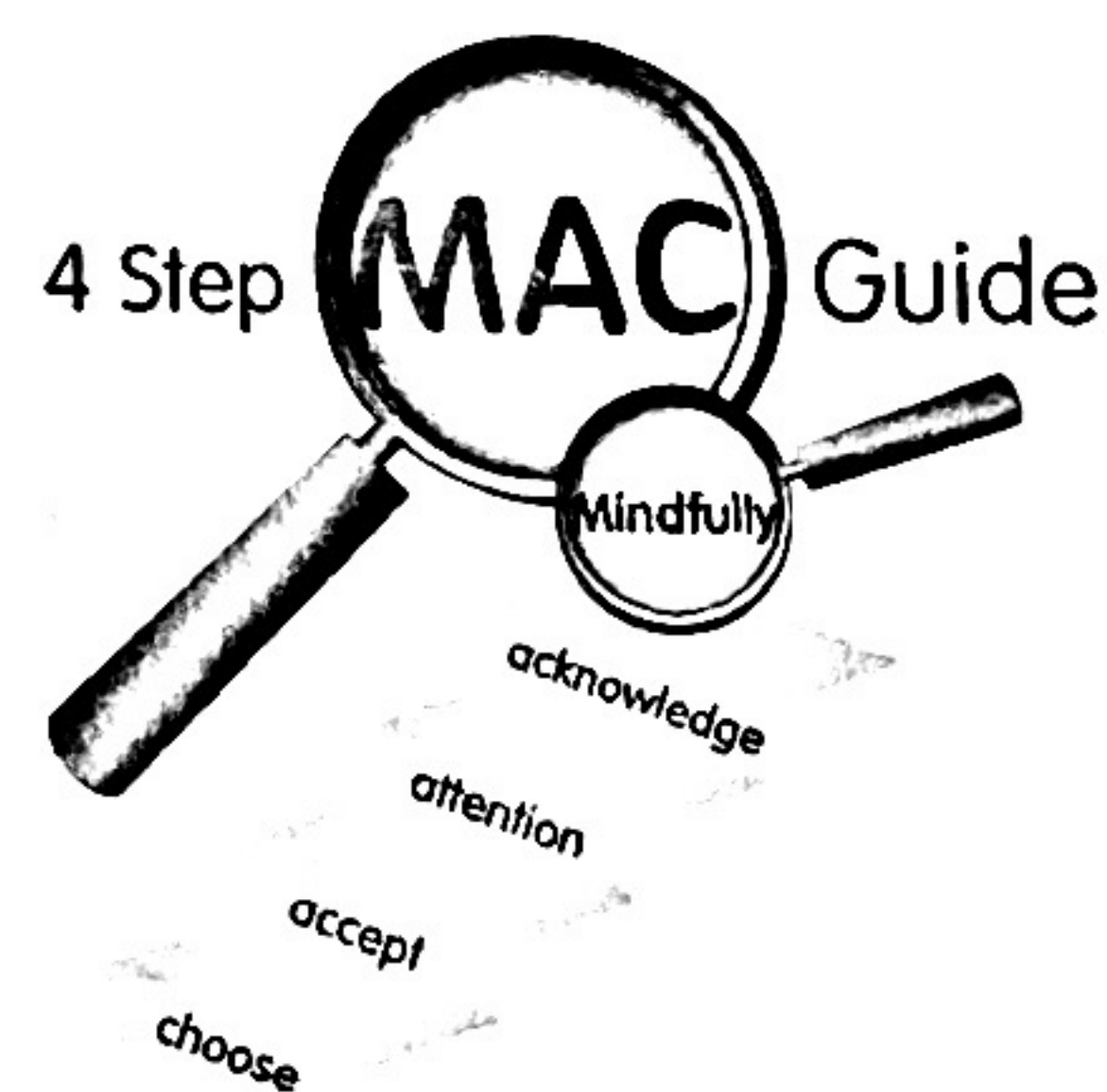
I changed the mindful venue. I pressed the "reset" button to mindfulness. Because the physical proximity to what was clouding the separation of mind and brain was changed, so was the brain's ability to function resulting in the ability of the mind to start functioning once again, mindfully functioning. Sometimes even the most well-trained level of emotional intelligence needs a change of venue to hit that "reset" button. It is a very simple exercise, and incredibly effective.



