

## **Session 9: Training in Wisdom #2 — Coping with Stigma**

The worse of the two is he  
who, when abused, retaliates.  
One who does not retaliate  
wins a battle hard to win.  
(*Samyutta Nikaya I, 162*)

**Therapeutic Goals of Session 9:** The primary therapeutic goal of this session is to teach clients how to prevent the stigma of addiction and HIV infection from detouring them from their spiritual path. In this session, clients will learn to interrupt the process of stigma internalization and self-fulfilling prophecy by using a new cognitive script ‘this is not me; this is not mine; I am my spiritual nature’. They will also work on strengthening their spiritual quality of forgiveness. This includes breaking the cycle of hatred by forgiving those who stigmatize them, as well as by taking responsibility for any past misdeeds, and asking for forgiveness of those they have harmed.

**Instruction to Therapist:** The format of each session is essentially the same. Each session begins with a renewal of clients’ commitment to their Spiritual Path, and 5 minutes of meditation. For this you will need a timer. The meditation period at the beginning of each session will provide you with an opportunity to repeat the instructions for *anapanasati* meditation taught in Session 2; it will also provide clients with the opportunity for additional practice and to clarify any misunderstandings they may have about the technique which they are expected to practice daily at home.

### ***Welcome, Commitment, and Meditation***

- Renewing commitment to spiritual path
- In-session practice of meditation on the in and out breath (5 mins)

**Example of therapist script:** Hello, ‘name’. Welcome to the ninth session of spirituality therapy. That you made the effort to be here tells me that you are committed to your spiritual path, is that correct? [Therapist asks for client’s continued commitment to the therapy.] Before we do our review of last week’s session, let’s begin by practicing the meditation on the in and out breath. As you know, your mind has a spiritual center where you can go to experience your true spiritual nature [or, depending on client’s beliefs, to be with God or a Higher Power]. We don’t usually experience this in our daily lives because the mind has a tendency to wander here and there; it is never still enough to experience its center. This is the monkey mind that we have talked about in our sessions, and it is this monkey mind that can get us into a lot of trouble. An untrained mind that is allowed to wander freely can get caught up in whatever thought or mood touches it. This means that it can readily get swept away by the addict self. That’s where meditation comes in – it helps us concentrate – to focus all our attention on this still, silent place that is within each of us where we can experience our true spiritual nature. In the meditation technique we do here, you are learning to focus single-mindedly on the sensations around the nostrils caused by the in- and out-breath. This area around the nostrils and above the upper lip where you first feel the touch of the

breath as it enters and leaves the body is your anchor. It is called an anchor because it helps you to remain centered during emotional storms, and it prevents you from getting swept away by strong currents of craving and aversion. The technique is very simple, but it does take a great deal of effort and practice to train the monkey mind to stay focused on one thing. Are you ready to work hard?

[Therapist's provides detailed instructions to client]:

- . Sit with back straight, feet flat against the floor, hands on your lap
- . Close your eyes (therapist checks that client is comfortable doing this)
- . Just breathe normally through your nose
- . Focus your attention on the area around your nostrils and above your upper lip and concentrate on the changing sensations in this area caused by the breath as it passes in and out of your nose. Do nothing else, just keep your concentration fixed there in this small area where you first feel the touch of the breath as it goes in and as it goes out – this is your anchor.
- . If your mind wanders away, just note 'mind wandered away,' and then firmly bring your attention back to your anchor. See if you can experience the gentle touch of the breath around the nostrils and upper lip as it enters and leaves the body. Keep your attention fixed here.
- . If you have difficulty concentrating, try the technique I showed you that we called "Just one breath at a time". At the beginning of each breath, commit yourself to carefully observing the changing sensations caused by just that one breath alone. Then fix your attention firmly on your anchor for just for that one breath, then the next, and the next. Continue doing this, taming the monkey mind, one breath at a time.

**We'll do this together for 5 minutes.** I'll let you know when the time is up.

Therapist sets a timer and meditates with the client for 5 minutes. When 5 minutes have elapsed, therapist asks client for feedback in order to ensure that client was able to experience the sensations around the nostrils and that s/he was successfully able to return the attention to the anchor each time the mind wandered away. This is the therapist's opportunity to correct any misunderstandings about the practice and to provide additional tools to clients who are having difficulty maintaining their concentration on the breath.

For example,

- a) if client has difficulty experiencing any sensations, expand the focus of attention to include the inside of the nostrils and top of nose. If client experiences sensations, but loses them during meditation, instruct client to take one or two short, sharp breaths, so that sensations can be clearly felt. Then instruct client to return to normal breathing.
- b) if client experiences sensations, but has difficulty with mind wandering, therapist provides additional concentration techniques, as follows:

'It sounds like you're doing well detecting sensations caused by the in and out breath; it's your monkey mind that's giving you the trouble, is that right? Don't be discouraged. Everyone has difficulty at first. You are only just beginning to become aware of your wandering monkey mind – this is an important step – it is the beginning of insight. With awareness of the monkey mind, comes the motivation to work hard to train it. You probably never realized before how difficult it is to train your mind. Remember that it is the monkey mind that will get you in trouble, so just keep working hard to train it. Be persistent. Each time the mind wanders away from the anchor, bring it back gently but firmly. Just as when you are teaching a child to stay away from what can cause it harm, train your mind gently but firmly to stay away from thoughts and feelings that can activate the addict self. Keep bringing the mind back to the anchor over and over again.

