

Accessing the ‘True’ Self in IFS and in Life: ¹ A technical white paper of autobiographical exploration, with links to key sources

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– Exploring subtle practices for insight, foresight, and well-being –

Abstract

This is a peer review draft of an autobiographically technical white paper describing my personal journey with Internal Family Systems (IFS) work; specifically, how I sought to resolve an experiential ambiguity between what, in IFS, is called the ‘true’ Self and a Self-like part.

The resolution I found is embodied in the teaching of Loch Kelly, a prolific IFS therapist, whose “Effortless Mindfulness” approach involves the realization what he calls “Self-essence.” *Self-essence* is the way we experience Self with awake awareness. It is the core of who we all are, even when we don’t consciously realize it. In his peer review of an early draft of this paper, Kelly added that: “Self-essence is the foundation that expresses as Self-energy, which empowers living from Self-leadership – Open-hearted Awareness, also called Bodhicitta² or Turiyatitta.³ Kelly teaches that learning to behaviorally abide in this inwardly spacious and pervasive awareness in everyday life typically needs to involve a step-by-step process of doing many guided “mindful glimpses;” these aid in learning how to let go of egoic, parts-based conceptualization, and open into experiential realization of “heart-mind awareness of Self-essence” that is beyond conceptual understanding.

The narrative of this white paper begins with a personal foreword that positions my quest as the fulfillment of a personal destiny. It moves through: a) my entry into learning how to do IFS from the work of Jay Earley and Bonnie Weiss; b) learning, via a practice partnership with Neda Navab, that my IFS work was suffering from not being able to experientially distinguish between ‘true’ Self and a Self-like part; c) learning about the work of Loch Kelly, which by exploring in depth, I successfully fulfilled my quest for experiential clarity about “true” Self vs. “self-like part”; and d) writing the narrative of this white paper, in which I assess the

¹ This white paper is dedicated to my daughter, Alison Davis, and granddaughter, Alena Davis, both of which are accomplished IFS therapists.

² In [Bodhicitta: The Excellence of Awakened Heart](#), Pema Chödrön explains: “*Chitta* means ‘mind’ and also ‘heart’ or ‘attitude.’ *Bodhi* means ‘awake,’ ‘enlightened,’ or ‘completely open’.”

³ In [The Book of Enlightenment](#), Anandi explains: “Turiyatitta means beyond turiya ... denoting the ontological foundation of turiya, the transcendental space upon which turiya dwells.”

I personally consider this profound level of subtlety to lie beyond the intended scope of this white paper; but to honor both Kelly’s choice in pointing it out and my own greatly deepened understanding of consciousness based on it, I encourage sincere spiritual seekers to consider the rest of the Anandi’s discourse about Turiyatitta not quoted here. It can be read by clicking on the above link..

contributions of IFS founder, Richard Schwartz with those of Loch Kelly and Jay Earley toward this end; with a curated listing of links to Kelly's work that I personally found most useful.

The paper is capped on page 17 with a list of summary conclusions from Draft Version One, leading to a bit of additional autobiographical narrative unique to Draft Version Two. It ends with a Concluding Assessment on page 21, in which I reflect on the "bottom line" value of this white paper for its intended audience; followed by a brief set of questions for evaluative feedback by peer reviewers.

Please note that, although this writing was undertaken for my own purposes – part of which is to be a chapter in a memoir that I am intermittently working on – my intended public audiences are primarily *IFS practitioners* who may not know about Loch Kelly's work, and secondarily *people who are new to IFS*. For this reason, I include many linked sources and occasionally lengthy quotations. Although a few reviewers of Draft Version One said they found this a bit off-putting, others appreciated how it eases access to key sources for digging deeper. However, I need to emphasize that for the most part you can understand the paper *without* actually clicking on these linked sources.

Also, please note that I cite various pre-publication draft versions of this working paper in order to make clear my step-by-step progress in experientially achieving the goal of my inquiry: clarity about 'true' Self vs. Self-like part in IFS and in Life. In a post-review draft for publication, I anticipate editing this out, as well as much of the autobiographically personal material.

Finally, some readers may be interested to know that this document is proving to be a very valuable reference handbook for myself; one that I find myself going back to repeatedly in order to deepen and integrate my understanding of the new paradigm described here for accessing the 'true Self' in IFS and in life.

