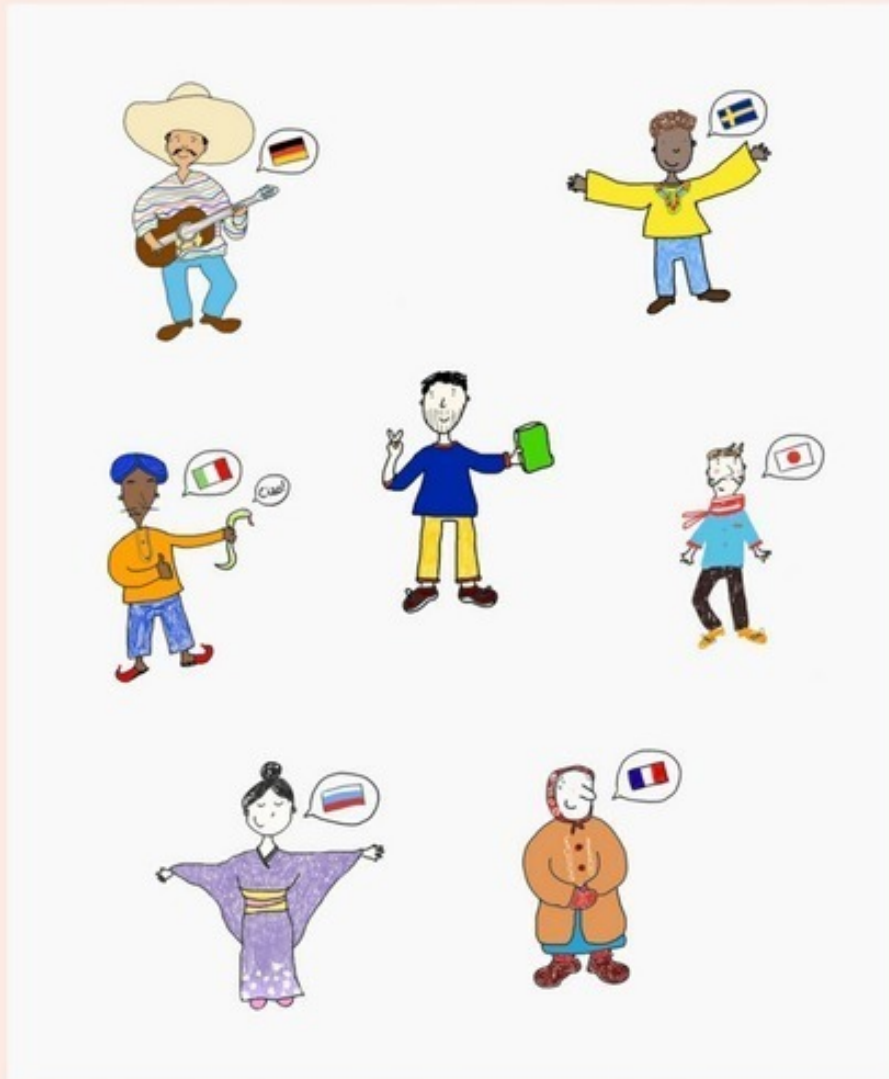


ANDREY ERMOSHIN

LEARN LANGUAGES EASILY



METHODS OF SELF-REGULATION
FOR SUCCESSFUL LEARNING

WITH 40 EXERCISES

Andrey Ermoshin

**Learn Languages Easily. Methods of
self-regulation for successful learning**

«Издательские решения»

Ermoshin A.

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Have you ever wanted to learn a language quickly and easily? In Learn Languages Easily renowned Russian psychotherapist Andrey Ermoshin guides the reader to do just that. The solutions offered here employ his own method called psychocatalysis. This is a method of self-regulation which is built upon paying attention to your body's signals and leveraging your own internal strengths. Ermoshin offers 40 exercises that will speed up the deep learning process needed to master new knowledge.

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Learn Languages Easily Methods of self-regulation for successful learning

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To the English-speaking Readers

This book is an introduction to psychotherapy and self-regulation methods without offering a person to admit that he or she is sick.

This book will help you learn foreign languages and turn this process into an easy and pleasant adventure. I also expect this book to do a bit more than that: the solution to the problem might also serve as an entrance to the world of self-regulation, the way you can maintain your health and pave your way to success.

Having begun to solve a specific problem, to study a language, in particular, a person understands that most of the obstacles to success in learning are inside.

The accumulated stress in the nervous system and the undeveloped pathways for perception of information can prevent him or her from getting new knowledge and forming new skills.

The stress is associated with the injuries, such as disappointment, deception, injustice, betrayal, unkindness, fear, etc. It can be also caused by stagnant strains, which have been formed during important periods of life: entering pre-school institutions or school, moving to another place of residence, changing job and other difficult situations. These are trace mobilization contours. All of them can be worked out, up to the most severe phobias.

Another important aspect of working with yourself is to pave a path for the new knowledge in the space of your consciousness...

The language is taken as a model. Any other task can be in that place, for example, the mastery of painting or the achievement of success in business. The algorithms for inner work, suggested in this book, can be used by any person and within any field of activity. Especially it can be useful for all teachers and students.

Thanks to the psychocatalysis practices, the readers will quickly restore their integrity and balance, supplement the competence and, by the end of the work, it will turn out that they have also learned the language, doing it easily, as if imperceptibly for themselves. What is more, the self-regulation skills will become even greater acquisition for the users of the method of psychocatalysis.

This is the second of my books, translated into English. The first one is "Phobias". It describes the work with mental traumas. In Russian there are also the books "The Objects in the Body: psychotherapeutic method of work with sensations", "Geometry of the Experiences: a constructive drawing of a person in psychotherapeutic practice," "The Enigmatic Syndrome: panic attacks and how to treat them", which describe other details of the methodology.

Originally, this book was addressed to the Russian-speaking readers. In Russia, people are willing to learn foreign languages, so this topic was taken as an example of the task, which is solved by many. In other countries, there may be other preferences, but I am sure that everyone will find useful the techniques of self-regulation offered in this book.

During reading and practicing you will learn a lot about yourself, grow up psychologically and you can be even healed.

Psychocatalysis offers the effective methods of improving your attention, motivation, ability to perceive the required knowledge, and other aspects of your personal achievements.

I wish you success in your self-regulation practices. This will be not only the contribution to your successful studying, but also an important factor of your personal growth and wellbeing.

Andrey Ermoshin

INTRODUCTION

How did this method appear?

“The head like a stone and the wooden feet”

“There’s no rush, but you’ve got to learn Chinese by the morning!” I think that sounds like a familiar situation not only to military interpreters who often use this phrase. Most of us live in a constant rush. We never have enough time to learn a foreign language although we urgently need it.

Some time ago, the author of the book found himself in the same situation. Fortunately, he managed to resolve it successfully, but it was not easy.

My head is ‘splitting’

At the end of 1992, I received a very interesting invitation to Italy for a course. The organizers paid all expenses, but there was one condition: I had to speak Italian, as there would be no interpreter¹. The course was to begin in three months.

A group of about 10 people willing to go was organized. We found a very good teacher of Italian and plunged into the learning process. However, two weeks later, I started experiencing some unpleasant symptoms: *I was having splitting headaches, my cheeks were burning, and my feet would get cold*. When I shared this with my colleagues, it turned out that they were not doing great too: some were having headaches, and one of us even had a hypertonic crisis.

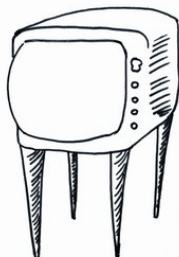


Fig. 1. An old TV with a big box and long thin legs. This is the way a person usually feels in a situation of information

overload: a hot heavy head of immense size and cold ‘shrunk’ wooden feet.

Later, when I began investigating this question, I found out that this problem is rather frequent: people of different age told me about similar symptoms in the situations when there was some information overload.

One patient described what he was experiencing in the following way: “My head was like a big old TV set, and the rest of my body was like those thin long legs TV sets used to have.”

¹ The event was organized by wonderful people from Roman-Catholic and Russian Orthodox churches, among them were: padre Nilo Cadonna and Don Silvio Frank on the Italian side and Father Alexiy (Baburin) and others as representatives of the Russian side. The professional aspect of the event was provided by Renzo de Stefani, Carlo Tieni, Roberto Cuni, and others (Trento, Northern Italy). I will always remember them with gratitude.

Another patient of mine worked as a manager for one company, and this is what she was experiencing after one training course: “My head feels like a computer monitor, and as if there is a floppy disc stuck at the back of my neck. My legs are wooden².”

Here is a story told by one of the participants. He is a pilot, and this is what he went through in the flight school.

The 17th class syndrome

There are about 680 English terms, which every pilot has to know. In reality, they use only 50 more or less, but they have to know all of them. Flight school is intense with six hours of English classes daily. By the time students reach class number seventeen, they find nothing better than to start drinking vodka. This is what they call “the syndrome of the seventeenth class”³.

Even little children can suffer from the syndrome of brain overload. “My head is filled with stones, and I cannot think straight,” – this is what pupils at school often say. Could it be the reason why they end up skipping classes?

There has to be a reasonable solution!

Alcohol is the worst solution to this problem: ethanol not only removes the information, but it also affects the hardware, so to speak. Running away from the studies does not help either: after some time, everything you have missed catches up with you. If you do not exercise today, you might miss out something significant tomorrow.

How can one avoid difficulties in the learning process and protect oneself from the disappointment in the future?

Learn with your heart

Here is how my story continued. The third class of Italian turned out to be the last one for us as a group. One of the participants said with a sad voice: “We’re learning the language with our brain, but what we have to do is to learn it with our heart”, and he put his hand on his chest.

On the way home, while sitting in a train, I thought, if there, in fact, was a language that we learned with our hearts. “It is our mother tongue!” There was an immediate answer to it. There was another step to make to have a discovery on our hands: “Where are my sensations connected with the Russian language?”

At that time, I was already working as a therapist and was deeply involved in the research of the methodology that would pay very close attention to the sensations experienced by the body. Our internal sight perceives these sensations as “objects inside our body.” This is exactly how I called the book devoted to the idea of psychocatalysis⁴.

Move that mass from the forehead to your body

As I closed my eyes, I was surprised to find out that my Russian language was ‘located’ somewhere at the level of the stomach. My inner vision registered it as a red-coloured ball that spread beyond the contours of my body. However, Italian triggered an absolutely different set of sensations. It was like a “white mass’ which was bursting my forehead. I dwelled on this sensation for some time and let the mass flow down where my Russian was. This moment was the beginning of my experiment.

² This description was given by Tatiana Perts.

³ Written down on August 13, 2011, in Moscow.

⁴ Psychocatalysis was officially accepted as a method of psychotherapy by the Professional Psychotherapeutic League in 2001.

As soon as Italian found its way to my stomach, my learning process gained speed, and I began soaking information like a sponge.

“Hatching” on the train

Further processes might seem a bit surreal. That white mass, which poured down from my forehead to the stomach (my initial knowledge of Italian), turned into a clutch of eggs. Soon, the first nestling hatched. It looked like a little rooster. It fed on the words and expressions in Italian, and it grew very quickly. Turning to a new word only once was enough for the nestling to “swallow” it.

The only time I could ‘devote’ to my nestlings was on the train on my way to work and back home. Local trains can be rather crowded, so quite often I could not find a place to sit. This made me more of a penguin rather than any other bird. So, I was making my way through the textbook by myself 16 minutes on the way to the city, and then 16 more minutes on the way back, five days a week.

My head is resting

The dates of my new linguistic trip moved to July instead of February, and that way, I got enough time to make my way through all 47 lessons of the textbook without any hurry.

In Italy, I was surprised to find out that my head remained calm and clear in response to the flow of Italian speech, and my stomach was “moving.” Approximately three days later, this movement in the area of my solar plexus calmed down, and Italian speech became clear, word for word, or as they say in Italian: “parola a parola”. My stomach felt slightly “disturbed” as a person with an unusual speech appeared; for example, for a different professional sphere or with a different dialect. At some point, I realized that I had developed the same attitude towards Spanish too, as if it was a variety of Italian. I was merely trying to comprehend it in a very hands-on style, without any barrier. I think, this is the way children perceive any language. After some time, French speech also became quite interesting to my ear, as another variation of familiar Italian sounds.

What usually happens to our knowledge?

I have overcome my personal challenge successfully, as I managed to learn Italian and have been comfortable using it since then. I did the same with English. Nevertheless, what is also important for me in this experiment is the fact that the solution which I found to learn a foreign language can be used as an efficient model for a further research of how a person interacts with any kind of knowledge in general. Here are some questions that came up throughout the elaboration of the methodology.

– How can one make one’s body more responsive to the new information: how can one ‘soften’ it, if the body feels ‘rigid’, in order to open it up and welcome new information? How can one cultivate full engagement into the process of learning? How can one avoid neuroticism in the learning process?

– How is the overall competence developed? How do nature, culture, and the spirit mysteriously interact within one person? Is it, at all, possible to renew one’s perception?

– Are there ways to restore one’s contact with the knowledge, which we have inside, but which is somehow unavailable for immediate use? Is it possible to “plug in” to universal knowledge, which is present in space? What do we get from our tradition by way of belonging to a family, people, and life in general?

I was gradually discovering the answers: they did not all come to me in one day, more as they were slowly falling into their place like pieces of a big puzzle. Behind simple algorithms, which you will find in this book, there are thousands of hours of individual psychotherapeutic sessions with my patients, hundreds of hours of group sessions with my students, and multiple episodes of self-observation in order to prove and grow those seeds of the new knowledge, that I discovered on the train after that memorable class of Italian.

Methods of self-development, that I would like to offer you in this book, might become useful for knowledge acquisition in any sphere. It can be professional development, sports, business, politics, and culture. Psychocatalysis is a universal method of self-regulation that will help you successfully achieve your life goals.

My personal experience of using this method has been exclusively positive so far.

Be inspired by a wonderful perspective!

Fruit of labour is sweet

The Italian language, as well as English which I learned, further along, have presented me with an opportunity to experience a variety of positive moments in my life. Being the only interpreter during some seminars and congresses, I would often work for hours, as if I had absolutely no idea how 'difficult' it was. When I was told that simultaneous interpreters are supposed to get some rest every 20—30 minutes, I was a bit confused: I must be the wrong kind of an interpreter, as I did not feel tired at all. It is highly likely that my own innocence saved me because it did not even occur to me that it could have been done differently.

I managed to save a lot of energy because the process of interpreting taught me to be calm and tune into the frequency of the speaker. It was about catching the ideas, not words, and looking at this process as an interesting game. At some point, I started enjoying finishing my translation before the speakers would finish expressing their thoughts. Other interpreters confirmed that such a tendency existed in their field. Interpretation is not just a kind of sports, it is also a school of artistry, and it is a highly interesting task!

I need to note that some of my fellow psychotherapists whom I have happened to work with and interpret are very peculiar people. Motto of one of the colleagues is "Sono tutti matti" ("We are all crazy!"), and then she would always add: "Ma sono capo dei matti!" ("But I am the head of all crazy!"). One can hardly fear anything else, having interpreted this lady.

I have conducted my seminars on psychocatalysis in Switzerland and Italy in Italian, including Sapienza University in Rome. I have invited my Italian-speaking colleagues to Russia on various occasions; there have been many situations where knowing Italian proved to be necessary and useful.

I have translated into Russian the book written by an Italian philosopher and psychotherapist, Antonio Mercurio. It was published in Russia in 2006. Here is its title: "Existential Anthropology and Personalistic Metapsychology". I do not always remember the exact title right away. However, I feel proud that everything worked out.

Knowing the language has given me an opportunity to discover new cities and countries, as well as meet wonderful people. Memories of each of these meetings are still vibrant. I hope you will also have your victories and achievements, thanks to free communication without any language barrier: there will be people and new places, interesting projects in the countries that will open up in a new light because you speak their language.

Further on, I will share multiple episodes of how self-regulation methods can be used in everyday life – in psychotherapy, or while travelling, or in other situations. However, to overcome these intense moments in our lives, when maximum self-realization is expected from us, we need to learn to move from the state of tension and feeling 'petrified' to the state of freedom and flexibility.

