

narcissistic sense of our own identity or permanence. In addition to our need for human modeling, this is one more reason why process practices traditionally require the expert supervision of a master teacher.⁵⁰

Beyond requiring supervision, the use of process methods is traditionally safeguarded by the insistence on three key prerequisites, especially for higher level practice. These three are: true renunciation; genuine compassion; and at least a clear intellectual grasp of the insights of selflessness and emptiness.⁵¹ As for renunciation, the basic skill of releasing self-destructive impulses and habits is vital if we're to have the mental flexibility to channel compulsive energies into healthy change. Second, a strong value and some practice of true empathy is vital to creating a proactive self, as well as to maintaining the intimate bond with a mentor we need to work through misperceptions and toxic emotions. Finally, at least an intellectual understanding of emptiness is necessary, since we otherwise run the risk of reifying any prosthetic self-image used in role-modeling as a simply another fixed self. This could easily result in reinforcing our self-reifying habit, hence blocking genuine openness and compassion. Worse, it may get us stuck in a narcissistic fantasy self that makes us even less able to interact well than our ordinary self.

The Seven Steps and Four Phases of the Role-Modeling Process

Given this, it's time to unpack the art of role-modeling, as exemplified by the imagery of the *Healing Mentor*, the patron of self-healing and self-transformation in the Nalanda process tradition.⁵² To streamline the practice for those new to such imagery, I've combined and simplified elements from the two most common practice formats.⁵³ If you find it hard to relate to the traditional imagery, feel free to substitute your own mental image of an *Ideal Healer* who can model self-healing and self-transformation for you. This generic approach is the one I take in clinical research,⁵⁴ and has also been suggested as an adjunct in psychotherapy.⁵⁵ While it seems inevitable that the role-modeling imagery of ancient India and modern Tibet will be revised to suit the cultural imagination of the modern scientific mind, I've found that asking students to conceive their own *Ideal Healer* puts a burden on them just when they're learning new insights and skills. More to the point, if I were to translate this art using familiar imagery from the Western tradition, it would introduce a host of cultural connotations that could obscure the intent or method at hand. So I've taken the middle way, of translating the language and symbolism as much as possible into poetic English, while staying as close as possible to the traditional intent of the art and iconography.

In what follows, I'll break down the steps, phases, and levels of the role-modeling process in sections, stopping in between to explain how each works. To make this introduction more practical, I've also condensed three different lines of interpretation into one integrated format. The three lines address the interpersonal, transference, and motivational dimensions of role-modeling, respectively. The interpersonal dimension is broken down into seven steps. Taken together, these seven prime and rehearse the gradual process of building a working master-apprentice alliance, a process I call mentor-bonding. The seven steps are: admiring; welcoming; disclosing; enjoying; requesting help; requesting constancy; and dedication.⁵⁶

These progressive steps of interpersonal bonding line up with four successive phases of self-transformation catalyzed by the healthy resolution of the transference bond, which shares some family resemblance with the psychotherapy process Kohut described as "transmuting internalization."⁵⁷ Of these four phases—which I call idealization, identification, internalization and integration—idealization aligns with the first three interpersonal steps from admiring to disclosing; identification aligns with the fourth step of enjoying; internalization aligns with the fifth step of requesting help; and integration aligns with the sixth and seventh steps of requesting constancy and dedication.

Finally, given the multi-dimensional nature of process-oriented learning, these four transference phases also align with four levels of motivational change. These four levels consist of increasing degrees of sublimation, brought about by a deepening capacity to transform negative affects into positive alternatives. They are traditionally linked with the capacity to modulate and transform affects with increasing levels of intensity: the lowest being the level aroused by romantic interest and sexual attraction; the next being the level aroused by mutual flirtation and erotic intrigue; the third, the level of intensity aroused by sensual touching and embrace; the highest, the level of intensity aroused by unbridled passion and sexual climax.

While the four phases of transference and four levels of sublimation are traditionally aligned with one another, they are not usually linked with the seven steps of mentor-bonding.⁵⁸ Instead, they line up with four different levels of process practice, called the action process; the performance process; the integral process; and the optimal integral process.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, I believe weaving these three lines of interpretation together

works for our purposes, since the seven-step framework of role-modeling provides the backbone of process practice at all four levels.⁶⁰ As I see it, the omnipresence of this framework invites one to read the four phases and levels as variations on a theme, each of which approaches the role-modeling process from the developmental standpoint of its different steps. The action and performance process practices we'll explore in this chapter are for novices practicing from a standpoint ranging from idealization to identification. The integral process practices we'll explore in chapter nine are for intermediate practitioners on the internalization phase. And the optimal integral practices we'll touch on in part 4 are for more advanced practitioners approaching complete integration. To prime your mind for the imagery that follows, please refer to the image of the *Healing Mentor* in the color insert.

The Active Process of Idealization, Step 1: Admiration

*In the open space before me, from a lucid, moon-disc of mind,
Dawns a lapis exclamation point, beaming healing speech of light
And an aura of lapis lazuli radiance that takes human form
As the Healing Mentor, who distils the genius of all healing beings
Throughout space and time. One with my role-model, he sits
Amidst a giant rainbow lotus, in saffron robes,
With all the marks and signs of altruistic, pure genius.
His right hand, palm out on his knee, holds a sprig of medicinal aloe,
His left, on his lap, holds a bowl of meditative elixir.
Lit from within by the moon and exclamation at his heart,
He embodies the medicine that heals body, spirit and mind!*

The intent of the ideal imagery on this first step and the phase it opens is not idealization for idealization's sake, but to help us recognize and admire the qualities of the archetype and living mentor we're trying to model. One contemporary Tibetan master of this art, Gelek Rinpoche, describes the attitude involved in admiring a role-model as more like the spirit in which an ambitious apprentice approaches a master: "That's what I want!" Instead of the childlike devotion we've been taught to feel towards our own religious ideals and models, the spirit of this tradition and imagery is closer to the congenial admiration we feel towards a teacher or guide. This basic equality is symbolized by the body language of our encounter: we envision the mentor-archetype sitting close enough to reach out and touch us, yet just a bit above eye level, like a big sister or brother.

The aim of this step is to help confirm our rational confidence in the virtues that qualify the model we've chosen as a living template for a new way of being. Focusing on the qualities of the role-model also serves to heighten our attention to them, effectively priming the process of guided learning and self-development. Projecting onto another human the image of self we ideally aspire to serves to objectify the other, with their consent, as a means to an end: using their more cultivated mind, body and sensibility as a reference point or catalyst in our own self-transformation. A positive mentoring relationship is as vital to reshaping our sense of self as our idealized relationship with parents was to shaping our childhood self-image or our relationship with teachers was to shaping our adult minds and careers.

Ideals and Mentors: The Checks and Balances of Tibetan Role-Modeling

Thanks to the system of mentoring that grounds self-transformation in this tradition, it is possible for us to consciously choose and guide the way we want to grow in the mentoring bond. For this to work, we need both a clear vision of the role we'd like to play in the world, and a living, breathing mirror or model that can help guide and check our efforts, based on our own personal experience and perspective. In this process, we envision the other person in the image of our ideal, while "inviting" or "merging" the tangible personal qualities or style of our living model to invest the abstract image with down-to-earth life. In a sense, the image serves as a filter or uplink that helps our minds recognize and connect with the real qualities we want to emulate. Yet it also filters out traits or quirks that are inconsistent with the role we want to play, helping our mind focus without distractions or contradictions on the qualities we want to emulate.

In this way, the ideal self-imagery and the real human model work together in a system of human checks and balances to assure that the process of change brings us to the new way of life we seek. Lest we imagine that this approach could never work in an individualistic culture like ours, the ruggedly individualistic Tibetans have a saying that clearly acknowledges the tension we feel at the idea of such a complex bond: "The

best mentor is the one who lives three valleys over.” Reminiscent of our complex feelings about therapists, this suggests that process mentoring works best when there is a healthy balance between the closeness we need for change and the space we need for autonomy. Another, related reason to imagine the mentor as a disembodied mind or spirit inhabiting a generic, archetypal body is that that generic self-image can be more readily taken into our minds and internalized, since it lacks distinguishing quirks that earmark it as “other.” So the archetype offers an ideal vision of self that is not just conveniently applicable to our minds—that is, prosthetic—but also easily transferrable or downloadable. In the end, it reflects a self-creative technology that is not just user-friendly, but eminently empowering.