Personal Foreword

An Initiatory Experience about "Home." On a pleasant summer's day in about 1942, when I was four or five years old, I was aimlessly lying on my back in a grassy pasture on the family farm in Kansas. I guess I was daydreaming while looking at the sky with a few puffy clouds scattered here and there, when suddenly I heard a distinct voice saying out loud, "This is where home is!"

Startled, I immediately sat up and looked around to see who had said that, but there was no one to be seen. Evidently the source of the voice had somehow been within myself, which I found very confusing, since I had no idea how a loud voice from inside could even happen.

Nor did I have any idea about the meaning of what the voice said. Did it mean that there was a different "home" than where I was living with my family? Maybe somewhere up in the clouds, like outer space as though I was, somehow, not a normal human?

Over the years, as I have studied numerous psychospiritual doctrines, I have oftentimes recalled this experience, wondering if I would ever get intuitive closure on what the voice actually meant. Recently though, I did.

During the second time I carefully listened to an introductory interview/lecture by Loch Kelly on “Access and Living from Self” [described on page 7], I got a flash intuition that the “Self-essence” that Kelly was describing might well be the “home” that I was initially alerted to by the unseen voice. Later, I found that Kelly himself, has referred to his concept of Self-essence in this precise way.

Introduction

Internal Family Systems (IFS) is a relatively new approach to psychotherapy. If not familiar with it, the essential details about IFS are contained in a brief overview, [Evolution of The Internal Family Systems Model by Dr. Richard Schwartz, Ph. D.](#)

Based on the recommendation of my daughter, Alison Davis, who uses the IFS approach to good advantage in her [counseling practice](#), I undertook to learn to use the IFS approach for myself, using a book that she recommended: [Self-Therapy: A Step-By-Step Guide to Creating Wholeness and Healing Your Inner Child Using IFS, A New, Cutting-Edge Psychotherapy, 2nd Edition](#), by [Jay Earley](#), plus other practice aids that Earley’s [website](#) makes available.

When it became evident that IFS work was more subtle than I could experientially grasp from Earley’s book and practice aids alone, I undertook to take two recorded [online courses](#) by Jay and his wife, [Bonnie Weiss](#) – first, a basic one, focusing on what in IFS work are called “protector parts;” and then a more advanced one focusing on “exile parts.” To do these recorded courses requires that you have a practice partner, which I did not have. So, I was very grateful when Bonnie, who teaches both of these courses as a live, real-time experience, generously referred me to Neda Navab, who had completed both of these live courses with her, as a possible practice partner for me.

During this time, I was experiencing a repeated problem in my sessions with the psychotherapist I was seeing weekly to resolve certain subconscious sources of motivation that have not served me well during my entire life. The problem was this: At the therapist’s suggestion, I would encounter deeply embedded painful feelings associated with what we were working on. When the pain of doing so caused me to shift from feeling to thinking about ways to make sense of what we were doing, the therapist would repeatedly insist that I go back into feeling. And, when I did, the only thing I could validly feel was that of being blocked. I then essentially felt shame for not being able to accomplish what I was instructed to do.

Side Bar on Accessing and Healing an Exile

From pages 178-179 of *Self-Therapy: A Step-By-Step Guide*
To Creating Wholeness and Healing Your Inner Child Using IFS, by Jay Earley

Being Allowed In

Getting Permission to Work with an Exile

The only reason a protector is active is that an exile is in pain; that is, protectors take on extreme roles in order to protect us from the pain of exiles. They are often reluctant for us to contact exiles because they fear that we will be overwhelmed by this pain. A central principle in IFS is: *We don't work with an exile until we have permission from any protectors that might object.* If you violate this principle, protectors are likely to interrupt your work with the exile. Their job is to make sure that you don't ever have to be in touch with the pain that the exile is holding. Consequently, if you try to dive in, you can antagonize these lions guarding the gate, and they will assail you with defenses like sleepiness, intellectualizing, distractions, dissociation, or anger, which will derail your work with the exile. This chapter explains how to get permission to enter the land of the exiles. It reveals what to do if a protector refuses to let you pass and how to reassure it so it will open the gate and let you enter.

