To Bite or Not To Bite:

Exploring the life myth to develop the inner facilitator

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By

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"When an obstacle to union arises,

energetic biting through brings success".

I Ching Hexagram 21

Abstract

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This study is a personal exploration of how an enhanced awareness of the student´s individual life myth can inform their development as a process-oriented facilitator. Starting from the premise that the difficulties and challenges encountered on the path of the student facilitator are traceable to the energies and polarities found in the first childhood memory, and using a heuristic self-inquiry approach, the author examines a number of relationship and group facilitation experiences, identifying recurring patterns of behavior in dealing with conflict situations. Applying innerwork techniques and exercises, the author explores the link between these recurring edge-like patterns and the dynamics of the original childhood memory, the first gateway into the ever evolving life myth. The result is an insightful perspective into the facilitator´s journey towards awareness and fluidity.

Key words: life myth, facilitator development, innerwork, heuristic self-inquiry, conflict, conflict facilitation, inner critic, mythical task, ally, inner opponent, wrestling the ally

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Introduction

This paper is a personal exploration of my journey as a student of Process-Oriented Conflict Facilitation. My interest in writing a personal account of this learning journey grew from the realization that many of the challenges that have arisen over the 3 years of study were already familiar to me. Each time I facilitated a group process or a relationship, or took part in conflict work, I experienced disturbances and difficulties that generated a feeling of being stuck in repetitive patterns that reminded me of past situations from my personal history.

The study of processwork requires the student to experience deep and intense intellectual and emotional challenges. Each of us brings our own uniqueness and individuality to the learning process and those challenges and difficulties that we face are also unique to each of us. Some of those difficulties will be new while others may be well-known to us. One of the things that first attracted me to the study of processwork was its clear expectation that the student would need to embark on a journey of personal growth and awareness.

In studying conflict facilitation I have been required to examine my own attitudes to conflict. I have had to sit in the fire of conflict and it has made me aware of habits, acquired over a lifetime, in dealing with conflict situations and with relationships in general. One of these habits is the tendency to avoid conflict situations altogether. An inner conflict, for instance, can be the source of much emotional pain and discomfort and I

have often postponed facing and dealing with situations or making decisions that would otherwise alleviate this inner tension. Similarly, in conflict with others, I usually dread having to face and confront the other party because of the difficulties that this entails. As Goodbread (2010) asserts, "conflict summons images of escalating emotions, loss of control, and ultimately, violence and destruction" (p.9).

While such reluctance to delve into conflict situations is shared by most people, it may seem surprising that a conflict facilitator may not be comfortable in conflict. In studying processwork it has been a relief to discover that very few conflict facilitators are. In the processwork paradigm, conflict is seen as a necessary and intrinsic part of nature. When we are in conflict, the flow of experience is interrupted by a disturbance. This applies to inner and outer conflict.

The practice of processwork provides methods and tools that allow us to identify and understand how this disturbance manifests in ourselves and in our interactions with the other. It involves understanding "process" as "the flow of experience in oneself and in the environment and following this flow in a differentiated way" (Diamond & Jones, 2004, p. 17). In processwork, the ability to follow process is an important skill for a conflict facilitator. Following it in a differentiated way means developing the awareness to notice change in different dimensions of experience, both in the other and in myself. As a student, the training has put me in situations where I have noticed recurring patterns of behavior that prevented me from being able to follow, unfold and deepen the process

during facilitation experiences. This has caused me great discomfort and hinted at life-long patterns of behavior in conflict and relationship.

In this paper, I explore the link between these life-long patterns and the life myth, a Jungian concept that describes a "patterning for life-long development" (Diamond & Jones, 2004, p. 148) and which is unique to each individual. So how do we identify the life myth? Jung proposed that the earliest childhood memories and dreams offer the first revelations on the individual life myth, and that the life myth can also be seen in recurrent and long-term experiences. This paper reflects this inner journey, beginning with my first childhood memory as the earliest gateway or entry point into the personal life myth, understanding that the energies and polarities present in the childhood memory also reflect tendencies that are present throughout one´s life.

The life myth is not a fixed, static blueprint for one´s life, but rather a set of tendencies and probabilities, a form of "psychological inheritance" according to Mindell (as cited in Diamond, 1995, p. 148). The life myth remains the same in its essence but the different elements or polarities are more predominant at different stages in our lives. Our personal development and psychological growth creates a constant reworking of our life myth. Our experience of the energies and their presence in the childhood memory varies depending on the developmental stage and often what was adequate at one stage can potentially hold us back from entering a new stage in our lives. Another element of the life myth is that it also contains a *mythic task* that is hinted at by the dynamics inherent in the polarities of the

childhood memory. Exploring and unfolding my mythic task is another element of this final project.

I begin by discussing existing literature on conflict facilitation and facilitator development from a mainstream perspective followed by selected basic theoretical processwork concepts that are relevant to this project. I then present my first childhood memory, explore the possible interpretations that it evokes, and establish the energies, issues, and polarities that are present. The following two chapters explore the concept of life myth and delve into its significance for facilitator development. I include a more personal exploration of my own life myth, using elements from my childhood memory as well as personal history. I discuss processwork´s approach to facilitation and identify several of the key challenges in the training process from the student´s perspective as well as their connection to my life myth, using examples of facilitation experiences in two different contexts: first, in the facilitation of a relationship, and second, in the facilitation of a group. The figure of the Inner Critic is at the core of this project, and it provides a focus for innerwork and the process of transformation that is required on the path to become a processwork conflict facilitator. My relationship with the Inner Critic is explored through examples drawn from my facilitation training as well as the process of writing this paper.

The purpose of the project was to explore the way that life edges affect our development as conflict facilitators and was a personal study of my ongoing journey towards awareness and fluidity. It describes my search for that state whereby I can be a source and agent for

healing in whatever situation I am in in the world. My deep desire to be able to increase my level of awareness and presence in the world is what drives this project.

In adopting the heuristic self-inquiry approach I committed to a personal exploration and sharing of my experience. The term *heuristic* originates from the Greek word *heuriskein* which means "to find out or to discover" (Mangal & Mangal, 2009, p. 250). "All heuristic enquiry begins with the internal search to discover, with an encompassing puzzlement, a passionate desire to know, a devotion and commitment to pursue a question that is strongly connected to one´s own identity and selfhood." (Moustakas, 1990, p. 40).

In this project I will explore my life myth and my experience of conflict, and show that they are intrinsically related. I feel fortunate that the study of processwork has given me the opportunity to delve into this area of my life in such depth. I trust that the sharing of my experience may benefit reader.

Contribution to the Field

This research contributes to the processwork community by the personal and experiential nature of the approach towards the study of the art of conflict facilitation from the developing student´s perspective. All students of process-oriented conflict facilitation face challenges in their personal development. Each student will have their own mythic path to contend with, and this life myth will shape their journey towards awareness and fluidity. I

trust that this attempt at self-reflection may inspire others in their own attempts to explore their life-edges and their own mythic task, embedded in their childhood memory or dream.