On the other hand, the step of admiring and the phase of idealizing must involve some vulnerability in order to work. They require a conscious choice to open our minds to the influence of another, involving what ego-psychologist Heinz Hartmann called “regression in the service of the ego,” a crucial step towards engaging in a transmuting bond. Unless we temporarily loosen the grip of our self-protective instincts and familiar defenses, our hearts and minds cannot open enough to assimilate the way of being we’d like to model. This dimension of the step of admiring and the phase of idealization require the student’s informed consent to a binding contract with the mentor that opens the door to all that follows.⁶¹

The Transference Phase of Idealization: A Mirror for Our Hidden Genius

As for the transference phase of idealization, active process practices view the art of role-modeling from the standpoint of the novice with low self-efficacy and little confidence in his or her natural capacity for change. Like most of those just beginning psychotherapy, such individuals may be so blindly attached to their traumatized sense of self that it blocks their capacity to even conceive of fundamental self-change. The focus here is on bonding with an idealized role-model whom we can experience as very different, far wiser, and more capable than ourselves. The imagery here corresponds to the kind of admiration or hero worship in which the mentor or ideal is not initially seen as an object of imitation, but as a refuge somehow above or beyond us. Developmentally, it corresponds to a very primal need for safety, attention, and direction, offering an opportunity to heal traumas and transcend needs still lingering from early childhood. The work at this basic phase is to approach the ideal by exposing and removing blocks to our sense of empowerment or competence so that, eventually, we can grow to identify with and imitate our role-model’s ideal way of being.

The Closer We Get: Idealization and the Art of Sublimation

As we saw above, the second way the four phases of role-modeling are described is in terms of the deepening levels of emotional intimacy and intensity we are ready to invest in and harness towards self-transformation. This third dimension of the process is key, since the transformative power of imagery is due in part to the way its shifts in perception usher in shifts in emotion and response style as well. As we saw, the traditional metaphors used to describe successive levels of emotional investment in self-transformation are drawn from the universal human experience of romantic love. Of course, this anticipates the insights of modern science that the psychology of human childrearing, social learning and cultural development depends on the primal biology of sexual attraction, courtship, and mating.⁶²

As in modern therapy, so in this role-modeling process, progress depends on our capacity to consciously harness strong positive feelings like passionate interest and excitement to the process of self-transformation, a capacity Freud and his heirs call sublimation, borrowing a term from the esoteric tradition of alchemy in the West. Such powerful, positive investment reflects a self-regulating capacity to shift our emotional style away from traumatic reactivity and towards self-confidence and prosocial emotions. As that natural capacity grows through practice, we gradually grow ready to invest the ideal way of life we envision with higher and higher degrees of passion. The imagery of action process techniques are needed when our minds can only harness the mild level of intimate passion stirred by furtively gazing at a distant love interest.

The Active Process of Idealization, Step 2: Welcoming

*Filled with gratitude for your healing presence and example,
I freely share with you all good things, real and imagined,
All my virtues and resources, this precious mind, body and life,
And this exquisite globe with its oceans, continents, wonders,
Healing gardens, gemstones, waters and infinite web of life!*

The second interpersonal step in the process is the act of opening our hearts, minds, bodies and life to the influence of our chosen role-model, by sharing without reservation all that we appreciate, treasure and enjoy. Just as we would naturally welcome a guest by opening our home, so we feed the bond with our mentor by fully opening our lives, letting go of any sense of ownership or attachment and inviting our chosen model to share our most intimate joys. Akin to the unconditional spirit of openness and generosity with which we welcome a loving parent or intimate partner into our lives, this exercise serves to let down any boundaries or walls of fear that might block our ability to be truly intimate with our role-model. In addition, by offering whatever we value, we also counteract any insecurity we feel in the bond with our mentor, based on any lack of self-worth we bring to the process.

In the context of sociobiology, this step rehearses the primitive social acts of sharing food and information, offering mutual aid and grooming, acts which elicit our most primal memories and sense of family belonging and kin-recognition. This is why traditional forms of the active process routinely involve setting out or imagining substances such as water, lotions, flowers, incense, candles, delicacies and musical instruments, and then going through the motions of offering them to actual representations and/or to our mental image of our role-model.⁶³ Without magic or mystery, these rites help practitioners overcome inner blocks to connection and trust. As these practices take effect and practitioners move to the next steps and phases of the role-modeling process, the emphasis shifts from such outward behaviors to inward intentions and dispositions.

Deepening Idealizing Transference, and Positive Motivation

In psychotherapeutic terms, this step involves gradually investing the transference bond with the positive energy of interest and excitement, by sharing intimate information and experiences which themselves are charged with emotion. By infusing these feelings and experiences into the mentoring bond, a sense of confidence and intimacy is built that helps overcome self-protective instincts and reactive habits of insecurity and guardedness. Consequently, this step has the effect of making the idealization of the mentor a more inclusive experience, creating the sense of a holding environment of mutual trust and care which serves as the crucible for further internalization and change. As for the dimension of sublimation, this step fosters the development of a deeper capacity to access and harness the sensual interest and excitement of genuine mutual attraction and flirtation to fuel the intimacy of the mentoring bond.

The Active Process of Idealization, Step 3: Disclosing

*Regretting all the negative instincts and habits I've indulged,
All the patterns that limit and block me from acquiring your qualities
And emulating your way of being, from the depths of my heart
I admit them all to you now, ask your acceptance and help,
And firmly resolve from here on to avoid and unlearn every one.*

The third interpersonal step in the process is disclosing our faults, the complement in the realm of negative experience to the second step of sharing the positive. This powerful exercise of openness and trust helps break down the walls of shame-based insecurity, hurt, and anger that predictably block the free flow of information and affect, whether in intimacy, psychotherapy or mentoring. Here the tradition prescribes the forces of confession and due diligence we've touched on in parts 1 and 2, only in the transformative context of a confidential role-modeling bond.⁶⁴ The net effect of this step is to help remove any real or imaged blocks to progress based on limits in our ability to freely, fully, and constructively share our struggles with negative instincts, habits and the problems they cause.

Clarifying Idealizing Transference and Positive Motivation

In terms of sociobiology, this step involves deepening the social-emotional bond of genuine empathy and care by exposing our human weakness and wounds to others in a setting of deep mutual respect and trust. Reaching this level of transparency and self-disclosure is a hallmark of the deepest levels of intimacy and confidentiality, and is a must in the development of a truly healing bond, whether it be one of intimate partnership, mentoring, or psychotherapy. By gradually exposing and removing shame-based obstacles to transparency and trust, this step further seals the mentoring bond, and brings the idealization phase to a close. The result is a truly transparent and grounded idealization, based on the full mutual disclosure of strengths

and weaknesses, and a fully informed alliance of both parties geared to overcoming limits and cultivating potentials. In terms of the energy on this step, it involves a deepening capacity to sublimate the first degree of toxic emotions like hurt, insecurity and shame into positive social-emotional forces like mutual sensitivity, empathic attunement, and congenial humility.⁶⁵

The Performance Process of Identification and the Step of Enjoying

*From the depths of my heart I enjoy all the myriad forms
Of happiness you experience and share with all beings,
With all the transcendent virtues that serve as their cause.*

With the fourth interpersonal step of vicariously enjoying the positive qualities, lasting happiness and whole way of being the mentor embodies, we enter the second phase of the role-modeling process: the transference phase of identification. By exercising the capacity to congratulate and truly rejoice in our mentor's good qualities without any sense of envy or comparison, we remove one more block to approaching our role-model in genuine intimacy. In a sense, we now re-experience our admiration in a new mode, empowered by a greater sense of equality, confidence and attunement, to imagine ourselves into the qualities and way of being we admired from afar in the idealization phase. This new sense of impartial enjoyment of qualities brings us closer to conceiving of ourselves as potentially having them or actually developing them. And this investment opens the door to the transference phase of identification.

Identification, Development, and Courting Self-Transformation

In this phase in the process, we're free to enjoy our closeness with the role-model, proactively taking in the feel of his or her strengths and way of being. As we begin to vicariously enjoy and even emulate what we admire in him or her, we experience a dissonance with our habitual identification with our prior limits. Our focus here may still be directed outwardly towards our role-model, but thanks to the mentor's mirroring of our own strengths and potentials, we begin to see ourselves in a newer, more empowering light. Open to seeing ourselves in the mirror of the mentor's acceptance, we begin to stretch our self-image to make room for some likeness to the way of being we aspire to. From the vantage point of this step and phase, role-modeling appears as a congenial process in which both parties share a common interest and excitement, though in an asymmetrical way. It works in much the same way a childhood choice to identify a teacher, athlete or artist as a hero can act as both a source of vicarious enjoyment of the hero's qualities and as a catalyst and template for the development of innate capacities.