Steps in Healing an Exile

In Part I, you learned the five steps in getting to know a protector. These same five steps also apply to getting to know an exile, although they are handled somewhat differently. The getting-to-know-a-protector steps are labeled P1-P5 and the getting-to-know-an-exile steps E1-E5.

Here is the entire sequence of steps for the IFS process. They generally happen in sequence, but there are times when they naturally need to occur in a somewhat different order.

1. Getting to know a protector
 - P1: Accessing a part
 - P2: Unblending from the target part
 - P3: Unblending from a concerned part
 - P4: Discovering a protector's positive intent
 - P5: Developing a trusting relationship with a protector
2. Getting permission to work with an exile
3. Getting to know an exile
 - E1: Accessing an exile
 - E2: Unblending from an exile
 - E3: Unblending from a concerned part
 - E4: Learning about an exile
 - E5: Developing a trusting relationship with an exile
4. Accessing and witnessing childhood memories
5. Reparenting an exile
6. Retrieving an exile
7. Unburdening an exile
8. Transforming a protector

When I got far enough in my course-based re-reading of Earley's IFS *Self-Therapy* book to encounter the material reproduced in the sidebar, I discovered that—rather than unwillingness on my part—what I was experiencing was probably the dissociative action of a “protector” who

had not been suitably recruited into the therapeutic process, and was blocking my ability to deeply feel painful memories, as described in the sidebar, which should be read before continuing.

When I realized this, I took a furlough from my weekly psychotherapy sessions, shifting instead to IFS self-therapy work with my new practice partner. As this autobiographical white paper makes clear, this shift has opened me up to a whole new paradigm for integral self-improvement and understanding about the nature of the “true Self” as distinguished from a “Self-like part” in IFS and in life.

Self-like Parts: The problem that forms the keynote of this white paper

It turns out that Neda was not only a good practice partner for learning to do IFS successfully, she also proved herself to be a fount of related referrals to other useful sources, both IFS and other.

The first key IFS referral I got from Neda was to [Volume Two](#) in Jay Earley’s Self-Therapy series; and specifically to its Chapter 8, on “Recognizing Self-like Parts,” i.e., subpersonality parts that have many of the qualities of the capital S “Self” of IFS, but still have an agenda of their own and opinions; for example, that they are the IFS Self.⁴

This often prevents IFS work from proceeding satisfactorily because protector parts may not trust the manipulative part that is not true Self. To prevent this from happening, Earley’s writing emphasizes the importance of a brief pre-session meditation to calm the mind and to make sure you are in a state of compassion, free of any judgmental feelings about any “parts” that take over the “seat of consciousness,” and make it seem as though they are the identity you call your Self.⁵

But in spite of repeated attempts in both IFS sessions and in meditation, I found it difficult to realize any experiential difference between “Self that is not a part” and “Self-like part” when doing IFS, myself. This ambiguity was heightened by two other sources I had recently dipped deeply into, both of which more or less hold that a singular Self view is an illusion:

1. The essential Buddhist theory and mindfulness meditation practice as taught [by Bhikkhu Anālayo](#), which holds that ultimate reality is pure awareness, with no singular Self to be found at the core of one’s being.

⁴ If not familiar with how the Self is viewed in IFS, please see the overview by Richard Schwartz linked above on page 3, especially its concise definition, and why being in true Self-identity is so central to IFS work.

⁵ An IFS therapist reviewer said “In the side bar [shown on page 4] there is no mention of Self either at first when unblending, in the middle to know exile, or at the end. So, most IFS therapy is actually done by parts similar to most other parts-based therapies. My Level 1 training leader said, ‘Self can’t be talked about in words, so you can just read the half-page in the manual on Self.’ It was not taught about, let alone given ways to distinguish it from Self-like parts which most IFS therapists do therapy from.”

2. The recent book, [*Your Symphony of Selves: Discover and Understand Who We Are*](#), by James Fadiman and Jordan Gruber, which has as its central proposition that the prevailing “Single Self Assumption” embodied in the ethos of western culture is deficient, and needs to be replaced by conscious recognition of our many selves within and how they can be used productively. These authors explicitly reject the singular primacy of a central Self, *as held in IFS* and similar therapeutic models.⁶

Thus, it seemed reasonable to seek alternative approaches to the understandings of Self in conventional IFS Self-therapy training.

