



STAR Center

Support, Technical Assistance and Resources Center

Engaging the Inner Creative Process for Recovery and Wellness: A Tool for Self-Help, Peer Support, and Provider Service Enhancement



Written by: Stephen Kiosk, M. Div., L.P.C.



National Alliance on Mental Illness

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The NAMI STAR Center is a SAMHSA-funded technical assistance center dedicated to promoting and enhancing recovery, mental health, and wellness through information, training, and resources on effective self-help and multicultural competence and social inclusion approaches with a special focus on working with underserved communities.

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Introduction

Attending to personal mental health challenges, recovery issues and wellness goals can be a daunting task. Becoming aware of and then working with significant issues, needs and goals with another person or group involves a very complex inner process of mind-body communication.

Stresses, anxieties and simple worries can block this complex inner process from happening in an effective and culturally sensitive manner.

There are numerous other factors that can hamper effective communication or decrease the chances of experiencing desired results from an interaction in support of recovery, wellness, discovery and personal empowerment for successful living. Therefore, it is important that individuals, peer specialists, supporters and providers take some time to more fully understand and engage the inner creative process in order to facilitate strengths-based recovery and wellness progress.

Purpose

The purpose of this tool is to provide an easy-to-use outline and format that can be readily utilized:

- For personal self-help and reflection for mental health, recovery progress, illness prevention and wellness
- To assist peers with a script that supports navigating deep inner processes where mind and body meet
- By mental health and other health care service providers and professionals who seek to deepen support and assist individuals in accessing and engaging their inner mind-body workings, the “creative process,” in a respectful, person-centered and culturally sensitive manner

This tool can be used for personal self-help work, by peers to support others, and by mental health and integrated care service providers

Contexts and Formats for Use

The “creative process” questions or statement-sets, adapted from the work of Ernest Rossi (1) and inspired by the work of Arnold Mindell (2), integrate four stages that facilitate mind-brain-body-gene dialog that are at the heart of recovery and new learning.

Stages of the Creative Inner Process

-  **Stage 1** : Getting an idea and starting to work on a problem or goal.
-  **Stage 2** : Working through any ambiguity, conflict or uncertainty about the problem, issue or goal.
-  **Stage 3** : Experiencing a flash of insight or emerging shift.
-  **Stage 4** : Verification and integration of a new insight, direction or learned skill connection.

According to Rossi, working through these stages "can turn on genes and brain plasticity in a single session." (1) Perhaps it can also be stated this way: our inner ability for change, new learning and wellness progress can be engaged and experienced in simple yet powerful ways.

This approach can be readily and easily adapted for many uses, flexible contexts and applications that can include:

- **An individual reading each statement-set and pausing for self-reflection time (using a clock or alarm with one to five minute intervals) after each set.** Self-help practices using audio recordings with digital recorders, cell phone voice mail messages or other readily available and inexpensive technologies can be especially helpful, powerful and surprisingly effective. The more you experience and repeat a new thought or action, the more quickly will it become part of your automatic skills and abilities.
- **A peer reading the statement-set script for other peers.** A person can use the script with its intentional wording and clearly marked pauses to facilitate inner transformation by affirming inner privacy, exercising gentleness and respect, and inviting a conscious contact with internal strengths and transformative abilities.
- **A mental health professional can explain and offer to use this format to more effectively facilitate inner personal transformative work** that implements deliberate and expressed intention, skillfully shaped process-questions and meaningful silence through supportive pauses. Using this approach and tool can also demonstrate sincere appreciation for the highly personal process involved in recovery and wellness progress.
- **A person who takes advantage of mental health/integrated health services can bring this tool into sessions** with providers and present this with an informed request that this format be utilized to more effectively facilitate powerful and transformative work within a recovery-oriented, wellness-focused and strength-expanding context.

The Creative Process Questions/Statement Sets

For the following content, please feel free to use additional or different words, phrases or time chunks that specifically connect with any other desired outcomes and benefits and that may more finely tune the experience to be even more culturally appropriate. Background music, if well-chosen by participants, can add to the richness of the experience as well as provide a greater level of comfort with "background noise" to address any other environmental sounds or factors that may be present.

It may be helpful to provide some introductory comments or discussion time as needed to address any important questions or concerns that may arise within your specific context when implementing the following script.

Creative Process Script

Preparation and Creating an Intentional Time and Safe Space

“So, with your permission, please allow me to invite you to feel as comfortable as possible now so that this time can be a powerful and personal gift to yourself—a gift that I am honored to be part of and willing to support (pause)...