The work of role-modeling in this phase is called the performance process, since our mentor's recognition turns our vicarious enjoyment of his or her qualities back on ourselves, opening the door to the more participatory observation involved in emulating them. As the English translation "performance" suggests, in this phase like an actor we begin to imitate the way of being we admire, becoming more aware of our need for the mentor's mirroring to help us expand our identity and capacity. In contrast to the idealizing mode of the active process, the work of the identification phase involves less ritualistic attention and more aesthetic rehearsal or creative reenactment. In terms of the level of sublimation at work in this phase, the performance process works best when our imaginations can harness the moderate level of passion aroused by the dance of flirtation, as in the exchange of glances or non-sexual touch in courtship.

In terms of its sociobiology, the step of vicarious enjoyment rehearses a basic building block of social cooperation, marrying the complex dynamics of social performance and the psychobiology of imitation. Beyond the workings of mere imprinting or entrainment, life forms capable of more complex social learning require the parent and offspring to engage in a complex dance of imitation which gives the developing individual the opportunity to actively model and gradually master specialized behaviors or ways of being.⁶⁶ Developmentally, this phase and level of role-modeling reawakens the active development of personality through latency and adolescence, based on the bond of identification formed in the Oedipal phase. This capacity for revising our childhood self-creation prepares us to join in an expanded social network of role-modeling, allowing us to adapt to a wider range of social relationships, including those dedicated to specialized cultural skills. This same capacity is exploited in psychotherapy to help individuals transcend artificial limits to our capacity based on indiscriminate role-modeling in childhood.

The Integral Process of Internalization and the Step of Requesting Help

*Since my future health and well-being, and my ability
 To help those around me find freedom and happiness
 Depend on my learning to cultivate your qualities
 And recreate your whole way of being, I ask you please:
 Freely share with me all your intuition and energy
 So by mastering your art, I may heal myself, my world and all life!
 Thrilled to be asked, your heart-moon and exclamation point beam
 A rainbow wave of healing clarity, energy and warmth,
 Sounding the affirmation, MAY ALL HEAL AND BE HEALED!
 Engulfed by the wave, its rainbow light and sound fill me,
 Melting away all my ailments, limits, blocks, fears and doubts,
 And freeing my own healing clarity and voice from the moon
 And exclamation point at my heart, to fill me as a flame fills a lamp
 And a nectar fills a vase, transforming my body, speech, and mind
 Into my mentor's, and rippling out through all my actions
 Until my home, world and all life are healed and transformed,
 And return a wave of gratitude that melts my heart!*

The fifth interpersonal step of requesting help lines up with integral process practice and the penultimate transference phase of internalization. It is based on the sense of vicarious enjoyment and identification developed in the prior step, but brings this sense to the next level: preparing to actually realize within ourselves the qualities we admire and enjoy in our congenial role-model. This step involves overcoming the inhibitions to growth posed by our self-limiting identification with fear-based insecurity and shame-bound helplessness. Here we've finally succeeded, with help from our mentor and the momentum built in prior steps, at getting out of our own way and forging a working congenial bond that can catalyze our self-transformation.

The Transference Phase of Internalization: Finding the Native Genius Within

In this advanced phase of role-modeling, we become ready to internalize the ideal image we projected onto our mentor, and begin looking within ourselves to identify the qualities and way of being that make up our native genius. The focus here is on approaching and encountering the self we're trying to develop as *already actually present within us*. The work here is twofold: to fully claim as our own the identity and competence previously modeled for us and recognized in us by an ideal other; and to finally and decisively change our familiar self-image to reflect the new qualities we've found or developed. The imagery of the integral process corresponds to the kind of admiration or hero-worship in which our mentor-archetype is encountered as an innate genius or dignity that has lain hidden within the depths of our being—unnoticed—all along.

In terms of sociobiology, this step and phase involve the social recognition and development of human potential through initiatory rites that empower individuals as naturally effective agents of chosen social roles and cultural skills. It reflects the social and cultural extension of the natural process of coming of age in adolescence, by extending our awakening into psychosexual maturity to include the sublimation of our generative powers into specialized forms of social agency and cultural mastery. Psychologically, this step and phase involve facilitating our self-discovery through a synergistic process in which we internalize qualities and a sense of mastery from our mentor, while taking in his or her recognition of our native potential and actual readiness for mastery. Akin to the mature separation process of leaving the nest or the process of entering the termination phase in psychotherapy, this phase involves a delicate rhythm or dance in which both parties cooperate in a gradual shift in power and responsibility from mentor to apprentice. One famous case of an encounter between a Buddhist master and student in the Chinese Ch'an tradition which gave rise to Zen has the student ask for his master to validate and reciprocate his growth, "Master, I am breaking out—break in!"⁶⁷

The Motivation of Self-Transformation: Embracing Pure Passion

Of course, the work in this phase of self-transformation involves not just radical openness of mind, but an equally exceptional capacity to tolerate emotional and visceral openness. As we know from our experience of natural highs, such openness comes when we're open to feeling a high degree of positive arousal and emotional intimacy. Traditionally, the level of sublimation needed to support this pivotal step and prepare us

for the integral process is one in which our imagination and empathy can harness and transform the high arousal stirred by a sensual touch, kiss or embrace. This level corresponds to a degree of social-emotional maturity in which we can share intense excitement and blissful openness without being triggered into a knee-jerk self-protectiveness or a compulsive drive to objectify, control or dominate others. It is here that we begin to find ourselves in the realm of the “blissful art” of accessing and harnessing the energy and chemistry of blissful openness as fuel for a life of enlightened altruism or altruistic genius.

The Optimal Process of Integration, Part 1: Requesting Constancy

*Acknowledging that this imagery is a mere simulation,
I ask you please to stay with me constantly, every moment
From now until I integrate your mastery,
And my body, speech and mind become the pure love,
Joy and equanimity which are your true body, speech and mind.
Moved by affection for me, my role-model melts and beams
In miniature to my crown, where he sits, facing forward,
Aglow from the lapis light affirmation that rings his heart-moon.
As I hear and recite his affirmation, I AM THE HEALING
GENIUS OF A FREE, CARING MIND, its glow intensifies,
Melting his body, speech and moon-mind into a drop
Like a rainbow tear for joy, which pours through my crown
And throat to melt into the exclamation point at my heart,
Merging his healing essence with mine, intensifying
My light, energy and warmth until they fill me as a flame
Fills a lamp and a nectar, a vase, rippling out in my actions
Until all those around me at home and on earth become
Healing Mentors, returning a wave of joy to my heart!*

The sixth step of requesting constancy ushers in the final phase of integration, by priming our minds to take the mentor’s living example into the fabric of our being, where it helps us recognize and integrate our full potential for healing genius. This step assumes a mature realization of the vital influence of the role-modeling bond in catalyzing ongoing self-transformation, as well as a proactive commitment to do whatever it takes to complete that work. Far from a mere dependency, it reflects the transgressive confidence we need to enlist and secure the mentor’s full investment in bringing us along, all the way to the fruition of full mastery.

Psychologically, the imagery of miniaturization reenacts the complementary shifts in perspective I mentioned on the last step, in which the apprentice grows in his or her self-image and actual capacity so that the mentor seems smaller in stature in contrast to his or her prior largesse as seen through idealizing eyes. The reenactment of the perspective shifts in the normal lifecycle of parent-child bonds is obvious, earmarking this imaginative process as the rehearsal of a conscious revision of normal development. Likewise, the iconic imagery of having the mentor enter the apprentice *via* the crown creatively reenacts the process of the internalization of a whole way of being modeled by parents, and suggests a symbolic recognition that the flow of social information is “down” through the generations and somehow involves the brain.⁶⁸

Although the imagery I’ve outlined here is not universal in process practices, some variation on the theme of transmission *via* the crown can be found in all depictions of the internalization phase of the role-modeling process, especially at advanced levels of practice.⁶⁹ It’s worth noting that such symbolism is not specifically Buddhist, but is reminiscent of totemic rites that rehearsed the generative act by which ancestors invest themselves in the lives of their heirs, recognizing the new generation as embodying their ongoing contribution to posterity.⁷⁰ A similar symbolism is implied in religious rituals like the modified sacrament of christening infants with water poured on their crown. In psychotherapeutic terms, the internalization of idealized images of parents—Freud’s superego—is seen as the foundation of the child’s construction of self. So the internalization of a new ideal image, projected onto the therapist and then reintegrated as a new mirror or template for the growth of a more ideal self, presumably involves the restructuring of the conscience in a transparent form, chosen to support the emergence of a conscious, mature way of being out of the transmuting dialogue of the therapy.

