

THE RED CHALLENGER

Living in the Now

Lesson Two

THE OUTER LAYER OF THE MAP

YOUR PERSONALITY TRAITS

Let's be clear here. Learning to Live the in the Now is learning to FEEL! Or more accurately it is *remembering* how to feel. This programme is about learning to feel the immediacy of life. ALL of it. Not just the good bits. The problem is that long ago you decided that this was not a safe way to live and you closed down your contact with the present moment. Developing awareness of the ways you avoid feeling your everyday experience is the first important step to living in the now. One of the biggest problems in our modern society is that we think our everyday ways of existing are normal, to be expected, are as good as it gets. They are not. When we develop mindful awareness of our immediate experience, we get back to who we were before the world got its hands on us and remember what we long ago forgot, who we really are.

In this session, we are exploring the outer layer of your map. Your personality traits. Your aim is to learn to recognise how these traits have become conditioned patterns of closure to living in the now. Your traits developed because you do not want to feel your own depths and taste life directly. Unconsciously you believe it is not safe and you would rather be safe than be happy. Eventually, your traits became ways of being that increasingly distanced you from the immediacy of life so that you gradually lost intimacy with it. This is why you feel so much dissatisfaction with yourself and your life. Is that normal? No, of course not.

The more you flee the present moment, the smaller and more isolated you become. You experience what I think of as an 'inner shrivelling'. You become dogmatic, inflexible and self-protective, and you become a victim of fear, anger, distrust, and neediness. You lose your sense of delight in life and instead of feeling full, alive, and energetic you feel depleted, empty, and dissatisfied. When you are not in the moment, you are in a reacting and avoiding mode of living. Even though you may not be aware of it, when you are acting out your habitual patterns of behaviour, thought, and emotions, most of the time your breathing becomes tight and muscles become armoured. You become tense and have negative feelings. At such times you have dropped out of the present moment and are likely to think reactively, behave poorly and make bad decisions.

THE OUTER LAYER OF THE MAP

WHAT THE PRESENT MOMENT FEELS LIKE

So what does the present moment feel like? Present moment awareness is experienced and recognised through your three centres. Your head centre, your heart centre, and your body centre.

Present moment awareness or nowness is experienced in the head centre when your mind is clear and spacious, and is free from clutter and busyness. You feel an unmistakable lightness of mind that feels clear, responsive and agile. Remember how your mind feels when you are on holiday, like you have left the cares of the world behind? That's it!

Present moment awareness or nowness is experienced in the heart centre when your heart is open and warm. You experience an outpouring of love for everyone and everything and there is an absence of tightness and defensiveness. When your heart is open there are no barriers or walls of protection. Remember how you feel when you look at someone you love or cuddle your pet? That's it!

Present moment awareness or nowness is experienced in the body centre when your body is grounded and centred. You were gifted with life and it is your birth right to feel its immediacy, to feel the humming vibrance of your body and the exquisite joy that exists within every moment. Remember a time when your body felt fully alive? That's it!

When these three centres are operating in the present moment you will recognise it as feeling relaxed, peaceful, and joyful. Anytime you are not feeling these things you have abandoned the present moment. (Which for most of us is most of the time!)

So, let's explore your everyday experience starting with the outer layer of your map. Your aim with this is to directly experience the ways you leave the present moment through your habitual patterns of behaving. We will do this through an inquiry exercise at the end of this lesson. But first, let's get familiar with your personality traits. Read the description of your personality traits on the next two pages. These are describing what is detailed on the outer layer of your map. Do not be discouraged if you do not recognise ALL the traits described. It often takes some time to own all aspects of yourself. Once you have read the description and had some time to digest it all move on to the inquiry exercise.

THE OUTER LAYER: YOUR PERSONALITY & DESIRE FOR STRENGTH

As a Red Challenger, your core value is strength. You believe that if you remain strong then you will be happy. The ways that you ensure you remain strong is by being independent, making your own decisions and being in control of your own course. You also show strength by being open, honest, direct and straightforward. Confronting problems head-on helps you to feel a sense of control and to maintain control and strength, you need to be your own authority, seeking the independence to be master and commander of your own life. As your colour suggests you see yourself as assertive, decisive and resourceful. You would like others to see you as strong, fair-minded and magnanimous. Your idealised image is that you are protective and powerful. You are strong, wilful, decisive, persistent and passionate. You know what you want and you know how to get it. You have the need to feel confident, self-reliant and in charge of your emotions. You don't need to be liked, but you do have a strong need to be respected. You also need a sense of fairness and justice in your dealings with others, or you are likely to assert your wilful and stubborn nature. You are often a dominating force in your surroundings and are frequently described as the 'life and soul of the party.'

