

# **Enlighten Up Your Day**

**Chapter Ten**

**Self-fullness**

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## Self-fullness

*“The more you give, the more you will receive, because you will keep the abundance of the universe circulating in your life” – Deepak Chopra<sup>i</sup>*

Now that we’ve explored the Compassion Triangle in Chapter Nine, let’s take a closer look at what it means to be self-full. When we put our best interests at the forefront of our concerns we are being self-full. If we don’t prioritize our wellbeing, who will?

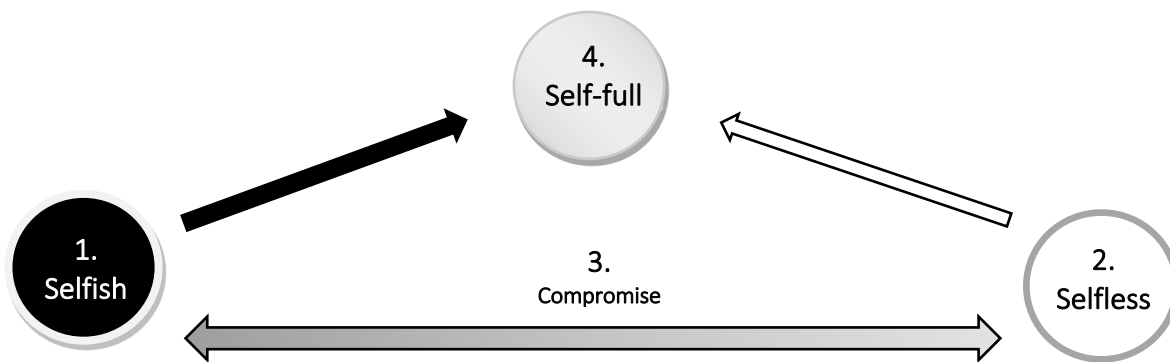
Self-fullness is the result of our decision to take ownership for our wellbeing. It is a practice of prioritizing our mental, physical, and spiritual health using coping skills and insights. Combining the best of two extremes – selfishness and selflessness – to create a new perspective is the art of self-fullness. The benefits of the self-full perspective are measured in greater happiness and health, better interactions with the people we care about, longevity, and clarity of purpose.

To be self-full we must operate from the conscious, Adult Ego state. Only from the Adult Ego state can we act mindfully and intentionally. When we assume full responsibility for our choices we feel liberated from resentment, guilt, shame, and doubt. We become the agents of our destiny and do not blame others for the consequences of our choices. And because we take care of ourselves we have more energy, inspiration and confidence to be a support for others. It may seem wrong to put our healthy self-interest first and foremost; but think of the consequences of putting ourselves at the bottom of the priority list . . . burn out, resentment, physical and mental health problems, family and partner issues, and chronic stress.

In the words of John Donne, “No man is an island; entire of itself.” We exist in relationship to each other and to the world. Ours is a living dance of giving and receiving. From this relational perspective we understand the truth – that to be self-full is to be centered in healthy interactions best defined as love-in-action.

## Exploration Exercise

Let's first look at some common definitions of selfish: to disregard the rights and feelings of others or prioritizing one's gain at the expense of others. Some common definitions of selfless include: being more concerned with the wishes and needs of others than one's own wellbeing or having no concern for oneself. In the diagram below selfishness is position one. At the other extreme is selflessness, position two. Most people think that compromise is the best solution but it's really just shades of gray between the first two positions. Compromise is position three. Another possibility is self-fullness. Self-fullness offers a new perspective that encompasses the wellbeing, needs, and desires of the whole. It represents a fourth position that integrates the best of both extremes.



Below is a set of exercises to help you understand self-fullness. After reading each example, you'll go to the next page and imagine a hypothetical example of a time when you behaved in a selfish way. Using the same hypothetical example, write how you might have behaved in a selfless way. Finally, you'll look for a new perspective and describe how you can act in a self-full manner.