In the next chapter, you will find information on how you can become more successful in the learning process, and what your possible stumbling points might be. I hope that you will be able to define your priority tasks with the help of self-diagnostics offered below.

Learning a foreign language can become a model for acquiring knowledge in any other sphere. If there's a person who needs to make quick progress in any other field, the following algorithms can be easily adjusted to suit this goal.

Basic problems one encounters when learning a foreign language

New facts

There were times when it was more than enough to speak our mother tongue. Back then, life was revolving within the limits of the village or a region, where you travelled on a horse on the days of a fair, and in those circumstances, learning a foreign language seemed at least eccentric. Using a foreign language made sense only when a person was wealthy enough and had enough free time to subscribe to foreign magazines, or to travel, or if one had business abroad. Even a hundred years ago, there were very few people who could afford it.

Now, everything has changed. Knowing a foreign language is indispensable. Many people travel around the world as tourists; many also run international businesses; now, it is quite usual to have friends in foreign countries and on different continents. Modern technology and means of transportation make it all possible!

There is no limit to increasing our scope of knowledge. One should at least speak English, which is the language of international communication. It is recommendable to speak another foreign language, depending on your interests.

What do modern people think about education?

Let's be honest; they do not always have a positive attitude towards this process. Learning a foreign language is often associated with hard work, extra effort, similar to climbing a mountain covered with ice, as there is always the danger of sliding back. Of course, we will do everything we can to hold tight and to keep on moving; we try to flatten our way to the top, to make it comfortable and easy, but before setting off on this journey, let's define where we stand.

We will have a look at the cases when people were 'lucky' to avoid any difficulties, and everything simply worked out on its own. The examples of the "lucky ones" can actually give us clues on how we can be successful, too! We will also turn to what causes difficulties in the learning process.

“I would learn English simply because...”

The lucky ones are those who learn the language of their favourite musicians, poets, and scientists. No one has to make these people study because, for them, it is a pleasure.

Schwarzenegger and Paul McCartney

One doctor, a colleague of mine, looks like Arnold Schwarzenegger, although he is of delicate psyche; he learnt German and Italian simply because these were the languages of Mozart, his favourite composer. He worked at a clinic, and he sometimes would donate blood to provide for his family, but during the nights, he was compiling a catalogue of all works composed by Mozart. Such hobby required the knowledge of the language, and that is why he learnt German and Italian.

Oleg, another friend of mine, is a musician. He looks a bit like Paul McCartney, and he adores "The Beatles". For this reason, he learnt all their songs, and that is how he learnt English.

During the process of learning, such people usually make wonderful discoveries about the object of their interest, and that is what maintains their motivation.

There are countless stories about how quickly people learn the language when they fall in love with the foreigners! We can feel motivated in learning a language when we want to speak to a spiritual guru. The sole idea of meeting someone special, a person who triggers the surge of endorphins in your

body (these are the hormones of happiness), filled with positive emotions and does not require any additional reward.

Those were the cases when everything was all right with the motivation, and that is exactly what helped to cross the boundaries.

However, it is quite possible to achieve success even when your motivation is not that highly emotional. There are also cases like that!

Obstacles mean nothing

When a person is truly gifted, obstacles connected with learning a foreign language may seem insignificant absolutely.

If we try to describe the characteristics of the “lucky ones,” then we should mention their intelligence, willpower, outgoings, and the ability to connect with their interlocutor. No doubt, it is wonderful when a person possesses such qualities. Think about the universal genius of Leonardo, for example!

It is very seldom that one has all these qualities. It is much more often that someone has the willpower, and another person is brighter, yet another person is more emotional. However, there is no such person, who would be deprived of any of these qualities. All of us are gifted. We just have these talents in different proportions⁵.

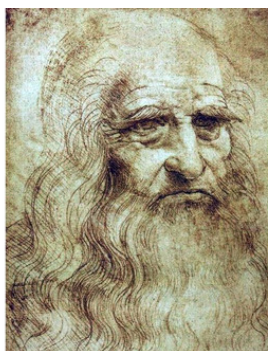


Fig. 2. The self-portrait of Leonardo da Vinci: deep-set eyes is a sign of a sagacious mind; a fleshy tip of the nose and full cheeks mean rich emotionality and breadth of the soul; bushy eyebrows, a nose with a hump, a developed lower part of the face mean a remarkable will.

I single out the three types of people who I call “square and shaggy,” “round and bald,” and “triangular and with a receding hairline”⁶.

⁵ There is a whole school dedicated to the research of the correlation between one’s looks and abilities. This matter has been of interest for centuries. There are famous works of the ancient physiognomists and of modern psychiatrists. The key figures in this line of investigation are E. Kretschmer and W. Sheldon.

⁶ I describe the given typology in greater detail in the following article: Ермошин А. Ф. К вопросу о психопатии и одарённости. // Психотерапия. – 2006. – №5.

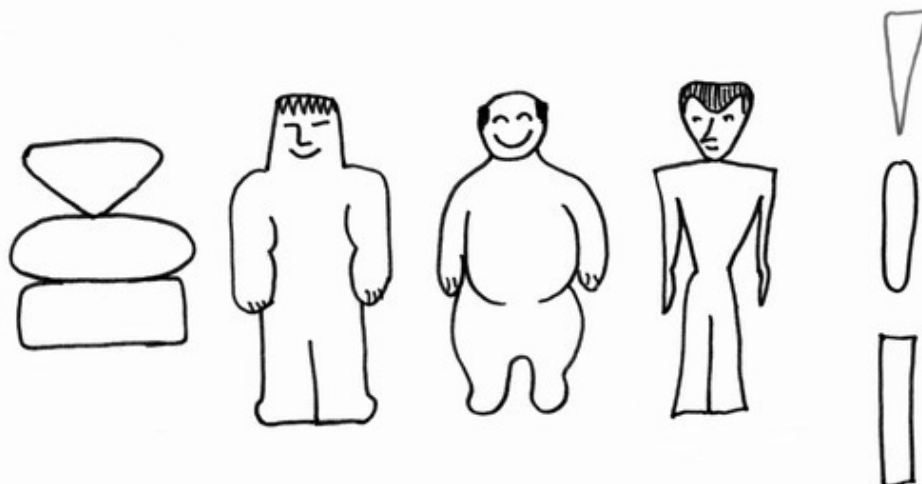


Fig. 3. The constitutional genetic types: “square” (strong-willed), “rounded” (emotional) and “triangular” (intellectual). To the left there is an image of a hypersthenic, squat structure of the body that gives the character expansiveness, to the right there is an image of the hyposthenic, “elongated” structure of the body, which gives the character delicacy, pliability

Each of these types has its own set of abilities.

Inherited qualities: pros and cons

“Triangular, with a receding line’ do not see the process of learning as labour. They like studying as much as other people enjoy jogging. These people have distinct looks: deep-set eyes, a prominent nose, and a spare frame (schizoid constitution according to Kretschmer’s terminology⁷). For this type of people, thinking means pleasure, and a learning process is perceived as a kind of sports, as a chance to exercise their brain. They greedily gobble new information.

A pencil and a shoe

People of this kind can easily find hidden connections between events. They are always the first to answer the question: “what have a pencil and a shoe got in common?” Their answer will be: “Both leave a mark.” A pronounced ability to establish associations helps them memorize things that might seem impossible for others.

We have to mention though that the extreme degree of these qualities may cause communicative difficulties: such people are often very reserved, unwilling to establish contact with other people; they can even seem autistic. Such students can easily read and understand, but they find it very difficult to speak in public because of the social anxiety.

There is the second kind of students. They are highly disciplined people who never ask themselves if learning a language should be pleasant. They usually have a strong chin, pronounced eyebrows, and an overall athletic figure (“square and shaggy’ as we refer to them, or as psychiatrists call them “epileptoid”). These strong-willed people are characterized by their can-do attitude towards the task.

Military interpreter

⁷ Ernst Kretschmer (1888 – 1964) is a prominent German psychiatrist and psychotherapist, the author of the book called “Physique and Character” (1921).

This is how military people often treat the task they are given: “If you cannot do it, we will teach you; if you don’t want to, we will make you to. If it is round, roll it; if it’s square-shaped, drag it. If you don’t have super-abilities, you will get there, but by studying hard!” I have met quite a lot of military interpreters, and all of them are very professional!

Their assertin, an immense willpower, and focus on the goal are the qualities that lead these people to success. At the same time, their ‘laconic nature’ may also become a problem. It sometimes happens that these people experience certain difficulties with speaking, as eloquence is not their strongest point.

On the contrary, there are very talkative people; they may seem rather pushy when it comes to communication: in other words, it is impossible to get a word in edgeways when talking to them. These people usually have plump cheeks, a small round nose, and they are prone to be overweight. Women have soft hair, and men are bald (‘round and bald’ according to our terminology, or a cycloid type, according to Kretschmer). They are always ready to communicate, no matter what the topic is. For them, speaking the language is one of the primary needs.

Cycloids can easily establish contact with a native speaker, though it does not mean they have no weaknesses: they tend to lack consistency and depth in learning grammar.

There are sensitive people who are able to perceive the finest nuances of speech and of human relations. They look delicate as they have a long, narrow face, a long neck, and a thin bone structure (“thin and resonant;” an asthenic kind). Unfortunately, this kind of people is characterized by shyness and bashfulness. They feel lost when in the company of other people as if their frequency is weaker than the powerful signal of other transmitters. These people have to go a long way to develop confidence and bravery in communication with other people.

We have several methods to help you make up for the qualities that each of the described types lacks, but we will discuss them later. As you may have already noticed, each quality can complicate the process and facilitate it at the same time. The schizoid’s ability to assimilate semiotic systems; the epileptoid’s stubbornness in getting to their goal; the cycloid’s openness to communication, and the asthenic’s delicate way of perception – each of these qualities can become a tool to achieve success, and they have to work for you!

Further, we will return to the topic of personality types in the chapter titled “Who should I practice with?”

Learning under pressure

Even if you are lucky, and you possess all those qualities mentioned above, if you are intelligent, strong-willed, big-hearted and delicate at the same time, you still can sometimes feel like a learning process turns into an ordeal.

How do you learn the language?

I conducted a survey on the site www.psychocatalysis.ru in 2010—2011: “If you are in the process of learning a foreign language, how do you organize it?” The first variant sounded the following way: “For me, learning a new foreign language is an easy and pleasant process because it makes me feel that I am getting closer to making my dream come true.” The second variant was like this: “I have a business-like approach to learning the language because I understand that I need it.” Here is the third variant: “I am learning the language under pressure simply because I have to do it.” I suppose you have already found your approach among these answers. Here is what statistics say on this matter: 37.8% of respondents said that they were learning under pressure because of the circumstances. Fortunately, there were also people who were enjoying the learning process and found

it easy. There were about 31.6% of people, who answered this way; 30.6% of respondents said that they had a business-like approach to this process because they understood the necessity.

Ninety-eight (98) people took part in the given survey. The percentage of the “students under pressure” was fluctuating from 37.8%, which we have mentioned earlier, to 42.3%; 37.8% continued learning the language although they had little wish to do so! Why shouldn’t they begin enjoying the process and learn the language with as much interest as 62.2% do? Creating positive motivation will be one of our first tasks here. Then we will add some methods to make the process of knowledge acquisition easier, and we will get started. However, for now, we have to return to the reasons why we experience complications in the process of learning.

First unpleasant emotions

At the first stage of getting to know a foreign language, it seems very ‘uncomfortable’ up to the point of seeming ‘idiotic.’ One should make a certain effort to overcome this aversion. This feeling often becomes the topic for stand-up comedians.

Because of this, I lost all the interest

During one of my seminars in Riga in 2010, one participant (her name was Olga) told us that during her first steps in learning German, she saw a quote from Mark Twain statement: “Life is too short to learn German.” (He compared German words to rails because they are so extraordinarily long: “Some German words are so long that they have a perspective.” This quote turned out to be so shocking for Olga that she immediately lost any interest towards the German language. Even years later, Twain’s words still had so much power over Olga, it stuck like a pin in her head, and it prevented her from making progress quickly. During the session of self-regulation based on the method of psychocatalysis, Olga “removed” this pin and absorbed the light of a much calmer and natural attitude towards this language. She realized its importance and its beauty despite the words of Mark Twain. Moreover, Mark Twain himself learnt German though he was always making jokes about it.

Recycling our first impression and setting ourselves free from some idle and harmful speculations is one of the stages of our work.

Tensions and complexes acquired in the early stages of learning

A bit of knowledge, but a lot of tension — this is a law of mental life. Our body has the following logic: “I don’t know what to do, but I hope that this energy outbreak will do the trick.” It is purely a reflex reaction. However, this energetic outburst will hardly compensate for the lack of experience! As a result, the student is sweating for no apparent reason. The only result it leads to is wasting energy, tiredness, and burnout. By the end of the class or some episode of interaction in a foreign language, beginners often say that they feel exhausted absolutely. Only the toughest can survive this challenge, and the majority tries to do everything they can to avoid the repetition of such unpleasant experience.

Even the subsequent increase of linguistic competence and constant practice do not set you totally free from this ‘primordial’ tension. This tendency occurs not only when learning a foreign language, but in any other sphere where one is supposed to improve their skills, like in sports.

Setting oneself free from the old blocks, calls for a specific effort. The case I am going to adduce further might play the role of the introduction to the following practice.

A young tennis player

Jane is a wonderful young tennis player. She is ten years old, and she has been playing tennis for five years. During the training, she shows a great game, but something happens to her during competitions. She gets upset because of mistakes and easily gives up in a peak situation.

I asked her if she had the information on how to win in tennis and where this knowledge was in her body.

“It looks like some light in my head,” answers Jane

“Where is the sensation that blocks your skills during the competition?”

“It’s in my chest. It’s stone the size of a fist.”

What can this “stone” be? Most likely, this is fear, which appeared when Jane was only learning to play.

Anyway, she was now an experienced player!

Jane eagerly agreed, that the knowledge she had accumulated over these years of training, should be given more space so that it could spread over her body, and she had to let that “stone” melt. She observed these two processes. Her knowledge spread, and the stone turned into streams of warmth that filled the body too: first, her hands, and then the rest of the body. A spot left by the stone quickly disappeared as well.

Then I asked her: “Could it be that there was some moment during the training when you got scared and felt lost?”

“Yes, there was such an episode.

“Where are the sensations connected with this experience?”

Jane discovered a black cloud in her stomach. This is how many people often describe the consequences of fright if they focus their internal vision on it. Soon, everything cleared up inside. Jane became even more relaxed and calm. Now, she imagined how, during the coming competition, she would easily, as a pro, show everything she had learnt while training.

Another aspect that required attention during our session with Jane was the sensation of some heavy burden on her shoulders, which was bothering her. It felt like bricks. Many people express their heightened sense of responsibility this way.

“Whose load is that? Is it yours or somebody else?” I ask her.

“It’s mine!” Jane says.

This is the pressure, which she experiences, but it is in her best interest to find the way to deal with it, even though it might seem like an unpleasant feeling. She observes how her body absorbs this heaviness. Jane throws back her shoulders and stands straight. Now, she even looks a bit more mature.

All this work took us about 20 minutes.

Since then, Jane has been playing with more confidence and freedom⁸.

Such sessions have been conducted with sportsmen of different training levels. Even the high-rank professionals need to work through their sensations to spread their experience on their body, to relieve the tensions and consequences of psychological traumas received during the training or competitions. Even after one session, the sportsmen acquire better mental strength. This is the key ingredient that leads to success.

It is always great to find out that two or three months later, these people have considerably improved their results and become champions.

Something similar should be done to our linguistic competence: we need to strengthen it, melt the tension associated with the learning process, and get rid of fears.

Fright is a variant of information trauma that may lead to a phobia. Getting rid of fear and tension is a necessary step to overcome a linguistic barrier.

⁸ This session took place on December 17 2010 in Odintsovo.

Student-time traumas

It also happens that a person suffers not only some tensions, but also traumas inflicted during the learning process. A teacher, who is too strict, or jokes of the classmates can “contribute” to such complex.