The totemic logic of descent and the therapeutic logic of transmuting the superego converge in the symbolic about-face taken by the mentor in this phase. Instead of confronting us as a mirror, external witness

or judge, in this step of the practice the mentor turns around to face in the same direction as we do, melting into us to see the world through our eyes. This about-face symbolizes the profound shift in our psychic structure and perspective on the world that takes place on this final phase. This shift involves the dissolution of the other as an object of desire, misperception or fear, and the start of a new phase of integration in which we become our own witness and judge, freeing our empathy to embrace others as true equals and alter-egos.

A final element of this step is the focus on recitation of the mentor's affirmation as a way to weave the mentor's voice into a newly enlightened inner dialogue. Though not always placed at precisely this step, the practice of reciting and contemplating affirmative messages is crucial to all levels of role-modeling practice.⁷¹ The key role of the mentor's affirmation here reflects a profound awareness of language as a medium for the transmission of agency, including the transformative agency of altruistic genius. This awareness is explicit in the alternate name of the process-oriented tradition: the "poetic" or semiotic vehicle.⁷² In this context, I use the word "poetic" in the sense implied by Allen Grossman's compelling view of poetry as an art of role-modeling or transmitting the ideal image of "beloved" human models.⁷³

In this fourth and final transference phase, with the help of affirmative speech, the orientation we take towards our ideal self begins to expand our sense of finding the ideal within, moving towards the ability to see and think of the ideal as both within ourselves and in others, simultaneously. This final shift towards congenial identification and full equality defines the perspective from which the most advanced optimal integral practice sees the role-modeling process. This phase has two objectives: to fully embrace the ideal qualities and way of being we've come to recognize in ourselves and others; and to finally identify our new positive image of ourselves and others with that ideal, by fully incorporating the new qualities of mind and action we've developed though emulating our role-model's way of being.

Consummate Motivation: The Energy of Blissful Openness

In terms of the level of sublimation involved in this phase, the optimal integral process works best when our imagination can harness the very highest level of passion, like that aroused by mature love-making and consummation. When we're able to access and harness such primal positive passion to the intimacy of the role-modeling bond, it lends greater depth and breadth to the radical openness which is the crucible for self-transformation. At this level of sublimation or flow, the way the imagery of the role-modeling process "binds the art" of blissful openness is laid bare. By melting into our hearts, our role-model elicits our most primal memories of and blissful responses to being seen, loved and cared for by parents and intimate partners.

Immersing us into the deepest waters of the unconscious mind, the imaginatively rehearsed experience of receiving our mentor's love serves as a universal solvent which melts the psychosocially constructed boundaries between us, opening the floodgates of the most immediate and complete give and take. According to the tradition, not only does this "blissful art" make it easier for us to realize radical openness, but it also serves as the most fertile medium for the cultivation of embodied empathy, compassion and altruism.⁷⁴ Here, the three distinctive features of process-oriented practice—the union of wisdom and method, the art of imagery and the depth-psychology of role-modeling—come together to catalyze, refine, and enhance the consummation of our work of self-transformation.

The Optimal Process of Integration, Part 2: Dedication

*Any positive insight or energy I've gained through this practice
I dedicate to achieving my Healing Mentor's integration
In this very lifetime, as quickly as possible! So by mastering
The arts of role-modeling imagery and blissful openness,
May I find the pure genius to heal myself and all life!*

The seventh and last step in the role-modeling process serves to seal and direct any progress we've made in the prior six steps towards the ultimate goal of the process: assuming the congenial form of mastery we've identified in the mentor and ourselves. If the sixth step of requesting constancy works to sustain and motivate our progress towards mastery, dedication works to reinforce that progress and galvanize our commitment to embodying mastery as quickly and completely as we can. The aim here is to internalize not just the mentor's qualities and example, but also the level and kind of dedication that inspires his or her way of life. In effect, this step completes the phase of integration by preparing us to integrate the transformative aim and work that makes up the mentor's life mission and intergenerational project.

Traditionally, this act of taking up the torch from the mentor and joining in the work of altruistic self-transformation involves merging our own momentum and aims with the momentum and aims of a whole community. So dedication is not just an act of committing whatever incremental steps we've taken towards our ongoing learning, reflection, and practice, but also an act of radical solidarity which merges our own personal journey of transformation with that of our mentor and the community to which we both belong. Traditionally, this is expressed in the mental act of merging all the insight or energy we gain into the "ocean" of the accumulated openness and altruistic intentions of all enlightened beings in all places and times. Figuratively, we now not only face the same direction as the mentor but also stand shoulder to shoulder with him or her, facing the challenge of transforming others and the world we share.

In terms of sociobiology, this step and the completion of this phase reflect the extension of the final, generative phase of the normal life cycle to embrace the expanded leadership role we can take within the extended family of human culture and civilization. In terms of psychotherapy, the equivalent of identifying with the mentor's work would be to become an emotionally intelligent leader in our lives, including choosing to become a therapist who masters the empathic art we benefited from as a client.

While the act of dedication is not unique to the process tradition, there are several distinctive aspects to it in this context. First is the unique orientation to evolve towards mature altruism not at the gradual pace of social evolution, but at the lightning pace of cultural evolution, that is: "in *this very lifetime, as quickly as possible.*" The second is that we dedicate the momentum we build to becoming a role-model of altruistic genius *via* the distinctive methodology of the process tradition, since only this methodology brings the aim of enlightened altruism—or altruistic genius—within reach within a single lifetime.⁷⁵ Of the four modes of practice we've defined as phases of the role-modeling process, only the highest mode identified with the optimal integral process is equipped to deliver on that ambitious promise.

Quickly, Quickly! Nagarjuna's Paradigm of the Optimal Integral Process

Given the complete paradigm defined in the optimal integral process tradition, the two methods of imagery and bliss figure as the focus of two stages of practice called the creation stage and the perfection stage.⁷⁶ Though the methods we explore in this book come mainly from the active, performance, and integral process traditions which serve as entry points for the optimal integral process, in terms of theory we'll rely on the definitive paradigm of the optimal process tradition. This is why our survey divides process methods according to the optimal integral map: the role-modeling art of the creation stage is covered in part 3; and the bliss-harnessing art of the perfection stage in part 4. Further, according to the optimal process map attributed to Nagarjuna, the work of role-modeling is divided into two sub-stages: the coarse creation stage focused on re-envisioning our social self and outer world; and the subtle or fine creation stage focused on re-envisioning our bodily self and inner world.⁷⁷ We'll close this chapter by considering the subtle form of role-modeling that completes the art. But before we move on to consider the subtle creation stage, we must briefly survey the traditional criteria for mastery of the coarse creation stage defined in the optimal process tradition.

Mastering the Coarse Creative Process, Part 1: Vivid Imagery

For process novices, the first challenge we take on is to be able to vividly imagine "*the sphere of a perfected world,*" which gives the art of role-modeling imagery the verisimilitude on which its simulation value depends. Though most of us feel we lose access to our imaginations shortly after entering adulthood, parts of our minds and brains continue to actively produce mentally generated imagery throughout our lives.⁷⁸ Since this capacity has been narrowed and routinized through development so we can coordinate our perceptions with others, we gradually learn to mistake the parts of our perception we imagine for direct perceptions of the world.

Once we begin to renew these skills to construct an extraordinary vision of an ideal self and world, most of us face a learning curve of sorts before we can envision imagery that seems more or less as real as the constructed perceptions we take for reality. Another aspect of this learning curve has to do with the learned capacity to relax enough to shift our cerebral dominance toward a more balanced laterality that has enhanced sleep-like qualities of states of reverie or daydreaming.⁷⁹ Most beginners find it takes time to shift into such states without falling into drowsiness. In this sense, focusing attention on imagery involves the same balancing act that focusing on the breath does in mindfulness, requiring us to settle the mind from distraction to enhance calm, and to lift the mind from dullness to enhance clarity.

Once we've begun to experience a sense of vivid appearance, our imagery allows us to suspend disbelief,

much like watching a film or being engrossed in a novel, only in this case we've created the imagery. This fact has two seemingly contradictory effects: the imagery we create seems more transparent because we're conscious of generating it; and, at the same time, it challenges our ordinary perceptions more than a movie or novel, since it acquaints us with the way they're made, as the act of film-making or creative writing alters our experience of what others make. Once we've begun to feel comfortable with imagery in general, the work of vivid appearance turns to making our mental image of our ideal selves and world more complete as a whole and in its details. For this work, the contemplative art of paintings, sculptures, blueprints, or replicas serves as a source of visual information which we systematically work to digest, store and recall. While this phase may seem contrived, it reflects the natural process by which perceptual data is committed to neural net-based memory stores to be later called on to generate mental imagery that encodes visuospatial information derived from sense experience.⁸⁰

Of course, of all role-modeling images, the most central is the congenial archetype we've chosen as our aim. And, given the integral logic of role-modeling, eventually we'll need to practice not just envisioning our mentor as the archetype but also envisioning ourselves and our bodies as identical with his/her archetypal genius. This feat involves a second learning curve steeper than the first, namely, overcoming our instinctive reification of and clinging to habitual images of our body and self. Once the interpersonal process of mentor-bonding has allowed us to begin to identify with a prosthetic image of our body as identical with our role-model's, we come to the next criterion of the process of coarse creation imagery: the art of enlightened pride.