If you find that you continue to get lost in your thoughts, you may count your breaths at the end of the out breath. Breathe normally, and count each breath after you have experienced the sensations caused by that in and out breath. Say the number silently to yourself just before the breath turns to come back in, like this:

Breathe in, Breathe Out, Count 'One'.

Breathe in, Breathe Out, Count 'two'.

Breathe In, Breathe Out, Count 'three', and so forth up to 10.

While breathing in and out normally, keep your focus on the sensations caused by the touch of the breath, don't focus on the numbers you are counting. If your mind wanders away before you reach the number 10, begin again at number 1. Once you have reached 10, stop counting, and focus on the sensations caused by the touch of the in and out breath without counting. Then, if the mind wanders away again, you can begin counting up to 10 again. Let's try that now just to make sure you get the hang of it.

We'll just do it for 10 breaths. I'll talk you through it. Sit up straight and close your eyes. Breathe normally through your nose and bring your attention to your anchor – the area around your nostrils above your upper lip where you can feel the touch of the breath as it goes in and out. Now silently, with me, begin counting the breaths at the end of the out breath. As before, you are going to continue focusing on the sensations as you breathe in and out, the only difference is that at the very end of the out breath, just before it turns to come back in, count silently. Let's begin:

Breathe in, Breathe Out, Count 'One'.

Breathe in, Breathe Out, Count 'two'.

Breathe In, Breathe Out, Count 'three',

Breathe In, Breathe Out, Count 'four',

Breathe In, Breathe Out, Count 'five',

Breathe In, Breathe Out, Count 'six',

Breathe In, Breathe Out, Count 'seven',

Breathe In, Breathe Out, Count 'eight',

Breathe In, Breathe Out, Count 'nine',

Breathe In, Breathe Out, Count 'ten',

When you are ready, open your eyes. Do you think you can do this at home if you have difficulty concentrating?

Remember, counting is just a tool to help you get your concentration back. Don't get caught up in the counting. It's your anchor, not the numbers, that you are training your mind to focus on during your meditation practice.

## Review of previous session

Brief review of concepts covered in previous session:

Wisdom includes ...

- understanding that your addict self causes suffering and is not your true nature;
- understanding that 'mind precedes all' – the habitual patterns of our minds determine our experience;
- replacing the addict habit pattern of the mind with a spiritual habit pattern;
- making a commitment to filling your mind with your true spiritual nature.

**Example of therapist script:** Let's begin with a quick review of where we left off last week. In our first session together we talked about the need to replace the addict self with the spiritual self and that we were going to help you do this with three kinds of training – training in mastery of the mind, morality, and wisdom, as well as with daily practice of 14 spiritual qualities. We then worked on the training in mastery of the mind, with its three components – effort, mindfulness, and concentration. Then we did the training in morality which we defined as 'doing no harm to yourself and others' in speech, action, and livelihood. We agreed that this is the foundation of your spiritual path. Then last week we began the training in wisdom. To have wisdom is to understand that the addict self causes suffering and to realize that it is not your true nature. It is a habit pattern of the mind – a habitual way of thinking that causes harm to you and others. Being on a spiritual path requires that you commit yourself to replacing this harmful habit pattern with one that reflects your true spiritual nature. You began this process by creating a blueprint for your spiritual path and a daily plan for how to incorporate spirituality into your daily life.

### Completion of at-home assignments:

- “Coach” role
- Discuss experience with at-home assignments:
  - Did client use the Daily Plan for filling the mind with the spiritual self?
  - Did client do the Spiritual Stretch daily?
  - Did client practice mindfulness (stop 3 times daily to be mindful of addict self-schema activation)?
  - Did client practice daily meditation on the in and out breath, and end with the recitation of *metta* statements?
  - Did client use *metta* statements in daily life to defuse negative emotion?
  - Did client transcend craving using the ‘observe and name’ technique?
  - Did client recite the self-affirmation/prayer at every opportunity?
  - Did client use a medication mindfulness ritual?
  - Did client advocate for HIV testing or HIV prevention/harm reduction?
- Identify specific examples of how the spiritual quality assigned last session (wisdom) was experienced and expressed by client during the week.

**Example of therapist script:** Let's go over your assignments for last week. Remember as your coach, I check in with you every week to help you stay on track and keep your spiritual muscles strong. So, it's important that you are honest with me about your practice. Okay?

During the week, you were going to work on your spiritual quality – Wisdom. You were going to do this by using your Daily Plan for filling your mind with your spiritual self in your daily activities. How did that go?

[If client has not used Plan, Therapist and client review, and modify as needed, the plan, cues-to-action, and client's commitment.]

How about your other training exercises?

Were you able to incorporate them all in your Daily Plan? Did you continue doing your daily spiritual stretch?

[Note: If client has not done stretch daily, review technique and suggest involving a family member].

Have you been remembering to do your three times daily check-ins to see if your addict self is active? What was your cue? How is that working for you?

[Note: If client did not do check-ins three times every day, discuss appropriateness of the cue being used. Emphasize the importance of frequent self check-ins to increase awareness of the addict self; no awareness, no progress.]

Have you been practicing your meditation on the in and out breath -- your assignment was to practice for 40 minutes every day, were you able to do this?

[Note: if client reports having difficulty, review technique, location, and posture, emphasizing the importance of diligent practice for training the monkey mind.]

Did you end your daily meditation with your *metta* statement 'may all beings be happy and free from suffering'?

Have you been reciting your self-affirmation/prayer to help you refocus when the addict self tries to intrude? Last week we spoke about how you were going to recite your prayer/affirmation at every opportunity during the day, synchronizing it with your breathing or walking. How did that go?