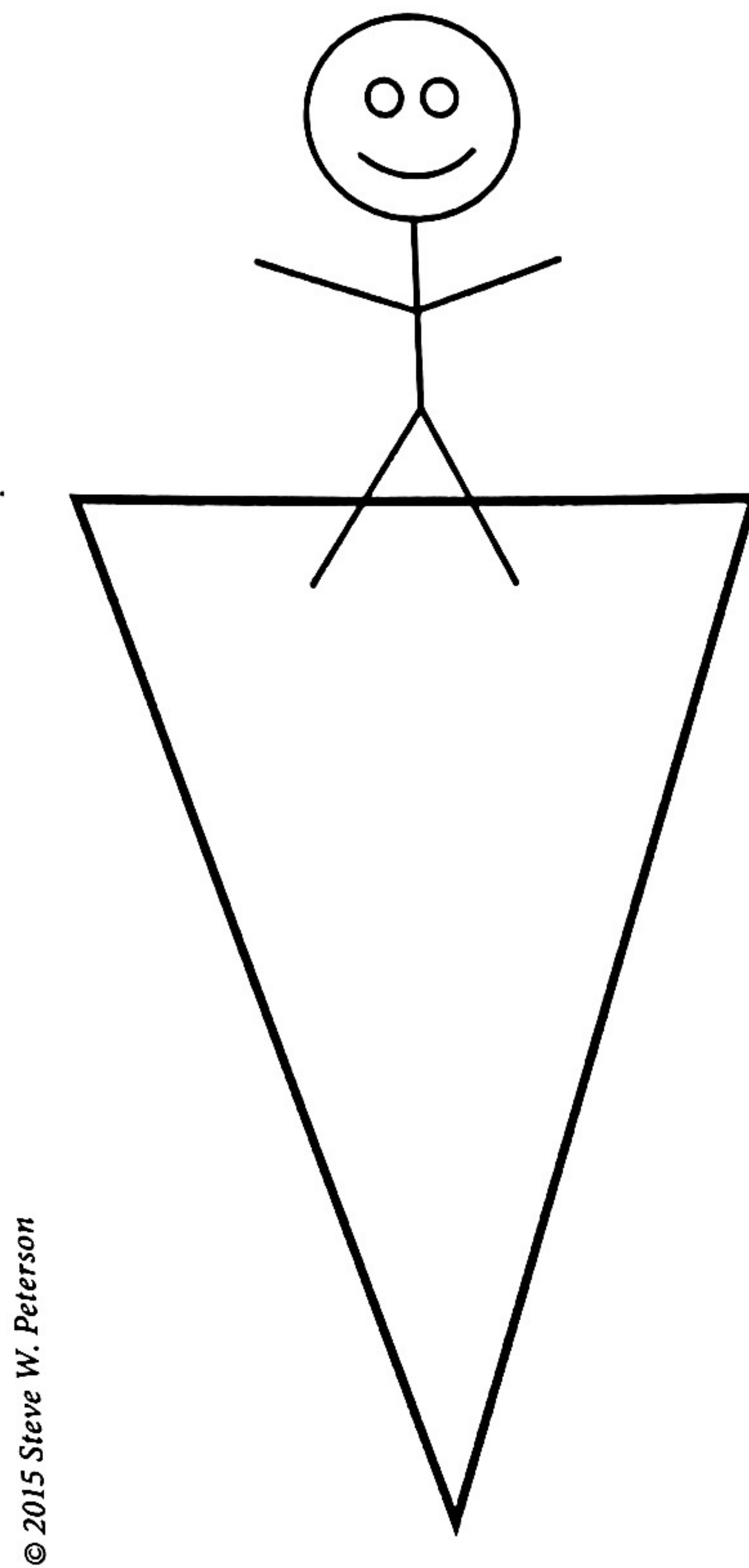
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ACTIVITY: DEMONSTRATE YOUR MINDFUL EGO

Describe one of your "hillside experiences":