Mastering the Course Creative Process, Part 2: Selfless Dignity

Referred to in our opening reference as "*union with the dignity of an enlightened being*" the art of mentor-archetype bonding is traditionally defined by an experience called "Buddha-pride" or "divine pride."⁸¹ At first blush, this involves the ability to shift the first-person pronouns "I," "myself," "me," and "mine," from their ordinary mental address—our habitual image of our bodies and selves—to their extraordinary new address: the archetypal image of body and self we're trying on for size. While this re-tasking of these all-too-familiar words to re-center our sense of self on a new mental body-image represents a first pass on what is called divine pride, it is not the real deal. If the pride of a Buddha or genius archetype consisted of identifying with a mentally constructed self-image, no matter how meaningful or inspiring, such a Buddha or genius would have little claim to be either enlightened or god-like.

The resolution here refers back to the basic psychology of process-oriented imagery, according to which the image serves as a dream-like template for embodying altruism, while the true essence of altruist's mind or genius is the spacious intuition of openness that holds that image, also known as "the divine self of selflessness." So the real sense and reference of "the dignity of an enlightened being" is not a vivid image at all, but rather a profound, enlightened awareness of the emptiness of all selves and worlds, an awareness that makes our archetypal self-image a transparent yet useful template for transforming our emotional and behavioral way of being. In this light, the criterion of enlightened pride or the dignity of pure genius is our ability to truly identify our sense of "I" with the spacious equipoise intuition of emptiness that is the womb in which all process-oriented imagery is conceived and to which it returns. This is why, to seal the transformations of the later phases of role-modeling, we typically see affirmations that pronounce ourselves one with the emptiness intuition, even when the particular form whose emptiness we're intuiting is an ideal image of our own embodiment of altruism.

In the art of both creation stages and all phases of the perfection stage, these two criteria remain essential to the process of role-modeling. Traditionally, they often appear as guiding principles or key reminders of process practice, formulated in two more or less universal affirmations. The criterion of vivid appearance is typically formulated in the affirmation, "*I have a pure nature which is the natural purity of all things!*" In contrast, the criterion of enlightened pride is typically formulated in the affirmation, "*I am the self-whose nature is the diamond intuition of openness!*"

Mastering the Coarse Creation Stage and Transitioning to the Subtle

If these two process criteria define the critical subjective qualities of process-oriented imagery, the remaining three content criteria define the key objective qualities of role-modeling imagery. Unlike the first two criteria, these three figure more as long-term outcomes that help measure our progress on the process path, eventually marking the transition from the coarse creation stage to the subtle. In effect, these three criteria measure the extent to which the perspective shift from our ordinary traumatic point of view to the mentor's enlightened

point of view is stable and complete. We've arrived at a complete shift in perception when we can: see all living beings as the mentor or role-model; see all things as enfolded in the role-model's enlightened environment or sphere of influence; and hear all thoughts, words, and sounds as the affirmative speech of the mentor. This "triumph of the *mandala*" reflects the replacement of the default programs that run our perceptual and conceptual systems by transparent, proactive programs developed in light of the mentor's example.⁸² Measuring effective practice by the ability to use imagery for stress-protection is consistent with current research,⁸³ and is the source of the synonym of this practice as the "poetic" practice of stress-protective words and images.⁸⁴

If the art of role-modeling we've surveyed provides the framework for the coarse creation stage, there are two additional tools traditionally used to frame the subtle stage. While the first of these, the art of the *body-mandala*, is little known in the West, the second, the art of envisioning the central nervous system is familiar to us thanks to popular images of the subtle body or yogic nervous system. Now that we've unpacked the basic role-modeling practice of the *Healing Mentor*, it's time to turn to another practice which can give us a window into the art of the subtle creation stage. Easily as popular and widely used for mind/body health, that is the active role-modeling process which revolves around the archetype of the *Healing Mother*. But before we can explore that practice and its relation to the subtle creation stage, it will help to briefly look into the imagery of the *body-mandala* and the subtle nervous system.

Subtle Creation: The Body *Mandala* and the Subtle Nervous System

Essentially, the art of the body *mandala* extends and expands on the imagery of the internalization and integration phases of the role-modeling process. This imagery involves taking the influence and image of the mentor into our body space as a way of purging and transforming our ordinary sense of self. At the stage of internalization aligned with requesting help, we took the mentor's luminous awareness, energy, and voice into our body, allowing it to melt away blocks and free the healing inner light and voice from our heart. At the integration stage, aligned with requesting constancy and dedication, the mentor's body dissolved into our own, merging inseparably with the inner mentor at our heart. Such imagery essentially allows us to re-people our internal world with the awareness, voice, and mind/body essence of the mentor.

In the imagery of the *body-mandala*, we take this internalizing art to the next step by installing miniature images of the mentor's body and speech at key points within our own body. In so doing, we transform our body into a living, breathing habitat or life-space for the mentor's healing influence and way of being. The points at which images of the mentor's body or speech are installed are not arbitrary, but are key points within the subtle body or central nervous system where vital neural processes can be consciously influenced. At more advanced levels of subtle creation, the images that personify the mentor's influence are fine-tuned, eventually morphing into pinpoint images of a single "seed syllable" of light and sound, which serves to guide or "bind the blissful art" of mind/body regulation in the perfection stage.

Reflections on the Need for Role-Modeling Imagery, Coarse and Subtle

Here, as at the initial phases of the role-modeling process, we may wonder, are such intricate acts of creative imagination really needed in the very real mind/body work of self-regulation of neural states and processes? The traditional answer is this: if the presence of a positive model is a vital catalyst for the transformation of our embodied self, the presence of a positive archetype of mind/body mastery is even more vital to the transformation of the nervous system. Just as a genuine healing alliance is vital to creating a holding environment to treat childhood trauma, so the formation of a role-modeling bond provides the crucible in which the apprentice feels secure enough to transform the traumatized self and nervous system into a proactive, ideal social self and nervous system.

As current meditation research suggests, positive imagery appears to help counterbalance negative affect preferentially stored in the right hemisphere and shift laterality towards the positive affect and proactive response style of the left prefrontal cortex.⁸⁵ When it comes to delving deeper into conscious regulation of neural processes like autonomic tone, then, we may suppose that installing images of the mentor within our body space helps make our internal environment itself feel like a healing environment rather than a Pandora's box of repressed traumatic memories and toxic affect. Likewise, our identification with the mentor would also seem to serve to heighten positive affect, self-efficacy and a proactive response style when it comes to facing whatever distress we feel.

In terms of the language of hypnotherapy, images of the mentor's body and speech within our body space act to provide an "affect-bridge," linking our awareness of our bodily state and emotional tone back to an experience of strong, positive affect and proactive agency.⁸⁶ In terms of current neurobiology, this art primes the natural process of social integration which helps us disarm primal defense systems and promote positive social engagement, by stimulating the bidirectional feedback linking friendly facial expressions, warm vocal tones and gentle bodily gestures to the social regulation of heart-breath rhythms *via* the vagal nerve, called the face-heart or brain-heart connection.⁸⁷ In light of the work of revising our own body-image after the mentor's, it's worth noting here that these feedbacks also include self-feedback from our own facial expressions, vocal tones, and bodily gestures.⁸⁸

Coarse and Subtle Creation: The Quintessential Preliminary to Self-Transformation

The psychotherapeutic logic of the creation stage helps explain why the Nalanda tradition places so much importance on the use of embodied imagery to clear away blocks and resistances to conscious self-regulation. And it also explains why the creation stage was seen as an indispensable "extraordinary preliminary" to the art of cultivating blissful openness on the perfection stage.⁸⁹ In effect, taken together with the three common prerequisites—renunciation, compassion, and emptiness insight—and the entryway of forming a role-modeling bond, the imagery of the coarse and subtle creation stage stand as a fifth prerequisite to the safe and effective use of the contemplative power tools of the process tradition. While the tradition speaks with one voice on this matter, the lengths to which masters like Tsong Khapa went to insist on the need for role-modeling imagery show that the impulse to avoid the work of restructuring perception is neither peculiarly modern nor Western.