A barn lock

I often think of a story told by one sensitive young woman⁹ who was so afraid of one strict teacher that every time before a class with him, she would get diarrhoea. She had to come to university hours before this class, and she would always ask her relatives or friends to give her a lift there in order to avoid any possible catastrophe in public transport. Even after the graduation, her fear of making a mistake remained so strong that she compared it to a barn lock on her forehead. This “barn lock” kept blocking her mind years after the university. After some time she got married to a diplomatic officer and spent a considerable amount of time abroad. This means that she had plenty of opportunities to learn and speak a foreign language. However, she never managed to do so. This paralysing anxiety concerning her possible mistakes in her speech was what we focused on during our session.

An unpleasant quality of a complex is that it cannot go away by itself, and you need to work on its dissolution. You have to make a conscious decision in order to unblock a complex.

Background tensions and traumas remotely connected with the learning process

When stressed, a person burdened with unsolved problems and worries finds it more difficult to absorb new information, just like a computer with old software and viruses tends to overheat. Those traumas and tensions, which are not related directly to the learning process, take a lion share of our efforts, steal our attention, and create obstacles on the way to learn something new.

Dumb-stricken because of fright

It sometimes happens that, at a moment of acute stress reaction, a person cannot think straight and feels lost and dumb-stricken. “I just stood there mute with fright, and I couldn’t say a word,” – says one of such “victims” having come to his senses. There are more serious speech impairments, which may manifest themselves in the freezing syndrome. These symptoms are called “mutism” and “catalepsy.” They can be explained by the fact, that in extreme situations our body switches to the old survival mode: one either runs or falls, or hides (freezes). In the case of catalepsy, we observe the latter variant: one stop moving because, this way, one pretends to appear invisible.

Speech, as an invention from the point of view of evolution, does not form right away, and that is why it is so sensitive to any disturbing influence. Like a delicate orchid that can be cultivated in a greenhouse, human speech is a very sensitive instrument. The state of calm and healthy, but not excessive revival, is the basis of good speech.

Nerve cells can regenerate!

Formation of new nerve cells during the learning process, travelling, or any other refreshing events is called “neoneurogenesis.” Stress prevents the process of formation: stress hormones affect the brain in such a way that new nerve cells necessary for memorizing new information and for the

⁹ Written down in 1996 in Moscow.

overall development of a person do not generate and, more than that, the existing mature nerve cells die¹⁰. This process was revealed in several various scientific researches.

It is very important to keep calm and remain stress-resistant, and if there are any tensions, they should be dealt with as soon as possible! A very easy but a very efficient test will help you figure out what state you are in and if you need to work on reducing your stress level.

Test “A constructive drawing of a person”

You will need a small piece of paper and a pen or pencil to do this test.



Fig. 4. Geometric figures used in “A constructive drawing of a person.”

“Draw a person made of rectangles, circles, and triangles. The overall number of elements should be 10. Define the age of the person you have drawn.” Shapes can be of any size. Rectangles, ovals, and triangles of prolate forms are also allowed. Within the total number of 10, each figure can be used as often as you choose, and you can also omit using some of the shapes. The only restriction is the overall number and the fact that there should be only one person in the drawing. You need to do this test right now without thinking it over. You will hardly need more than a minute to complete it¹¹.

A brief way to interpret the drawing is the following: it is your self-portrait. Not exact, of course. The drawing you have is a projection of your emotional state, and it reflects how you feel and react to the factors active at the age of the person in the drawing¹².

This drawing is a mirror where you can see your emotions, or you can call it ‘a photo of your mind’s energy.’

Sometimes, a person in the drawing can have a head that is too big for the body, and relatively short arms and legs made of triangles: this is a sign that the brain is overheated and hands and feet are cold, and that is a typical symptom pointing to the state of anxiety.

¹⁰ Experiments on various laboratory animals have shown that stressful conditions lead to loss of nerve cells and cognitive disorders (Kozorovitskiy Y., Gross C.G. et al, 2005). One of the possible mechanisms of the given phenomenon is the suppression of neurogenesis under the influence of the hormones of the suprarenal cortex (Gould E., Gross C.G., 2002).

¹¹ This test was created by Victor and Elena Libin in 1984. I offer my modification of the test, which includes the age of the person in the drawing and an option of data interpretation. My approach to this test is described in greater detail in my book “Geometry of Feelings: a constructive drawing in psychotherapeutic practice” (Ermoshin A., 2008, 2013). In the present work, we briefly touch upon these issues as well.

¹² The reaction of our autonomic nervous system to the events of past can be ‘stored’ in our body for quite a long time and has no expiration date. One has to address these reactions specifically in order to ‘turn them off’. How to relieve the tension after a fight or other traumas is described in my previous works (Ermoshin A., 1999, 2008, 2010).



Fig. 5. A big head as a sign of anxiety in the constructive drawing of a person

A circular head and an oval body point to phobia.



Fig. 6. The reflection of fright and fear in the constructive drawing of a person. A round head and an oval body, big eyes, and a navel as a place affected by frightening information; periphery seems to be reduced and drawn with triangles.

A square head and a circular body are signs of conflict involving anger, outrage, or an insult.

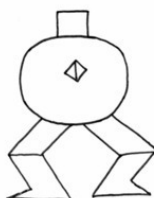


Fig. 7. The outline of a protest and anger in a constructive drawing of a person: a square head, an “inflated” body, energy moved from the arms to the place of the trauma, the legs look like pillars and signify the decision to “stand on one’s ground.”

The age of the person in the drawing sends us to the period when the given symptom appeared. As a rule, this is a period of certain life changes or significant events¹³.

When working through the neurotic tensions, we will return to this test, but for now, we will just use this information as a certain point for the future work with some references for interpretations.

Now, let’s turn to another specific configuration of the drawing with “a hat on the head.”

¹³ A detailed description of various configuration can be found in my book called “Geometry of Emotions” (2008, 2013) as well as on the website www.psychocatalysis.ru

Cerebral ischemia

A head with 'a hat' on top of it can be a sign of the cerebral malnutrition. This can also be the cause of bad grades. The main source of the problems here is the impulsion from the intervertebral discs, which causes tension in the muscles of the back, neck, and can cause spasm of the blood vessels feeding the brain. Neurologists call this "a vertebral artery syndrome," or "a vertebrobasilar insufficiency." The zones of discomfort are usually shown, as a triangular neck, or as a triangular body with its vertex, touching the neck, or as a body composed of several shapes. Places, where shapes are narrowed, or two elements are connected, point to the level of the spasm.

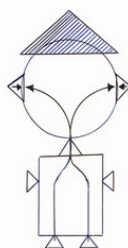


Fig. 8. A big head and shortened limbs: this is how people feel when they experience anxiety or information overload; a narrow place, where the neck is a sign of the problems with the spinal cord. A combination of the heightened brain activity and its insufficient blood supply due to the vasoconstriction leads to energy deprivation of brain tissues, and this, in turn, creates the risk of hypertension and panic attacks to compensate for this syndrome. The "hat" on the head points to the fact that the brain is suffering from oxygen deficit due to its large consumption and lack of its supply. Tension in the temporal region compensates for the sensation that the head is swollen.

The conflict between big nutritional demands of the brain and its relatively small supply is rather dangerous.

Panic attacks

Lack of oxygen supply to the brain is a serious condition, which not only leads to the decrease of brain efficiency, but also increases the risk of high blood pressure and so-called sympathoadrenal episodes: that is when an adrenaline rush takes place in order to improve brain nutrition. Such states are also referred to as 'panic attacks'. According to my hypothesis, hypertension and recurrent adrenaline rush simply execute the "order" of the "starving" brain tissues. Their signals are processed by the thalamic structures (which are also "a conductor" of all neurohormonal processes), and this subsequently triggers chain reactions leading to panic attacks or permanent high blood pressure. This is one of the many ways, how our body regulates its activity to save its starving tissues. The ischemized tissue dies and stops screaming for help. Some time ago, I described these phenomena in several publications, referring to them as "a syndrome of unclear head," or "cerebral energy deficiency syndrome" (Ermoshin, A., 2002, 2008).

We have planned to take some action aimed at decreasing the level of stress and maintaining the healthy condition of the blood vessels. These actions can help us re-establish the efficient functioning of the brain and prevent panic attacks, hypertension, or a brain haemorrhage as well as establish an effective learning pattern.

Influence of upbringing

Speech block can manifest itself not only in case of a foreign language, but it can also be connected with the conditions of one's upbringing. There are families where communication does not really seem to play such an important role. Parents and kids either simply have no time to talk or, what is much worse, children are asked to "keep their mouths shut". There is a syndrome called "alexithymia," where a person suffering from it is not capable of identifying emotions and expressing them. There are also cases when a child stops talking, as a result, of a deep emotional trauma. These reactions are called "selective mutism" (Shevchenko, Y.S. et al., 2007/ Шевченко Ю. С. с соавт., 2007).

A gag in the mouth

A colleague of mine once told me that he had to work with a girl who involuntarily stuffed handkerchiefs or paper tissues into her mouth. From their sessions and the conversation with her parents, he found out that she had often been told to "keep her mouth shut". When she did not obey, she was often punished. It is no wonder this patient developed a major neurosis¹⁴.

Tensions in the relationship with the parents or with the teachers can often have a negative effect on the speech.

Influence of historical associations

A language can be seen as attractive or repellent because of the associations it evokes.

For example, in the USSR in the 70-ies, the English language was often associated with rock'n'roll and freedom. "I would learn English only because Lennon spoke it" was a famous phrase among fans of the Beatles back then (which is a changed quote from Mayakovsky's "I would learn Russian only because Lenin spoke it"). Nowadays, English is the language of international communication, and people seem to have a more neutral reaction to it. We will have to wait and see what it will be associated with in the future.

Not so long ago, German was closely associated with fascism, tragic moments in the history of Russia and pain.

The soldiers are fighting back

Inna lived in the South of Russia, and these are her impression from her trip to Germany. She went on a ferry cruise on the river Rhine.

As she was standing on the deck and listening to the ubiquitous German speech, she was trying to feel this language. Suddenly, she felt that every cell of her body was trying to resist it. It felt as if, as on some round screen, she saw the following picture: "Russian soldiers organized an all-round defence and were shooting back from every available weapon at the German words, which were trying to get into my mind and body." She was surprised to experience such a sensation since there had not been any particular stories connected with WWII in her family history. "After this experiment, my body was filled with this obsessive vigilance and a wish (just in case) to leave this very hospitable country¹⁵."

¹⁴ As told by Y. Ilyin in 2014.

¹⁵ Written down in Trier, Germany in 2009.

The war ended a long time ago, but many people of older generations still need to make a special effort in order to leave the captivity of their historical associations. Younger generations have a more tolerant attitude to Germany and the German language.

A primordial instinct

A negative attitude to the sound of foreign speech goes a long way back and can be explained by the evolutionary experience of humanity.

Everything is on fire

Elvira, who was born in Kazakhstan, describes the images that come to her mind when she hears the sound of French: “Soldiers are galloping by with a whooping sound. They bring suffering and pain. Everything is burning. I feel a terrible fear in my stomach.”

This reaction might seem odd if we take into account the fact that Elvira’s husband is Belgian, and that she has already been living in Europe for several years¹⁶.

Xenophobia (fear of the foreigners) and parochial altruism (love towards the ones from your tribe) are written down in our genes. The results of research conducted by evolutionary psychologists confirm this fact (Markov A., 2012). It is important to know about it in order not to become a slave of your own instincts, and it is necessary to be aware that there are different nations and different languages and, hence, update the attitude we initially inherited from our collective unconsciousness. We need to do certain cultural work so that we could rise above our own biologically defined hostile reaction to “others.”

Organic lesion of the central nervous system

The difficulties connected with focusing one’s attention due to the consequences of certain brain injuries require a separate matter. Such traumas can be prenatal, natal, and postnatal (let’s also take our chance at learning something about Latin and Italian: “nato” means “born,” and “Natale” means “Christmas”).

“Prenatal” means before having been born, and “natal” means during the labour. The most likely cause in these cases is the lack of oxygen during pregnancy or labour (if the umbilical cord is clamped, etc.)¹⁷.

Postnatal traumas are received after birth. Falling out of a cot, getting hit in the head by a swing, hitting the head against ice: all these situations are far from being rare. Apart from that, you can also add general anaesthesia, a sunstroke, consequences of the flu with fever, meningitis, brain concussion in adulthood, consequences of drinking alcohol, and the influence of other unfavourable conditions. All these illnesses can take their toll on our attention and memory.

Some of the characteristics of such sort of problems can be diagnosed with the help of the test called “A constructive drawing of a person”. In the drawing, you will see a head filled with the round elements (eyes, a nose, a mouth), or there will be a hat or hair standing on end; at the same time, there will be a relatively ‘calm’ body (made of one rectangular block).

¹⁶ Written down in Odintsovo, Russia, in 2010.

¹⁷ Using proper medical terms, we should call it “a residual organic lesion of the central nervous system of post-asphyxial cause.”

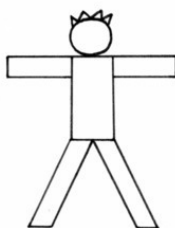


Fig. 9. A constructive drawing of a person in case of cerebral concussion: an overall relaxed body with “hair on end” on the head as the sign of the local suffering, without affecting the other parts of the body. In case of asphyxiation lesion (clamping of an umbilical cord at birth, for example) there will be a face, filled with elements: eyes, a nose, a mouth.

If such symptoms are discovered, then it calls for a special treatment to restore the balance of inhibitory and excitative cerebral processes (bromides, magnesium compounds, etc.) as well as brain nutritive compounds (nootropics). The medication, as mentioned above, is usually prescribed by neurologists.

Depressants

In some cases, there might be some negative consequences when a person takes medicines slowing down brain activity. In everyday terms, alcohol belongs to this category, as it creates “emptiness” in the brain. That is why, in Russia, there is a saying about ethanol: “When we were drinking it was fun, the morning after we cried.” Washing out the transmitters, which takes place after the consumption of alcohol, significantly decreases performance efficiency. Systematic consumption of alcohol leads to a severe organic lesion of the brain, up to dementia.

Autopilot

Before the body reaches the state of dementia, there are episodes of memory loss caused by intoxication, the so-called ‘palimpsests’ (it is the same term as the one used for erasing parts of the text on ancient manuscripts to write a new one). People often refer to this state as ‘autopilot’: it happens when, for example, a person comes back home but does not remember doing it.

Dementia stands for more than temporary transmitter failure: it is a physical destruction of the brain. In this case, it is rather difficult to expect to reach success in the learning process.

Marijuana is another example of what can make a person “dumb.” Tetrahydrocannabinol gets stuck in the membranes of the neurons and disrupts the neural network. The same applies to other types of narcotics. Apart from chemical damage to the nervous system and the body in general, they are the reason why addicts have a narrow scope of interests, no motivation for the realization of their life projects: in other words, these substances make development and self-fulfillment irrelevant.

Neuroleptics, the components of which can be found in some medicines prescribed for lowering blood pressure, may also cause difficulty in receiving new ideas as they function as blockers of neural transmission.

Workload

Being too busy with the tasks that are piling up or leading a hectic lifestyle can also become an obstacle to successful learning. Anything new requires ‘reconnection’ with it and adapting one’s life to it as well. One needs to find time for learning and to organize the process, which itself converts into

a certain exercise in time management. That is why any learning process demands special attention and practical solutions.

However, even if all the conditions mentioned above are favourable there is another issue, which seems to be universal. That is the difficulty of learning when one is an adult.

Learning for adults

Infants learn the language at their mother's breast. Breastfeeding is also the first sessions of communication a child can hear. Then he or she enriches their vocabulary when interacting with the relatives and improves the language skills on the playground when playing with other kids. There is plenty of time to get used to the language when you are surrounded by it, and you can make those cute mistakes while practicing. Then, at school, we reinforce the acquired skills as well as develop writing skills.

How do we learn the second or the third language? It usually happens much later, and we do it with the help of textbooks and other data storage devices, but never directly person to person. Quite often, it is done with some level of obligation and "stress in the brain."

