

How to Do the Work

Recognize Your Patterns,
Heal from Your Past,
and Create Your Self

Dr. Nicole
LePera

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Glossary of Holistic Psychology Terms

ALLOSTASIS: The physiological process of transitioning from a stress response state (fight or flight) back to homeostasis.

ANALYTIC MIND: The thinking part of the brain, located in the prefrontal cortex, which is engaged in problem solving and decision making.

ATTACHMENT: The relationship or bond between humans that is influenced by early childhood relationships with parent-figures.

AUTHENTIC LOVE: A safe space of mutual evolution between people that allows each person to be seen, heard, and authentically expressed.

AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM: The part of the body's central nervous system that is involved in the regulation of involuntary functions such as heartbeat, breathing, and digestion.

AUTOPILOT: The state of living unconsciously and without awareness, running on conditioned patterns (habit).

BEHAVIOR MODELING: The act of demonstrating behavior to others through one's actions, choices, and interpersonal engagement.

BELIEF: A practiced thought grounded in lived experience. A belief is built up over years of thought patterns that create neural pathways and requires both interior and exterior validation to thrive.

BOUNDARY: A protective limit established between oneself and others with the goal of defining where one ends and another begins. Clear boundaries enable individuals to honor their own needs and support authentic relationships.

CONDITIONING: The coping mechanisms, habits, and core beliefs we

inherited from parent-figures, authority figures, and the culture at large, beginning in early childhood.

CONSCIOUSNESS: The present state of awareness in which choice becomes possible.

COPING STRATEGIES (ADAPTIVE AND MALADAPTIVE): Actions we take as an attempt to return us to feelings of safety.

CORE BELIEFS: Our deepest perceptions about who we are that are ingrained in our subconscious before the age of seven based on our lived experiences.

CO-REGULATION: An interaction or exchange between people that allows for safety and security to process difficult and stressful emotional experiences, for example, when a child or infant is in a stressful situation and the mother uses a soothing tone of voice and/or holds the child while simultaneously acknowledging the child's distress.

CORTISOL: A stress hormone involved in the fight-or-flight response that activates the body to engage with or remove itself from a perceived threat.

CRITICAL INNER PARENT: The internalized voice of a parent-figure who denied one's reality as a child or who shamed or invalidated our needs, emotions, and thoughts.

DISSOCIATION: An adapted stress response in which a person is physically present and mentally detached, numb, or shut down due to an overwhelming of the nervous system.

DISTRESS TOLERANCE (ENDURANCE): The ability to feel and be with a difficult emotion, then return to a regulated state.

DYSREGULATION: A state of physiological imbalance in the nervous system.

EGOCENTRIC STATE: A developmental state of childhood in which there is an inability to understand a perspective or opinion outside one's own. In egocentric states things seem to happen *to us, because of us*, resulting in a false belief that another's behavior means something about who we are as a person.

EGO CONSCIOUSNESS: Complete identification with the ego, often resulting in reactivity, defensiveness, and shame.

EMOTIONAL ADDICTION: The unconscious drive of the subconscious mind toward familiar emotional states in which the body's nervous system and neurotransmitters are activating stress hormone responses.

EMOTIONAL DUMPING: The unloading of emotional issues onto another person without considering or being empathetic with that person's emotional state.

EMOTIONAL IMMATURITY: The inability to hold space for others' thoughts, opinions, feelings, or perspectives because of personal internal discomfort.

EMOTIONAL MATURITY: The ability to regulate one's emotions allowing for flexible thinking, open communication, and resilience in stressful experiences.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION: The ability to respond to stress in a flexible, tolerant, and adaptive way, allowing our nervous system to return to baseline.

EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE: The ability to be flexible and rebound quickly while processing a wide variety of emotional states.

EMPOWERMENT CONSCIOUSNESS: The understanding and acceptance of the ego that create a space of awareness. This space enables a person to make choices beyond knee-jerk ego reactivity.

ENMESHMENT: A relationship dynamic in which both a lack of boundaries and shared emotional states cause a lack of personal independence and autonomy.

ENTERIC NERVOUS SYSTEM: The part of the autonomic nervous system that governs all activities of the gut.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT: A nervous system response aimed at keeping us safe from perceived threat.

FUTURE SELF JOURNALING: A journaling tool used to support the conscious creation of new neural pathways and emotional states, leading to sustained behavioral change.

HOLDING SPACE: Being fully present and curious with someone, without judging or attempting to change them, as they express their emotions and experiences.

HOLISTIC PSYCHOLOGY: A practical healing philosophy that considers and addresses all parts of the person (mind, body, and soul), encourages the exploration of causes of symptoms rather than suppressing them, and acknowledges the interconnectedness of the universe.

