

Inner Bonding: Getting out of the Head

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The ultimate aim of Inner Bonding is to assist us in shifting from identifying with our mentally-created “self” (the mental image of ourselves we created in childhood and reinforced throughout our lives), to *finding and experiencing ourselves as* our Core Self deep within our human heart and belly. Many people who begin working with Inner Bonding immediately “get” that this is not a mental or even purely emotional process. However, if there are any other people out there like me, who understand the process really well intellectually and resonate with it but still don’t fully “get it” experientially, I am writing this article for your benefit...read on.

What I am finding is that our growth and development is a process of repeatedly dropping and seeing through our identification with the mental images we have constructed of ourselves. As we let go of who we thought we were and open to the *felt* presence of the inner energies of our true essence, we rediscover and experience our true Core Self, the unique and personal sense of Self that we can *feel* deep within. This Core Self is not a mental creation and is not something we can point to in our physical world and yet it is the very real, palpable, personal Self created by the Divine (some might call this our Soul). I have found that this journey back to Core Self is not one we can think our way through and that indeed our intellect can become our biggest obstacle.

The potential pitfall is that we can use tools, even IB, to get more stuck and identified with the mentally-created self. Although it can be helpful to intellectually understand the IB concepts and terms, for someone like myself, the tools need to be used as pointers to the real process which, although it might begin in the thinking mind, ultimately is a shift away from focusing on the self-image we created with our thoughts, to knowing, feeling and experiencing ourselves as the energies of our true Core Self. *In other words, I am not who I **think** I am, I am who I **feel** and **experience** myself to be within my core.*

An analogy is that of someone who has never taken a plunge into a pool of water. For this newcomer it might be helpful to mentally understand the nature of water, the physics of how to stay afloat and swim, and to listen to other people’s descriptions of what it feels like to be in the water. And yet, until I take the plunge myself, I will only have a mental idea of what it might be like--I am not experiencing and directly contacting the water myself. Others might encourage me, tell me it is safe. I can even really *want* to jump in and yet there is a way in which my old defenses prevent me from actually doing it. I might mimic those swimming in the water and even pretend to swim in a mental way, and yet, I am not truly experiencing it; I have not jumped in and contacted the water personally and directly.

Similarly, it is possible to read about and hear descriptions of what it is like to do Inner Bonding, even to be guided through the process and yet, still be walking around the pool pretending to

be swimming when I am really still standing on the water's edge terrified to take the leap. There is a subtle way in which I can do IB as a process, even have real contact with spiritual guidance and be in-touch with my emotions, and still avoid contacting my Core Self. I can go through all the steps, feel my emotions, mentally be in the intention to learn and at the end of the process believe that I am splashing around in the pool but really I am still standing at the water's edge with knees trembling.

What I have begun to realize is that I did IB in such a way that old false beliefs about my mentally-constructed self were changed, which brought a type of relief and even peace because our emotions usually reflect our thoughts. And yet, the fundamental problem remained in that I still identified myself as a mental image (albeit a much more pleasant one) and still felt cut off from the essence of my Core Self. It is like the old saying goes about "moving the chairs on the deck of the Titanic". My self-image was improving because I was changing false beliefs, but I was still identifying with my self-"image" instead of finding my true identity by *feeling* and *contacting* my Core Self. In other words, I was changing my thoughts about my self instead of finding my SELF.

When I have used IB (and other tools) in this way, I would somehow feel empty and incomplete even though I might simultaneously feel the presence of love or peace. I felt as though there was still something vague missing. I did not know it, but I was feeling the absence of contact with my Core Self, which is the true wellspring of my personal essence and the connection to the personal Divine within. The way I was using Inner Bonding was helpful and yet, for me, there was something missing.

My wife, Karen, who also went through IB training at the same time I did, is an example of someone who immediately leapt into the water with a loud and emphatic "whooo hoooo!" (I believe she did a cannonball). Karen "got" IB at a deep experiential level and never looked back. I, on the other hand, didn't, despite a very good intellectual understanding of it and despite observing it extensively in Karen.

For me it has been a long and very gradual process of returning to *feeling* my Core Self through explorations in other areas, such as experiencing myself in my Hara ("navel center" in Japanese) through Aikido and through the writings of teachers such as Karlfried Graf Dürckheim and A.H. Almaas which have validated my own experiences of Core Self. As a result, I am also realizing that I have had previous experiences of my Core Self (especially in childhood) but no one was there to point out to me "*that is you experiencing your Self*". As a result, I negated and invalidated those experiences as not being "real" and defaulted to creating a mental image of myself and operating from that mental identity. I also now understand that when the founder of Inner Bonding, Margaret Paul, would say to people at intensives "I can't *feel* you", she probably meant that she couldn't feel the person being in contact with their Core Self within their belly.

Now a whole new world is opening. This world isn't just the magical oneness experience of the *impersonal* Divine but rather a deeply *personal* Divine that is the "me-ness" of who I am as an

individual Soul. Many Inner Bonders know both this world and this true Self, but to me this world was fantasy constructed in my thinking mind and no matter how hard I tried I could not “get there” in my usual way of functioning and understanding. So if there is anyone else out there that feels stuck in this way, my heart opens to you, I know it is not that you haven’t tried!

Personally, I believe that the journey of growth and discovery continues forever and that Inner Bonding is no exception—that there are constantly new fun insights and experiences as we deepen in our understanding. So I encourage you also to continue being curious and to explore Inner Bonding in an even deeper way whether you feel that you “get it” or not. Now, excuse me, I think that I would like to try a swan dive...Karen, my dogs and a whole lot of wonderful people are having way too much fun without me.