The self-reflective approach of writing about my inner experiences has been difficult and liberating at the same time. The struggle with the Inner Critic figure is something that most people have to contend with at some stage through their lives. In documenting this struggle, I am subscribing to the view that if you work for yourself you also work for everybody else.

Research Question

This project seeks to answer the following question: How does an increased awareness of the energies and polarities inherent in our life myth impact on our relationships to ourselves and the world and, ultimately, our development as conflict facilitators?

I began this project by acknowledging my bias around this research question. I do believe that my ability as a facilitator is closely linked to my ability to develop my awareness not only around me but also my inner awareness. I also believe that the dynamics of my life myth are constantly playing themselves out in life situations, especially those that I find most challenging. The challenge to become a processwork facilitator is by far one of the biggest challenges I have ever faced. I trusted that this project would lead not only to new insights about my own process but also be a contribution to the field of processwork, mainly through the sharing in depth of the personal experience of developing the inner facilitator using the life myth as a guiding light.

Notes on Form

I chose to use capitals when referring to some dream figures, like the Ally, the Inner Critic, the Biter, the Bitten One et cetera. This is part of my awareness project. Capitalizing the words gives the figures a quality which emphasizes their mythical nature. It brings them out of the shadows. They are part of the Dreaming. I am saying to them, "I know you are there. I am calling you out."

Literature Review

The literature review focused on two elements that I have identified as the basic elements for this heuristic study. They were as follows:

- Conflict and conflict facilitation

- Life myth

I will describe mainstream approaches to Conflict Resolution focusing mainly on the perspective of the facilitator while also exploring a number of different approaches to the conflict facilitation experience. I also explore the concept of myth, the life myth, and its significance to personal development. The questions that drove this literature review were as follows:

- What is the goal of the conflict facilitator?

- What skills or attitudes are important for the facilitator?

- What causes conflict?

- How is the personal development of the conflict facilitator addressed?

Most writing and research around conflict agree on two basic ideas: "…conflict is normal in human relationships and conflict is a motor of change" (Lederach, 2003, para. 5). A Facilitator facilitates conflict. The word "facilitate" is derived from the latin *"facilis",* and means "to make (something) easier, help bring about" (Merriam-Webster´s online dictionary, n.d.). The term conflict facilitation itself is relatively new to the field, with conflict resolution and later mediation being predominant (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000). For the purposes of this study, I used the generic term *facilitator* to refer to the practitioner of conflict mediation, resolution or facilitation. I looked at the traditional role of the facilitator

in situations of conflict and highlighted the essential differences between the processwork and nonprocesswork facilitator.

A review of the literature on conflict resolution shows a wide scientific foundation in the study of the dynamics of conflict, including static and dynamic models as well as Game Theory (Boulding, 1962), and Lewin´s Field Theory (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000). Most literature on conflict resolution is able to define the basic personal characteristics required to become a successful facilitator, with the ability to communicate effectively, good management and leadership skills, good interpersonal and listening skills, basic empathy and non-judgmental attitudes being most important (Deutsch & Coleman , 2000). Kressel (2006) describes mediation as an "inordinately stressful social role", a stress that is compounded by a "lack of a proven theory on many central issues of professional behavior" (p.747). The same author promotes a reflective approach as an essential part of the learning process, while Marsick and Sauquet (2000) advocate creating "space for naming and working with feelings" (p.392) as a way of expanding the awareness of the facilitator as well as the parties in conflict. Kressel (2006) also challenges the "mythic belief…that a proper mediator must be neutral, nondirective, and impartial" (p.747).

Riskin (2010) promotes the practice of mindfulness meditation to develop self-awareness in the facilitator. He argues that awareness of own thoughts, emotions and sensations felt by the facilitator will affect his ability to effectively deal with conflict situations.

Lederach (1997) introduces the concept of "conflict transformation" to describe an approach which looks to move beyond the focus on "the cognitive skills of analyzing conflict and the communicative skills of negotiation (p.107). In seeking to understand the link between conflict and change, Lederach identifies four dimensions in which conflict impacts situations and people:

1. personal

2. relational

3. structural

4. cultural

Conflict transformation seeks to address these four dimensions by:

1. Minimizing the destructive effects of social conflict and maximizing the potential for personal growth at physical, emotional, and spiritual levels (personal);

2. Minimizing poorly functioning communication and maximizing understanding (relational);

3. Understanding root causes of violent conflict; promoting non-violent mechanisms; minimizing violence; fostering structures that meet basic human needs and maximize public participation (structural);

4. Identifying and understand cultural patterns that contribute to the rise of violent expressions of conflict; identifying cultural resources for constructively handling conflict (cultural) (2003).

Lederach (2003) highlights two central root causes of social conflict: *identity* and

relationship. He advocates for the creation of "spaces and processes that encourage people

to address and articulate a positive sense of identity in relationship to others but not in

reaction to them" (Lederach, 2003, p. 14). Lederach expounds three guiding principles to

achieve this goal: honesty (to build trust), iterative learning (to acknowledge complexity)

and appropriate exchange (beyond face-to-face dialogue).

On the specific topic of the facilitator, Lederach (2003) identifies several basic skills:

Firstly, the "capacity to see the difference between content of a conflict and its emotional

and relational context" (Lederach, 2003, p.13). Secondly, an ability to recognize what sort

of processes and time frames are appropriate at a particular point of the transformation

process; thirdly, the ability to frame in an inclusive manner that embraces complexity and

diversity, instead of an either/or approach; and lastly befriending complexity, recognizing

its potential for building desired change. Lederach´s conflict transformation approach

looks beyond the specifics of the current conflict and brings in historical and cultural

aspects that form part of the conflict. Conflict Transformation is seen as an ongoing

process. It is inclusive and welcomes the diversity and complexity that the sides bring,

encouraging dialogue and exchange beyond the verbal stage.

Bowling and Hoffmann (2003, as quoted in Siver, 2006) highlight the facilitator´s

psychological, intellectual, and spiritual qualities as having a direct and potent impact on

the process and outcome of mediation. They identify three stages in the development of the

mediator/facilitator, the first being the apprentice stage of learning of theory and technique.

The second stage is working toward an intellectual understanding of how and why

mediation works through empirical and theoretical research. Third is the facilitator´s own

awareness of how his or her personal qualities influence the mediation process. In this

stage, the facilitator focuses on their personal development in order "to reach a deeper level

of personal connection with the parties, so that the reframing resonates with authenticity"

(Bowling & Hoffmann, 2003, as quoted in Siver, 2006, p. 8).

A life myth is "a constellation of beliefs, feelings, images, and rules – operating largely

outside of conscious awareness – that interprets sensations, constructs explanations, and

directs behavior" (Feinstein, 1997, p510). In modern psychology literature, it is Jung who

first studied the link between psyche and mythology in depth. He saw dreams as being a

window into a common consciousness that tied humanity together. Jung also believed that

"each life has a myth or pattern that holds a life´s fate and a task that grows out of that

pattern" (as cited in Shapiro, 2001, p. 81) and that early dreams or memories show us this

pattern (1964). Mindell´s work has expanded Jung´s idea that the life myth was linked to

childhood dreams and memories by adding other elements that are also connected to the life

myth, in particular chronic symptoms, illnesses, addictions and relationship patterns

(Diamond & Jones, 2004).