We've already seen how the art of role-modeling imagery at the heart of process practice can catalyze shifts in the perception of self and others, and in the web of relationships that make up our social life. It's time now to turn to the subtle creation stage, in which that alchemy is carried into the deeper level of shifts in emotional tone and instinctive response style. Of course, the fine-brushwork of personifying imagination that makes up the subtle creation stage is challenging for beginners. Fortunately, this tradition offers a wide range of preliminary practices to prepare for the advanced methods of the optimal integral process. The rest of this chapter will focus on aspects of the active process of the *Healing Mother* which can help beginners ready themselves for the emotional alchemy of the subtle creation stage.

The *Healing Mother*: Transforming the Compulsive Mind/Body Process

Among the best loved and most widely used process practices in Tibet, the active process of the *Healing Mother* has unique features that make it both highly accessible and effective. This is partly due to the symbolic value of the archetype of the *Savioress* or *Heroic Mother*, best known in the most beneficent of her twenty-one forms: the pacifying, milk-white *Healing Mother*. Beyond the natural soothing effect of her motherly form, this archetype is traditionally used for its power to catalyze the inner transformation of emotional tone and instinctive response style that is the work of the subtle creation stage. In addition to the simple role-modeling imagery she shares with the *Healing Mentor* and other similar archetypes, the *Healing Mother* includes several added imagery tools, including one we'll unpack here and one we'll unpack in part 4. Those two power tools are: the art of protecting the stress-reactive mind/body process; and the art of sublimation based on vase breathing. Of these, we'll explore the first as a window into the subtle creation stage of the optimal integral process.⁹⁰

The Five Compulsive Mind/Body Systems: The Basis of Transformation

The stress-protective practice of the *Healing Mother* focuses on transforming the workings of the five main complexes in the subtle body, said to govern the five principal mind/body systems. If you recall, these five systems were enumerated in the simplest analysis of the mind/body process in Buddhist science and mindfulness practice, as the physical, sensory, conceptual, emotional and perceptual systems. Given this analysis, self-transformation is then modeled into three phases—basis, path, and fruit—defined in terms of the framework of the four noble truths. As Tsong Khapa says,

In the continuation of the *Esoteric Community Process*, “process” is said to mean (mind/body) continuum and to be of three types: a “base continuum” that is the base on which the paths are acting (to purify the obscurations); a “path continuum” that purifies this base; and a “fruit continuum” that is the fruit of purification.⁹¹

The basis of transformation is the normal, stress-reactive condition of the mind/process body process. It’s defined as the five life systems in their compulsive mode, poisoned by the five root compulsions, which I like to list as anger, greed, desire, envy and pride. Each of the five systems is linked with the toxic emotion that poisons its healthy functioning. The compulsive mode of the physical body is driven by toxic aggression and violence. The compulsive mode of sensation is driven by toxic greed and avarice. The compulsive mode of the conceptual system is driven by intoxicating acquisitiveness, craving, and clinging. The compulsive mode of the emotional system is driven by toxic envy, jealousy, and competitiveness. And the compulsive mode of the perceptual system is driven by self-reifying delusions and intoxicating pride.

The Five Types of Pure Genius and Intuitive Wisdom: The Fruit of Transformation

Next, drawing on the socially engaged teaching tradition, the fruit of the process of self-transformation is defined in terms of the embodiment of enlightened altruism or altruistic genius. You may recall that the fruit of fully mature social agency was analyzed on the engaged path into five families of enlightened altruism aligned with five types of altruistic genius: moral altruism and moral genius; social altruism and psychological genius; contemplative altruism and creative genius; active altruism and organizational genius; and intellectual altruism and scientific genius. Given the radical goal-orientation of the process teaching tradition, the masculine and feminine aspects of these five types of altruistic genius are identified with the five mind/body systems and five physical elements, when purged of the toxic influence of the five compulsions and guided by the emergence of five pure intuitive wisdoms. As it says in the *Esoteric Community Process*:

In short, the five aggregates are
Proclaimed to be the five enlightened geniuses.
The diamond media themselves are
The supreme *mandala* of the enlightened altruist(s).
Earth is called (the feminine genius) *Illuminatrix*.
The water element is (known as) the *Protectoress*.
The fire (element) is (to be called) the *Lotus Garbed*.
(The *Healing Mother*) the *Savioress* is proclaimed to be air.
(And space is the feminine genius *Diamond Texture*).
The practitioner always meditates
On forms, sounds, and so on, as divine.⁹²

So, the pure mode of the physical system and body solids is our masculine and feminine moral genius, guided by mirroring intuition. The pure mode of the sensory system and bodily fluids is our social altruism and psychological genius, guided by the equalizing intuition. The pure mode of the conceptual system and body heat is our contemplative altruism and creative genius, guided by the discriminating intuition. The pure mode of our emotional system and breath gases is our active altruism and organizational genius, guided by the executive intuition. And the pure mode of our perceptual system and body spaces is our intellectual altruism and scientific-philosophical genius, guided by the ultimacy intuition.⁹³ The reference also explains that the transformation of our mind/body systems and elements also involves purging and transforming the perceptual media of the five sense faculties and their objects into our male and female altruists.

Purifying the Five Systems by Role-Modeling: The Path of Transformation

As for the path which leads us from the basic condition of compulsive life to the final fruition of altruistic genius, this analysis is set within the alchemical view of self-transformation in the process tradition.⁹⁴ According to that view, we learn to transform the systems of our mind/body process from their compulsive mode to their enlightened mode by practicing the arts of archetypal imagery and sublimation within the crucible of the role-modeling bond, catalyzed by the creative influence of a mentor. One way this process is

envisioned and rehearsed in the subtle creation stage is with the help of the simplest kind of *body-mandala* and subtle body imagery.

According to that simple imagery, the body of the role-model is envisioned as a pure, luminous space inhabited by thumb-sized images of the five types of altruistic genius. Usually imagined as miniature replicas of the archetypal role-model made of five different colors of gem-toned light, these images form a *body-mandala* or inner circle of sub-personalities, each representing the presence of one of the five mind/body systems in their enlightened forms as types of altruistic, pure genius.⁹⁵ Their range of rainbow colors visually establishes them as analyzed parts of a full spectrum of capacities embodied in the mentor. In an even simpler version, the geniuses of the five systems are often reduced to five 3-D syllables, made of five, gem-toned lights, representing the five main tones or senses of the mentor's affirmative speech.

Installing the Simple Body-*Mandala* at the Five Main Points of the Subtle Body

The last step in setting up the imagery of the subtle creation stage is that the images of the mentor's sub-personalities, and/or their symbolic "seed-syllables," are installed at key places along the visualized network of the subtle body or central nervous system. At this point in the process, the main channels and complexes of the central nervous system may not be explicitly imagined. Instead, either the sub-personalities or the seed syllables representing them may be placed within the role-model's luminous body at key points along the spinal axis where the five main complexes of the central channel or neural tube would be.

Those five main points where syllables are placed are at the crown, throat, heart, navel and pelvis. While the syllables vary in different practices, in the *Esoteric Community* system, the seed syllables of the five genius types—Om, Ah, Hum, *Sva*, and *Ha*—are placed at the crown, throat, heart, navel, and pelvis, respectively. For simplicity, I will abbreviate these as exclamation points of five gem-toned lights, in line with a similar move made at later stages of traditional practice.⁹⁶ The five systems are color-coded and aligned with those points as follows: the physical system, diamond white, at the crown; the conceptual system, ruby red, at the throat; the perceptual system, sapphire blue at the heart; the sensory system, citrine gold at the navel; and the emotional systems, emerald green at the pelvis.