You believe that too much of a good thing is almost enough. You like challenges and are often challenging when it comes to overcoming the kinds of obstacles that limit or deter others and Red Challengers can be refreshing and inspirational leaders. You can quickly assess a situation, cut to the chase and 'call a spade a spade', simplifying what initially appears to be complex and confusing. This ability to instinctively see the truth in any given situation and act decisively makes you a natural born leader. Living by your own personal code of honour, you have a strong sense of justice, which compels you to act whenever you see any kind of injustice taking place. This often inspires great loyalty from those who see you as a protective authority. Your greatest strength is your sense of justice and desire to protect the weak, vulnerable, downtrodden and under-represented. Big-hearted and generous by nature, you are unusually devoted, willing to protect others even at your own expense.

Behind your tough exterior, you are gentle, playful, childlike and innocent. Always one to laugh, you can see the humour even in the most painful and difficult of circumstances. You also have a well-hidden tender and caring side that is vulnerable but this often only shows up when you are with small children or animals. You are charismatic and have a take-charge, no-nonsense, can-do attitude. You have great pride in your ability to face, endure and overcome adversity, believing that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

OUTER LAYER: YOUR PERSONALITY & AVOIDANCE OF WEAKNESS

As a Red Challenger, the ways you find it difficult to stay in the now are connected with your fear of being perceived to be weak by others. You believe that if you show weakness or others control your environment you will be unhappy. Because of this your weaknesses and negative tendencies relate to the ways you ensure you avoid being weak – always. When you fear losing control or being weak, your hot temper, comfort with confrontation and penchant for vengeance may cause others to gang-up against you. Because you fear being powerless you set up a hard and intimidating exterior. You avoid being weak, vulnerable, controlled or manipulated. Secretly, you fear being caught off guard, harmed and/ or humiliated. Being mistreated and at the mercy of injustice are among your deepest fears. You resist and defy anything that is imposed upon you. Fearing deprivation, you avoid ever having to go without what you deem essential to your survival. You do everything in your power to avoid being dependent on anyone or anything. You have a distaste for mediocrity and anything that feels contrived.

Your word is your bond and you do not suffer fools gladly

People are occasionally intimidated by you and often misinterpret your direct manner as insensitivity. Self-possessed, you easily speak your mind and can come across as too aggressive. You believe that being true to yourself means that you say what you mean and mean what you say. You stand up for your beliefs and perceive backing down as a sign of weakness – even though at times doing so may be common sense and in your own best interest.

Your vice is excess and going to extremes. Whatever you like, you want more of and whatever you do, you overdo at full speed. Quick to respond, you can over react and come on too strong. You can be too much, too intense, and unwilling to self-limit. This can lead to escalating conflict due to an over reliance on your own truth and self-defined justice.

Under stress you can become myopic, believing your truth as 'The Truth'. Seeing life as a battlefield or a contest of wills, you can become confrontational and have difficulty backing down or admitting defeat, and like a general surveying the battlefield you are not interested in subtle nuance, but rather in the big picture.

Your attention goes to issues of power. Who has it and most importantly, if it is being used fairly. You instinctively sense a power vacuum and you often step in to fill it. You can be relentless in your search for truth, justice, power and influence. You tend to push things to the edge and sometimes may run over others in the process, often those closest to you.

EXERCISE

Congratulations, you are now ready to begin your first exercise.

- Give yourself some quiet time, have your map open in front of you and bring yourself into a state of mindful awareness with a few deep breaths.
- Choose one personality trait from the outer layer of the map it can be a 'good' trait or a 'negative' trait.
- Using the trait you have chosen, 'answer' the three inquiry questions below.
- For one, or even two of the questions you may get the answer "It doesn't." That is fine, move on to the next question
- Avoid rushing through these questions with your thinking mind. Mindful Awareness is needed here.
 - **How does this trait create distraction and busyness? (meaning I lose contact with my feelings and the immediacy of my body)**
 - **How does this trait create overthinking? (meaning my mind is cluttered and full)**
 - **How does this trait create avoidance and withdrawal? (meaning I feel closed off and unavailable.)**

Remember, anytime your mind is not clear, your heart is not open, and your body is not grounded you are avoiding or fleeing the present moment.

You may not always find this inquiry easy because your traits have become so normalised. Simply remain with your mindful awareness and notice whatever arises into the space of inquiry. It is important that you stay open and curious and not judge what arises. **It is also important that you do not do anything or try to change yourself.** People often think they have the change their behaviour, do things differently, nothing could be further from the truth...**there is nothing to do but simply hold the space of mindful awareness.** Spend a week or two doing this exercise **choosing a different trait each time.** Choose traits that you have noticed popping up in your day. When you choose traits that you notice in your everyday life you are learning to catch yourself in the act of fleeing or avoiding the present moment. The more you do this the faster your awareness grows, the more spontaneous and authentic you become, the more you develop a growing connection to the present moment.

Listen to the guided meditation called 'Your Traits'. It will support you with this exercise.