Feinstein (1997) proposed a five-stage model for working with the life myth:
-    Identifying the mythic conflict underlying psychological difficulties

- Understanding both sides of the conflict

- Conceiving a new mythic vision that integrates the most vital aspects of the old and the emerging myths

- Refining the new mythic vision and making a conscious commitment to it

- Translating a new mythology into daily life.

Joseph Campbell´s study of history and mythology highlights the importance of myth in our lives not only as a collective but also as individuals. In the same way that cultural myths are seen to reflect a whole culture, similarly a life myth is a reflection of the life path of an individual (2004). Each individual has a unique life myth and each life myth has a task attached to it, a challenge inherent in the polarities that appear in the childhood dream or memory and which manifest themselves throughout our lives. Campbell (as quoted in Feinstein & Krippner, 1988) also suggests that there are four areas where this mythic task becomes relevant:

- to provide meaning to the life experience;

- to navigate the different stages in life by tracing a unique path;

- in the way we relate to others; and

- the yearning to find our place in the vastness of the cosmos.

Selected Processwork Theory

"Process work is an evolving, trans-disciplinary approach supporting individuals, relationships and organizations to discover themselves. PW uses awareness to track "real" and "imaginary" psychological and physical processes that illuminate and possibly resolve inner, relationship, team, and world issues." (Mindell, Amy, & Mindell, Arnold, n.d.).

processwork, also known as Process-oriented Psychology, is a cross-disciplinary approach that supports individual and collective change. Its origins are rooted in Jungian psychology, Taoism, shamanism and quantum physics. It is an awareness practice that in its early days, influenced by a Jungian approach, focused on night dreams and active imagination, and later extended to include body symptoms and other proprioceptive experiences. Mindell (1995) discovered that our bodies are dreaming 24-hours a day, and this dreaming follows a teleological path, meaning that "events are striving toward a meaningful purpose or goal" (p.55). Mindell called this dreaming process the *Dreambody*. Extensive further research by Mindell and colleagues led to the development of a signal-based system that allows the therapist or facilitator to guide the individual in unfolding the meaning of these dreaming signals. processwork can be applied and be effective in a variety of settings, including self-guided inner work, individual therapy, relationship work, group work, community and organizational development, diversity and leadership training to name a few. For this paper, I focus on those elements of processwork that are relevant to the field of conflict facilitation.

Conflict, according to Arnold Mindell (2000), is a "master teacher" (p. 196) and, as such, it is to be welcome and embraced. The role of the facilitator in processwork is based on a feeling attitude that is foundational to the processwork approach, which Mindell calls Deep Democracy. Deep democracy is "the belief in the inherent importance of all parts of ourselves and all viewpoints in the world around us" (Mindell, 1992, p. 13). All parts are needed for sustainability and wholeness. Deep Democracy also considers all levels of reality to have equal importance and requiring equal attention: Consensus Reality, Dreamland level, and Essence level. Deep Democracy encourages the conflictive parts to express themselves in their full polarity and diversity, in order to allow these parts to experience themselves and each other. This interaction is usually done via the use of roles in the field, utilizing concepts that derive directly from Role and Field Theory. When working with the inner psyche of individuals, this interaction of roles reflects the different parts of one´s personality that form our whole identity, in particular those parts which may be in conflict with each other. Similarly for groups, roles also exist as part of the group identity and can be drawn out via the facilitator's awareness of the group's dynamics which become apparent in the group's signals, verbal and nonverbal. It is in this interaction of all the different voices or roles that the parts can begin to move towards a solution (Diamond & Jones, 2004). The significance of this approach and methodology to working with conflict is that it allows the opposing parts and other stakeholders in a conflict to explore their positions and interact in a way that inevitably tends to clarify and deepen the discussion until the core issues are visible to all the stakeholders in the conflict field.

Processwork and the Facilitator

Processwork considers the facilitator's inner experience as a crucial part of the facilitating experience. It subscribes to a holistic approach which considers the dynamics of conflict and the interaction between the parts as the manifestation of patterns that are deemed to be part of a larger energetic field. "There is no difference between what is outside and what is inside (the facilitator); we are simply becoming aware of and experiencing a field or dreaming process expressing itself through us" (Amy Mindell, 1995, p125).

Processwork is influenced by field and quantum theory perspectives in asserting that we are all connected, entangled by some invisible force. Processwork emphasizes that awareness of what is happening and what wants to happen is more important than any preconceived ideas of what we should do as facilitators. In order to achieve this awareness, the processwork facilitator´s training demands a process of deep self-exploration. It is here also that processwork training differs from the traditional approach to facilitator development. Mindell´s work abounds with references to the development of the inner shaman, the ability to perceive reality in a way that takes into account the full human experience. In *The Leader as a Martial Artist*, Mindell (1992) describes the ideal facilitator as one who "does not have a program but follows the Ki, or energy of the group" (p. 62).

Selected Processwork Concepts

Taoism. Taoism is an ancient Chinese belief that follows nature. The Tao is the path of nature one tries to follow, to stay in harmony with the Tao, rather than go against it. The Tao can be mysterious and unpredictable. Trying to follow the Tao can be like surfing a powerful wave.

Field Theory, roles and ghosts. Groups and organizations form energetic patterns, or fields, around themselves that organize what happens within the group. They are similar to magnetic fields. The identity and beliefs of a group make up an aspect of its field. Another aspect is the atmosphere and tensions between parts or polarities within the group. These polarities express themselves through roles which manifest between individuals and inside each of us. Ghosts are background roles that are talked about or felt but are not present in the group.

Levels of Reality. "Any given topic has at least three levels of consciousness associated with it" (Mindell, 2002, p.76). Consensus Reality (CR) describes the tangible world of facts, figures and agreed perceptions, where we can speak of separate parts in relationship to one another. The Dreamland level, a non-consensual realm describes symbols, dreams, roles, ghosts and subjective experience, which may not be agreed upon by all participants. Like CR, Dreamland has polarities, allowing the interaction between different parts of a conflict. It works with body signals, ghosts, and roles that are present in the field but tend to be marginalized on the CR level. The Essence level is the deepest level of reality and is also within NCR (Non-Consensus Reality). It describes the basic energetic tendencies, deep, common universal principles and experiences that unite all humanity.

Process-oriented conflict facilitation explores conflict not just on the CR level but also on the NCR levels. It values the powerful inner experiences that may occur in an altered and more subjective state, where "fantasies, intuitions and insights can be noticed right alongside today's problems" (Mindell, 1995, p. 186). Conflict is not only about solving the problems of CR. It is also about finding the common ground between human beings which often manifests in the essence level. "Working with the sentient background to relationships and groups is "preventive" relationship medicine." (Mindell, 2000, p. 180).

Innerwork is a term that describes an intrapsychic activity or experience, that begins with introspection. The practice of innerwork promotes an awareness of our inner experience beyond that with which we are familiar. Innerwork is a conscious practice that is used to facilitate ourselves through the personal growth allowing our true life destiny to unfold. For the processwork facilitator student, innerwork is an important part of one's training. It involves working on those disturbing situations that arise during a facilitation experience. Innerwork is used to internally process and unfold so that when they do appear, we are familiar with the roles because we have already found their expression in our inner experience. This enables the facilitator to become a channel for the field through the ability to flow between experiences that the group often disowns or marginalizes. This familiarity then allows us to focus on the client(s) with detachment and compassion, allowing their own process to flow freely.