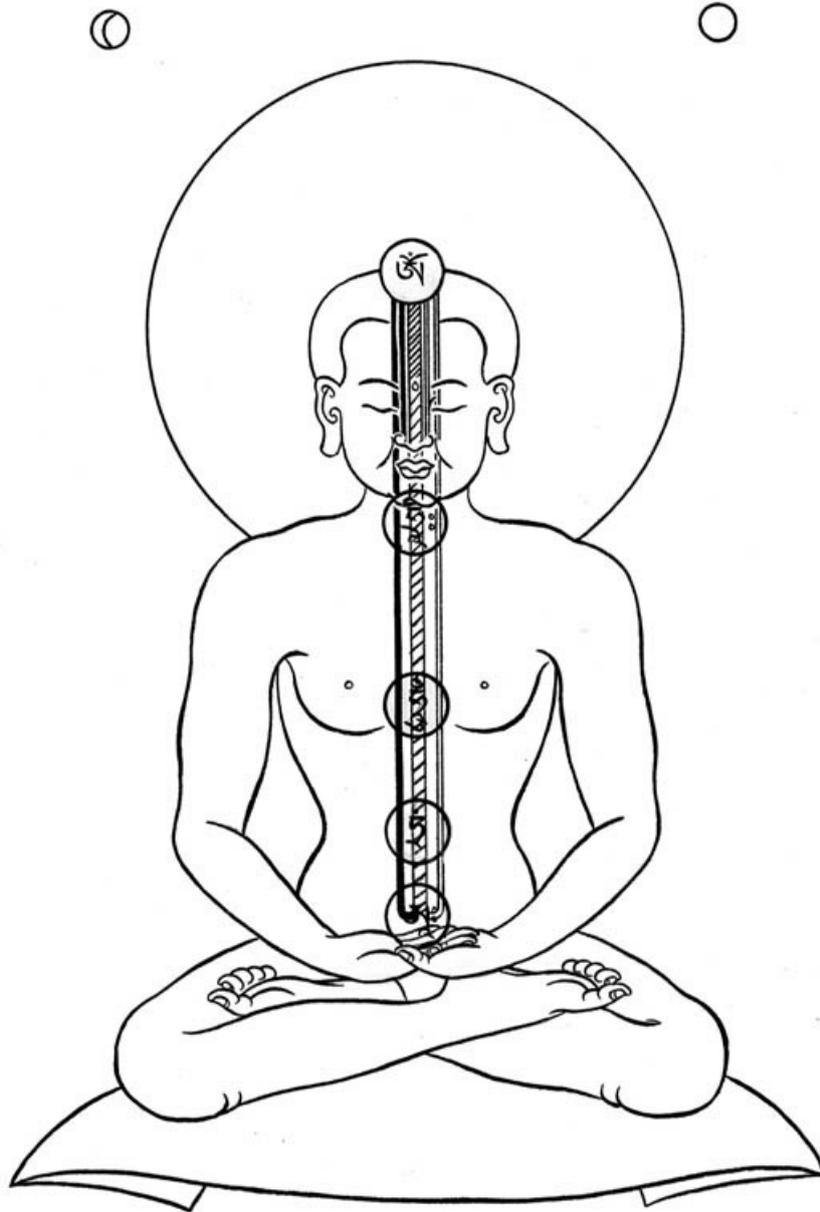


Figure 7.1 The Neural Network of Self-Regulation

Given this background, we're ready to return to the practice of the *Healing Mother*, and the power tool of stress-protective imagery and affirmation. In this practice, you first envision the *Healing Mother* as you did the *Healing Mentor*, seated in meditation on a giant rainbow lotus in front of you. In addition to her distinctive outward appearance—luminous white with seven eyes—within her translucent body of light, standing on five thumbnail sized moon-disc cushions at her crown, throat, heart, navel, and pelvis, are the five 3-D exclamation points of diamond, ruby, sapphire, citrine, and emerald light. Each glows with a rainbow aura shifted towards its main color, filling her body with a rainbow luminosity that glows through her pores to form an aura of rainbow radiance around her. Recalling that these syllables symbolize her embodiment of the geniuses of the five enlightened mind/body systems guided by five intuitive wisdoms, you then envision within your own meditative body of light the five moon discs with five color-coded exclamation points, symbolizing your five mind/body systems, though still obviously obscured and tainted by the compulsions of anger, desire, pride, greed, and envy.

Inserting the Art of Stress-Protection into the Role-Modeling Process

With this setup, you proceed through the seven steps of mentor bonding as you did with the *Healing Mentor*, but at the fifth step of requesting help, instead of a rainbow wave coming all at once from your role-model's heart, one at a time five beams of gem-toned light come from her five points to your five points. As each beam of gemlike laser light strikes each one of your points, you imagine that it purifies each system of its respective stress-toxin and transforms it into its enlightened form, crystal clear and radiating its particular gemlike light through your body of light. As each light in turn fills your body, you imagine it glowing out your pores, radiating in all directions twenty feet or more around you, where it sets up a firewall of gem-toned, laser light. As each new system is purified and transformed of the various toxins of stress and trauma, the light it radiates sets up another shell of firewall outside the previous shell(s), finally manifesting an impenetrable rainbow-hued firewall of five gem-toned laser lights.

Sealed with the *Healing Mother* within that protective firewall, you're safe to practice letting go of the emotional tone and reactive style of stress and trauma, knowing that any triggers from the stress world outside will be neutralized by the firewall of healing intuition and energy you're able to tap and emit. The subtle creative imagery of this meditation not only helps us perceive our outer and inner environment as safely contained within the crucible of the role-modeling bond, but also empowers us to practice experiencing our body-mind and its internal systems as purified and transformed by the catalyst of his or her healing influence and example.

Given this, we're ready for the closing meditative experiment of this chapter. Unlike the guided meditations thus far, this and following experiments will be structured in the traditional format of a performance script.⁹⁷ As the words suggest, the format guides our imagination and recitation as the dramatic script of a play would an actor's performance. While it may take some getting used to, this format has several benefits. Whether we actually read the script out loud or read it mentally to ourselves, the active work of announcing the imagery and affirmations helps shift our mode of engagement from receptively following to actively co-creating. This performative dimension not only empowers us to step more fully into the world of the meditation, but starts to prime the dynamic motivation, expression and interaction that plant the seeds for our eventually embodying the mentor's role and way of being. As in any script, I'll provide process notes and suggestions in italics, like stage directions. Affirmations will be in capitals. To prime your mind for experiment 7, please refer to the image of the *Healing Mother* in the color insert.

Meditative Experiment 7: Subtle, Stress-Protective Imagery and Affirmation

*Imagine yourself in a safe healing environment, on top of the world,
Feeling freely connected to all living beings,
Facing a gathering of the healing mentors, teachers,
Texts and communities that most open your heart & mind.
Sitting comfortably with hands placed,
Balance your energies, either with alternate nostril breaths
Or by exhaling fully and deeply one or more times.
Now rehearse the seven step role-modeling process,
Reading the following lines mentally or out loud,
As if you were reading them to your mentor,
Who sits right in front of you as the Healing Mother.
To get the most out of the process, pause for a moment
After reading each step, and try to see, feel and taste
The living, breathing presence of your role-model.*

Purifying Ordinary Perceptions of Self and World
"Suddenly all life and all things melt into pure, blissful openness!
In the deep space before me, out of sheer luminosity
Comes a giant rainbow lotus of total release,
In the midst of which glows a moon cushion of mind
That bubbles up a 3-D exclamation point
Of sapphire light, like a beacon of healing speech,

Radiating a rainbow aura of five pure energies,
And sounding the affirmation—
MAY ALL BE SAFE, WELL AND FREE!
Suddenly in the rainbow orb of that aura
Dawns the milk-white form of the Healing Mother,
Seated on the moon-cushion and giant rainbow lotus.
Lit from within her crown, throat, heart, navel and pelvis
By five moon-discs and gem-toned exclamation points,
Her translucent form, filled with five gem-toned lights,
Radiates a rainbow aura of blissful openness and art,
Embodying the love that is the mother of us all,
With all the marks and signs of perfect maturity.
Smiling in rapt attentiveness, with five extra, intuitive eyes
In her brow, palms, and soles making every gesture an art,
She wears the rainbow silks of five freedoms,
And the six transcendences as ornaments.
Her right palm over her knee faces out,
Offering protection and freedom from trauma,
Her left palm open over her heart holds the stem
Of three lotuses blossoming over her shoulder
The arts of longevity, empathy and pure genius!”

Inviting the Healing Mother's Presence and Blessing
“From the exclamation point at her heart,
The Mother beams light inviting all the nurturing
And healing mentors from all places and times
To merge into her and seal her with healing nectar,
Filling her and overflowing as a Long-Life Buddha crown.”

The First Step: Admiring
“Admiring the grace of your nurturing openness,
I entrust my life to your motherly care and teaching.”

The Second Step: Sharing
“All my resources, real and imagined,
Even this precious mind, body and life,
And our globe with all its life and wonders,
I dedicate to the blissful openness you embody.”

The Third Step: Disclosing
“In all honesty, I regret and admit each and every one
Of my obstacles, limits, and faults,
And resolve with your help to transform them all.”

The Fourth Step: Enjoying
“Turning competitiveness into the joy of teamwork,
I vicariously enjoy your qualities and vow to emulate every one.”