During the learning process, a considerable amount of adults experiences the syndrome we have described earlier: even if they manage to organize their time, it seems that new information enters the brain with some difficulty. A couple of weeks after the beginning of the learning process, our skull feels like "blowing into pieces," our head becomes hot, heavy, and overloaded. In many cases, it becomes a reason why people choose to halt the process or even to stop it.

We have an antidote for that, but before we move to applying the tools for renovating our state, we will sum up the results with the help of one test.

During the process of self-testing, it suffices to note the percentage of correspondence of each 'recommended position' you have. At the same time, you have to tune yourself to success in the learning process and further on, you will use these statements in order to maintain this positive attitude of the student.

A test: "An ideal student"

We will see several statements that describe the state of an ideal student. Read them one by one and compare them to your sensations. Your task is to see, whether it is an absolute "YES" that you experience in response to it. What percentage of these statements is true in your case?

Even the fact that you are doing this test will have a positive effect on your studies. However, if you feel that you would like to reinforce some of the positions offered by the statements, you can easily achieve it with the help of the exercises that follow the test.

1. I feel that the knowledge of the language brings me closer to my dream coming true, to the fulfillment of my wishes, and that is why I study with enthusiasm, and I really want to learn this language as soon as possible.

2. I understand the advantages of speaking a foreign language, and I carry this understanding deep inside me, which pushes me to enrich my linguistic knowledge to practice this language every time and everywhere.

3. I feel the necessity to speak a foreign language in this modern world and I embrace this opportunity.

4. *I successfully make my language classes a part of my routine, even if it contradicts my former habits and makes me put away some immediate pleasures.*

5. *I use every available moment and opportunity to improve my knowledge.*

6. *I quickly resume my efforts and go back to the process of learning the language if, for some reason, I have moved away from my goal. I remain in the way of learning the language in order to achieve success.*

7. *I feel happy with what nature has given me:*

a) *I am good at learning languages, and I like learning in general;*

b) *I am a goal-oriented and well-organized person. I stick to the decisions I make, and I see through everything; I feel confident about my success;*

c) *I am an easy-going person. I like communication and speaking a foreign language is easy and pleasant;*

d) *I am a confident person. I easily meet other people even if they speak a foreign language.*

8. *I believe in myself as a skilful student, and I have a good self-esteem when it comes to my learning skills.*

9. *I like people who speak the languages they want, and I want to become one of them.*

10. *In my family, among my colleagues and friends, there are people who successfully learnt a foreign language. I know it is possible and it is quite natural to speak as many foreign languages as necessary, just like them.*

11. *My friends and family express their feelings, thoughts, and I communicate naturally and easily.*

12. *I deal with my daily tasks as they arise and without any delay. I quickly move from feelings to actions, I rest well, and I recuperate my strength.*

13. *My brain is open to new ideas and tasks. I keep calm and work without stress or fatigue. I live and study with positive energy and in a good mood.*

14. *My life experience helps me maintain my mental balance; I am confident in the face of the challenges my life brings me. I know how to maintain equilibrium in a difficult situation. If it is necessary, I work through the consequences of traumas. My mind feels complete and invincible; I am totally dedicated to my studies.*

15. *I can distinguish between my responsibilities and those of other people. I do my best. My shoulders are free. I find time for self-education.*

16. *My spinal cord feels well. I systematically stretch the muscles of my neck, my back, and my body in general. My blood vessels are free from spasms, and I feel that my brain gets enough oxygen, and my head is clear.*

17. *My nervous system is healthy: my attention can easily switch to another subject or I can maintain the focus on my task. My memory is excellent.*

18. I lead a healthy lifestyle. I refrain from using alcohol, drugs and other psychoactive substances. I keep away from gambling and other activities, which can be harmful to my body and my self-realisation.

19. I am used to studying.

20. Even the first encounter with the new language was interesting and pleasant for me; and even if I had any tension, it has already disappeared.

21. The amount of information I have to learn is not a problem to me; I know that it can be acquired, step by step, and with accordance to my plan.

22. I learn new words, expressions, and intonations with pleasure.

23. Native speakers are my potential partners for new projects. I treat them with respect and without bias.

24. I easily acquire knowledge. My body absorbs it like a sponge. I feel how diverse my channels of perception are, and I see a large reserve of capacity in myself. Knowledge flows into me from every possible direction. I like to enrich my knowledge using every available source.

25. Situations, when I have to use the language, seem interesting; I keep my calm hands-on attitude in this situation and even feel excited about meeting a native speaker.

26. I have an easy access to knowledge. Words and phrases I need quickly find their way in my mind and flow in a conversation with my interlocutor. The flow of speech is calm and steady. My speech embraces the interlocutor and unites us in one whole. I like socializing.

27. When I pronounce foreign words, the sound appears the same way native speakers produce it. I vocalize the same way native speakers do.

28. I know how to enjoy socialization and put the information in a foreign language to good use.

29. Learning a foreign language is one of my favourite projects that I gladly work on. I see the new horizons of the self-realization that this knowledge gives me. By speaking the languages, I need to come closer to the completeness of my existence.

If you have a 100% match with all the statements as mentioned above, we can only be very happy for you. Nevertheless, even in this case, I would invite you to find out more about the techniques of increasing learning efficiency, i.e. how you can “corporatize” your knowledge and organize it in a very accessible way. If you have found any discrepancies with the statements, consider each of these inconsistencies as an incentive to do the exercises that we will present right after describing our method.

Objectives and ways to achieve them

Initiation

Although our ability to speak is given to us by nature, we need to trigger it, to switch it on so that it would “work” the way it should. The technique we will try to apply to the process of learning a foreign language will be like the one we have already experienced when getting to know our mother tongue.

Learning about the mystery of the language

‘The high priests’ of the language who teach the child the mystery of the language are the parents, guardians, and other adult speakers of the language. Is not it a miracle that those monosyllabic exclamations we exchange with a baby set the foundation for a beautiful system of communication with the thousands of words and endless expressions?

Between those first sounds produced by a baby and subsequent complex utterances, one would find the mystery of the formation of a “homo talking”. It looks like both parties are interested in it, that is why this mystery takes place: the spirit strives for culture, and the culture looks for a spirit to turn into its medium. Look how eagerly children absorb new words and expressions and how much they enjoy practicing the language! The same way a loving and caring adult would share their linguistic experience with a child! This is how the culture complements the spirit!

Just the way it happened in our childhood, we will do everything to provide our body with the necessary information. In order to learn it the same way, we will check if the necessary channels are open and if an easy access to information is available. There is a certain trajectory for each person and information he or she is going to absorb, and our task is *to make this spirit and culture unite*, like a module-to-module docking in space.

We will tackle this with the help of a special method.

Psychocatalysis is a way to help the self-regulation of the body

Psychocatalysis is a method of regulating the body, including its autonomic level. Getting access to the regulated processes in the body is possible by paying a very close attention to the sensations in the body and by observing our internal space. There are three main phases in this process: exploring the initial state (a brief analysis), making a decision concerning spontaneous changes that have taken place earlier (what should move on and leave the body), and – finally – observing the changes (active “meditation”). This method is quick and efficient, and it allows refreshing the state of a person at all levels: at the level of the body as well as at the level of “the head.”

Catalysis is a term used in chemistry. Adding a catalyst can accelerate a slow-developing process. A lump of sugar can remain solid in cold water for quite some time, but if one heats the water, it will quickly become a part of the solution. The same way with the help of hydrochloric acid and enzymes, the food in our stomach turns into “chyme,” or a set of basic elements; however, without the enzymes, the food will remain hard as a brick.

In the case of our minds, the heater or the enzyme is our conscious attention. It is *precisely our attention*, which brings the *energy and ideas* necessary to trigger the processes.

A boy with a stick and a clock-master with a brush

Here is another image to demonstrate the idea of catalysis: it is spring, and there is a stream of water; some splinters formed a dam and did not let the water go through, and the stream stops as a result. A boy comes and moves the splinters aside; the stream keeps going and carrying the boy’s toy ship. This boy with a stick is our attention, and the ship is the useful information.

And here is an image of setting free from traumas which disturb normal course of psychological processes: a clock-master looks at the broken mechanism through a magnifying glass: he pushes back the spring, takes out a speck of dust, adds a drop of oil, and the clock resumes its rate.

Psychocatalysis is similar to the work of a clock-master, only that it deals with our minds which sometimes also accumulate “dams’ or “specks of dust’ and, sometimes, one needs to “pull the spring back’ or “remove those debris and oil the mechanism’ in order to keep the machine going.

The chilliness of culture cools down the heat of the spirit

Self-regulation and self-healing are the part of our regulatory system, but their potential is not limitless. M.E. Burno, whom I consider one of my teachers, called nature “a wise fool’. A fever is supposed to help our body fight the infection, but if the temperature gets too high, it causes problems, too. When it comes to our psychological health, then our excessive worries are similar to high body temperature. Then the chilliness of culture helps the heat of the spirit cool down to a reasonable temperature. Sometimes, one needs to “turn up the heat’ to speed up the processes which “have frozen.”

Nature does not restore everything automatically, and it looks like it left a part of its responsibilities for restoring the peace of mind to a human being hoping that we will be able to do it. So, we have to live up to nature’s expectations!

Emergency protection

I often compare the kind of protection that activates in the case of stress to an airbag in a car. This airbag saves our lives at a moment of the crash, but it never goes back to its place again. You cannot continue your way once it has been activated, and the car needs to be serviced. Our autonomic system works the same way: if it activated in a dangerous situation, it cannot switch off itself once activated. It is as if nature tells you: “I have saved your life, and you’re on your own. I haven’t really thought of that moment with calling the reactions back.” People tend to accumulate these “upsetting episodes,” and that is why they need to make a special conscious effort to restore psychological balance.

The brightest example of a psychological “dead-end’ that forms under the influence of the natural mechanisms is a phobia. Frightening information “impresses’ the body to such an extent that a mere reminder about the situation which caused this fright leads to a recurrent reaction of fear, even if the situation is no longer relevant, and a person understands that too.

The problem is that this frightening information led to the triggering *emergency protective mechanisms*, which do not switch off automatically and get fixed in the psychosomatic profile of a person.

One can use their mind, just like a steering wheel of a vehicle, to navigate through life. However, this principle works only under normal conditions. In extreme situations, automatic single-action safety mechanisms come to our rescue, and once they act like our airbags, moving forward comes to a halt for a certain period.

Healing from phobia does not require a lot of time, but it does call for a special approach: one needs to extract the information that entered the body at a moment of frustration, and now it is set deep in the mind of this person. Greyness or blackness is to be found where it entered the body, and where it moved to, and what it “hit,” and then it should leave the body the same way it came into it. As a rule, it is found in the stomach or in the area of solar plexus where the information tends to hit; then it comes out through the top of the head as black smoke. As a result, a person begins to feel the balance in life and can “steer’ it as he or she did before, that is: using intellect and mature coping mechanisms.

It is rather difficult to imagine any process of restoring balance without this procedure of ‘letting the smoke out’, which might seem odd at first sight. Without the procedure, ‘cleaning’ the autonomic depths of our nervous system, the feeling of fear, can last years, even if the central nervous system ‘came to its senses’ and realized that the danger has passed.

This ‘object that we discover in our body’ and the way to work with them is described in my previous works (Ermoshin, A. 1999, 2008, 2010).

Later, we will have a look at the most significant elements of this work in case of foreign languages. This way, we will only help our nature, and we will not introduce any alteration, which means we will act only when automatic regulatory processes fail to do their job. Psychocatalysis is a temporary suspension of a ‘manual control’ that restores normal functioning of a self-regulation mechanism. Reasonable decisions (the work of our intellect) help the profound wisdom of our body find its way out of a dead-end, which the body drove itself into while solving the problem and using the subconscious in-born strategies of problem-solving triggered by emergency situations.

98 dollars

The decisions themselves, when found, seem to be very simple. There is a joke about a mechanic who made a couple of circles around a broken car, listened to the sound of the engine and then hit it once with a hammer. The engine started working well again. The mechanic writes a cheque for 100 dollars. ‘Why?’ ‘One dollar for using the hammer, one dollar for the hit, and 98 dollars for finding the right place to hit.’

The connection with the processes that take place at the autonomic level of our nervous system is carried out through our sensations. I do not exclude that the processes at this level cannot be regulated by other methods.

Access via sensations

Each mental process has its own ‘autonomic accompaniment’: reaction of the blood vessels, muscles, changes of metabolism and of temperature in the brain or the body, as well as changes in electrical conductivity of the tissues. They can be registered objectively and subjectively.

The body electricity

The body electricity can be considered a detector of internal processes built into our body. I am very grateful to Professor A.A. Tabidze for his collaboration in 2012 when we were establishing the correlation between subjective sensations of the patients and some objective parameters. Prof. Tabidze was measuring the intensity of a current at 12 specific places on the wrist and on the sole of the feet (Nakatani-Klimenko method) before and after the psychotherapeutic sessions that I was conducting. In cases of connection with strong emotions, the test revealed considerable positive dynamics: energy channels manifested levelling of conductivity levels. At the same time, one could also observe a correlation between subjective and objective channels. However, if the problem of the patient had a chronic and not only psychogenetic character, then improvement was not as fast.

Changes in brain activity in different states can be registered by modern methods of neurovisualisation, with the help of positron emission tomography (PET). The results of numerous researches are published online, especially on the websites dedicated to the research in the field of hypnosis.

Areas of hot and cold in our body corresponding to the different states are registered by a thermograph.

It is known that ‘lie detectors’ actively exploit this phenomenon to confirm, if the information given by the respondent is true or false. However, a person can discover a lot about him/herself

without any machines, simply by immersing in one's sensations. Ability to "self-scan" seems to be this wonderful mechanism offered by nature in order to give us an opportunity to find out the characteristics of our state of mind and ways to participate in its improvement.

Information provided by our internal sight is as relevant as the data on the radar for an air-traffic control officer responsible for airplane traffic in the sky.

Somatopsychotherapy

Karl Jaspers (1883—1969) noted that "intense concentration on one's own somatic sensations (like the one described by Schulz in connection with autogenous training) leads to 'discovering organic worries' which do not depend on suggestion and are not the fruit of illusory development of normal sensations, but they are available for testing by augmented cognition" (Jaspers, K., 1997, p. 283). He called the field of science that deals with the sensations in the body "somatopsychotherapy". The earlier name of psychocatalysis was "somatopsychotherapy".

Sensations that accompany various worries are quite concrete. Just think how feeling happy makes us fly, and this sensation seems to be very strong. The weight of unresolved issues often pressures a person, and it is quite tangible. For each emotion and each psychological process, there is its specific configuration of characteristic sensations.

Concentrations and discharges, rises and falls

When a person closes his or her eyes and starts paying attention to the sensations at the level of the body, then it turns out to be quite easy to determine the places of fullness and emptiness within the internal space. *These places often manifest themselves as concentrations of light, air, water, some matter, lava, golden or silver sand or other pleasant substances. However, one can also discover blackness, darkness, and greyness of different degree of density: it can seem like dust, soot, pieces of glass, chips of stones, and other elements, which one perceives as disturbing, unpleasant, and as a foreign object causing tension around itself.*

According to people's perceptions, the body itself may appear as *a mighty tree standing on the top of the hill*, and, on the contrary, it may *look like a scrag*. Sometimes, it's *a beautiful vase filled with jewellery*, and sometimes it is *an old dusty room*. All these images send their message as they reflect the state of a person. When we begin paying keen attention to these sensations, it opens up access to the regulation of spontaneously provoked conditions.

Meditation-based practices

Due to sensations that have to do with the realm of consciousness, they are easier to register when having one's eyes closed. That is why the major part of such practice is meditation-based: a person closes his or her eyes and observes the processes that take place inside and consciously takes part in them.

One should add here that observation practices go a long way back in history, and their efficacy has been noted.

"Let's observe together..."

During one of the international congresses on psychology, I was sitting next to a Hindu who was an heir of the ancient tradition of internal work. It was obvious from his behaviour that he was a real guru. He was a very sympathetic and warm person. When one Russian woman who looked very

sad told him that her heart was aching, his reply was the following: “When I finish the Q&A session, we’ll go and sit together in the hall, and *we’ll have a look at it together*¹⁸.”

