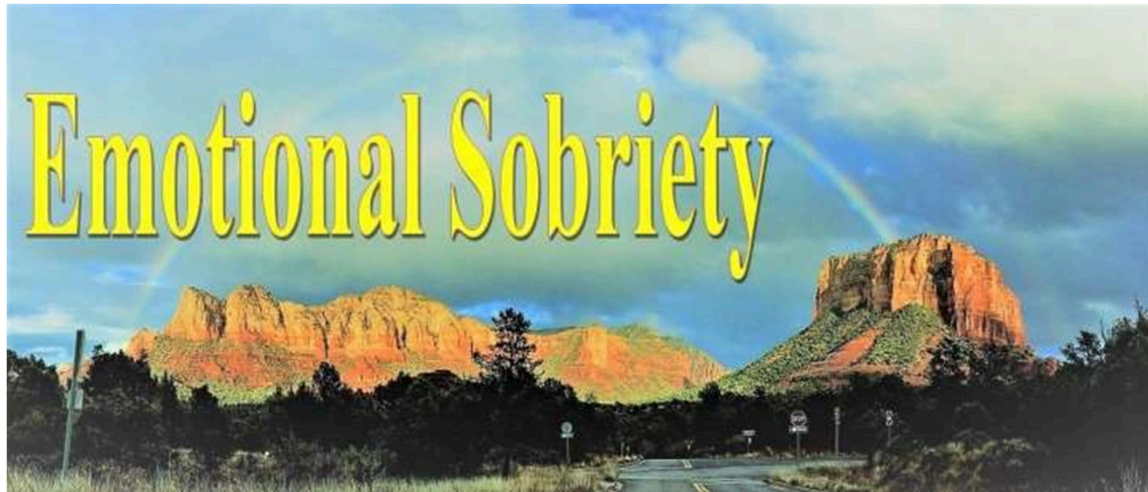


SPIRITUAL BYPASSING

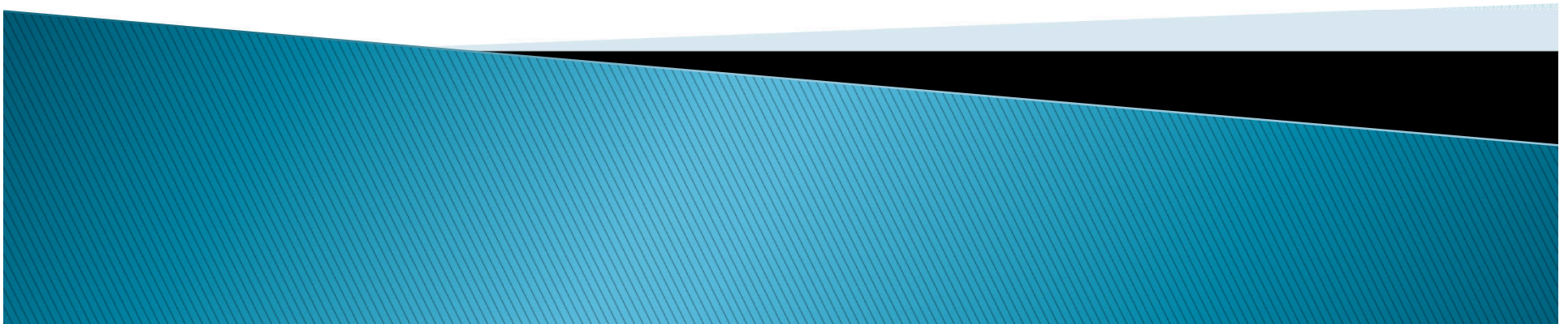
First presented by John R at the FLS Webinar on 8-29-2020



Presented by the
Freethinkers Living Sober Group
Of
The Verde Valley, AZ

Spiritual Bypassing

What is it? Basically, in me, it was a deeply held defense mechanism and an avoidance technique run amok!



Salvation? Enlightenment?

In his classic book, *Toward a Psychology of Awakening*, John Welwood defined spiritual bypassing as using “spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep personal, emotional ‘unfinished business,’ to shore up a shaky sense of self, or to belittle basic needs, feelings, and developmental tasks.”