Enhancing the Fourth Step: The Four Boundless States
“May all beings have real happiness and its causes!
May we all be freed from all suffering and its causes!
May we all enjoy and savor all good things!
May we all know unwavering equanimity!” (Repeat 3X)

The Fifth Step: Requesting Help
“From the bottom of my heart I ask you, *Healing Mother*,
Please share with me your healing purity, genius and art!
Thrilled to be asked, the *Healing Mother* emits rainbow light

From the moon and sapphire exclamation point at her heart,
Filling galaxies to the furthest reaches of space,
Drawing the boundless renunciation, compassion and wisdom
Of all geniuses of all five kinds throughout space and time
Back to melt into her heart, then beaming them all to me
As a rainbow wave that engulfs and fills my body with light,
Transforming my mind into a heart-moon of lucid awareness,
My speech into a blue exclamation point of affirmative thought,
And my body into the milk-white body of a *Healing Mother*.”

Requesting the Mother's Purification and Protection

“Knowing that the gross transformation of my body-speech-mind
Is a mere simulation, from the depths of my heart I ask you,
Healing Mother, please share with me the subtle
Intuitive essence of your five-fold purity, genius and art!
Thrilled to be asked, the *Healing Mother* emits rainbow light
From the five points of her subtle body, beaming them
One at a time, to purify, protect, and transform
All five internal systems of my own subtle mind/body process.”

Purifying, Protecting, and Transforming the Physical System

“The Mother's crown-point beams diamond white light
To the opaque white exclamation point at my crown,
Clearing away the compulsive drive of aggression and violence,
Until my crown-point becomes clear diamond and shines
With pacifying diamond light that fills my physical body
With the moral genius of reflective intuition
Until it emanates from my pores and sets up a diamond laser shield
All around me that transforms any triggers
of aggression and violence.”

Purifying, Protecting, and Transforming the Sensory System

“The *Mother's* navel-point beams citrine gold light
To the opaque yellow exclamation point at my navel,
Clearing away the addictive hunger of greed and avarice,
Until my navel-point becomes clear citrine and shines
With a warm citrine light that fills my sensory system
With the social genius of equalizing intuition
Until it emanates from my pores and sets
up a second, citrine laser shield
All around me that transforms any triggers of greed and avarice.”

Purifying, Protecting, and Transforming the Conceptual System

“The *Mother's* throat-point beams ruby red light
To the opaque red exclamation point at my throat,
Clearing away the obsessive energy of craving and clinging,
Until my throat-point becomes clear ruby and shines
With a radiant ruby light that fills my conceptual system
With the creative genius of discriminating intuition
Until it emanates from my pores and sets up a third, ruby laser shield
All around me that transforms any triggers of craving and clinging.”

Purifying, Protecting, and Transforming the Emotional System

“The *Mother's* pelvic-point beams emerald green light
To the opaque green exclamation point at my pelvis,
Clearing away the competitive energy of envy and jealousy,
Until my pelvic-point becomes clear emerald and shines
With a vibrant emerald light that fills my emotional system

With the proactive genius of executive intuition
Until it emanates from my pores and sets
up a fourth, emerald laser shield
All around me that transforms any triggers of envy and jealousy.”

Purifying, Protecting, and Transforming the Perceptual System
“The *Mother’s* heart-point beams blue sapphire light
To the opaque blue exclamation point at my heart,
Clearing away the narcissistic energy of self-
reifying delusion and pride,
Until my heart-point becomes clear sapphire and shines
With a deep sapphire light that fills my perceptual system
With the intellectual genius of ultimate reality intuition
Until it emanates from my pores and sets
up a fifth, sapphire laser shield
All around me that transforms any triggers of delusion and pride.”

Sealing the Purity, Protection, and Transformation of All Five Systems
“The *Mother’s* five points beam all five rainbow lights
To the five exclamation points of my subtle mind/body,
Dispelling the instincts of all five primary compulsions,
Until my five points become clear gem-toned light and shine
With a rainbow aura that fills my five mind/body systems
With the fivefold genius of all five pure intuitions
Until it emanates from my pores and sets
up a sixth, amethyst laser shield
All around me that seals the transformation any compulsive triggers.

In each of the spaces between the six shields is a network
Of gem-toned light lotuses whose laser edges instantaneously
Disintegrate and transform any triggering
input from the outside world.
Safe within the firewall of the *Mother’s* intuition and art,
I finally release stress emotions and instincts,
And fully immerse myself in my pure, healing genius.”

Enhancing Stress-Protective Imagery with Affirmation:

*Focused first on each point and shield at a time,
And then on all points and all shields at once,
Recite mentally or out loud as many times as you like*

*Either the Mother’s brief affirmation—
MAY ALL BE SAFE, WELL AND FREE!*

*Her long affirmation—
MAY THE LIFESPAN, VIRTUES, AND
WISDOM OF ALL LIFE INCREASE!*

*Or her personally directed long affirmation—
MAY MY (OR ANYONE’S) LIFESPAN,
VIRTUES, AND WISDOM INCREASE!*

*As you recite the affirmation, imagine it beaming
Light and sound from each point in your subtle body
To each shell in your firewall, where it intensifies
The glow and power of each shell and lotus network,
And then beams back to intensify and clarify each point.*

*The crown-point beams diamond light to shield one,
Which intensifies and returns diamond light;*

*The navel-point beams citrine light to shield two,
Which intensifies and returns citrine light;*

The throat-point beams ruby light to shield three,

*Which intensifies and returns ruby light;
The pelvic-point beams emerald light to shield four,
Which intensifies and returns emerald light;
The heart-point beams sapphire light to shield five,
Which intensifies and returns sapphire light;
All five points beam rainbow light to shield six,
Which intensifies and returns rainbow light.
After the recitation, immerse yourself in the resonance
And afterglow as much and as long as you can.*

“One with the dignity of the mentor’s intuitive genius,
I look with her care at the world all around—
Find the *Healing Mother* in all living beings;
See all things enfolded in her healing art;
And hear all sounds echoing her affirmation!”

The Sixth Step: Requesting Constancy

“Knowing that this imagery is a mere simulation,
I ask you please to be my constant protector, companion
And guide, from now until I integrate your mastery,
And my five systems embody your fivefold genius!
Moved by affection for me, my role-model melts
From her crown and toes to the moon and exclamation point
At her heart, which in turn melt into the point’s single dot,
Like a tear-drop for joy, coalescing all her intuitions and energies.
Glowing with rainbow light, her heart-drop comes to my crown
And melts through my crown and throat into the exclamation point
At my heart, merging her healing essence with mine, intensifying
The light and warmth of all my five points,
until they fill me as flames
Fill a beacon and nectars, a vase, rippling out through my shields
In all my actions, until all those around me become
Healing Mothers, returning a wave of joy to my heart!”

Now pause to absorb and drink in the warmth and moisture of that joy, As long and deeply as you can, and then prepare to close the session:

“Suddenly the world outside, my healing space and body
All return to their normal appearance, the six shells outside
And the five moons and points inside all melt into my heart,
Then the exclamation point melts into the dot of my heart-drop.”

The Seventh Step: Dedication

“Any intuition and energy I’ve gained through this practice,
I dedicate to integrating my mentor’s intuitive essence
In this lifetime, as quickly as possible! And so, by mastering
The arts of role-modeling imagery and blissful openness,
May I purify my five compulsions, embody the five intuitions,
Transform my mind/body systems into the *Mother’s*
Fivefold healing genius, and bring all life to her optimal state!”

Afterimages: Some Reflections on Role-Modeling Imagery, Coarse and Subtle

As you may have gleaned from this experiment, this tradition of imagery stands in contrast to its Western analogues, not just in its use of ideal self-images in role-modeling bonds, but also because it prepares us to master the social-emotional and neurobiological art of sublimation. When we envision a new self-image in this tradition, the imagery prepares us not just for a new way of being in our social world, but also for new ways to live in our emotional body and nervous system. As in the exercises of parts 1 and 2, the imagery we’ve

explored begins by prompting us to envision our body in the lighter, clearer version I've called the "breath-body" or "body of light." What is new here is that this body helps make us more receptive to influence from an ideal role-model, giving our sense of self the plasticity we need to try on and take in a more ideal outer role and inner way of being. This kind of coarse and subtle self-imagery aims to help expand both our perception and emotional intelligence beyond reactive patterns. It also serves to open us to more empowered self-images, positive emotions, and peak states of physical arousal and flow.

As a note of encouragement, let me reassure those of you who doubt your ability to meditate with imagery. The trick is not to expect too much right away but to work with whatever you can muster, trusting that the process will bear fruit just as any new workout. Some of you may need to be content at first with just "reading" or "listening to" the "scripts" or "tapes" that guide imagery practice, like poems or short stories. The result you're seeking is that your imagery will gradually become as clear and real as normal perception, while retaining the sense of transparency that comes of consciously creating and evoking a specific perception in the mind's eye. Eventually, this skill will help you alter the basic building blocks of perception, including your habitual sense of yourself and others. And these shifts will open new doors in your perception, experience, and response to the worlds around you and inside you.