Please allow the following words, intentional pauses and shifting experiences of your attention to take place, easily and naturally, so that this can be a time of new discovery and renewed strength. (pause) Perhaps you can hear or imagine your own thoughts that welcome this gift to yourself (and letting it be a gift of peer support and deep and meaningful presence among us, for each other, with each other, to each other) at this moment, at this time, even if there is any sense of manageable apprehension or curiosity... (pause)

Perhaps you can focus your vision and attention on an object or a visual zone or even close your eyes if that’s ok or preferred...whatever works best for you...whatever is most comfortable and natural for you to do now. (pause)

And as we spend this time together, the following questions and statement sets that I’ll put to words are meant for the silent listening within you...so there’s no need to respond out loud...this can be an affirming time to spend time within your own inner world...(pause)

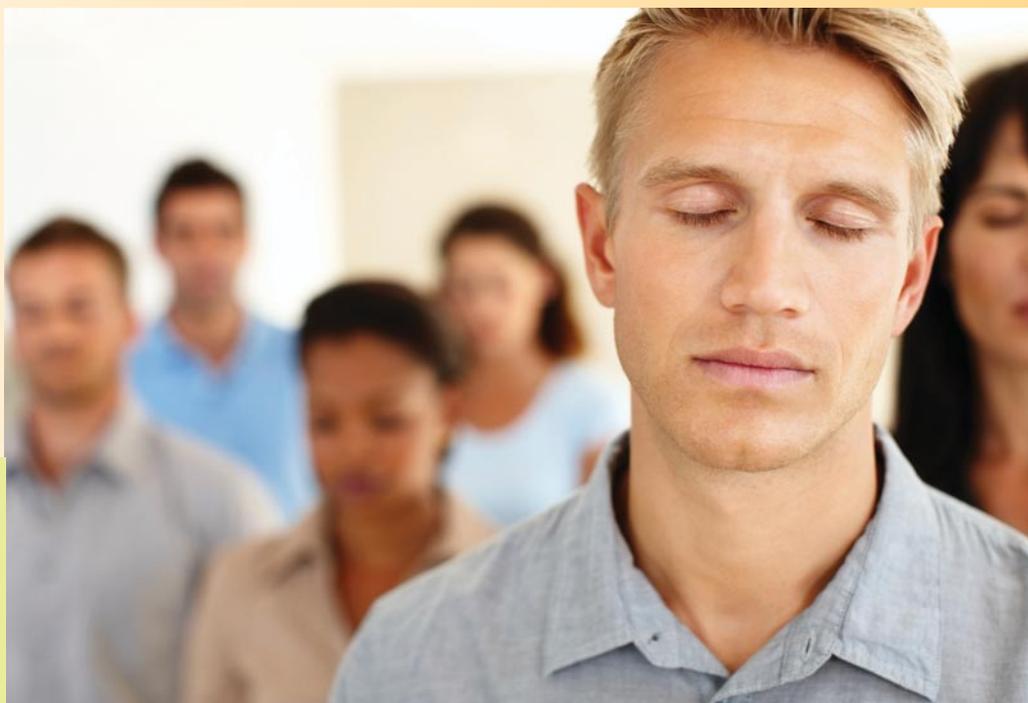
Please just welcome new possibilities and gentle surprises...powerful surprises. I’ll ask these four sets of questions and statements, and will follow each of the four sets with some quiet. (pause)

It can be normal and natural to experience a little manageable and anxious wonder with this exercise...especially if you haven’t had the time or opportunity before to give yourself a gift like this. (pause)

I’ll give a clear signal later when this experience together is about to come to a close. When I say at the end: “and so this inner journey and exploration comes to a close” (say with a slightly different and deliberate emphasis)...

...So when you are ready, please let me know by a word or two or a nod that “it’s ok to continue”...that you feel safe right now from a perspective and willingness to live from strength and hope (pause for a signal or response) then I will continue... (pause and wait for response or signal to proceed).

Anyone can bring this tool into provider sessions to foster easier, quicker, and more effective results.





Question/Statement Set 1: Getting an Idea

What is most important on your mind today? (pause for a few seconds) What issue or goal is absorbing your attention? (pause for several seconds) What is the most important emotional issue right now? Please be with whatever you experience right now while I stay quiet for a moment or two to simply be here in the spirit of mutual respect and support (allow one to three minutes of silence)...



Question/Statement Set 2: Getting Through Ambiguity and Any Anxiety

What is going on in your mind and body, as your experience continues for another moment or two in the privacy of your own awareness...so that you can learn what is needed for you right now? Welcome possibilities that may secretly and privately come to you through and beyond any manageable anxiety or wonder..." Please be with whatever you experience right now while I stay quiet for a moment or two to simply be here in the spirit of mutual respect and support (allow one to three minutes of silence).



Question/Statement Set 3: Insight/Shift

What is going on within you, privately right now? There is no need to explain anything out loud. Is it possible to appreciate whatever your experience is that continues all by itself? Experiencing something a little different now, perhaps...something that can be enlivening, comforting, inspiring...what is most needed...for your well being and inner energy and balance right now in your life... Please be with whatever you experience right now while I stay quiet for a moment or two to simply be here in the spirit of mutual respect and support (allow one to three minutes of silence).