Personal Resolution Pyramid²⁰

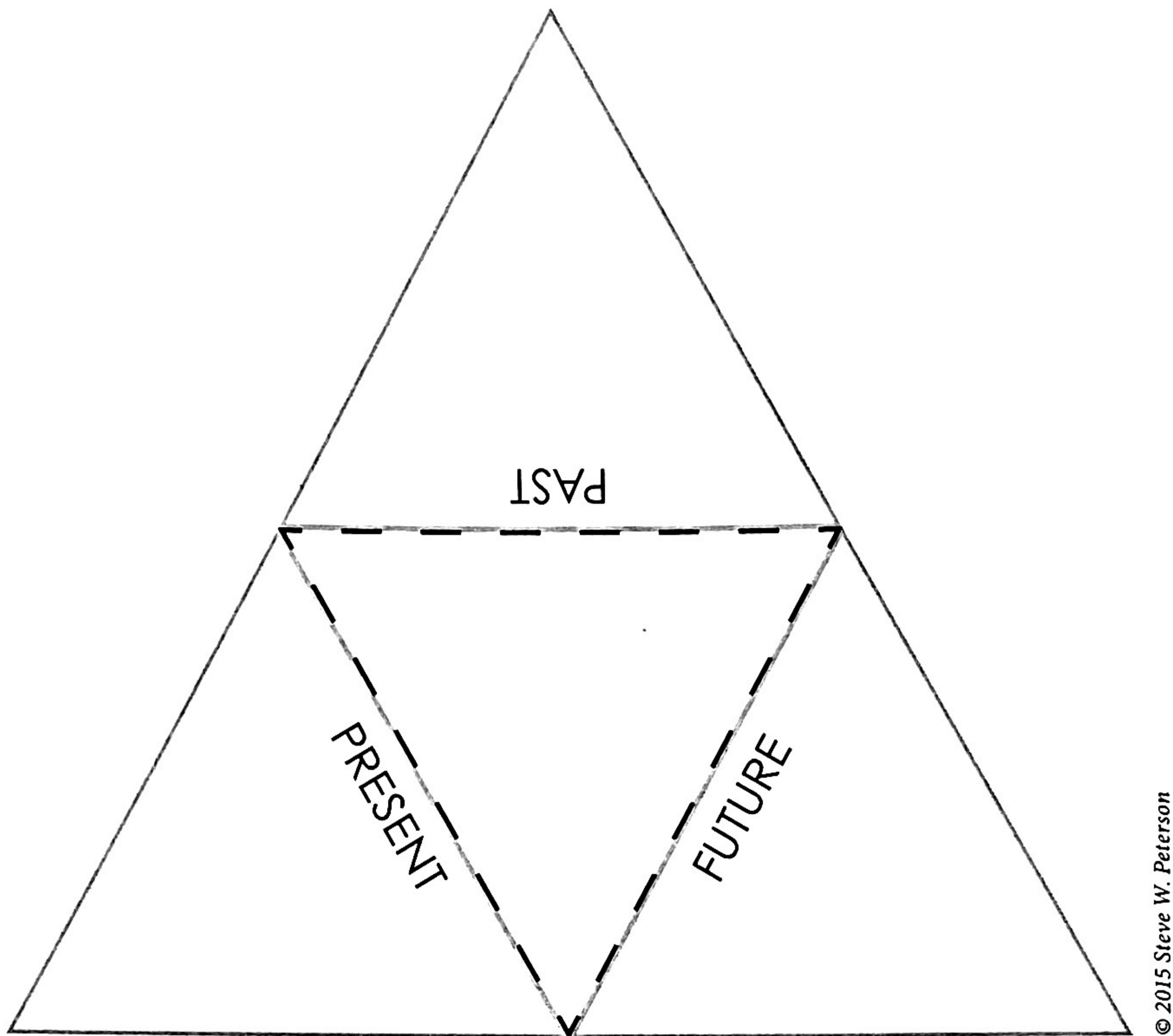


The purpose of the Personal Resolution Pyramid is to simulate balance on three sides of the pyramid so that it rests evenly on the tip. Each of the three sides of the pyramid represents various aspects of one's personal and professional life:

- Past, Present and Future
- Personal, Social and Professional

This is accomplished by mindfully identifying emotional events in each category. The key is to not allow brainFULLness to direct your responses. Exercise a mindful ego and pay attention to your emotional intelligence to guide you. Accept without judgment.

Pyramid Number One— Past, Present, and Future²⁰



This is a cut-out of your first pyramid.

Once completed, cut along the solid lines and fold along the dotted lines.

Within each category, identify factors significant to your life. Write them in the appropriate categories. You can list as many items as you wish in each category.

The significant factors you need to identify are:

- Goals.
- Stressors.
- Memories.
- Fears.
- Ambitions.
- Concerns.
- Any emotional event that is at the forefront of your mind – positive or negative.

Now look at how many items you have listed in each category. Odds are, there are an unequal number of items listed.

Your goal is to balance each side of your pyramid. Unless each side has an equal number of items listed, the pyramid will not balance on its tip.

This is where your emotional intelligence gets a workout. Mindfully determine which items can be removed from each category in order to achieve balance. You may need to add items to a category. Determine what is important and what is not. It does not matter whether you have positive or negative events in each category; that is a part of life. The good. And the bad.

It is your emotional intelligence that will guide you on how to respond to these events and come to closure with the negative ones...and relish in the positive ones.

In regards to your goals, be reasonable. We were all told since we were children that we could accomplish ANYTHING that we wanted! There is nothing wrong with childhood and adult aspirations. A mindful ego is reasonable and would rather bask in its successes versus its failures. Be reasonable. A mindful ego uses small successes as the steps to reach the top of the stage where it receives its recognition. Remember it's the journey, not the destination that brings the best reward.