### **Define a hypothetical example in which you might have acted in a way you consider to be selfish.**

When I was walking home from getting a haircut I popped into the bookstore. I saw a science fiction book that I wanted. It was a bit expensive, and even though Theresa and I are on a tight budget, I bought it anyway without first discussing it with her.

### **Using the same example, describe the situation from the standpoint of selflessness.**

I don't buy the book and I feel guilty for even thinking about getting something for myself. At the same time I feel resentful towards Theresa and blame her for not letting me spend money on something I want.

### **Explore what the self-full (new perspective) might be.**

I postpone buying the book. Instead, I discuss it with Theresa to see when we can afford it in our budget. Theresa looks it up online and finds a used version for a quarter of the cost and we order it then and there.

**Define a hypothetical example in which you might have acted in a way you consider to be selfish.**

A friend calls and says they're having a tough time. I say I'm on my way over but I go to a previous engagement first. I leave my friend hanging and they're stuck waiting for me.

**Using the same example, describe the situation from the standpoint of selflessness.**

When my friend calls saying they're having a tough time I cancel my engagement and race over there to help. I end up feeling resentful and frustrated because all my friend wants to do is vent about their problems and I've broken my date with another friend.

**Explore what the self-full (new perspective) might be.**

I spend a few minutes talking with my friend so that we're connected. I let them know that I have a previous engagement, so we set up a time to get together after. I enjoy my lunch and am able to be 100% present with my friend when we get together.

**Define a hypothetical example in which you might have acted in a way you consider to be selfish.**

**Using the same example, describe the situation from the standpoint of selflessness.**

**Explore what the self-full (new perspective) might be.**

## Mindfulness Practice

*Practice sharing the fullness of your being, your best self, your enthusiasm, your vitality, your spirit, your trust, your openness, above all, your presence.*

*Share it with yourself, with your family, with the world – Jon Kabat-Zinn*

During meditation practice, orient yourself to the present moment and allow your mind to be aware of times that you have been self-full. Let these instances float up into consciousness and flow by as you feel confidence and peace. Everyone experiences meditation and mental imagery differently. Recognize that you might want to adjust this meditation to fit what works best for you. Adjusting the meditation is, in itself, a practice of self-fullness. As you meditate plant a seed of intention that supports your observation of self-fullness in daily activities.

Over the next month take note of those instances when you were about to fall into the habit of either selfishness or selflessness but instead took the fourth position – self-fullness. As you take notice, appreciate that you are coming into the moment which *is* mindfulness. Write these instances in a journal or notebook to deepen your practice. In the hustle and bustle of daily living it's all too easy to forget the progress we've made. By being able to look back at our headway we build confidence and strengthen our commitment to keep practicing.



## Summary

Self-fullness is the result of our decision to take ownership for our wellbeing. It is a practice of prioritizing our mental, physical, and spiritual health using coping skills and insights. By combining the best of two extremes – selfishness and selflessness – we create a new perspective, self-fullness. The benefits of the self-full perspective are measured in greater happiness and health, better interactions with the people we care about, longevity, and clarity of purpose.

### Points to consider:

- To be self-full we must operate from the conscious, Adult Ego state. Only from the Adult Ego state can we act mindfully and intentionally. When we assume full responsibility for our choices we feel liberated from resentment, guilt, shame, and doubt.
- Self-fullness comes from a new perspective that encompasses the wellbeing, needs and desires of the whole.
- Over the next month take note of those instances when you were about to fall into the habit of either selfishness or selflessness but instead took the fourth position – self-fullness. As you take notice, appreciate that you are coming into the moment which *is* mindfulness.
- Write these instances in a journal or notebook to deepen your practice.

## References:

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- <sup>i</sup> Chopra, D. (1994) *The Seven Laws of Spiritual Success: A practical guide to the fulfillment of your dreams.* (p. 30). Amber-Allen Publishing. San Rafael, CA.