Question/Statement Set 4: Integration

So what is most significant for you **right now**? Where does this lead you? Where does this guide you to next? How might this experience within you continue to support your making any changes you may want or need--in any area of your life--by yourself or with the support and encouragement of others? What will you do for what comes next in your life to allow and enhance greater expression of your success, your skill...your rewarding unfolding of your energy, attention, time and every day activity? Please be with whatever you experience right now while I stay quiet for a moment or two to simply be here with you in the spirit of mutual respect and support (allow one to three minutes of silence).

And knowing and trusting that any needed and important things can continue to take place within you, even while you shift your attention to what's going on in the room. Will you please allow your attention to shift again slightly...easily...knowing that you can bring with you from that experience...whatever is most helpful and needed...

...Preparing yourself for a transition of your attention and focus, as this activity together makes a transition, I share with you again the words..."and so this inner journey and exploration comes to a close." (say differently and with emphasis and wait for a shift of attention).
(Depending on your role, your context and specific purpose, you can follow with a period of sharing and discussion that is introduced with some agreements to ensure emotional safety, trust, confidentiality, dedicated time for each participant, etc.)

Summary and Invitation

Each of us is capable of imagining and experiencing wondrous and positive thoughts, feelings, sensations and behaviors. This tool was pilot-tested with individuals and workshop groups prompting positive responses and is offered within the context of promoting individual self-help approaches, effective and easy peer-to-peer recovery and wellness group practices and culturally appropriate interactions for mental health and health care service providers.

The STAR Center invites you to use this tool for your own well-being and for the well-being of others.

Please let us know what you think! Please give us your feedback on how this tool was helpful or how you think it can be improved—Please check us out at www.consumerstar.org, on Facebook (NAMI STAR Center) or Twitter ([namistarcenter](https://twitter.com/namistarcenter)).

If you would like to request free phone or teleconference experiential and skill-building training on this tool, please contact the STAR Center.

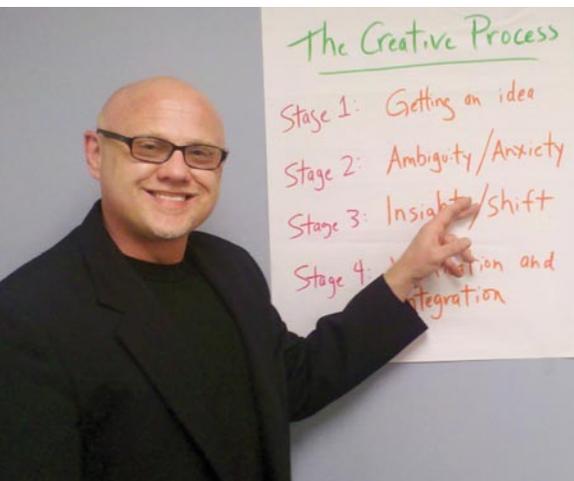
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Recommended Books, References and Resources:

- (1) *The Symptom Path to Enlightenment: The New Dynamics of Self-Organization in Hypnotherapy--An Advanced Manual for Beginners* by Ernest Rossi. www.ernestrossi.com
- (2) *The Quantum Mind and Healing: How to Listen and Respond to Your Body's Symptoms* by Arnold Mindell.
- (3) *Guided Imagery for Groups: Fifty Visualizations That Promote Relaxation, Problem-Solving, Creativity and Well-Being* by Andrew Schwartz.
- (4) *Healing Yourself: A Step-By-Step Program For Better Health Through Imagery* by Martin Rossman.
- (5) *Awakening the Mind: A Guide to Mastering the Power of Your Brainwaves* by Anna Wise.



About the author:

Stephen Kiosk, M.Div., LPC, is the Director of the NAMI STAR Center. Steve grew up in a rural farm town on the Illinois-Wisconsin border. Raised in a family that experienced severe mental health issues, addiction, combat-related stress, domestic violence, and murder, Steve began his own mental health and wellness practices to address severe depression, anxiety, an eating disorder and other issues. His recovery foundation began with peer counseling and 12 Step work. Steve later entered the seminary and was a member of a religious order for several years when he began his service to and work with diverse individuals and communities across the country. Earning a Master of Divinity, he was later ordained a priest and was the associate pastor of a community in DC. To assist his own and others' personal growth and recovery, Steve studied substance abuse counseling, guided imagery and hypnotherapy, mind-body medicine, the effects of and approaches to trauma, solution-focused therapy, peer specialist curricula,

cross-cultural healing methods and traditions, and effective learning and behavior-change strategies, based on individual, group and cultural strengths and belief systems. Steve's past efforts include roles and duties at the Whitman-Walker Clinic's Elizabeth Taylor Medical Center in Washington, D.C., the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. He has also directed recovery, community support, and social services programs with and for homeless women and children in DC living with HIV/AIDS, mental health issues, addictions and other life challenges. Steve is a licensed professional counselor, trainer, mental health and wellness advocate, and published author who also sings opera.



“Let your star shine!”



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