



# TRANSFORMING

## *Self-Defeating Narratives*

### **The 3-1-2 Practice**

The 3-1-2 practice helps us free ourselves from the suffering of feeling separate. It's meant to be engaged precisely at the moment when you realize you feel stuck, triggered, shut down, or aggravated.

### **Philosophical Underpinnings of The 3-1-2**

In moments of distress, we often become immersed in an internal narrative that focuses our attention on the separate self, with our thoughts constructed in the first-person narrative voice: "I am not getting my needs met... I am being disrespected... I don't feel good... I have to be a better person... I am afraid that..."

Other times when we suffer, we may not have particular clarity about the cognitive processes going on. We can feel deeply emotional and often confused. These struggles can feel more somatic, more centered in the physical body, so they don't have a clear cognitive expression.

In either case, we may realize that we've become embroiled in a tension between different internal feelings and needs. One part of ourselves may feel in conflict with another part. The 3-1-2 practice can help us get clear about which parts feel activated and need encouragement from "center", or essence nature.

Regardless of how our suffering shows up, the teachings of non-dual Buddhism and the non-dual Śaiva/Śakta Tantra propose that all suffering is caused by our sense of the separate self and the deep dissatisfaction that results from feeling separate. In these traditions, therefore, the idea of an



# GENERATING

## *Self-Acceptance, Courage, and Presence*



# TRANSFORMING

## *Self-Defeating Narratives*

individuated “I” gets put deeply into question. That separate “I” around which so much of our cognitive worry circulates is not exactly real. If you look closely, it is nowhere to be found. The experiences that make up our sense of self are nested within a profound circle of interconnectedness that both influences and receives every thought, emotion, action, and outcome.

Consider the possibility that, at the level of consciousness, everything is so deeply interconnected that even the smallest gesture creates an infinite ripple. From this perspective, we can realize that much if not all of our suffering is caused by the experience of being “taken over” by parts of the self that feel defended, isolated from the whole, and trapped in self-referential thinking. Becoming identified with particular parts of ourselves occludes the truth of interbeing, and thus, we tend to grasp and cling to fixed beliefs and strong emotions for the illusion of protection and control that they provide.

### **The 3-1-2 Process**

The 3, 1, and 2 in the title of this practice refer to the 3rd person (he, she, they), 1st person (I, we), and 2nd person (you) narrative voices. The practice asks us to shift our awareness through these narrative voices to give ourselves a broader perspective on our predicament and open up space for healing and transformation.

So as a training, begin by imagining that you feel triggered. You might actually call up your awareness of an existing trigger. To find something to work with, you can ask yourself the questions: What breaks me apart from a sense of being inside the wholeness? What is currently triggering me? Where do I feel stuck?



# GENERATING

## *Self-Acceptance, Courage, and Presence*



# TRANSFORMING

## *Self-Defeating Narratives*

When you're ready, move through the 3 phases of the practice, one by one:

- **3rd person: Witness Phase.**

- Step out of your 1st person "I" narrative and into the 3rd person. Stimulate "witness consciousness," which often brings a quality of spaciousness and equanimity. Name the experience by giving it a title, as if you were titling a book in 3rd person. Such as, "Trevor engages in self-criticism in regards to his job." or "Trevor gives himself a very hard time."

- **1st person: Interoceptive Phase.**

- Next, come back inside yourself, and ask how this feels in the body. Notice any particular constriction, sensation, or physical experience. Also, notice any unmet need. Feel it deeply, and note the quality of separateness. This phase is meant to be very somatic. If there is a verbal, cognitive component, it would be in 1st person, such as "I feel nauseous." or "My shoulders are tense."
- You may also become aware of a story about self that feels limiting, but try to stay in the somatic, bodily, interoceptive experience. Interoceptive awareness stimulates brain areas that inhibit the activation of the Default Mode Network where a lot of self-referential (1st person) thinking occurs.

