

# Module 4

## A Spiritual Dilemma

---

**Continue with the food diary and keep logging your emotions as they come up at each eating episode.**

### THE SPIRITUAL SOLUTION

Healing from problematic eating doesn't simply mean healing our physical aspects. It also means healing the spiritual, mental, and emotional being so that healing around food is permanent.

Of course, physically healing the body is important, but without healing the emotional and mental body, a permanent healing cannot take place. There is a deep interconnection among all four aspects of our being, and the spiritual component of recovery has been shown to be very important. Positive thinking, constructive self-behaviors, and a decline in body and shape obsession are strongly linked with spiritual recovery.

The word "spiritual" here doesn't mean religious. What we're talking about is a connection with the highest spirit in your life—a conscious connection with your deepest self. This connection may be through a deity such as Jesus, Allah, Buddha, and so forth, but only if that deity is what touches your deepest soul. However, a deity isn't necessary at all. What is important here is that you are working to consciously connect with your highest self throughout the day and to stay present and aware of your actions and behaviors. Some people find this connection through nature, meditation, prayer, breathing, music, dance, and so on.

So how does one connect with his or her highest source?

This is simply about training the mind to begin to *see* differently. As the mind shifts from a closed, confined, judgmental, confused, and distorted space to one of openness and clarity, it is only natural that you will find peace of mind as well and that positive behaviors will

become effortless as result. There is absolutely nothing “out there” that can create suffering like the diluted mind. A mind that is stuck in very rigid, black-and-white thinking is common in the problematic eater. Instead of staying in these low, vibrational thoughts, a person has the opportunity to connect with one’s higher self and begin to see more clearly. This spiritual connection heals problematic eating for life.

A connection to your truth (your needs, feelings, and emotions), faith in the ability to change your thoughts, and the willingness to do so are of utmost importance here because dysfunctional eating isn’t about what you’re eating but why.

Byron Katie says, “If you haven’t undone your painful thoughts, you can get into a bubble bath, light candles, recite positive affirmations, pamper yourself in every way—and once you’re out of the tub, the same thoughts will come back to haunt you. It’s like staging a seduction, only the one you’re trying to seduce is you.”<sup>7</sup>

Your thinking, therefore, creates patterns of beliefs that become so ingrained that they unconsciously determine the actions and behaviors that leave you stuck. When you are connected with your breath and are conscious of the thoughts and feelings that are present, you begin to feel connected and calm in your body, a spiritual connection begins, and your mind comes out of the trance. You begin to understand the thoughts driving you to eat in a destructive way. In the process of listening to the body and being present, you begin to understand in a very deep way that you’re able to consciously create your minute, hour, and day the way you want it to be—including how you want to feel in your body and what you will put on your plate.

By letting go of the diet mentality and embracing truth through conscious attention to the present moment and your thinking, you are able to actually enjoy nourishing food rather than looking for the next “fix.” Your body begins to *want* to eat well because you’re honoring your highest good by taking deep care of the mind in this way. You no longer have to live with rigid rules and punishing demands on yourself. In this way, you want to nourish your body because you care, and that is reason enough to be truthful and present with yourself and your food.

Looking deeply into the self might feel scary at first. Difficult feelings can arise when you are present and experiencing what is there rather than what you want to feel instead. Community can be helpful here, and being around others who understand what it means to “look inside” will offer a sense of validation that can help with this process in the beginning. Connecting with your truth is taking action. It is taking responsibility for your own mind, thoughts, and behaviors—and it will lead to freedom.

Caroline Myss writes, “This dark night of the soul’s emergence may seem daunting and discouraging, but growing into individual power inevitably creates some pain and discomfort. Yet it also offers us the chance to emerge at a higher level of mastery and satisfaction.”<sup>8</sup>

How can you connect with what you are feeling and move into a deeper exploration of self?

## Exploring Self

1. Be still in your mind and notice your thinking. Set a time every morning and evening for ten minutes to start. Make this a practice before all eating episodes (one minute of stillness).
2. Develop a “one day at a time” (or “one minute at a time”) attitude. By focusing on bringing your attention back to the present, when the old beliefs pop up or you find yourself in a stressful situation, you begin to let go of the futuristic pressure of “doing this for a lifetime.” Make a daily commitment to stay present, and send reminders to yourself on your phone to be here now.
3. Consciously imagine your ideal day. In the morning silence, set a couple of minutes aside at the end to attain quietness and calm the mind. Then say aloud that you are consciously creating your day. Decide what you want to be and feel throughout that day. Imagine yourself flowing through your day with grace and ease, understanding that you are connected to your highest energy source at all times.
4. Practice a morning ritual that binds you before you leave the house. Stick to it for one week and record how you feel. For example, you may start your day by immediately getting on your knees in prayer or by sitting on a cushion or in a chair for a short meditation. Then consciously create your day. Have your breakfast planned out the night before so you don’t think about what you will eat. Give yourself enough time to prepare your food, have time for quiet, and complete your morning routine without feeling rushed and anxious. Make your bed and leave your house feeling like things are in order and calm.
5. “Get present.” This is an important tool to practice throughout your day. Begin in the morning and remind yourself that one of your intentions is to be present throughout the

---

8 Caroline Myss, *Why People Don't Heal and How They Can* (New York: Three Rivers, 1997), 101.

day—to be in the here and now, not worrying about yesterday or what tomorrow will bring. When you experience a moment of anxiety or fear, simply ask yourself, “How far into the future am I?” Bring yourself back. “Is everything OK right here, right now?” In the beginning, you may need to bring yourself back many times throughout the day. Be gentle here. Accept what is. Let go of perfection.