[Therapist recites the prayer/affirmation to ensure that client remembers it.]

Did you also recite your *metta* statement to yourself whenever you had negative interactions with others during the week?

Have you been able to 'stare down' the craving monster – make it lose its power by observing it as if it were under a microscope, and seeing that it is actually made up of fleeting sensations that are insubstantial and impermanent?

Are you using your mindfulness ritual each time you take your medications?

Did you talk to anyone about HIV testing or HIV prevention?

[Note to therapist: The goal of this discussion is to encourage practice, while helping clients to identify their own spiritual qualities. Therefore, if client has not practiced, therapist asks client to describe a situation during the week and to identify instances of effort, strong determination, equanimity, gratitude, morality, loving kindness, tolerance, courage, and wisdom – the nine spiritual qualities covered so far in treatment. You can also suggest that they keep their signed Commitment in a conspicuous place and read it frequently.]

You are doing a good job strengthening your spiritual muscles with your daily practice. I really appreciate your being honest about where you are having difficulty. This shows me that you are not allowing the addict self to sabotage your practice. Keep up the good work!

**Instruction to Therapist:** Once you have reviewed the previous session and the at-home assignment for the previous week, you can begin providing the new material. As shown below, introduce the new material to clients in discrete segments to facilitate learning. Repeat key concepts frequently, and integrate the new material with what you already know about clients' addict and spiritual self schemas, and their spiritual or religious beliefs.

## **New Material: Training in Wisdom #2 – Coping with Stigma**

**Background Information:** As described previously, the ‘Training in Wisdom’ consists of two of the eight components of the Noble Eightfold Path -- Right View and Right Thinking. Previous sessions have taught clients that to think of the addict self as their true nature is not correct; rather, the addict self is a habit pattern of the mind that separates them from their true nature. Now, in this session, they will also learn that how others view them – that is, through the filter of stigma and prejudice -- is not their true nature either. It is unfortunately the case in our society that individuals with HIV who are addicted to drugs are dually stigmatized. Stigmatization is, of course, harmful on many levels. In this session, we focus specifically on trying to prevent stigmatization from activating the client’s addict self schema, which occurs through the process of internalization and self fulfilling prophecy. This means that individuals come to internalize (or ‘own’) the negative opinions of others, and then act out those very characteristics and qualities attributed to them by those who would stigmatize them. The Buddhist training in wisdom is particularly relevant for preventing these harmful processes because Buddhist teachings emphasize non-attachment to identity views – it teaches not to cling to anything as ‘me’ or ‘mine’ (*Majjhima Nikaya 109*). Modified for our current purposes, it will teach drug addicted individuals living with HIV to recognize that the negative opinions of others are not ‘me’ or ‘mine’ and, in so doing, prevent the internalization of these negative opinions, and subsequent addict self schema activation. Having an opportunity to share, in this session, their history of painful experiences of stigmatization will also serve to counter the effects of internalization, and help prevent further activation of the addict self-schema.

The importance of forgiveness is also emphasized in this session. Clients are taught that if they allow the ill-will of those who would stigmatize them to elicit negative emotions in them, these negative emotions will undoubtedly activate the addict self auto pilot and culminate in drug use or other harmful behavior. Making a commitment to stop the cycle of ill-will is crucial for anyone on a spiritual path. As in previous sessions, this material is presented to clients in terms of letting them know ‘what’s in it for them’ to stop the cycle of hatred. In Buddhist texts, we are told that hate is a fearful danger that most people do not understand; it brings great misfortune, it churns up and harms the mind (*Itivuttaka 84*). We are reminded frequently that hatred is never allayed by further acts of hatred; but rather that it is only allayed by non-hatred (*Majjhima Nikaya 128:6*). The numerical discourses of the Buddha describe five ways to remove a grudge against someone who may have harmed us rather than reciprocating with ill-will: we are told to develop loving kindness and compassion towards that person, and to develop equanimity in ourselves; and we are told to pay no attention to that person, other than to remember that he is heir to his actions (*Anguttara Nikaya: 108*). In other words, we are implored not to get caught up in another person’s hate. If we do, we harm ourselves and in so doing we have lost sight of our spiritual path. This message is of course consistent with the teachings of many religious traditions. For example, in the book of Job we are told ‘You are only hurting yourself with your anger’ (*Job 18:4 TEV*). And, in Luke, we are urged to invoke blessings upon and pray for the happiness of those who curse us and to

implore God's blessing upon those who abuse us (*Luke 6:28 AMP*). As in previous sessions in the training in morality, this session reminds clients that we are all heir to our actions; we all reap what we sow. Hate harms the hater; having compassion for those who hate, rather than responding in kind, will be rewarded with a calm and peaceful mind, and we will remain on our spiritual path.

In addition to learning the importance of forgiving others, clients also learn the importance of accepting responsibility for their own harmful behavior towards others and asking for their forgiveness. In previous sessions, clients acknowledged the many harms caused by the addict self. Now, in this session, they learn to ask for forgiveness of those they have harmed without having any expectations of receiving it, and to let go of any guilt that could further activate the addict self schema.

## **Segment 1 -- Interrupting Stigma Internalization and Self-Fulfilling Prophecy**

- **Wisdom** – Right View and Right Thinking
  - Don't get detoured by the wrong view and wrong thinking of others
- **Stigma** – “a mark burned into the skin of a criminal or slave—a mark of infamy, disgrace, or reproach.”
- **Internalized stigma** -- Self-Fulfilling Prophecy -- internalization of stigma can lead to acting out behavior that is consistent with the stigma
- **Cognitive Script** – ‘This is not me; this is not mine. I am my spiritual nature.’