Primary and Secondary Process. The primary process is that part of our identity with which we most readily identify. If we are asked to define ourselves, we most likely answer from this primary identity. The secondary process refers to those parts of ourselves which

are not so familiar to us, or with which we do not identify. Individuals, communities, groups and organizations all have primary and secondary processes. The term "process" is used because primary and secondary identities are not static. Rather they are evolving constantly and are influenced by "ongoing perception, awareness and conceptualization" (Goodbread, 1997, p.24)

Edge. The edge separates the primary and secondary process. It marks the limit of the known identity and we encounter it when we make contact with that part of ourselves which is part of our secondary process. When an edge is encountered by an individual or group, it tends to manifest as incongruent behavior in the form of discomfort, nervousness or excitement (Diamond & Jones, 2004).

Inner Critic. A dream figure which appears as a voice that criticizes some aspect of oneself. The inner critic´s voice is one-sided, usually structured by a belief system, and tends to support the cultural norm.

First and Second attention. The first attention is used in consensus reality. It is the attention we need to accomplish tasks in daily life. The second attention notices those experiences that are part of the dreaming level, which we normally neglect because they seem irrational or insignificant. "The goal of the warrior is to develop the second attention, for this leads to living the dreamingbody and finding the path of heart" (Mindell, 1993, p. 27).

Metaskills. The feeling with which the facilitator employs and applies techniques, knowledge and theory.

Channels. We experience reality and receive information through channels. They include: visual (seeing), auditory (hearing), proprioceptive (feeling), kinesthetic (movement), relationship (with another person or entity) and the world (external events).

Group Process. A deeply democratic method used to process a group's tensions and resultant polarities. Facilitators support the group to bring out all the voices and levels of reality. This process raises the awareness of the group and provides the opportunity for the group members to explore all the roles. Group process is based in the theory that when conflict is processed and unfolded, people can explore previously unknown parts of themselves and create more relationship and community in the larger field of the group.

The Childhood Memory

Dream is the personalized myth, myth the depersonalized dream; both myth and dream are symbolic in the same general way of the dynamics of the psyche. But in the dream the forms are quirked by the peculiar troubles of the dreamer, whereas in myth the problems and solutions shown are directly valid for all mankind."

(Joseph Campbell, 2004, p. 18)

The concept of life myth is influenced by Jung´s belief that childhood dreams "revealed an archetypal or mythic pattern for a person´s life" (Diamond & Jones, 2004, p.148). Mindell expands on this idea to include earliest childhood memories as equivalent to the childhood dreams (2007). A possible reason for this equivalence is that what is relevant is that first connection with the symbolic world. It is that experience that permeates the child´s limited view of the world and marks an entry into the realms of experience beyond the everyday self. It establishes a connection between consensus reality and the dreaming realm. In this project, I am using my earliest childhood memory as a dream-door into my life myth.

While the description of the dream or memory itself remains constant once it is recalled, its interpretation is not static. The more one explores and interacts with it, the more nuances and insights become apparent over time. The childhood dream or memory is a snapshot, a window into the life myth. The life myth evolves with the influences of significant life events, symptoms, relationships, addictive tendencies, and peak experiences. The life myth also converges with those cultural myths that are part of our environment and that we grow up with and are influenced by. To discover and unfold our life myth is an ongoing and lifelong task. This final project in itself is part of the ongoing development of my life myth.

This is my first memory:

> I was a small child when my parents first took me to the sea. My mother held me in her arms as she walked on the sand towards the shoreline. When she got close enough to the water, she attempted to lower me onto the water to introduce me to the sea. I reacted and sank my teeth into her arm to bite her. My recollection is that she screamed in pain and reacted by shaking me. I eventually let go but I am told my teeth marks on her arms remained for weeks.

As I begin to delve into the memory, I am struck by the lack of color and nuance. It is a memory in black and white. The CR images are: Water, Child and Mother. The mother is trying to introduce the child into the water. The child bites the mother.

During a seminar in Yachats, in February 2014, presented by Arnold Mindell, I learnt that one way of working with the original dream or memory is to identify the energies that are most salient in the dream. He proposed that these energies are present throughout one´s life and appear in different patterns and varying degrees of intensity. From the time when I first began to work with this childhood memory I have marveled at the power of the child biting. It is a power that has not been easily accessible to me in my life, and yet here it is in my earliest childhood memory. In the memory, it is a reactive action. Something is not right and the bite is a way of expressing this feeling of discomfort and strong reaction against a particular situation. The Child decides that it is not ready to enter into that strange new world. It does not understand that it is just going to be a feet wetting experience. It seems final and there is almost a sacrificial aspect to it. So it turns its head away and it bites the mother in the arm.

In this project, I focused on the energies behind biting and being bitten. These are the core element in my life myth and are present in relationship and in my facilitation experiences. Symbolically, "biting" has a wide range of meanings. In this scene the child´s *bite* represents the decision to be present, to go against the flow represented by the mother. The bite is about instinctively taking charge and following the inner experience even if it goes against the expectations of others. Biting is an expression of raw power, a means of being heard, when crying is no longer effective. For the child, biting is an act of creativity.

Life myth and Long-term Edges

"Personal myths explain the external world, guide personal development, provide social direction, and address spiritual questions in a manner that is analogous to the way cultural myths carry out those functions for entire groups of people. Personal myths do for an individual what cultural myths do for a society"

(David Feinstein, 1997, p. 510)

The life myth connects to every meaningful experience contained in the course of our individual life. According to Diamond & Jones (2004) "…a person can work with a life myth consciously and creatively, instead of being unconsciously propelled by it" (p. 148). How can we do this? How do we work with a life myth consciously and creatively? We can consciously take part in the development of our life myth by recognizing it and unfolding its essential qualities. These qualities are contained in our first childhood dream or memory and through the patterning inherent in chronic body symptoms, illnesses, addictions, relationship patterns and peak or near-death experiences.

Mindell (2007) offers another perspective in approaching the work with life myths, via the concept of the Big U. The Big U refers to our totality as individual sentient beings, the sum of all our parallel worlds or, in quantum physics terms, the equivalent of the *pilot wave* prior to collapse, with all its possible states. Castaneda refers to it as The Path of Heart, while Maslow´s Self-Actualization principle and Jung´s Individuation also point in the same direction.