6. Do morning pages. Julia Cameron speaks of “morning pages” in her book, *Finding Water*.<sup>9</sup> By getting up and writing three pages every day, you empty the chatter in your head and can “get present” to what’s going on emotionally. If three pages are too much, begin with one page. Without judging and worrying about how you are writing, simply write. This is something only you will look at, so be completely free with your words. This exercise may be as simple as getting down all you have to do in the day or just what you want to eat for breakfast. There is no right or wrong here. Just write!
7. Go on an artist date. This is another Julia Cameron inspiration. Make a commitment to take yourself out once a week (minimum) and do this in a place of deep love and gratitude for the amazing being you are. Treat yourself! Take yourself to a movie, go out to dinner, or even take a walk in a park. But make sure to plan this time ahead and acknowledge that this is time for *you* to be with *you*. Let go of the old voices that may say, “I don’t have time” or “I don’t deserve this.” Commit to a date this week. Come back and share how it felt.
8. Create a vision board of how you see yourself one year from today. Use bright, beautiful, and colorful pictures from books and magazines to create something you love looking at. You may include words that inspire you and describe the unique being you are. Put this board up where you can see it in your home and make sure it evokes feelings within you.
9. By creating a ceremony around mealtimes, you are not only bringing in your spirit essence but also grounding your body in the present moment. This can be very simple or more in depth if you feel drawn to that. Being grateful for the food—for where it came from and for the process it went through to get to you—is a beautiful way to acknowledge the goodness you are about to give your body. Acknowledging how the food will nourish your mind, body, and spirit and thanking yourself for giving your body such nourishment are also a great addition to a food ceremony.

---

<sup>9</sup> Julia Cameron, *Finding Water: The Act of Perseverance* (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 8.

## **Example**

“Thank you for this incredible nourishment I am about to feed my body and mind—all the beautiful colors and vibrant textures I get to be a part of. Thanks to all involved in bringing this precious meal to my table: the earth that held the soil for the seeds, the farmers who worked to manifest the vegetables, the truck drivers who brought the produce to the store, and the market attendants who cleaned and presented the food. Thanks to myself for treating my body in this divine way. I see all the cells of my body in a glowing, warm light—full of the healing energy of this food I am about to ingest. May I eat mindfully so as not to miss any part of this abundance.”

## **Morning Meditation**

Imagine a bright, glowing ball of white light at the top of your crown. It enters the crown of your head, and you know this is your life force, the highest place of energy in yourself, your prana. As it enters the crown of your head, you acknowledge this glowing light energy as purifying your distorted thinking; this light dissolves into all your cells. You know that you are the light, that you are divine brilliance. As you inhale and exhale, imagine this soft white light flowing through your entire body slowly and lighting up every cell it touches through the outer parts—head, shoulders, face, chest, waist, legs, and feet. It also cleanses the cells in every part of the body, illuminating every organ and muscle. As you visualize this brilliant white light, you are choosing to know that you are the light, that you are the power. If you have religious beliefs, simply acknowledge that you are in alignment with that higher energy being through the light. With every inhale, you breathe in this beautiful, peaceful white light, and on every exhale you allow the body to get rid of anything that isn't serving. Imagine this stale energy leaving the body in the form of dark, black smoke. As you exhale, it leaves through the feet and goes deep into the earth to be transformed. Your entire body is now radiating this beautiful, brilliant white light, and you feel calm. You feel at peace. You are present. You are here, now.

This is one tool to connect with the source—with your highest energy, the place of decision making. Learn to be conscious of your thinking as often as possible; you are able to let go of the negative automatic thoughts and replace them with this new life force energy. When you are in this connected space, you have the ability to make choices that benefit your deepest spirit.

## **Surrender Your Old Will**

What is our will? What are we surrendering it to?

Our “old will” is that place inside that feeds the delusions of our minds and keeps us stuck in disordered eating. When you begin to recover, it is easy to fall back into old behaviors and thoughts. Sometimes resistance shows up, and we find ourselves spiraling backward into old self-defeating patters.

Surrender means coming to the winning side, letting go of needing to control the show, and just allowing things to unfold at the pace they need with all the feelings that may come with it. This isn't an easy thing to do, and we need to remind ourselves daily that we are now ready to surrender our old, sneaky will and allow for the divine essence within us to shine.

Practice letting go of questions, assumptions, and old negative beliefs, placing them in the hands of the divine. (This is your highest self or any other entity you wish to surrender to.) Consciously connect—through prayer, meditation, or simply a quiet space each morning—to your higher self, your God consciousness, or the entity that you call the divine to release you from your old will and be open to the bigger plan and its timing in the universe. In this place of surrender, you will begin to feel an openness and expansion that creates the space for change.

## **Grace**

As you begin to surrender your old will and come into some new thinking about food, shape, and weight, you will begin to witness small (and sometimes big) miracles all around you. Grace is the powerful feeling of “being in the flow” or at the right place at the right time. It is a feeling of ease and comfort that has you know that you are being guided and looked after and that all is well. Of course, grace comes into our lives at different times and in different ways, but as you continue down the road of recovery, you certainly will experience grace in many different ways. By working with your spiritual toolbox and transforming your thinking, you make room for grace to surface in your life.

“Grace is an unreasonable force; it pays no mind to what we consider difficulties. It has the power to lift you beyond your abilities and draw support into your life just as you need it.”<sup>10</sup>

---

10 Alcoholics Anonymous. Alcoholics Anonymous. (New York, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc., 2001), 285