**Instruction to Therapist:** The goal of this segment is to teach clients about social stigma, internalized stigma, and self-fulfilling prophecy, and to introduce clients to a new cognitive script for interrupting these processes. You will begin by reminding clients that they are continuing their training in wisdom which consists of two components of the Noble Eightfold Path – Right View and Right Thinking. Remind clients that as described in the previous training, ‘Right View’ can be interpreted as coming to the realization that the addict self is merely a habit pattern of the mind that causes suffering, that it is impermanent, and that it is not their true nature. ‘Right Thinking,’ which is also interpreted in the Buddhist texts as Right Intention, can be understood as helping clients learn to redirect their thinking onto a spiritual path that will reveal their true nature and will end the suffering caused by the addict self. Explain to clients that one thing that can detour them from their spiritual path and prevent them from attaining Right View and Right Thinking is to get caught up in the wrong views and wrong thinking of others. In other words, it is dangerous for them to get caught up in how other people view them and how other people think about them. Explain that when we have wisdom we do not let the views and thinking of others guide our way, but rather we allow ourselves to be guided by the Right View and Right Thinking associated with our spiritual path. Emphasize that it is when we remain firmly on our spiritual path we come to understand our true nature, and we don't concern ourselves with the how others view us.

Introduce the topic of stigma and self-fulfilling prophecy by asking clients if they know what the word “stigma” means. Then give them the dictionary definition which

drives home its powerfully negative impact. The dictionary defines stigma as ‘a mark burned into the skin of a criminal or slave – a mark of infamy, disgrace or reproach.’ Your clients, who are dually stigmatized because of addiction and HIV, will quickly grasp this definition. Ask them if they have ever felt stigmatized, and what this experience was like. In the suggested script below are questions that can be used to encourage clients to share the suffering experienced because of stigmatization. Explain how a stigma can become internalized. Then, once internalized, it quickly turns into a self-fulfilling prophecy by activating the addict self which, in turn, feeds and maintains the stigma. Give clients examples from their own lives. For example, you will be able to demonstrate the process easily by referring clients back to their previous descriptions of their addict self, which are likely to include words like “irresponsible”, “selfish”, “worthless”, “dangerous”, each of which mirror the social stigma. You will also probably be able to demonstrate the process of self-fulfilling prophecy in your clients own lives, in which their destructive automatic reactions to being stigmatized have reinforced the negative opinions of others. Ask them if they have ever come to believe that what other people think about them reflects who they really are. Explain that when they come to believe that this is who they really are, they have caused harm to themselves, and have therefore lost sight of their spiritual path. They have allowed themselves to get caught up in the illusion that the addict self is their true nature, which it is not. That is not to say that they should not take responsibility for their previous destructive behavior, but rather that they should make a commitment from this moment forward to end the cycle of internalized stigmatization and self-fulfilling prophecy.

Next, teach clients how to use an affirmation to break the cycle of stigma internalization and self-fulfilling prophecy. When faced with stigma, they will say to themselves ‘this is not me, this is not mine; I am my spiritual nature.’ Explain that this is an affirmation used for thousands of years by people on a spiritual path that they can now use to rob the stigma of its power to activate the addict self. Emphasize that these words epitomize the Right View and Right Thinking that is taught in the Training in Wisdom. Show clients where the words are written in their Client Workbook, and encourage them to use this affirmation frequently throughout the day.

**Example of therapist script:** Today we are going to continue the training in Wisdom with its focus on right view and right thinking. Having right view requires understanding your true spiritual nature. Having right thinking requires that you make sure that your thoughts are consistent with your spiritual path. One obstacle that gets in the way of both right view and right thinking is getting caught-up in how other people view us. I’m talking specifically about the opinion of those people who stigmatize us. Do you know what the word stigma means? Let me tell you how it is defined in the dictionary. The dictionary defines “stigma” as “a mark burned into the skin of a criminal or slave—a mark of infamy, disgrace, or reproach.” That’s pretty powerful, isn’t it? When individuals or groups are stigmatized, it’s as if society has branded or labeled them as dishonorable, even reprehensible. Being stigmatized not only feels bad, it can actually influence how the person who is stigmatized thinks and feel about themselves and even how they behave. In short, it can get in the way of people experiencing their true nature. People are stigmatized for various reasons. People who are infected with HIV and are addicted to drugs are doubly stigmatized in our society. Have you ever had the experience of being stigmatized?

[Therapist encourages client to share experience of being shunned or scorned by society because of HIV and addiction, using the following questions as a guide:

Have you had the experience of anyone avoiding you or acting hatefully towards you because you have HIV or because you have a drug problem?

Could you tell me more about that? (Therapist probes for details).

Have any family members shunned you because of HIV or addiction, or both?

Could you tell me more about that? (Therapist probes for details.)]

Being stigmatized has the potential to become a large obstacle in your spiritual path for several reasons:

One reason is because it interferes with one of the components of wisdom – right view. Rather than you being able to experience your true self -- your spiritual nature -- what happens is that, after a while, you may begin to internalize society's stigmatizing labels—that is, you may actually come to believe that how other people perceive you is your "true" self. People who suffer from preventable illnesses, like addiction or HIV, often feel this way – they may begin to experience a deep sense of shame, and actually begin to think, feel, and behave just as others expect them to. Eventually they may throw up their hands and say 'What's the use, they already think this of me anyway, I might as well act like it" and they may subsequently engage in behaviors that place their health, and the health of others, at risk. This is a good example of a **self-fulfilling prophecy**.