Psychocatalysis has quite a lot in common with various ancient and modern practices, but it also brings them to the next level. This method has a diagnostic stage that is similar to Western analytical practices. However, if traditional analysis of a certain feeling can take years, in psychocatalysis, it takes about 3 minutes. Then, there is a stage when the patient observes the changes of his or her state, and this aspect of the method brings it closer to Eastern meditation-based practices. Yet again, if traditional meditation-based approach may last for years, therapeutic stage of psychocatalysis takes minutes. There is a bridge between these two stages: a kind of a transitional stage that unites the work of the conscious mind and the innermost wisdom. This is the stage of evaluation and decision-making, and it takes as much as one needs to grasp the discovered situation and find a solution to it. In many cases, it just takes seconds, but it is those seconds that matter most because they are followed by switching from the reflection to the healing observation.

“A clever fight’ and other congenial practices

An attentive reader will find a certain correlation between psychocatalysis and “a clever fight,” which is a practice from Orthodox monachism: to observe everything that is happening in the internal space in order to preserve the purity of your heart and yourself as a good vessel for the Holy Spirit¹⁹.

Some readers may also see that psychocatalysis has something in common with the methods used by the country quacks. They admit that the change in the state of a person is connected with the fact that our soul receives or loses particular substances, the way it happens with hiccups, for instance. Hiccups “attacks’ a person and then, when one is healed, it comes out and disperses. By the way, in psychocatalysis, you would not “send’ hiccups to anyone, as there is no such need for it. It just stops getting the support of the body and disappears.

In some way, it also reminds me of a Russian fairy-tale about Trouble. Once upon a time, there were two brothers: one lived happily, and the other did not. The unhappy brother decided to find out the secret of happiness from his brother. “I buried my troubles in the field.” The unhappy brother was also envious, and instead of burying his troubles, he dug up that of his brother. Then he dug up Trouble and said to it: “Go back to my brother.” “Why would I go back to him: he’s a bad person, he buried me but you’re good because you’ve dug me up, I’ll stay with you.”

Shaman practices are based on the attitude very close to that of the quacks: some parts of the soul can be lost and some foreign objects, on the contrary, can take their place inside our soul where they should not be. Shaman will be sending the “snake,” which causes distress from the stomach to the centre of the Earth, and that pure part of the soul, which has been rescued will be sent back to the body. Here, we need to add that psychocatalysis does not offer standard solutions like “everything bad will be sent to magma,” etc. The principle of reverse development of the symptoms suggests involution of harmful states, using the same way they appeared in the first place. Fright experienced during one’s life goes away through the top of the head; if it was experienced in mother’s uterus, it will leave the body through the navel; and if this fright is ancestral, then it will go away through legs and feet. Sometimes, it comes out of “all pores.” The way it appeared, it will disappear – it is the same movement, but backwards.

Psychocatalysis is also a close autosuggestion of I. Schultz. However, we do not simply work with wishful thinking. When the warm feeling of psychocatalytic reaction spreads all over the patient’s body, it has its origins and appears for a reason. What makes psychocatalysis different from autosuggestion is the approach to the fact, where warmth and heaviness are initially located and

¹⁸ Moscow, 2010.

¹⁹ See also: “Добротолюбие” (Dobrotolyubie), 4 volumes.

what keeps them there. This is autosuggestion with a diagnostic phase and with solutions concerning spontaneous “formations’ in the body before the’ training’. During the session of psychocatalysis, patients observe the movement of negative sensations to the periphery because there is nothing left that would hold them in the centre. *In the course of the session, the “cause’ stops receiving any supply, then it is sent to a reasonable distance, and after that, the patient finds an antidote in order to stop the cause “poisoning’ his/her life.* As a result, this person achieves not only a temporary state of relaxation, but also an actual reinvention that will give him/her peace for many years ahead.

Some people call this practice “hypnosis without hypnosis,” or even “hypnosis inside out.” They refer to it as “hypnosis’ because what happens during the session is close to what we witness at the session of hypnotic trance. It is “without hypnosis’ because we don’t confront our consciousness and that is why it is unnecessary to turn it off. On the contrary, our consciousness has to take an active part in everything that is happening during the session. For this exact reason, this method can be called “*hypnosis inside out,*” or “*anti-hypnosis:*” “Wake up and observe what is happening inside yourself!” The initial state is, thus, considered to be a *kind of a dream one has to wake up from.* The fact, that consciousness is active and takes part in the process, means that psychocatalysis does not have cases of the patient’s resistance. There is nothing to resist. This is the most advanced kind of hypnosis, which does not really happen, but has its effect.

The light of knowledge versus the darkness of ignorance

Data processing is followed by different sensations, and the experience of practising psychocatalysis allows us to make the following observations.

When new useful knowledge, welcomed by us, makes its way through our mind, we experience the sensation when some light-coloured mass of information is moving from periphery to the centre. When unnecessary knowledge is being “deleted,” we observe the reverse process: it begins from the centre and moves to the periphery; it comes out through the top of the head as something dark, grey, or black, which is what affected us at the moment of frustration. This is how primordial elements of our consciousness send signals, which enter the body and leave it. A variety of cases when patients needed to get rid of unnecessary information are presented in my book “Phobias, Disappointments, and Losses” (2010, 2011, 2014), and we are going to see more of those examples that relate to the subject of this book.

“Knowledge is light; knowledge is power.” “Ignorance is dark.” These expressions reflect how people really feel. If everything goes smoothly, the light of knowledge, which nurtures life, fills in and lightens up the body, whereas the darkness, cast by ignorance and lack of confidence and characterized by a knot in the stomach, step away and disappear, defeated by its power. If something foreign has wounded the depths of the body, it would go away, too.

Knowledge in its integrity, thoroughness, and maturity finds its deserved place while harmful fragmentary and random information leaves it. When “frights,” “deceits,” and other traumatizing signals leave the body, our autonomic nervous system calms down, and our emotional balance is restored.

Studying is much more efficient and successful when one is in a calm state. In this condition, the flow of information come from every direction, and everything new seems easy to learn.

“Mission control centre’

The location of information within the psychological space of a person defines its status and its influence on this person’s life. There are places with more degree of influence, or “prestige.”

The vault for most significant information is usually in our stomach. It is like a town hall. This place keeps the essential information about what one should strive for and what one has to avoid. This

is the place, we will usher the information that will help us take a creative approach to life and will eliminate everything that has a harmful effect on it.

Core competence

Information can be stored at the level of the head, but this is not its final destination. Our head and brain can be easily “disturbed” by the stress. Experience shows that a much more secure place is our body, for instance, at the level of the solar plexus. Deeper levels of the nervous system are much more stress resistant, and they keep the information even in extreme situations. It is similar to oceanic depths because they are always quiet, even if there is a storm on the surface. Having such core competence, a person maintains the ability to adapt creatively to different circumstances, even when reason seems to fail to do it efficiently, and when the brain is intoxicated by stress. Nevertheless, only information that is useful and appropriate for life should be stored there.

In order to “relocate knowledge” and rearrange everything, good and bad can be done with the help of the phenomenon as mentioned above; that is: by way of observing these processes at the level of sensations.

Unexpected answers to strange questions

Concerning the question of “the future of one’s knowledge”, then it turns out to be quite possible to receive coherent answers to the questions that may seem odd at first sight: “*Where is the knowledge I already have? What does it feel like?*” As an answer to these questions, you can hear the following, for example: “*It’s a ball in my stomach.*” – “*And where are the sensations connected with the new knowledge?*” – “*It’s a fog above my head.*”

The difference of emotions can give us quite a lot! To discover it and benefit from it, all you need to do is to concentrate a little.

The experience of internal work of many people shows that one can trace how new information enters the body, the way it exists, develops, the way it is used when it’s necessary, and the way it serves to solve problems. Flows of information that come our way and flows of information that we give away can be tangible! The ability to reconnect with our sensations through our attention gives us the keys to take an active part in the distribution and use of knowledge. This allows us to “sort through” useful and unnecessary information and reinvents ourselves.

Moving towards refreshing self-awareness is what we are striving for.

Question attack using a three-step method

This is how it is done. Our mind is attacked by questions about the immediate sensations like “Where?” “What?” and “What does it look like?” We have to stress the fact that we are talking about revealing what it is actually like, so this process does not mean “fantasizing” or “making things up.” As soon as the characteristics of the spontaneously formed state begin to surface, one can move from the diagnostic stage to the stage of therapy: from the evaluation of the state and solution to the observation of the changes, and from analysis to “meditation”.

Here are the major questions for the different stages of work:

- Where and what do you have in your initial state?
- Can you define where it is useful or not, and what kind of solutions do you see in connection with what you have discovered? You can discover the factors that trigger certain sensations and the way your body reacts to these sensations.
- Where are the obstacles that inhibit the natural flow? What do they look like? What happens to your sensations because of it?

Then, in three steps, we resolve the following questions: *where do we take what will help us update our contour/profile and help us mature? How will it come?*

This algorithm follows the principle where *a bigger task of updating one's state is divided into smaller steps that are much easier to make.*

As soon as traumatic contour dissolves, excessive tensions disappear, and the good knowledge becomes a part of the body and keeps your life project blossoming.

Conscious choice

With the help of methodology of psychocatalysis, we will find a solution to a series of questions:

– Is there a reason to learn a new foreign language? If there is, what channel should be used for this purpose? Will you make it look like you're learning it or will you invest yourself in the process so that you could understand the language, speak it, and taste the fruits of your effort?

– What should one do to make way for this knowledge to your body and have easy access to it?

– How can I feel free and relaxed when I use this language?

– Are there some useful tips and tricks to learn efficiently? Is there a better way to learn?

There will be three levels of our work:

– reason and intellect (head);

– feelings and soul (chest);

– willpower and self-actualization (stomach and solar plexus).

We will strive to keep our mind clear, our soul firm, and our willpower strong. Let's start with focusing our attention.

There are two phases: the first one is preparatory, and it is similar to preparing the ground for sowing; then comes the main phase of sowing the seeds that will bring the harvest. Yet, we will begin with some general work that is not directly connected directly with the learning process.

LET'S FREE OUR ATTENTION

There is a Chinese saying that the one who has a lot of chi (energy) is rich. This is how we are going to rephrase this saying: “The one whose attention is free can learn a lot and do a lot.” Our attention can be called the currency of our mind, its “gold reserve.” Paying attention wisely defines the success and fate of a person, and when attention is wasted, it brings problems along. Our freedom is in the way we manage our attention, and rational use of it is the key to success.

What usually happens to our attention? Its existence is far from being trouble-free. Unfinished tasks, unresolved issues, failed exams, unrealistic dreams, meaningless attachments, and unhealthy worries hold our attention hostage. It is high time we said goodbye to many of these elements that gobble the energy of our mind and soul and keep going solely due to inertia. However, we never find time for that. When such elements pile up, normal functioning of the mind becomes impossible.

There are two ways to resolve this issue: either you work through each episode, which “casts shadow” in our mind, or you try to get rid of them in one go. I prefer the second option and then additionally work through anything that is left. This strategy I choose for my everyday psychotherapeutic practice, and it works.

Whatever holds our attention can be perceived as something remote, or it can be close to you, but in the majority of cases, this information manages to “creep into our mind” and sometimes even “fall into our stomach.” From my experience, I would recommend beginning with setting free deeper layers, which are at the level of our stomach and solar plexus; however, one can also start with more superficial layers of our mind, that is the head, and then make his/her way to the depth.

The body can recognise such “retractions” causing tension as greyness, darkness, blackness. Even if the topic is worthy of attention, it should not be in the stomach. There is an optimal distance for it.

If you feel surrounded by problems

Exercise 1: Total immediate reinvention of the mind

In order to maintain better concentration, close your eyes. You can open and close them anytime you wish. Your concentration is much more important than the fact whether your eyes are open or closed.

Stage 1

– *Your problems can find themselves in your head as if they are in a saucepan with a lid on it. Then it makes sense removing the lid and let the tissues of the brain smooth. Everything unnecessary will fly away as darkness and trash out of your head.*

– *It can be dust, smoke, or soot. It may leave your body as plumes of smoke from the chimney; it can be a whirlpool or a tornado. Sometimes, it leaves as smoke rings: the shape is not important, what really matters is the direction of the movement.*

– *Let this flow work. Let it carry out everything superfluous and unnecessary.*

– *As a powerful vacuum cleaner, it will drain everything grey and dark out of your head, and then from every corner of your body.*

– *It includes the zone of solar plexus, which often stores the consequences of frights.*

6. *It often happens that everything that used to cause worry, tension, and even fear leaves the body as black or slate-grey smoke.*

7. *Your body is being cleansed. Intuitively, you can feel how much of this process has been complete.*

8. *Stay there. Observe the process as long as you need to bring it to 100% completion. Your attention is the catalyst of this process.*

9. *When you feel your body cleansed, you will feel it closing; and that is the time to open your eyes.*

To make sure that everything is “clean,” have another go.

If unpleasant signals “managed to reach” your solar plexus, guide your attention to the extreme point when they settled, and then say: “Stop! Go back!” – and then observe the way that substance, which may look like black smoke or something similar to it, leaves your body in the reverse trajectory (it will leave the same way it came in).

It usually leaves the body through the top of the head. The “lid,” or the “hatch” opens up for a short period of time, and everything that wounded us at a moment of temporary instability will go away. Signals, which caused the tension, leave the body as dark energy and some fine suspended matter. Sometimes, it can even look like trash or stones. Sometimes, it can be some abstract objects like red and yellow triangles, for example. Not all these associations are that important as they are not our goal. What matters here is the process of letting go of everything that we do not really need in life.

Sometimes, darkness goes away through our eyes, ears, or our mouth.

It happens so that once one has restored his or her peace, a black dot or something similar to it moves away from the stomach through the feet. This can mean that some ancestral fright brought by the family has left the body.

That black dot which went out through the feet

Tatiana is a successful businesswoman. The tension she feels in her stomach, sometimes, brings her physical pain. As she calms down, the tension drops, and she feels how some black dot leaves her body through her feet. Her stomach feels liberated, then her legs gain strength, they seem to come to life again, and she is rubbing her hands. Then she remembers that she is a granddaughter of former political prisoners both on mother's and on father's side of the family. She has become an entrepreneur. The understanding of the fact that the risk of danger is not as high as it used to be for her ancestors gives her pleasant feeling. The day after the session during our seminar, she discovers some residue feeling in her chest in the form of red worms, and this sensation quickly disappeared. Tatiana felt peaceful, and her attention was free²⁰.

If you feel that this process is completed, you can move on to the second stage of the reinvention.

Stage 2

1. When you feel that your internal space has been cleansed, that the membrane of the entrance has skinned over, that the hatch has closed, then observe how reasonable solutions, experience, and competence that surround your head pour into your body and fill in the space, especially where you have previously experienced tension.

2. This is when the flow of light, water, some mass, lava or even something free-flowing is moving down from the surrounding space or your head into your. In some cases, new knowledge is born and is unfolded directly in a place, which has been cleared of unhelpful information.

3. Everything, that makes us more mature and more confident, flows into the tension-free body and find its right place, thus forming the core of the competence.

4. It usually flows down to the level of the solar plexus (in the stomach, at the level of the elbows)

5. This will help you feel calm and maintain your strength, even in stressful situations. This will help you act precisely and creatively.

6. You may feel how light your head has become and your body has this pleasant feeling of saturation, which makes it more stable and calm. The sensation of pleasant heaviness can reach your fingers and toes. Remain in this state as long as you find necessary. Gradually, this heaviness and warmth will be absorbed, and then you will experience lightness and freshness.

7. A part of your strength can come from your feet, "from your roots".

8. This feeling of new fullness will support you and protect you in the future.

9. Along with cleansing from the old and filling in with the new, this process can be seen as some sort of initiation into maturity. Now, you will be able to solve any problem like an adult.

10. When you feel that the process is complete, open your eyes.

What you have just done is the most efficient and significant practice for restoring your potential. You might find it useful to repeat this procedure.

What kind of "snake" am I cherishing in my bosom?