*"If you are depressed you are living in the past.
If you are anxious you are living in the future.
If you are at peace you are living in the present."*

—Lao Tzu

An online post through social media paraphrased this quite well.

1. The past

- Everyone has a past; decide wisely what you choose to have influence over you.

2. The future

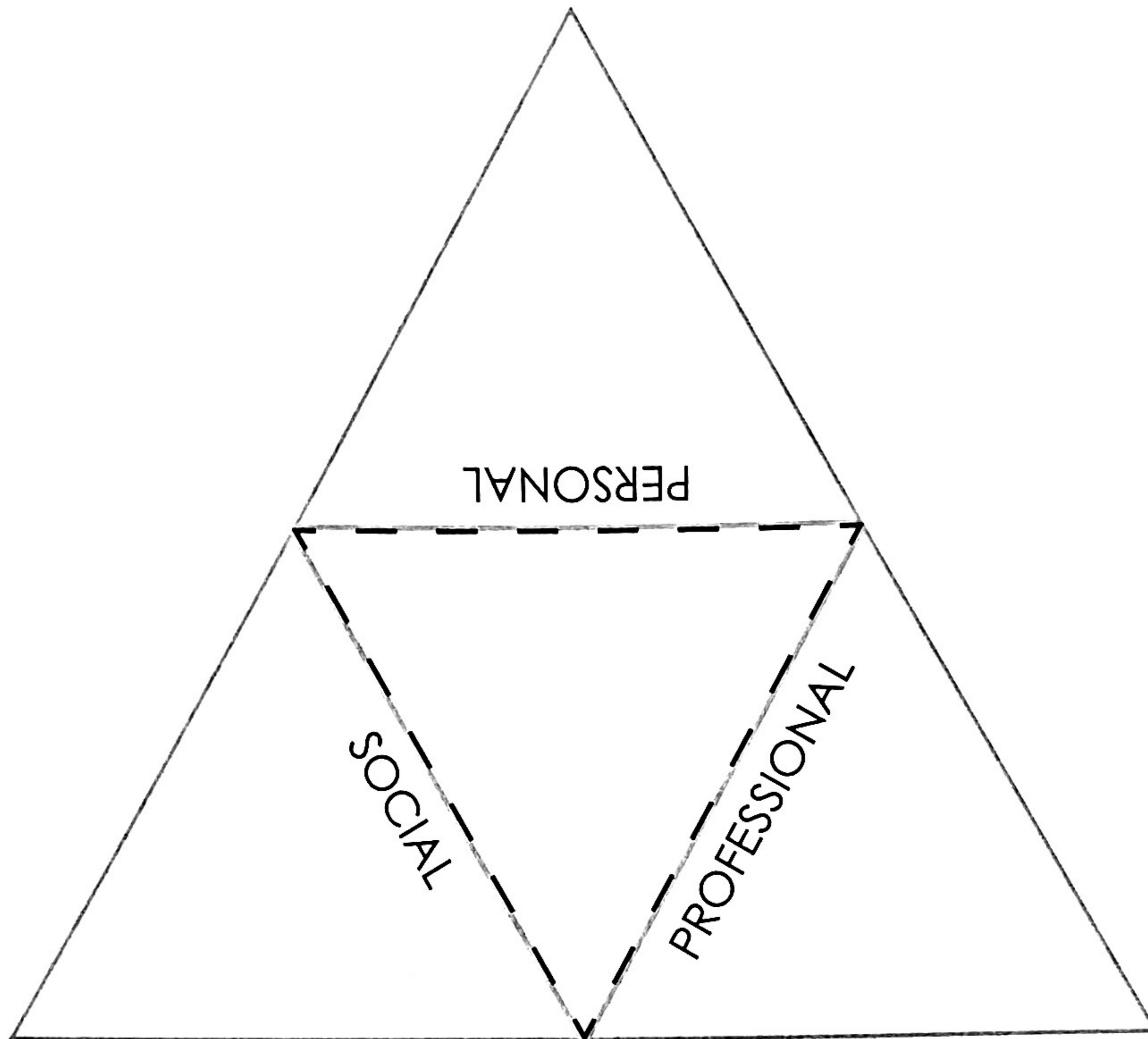
- Select reasonable, attainable goals rather than stress over what hasn't happened yet.

3. The present

- It is how you come to terms with the past and plan for the future that enables you to live in the present!



Pyramid Number Two— Personal, Professional and Social²⁰



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Repeat the same exercise but this time focus on your personal, professional, and social life.