Have you ever experienced shame because of your addiction to drugs? Do you experience any shame because of HIV? Do you ever feel that the negative opinions of others about you are accurate – that they reflect who you really are? When you described the addict self in our first session together you said that you were ..... [therapist lists some of the negative attributes]; do these words reflect what other people think about you? What do you do when people put you down? Do you get angry? Do you lash out? Do you use drugs? So, do you see now how your response to stigmatization can feed the addict self?

[Therapist probes for evidence of stigma internalization, addict self-activation, and self-fulfilling prophecy in client's own life.]

When talking about the cycle of stigmatization and self-fulfilling prophecy, we must be careful not to put the blame on other people. We must not lose sight of the fact that there may be some basis for the negative opinions of others, especially if you have actually caused harm to someone when your addict self was activated. It's very important to remember, however, that even if there is a grain of truth about the negative characteristics of the addict self, this is not your true nature, but rather a habit pattern of mind that can be changed. You must not confuse the addict self with your true nature, even if those around you do. That's what the training in wisdom is all about – helping you to maintain 'right view' – so that you always remember your spiritual nature, and by doing so you interrupt the process we called 'stigma internalization and self-fulfilling prophecy' before it does further harm. Rather than throwing up your hands and saying "What's the use, they already think this of me anyway, might as well act like it", you will activate your spiritual self instead, and stay on your spiritual path, knowing who you really are, and not getting caught up in the illusion that you are your addict self.

So, how to do this. As part of your training in wisdom, I'm going to teach you some simple but powerful words that will protect you from getting caught up in stigma and self-fulfilling prophecy. If ever you are shunned or hated or looked down on, I want you to recite silently these words "**this is not 'me'; this is 'not mine.' I am my spiritual nature**". Can you repeat those words for me? 'This is not me; this is not mine. I am my spiritual nature'. Don't forget these words; they are very wise words that can help you remember your true nature; recite them frequently to yourself when you are confronted with stigma. You will find them written down for you in your 3-S journal.  
[Therapist ensures that client can recite the words and directs client to workbook.]

## Segment 2 -- Forgiveness

- Not getting caught up in the cycle of hate
- Asking for, but not expecting, forgiveness of those we have harmed
- Forgiving those who have harmed us
- Training oneself in forgiveness

**Instruction to Therapist:** The focus of the next segment is forgiveness, which is the spiritual quality that clients will be working on during the week. In this segment, you will be talking about both asking for forgiveness as well as forgiving others. Forgiveness can be a difficult topic for clients, so remind them that all of the major religious traditions teach the importance of this spiritual quality. Begin by discussing why it is important to ask others for forgiveness. Explain that when they use the affirmation 'This is not me; this is not mine' they are not absolved from previous harmful behavior. Let them know that being on a spiritual path requires that they take full responsibility for the harmful actions of the addict self. However, they should not identify with it and get burdened by guilt; instead they should identify with their spiritual self, accept responsibility, make amends if possible, and ask for forgiveness. Emphasize that the reason to ask for forgiveness is not about the other person; rather, it is about purifying one's own mind. Remind them that whenever we do something that harms another person, we have also harmed ourselves. So we ask for forgiveness not only to try to make amends, but also to purify our own mind so that we can move forward and not cling to the past. Emphasize that it is not the person's response to our request for forgiveness that matters. In fact, clients should not expect to be forgiven. They should simply ask for forgiveness with a sincere open heart, one that accepts responsibility for the harm caused, and is committed to not causing further harm. Even if the other person responds to their request for forgiveness with hatred and insult, they should not identify with it; they should simply say their affirmation to themselves 'this is not me, this is not mine; I am my spiritual nature'. Remind clients that if they internalize other people's negative opinions of them, or hate those who hate them, they are contaminating their own minds.

To prevent defiling their own mind, they need to **train** themselves in forgiveness. Emphasize the word 'train' which implies diligent and consistent effort. Training in forgiveness is an important part of the training in wisdom. Clients will need to train themselves diligently so that they do not get caught up in the cycle of hate. This is not easy, of course. It is the current addict habit pattern of the mind to perpetuate the cycle of stigmatization and self-fulfilling prophecy. To hate rather than to forgive those who hate us, to be defensive rather than to ask for forgiveness of those we have harmed – this is the

current habit pattern of the mind. Explain that just as a marathon runner trains to run a marathon, they will need to train their minds in forgiveness. Teach clients that they can begin to train themselves by making a commitment to become more aware of when they are having unforgiving or hateful thoughts about others during the day. Then, when they become aware of an unforgiving or hateful thought, they should train their minds to return to their anchor – that place where they first feel the touch of the breath as they breathe in and out through their nose. Emphasize that when they stay connected to their anchor, they remain firmly on their spiritual path where there is no room for hate in their lives; no room for stigma; no room for self-fulfilling prophecy. In this way, by not clinging to the hateful or unforgiving thought, they will not feed it, and it will get weaker and weaker, and they will allow their spiritual nature to guide their behavior rather than being the slave of the addict self and allowing themselves to be guided by, and thus reinforce, the negative opinions of others. In the experiential component of the session, clients will begin their training in forgiveness.