Our attention can be disturbed not only by problems, but also by some useless wishes, empty hopes, and some unfortunate attachments. This is what we can find in the chest, in our "soul".

Exercise 2: Getting rid of pipe dreams

Stage 1

1. Define what has "sunk deep into your heart" and what exactly is it that you are cherishing?

²⁰ This class took place in Nizhniy Novgorod on September 27 and 28 2014.

2. *Decide if it is something useful and has any perspective and if you should really keep nurturing it.*

3. *Whichever useless object or attachment you discover in your chest will fly away your energy will be released.*

Stop cherishing snakes

In this part of the work, you let go of every “snake” you have been cherishing so far in the depths of your body, and by snake, we mean everything that has been harmful. Letting go in this case is connected with calming down and finding peace, without any fight. There is nothing to fight with. If you have made your mind, you will find your peace. Under such circumstances, “snakes” dry out and vanish as dust or simply disappear.

These emotions can be connected with some unfortunate infatuation with a person in a relationship or when you are not single. It can also be alcohol addiction: then those bottles of liquor are let go from your internal space which peace of mind fills instead.

In my book “Objects in the Body,” I mentioned observations of the Orthodox monks on how “wicked thoughts” settle in our mind and how desires unfold: it never happens quickly. Fortunately, the reverse development of the events for these unwelcome conditions is also possible. As a result, “sobering up” helps a person return from the unnatural state to its natural condition and reconnection with God.

Stage 2

– *If you realize that your wishes are natural, and the unnatural part was tying them to the object that you have just let go, then take this thought a little further. Are there better or “legal” ways of satisfying these wishes? Is not there someone or something on the horizon that would bring you that long-awaited satisfaction without causing you any trouble?*

– *If you experience something like that, then let this feeling come closer to you.*

3. *If not, then prepare yourself for attentive scanning of the space around you so that as soon as this realization appears, you will react to it. Meanwhile, you have to be patient.*

4. *Ability to stay strong through difficult times is a trait of a mature person.*

Where am I?

In one of our classes, there was a woman, who, judging by her facial features, was a very gifted person. Such people tend to have very bright awakening moments. All of a sudden, she says: “I have complete silence; there are no images at all.”

Here is a part of our conversation with her:

Surrounded by fir-trees

“Where are you? Are you here or somewhere else?”

She finds herself in the country. Even her picture had something of this sort (the test drawing which you must have already tried doing): in her picture, there was a person surrounded by triangles, which stood for fir-trees. What did we discover in our conversation? 70% of her attention was there, in the woods, and only 30% was present at the seminar.

“While you are there, does that place give you anything?”

People usually gain strength in places like this. However, she didn’t respond, but having spent some time there and gotten what she wanted, she “returned” to the seminar.

Then she received the image of tranquillity: she was sitting with a butterfly on her hand.

It was highly interesting to observe our work with her. Sometime later, she realized that she was blooming. Her internal sensations revealed themselves. Everything went very well.

In the case of this participant of the seminar, it turned out that “she herself,” or a bigger part of her soul was in a quiet place, far away from the class. In this situation, the question: “Where is my attention? Where am I?” turned out to be very useful. These questions helped her get what she needed “there,” close the Gestalt of rest and return to the working environment²¹.

Exercise 3: Spend some time in a happy place and then return

- Define where you are.
- Stay there for some time so that you could get what you need: it could be some peace and quiet or emotional support. It can easily be something else.
- Return to “here and now”.

Similar kind of technique is used in such schools of psychotherapy as Ericksonian therapy guided by affective imagery and several other movements: patients are asked to think of something pleasant and spend some time reminiscing. You need to find your happy place where you can recharge.

A little cave

A person might remember that when he or she was a child and went to the seaside to spend holidays, they would dig a little cave in the sand, which felt like a very comfortable and safe place. Everyone has its own unique image of a happy place, which functions as a vitamin in adult life.

In psychocatalysis, this method is used only in specific cases when a patient expresses a certain need for that.

In general, setting one’s attention free, calling it back and “dragging it away from something” is a big job, which we will successfully complete along the course. For now, let’s ask ourselves the questions where our intelligence and soul are? This can be seen as a useful complement to the work you have already done.

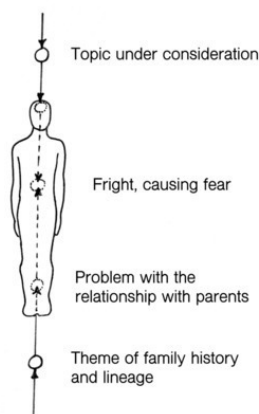


Fig. 10. Location of the information in the space of consciousness that causes the reaction of the body of different strength and quality.

This task is based on the following observation: the things that “steal” our attention can be inside our body as well as outside. We began by letting go of the tension-causing sensations in the depths of our body, and as a result, we have decreased the overall level of tension. Nevertheless, we also

²¹ Written down in Astrakhan in 2010.

need to deal with what is at a distance and drains our energy, attention, and a part of the resources of the nervous system.

Topics, which disturb our mind, can be allocated along the vertical and horizontal axes. The most harmful are those worries, which have managed to creep into the core of the body and reach the solar plexus.

However, we need to work through everything that is “on the way” to the core.

Where is my intellect?

Exercise 4: Paying attention to the problems and sorting them out: if they are dead-end, go away from them, and find the solutions to the problems that have something promising!

Stage 1: Going away from dead-end problems

1. Diagnostic phase

Ask yourself a question: “Where is my intellect? What is my attention focused on? What is it busy with? What is it aimed at?”

At the level of sensations, there might appear an image of your intellect, being an octopus with its tentacles (or an amoeba with its pseudopodia). This “creature” has spread in different directions and left them there.

Things that keep our attention are often found above our head, in front of it, or above it.

In our mind, choose the fattest “tentacle” and walk on it to find out what is hiding at its end. You will see that it is holding your attention with your internal vision. Either it will be an image, that reflects the essence of the problem, or you will somehow realize what draws your attention.

2. Phase of evaluating spontaneously formed conditions and finding a solution to them

As far as each direction is concerned, you decide whether to keep it and invest your effort in it or whether it is enough and it is time you got your energy back.

Different tactics

It is quite likely that once your eyes are closed, you will find out that some part of your attention is filled with mental notes and post-its: these are the reminders about the things that require your attention, and you should not forget about that because they are important. Moreover, you have no right to rest until they were resolved.

Perhaps, some of these errands do not deserve the high priority you have given them, and their importance was ascribed spontaneously.

Some part of your attention can also be lost in the errands, which have long lost their importance, and you simply need to walk away from them.

3. The phase of changes: the solutions to set your energy free!

A) As far as investing your attention in something that has no future, stop yourself right away and simply observe how your energy, which you have given to this, goes back to your body (as light, warmth, a stream of water, or something else that is pleasant). The “tentacles” are being pulled in, and the surface of the “ball” is getting smooth.

Meanwhile, the things, that are not of your concern, or which have lost their relevance, should return to where they came from in the first place.

These actions will give you an opportunity to focus on what is important and relevant right now.

B) If there are justified reasons that require your attention, but they can wait, then you make a note in your agenda and realize that you will return to this issue in own time; until that moment, you don't have to worry about these issues.

Energy comes back to you, as well as that chronic, but inactive 'bulging' in this direction will smooth.

C) When it comes to urgent issues, make your decisions right now: in what order are you going to do it, and how are you going to do it? Then you have to do it.

If you need ideas to help you find the solution, there is an additional exercise for this purpose.

While mentally remaining on the issue, use the 'tentacle of your attention' to scan the space for necessary solutions. Are they near or far? Most likely, they are already on their way. And it is also likely that they are in the same direction where the problem is.

From feeling preoccupied to working

Within your mental space, there is a trajectory of ideas, which help you solve this or that problem: this trajectory is an arc. From afar, that is: at the front, and from above, it moves towards you, to the upper frontal part of your head. Then it goes into your body. Your task now is to give way to these bright ideas. Let them flow into your head, and then spread over your body. They come at the level of the chest, making your soul calmer and firmer, making your willpower stronger at the level of solar plexus: let your confidence of success grow and turn into determination.

Along with growing determination, tension will be decreasing, and you will be able to move into action.

These exercises reduce empty worries preventing your body from spending your intellectual energy twice on the same issue. You remember about the issue, you act and solve it, and then you forget about it! You do not need tensions, all you need is to solve and act according to the principle "One thought, one action."

When you give way to your sensible ideas, something like light, water, a little cloud, or another kind of something positive pours into your body. You begin to feel calmer.

This is a step-by-step algorithm according to which you work.

Stage 2: Finding solutions and confidence

– *Where is the knowledge useful for solving these problems? Is it near or far? In what direction is it located?*

– *What does it look like? Is it a cloud, a sun or something else?*

– *Should you let them come closer to you and enter your body?*

– *Observe the way it is happening: a ray of light, a cloud or a stream of water "settles" in your body.*

– *Explore what it feels like to be filled with useful information. How much of that necessary knowledge do you have now?*

– *If you think there is enough of it, then think what issue could be successfully resolved using the knowledge you possess? How quickly can you resolve it? What will you do first?*

A lump turns into a path

What used to be a stumbling block for you, what created an obstacle in front of you, is spreading in front of you like a bolt and turning into a band you can move along step-by-step, and gradually solve the problem. What used to seem like a big problem turns into a much smaller issue.

Every given moment in time, you just should make a single step, and this is how you can work your way to the solution! You do what you should do, but without any tension. As soon as your tasks are completed, those mental notes pinned to the surface of your attention disappear and sink in your body, and then you experience the sense of completion and composure.

– If you need to complement your knowledge or get more information to come closer to the solution of your problem, think and plan where and how you can get it. If you might find it useful asking for a consult with an expert or study the question yourself, and thus, bring your knowledge to the necessary level.

Make sure you are wishing for the right thing

Recently, it has become quite a trend to make New Year resolutions more down-to-earth, and instead of saying “I want to own a castle on the beach!” you go for a more goal-oriented “I want to learn to promote my online services efficiently, and I would like to make progress in learning a foreign language!” etc. I think this tendency is very positive! If you have new skills, you will have an increase in your income. Your dreams will get support!

Streams flow into your head

It turns out that our intellect can appear in the places where it does not have to be, but it still has responded to us. The general message of this task could be formulated the following way: “My attention, return from the places where you are not supposed to be!”

While you are working on this task, you will feel the flow into your head while many different objects fall back into their place. They will be used as fuel for your body, and they may enter through the wide opening in your head and then move from to your body.

Such work can become useful not only at the level of your head, but also at the level of your soul.

Strength, given away by mistake, will flow back to your chest. It means that what used to “lure” you, but was unreal, will let you be, and your strength attached to these emotions will be set free, too.

We will realize the following: “I am being filled with energy. It is being transformed into its original state. It feels so good and pleasant! I am myself again. My attention and my soul have returned to their place from numerous attachments and commitments. Now, I feel more like myself than ever before! I can invest my energy in the direction I choose, and that is great news!”

Putting the bone back into the joint again

Sometimes, the participants of the seminars when trying to concentrate find out that the energy of their attention is very far away, light years away. However, even in cases like these, nothing prevents you from deciding if this attention is justified. Getting your attention back into your body is always a very pleasant sensation. In some way, it reminds me of putting the bone back into the joint. The moment of putting it back requires patience and attention, but then everything falls back into its place.

In certain cases, when a person needs to get his or her soul back, they need to travel to the sky: feeling desperate to find happiness on earth, souls try to find it elsewhere. These are special cases.

If there are any complications

Getting to “see” your sensations requires time. If it does not seem to work right away, you need to make the first go, then switch to another task, and then again return to self-observation, but it must be done without any tension or pressure. Your sensations will eventually show through. The whole idea of perception of one’s body and space is natural and available to everyone. Even if you have

never practiced anything like this, you will quickly realize that your sensations are always close to you and you can see and understand the processes within the realm of your consciousness.

Tensions, caused by the fact that some of your needs have not been satisfied or by some unaddressed traumas, “muffle” our finer sensations. Nevertheless, it not the reason to give up; it is an invitation to face those louder tensions and contour distortions and work them through. This is exactly what we are going to do now.

PEACE OF MIND AND INTEGRITY OF THE SOUL

Tensions and traumas

The soil and the seed

The information we learn can have a different fate in our body and it is not always fortunate. There is a parable about a seed in the New Testament.

Matthew, Ch. 13, 3—8

“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. When the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown”.

This parable is about the fate of the word on the Kingdom of Heaven.

Turning a seed into a crop 100 times means being good soil capable of taking in the grain of truth, let it root and grow. “The kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.” (Ibid, v. 31—32)

We are talking about knowledge of the language. Its successful development means the same: 1) taking care of the soil so that it could accept the *seeds of knowledge*; 2) *sowing* these seeds; 3) subsequent cultivation of the tree to the moment “the birds of Heaven come”, i.e. till getting a visible result.

One needs peace of mind

Being successful in the learning process corresponds to the calm but active state of the central nervous system (CNS) and to the balanced functioning of the autonomous nervous system (ANS): both its sympathetic and parasympathetic parts. The latter system is also referred to as autonomic since it is responsible for energetic processes. The smooth functioning of different levels and parts of the nervous system contributes to the stamina in a learning process and life in general. However, chronic stress of the sympathetic part, so-called sympathoadrenal conditions and hyperexcitation, leads to fatigue, exhaustion, and decreases educability.

In practice, we sometimes encounter cases of extreme conditions when one is too exhausted and too reserved. In cases like these, learning something new is highly difficult even, if one tries really hard. In such a state, a person is like a stony dry soil from the parable as mentioned above. More than that, this soil can be “littered” with weeds of harmful impressions, which crawled into our mind at the early stages of life and studying. You need to weed the field of our mind and expand it if you want to cultivate useful knowledge on it.

Two sources of stress

Stress has two causes: adaptation to the new and old trauma

Stress of adaptation is a reaction of mobilization, which appears in different periods of life when one finds him/herself in new circumstances without prior preparation for them. It does not

concern dramatic events only. Starting school, which is natural absolutely, can turn out to be the cause of stress. When this event is long gone, your autonomic nervous system (ANS) “remembers” how much stress it caused you and cannot calm down.

Congestive reactions of the autonomic nervous system as tension, anxiety, lack of confidence, irritability, anger, rage, and even fury can appear at different stages of life:

- separation from parents at very young age;
- entering kindergarten or school, changing schools or moving houses;
- changes in the family (death of the family member, separation and divorce, new members of the family, birth of a new member of the family)
- fights between parents and other specific conditions in childhood;
- changing physiology;
- entering university;
- starting a job;
- birth of a child;
- changing jobs and positions;
- information concerning health problems;
- retirement (also the cause of stress).

These seemingly regular events disturb our nervous system; adapting to them does not happen right away and results in prolonged energetic “restlessness”, which appears once and then automatically remains there.

Another category of conditions that consumes body energy is the consequences of psychological traumas such as fright, deceit, betrayal, and loss. These are more serious situations than simply facing something new and adapting to it. These are the situations when a body is affected all of a sudden and reaction to them remains in the autonomic contour of the person, even when the events are long gone.

Atlas of emotional experience

Consequences of psychological trauma and chronic stress tend to “settle in” our body and then build up. Each of such experience has a corresponding set of sensations and levels of the body that it affects. As a response to the lack of competence, we get a lack of confidence; when a problem remains unresolved, we worry; when our future looks uncertain, we experience anxiety; and when we get frightened, we have fear. We feel annoyed because of someone’s constant moralizing; we feel offended when we are disappointed, and our expectations do not match the reality; we experience anger and rage when someone is rude to us; and we want revenge when someone betrays or cheats us.



Fig. 11. The head: anxiety in the forehead, irritation in the temples, control in the occiput; the shoulders: the burden of responsibility; the throat: resentment, self-pity in response to disappointment, deception; the chest: worry, indignation; the stomach: fear, anger.

