

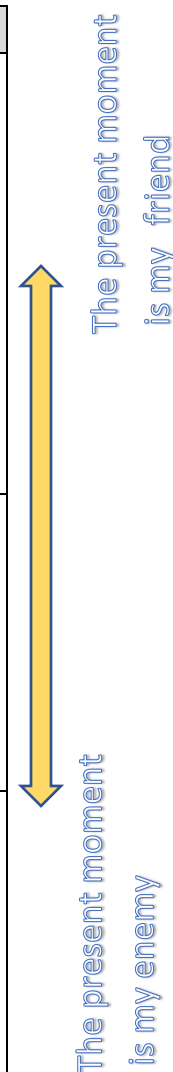
Appendix X: Book- *Transformative Educator’s Guide to Mindful Practice: Daily reflections and exercises for Peace of Mind, Excellence and Teaching from the Heart*---By John Shindler

Levels and/or States of Consciousness

At any one point in time our mental activity is defined by what we could call a “state of consciousness.” And any particular state could be located on a continuum/level – from low - lost in our ego and victim thinking to high - seeing reality clearly and feeling a sense of ease and oneness. We may stay in a particular state for a moment or for weeks or more.

The thinking and mental messages that define the levels is outlined in the table below. At the bottom is the victim level in which we feel that things are against us and we cannot be OK with our situation the way that it is, we feel things and others should be different, and our current lot is unfair in the vast configuration of things. The next level up is defined by the active state of trying to control our world with effort, manipulation, overcoming our situation, and basically trying to win the game of life. The top level is defined by a letting go of the controlling attitude and opening to more conscious thinking and coming into alignment with our true nature and the world around us. For each level, we can identify the kinds of mental and/or spoken statements that would represent the thinking at and within that level.

Level Label	Definition	Ascending Mental State Statements
Aligned/ Aware/ Flow	At this level of consciousness one feels a sense that fundamentally life is in order. Action comes from internal sources of motivation that just feel right. It can take the form of a state of flow, grace, creativity, losing track of time in a task, or feeling inspired or meditative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel as sense of oneness with everything • I just forget myself and get into the flow and let excellence and goodness emerge from a higher source. • I feel like answers and insights come to me without effort if I am just open to them. • I feel a strong sense that having faith in my vision and the process will lead to something good. • I can feel some awareness of the larger reality no matter what the situation. • I am OK with mistakes along the way
Manipulator/ Empowered/ Controller	At this level of consciousness one is looking to take action to control their environment and situation. The idea is that things are not OK as they are but can be made OK by being manipulated by clever or purposeful effort toward the goal of improving things.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It all seems like it is working out right now • I know I can do it if I try • I have some clever strategies to get what I want • I might lose some battles but I will with the war • It takes a lot to keep it together • Mostly life is so much work
Victim/Ego Survival/ Poor me	At this level of mental state one feels like life is out to get me. People and circumstances against me and luck in not on my side. I feel defensive and the need to protect myself. It is difficult to trust why things would get any better.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wish so much was different • I just want to survive this • I feel like what I am going through is not fair • I feel so let down by life and others right now • It seems like so much is against me right now • I feel hopeless



Our mental state is a reflection of our habits of mind and our world view. It can be temporary or long lasting. But it is worth considering where our thinking and emotional state is at various times in any day, especially when we are with students. The more we can watch our minds and tune into our bodies, the more we can be aware of which state we are in. It is essential not to be critical or judgmental when we explore our current state, or look back on a previous state. Negative judgment leads to fear, worry and unhelpful self-criticism. Positive judgment can lead to wishing for the return of a previous state and feeling like the present moment is not good unless we are in our desired state. In all cases, just notice, be present, and make the moment your friend.

The more we can find the present moment and some space and lightness, the more we can trust and experience the higher levels. Conversely, the more we live in fear and mistrust the more our concrete experience will confirm a victim story – which is inherently a misperception of true reality, but will seem real in our experience. Our thoughts and experiences will be related. Our inner messages will affect our state of consciousness and emotions, and likewise our emotional state will tend to encourage us to interpret reality in ways that are consistent with how we are feeling. But we always have the choice to bring more consciousness into things. And a bad feeling is not a problem, bad feelings and unlucky events come and go. But telling ourselves victim stories is seldom helpful. They tend to pull us down and attract in all sorts of unwanted circumstances. When things are tough, it is a real victory to just ask ourselves what is important now and take one positive (ego free) action toward a good outcome for all involved.

When things are going well, we can practice trying to bring more trust and alignment into our day. When we are in our control mode, it is useful to encourage little movements to the next level. We might notice how we are struggling against things and take a breath and see if we can engage in our activity without the feeling of struggle. If we are using a lot of old thinking to solve our current set of problems, we might set the intention to be open to some new insights from our higher levels of consciousness. A great question to ask ourselves is “if I cannot solve my problems with the same level of thinking that created them, then what would solutions from a higher level look like?” And be patient and trust your inner resources.

Exercises:

1. Stop a few times a day and just ask yourself how your mind is defining the present moment. Is it your friend, or is it the problem. Are you struggling against it, or feeling enough acceptance of it to have a sense of ease and space? If you are feeling like you are stuck and struggling in the victim level – just notice it, and recognize that it is what you mind is feeling the need to do at this time. Then when you feel ready, begin to ask yourself some empowering questions such as:
 - Can I feel into a more true and deeper reality than the one that my mind is stuck in right now?
 - What is the ultimate truth of things?
 - What advice would my higher-self give to my right now?
2. Read the statement in the right column of the table. Which ones does your best and highest-self connect with? Which ones does your ego connect with? Notice that when you read and feel into the victim lines your ego wants to agree and find evidence to support the words? And notice when you read the flow level lines they tend to become increasingly true in your experience, and your body feels more free and light? Your body is a great indicator of your mind. It will always tell you the truth about what is going on in your mental-emotional state. So just stopping and noticing what is going on in your body is another great tool to check in on your state of consciousness. Just the act of tuning into your body will be a powerful meditation and source of grounding you in the moment and what is true.