In the processwork paradigm, the Big U includes all three levels of experience, Consensus Reality, Dreamland and Essence level. One of the gifts of processwork is the ability to view our personal experience across these three levels of reality simultaneously, which provides the opportunity to experience the multi-level nature of one´s individual long-term process. By mapping one´s process structure into primary and secondary identities separated by our edges and their associated behaviors, we also can have an insight into our life myths. In particular, recurrent difficulties that manifest as edges can identify or point to the mythical task associated with our life myth. As Mindell (2002) asserts: "The edge protects myths; when the edge cannot be jumped… the edge is there to protect and to preserve the unconsciousness until it is fully completed" (p.52). Such chronic edges revolve around the life myth according to Diamond (1995). If we also consider Mindell´s (2007) assertion that "each event at any given moment in your life is an example of, and organized by, a larger principle…linked to the whole of your life… and is different for each individual" (p.124), then we can begin to interpret long-term edge work as a way of working with our life myth and, in turn, the act of exploring and unfolding our life myth allows a different approach to working on our edges, in particular our chronic, long-term edges.

Unfolding the Life myth

"Life myth is a useful concept for understanding long-term edge work because it frames the personal growth journey in an impersonal way, allowing for wider perspectives and new meaning to emerge" (Diamond, 2004, p.148).

In my training towards becoming a Facilitator, the expansion of my self-awareness became a core task, profoundly challenging my preconceptions and prompting a continuing revision of some of my own long-term inner and outer conflicts. As I began to apply my knowledge of processwork and its concepts to real life situations, I found myself becoming more aware of my patterns of behavior in the midst of conflict. In this chapter I provide background that will allow the reader a deeper understanding of the mythical quality of my behavior in the facilitator´s role.

During much of my life I have felt bitten both outside by politics, culture and a critical father and inside by an internalized inner critic. I learned to marginalize this biting energy, making it secondary and less known. In other words I experience biting as happening to me from outside my primary identity**.** I have often felt attacked in the facilitating role. My edge to owning the biter´s role manifests in ambivalence, confusion and sometimes paralysis, which puts me on the defensive. In order to explain why I refer to it as a *mythical edge* I need to provide some more details about myself and examine some of my more significant life experiences.

Growing up in Chile in the 70s was a traumatic time both at home, with a psychologically and physically abusive father, while also living in a country caught in the midst of social

upheaval. Life in one of Santiago´s most disadvantaged suburbs was challenging and you had to develop an ability for self-protection and a street-wise attitude. The political situation was very polarized and frequently we had to dodge street protests which often became violent street battles between supporters and opponents of the government with the police caught in between. I remember getting used to this chaos and the lingering smell of tear gas near my school. There was a constant sense of impending violence that lasted 3 years and culminated with a bloody military overthrow of the government and the installation of a military regime in 1973, an event which changed everyone´s life forever. I cannot accurately describe the days and months that followed this event. A lot of people left their homes, either leaving the country or going into hiding. A lot were also arrested, some released but many never returned, joining a long list of people assassinated and/or disappeared. Although my immediate family was not under threat for their political views, like most people, my parents decided to look for a way out of the country. We were able to apply for immigration to a number of countries and we were fortunate to be selected by the Australian government as part of their migrant intake and within 2 months we were on a plane, my parents with four children leaving behind our known lives and heading for a new country of which we knew precious little. I remember a feeling of excitement mixed with a deep sadness which I still carry with me. A yearning for a sense of home still haunts me.

As I write this, I notice my hesitance about sharing it. It is difficult for me to accept and acknowledge the traumatic events that I witnessed and the pain and suffering that was unleashed. There was a constant sense of being under siege (both outside and at home),

particularly since my family situation was difficult as the pressures of daily living took its toll on family relationships. Violence and threats were the norm both outside and inside the family.

Around the age of 8, I developed a speech impediment, a stutter, associated with a post-traumatic reaction to specific events in my childhood. Stuttering became chronic and accompanied me well into adulthood. It meant that almost every time I spoke in public, I had breathing difficulties and tension in my body and particularly in my throat and chest area. Speaking often felt like a car that wants to move but has its brakes fully on.

Prior to my childhood trauma experience, when I was 7 or 8, I recall playing the lead role in a Christmas play at my church. This memory became an important part of my quest for fluency. It showed me that at some point I did have access to verbal fluidity, because my memory was that of a confident child, who enjoyed the experience (and even had time to whisper the lines to other children who forgot their lines due to their own nervousness). This experience of spontaneity, improvisation and creativity showed that the figure of the inner critic had not yet taken hold at that stage of my life.

This speech impediment had a big impact on my ability to relate, making it difficult to be fully present in the world. My inner struggle was trauma-related and prevented me from fully speaking out. The desire or intention to speak and communicate verbally was interrupted by a secondary, involuntary body spasm, a dream figure saying: *"no… you shall not speak… it is too dangerous…"*. I discovered processswork in mid-life but my

training towards becoming a facilitator began in my late teenage years when I began to work on the polarity between wanting to speak and stuttering, exploring a variety of approaches such as speech therapy, meditation, cognitive behavioral therapy, Gestalt and Jungian therapy among others.

It took the best part of two decades before I was able to regain a comfortable degree of fluency in my speech. The inner struggle I faced in communicating with others in a fluid manner was often overwhelming and I developed a chronic mild depression associated with the feeling of shame. The shame associated with not being able to communicate fluently is pervasive, given that the verbal channel is the most frequent and common way in which people establish relationship with others. Consequently, it prevents deep connection with people and, as we will see later, the yearning for connection is one of the biggest motivations behind the critical figures. Halfway through my MACF studies, I received a gift from one of my teachers when they pointed out a tendency that I had when relating to others which caused me to reappraise my own attitudes to the world around me. This episode planted the seed for the questions that led to this final project. Basically, the teacher´s feedback was that I had an edge to connecting with others. As soon as I would connect, my inner critic would intervene with its accusations and doubts regarding my shortcomings in my capacity to relate to others. This would prompt me to withdraw and there I would sit until the urge to relate would become important enough for me to make the painful effort to reconnect again. I have navigated this cycling pattern throughout my life, never recognizing, until now, the destructive role of this critical voice in my relationships.

The first time I remember consciously working with the figure of the inner critic was triggered by a very embarrassing moment in my life. I was in Sydney, Australia, participating in a political ceremony to honor fallen comrades back in Chile, killed by the military dictatorship. When my turn came to say one of the names aloud in front of two or three hundred people I froze, literally. After what seemed an eternity I managed to blurt out the name. In that brief timespan I heard murmur and laughter from the audience. I felt mortified and felt as low as I had ever felt. It triggered a deep depressive state. During a psychotherapy session the following week, I was asked to become the critic. I played that critic role at its most vicious and called myself all sort of derogatory names and insults. After a few minutes of doing this, I began to laugh and suddenly experiencing a huge relief. It did not matter! So what if everybody there had seen me freeze? I flipped from one polarity to the other extreme and experienced that part in me that could be detached from the critic´s shaming accusations. I had been projecting this voice on everybody in the hall. This feeling lasted for a few days and I can still remember the liberating effect it had on me as it lifted me from my depressive state, at the same time offering a different, more self-embracing perspective on my experience.

Having access to this less judgmental experience was deeply significant. Even though at first I could not maintain that state for very long, it gave me a sense of what it might be like to face up to the critic and not just feel bitten. I got a taste for the power that usually resided in the inner critic and experienced the possibility of making it more useful. Using the language of Carlos Castaneda and his books about Don Juan, the Yaqui shaman, I had

been the *prey*, *the hunted* for so long but now perhaps I could become the *hunter of power*

as well. It was about transforming the inner critic´s energy to bite back and have access to

its power.