**Example of therapist script:**

**[Therapist discusses the importance of asking for forgiveness]**

Saying ‘this is not me; this is not mine’ does not mean that you are not responsible for your actions. Far from it. Training in wisdom includes knowing that you are ‘heir to your actions’ – remember, if you cause harm, you harm yourself as well as harming the other person. With this knowledge, you can acknowledge your true nature, while attempting to make amends for any harmful actions you have engaged in. This may include apologizing to, and asking forgiveness of, those you have harmed. [Therapist note: if it is consistent with the client’s religious beliefs, it may also include asking God’s forgiveness.] Having wisdom also means being able to remain on your spiritual path even if the person you have harmed chooses not to forgive you. Remember, you have no control over the other person’s response to you. You only have control over your own mind.

**[Therapist discusses the importance of forgiving others]**

Having spiritual wisdom not only requires being able to ask for forgiveness when you have harmed others, it also requires forgiving others when they have harmed you. When you are being unjustly stigmatized, it’s easy to get caught up in the cycle of hate. In the past, how have you responded to people who shun you or acted hatefully towards you unjustly because of HIV or addiction?

[Therapist determines the extent to which the addict self is activated in response to stigmatization.]

If you have hatred in your heart and if you entertain angry thoughts against those who stigmatize you, then you are not on your spiritual path. This is your warning sign that you are getting caught up in the cycle of hatred and are forgetting your true nature. Being on your spiritual path requires forgiveness – asking for forgiveness when you harm others and forgiving others when they harm you. Being able to forgive people who seem to hate or scorn us is difficult, I know, but unless we are willing to **train** ourselves to ask for forgiveness, and to be forgiving of others, we will never be able to maintain the connection with our true spiritual nature. Remember, when we don’t forgive those who would stigmatize us, it only hurts us further, it doesn’t harm them – their own hate is what will harm them.

Did you notice that I used the word ‘train’. You really do have to train your mind in forgiveness. You can’t just try to forgive. I recommend that you replace the word ‘try’ in your vocabulary with the word ‘train’. You don’t **try** to run a marathon, you **train** to run a marathon. Similarly, you do not **try** to stay on your spiritual path, you **train** your mind to include only those thoughts and feelings that are consistent with your spiritual path. So, each time you have an unforgiving thought, you have to bring your mind back to your anchor, and focus on the peace and serenity of your true spiritual nature. Whenever it leaves that place of forgiveness, you have to bring it back again and again, and again and again. Think of yourself as being in training for a difficult, but rewarding, journey; this is what is required of someone who is in training. We’re going to begin your training in forgiveness right now? Are you ready for your resistance training exercise?

### **Segment 3 -- Experiential component**

- Gym metaphor: need to exercise spiritual muscles – Forgiveness
- Role-Play Part I: Asking for forgiveness
- Role-Play Part II: Resistance Training -- Forgiving others

**Instruction to Therapist:** The next segment is the experiential component of the training. As with all sessions, the gym metaphor is used, such that clients are provided with the opportunity to exercise their spiritual muscles, and to do some resistance training with the 3-S counselor who serves as the client’s coach. Today the focus will be on helping clients strengthen the spiritual quality of forgiveness through the use of role-play. The role-play will be in two parts. In the first part, clients will practice asking for forgiveness from someone they have harmed; and in the second part, the resistance training, they will practice forgiving a person who responds to their request for forgiveness with anger and invective. You will play the role of someone the client has harmed when his or her addict self was activated. In the first part of the role-play, clients will practice telephoning this person to apologize and ask for forgiveness. So, before you begin the role-play, brainstorm with clients who this person should be so that you can be prepared to play the role convincingly. For example, ask clients to identify a friend or family member from whom they are estranged because of something they did when the addict self was active, such as stealing or lying to this person. Clients will then practice calling this person on the telephone; acknowledging the harm they caused this person, offering a sincere apology, and asking for forgiveness. In this first role-play, you will accept the apology and forgive the client. This will not be so in the second part of the role-play. The second part of the role-play will be the resistance training. Clients will practice remaining on their spiritual path even when you, playing the role of the other person, not only refuses to forgive them, but also hurls insults at them, using words that are consistent with the addict stigma and with clients’ addict self-schema. This is clients’ opportunity to practice their new cognitive script. Rather than responding to insults by activating an addict self script, which will lead to further harm, have them practice a new spiritual self script that identifies only with the spiritual self and its spiritual qualities. In response to your insults, have them practice saying their affirmation ‘This is not me; this is not mine; I am my spiritual nature’. For purposes of the role-play, clients will say this affirmation aloud, while, in reality, of course, they would recite this affirmation to themselves. They will also practice responding to the person’s negative comments with

forgiveness and understanding, rather than allowing the addict self to become activated. As clients are unlikely to have ready access to a new script of forgiveness and empathy, you should provide them with a script that they can read during the role-play. A sample is provided below. In this role-play your task is to do whatever you can to help your clients practice not getting caught up in the cycle of hate and ill-will that perpetuates stigmatization and self-fulfilling prophecy.

**Example of therapist script:** This is the part of the session when we work together to help you strengthen your spiritual muscles. Remember it's like going to the gym. We'll work out for a while and then we'll do some resistance training where it gets a little harder. Today we are going to work on the spiritual muscle – forgiveness. This workout will require that you activate your spiritual self and practice asking someone to forgive you for the harm that you have caused when your addict self was activated. You will then practice forgiving this person when he or she not only refuses to forgive you, but also hurls insults at you.