Signs of Spiritual Bypassing

- ▶ Not focusing on the here and now; **living in a "spiritual realm" much of the time (define it as you like).**
- ▶ Overemphasizing the positive and avoiding and/or denying the negative e.g.: demands to be “happy, joyous, and free” at all times.
- ▶ **Being self-righteous about enlightenment/salvation/sobriety.**
- ▶ Being overly detached and/or anti-dependent
- ▶ Dependence on “spiritual” ideas/beliefs to avoid unwanted emotions
- ▶ Having feelings of entitlement.
- ▶ **Exhibiting frequent anger and/or rage.**
- ▶ Engaging in cognitive dissonance.*
- ▶ Judging others for not “overcoming” their feelings or difficulties
- ▶ **Pretending that everything is okay when it’s not.**
- ▶ **Presenting a false self, or presenting oneself as having all the answers or none of the answers.**

Adapted from an article by [Diana Raab PhD](#)

Pasted from <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-empowerment-diary/201901/what-is-spiritual-bypassing>>



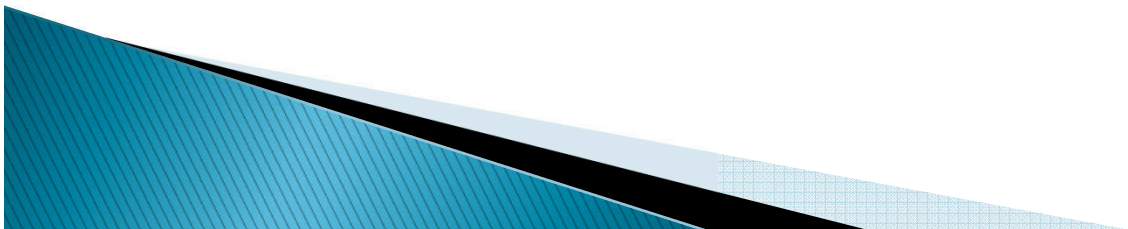
Who, me?

- ▶ The difficulty in my case was that the cause of the beliefs, behaviors, and emotions generated by the bypassing lay largely beneath the level of my conscious thought or ability to access intellectually.
- ▶ The “problem” was caused by the way I defined “the problem!” And my spiritual solutions only reinforced the underlying problem!
- ▶ Those underlying assumptions seemed to be a fundamental part of my “self.” They were “axiomatic” in my way of seeing myself and the world around me.



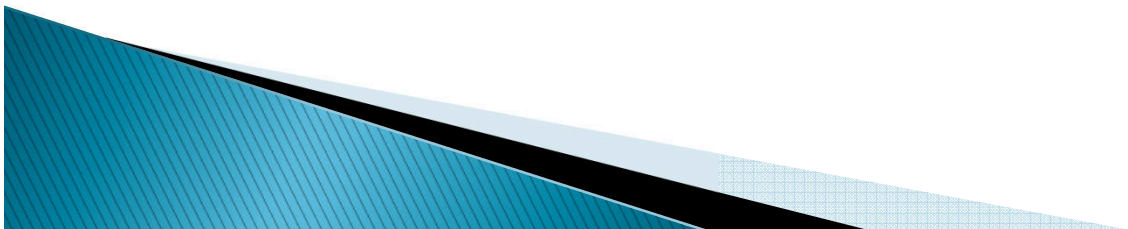
Demands and Dependence

- ▶ I had been placing a great dependence on the various paths (God, Meditation, the 12 steps, my “self” and “spirituality”) to solve a “problem” that wasn’t the real problem! “Just turn it over!?”
- ▶ The real problem was that my delusion led me to believe that “/” was the problem that needed to be solved! And the answers were “out there.”
- ▶ There’s a difference between denial and delusion, and my walk may be a great example of it. I couldn’t “see” the delusion.



Delusion v Denial

- ▶ In my definition of the word, delusion often corresponds with the very image one has of oneself and underlies perceptions that seem inherent in one's observed “reality,” and (seemingly) an intrinsic part of one’s identity.
- ▶ Denial is often a function of willful refusal to acknowledge an observable fact that one, at some level, probably already knows is true



Bypassing as a Buddhist?

“Many have come to a spiritual practice with this problem, what some psychologists call a ‘weak sense of self’ or a ‘needy ego,’ **with holes in their psyche and heart**. This deficient sense of self is carried for years by our habits and bodily contractions, **by the stories and mental images we have learned to tell ourselves**. *If we have a deficient sense of self, if we perennially negate ourselves, then we may easily confuse our inner poverty with selflessness and believe it to be sanctioned as the road to enlightenment.*”
(emphasis added)

▶ Jack Kornfield

from <<https://jackkornfield.com/misconceptions-selflessness/>>



Meditation as Bypass

- ▶ Although meditation can be difficult at first, after some practice it becomes pleasant. It can even become another kind of high.
- ▶ ...Buddhist texts warn the meditator away from getting attached to the pleasure of meditation
- ▶ ...the very structure of the meditative experience can help us to stay in denial about our dysfunction. We can use meditation as a place to hide.

One Breath at a Time: Buddhism and the Twelve Steps.
p25. Griffin, Kevin. St. Martin's Press, 2004.



Transcend?

