

A Map to help make sense of our Inner Psychological World

The following are some central concepts to assist an understanding and to enable you to begin to map your inner psychological life

Primary Processes:

Primary Processes include everything connected with one's personal identity: Who I am; how I describe myself; what I do; what I like, what I have. How I would complete the following open ended sentences indicates a primary process. I am.... I do.... I have.... I see myself.... I know.... I love.... etc.

For example; I am a student studying in DCU, I am a final year undergraduate and I am from Galway. I have two brothers and a sister and I love football. Primary processes are experiences that one is familiar with, that one knows and that one is comfortable with.

Secondary Processes:

These are experiences we do not perceive as belonging to our personal identity. They are experiences we deny, reject, avoid, and/or repress. They are experiences we struggle with, that disturb/annoy us or that attracts us. They are feelings we don't like to have, what are upsetting in relationships or what we do not like about ourselves.

Edges:

The term “edge” means quite literally the edge of one’s primary identity beyond which one feels one cannot go. For example ‘I cannot give presentations; I just feel I can’t do it’.

The edge is the experience of not being able to do something, being limited or hindered in some way, feeling blocked and stuck. Structurally speaking, the edge separates the primary from the secondary process, and where often there is a set of rules, judgements and/or a belief system operating. It’s the limit of what we believe we can do, feel and tell. It’s the boundary of our own known identity.

On one side of the edge is the way in which we normally identify ourselves (primary processes) and on the other side are the numerous and unknown aspects of our experiences and potentials (secondary processes).

Working at and around the edge terrain is an important aspect of personal development. If we can work effectively with edges, the primary and secondary processes come into relationship with each other. If we are unable to notice edges the process may cycle endlessly.

Working on the edge:

The following are some ideas on how to work on the edge, remembering that the important thing is not necessarily to go over the edge but rather to be aware of it.

- Stay as best you can with the edge, observe, notice, acknowledge and investigate it.
- Notice if there is a thinking pattern, a belief or a feeling that holds you back.

- Ask yourself what have you against a particular process.
- Think of someone encouraging, supportive and willing to help (real).
What would they say or do?
- Visualise about what would happen if you went over the edge.
- Make a story that reflects the entire conflict you are in.
- Try to appreciate yourself as best you can for where you are.
- Find a pattern of thinking that assists you negotiate this edge.
- Seek advice by consulting an inner or outer wise person/figure.
- Deal with the inner Judge/Critic
 - Identify the Critic (what is it saying, is it a feeling?)
 - Do you want to get rid of it?
 - Do you want to transform it?
 - Are there parts you want to keep?
 - Are there parts you want to change?
- Using appropriate humour sometimes can help working on the edge.
- Make a realistic and doable plan to navigate the edge: Break the plan down into a number of smaller steps, or just jump in, or get more information and support to negotiate the edge.

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