Somatic IFS

At about this time, my practice partner, Neda Navab, suggested that we try a new approach she had recently heard about: [*Somatic Internal Family Systems Therapy: Awareness, Breath, Resonance, Movement, and Touch in Practice*](#), by [Susan McConnell](#). So, we both got the book and followed its protocol strictly for a few sessions. Our experience of the Somatic IFS approach, with its heightened attention to bodily based sensations, proved very useful in helping us to be aware of all types of feelings. Thus, we continue to use an *ad lib* version of its protocol in our IFS practice partnership, finding it of great help to focus on bodily-based feelings whenever stuck.

But, Somatic IFS didn’t offer any additional insight to help resolve my experiential ambiguity between Self vs. Self-like part when doing IFS work, so I continued the inquiry that this white paper documents.

Effortless Mindfulness and Self-Essence

Then, in yet another key referral, Neda indicated that [Loch Kelly](#), a radical meditation teacher and IFS therapist from whom she initially learned about IFS, was soon to be offering a day-long online workshop on “Access and Living from Self,” and that I should watch an introductory interview/lecture, “Loch Kelly Accessing Self,” available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwNxK01BfHM>.

A description of this 55 minute recorded presentation by IFS therapist and [IFSCA](#) Founder, [Derek Scott](#), as carried on the Youtube site, is as follows:

In this remarkable video Loch Kelly opens by describing his background in the Wisdom Traditions as well as various schools of psychotherapy. He recounts his first shift into Self-essence and his initial meeting with Dick Schwartz that led to their co-facilitation of Spirituality retreats. Loch discusses Self-Essence from which arises Self-Energy and then Self-Leadership and describes the “11 i’s” of Self-Essence. He names common Self-like parts which are often “transitional parts” as we seek to embody more Self-energy and offers ways

⁶ Draft Version 1 of this white paper carried an extensive quote from pp. 334-336 of this book that may be of particular interests to IFS therapists interested in Self-theory. I removed it for Version 2 due to feedback that it impeded the flow and was not itself essential to the thrust of the narrative.

to help them separate out from "pretending to be you". Loch invites us to consider where we are aware from to help us find the "awake space". He offers ways for us to know ourselves as "essentially human". The conversation closes with an understanding of the role of empathy in the therapeutic encounter. This video is very rich and worth visiting a few times as different parts may hear different things at different times. Loch is clear that these teachings invite a shift in our identity to the embodied Self which he describes here, "Self is that which has the capacity to bear that which is unbearable."

Website: <https://lochkelly.org/>; YouTube Channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQTIKxfVk5o6B5SvbyYdSZQz>

After watching this presentation several times - as well as a few of the many videos that Kelly's [Youtube channel](#) offers,⁷ it became clear to me that Loch Kelly's approach offers a plausible way to gain experiential access to a "True Self" level of awareness that would clarify the ambiguity about Self vs. Self-like part in IFS I had been seeking. Also, surprisingly, that this level of awareness could be the "home" that was meant by the voice I heard as a small boy (described in the Foreword).

So, I decided to enroll in Kelly's day-long workshop.⁸

A major realization I got from this workshop was that the style of teaching it involved would not enable me to make the transformative shift that Kelly's approach claims to be all about, and that I am not unique in this regard.

The Key Role of Mindful Glimpse Exercises

In answer to a question that I posed during the workshop, Loch Kelly stated that, for most people, the best way to master what he is teaching is by way of frequent use of what he calls "mindful glimpse" exercises. These are like guided micro-meditations, structured in different ways to fit different types of learners, all of which are an invitation to pause and shift your awareness, for at least a brief time, to a new level of consciousness and a taste of Self-essence that is beyond conceptual understanding; Kelly states on pp 93-94 of [The Way of Effortless Mindfulness](#) (2019 - his most recent book):

"In mindful glimpses, unhooking awareness has to be fast and direct so that awareness can detach from thinking; otherwise, you might simply be using attention. In mindful glimpses, we

⁷ As I was writing this narrative a month later, I found the 37 minute Youtube video: "[A Glimpse of Flow Consciousness by Loch Kelly](#)," to be a more easily grasped introduction of Loch Kelly and his "Effortless Mindfulness" work than the longer interview/lecture cited above.