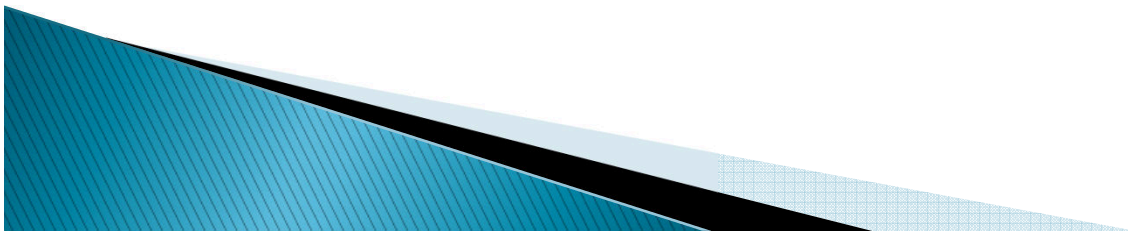
"If you have found a way to transcend the human condition, my hat is off to you. Truly. But for the rest of you who continue to wrestle with emotional growing pains, I am spreading the news about spiritual bypass as a reminder that *we are not supposed to rise above it all*. We can't out-run our own feet. We can't out-think our own brains. *We can't override this human operating system that we live and breath [sic] in every hour of every day, freeing ourselves of pain and problems. Not perpetually anyway.*" (emphasis added)

Ingrid Clayton, Ph.D.
[Emotional Sobriety](#)



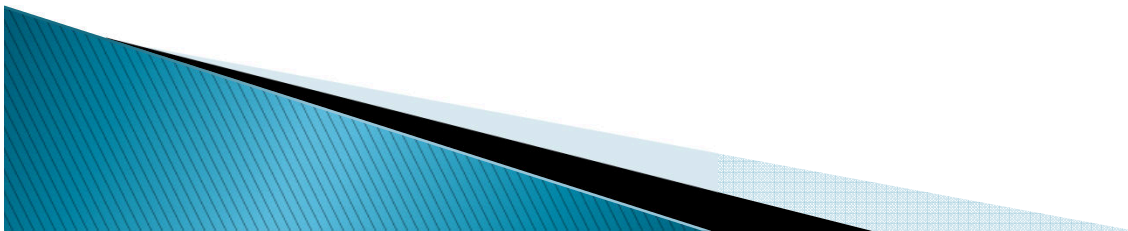
Happiness? Or Bad News?

- ▶ “Ultimately, happiness comes down to choosing between the discomfort of becoming aware of your mental afflictions and the discomfort of being ruled by them.”
 - ▶ --Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche



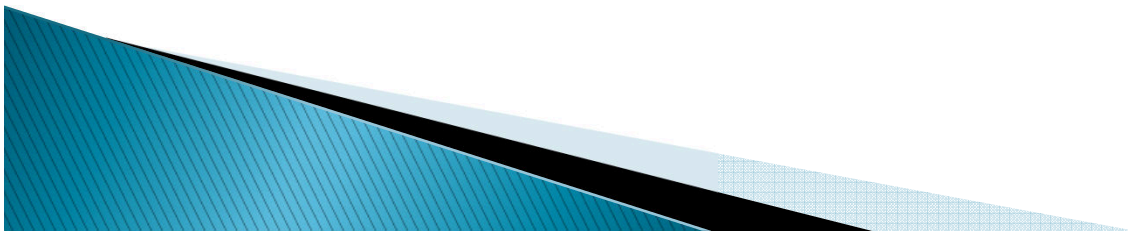
Any solution ...

So, just seeing the delusion, recognizing the underlying psychological, mental, and behavioral results of the delusion did not result in anything like “happiness” or even permanent relief. However, it did begin an earnest effort to recognize the symptoms and seek solutions in my life. We talked about some of those solutions in Part II of the webinar in August.



Take the pain and ...

It may be important to recognize that sometimes the pain doesn't just magically go away and sometimes, as with deep meditation practice, the pain actually seems to intensify! The fact in my case was and is that pain didn't necessarily mean I was doing something wrong! It actually meant I was doing something right.