> "As a hunter… you are the doer and the one done to, the seer and the seen. You are
> the one struggling under the pain of life, the one who creates the pain, and the one
> who must facilitate between the two" (Mindell, 1993, p. 63)

My emphasis shifted from not only being a victim towards gaining more self-awareness to

free myself from the internalized tension that caused my body to seize up in front of the

audience. I becoming adept at focusing my second attention on the proprioceptive

channel, to observe my body as it went into the spasm that prompted the stuttering. I

became quite good at recognizing when I was about to stutter. This gave me the chance to

stop myself and stay silent. With time I learned to stay with the tension and find an

alternative way of producing the sound. I was literally learning to use my voice again.

As I write this, I feel the inner critic rise up and ferociously question the foolishness of

talking about myself so personally. Its voice admonishes:

> "You should not show people so much of yourself. Your weaknesses and failures
> are nobody´s business. Keep them to yourself".

It is the bite of the Critic once again. Throughout the lifespan of this project, I have

experienced being relentlessly bitten by the Inner Critic. I react by moving away and

procrastinating, protecting myself and licking my wounds. It is difficult to admit that I

come from a traumatic childhood with the constant threat of violence both outside and

inside the home. It gives me a sense of vulnerability, of weakness, of not being good

enough. The critic knows where to bite with precision, in the most hurtful manner, in the most tender of spots, my self-esteem, my insecurities and my aversion to conflict.

By going ahead with this project my message to the critic is:

> "Say what you might, I had the experience of not being affected by you. Even though I have a big edge to standing up to you, I had a taste of biting back and now that possibility is available to me. Even if I can´t connect with it all the time, I am on a journey towards it. Change is possible…"

When I first began to develop this topic, I felt lots of excitement and also a kind of apprehension. It was and still is a daunting experience to show my struggles with the facilitator´s role, my difficulties with my inner critic, my stuttering, and my sometimes awkward attempts at relationship. Yet, I still decided to go ahead because I felt that there was something inherently liberating and transformative about this project.

The Critic has embodied the role of the biter. This project was about wrestling with the biting critic and developing the awareness and capacity to reclaim the energy of the biter. The mythic task is to consciously use the energy of the biter in my daily life, my relationships and in my role as conflict facilitator.

The Critic as the Ally

"The ally is impossible and dangerous yet without it, life is empty"

(Mindell, 1993, p. 96)

Looking at my early childhood memory, the Biting is the symbol or energy that is most closely related to power. A consequence of growing up in an unsafe environment is that power is marginalized, and in my own dream world, the Inner Critic dream figure contains a significant part of this marginalized power. As we saw in previous chapter, the Critic has acquired the power of the Biter. I often feel the victim of the inner critic´s bite and, because of this, I am not conscious of my own biting of others. Therefore I am often critical of others without being aware of it. On the other hand, I often feel criticized by others when it is my own inner critic that is disparaging me. This project is about what Arnold Mindell (1993) calls "wrestling with the ally" (p. 111): bringing awareness to and engaging with the energy of the Inner Critic. "The ally has a truth, but this can only reveal itself completely through your wrestling with it, making it as useful as possible" (Mindell, 1993, p. 111).

The concept of the *ally* is found in Carlos Castaneda´s narration of his encounters with the Yaqui shaman, Juan Matus. The ally is a guardian-like archetypical dream figure that represents a door to an altered state of consciousness. In his book *The Shaman´s Body*, Mindell (1993) refers to the ally as a *spirit helper*. Its form and manifestation is unique for each individual. The ally can often appear as an enemy.

My Inner Critic is my Ally. It is a tyrant but also a teacher. For too long, the Inner Critic has been a dominant and ever present figure. Mindell (1993) says that the "most powerful allies impinge upon you… you want to go in one direction… unconscious energies go in another" (p. 97). How do we wrestle the ally? We wrestle it by acknowledging it and engaging with it. Joe Goodbread (2010) suggests that "recognizing an outer tyrant´s power is a first step toward building a diplomatic relationship with him" (p. 77).

Engaging with the Inner Critic

"The challenge is to recognize the inner opponent as a reflection of our own unrecognized but potentially accessible power" (Goodbread, 2010, p. 23).

Writing this paper has been a painfully difficult experience. On one hand, I have a commitment to write about my personal experience, life myth and development as a facilitator, and on the other hand there is a stubborn resistance, represented by the voice of the Inner Critic. I am distracted and diverted by my Inner Critic´s constant criticism. In this chapter I provide some examples of my innerwork with the Inner Critic.

The Inner Critic usually dominates the auditory channel. Its voice has a hypnotizing effect, creates trance-like behavior and sounds extremely convincing. Doing innerwork brings awareness to this voice and is the first step in reclaiming the energy of the biter. It has always been difficult for me to play the role of the critic. Adopting its voice, posture and tone, which represent its power, has been a challenging and difficult task. To become the Critic consciously and fully means I have to find the Biter energy that makes it such a powerful foe.

Innerwork 1

In the early stages of the project was this dialogue.

Critic: Writing a heuristic self-inquiry project is for self-centered people who want all the attention on themselves.

Me: I am not self-centered. But I want to write about my experience.

Critic: You cannot do it without being self-centered. So don´t do it. Write about

something else. Something less personal.

Me: (…giving in…) Perhaps you are right… I will try to find something else to write about.

This dialogue shows both the power of the critic and my edge to being self-centered. Being self-centered is secondary and I am not yet able to identify with this. If I really want to write a heuristic project, I need to find that part of me that is self-centered.

Innerwork 2

Self-centeredness came up.

Me: Yes, I am self-centered. I don´t see the problem with that.

Critic: The problem is that self-centered people are obnoxious and disliked.

Me: Well, there is a risk that I may come across as obnoxious and some people may not like my project. Can´t please everybody.

Critic: You are so self-centered!!!

Me: (…standing my ground….) I will write about my personal experience precisely because being self-centered is difficult for me. I will take the risk of being disliked and seen as obnoxious and arrogant.

This innerwork dialogue actually occurred over a period of time. It has been difficult for me to embrace the kind of self-centeredness required to write a heuristic project. Once I made the decision to go through with the project, the critic´s voice shifted to focus on other aspects.

Innerwork 3

An attempt at direct confrontation.

Me: Dear Critic… you are in every one of my relationship interactions. I can´t get away from you. But now I am noticing you. I want you to stop.

Critic: You are so weak. I will just ignore you.

Me: (I feel the Critic´s power and feel frozen, not knowing what to say. I stand in silence. Then I notice that I am at an edge to fight back. I notice the Inner Critic is actually being a bully). I hold myself to the edge and reply: "Stop being a bully. You don´t have to be so mean all the time"

Critic: I am not listening to you!

Me: F--k you! Everytime you criticize me I will stop you.

This is about awareness and staying at the edge instead of automatically bowing to the

critic´s bite.

Innerwork 4

Given that the critic occupies the auditory channel, I decide to work in the

movement channel which is not occupied by the critic.