⁸ Links to a two-part video recording of the "Access and Living from Self," January 23, 2021 online workshop with Loch Kelly are:

Part One: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdEGsVokgRI&list=PL7vcYgC52ZjYIRBr1LhFzE-Wb9i3FhABL&index=1&t=284s> (2:02);

Part Two: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQcpO3fyYa8&list=PL7vcYgC52ZjYIRBr1LhFzE-Wb9i3FhABL&index=2&t=3s> (2:20).

don't rely on attention, concentration, will power, imagination, or thought. We move local awareness into awake awareness as if it were air into air. Instead of a pebble being tossed into a pond, it feels like a drop of water merging with a body of water. That's how we move from a small part of you to pursue from awake awareness."

For me, his best brief online experiential demonstration of mindful glimpses is the 15 minute Youtube video, "[How to Shift from Head to Heart](#)." Two others are: "[Glimpses of Awake Awareness](#)" (13 min.), and "[A Glimpse of Flow Consciousness by Loch Kelly](#)" (37 min.)

By doing "*many glimpses, many times*," Loch asserts that we can "train to remain" and gradually transform our neural networks to enable the abiding of effortless awake awareness in the midst of normal life activities.

A Personal Sidebar on Addiction to Thinking

As I was proof-reading the above sections, I was stunned by an insight that occurred when I mindfully grokked Kelly's statement that:

"In mindful glimpses, we don't rely on attention, concentration, will power, imagination, or thought. We move local awareness into awake awareness as if it were air into air."

The insight I got was that I have been trying to do mindful glimpse exercises, *imagining* the reality of what Loch is describing, rather than just "letting be" – even when it seems like nothing he describes is happening. This insight immediately brought to mind a witty comment that Bonnie Weiss made when I sought her advice regarding my experiential ambiguity regarding Self-like parts and a Self that is not a part.

Bonnie asked me if I was familiar with the [Enneagram](#) model of personal character types. When I said that I was, she laughed and said, "Well, I imagine that you certainly are, because you are a perfect Five." (This type is called [THE INVESTIGATOR](#) — an intensely cerebral type of person who, in Bonnie's experience, frequently has problems with IFS due to over-thinking, rather than just trusting the process, letting things unfold as they may.)

Bonnie's insight also led me to intuit that the whole inquiry quest being described here is an exercise done from a Self-like part. However, although I have not yet been able to experientially realize the full heart-mind awake awareness that Kelly describes as being our true Self, I am pleased to note that this quest has already led to a vast improvement in my personal IFS Self-therapy work.

I initially assumed that Loch Kelly's most recent 2019 book would be the best resource for learning his system, and for guided glimpse exercises. But when I asked him about this in the workshop, Loch responded that although the mindful glimpse exercises in the book are only available in printed form, readers are encouraged to record them on their own. He then added that he has a variety of recorded glimpse exercises available on Youtube.⁹

For some reason, Loch did not mention that there are also audio recordings of his books that include embedded mindful glimpse exercises. Here, based on my admittedly limited experience, is a curated commentary about the usefulness of each:

Recommended Sources for both Effortless Mindfulness Theory and Mindful Glimpse Guided Exercises

1. [Effortless Mindfulness Now: Awakening Our Natural Capacity for Focus, Freedom, and Joy](#) (2017). Narrated by Loch Kelly, this is available only as an audiobook, and I found it to be both the easiest and the most enjoyable way to grasp the whole of Kelly's model. It balances the cognitive with the experiential in an integrative way, and I loved how particular mindful glimpse exercises were chosen to illustrate the specific points being made in the narrative.¹⁰

Please note that after this white paper was written, I discovered that Chapter 18 contains an eleven-minute set of steps very useful for triggering a shift into integrative Self-awareness. A personal recording of it is embedded here for convenience.

Please click on the icon to listen:



2. [Shift into Freedom: A Training in the Science and Practice of Open-Hearted Awareness](#) (2015). This is an audiobook with each chapter being a voice recording of a specific mindful glimpse exercise carried in the unabridged written version noted next. Many of these mindful glimpse exercises are also included in the next two items. Due to the usefulness of seeing all of these exercises listed on one page, and being able to then mark the ones that work best for you, I have listed all of them in an Appendix, curated with *** for those that Neda Navab and I judged most useful to us.