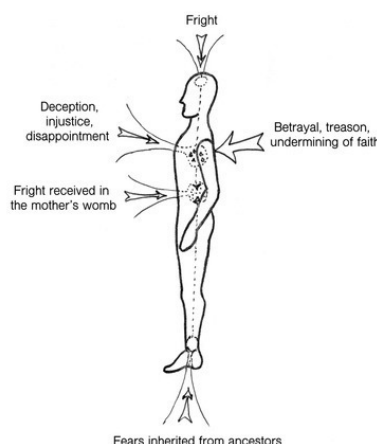


Fig. 12. The direction of impact received during the trauma.

Traumas are the following: fright, disappointment, offence, betrayal, infidelity, and loss.

The tendency of its progression is the increase of tension till it reaches the level of “sympathoadrenal status”, which may even lead to “the syndrome of burnout”, a condition difficult and sometimes even impossible to restore from. A person gradually turns into a “squeezed lemon”, and in these circumstances, learning something new is absolutely out of the option.

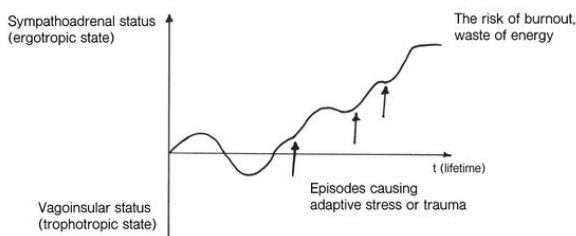


Fig. 13. Gradual loss of balance, accumulation of stress in the course of life.

One needs systematic work

Both stress excessive activation and traumas are to be worked through. The way to do it quickly and efficiently is described in my books “Objects in the Body” (Ermoshin, A., 1999, 2004, 2007, 2013), “Geometry of Emotions (2008, 2013), “Phobias, Disappointments, and Losses” (2010, 2011, 2014). We will recapitulate the key moments in this book as well. The general algorithm of work in its updated version is adduced in the Introduction.

In order to “harness” stress and return the body to its peace, one needs to perform a series of tasks. To restore the balanced functioning of sympathetic and parasympathetic autonomic nervous system and brain, one has to do a number of self-regulation episodes by the method of psychocatalysis where each of these episodes brings you closer to the normal condition.

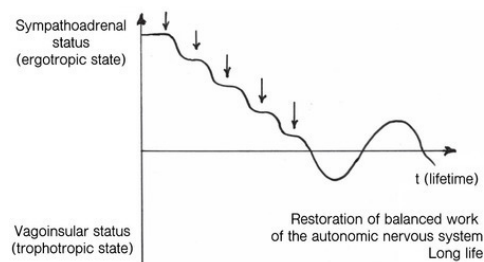


Fig. 14 Gradual recuperation of the normal functioning as a result of successful self-regulation by the method of psychocatalysis.

In this book, we will focus on the cases connected with education, and we will analyse only a couple of cases of general de-neurotisation and de-traumatisation.

Setting oneself free from stress and trauma when working with languages

We will concentrate our attention on the following aspects:

- Working through the consequences of the first encounter with a foreign language and the stress of the early stages of developing linguistic competence:
- Traumas and reactions connected with the perception of the language.
- Traumas and reactions connected with the attempts to speak and with practice in general.
- Working through the traumatic experience of communication with teachers.
- Working through basic neuroticism with its roots in personal history.
- Working through the negative influence of the ancestral and national experience.

Stress of the first encounter

The first encounter with a new language is dumbfounding. There is nothing to hold on to when you try to understand it. All you have is the sound, which does not make any sense.

Ta-ta-ta

This is how Italians describe the sound of the Russian speech: “Ta-ta-ta.”

There is yet another phenomenon: when we are faced with something big, even if it's breathtakingly beautiful, it can make you feel dizzy. One feels unwell primarily because of the amount of the new information. A big exhibition can cause such a state. One needs time to get a grip, calm down, and then “consume” it step-by-step.

Hit by a ball in the stomach

Lyubov describes her first encounter with the language as being hit by a ball in the stomach. The ball bounced back. She did not have time to react and couldn't catch it. The feeling of tension remained.

Some years later, being an adult, she returns to this topic, she understands that she could have taken in the language not as one big ball, but as many little ones. The tension goes away²².

Almost everyone experiences the stress of different intensity at the beginning of learning a language. This stress is written into our psychosomatic contour, even years later, as a kind of “background.” That is why many people, even when they already have linguistic experience, try to avoid situations when they have to speak or understand. Here are a couple of examples.

A plate in the forehead

Datse sees her fear of making a mistake as plates in the upper part of the forehead. She had to “stand on them” with her attention to make them melt²³.

Feeling tense

Another participant of the seminar whose name is Eugenia, confesses: “I do not allow myself to make any mistakes. I don't speak: I feel embarrassed, I feel tense and lost. I create this stiffness myself as I don't let myself say anything unless I know it perfectly well.” The importance of the task is much higher! Communication has the highest priority, as well as the resolution of any practical issues; it's not a competition or exhibition of linguistic achievement.

²² This session took place in Moscow on May 22 2010.

²³ This session took place in Riga on December, 3 2005

This conversation sets the beginning of working through the fear of making a mistake²⁴.

Along with stress, traumas can also be possible. I will describe a couple of cases together with the way we worked through them. This will prepare us for further work together.

In the introduction, I mentioned that a conversation with an English teacher killed my interest towards Italian. Here is a short summary of this story.

The rooster is killed

When I was learning Italian and was feeling quite enthusiastic about it, I told one English teacher about it. She started saying that learning English was much more important, necessary, and more promising.

After this conversation, I suddenly felt that my interest towards Italian seemed to have died out. The textbook, which I thought was so nice and lively, lost its magic.

I began my internal observations to find out what had exactly happened because of this conversation. Italian had been developing as an energetic rooster in my stomach; it actively absorbed everything that had to do with this language: words, expressions, intonations, etc. What did I see with my inner vision? The rooster was killed!

I had to take the dagger out of the rooster, bring it back to life, and learn this lesson: language teachers can experience some sort of jealousy; do not tell everyone about your success, do not share too much! Share your achievements only with those who can feel genuinely happy for you! (If there are such people.)

When your skills become advanced, then you can tell everyone!

“No matter how much effort you put into this, you will never speak like a Russian”

A participant of the seminar in Moscow, her name is Svetlana, has been trilingual with Russian, Ukrainian, and Arabic though Russian has never been her primary language. She has been carrying a phrase once said by a teacher whose opinion was very important to Svetlana: “No matter how much effort you put into this, you will never speak like a Russian.”

We confirm the situation.

“Where did that phrase go and what does it look like inside?”

“It’s like a splinter in my heart.”

“What is your plan: will you continue carrying it or have you had enough of it?”

“Of course, I’ve had enough.”

“Then observe what is happening.”

“It has fallen into pieces and come out as bubbles through the top of my head.”

“It looks like it has left you the same way it came in. Quite often people seem surprised that everything negative comes out through the head, the top of it. It’s like a hatch, which opens up, and then everything that got inside by mistake comes out.”

“The wound on my heart is healing.”

“It sometimes happens that closer to the end of the healing process, there’s the sensation that someone touched the wound with a brush, and then everything smoothed.”

Svetlana draws another breath. I ask her:

“Where is the new understanding of the situation? You speak Russian very well, and with every new day, you will speak even better.”

“It’s like a light-coloured cloudlet above me.”

“Isn’t it time this cloudlet came where it belongs, to your suffering heart?”

²⁴ This seminar was conducted in Moscow in 2011.

Svetlana observes how the cloudlet envelops her, gets absorbed by her skin, and then reaches her heart.

Svetlana feels calm. She opens her eyes²⁵.

What do we do to update the state we are in?

Here is a template for such kind of work. In order to work with the discovered unnecessary formations, we use the following questions: *“Is there anything that prevents me from speaking the language I need? Where is it? What does it look like?”*

If there is anything that seems disturbing, you will find it in a particular place and in the form of a particular object.

Then you decide if you want to keep nurturing it or it is time to stop. If you choose to stop and you do not want to nurture it anymore, then you observe how it dries out to its original state: whatever came from outside will stay, and whatever you added to yourself will be taken back. The rest of the “foreign object” goes away the same way it came in. You will calm down.

When you calm down, it means that you observe the redistribution of energy on your body. Your arms and legs get warmer and have a pleasant heaviness; your head feels lighter, and the forehead cools down; your chest and stomach feel free, if before that you experienced any heaviness or compression; and they fill in if they used to seem empty. At the end of this process, you make sure that the place where trauma used to be is clean and calm. “The wound” has healed, everything has smoothed, and there is no “scar”, no “inflammation” left.

However, you need to be able to distinguish between the two classes of the condition: trace stress due to the lack of competence, which easily melts during observation; and the injury itself, that is: consequences of fright, ridicule, etc. In such cases, one needs to observe how the feeling that has damaged this person in the first place leaves the body.

Another step is looking for the necessary experience in the space around you. The goal of this experience is to help you develop a new attitude to what used to hurt you: it may look like a little cloud above your head of some sort of condensation inside your head, and then it goes in the form of light, fog, or a more concentrated stream to the damaged place.

Remove the splinter and move on

As for the lack of tact or stupidity of other people that often hurt sensitive people, then there is an old Russian saying for that, even if you don’t sow fools, there’ll be enough of them for the next hundred years. A certain percentage of people of this kind always exist among us. Sometimes, there are more of them, sometimes there are fewer, but they always exist. It is silly to expect that one can live a long life without meeting foolishness or evil. It is more practical to understand how different people are and that it is impossible to expect everyone to treat you nicely and with tact, even if you try to treat everyone this way. Moreover, if you got hurt, do not dwell on your pain, remove that splinter as soon as possible, get wiser and move on!

Now, you can address difficult situations in a mature and business-like manner. No one can keep you from increasing your competence!

You may have already succeeded in doing this part of work following the instructions. Just in case, there is a brief algorithm presented in a more structured way.

²⁵ This work took place during the seminar conducted in Moscow on July 21 2012.

Exercise 5: Working through internal tensions and traumas received during the learning process

Read the first step of instruction, close your eyes, do the part of the exercise, then open your eyes for a while and read the next step.

– *Where are the feelings, left from the first encounter with a foreign language? The first time you heard it, the first attempts to understand and speak – where and what impressions did they leave?*

– *What do you feel like? Do you feel happy and ready to work (which would be great)? Do you feel some mobilizing tension or even feeling traumatized?*

– *In case you feel calm, comfortable, and confident, just reinforce this state, let your body feel and spread this awareness, too.*

– *If you feel some tension or even some damage, wait for the moment when you feel where the element supporting this tension is: is it at some distance from your mind or has it gotten inside? When did this damaging signal start? Did it hit you in the head, the chest, or the stomach? Is every cell of your body suffering? What does this wounding element look like according to your sensations?*

– *Wherever these damaging elements hit you, wherever it is now, and whatever it looks like (whether it is a rock, a pin, or some unpleasant powder, you need to decide if you prefer to keep carrying it around or if you have had enough of it.*

– *If something wounded you, observe how this object or energy leaves you in reverse trajectory. Whatever got inside without invitation, let it go without any regrets; it will come out the same way it came in.*

– *If this is something massive, then you should try to relax and calm down, and take back all your energy from it. This object will dry out; it will get smaller and smaller, and what is left will disappear completely or will fly away.*

– *Residual inertial tensions melt, and a pleasant warmth and heaviness softly spread all over your body from the centre to the periphery. After this, your mind will get clear. Your arms and legs will get the sensation of being filled; your head, chest, and stomach relax and calm down.*

– *When you feel that the space of your mind has cleared, and internal filling is even; there is an overall feeling of integrity, purity, and balance, and then you should wait for the realization of the way you should treat similar potentially stressful situations in the future. This understanding may appear right above your head in the form of a little cloud or sun, or it can already appear in your head, on the forehead as the concentration of something radiant.*

– *Then you decide whether this is the destination of this work. Do you need to look at a deeper level? Understanding of the situation is becoming a part of your body: it flows down into your body as light or water; you accept it, and your body absorbs it.*

– *You get used to feeling calm when you have to use the language. You imagine how you act easily and in a business-like way.*

– *When you feel that this process has reached its end, open your eyes.*

The following typical stories can also be of help to you.

On a pin

After first encounters with the English language, Serguei thought it was too difficult, and it felt like being pierced by a pin in the area of a lower back. Below this pin, there is a little carnivorous animal with a bushy tail, which looks like an arctic fox: this is an image of hidden anger. He took the pin out. Internal opening closed. That little animal hid away. He had the sensation that English flowed down easily like water from the head to the body and found its place in the stomach²⁶.

Tatyana the violinist

Tatyana is a professional musician. She told us the story about how she went with her orchestra to England for the first time when she was 17. According to the contract with the host party, she was supposed to be in a homestay. They were going to a provincial town for some festival.

Tatyana did not speak much English. Starting from customs clearance, she remembered the feeling of embarrassment because of herself and the whole orchestra; 42 people in total could not speak English.

When it was time to meet the hosting family:

“I didn’t understand much,” – Tatyana continued. – “I felt dumb with a spasm in the throat. I felt very confused and very uncomfortable. People were very warm and welcoming, but I was incapable of expressing my gratitude. I felt like an idiot. My head seemed completely empty. I had already started believing I was a complete fool.”

“I am an intelligent person stuck in a ridiculous situation!” That would be a much better way to think about the situation. Tatyana and I begin to work together

“In order to avoid such situations in the future, it would be a good idea to study without any stress. What is happening in the head now, with the way it is filled now?”

“It feels better.”

“What about the rest of your body?”

“Either” – Tatyana confirms.

She understands that there is some knowledge she has already acquired, and she let it become a part of the body. She is much better equipped than when she “felt like an idiot,” and nobody can stop her from making further progress. The reaction Tatyana had during her first visit when she lacked linguistic competence was natural absolutely, but it did not make this reaction necessary to experience. It was time to leave this reaction behind. What kind of reaction was that, and what did it feel like? *It was a sensation of a big compression, a strong squeeze at the level of the body.*

In the course of observation, Tatyana noted that her tension was melting, new competence flowed into the body, and now she can imagine a new trip in this newly renewed state²⁷.

A thin chainmail and a helmet

“I am wearing a thin chainmail, and at the level of the nose, there’s a metallic plate. It’s my protection” – Irina tells us.

²⁶ This work took place in Moscow in 2014.

²⁷ Moscow, 2011.

“When we communicate with a native speaker, we never have the vantage point. Our linguistic knowledge always loses to that of the native speaker. And it often makes us take a defensive position” – I comment on Irina’s description.

While we pay careful attention to the sensation of energy invested in the formation of the “chain mail” or other spontaneous protective mechanisms, be it a shell, a whole house and even a fortress, as a rule, this energy then returns to the circulation and undergoes reverse development. One begins to feel the ability to lean on the internal strength and competence, which are located in the stomach, in the chest, in the head; after that, one can move on from protecting one’s own self-esteem to building the strategy of how to achieve results.

Irina “calls back” the energy she invested in protecting herself, and she begins to feel free. Her new protection is her competence, that is: the knowledge she absorbs during studies²⁸.

Edgy upbringing

The way we perceive new information can influence by the image of the person who communicates it to us.

In the situation when a teacher motivates a student using edgy techniques of targeting student’s self-esteem, and when students have to defend themselves and prove their worthiness, it is no wonder that soon students find both the teacher and the subject off-putting. The main task of a person is to preserve his or her inner self from damage and maintain one’s dignity. If a tasty dish is spiced with disrespect and lack of affection, then one would hardly be able to enjoy it. If a teacher allows him/herself say something mean to a student, then it is likely, that the subject this teacher is reading, will be rejected as well.

Take your grades with calm!

Healthy attitude to marks means understanding that it is an evaluation of your knowledge on a given day and on a given topic. It has nothing to do with evaluating you as a person. Tomorrow, you can be an A-grader. Moreover, the person who provides you with this or that mark cannot be objective absolutely; he or she is also human and can be in a different mood. Sometimes, this person can be downright unfair. This is a part of reality. In any case, one should treat grades with calm. Grades are not the point; what matters is whether you can reach your goal or not.

If a student is poisoned with the negative marks of the teacher, it is rather unpleasant, but it is not the end of the world. You need to find and let go of the poisonous alloy that accompanies useful knowledge.