Me: Dear Critic… Now I am noticing you. I am bringing awareness. The Tao has given me this challenge, so here I am. I am gonna wrestle with you.

In this innerwork I use movement to dialogue with the critic. First, I relax my body and go into a quiet mental space. I reflect on the energy of the Critic. What is its essence? I stand still for a few moments and then my hands begin to move… They initially push forward as if making space for something in front of me… then gradually they begin to move with force in a downward motion… At first the palms are open but gradually they turn into a fist. My fists take turns in coming downward

with force, from above my head down past my hips at an arm´s length in front of me. This is the energy of the critic.

Next I look for a movement that represents that part of me that gets disturbed by the critic… I stand still and my body begins to sway. My hands also begin a swaying motion, drawing patterns in the air with small circular and subtle movements. My fingers also move in sympathy with my hands, tickling the air in the space in front of my face.

After defining the two movements, the next step is to bring them together, exploring their convergence. First the pounding fists and then the flowing hands. They meet… the forceful and the flowing… over and over… until I notice a change in the quality of the movements. The pounding becomes softer and more circular. The downward motion does not stop suddenly but becomes a circular motion that rises up again, before coming down. My fists loosen up as my fingers play in the air…

The energies meet as strength and flow come together. My body is also gently swaying and I feel a kind of playful freedom. This is a quality that is not fully familiar to me. It is the playful nature that arises from the interaction of the two forces. I feel lighter and more fluid.

The message is: Be more playful with the inner critic….. start laughing…. chill out. An image of my little niece holding her hands and making the shape of a "W" and saying with a mockingly disdainful voice: "What-ever".

After the movement-based innerwork comes integration. I face the Inner Critic.

Inner Critic: Tell me you´re not serious. Surely you´re not going to include this crap. It's meaningless.

Me: (I smile. I give the "W" sign and imitate my niece) "What-ever!.....
I think you're scared because I am getting more comfortable showing my innerwork to the world. And I am enjoying myself while doing it."

At this point, I go over the edge. I find that part of me that is actually comfortable with showing my innerwork to the world. It is a momentary experience. I am wrestling with the critic, creating relationship and engaging with it in a movement dialogue.

These innerworks reflect the power of the Inner Critic which lies not only in its knowledge of my vulnerability but also in its bite. It has the ability to bite and bite hard, holding tight to its prey. This is the power that I want and my Inner Critic is my teacher. Mindell (1993) describes the ally as "a spirit that may have power but no intelligence, perseverance but no heart, wisdom but no feeling." (p. 97). In engaging with the Critic consciously through innerwork I have begun to confront it and ultimately experience the power of biting.

Wrestling with the Ally

"To be truly congruent you must notice what is happening inside yourself even if you think it is ridiculous and only your process" (Mindell, 1995, p.164).

In facilitation situations, with the help of supervision, I came to realize that I marginalize my inner experiences. My inner critic has interfered with my ability to flow between the roles and be fully present with the group. I did not allow myself to have my feelings, or if I did, I found it difficult to acknowledge them and recognize them as part of the group´s process. In this chapter I examine a real life experience in facilitating a group process which depicts the impact of the Inner Critic in my role as facilitator.

During my last year of study I organized a series of four open group processes on the topic of shame, each a week apart. In the first one I was very nervous prior to the group process but I failed to acknowledge that this could be part of the group´s process. I unconsciously marginalized my nervousness and kept it to myself. My attitude came from a desire to do things in "the right way" and avoid mistakes. If I had been more aware, I could have seen that this attitude was part of the dynamics of shame. David Bedrick (2013) talks about shame as "The idea that 'something is wrong with us' (which) leads to an incredible motivation to correct, fix and prove ourselves as worthy".

I began the first group process with an introduction that was way too long, taking over the auditory channel, something that is known as "channel blocking". This is a common experience for me when I facilitate. I am constantly battling an inner opponent which

appears to me as an inner critic´s voice. The impact of the Inner Critic is clear. Its voice says:

- Don´t show your feelings, they are not important. Nobody cares about them

- You will get in trouble and get hurt if you show your vulnerability

My incessant chatter is a way of shutting down the critic´s voice. I was in a kind of trance for the first 10 minutes of the group process. One part of me wanted to open the process to the group but I simply could not stop talking. I remember looking around at people and sensing their discomfort at my own discomfort and inability to stop talking. I was interrupted by a verbal intervention from my supervisor to snap me out of it and open the process to the group.

As I write this, the process returns and the Inner Critic bites:

    Inner Critic: "How dare you confess your weakness to the world! You should not be sharing this. It will make you weak. People will lose respect for you..."

    Me: (Once again I am at the edge. I consider myself a very private person and the possibility of sharing this "weakness" with the world is quite terrifying. I feel the critic´s bite and I hesitate. Procrastination, my favorite edge behavior, comes to the rescue. I note the sarcasm in this last sentence.) "Who is speaking?" I ask… It is the Critic who bites to stop me from writing, and then criticizes me for letting go of the task. I retort:
"I am on to you critic! Normally, I would just procrastinate but I see your game. You criticize me regardless of what I do. So I am wrestling with you again!
I disagree with you… there is nothing wrong with showing all my parts. It is valuable and it takes strength to show all parts of oneself. I am stronger than you think. I consciously bite back"

Back to the group process and once I opened the process to the group, people began to share their reasons for being there. Initially, there was a reluctance to go into the experience of shame. When somebody did speak about their personal experience of shame, I was not able to support them. Just as I ignored myself and my inner experience, I ignored the atmosphere and the signals in the group. My own internal edge affects the group edge.

Innerwork

> Inner work is mandatory for the process-oriented facilitator. He is a channel for the field and therefore he wants to process and understand that field before the group meets. Before a group process the facilitator finds the roles and works on them inside himself so he is prepared to work on them in the group. During the group process he can find the roles inside himself and work on them for the group. Finally, he studies the process after the group and works on what was disturbing, his own one-sidedness and how he may have been dreamed up. All is part of the facilitator's ongoing preparation and growth.

> (From a conversation with Rhea Shapiro, n.d.)

The day after the group process I had a supervision session with my supervisor, Dawn Menken. We processed my deeply critical views of my facilitation the day before. Focusing first on my overly long verbal introduction, Dawn suggested that there must be something useful in my verbal chatter. We discussed the possibility of my inner experience being of value to the group´s process. , My response was to go into a verbal explanation of my desire to find the right words. She interrupted to ask me to try bringing my experience back to the group. I felt my resistance to even trying. I didn't want to abandon the verbal channel. She asked me to go deeper into the resistance….

My Resistance responds*:* "No way. My experience is private. I don't want to share it. I may be nervous but I refuse to acknowledge it."

Dawn explains that my refusal to bring in my inner experience is valid. The point is not necessarily to share it openly. Rather the point is to value it. However there is a *ghost* that does not value it and is very much against my inner experience. Hence my resistance to sharing my experience and the resultant difficulty in relating to others when in the facilitating role.

I enter into dialogue with this ghost and attempt to stand up to it. The ghost comes back with a ferocious attack, questioning me and belittling me. I try to match its power but I am at my edge. I feel the bite of the critical voice. The ghost has a real anger with which I am familiar.