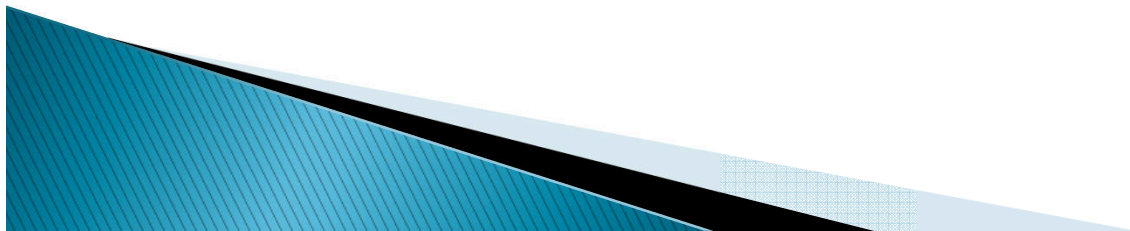
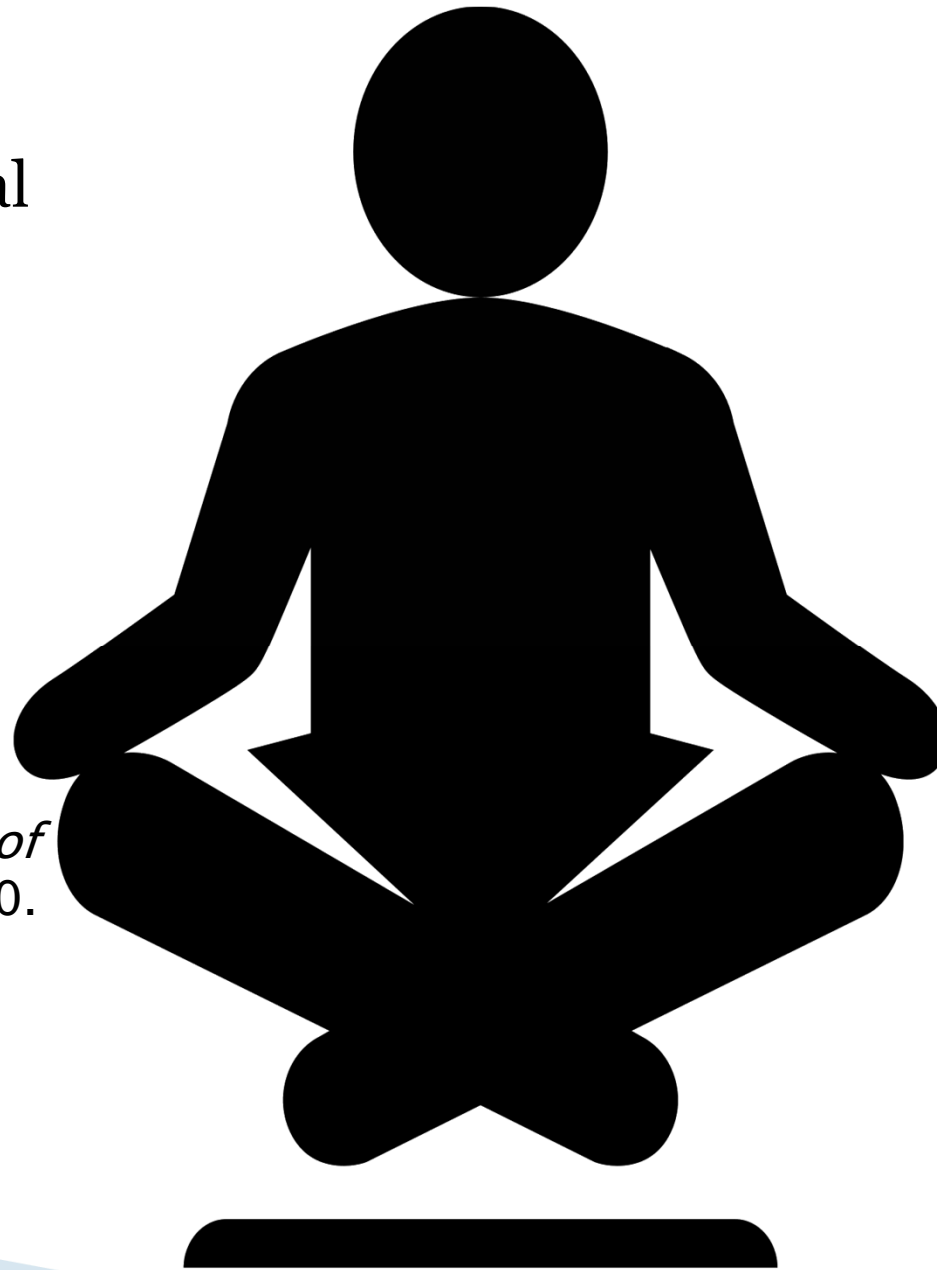
So, now what?

- ▶ What we used to call “Stage II” recovery. Emotional Sobriety is an ongoing journey and consciousness (awareness) is required!
- ▶ We covered a lot of that in Part II of our Webinar on Emotional Sobriety, available on the Freethinkers Living Sober websites.



Enlightenment is not some ideal goal, perfect state of mind, or spiritual realm on high, but a journey that takes place on this earth. It is the process of waking up to all of what we are and making a complete relationship with that.

John Welwood *Toward a Psychology of Awakening*, 2000.



Freethinkers Living Sober Group Presents:

Emotional Sobriety

Please visit

<https://es.freethinkerslivingsober.org>

View videos, our blog and
other resources about
Emotional Sobriety