A poisonous teacher

Ekaterina: “There’s a whole whirlwind of difficult moments. My head is buzzing. There are images of these teachers, a real kaleidoscope of personalities.

I had a teacher. He was with a sense of humour, but it was rather unkind. It all sounded more like being ridiculed and humiliated. He seemed kind at first, but then...”

Ekaterina observes how this whirlwind of unkind influences leaves her body as something grey, black, and dark²⁹.

Here are several more examples of internal work.

Steam through my eyes and ears

²⁸ This work took place in Moscow in 2011.

²⁹ This session took place in Riga in 2007.

Irina: “My tonsils responded. They seemed to feel loose like when you have a sore throat. Steam was going through her ears and eyes. Some tension was identified at the root of her tongue; it flowed to its tip and then completely disappeared.”

Throw away a crumpled piece of paper

Svetlana: “There’s a crumpled piece of paper in my hand, and I have thrown it away.”

A ray of light hit me – stop – back off

Julia: “My ears. I couldn’t hear. I couldn’t make sense of the speech. I began to think that I wasn’t able to hear. My reaction: eyes strained; I felt like I was going to cry.”

A.E.: “What exactly happened to you back then?”

Julia: “A bright ray of light hit me in both eyes.”

A.E.: “What place did it reach? You need to follow its trajectory to the end and then say ‘Stop!’ and set off a reverse process, that is: you will need to observe how this unpleasant energy goes out and away. Ok, this ray of light came, but now, it has to go.”

Through Julia’s eyes, it is moving out. Julia observes how that ray of light, which wounded her, leaves her and moves away. She feels free. Her ability to hear and to listen returns.

Sometimes, it feels like earplugs falling out when your ability to hear is being restored³⁰.

Tongue in the hook

Here is an example of working with myself.

I learnt German in school and college (in der Schule und in der Hochschule). What do I have left from those times?

My tongue is on a steel hook.

When I was in the fifth grade, our headmaster told us that our new teacher was highly professional and that her pronunciation was the best among other students of her university. Perhaps, this was just a way to supporting a young teacher and earning our respect.

Quite paradoxically, it did not inspire and, on the contrary, we felt numb. It seemed embarrassing to speak with a bad accent in front of such a teacher, but it also seemed impossible to understand how one should pronounce from those few comments and few classes we had with her. In the end, no one dared to talk in front of her, and no one could learn to do so because there was no other source. There was only a textbook. Nobody has heard about audio and video courses back then. Language teaching was very formal and scarce.

Now, many years later, I have a better understanding of that situation, but it does not resolve the conflict between high requirements and the lack of opportunity to correspond with them, which I experienced at school.

Even though I always get my As for German, I continued learning this language in college and achieved a certain level. German has always been a language for reading rather than speaking for me. That “hook” that got my tongue had me through the years. Naturally, as soon as I realized it, I chose to “get my tongue off the hook.”³¹

My mind took it quite literally: a steel hook and then setting my mind free from it.

A lump in the throat

A lump in the throat is one of the typical syndromes. It can become an obstacle for the free flow of speech. In many cases, it is connected with the feeling of being offended.

³⁰ The work took place during the seminar in Moscow in August 2010.

³¹ This particular work took place in Moscow in 1992.

There is a little trick in working with this condition: you do not work with the lump – you should work with what caused it. A lump itself is a secondary formation, and it merely reflects the reaction of the body to the trauma. That is, you should determine what affected your chest at a moment of deceit, the wreck of hopes, insult, or disappointment. In the “pit” of the chest, there will most probably be pieces of your first naive ideas about life and people. They often look like shatters of glass or knockings of stone.

In all cases, these symptoms are subject to reverse action: they either resolve or heal right away, or “fall out,” and then the energy of the shatter and pieces returns to the body. The lump also resolves after that. A new attitude to life, this time more realistic, comes to the body as light and/or warmth that makes your head more sensible, your soul tougher, and your willpower stronger.

A more detailed description of de-traumatisation and de-neurotisation algorithms are presented at the end of this book. It also includes working through the traumas of disappointment and offence. This is what it looks like in practice.

Tatiana the artist

Tatiana is a grown-up person; she is an artist. She said that she was a straight “A” student and, at some point, she had to change schools. At her new school, English classes were given much more attention than at her previous school. She did not want to look ignorant, so when she was asked whether she had read this or that author in original, she would respond: “Yes, of course!” Her answer would provoke laughter in the classroom. As a result, that period of life brought her the feeling of tension, which has accompanied her to the moment of our meeting.

We discovered it during the following work.

“There is an idea to learn a language. Does this project appear new or far from you? It can appear as some sort of container in front of you. You should decide whether you want to accept it or to reject. If you choose to accept, then observe how your soul is accepting it.” (The method of “putting on’ good things and using this moment as a checkpoint will be described later. We still have to find out more about the method of “test phrases and images.”)

Here is the description given by Tatiana.

“I have started drinking from the cup eagerly. Suddenly, there’s a headache, and everything got stuck in my throat.”

“Is it a technical problem: for example, the cup is too big, and the throat is too narrow? Or is it your body protesting?”

“Most likely, it’s a protest. I tried to imagine that it is water, like a puddle of water, which I could absorb with my feet, but it turned out to be impossible.”

“Is there anything inside that would perceive learning a language as potentially harmful?”

“There is nothing that I could think of. I like learning new things, and I always put my knowledge to use. I’m checking my inner container, and there’s also enough space.”

“Let’s define what kind of impression you first encounter with the foreign language produced.”

Tatiana begins telling her story. For her final year, she had to change schools, and at her new school, everyone seemed to have a much better level of English. Then she realized: “I don’t know this language while everyone else speaks it fluently.”

“I had no problems with other subjects, but English was different. My classmates treated me with condescension, and they laughed at me.”

“What kind of impression did it leave inside? Is there a feeling of inferiority?”

“There’s tension in my head, chest, stomach, throat, and shoulders. There’s a boulder in the soul and a lump of offence in the throat.”

“Many years have passed since then. You have acquired a lot of new knowledge, and there have been many achievements. If it is just tension, then let it melt; if you feel there is something hurting

you (it does not matter whether it is sharp or blunt, big or fine, you have to let it go the way it came). Follow the principle that we let go of everything that came in without any invitation.”

“It feels better now. Something was holding me in the chest, like a lump. It’s gone.”

“Now that you’re free from the influence of the old wound and tension, observe what is happening next.”

Everything, connected with language learning (contents of that cup), was absorbed by the whole body. Here are Tatiana’s words:

“I imagined that my whole body was absorbing some yellow-coloured substance. My body was learning the fact that a language could also be learnt by the whole body³².”

What to do when something is smothering you, and you feel screens in the throat and a noose around the neck

Some people discover that they have a noose around the neck or a screen at the back of the neck all of which cause the feeling of being suffocated. We have to note here that such sensations do not always point to psychological problems. One should also consider that they could be the symptoms of problems with the spinal column or with the thyroid gland. It can even be ischemia (insufficient oxygen supply) of the nucleus of the glossopharyngeal nerve or other reasons.

If your intuition is telling you that the reason is psychological, nothing stops you from having a look at who is controlling the noose in case you feel it around your neck. Usually, there is nobody else who would hold it. Even if there was someone who provoked the spasm, you do the rest on your own. That is why you have to decide whether you want to keep on going like this or put a stop to this.

It may also be one of the manifestations of ‘sub-identity’ in its attempt to protect your grand self from ‘humiliation’ and being ridiculed.

A group photo

One may think that some people have nothing else to do but to watch you and evaluate whether you do everything right or wrong! In such cases, I often ask my patients the question if they look at a group photo whose looks they worry about the most. The typical answer is that, firstly, they think about themselves. This is what most people do. They worry about the way they look, and they do not really care about you. If it is the kind of person, who likes to judge everyone else, then let it be his or her problem that they are ready to waste their time judging. It’s enough for you to know that you deeply accept yourself and that you respect and love yourself, no matter what others think of you. In any case, you will try to do the best you can.

Thinking about the impression you make on other people is an unnecessary neurotic reaction.

Hands on the neck

Zinaida, a medic student, tells us the following:

“There are hands on my neck. They are human hands. Something is squeezing my neck...”

“Do you think there’s such force in the world that could be strangling a good girl Zina?”

Zina thinks and understands that there is nobody except herself who would prevent her from speaking. This is an after-sensation, which was formed at an impressionable age at some confusing moment. It is just an inertial contour.

Having realized that it is a part of her own, Zina decides to bring back the energy from that ‘sub-identity.’ She observes the process that follows the realization. Hands move away from the neck and melt. The energy of the body, that used to be split into two, is united, and Zina experiences a boost of energy.

³² This work took place in Moscow in 2010.

She feels that the world accepts her with interest and love. She becomes stronger with every day in this world. This sensation settles in her body³³.

Exercise 6: If there is something squeezing your neck

Initial attitude: "I choose to be ridiculous and absurd if it's necessary. I focus on speaking and reaching the goals of communication and not on making an impression as an expert in this language. Calmly and with dignity, I cushion those mistakes I make during the communication. I feel the ability to communicate freely using the knowledge I increase daily. My organs of speech are free. I breathe freely! Everything is great!"

With such attitude, observe the reserve development of the pressure that was applied on your neck and how energy from whatever was holding you, be it a noose, a choker, or a collar, goes back into your body as warmth and pleasant heaviness. Feel the way your body is being filled. What used to be a noose is resolving completely.

Your new attitude of confidence and calm establishes itself in your body. Your body accepts the idea that your focus is on the goal of communication, on finding the right words, and connecting them in an understandable way and not on the way you look and the way you are evaluated. This understanding has a similar sense of the body being filled with light or any other positive sort of substance.

A choker

This comes from my own experience. From time to time, I had this sensation of wearing a metal choker and being a galley slave, which made me think what provoked it and how I could possibly get rid of it. During one of the sessions of self-regulation, I began exploring. There was no one and nothing that would hold my neck chained. The chain from the choker was not going outside. It turned out that its "anchor" was a big dark kettlebell at the bottom of my stomach. As soon as this kettle bell was removed, the choker disappeared, too!

Remains of earlier traumatization and slavery were gone. I felt calmer³⁴.

There is more than one cause

A lump in the throat or being choked can be explained not only psychologically. In medicine, there is a notion of a differential diagnosis. However, similar symptoms can be caused by different reasons. In the situation, when these symptoms cannot be worked through self-regulation, or they quickly return, you need to think about other possible reasons and seek professional help of a corresponding expert, such as a neurologist and a spine specialist, an endocrinologist, etc.

You can exclude some of the aspects yourself. There is a very good diagnostic method in medicine that is called "ex juvantibus." You assume, for example, that the reason of the spasm in your neck could be, say, impulsion from intervertebral discs at that level. Useful exercises for the neck are described in the corresponding chapter of this book. Do these exercises and, if they help, you will see that your diagnostic hypothesis was true. If you see no or little improvement, then you need to come up with a different hypothesis.

You have to take into account that, practically, every symptom can be explained from various points of view, that is: it can be the result of several different causes. For instance, the syndrome of energy deprivation of the brain (we have already mentioned it in this book) depends on the level of activation of the nervous system, blood vessels feeding the brain, spinal column, functioning

³³ This work took place in Moscow in 2010.

³⁴ It took place in Ascoli Piceno, Italy on February 22 2012.

of the lungs and heart, and on other factors. You can find out more about it in my book “Geometry of Emotions” and “Phobias.”

Working with the initial state

Traumas, which have no direct connection to the speech, can still affect it. When Elena observed the process of speech production, she discovered the consequences of an episode she experienced many years ago.

A comet got into my head

Elena. A *comet* got into her head when she saw how her husband hit their daughter with the back of his hand when she was standing in the cot and crying. This episode brought up a feeling of hatred towards her husband, which lasted for more than 30 years, even after the divorce.

There was a similar tension in his body.

During the session of self-regulation, Elena let the “comet” leave her head in the opposite trajectory, and her body finally began to relax. Along with relaxation, it was easier to see the mystery of the speech production. Speech is born in the state of calm, and then it flows like a river. A whole river flowed and then disembodyed into the ocean.

Other processes began to go freely. Reference books, dictionaries, and films are loaded through the top of the head to the area of the stomach. Elena felt she was “on air.” She offered the following interpretation of what has happened: she got connection to the info field³⁵.

Robocop

Nikolai is 32 years old. There is a certain delicacy in his build. He experiences a lot of stress even when he has to contact people in his mother tongue. Face gets tense, and there is also some tension in the chest and stomach.

On the test drawing, there is a 5-year-old boy. This is indeed what Nikolai feels like, although he works for a big company in a very good position!

As he was paying attention to his sensations, he revealed he was like a Robocop in the film, as if his face made of steel, and his body protected by the armour.

“Before the moment this armour appeared, had there been anything in your life that could have been traumatizing?” I asked.

“There were a lot of fights in the family. My mother used to shield herself with me, so I was a buffer between her and my infuriated dad.”

“What seems to be covered with armour?”

“It’s as if I didn’t have the frontal part at all. Imagine a building, the front of which is ruined and crumbled completely. I feel like I have left my body. By the way, I have been having these dreams that I lost my head since I was a child.”

“Fortunately, a human body is not a building of lifeless bricks: we have a process of regeneration. Observe what is happening.”

In the mind of Nikolai, the following static picture appeared. His father is sitting in an armchair as some sort of shapeless mass in front of him, Nikolai is tense, and everything in the picture is motionless. Nikolai is “frozen” with his fear. At the level of his solar plexus, there is a big and completely empty sack.

The further process consisted in coming out of this state of being stuck and being outside your own body. As you know, there is an expression “to throw somebody off his stride,” and it looks like exactly what happened with Nikolai.

Very gradually, while keeping the attention on the motionless scene, it started to “unfreeze” and “melt.”

³⁵ The session took place in Moscow in 2012.

I helped Nikolai with the words of support: life has changed, nobody is fighting right now, and he is a grown-up person with a lot of experience. I asked him to observe how his new experience (the experience of defending his dignity and the experience of communication) was coming from the space, from his head into the reservoir at the level of his solar plexus and stomach (where he used to feel emptiness).

Everything bad, that got inside, went away through the face and eyes.

Alongside with the changes inside, Nikolai's self-image changed too.

The initial state of the frozen pain, hidden rage, the fear of emotional expression, and protective tension transformed into a new state of freedom, peace, and being filled with new knowledge and strength.

In a new state, it became easier to imagine and then learn what adequate communication with people is like³⁶.

Bold 90-s

A constructive drawing of a person, which we have described earlier, brings out the issues that influence the overall state of a person. Even if an issue does not produce a direct influence on the speech, it can interfere.

Unwanted generation

In the class which took place on August 13, 2011, in Moscow, there were Elena, a saxophone player; Ilya, an architect; and Denis, who worked on television. All of them are people who grew up in the 90-s.

In Elena's drawing, the neck was drawn as a triangle with its vertex looking up. This is a sign of offence. Her favourite instrument, saxophone, fell through into her soul as if it was a black hole. It is a dead-weight burden at the bottom of this hole. When Elena graduated from music academy and she was eager to begin growing professionally. To her great disappointment, her skills and instrument were not in demand. It was very difficult for her to overcome frustration. Even now, there is a sad joke: "If you are a student of a Conservatory, make sure that you have a spot in the underground to be able to earn money." Back then, Elena had to live this joke.

In the drawing of Ilya, the architect, there is a triangular head with the vertex looking downwards, and a neck, a large circular body. Arms and legs are long; arms are lifted above the line of the horizon and have fists made of circles. This is a contour of anger, and a reflection of a similar story of frustration, disappointment, and pain. The only difference is that there is more rage in Ilya's reaction. Instead of developing ideas of improving architectural space, Ilya became a civil servant in an architectural bureau with 90-year-old grannies doing tedious paperwork. It seems that someone is intentionally dragging him into humdrum. Ilya changed jobs six times, but the result is always the same: nobody needed his ideas. As for sensations: walls of a building (at the level of the chest) seem to have fallen apart into a deep mine.

³⁶ This session took place in Moscow on February 6 2012.

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