First, I'll need you to identify someone that you have harmed in the past. This could be someone that no longer speaks to you because of what you've done in the past. Perhaps you lied to that person or stole from them when your addict self was activated. Can you think of someone like that? [Therapists brainstorms with client to identify a friend or family member who is estranged from client because of client's addiction.] In the first part of the role-play, you will call me on the telephone, and tell me that you are changing your life. You will acknowledge the harm you caused me; really try to convince me that you realize that you have hurt me. Then apologize sincerely and ask for my forgiveness. You might even say that you don't expect me to forgive you, but that you want me to know how sorry you are and want to make it up to me somehow. Okay that's the first part of the role-play. The next part of the role-play will get harder. This will be your resistance training so that you can really work those spiritual muscles. Not only will I refuse to forgive you, I will call you names and insult you. Your task is to stay on your spiritual path. You will take a moment to focus on your anchor, and you will remind yourself 'This is not me; this is not mine; I am my spiritual nature.' Of course, in real life, you would say these words silently to yourself whenever anyone insults you or is hateful towards you, but in our role-play say it **out loud** in order to practice. I also want you to practice forgiving me for insulting you. Accept responsibility for your own actions that caused the initial harm, but don't get caught up in the cycle of ill-will by identifying with the insults. Okay? If you need some help with that part of the role play you can **read what I've written on this card**, but feel free to add to what is written.

[Therapist gives client a card with the following written on it: When someone refuses to forgive you, and instead insults you...

Focus on your anchor. Then recite the following:

'This is not me; this is not mine; I am my spiritual nature. I acknowledge the harm I caused to ... (person's name)... and I am sincerely sorry. I understand and forgive .... (person's name)... insults, and I will not get caught up in a cycle of hate and anger.]

Remember the goal of this workout is to help you take responsibility for past harmful behavior, to make the commitment to cause no harm in the future, and when faced with stigmatization to remind yourself of your true spiritual nature. Remember, you are not your addict self, so don't get caught up in other people's words and opinions. Just do your best to stay on your spiritual path. Okay, let's begin.

Begin Part I of role-play (client pretends to call 'therapist' on the telephone):

Example:

Client: Hi, this is (...name....)

Therapist in role of person who has been harmed: What do you want? I thought I made it clear I don't want you calling here.

Client: I just wanted to let you know that I've made a lot of changes in my life lately, and I realize now that I did some things that hurt you. I don't know if I'll ever be able to make it up to you, but I just wanted to say how sorry I am and to ask for your forgiveness.

Therapist: You've got some nerve. You think I haven't heard this before?

Client: I understand why you would feel that way. I know I've got to earn your trust and that it might take a while for us to have a relationship again. Thanks for listening anyway.

Therapist: Well, okay, If you want, you can call me tomorrow and we can talk things through.

Begin Part II of role-play (client pretends to call 'therapist' on the telephone):

Client: Hi, this is (...name....)

Therapist in role of person who has been harmed: What do you want? I thought I made it clear I don't want you calling here.

Client: I just wanted to let you know that I've made a lot of changes in my life lately, and I realize now that I did some things that hurt you. I don't know if I'll ever be able to make it up to you, but I just wanted to say how sorry I am and to ask for your forgiveness.

Therapist: You've got some nerve. You think I haven't heard this before?

Client: I understand why you would feel that way. I know I've got to earn your trust and that it might take a while for us to have a relationship again. Thanks for listening anyway.

Therapist: You're a real con-artist, you know that! You're just rotten through and through. You'll never change. I hope you rot in hell! (hangs up)

Client – [Client focuses on his/her anchor and practices reciting **aloud**: This is not me; this is not mine; I am not my addict self. I acknowledge the harm I caused to ... (person's name)... and I am sincerely sorry. I understand and forgive .... (person's name)... insults, and I will not get caught up in a cycle of hate and anger.]

## Segment 4 -- At-home practice assignments

- Continue: Use daily plan for filling the mind with the spiritual self
- Continue: Daily 3-S stretch
- Continue: 3 times daily self-schema check-ins (with cue)
- Continue: Meditation on the in and out breath (45 minutes) ending with metta statements
- Continue: Recite affirmation/prayer throughout the day
- Continue: Transcend craving by systematic observation of impermanence
- Continue: Use *metta* meditation statements to defuse negative emotion
- Continue: Use medication mindfulness rituals to help you follow medical recommendations
- Continue: Advocate for HIV testing and HIV prevention/harm reduction
- New: Practice forgiving someone who has harmed you and asking forgiveness of someone you have harmed
- New: Spiritual qualities assigned -- **'forgiveness'**

**Instruction to Therapist:** In this segment of the session, clients are given their at-home assignments. They are reminded that being on a Spiritual path requires all the spiritual muscles they have previously worked on and so they are to continue the at-home exercises previously assigned in addition to the ones you will be assigning today. Be sure to refer clients to the page in the Client Workbook on which the at-home exercises for today are written. Then go over each of them with clients to ensure that they understand what is to be accomplished during the coming week.

Clients are to continue using their daily plan for filling their minds with the spiritual self in all their daily activities. Their daily plan should incorporate their Spiritual Stretch, their 3 times daily self check-ins, their medication mindfulness ritual, and their meditation on the in and out breath, which should end with the recitation of *metta* statements – ‘May all beings be happy and free from suffering’. Note that their daily meditation time is increased as appropriate. This will depend upon how clients are progressing. Keep in mind that the goal is to have each client meditating for one hour each day by the end of treatment. Remind clients that they are to continue using their spiritual self-affirmation not only when the addict self intrudes, but at other times during the day synchronizing it with their breathing and walking, and they will also continue to transcend craving whenever it arises in their daily lives by carefully examining the rise and fall of the sensations associated with it, knowing ‘this too shall pass’. Should they have any negative interactions with others they will recite their *metta* statements to defuse negative emotion before it activates the addict self. In addition, they will continue using their medication mindfulness rituals, and being an advocate for HIV prevention in their community. Once the usual routine is reviewed, the new assignments are added. The new Spiritual quality to assign in this session is ‘**forgiveness**’ and their new assignment is to forgive someone who has harmed them and apologize to, and ask for forgiveness from, someone they have harmed. If appropriate, have this be the same person that was used as the example in the role-play. The segment ends, as it always does, by asking clients’ for their commitment to completing the at-home assignments and remaining on their spiritual path.