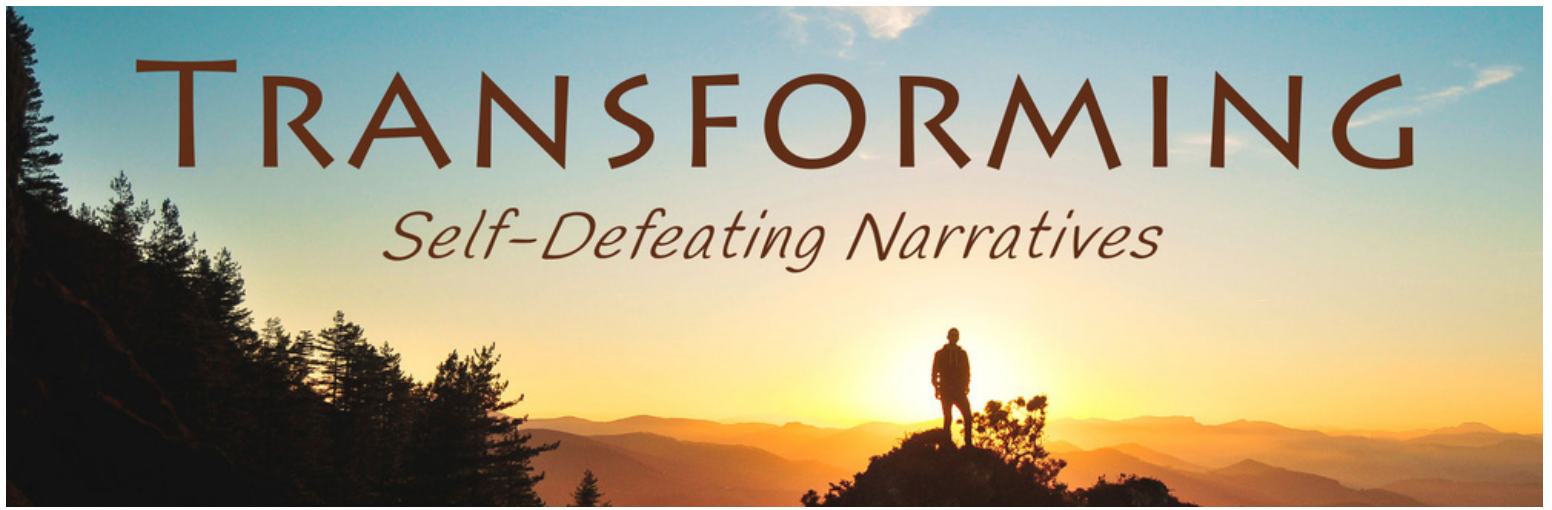
- **2nd person: Encouragement/Empowerment Phase.**

- Move into your wise inner knowing, and ask the being what is most needed. What would truly help alleviate the suffering? Then, offer yourself that exact reassurance in 2nd person, with a sense of love and spaciousness: "You're going to be ok." or "How you're feeling makes sense." or "You can do this, sweet one."
- Let those reassurances into the body, and feel the "I" experience relax or transform.



# GENERATING

## *Self-Acceptance, Courage, and Presence*



Ideally, rinse and repeat. The more you practice 3-1-2, the easier it becomes to draw yourself back into the circle of interconnection when you get stuck.

### **Origins and Influences of the 3-1-2**

The 3-1-2 practice was originally conceived in the context of a 9 month program called DharmaBridge, founded and led by Kelly Blaser. The DharmaBridge members have evolved it, expanded it, and given it juice.

The practice is based on:

- ideas in the non-dual tantra\* about the Self or the lack thereof
- influences from Zen awareness practice (Living Compassion)
- Cognitive Science and the work of Ethan Kross, PhD, Director of the Emotion & Self Control Laboratory at the University of Michigan.

\*By non-dual tantra, we mean Vajrayana Buddhism and the Non-Dual Śaiva and Śakta tantra.

© Kelly Blaser 2021, all rights reserved