HOMEOSTATIC IMPULSE: A psychological and biological pull toward the familiar, known as the habit self.

HOMEOSTASIS: The ability to maintain a relatively balanced internal and nervous system state regardless of the happenings in one's external environment.

INNER CHILD: An unconscious part of the mind in which we carry our unmet needs, our suppressed childhood emotions, our creativity, our intuition, and our ability to play.

INNER CHILD WOUNDS: The painful experiences carried into adulthood of not having our childhood physical, emotional, and spiritual needs (*to be seen, heard, and authentically expressed*) met.

INTERDEPENDENCE: A mutual supportive connectedness within a relationship that allows for boundaries, safety, autonomy, and full Self expression.

INTUITION: An internal knowing and inner insight that when listened to guides us toward our authentic path.

INTUITIVE SELF: The most authentic, spiritually connected Self that exists beyond conditioned patterns and conditioned responses.

MONKEY MIND: The constant stream of mental chatter that runs through the human mind.

NEGATIVITY BIAS: The brain's evolutionarily hardwired bias of prioritizing (and therefore valuing) negative information over positive information.

NEUROPLASTICITY: The ability of the brain to form new connections and pathways and to change and adapt the way its circuits are wired based on our experiences.

NOCEBO EFFECT: A scientifically documented phenomenon of when negative expectations of medical treatment or prognosis lead to negative results.

NORMATIVE STRESS: Predictable and expected stressful events that are universally common throughout one's life, for example, birth, marriage, and death.

PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM: A division of the autonomic nervous system (sometimes called the "rest and digest" system) that is responsible for conserving energy, lowering heart rate, and relaxing the muscles of the gastrointestinal tract.

PLACEBO EFFECT: A scientifically documented phenomenon in which an inert substance (such as a sugar pill) improves the symptoms of illness.

POLYVAGAL THEORY: A theory put forth by the psychiatrist Stephen Porges suggesting that the vagus nerve plays a central role in the central nervous system regulation that influences social connection, fear responses, and overall mental and emotional well-being.

PREFRONTAL CORTEX: The area of the brain that governs complex functions such as problem solving, decision making, future planning, and metacognition (*our ability to witness and think about our own thoughts*).

PSYCHONEUROIMMUNOLOGY: A branch of science dedicated to the study of the complex interplay among the mind, the nervous system, and the immune system.

REPARENTING: The practice of relearning how to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the inner child through daily, dedicated action.

RETICULAR ACTIVATING SYSTEM (RAS): A bundle of nerves located on the brain stem that filters the onslaught of stimuli in the environment and plays a crucial role in maintaining behavior, arousal, consciousness, and motivation.

SELF-BETRAYAL: A learned coping mechanism from childhood in which parts of ourselves are denied in order that we may be seen, heard, and accepted by others.

SHADOW SELF: The “undesirable” parts of our self that are repressed or denied as a result of conditioning and shame.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT MODE: A nervous system state of regulation in which safety and security can be accessed in order to be open and receptive to connections with others.

SOOTHING: The act of neutralizing our emotional states, enabling a return to homeostasis.

SPIRITUAL TRAUMA: The consistent experience of not feeling seen, heard, or free to express oneself authentically, resulting in a disconnection from the authentic Self and causing suffering, loneliness, and internalized shame.

SUBCONSCIOUS: The deeply embedded part of the psyche that holds all of our memories, suppressed feelings, childhood wounds, and core beliefs.

SURVIVAL BRAIN: A nervous system state of hyperfocus on perceived threats that results in black-and-white thinking, panic, and emotional shortsightedness.

SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM: The part of the autonomic nervous system that governs the fight-or-flight response to perceived stress.

TRAUMA: Any experience where an individual lacks the ability to emotionally regulate or process and then release the event, causing dysregulation to the body’s nervous system. Trauma impacts each person differently due to their own conditioning and modeled coping skills and cannot be qualified or measured.

TRAUMA BONDING: A conditioned pattern of relating to others in a way that mirrors or reenacts our earliest attachments with parent-figures. Trauma bonds typically contain dynamics of emotional abandonment, lack of boundaries, enmeshment, or avoidance and can happen in both romantic and platonic relationships.

VAGAL TONE: The ability of our nervous system to shift between sympathetic and parasympathetic activation in response to daily stress. Poor vagal tone results in misdirected responses and high sensitivity to

perceived threats in our environment. This overactivates the body's responses and leads to reduced emotional and attentional regulation overall.

WISE INNER PARENT: A nurturing practice within reparenting of creating an internal narrative that witnesses ourselves without judgment. The wise inner parent is able to see, hear, validate, and honor all emotional states, behaviors, and reactions with loving awareness.

Suggested Further Readings

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