**Example of therapist script:** The session is almost over. Let’s go over your training schedule for the week.

**Continued:** Continue using your daily plan for filling the mind with your spiritual self. Incorporate all your other assignments into your daily plan.

Continue your daily spiritual stretch and your mindfulness practice of checking in with yourself three times a day to see what habit pattern of the mind is currently active. Keep using your cue (...name cue...) to interrupt yourself three times a day. Also continue your in- and out-breath meditation practice, ending with your *metta* statements – if you can, increase the time you practice each day to 45 minutes.

[Therapist gauges practice time to client’s progress.]

Keep reciting your prayer/affirmation not only to refocus after an addict self intrusion, but frequently during the day synchronizing it with your breathing and walking.

Whenever craving arises, say ‘this too shall pass’ and stare it down! Just stop and observe the craving sensations; watch them arise and pass away.

If you have negative interactions with others, recite your *metta* statements to prevent the addict self from getting activated.

Also, keep using your medication mindfulness ritual to help you remember to take your medications, and, whenever you can, talk to others about HIV testing and HIV prevention and harm reduction strategies.

Added: Your new assignment is to forgive someone who has harmed you, and also to apologize to and ask for forgiveness from someone you have harmed. [Note: if the client is prepared to do so, this should be the person identified in the role-play.]

The spiritual quality to strengthen this week is **forgiveness**. You have already demonstrated that you have this quality today. You will need it during the week.

Commitment: Can you make a commitment to stay on a path of wisdom this week – this means not forgetting your true spiritual nature and training your mind in forgiveness?

## Segment 5 -- Summary

Summary of session content to facilitate client understanding:

Wisdom includes:

- Stigma and self-fulfilling prophecy
- Right view: This is not me; this is not mine
- Right thinking: Forgive, do not get caught up in a cycle of hate
- If your actions have harmed others; acknowledge, apologize, ask for forgiveness

**Instruction to Therapist:** The next segment of the session is the summary. The purpose of the brief summary is to help clients remember what was covered in the session. The summary for this session should include reviewing the training in wisdom, with its two components – right view and right thinking. Remind clients that the addict self's response to being stigmatized is to internalize other people's negative opinions of them and then act as if it were true, thus reinforcing the stigma. Emphasize the importance of forgiveness in ending the cycle of hate and ill-will that is caused by stigmatization, and also review with clients the importance of acknowledging the harms that they have caused to others, apologizing, making amends if possible, and asking for, but not expecting, forgiveness.

**Example of therapist script:** Now let's review briefly what we talked about today. Today we continued the training in wisdom. Wisdom includes understanding that the addict self is a habit pattern of the mind that causes you to suffer and is **not** your true nature. Specifically we talked about stigma, and how important it is to remind yourself 'this is not me; this is not mine' so that you interrupt the self-fulfilling prophecy process and the cycle of hatred and anger. We also talked about the importance of owning your actions. If you have harmed anyone, take responsibility, apologize, make amends, if possible, and ask for forgiveness. But, don't have unrealistic expectations about how the other person will respond to your request for forgiveness. If someone harms you or treats you with hatred or anger, remember your spiritual nature, and forgive the person. Remember hatred harms the hater. Do not let it harm you; let it go.

## Segment 6 -- 3-S stretch

- 3-S stretch with new spiritual quality ‘forgiveness’ inserted

**Instruction to Therapist:** Each 3-S therapy session ends with the spiritual stretch. You will find a diagram of the stretch in this manual and also in the Client Workbook. The goal of the stretch, which is to be performed daily at home, as well as at the end of each session, is for clients to affirm both physically and verbally their commitment to spiritual practice. At each stage in the stretch, which is performed slowly, counselors and clients affirm, aloud, the commitment to the client’s spiritual path and to developing the spiritual quality assigned for the week, in this case forgiveness. The words spoken during each part of the stretch are to remind clients that being on a spiritual path requires making their thoughts, words, emotions, actions, and perceptions consistent with the highest spiritual ideals. You will do the stretch with your client at the end of each session so that you can correct any mistakes as the stretch is executed, and ensure that clients know how to do the stretch when they get home. Until clients are familiar with the wording, have them repeat each phrase after you. Explain that the stretch is a simple way to begin their day that can remind them to stay on their spiritual path. Remind them that the stretch is one of their at-home practice assignments, and show them once again where they can find it in their workbook. Then do the stretch together and end the session.

**Example of therapist script:** As forgiveness is the quality you will be working on this week, let’s end the session by focusing on this quality while doing our spiritual stretch.

[Therapist and client stand and perform the stretch together – see appendix for posture.]

‘Today I take my spiritual path. May my thoughts reflect forgiveness; may my words reflect forgiveness; may my emotions reflect forgiveness; may my actions reflect forgiveness; may my perceptions reflect forgiveness; may I be open and receptive to forgiveness. I am my spiritual nature.

**End**

**Example of therapist script:** Thank you for coming today (client name). I look forward to seeing you at our next session.