Dawn helps by playing me and models wrestling with the Inner Critic/ghost as I play the critic. She grabs me by my shirt and yells in my face: "Stop it! Don't talk to me like that. My feelings are important. I won't have you belittle them. Don't patronize me. Cut this out…my feelings are integral to who I am. My feelings and vulnerability is what I live for!"

Her radical intervention is over my edge and I begin to weep.

Dawn, now out of the role, then asked me: "Moises, what are you feeling?" I reply, "I like what you did."

She reacted: "No! Don't evaluate it! Believe in your feelings! Tell me about your feelings! Speak from your feelings!"

This session captured the depth of my personal process. At the time I couldn't quite repeat what she modeled. A radical appreciation of my feelings was way over my edge, but I can now see that it is the right direction. This is my challenge, my mythical task: To learn how to use my bite and realize that my feelings are integral to my power.

By bringing awareness to my own experience of being bitten by the critic, I could have brought that awareness to the field of the group. By working at my own edge, I could then support the group´s experience and I was able to unfold the roles that were in the field. This became more apparent in the next three group processes where I was able to pick up my own feelings and acknowledge them in a way that was useful to the group.

For example, when a participant complimented me, my initial experience was one of discomfort and shyness. Usually I would hide this feeling, but instead of keeping it to myself, I shared it with the group. I asked, "Is anyone else feeling shy right now?" This became an opening for the group to share their own shyness, and even shameful feelings. Very personal sharing followed as people began to speak openly from their deeper selves.

This recognition that my feelings are useful to myself and the field of the group actually pertains to the act of biting itself. I cannot ignore my feelings and be an effective facilitator. There is a shift in awareness. I am changing from being the bitten one who says: "Every day the critic finds something in me to criticize", to the biter who says,

"Everyday there is an opportunity for me to practice wrestling with my critic. Here we

go… Let´s wrestle". This is the mythical task.

Conclusion

Looking back on this journey through the mythical aspects of my life, my relationships and my development as a processwork facilitator, I can only marvel at how it has unfolded, from the initial excitement at the opportunity to unleash my creativity and choose one topic from a myriad of ideas and possibilities that this final project task opened for me. At that point I did not envisage the prominent role that the figure of the Inner Critic would play. There were so many days where I would sit down, having resolved to begin writing and develop ideas, only to see them, one by one, cut down by the critical voice that ruled against them: "Not good enough," "Not worthy of a final project," "Too personal," "what would so-and-so think after reading this" et cetera. The paralyzing effect of this critical voice gradually became a focus for my exploration. One of the gifts of the processwork paradigm is that it values every aspect of an experience as having meaning. This resistance was showing me a direction to follow.

When I began to work on this inner resistance, I just wanted to neutralize it, ignore it or shut it down so I could get on with the real task of writing. This approach backfired in my role as facilitator when I tried to ignore my inner experience. It took months of innerwork and supervision until I began to see what I was really up against. The Tao was gifting me a perfect opportunity to study, deepen my processwork knowledge and skills, explore my life myth, and wrestle with the biggest barrier to my growth as a facilitator, the Inner Critic´s voice.

One of the many benefits of studying processwork and process-oriented conflict facilitation is that I was in an environment that welcomes deep experience and nurtures personal growth. Trust is created and feedback from peers and teachers is given and received with care and respect. Consequently, I came to the realization that my Inner Critic´s voice was unusually harsh and overbearing. Because of the abuse in my personal history, the power of the Biting Child was linked with the Inner Critic. This discovery marked a shift in my journey as I began to actually wrestle with and challenge the Inner Critic. I began to loosen the hold that this Inner Critic had on the biter in me. The heuristic approach to my research has allowed me to study my own experience and use this opportunity to advance my personal growth, both as an individual and a facilitator.

The very act of writing this paper, in spite of the voice of the Critic constantly challenging its validity, is akin to standing up to the Critic and biting back. Finding this part within me that can stand up to the Inner Critic has not been easy. It has taken much innerwork and the willingness to hold myself at that edge. These days I have more access to this inner space where I can practice standing face-to-face with the Critic and take the other side with the same force. I am finally biting back with awareness and intention. In this meeting of equal forces, magic happens. I get a glimpse of a feeling of transcendence into a new ground, where I am immune to the Inner Critic´s voice. To flow between the two energies is like dancing a new dance. The bite of the Inner Critic is still present. I no longer expect it to go away. It is a teacher, a guide and my ally. I now understand that "wrestling the ally"

means breaking the entrancement of the inner critic through awareness. The mythic task is to wrestle and engage, to stay present in relationship with the inner critic. By so doing, I gain access to the power that up till now has been monopolized by the inner critic.

In working with my earliest childhood memory as a dreamdoor into my life myth, I was able to acknowledge the child´s power. My feeling about this biting child has expanded to incorporate a sense of admiration for its resourcefulness and courage. The child reminds me of the importance of respecting my inner experience and following myself. This shifting attitude towards my inner experience manifests as a new kind of compassion. Amy Mindell (2003) in her book on metaskills defines compassion as "nurturing, caring for, and attending to those parts of ourselves that we like and identify with while attending equally to and appreciating those parts that we do not like, that we disavow and that are far from our identity" (p. 69).

When I experience compassion towards myself, I can feel into all the roles that are present in a particular moment. I recognize that there is a part of me which is fearful of the unknown, and I can also find the fearless part in me that is comfortable with not knowing. I recognize that I can be a biter and I can also be the victim of my own or the other´s bite. Compassion values all experiences and roles in the field, including the facilitator´s own inner experience. Compassion acknowledges our interconnectedness.

The purpose of the project was to explore the way that life edges affected my development as a conflict facilitator and prevented the ability to follow the process. I have described the recurring behavior that prevented me from being fully present with all my parts, both in facilitation experiences but also in my personal history. Previously my inner critic was "running the show". This heuristic study of the process of wrestling with the ally/inner critic has been a way of working with this life-long edge. Using real life facilitation experiences, I have described how the journey to reclaiming the biter inside me has had an impact on my development as a facilitator. Having the Inner Critic as the ally to wrestle with, is both the problem and also the solution. In the childhood memory, the pattern is there, the child just bites. Now the circle is complete. I am reclaiming my original ability to bite back from the inner critic and using it in service of my role as a facilitator, both internally and externally, allowing myself to value my inner experience and make it useful to myself and to the group.

As I write these lines, I am working in the most challenging role I have ever faced. Surviving the first months of a high-pressure management position would not have been possible were I not able to access that inner power required to stand up to my inner critic. The innerwork that has been a core element in this project has allowed me to build the muscles that I need to wrestle the critic and validate my inner experience.

There is a sense of liberation that is beginning to permeate my everyday life. The exploration of my life myth has created an amazing journey, and I can feel the fruits of this

adventure. In the course of this project, I have discovered that the process of wrestling with the ally generates the power of the biting energy. This reclaims the original image of the biting child before the emergence of the inner critic. The I Ching Hexagram 21 – Biting Through – describes the process: "When an obstacle to union arises, energetic biting through brings success" (1997, p.86). The biter wrestles with the ally, processes obstacles and achieves empowerment.

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