

Inner Conflicts and Agreements with Yourself

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Making and keeping agreements with yourself helps to build confidence and self-trust. However, it can be a source of inner conflict. For example, one part of you wants to watch a movie and another part of you wants you to get your work done. You might find yourself entangled in this inner conflict over and over again. You feel stress, wishing for a sense of ease and inner harmony. You would also like to trust yourself to engage in behaviors that truly support your life.

To sort inner conflict and make doable agreements with yourself, it's helpful to focus on the following three things:

1. Confusion and bias with regards to your needs
2. A lack of diversity and flexibility with strategies to meet your needs.
3. Confusing specific doable strategies with what you think you "should" do.

Let's look at these three aspects and how they can help with inner conflict and creating life serving agreements with yourself.

While you have the same needs as everyone else, your relationship to each need is unique. For some needs you have an easy confidence. For other needs you feel insecure. And for some, you carry a bias against them. Sorting needs in a concrete way, can help you begin to change this bias or insecurity.

One simple sorting method is to name two parts or "selves" in an inner conflict or broken agreement with yourself. This can be as simple as "the me that wants to watch a movie" and "the me that wants to get work done." Sorting in this way allows you to name the needs for each part of yourself more easily. For example, watching a movie might meet needs for ease, comfort, fun, and rest. Doing work might meet needs for integrity, contribution, and order. If there is bias against particular needs, you will likely consistently deny those needs which contributes to breaking agreements and a sense of inner tension. Thus it's helpful to write down both sets of needs and keep them in front of you for the next step. Writing each need on an index card or pulling them from the needs deck further supports holding all needs equally.

Seeing the needs individually on cards, you can begin brainstorming diverse and flexible strategies by placing one need in front of you at a time. Focusing just on that one need, write down as many ways as possible (at least five) for meeting that need; both what you are already doing and what you might do. While this process may be a bit long, it will build your capacity for creativity and diversity regarding meeting needs. In the long term, such capacity will result in incredible confidence and ease. Commit to doing this exercise once a week for a month.

Next, put all the needs relevant to the situation and the potential strategies to meet them in front of you and notice where your aliveness takes you. Tracking for aliveness is key. With a mind that is caught in what you think you should do, you will create agreements with yourself that are not sustainable. This sometimes results in a repetitive cycle of pushing yourself and then collapsing or "giving in" to the behavior you don't enjoy, then feeling guilty, then pushing, etc.

When you are truly connected with a sense of aliveness, you are naturally attracted to sustainable and responsible strategies for meeting needs. A specific and doable agreement with yourself is not just one that answers the questions: What? When? Where? Who? How long? How often? It is also something that, when you think about doing it, you have a sense of energy and confidence. Any sign of inner pushing is a sign that the proposed agreement isn't doable.

Shifting an agreement with yourself from something that is forced to something that is alive for you is simpler than you might think. Three things are helpful to keep in mind.

- **Time:** Often simply adjusting the amount of time to engage in something will shift doability. For example, if you tend to have bias for work related needs, play time often needs to be extended. You may find that the extended play leaves you with a natural inclination to do the work that you were previously pushing yourself to do.
- **Smaller Focused Bits:** You have likely heard of breaking down a work task into smaller approachable bits. This can also be true for meeting other needs. Sometimes when you are having feelings of lack, your mind moves to extreme strategies. For example, you have been neglecting exercise so you impulsively join a boxing gym. In reality, just getting up from your desk three times a day for a walk or some push ups can be very satisfying.
- **Meaning/Purpose:** Old strategies to meet needs can become numb routines when you lose contact with the true purpose they serve. For example, making lunch for the kids everyday can become a disconnected task or a way to love them. Check in with agreements or choices that you currently experience as an obligation and ask yourself what needs you are trying to meet and if this contributes to your sense of meaning and purpose.

Making and keeping agreements with yourself is an essential life skill and also a way to honor your life. Inner conflict is a call for you to attend to the nuances of creating specific, doable, and life giving agreements.

Practice

Take a moment to reflect on one agreement you have not kept with yourself. How would you identify the parts of yourself at play in the agreement? What needs are alive for each part?