⁹ Loch Kelly's Youtube channel is: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQTIKxfVvK5o6B5SvYdSZQ>.

¹⁰ Given the similarity of this audio book's structure to Loch Kelly's most recent (2019) printed book, *The Way of Effortless Mindfulness*, plus the fact that it is available only in audio form and Kelly's admission of life-long suffering from both dyslexia and ADHD, during which his books are created, I conjecture that Kelly used his narration of the 2017 *Effortless Mindfulness Now* audiobook as essentially a working draft for his written 2019 book *The Way of Effortless Mindfulness* (listed last in this curated list).

3. [Shift into Freedom: The Science and Practice of Open-Hearted Awareness](#) (2015). This is available, both as an unabridged paperback, a Kindle digital version, and an audio book, narrated by Kelly. However, due to the usefulness of other offerings listed below, I have not accessed the printed version of this book.
4. [The Way of Effortless Mindfulness: A Revolutionary Guide for Living an Awakened Life](#) (2019). This is Kelly's most recent book, on which his "Access and Living from Self" workshop was purportedly based. Although it is available in audiobook form, it is narrated by a different speaker whose voice does not, for me, embody the transmission of intelligent energy that Loch's own voice carries. So, although the printed version of this book has become my standard reference for *studying* Loch Kelly's work, it is not what I use for guided mindful glimpses.

As a concluding summary of this section on Recommended Sources:

- The audio-only presentation of *Effortless Mindfulness Now* is my preferred resource for experientially learning Kelly's whole system due to the way it interweaves his mindful glimpse exercises with the narrative of the main text;
- My preferred vehicle for repetitive practice of specific glimpse exercises is the *Shift into Freedom Training* audiobook; and
- *The Way of Effortless Mindfulness* paperback, is what I repeatedly go back to for reference.

As an additional recommendation, Loch Kelly, in his review of my first draft, suggested Tammy Sollenberger's [The One Inside: An Internal Family Systems \(IFS\) podcast](#), and the interview with him (<https://theoneinside.libsyn.com/ifs-and-self-with-loch-kelly>); plus a clip of the 7 minute meditation on un-blending the Self that it contains (<https://theoneinside.libsyn.com/ifs-and-what-if-there-was-no-problem-to-solve-meditation-with-loch-kelly>). *This interview is possibly Kelly's very best introduction of his work for IFS practitioners.*

Theory of Parts, Self and Self-like Part in IFS

We turn now from a focus on experiential learning of that which, by definition, is beyond cognitive understanding to a cognitive focus on the theoretic models through which Richard Schwartz, Jay Earley and Loch Kelly each propound their approaches, especially as regards true Self and Self-like parts.

To review, in the IFS therapeutic model developed by Richard Schwartz, what is called the ego personality, the psyche, or the small self, is an ecology of subpersonalities, a.k.a. "parts" who interact with each other and influence our thoughts and behaviors.

When a person has been hurt, humiliated, frightened, or shamed in the past, he or she will have parts that carry the emotions, memories, and sensations from those painful experiences. Other parts want to protect the egoic self from feeling these feelings by keeping them out of

conscious awareness. They try to keep vulnerable, needy parts locked in inner closets of the subconscious. These various parts are categorized as:

- Managers (These are protector parts, many of which try to protect by taking typically extreme roles.)
- Exiles (These are the hurt parts, usually storing traumatic memories, that are often repressed into the subconscious.)
- Firefighters (These are the parts that emerge in crisis and act strongly when exiles flood the Self with pain.)

The IFS Self and Self-like Part as viewed by Schwartz. In [Internal Family Systems Therapy, 2nd edition](#) published in 2020 by Richard C. Schwartz and Martha Sweezy, the Self in IFS is described in the following clips:

“Some spiritual teachings differentiate between a “higher Self” and a more mundane executive self, which Freud termed the ego. But our clinical experience using IFS argues against this dichotomy. What Freud called the ego is in our view a collection of manager parts. The Self of IFS interacts with parts and is also transcendent. As an entity, it is available to hear competing perspectives, to nurture, and to problem-solve. As a wave, it is one with the universe and other people as if, at that level, all waves overlap in ultimate commonality. Parts find the relationship with the Self incredibly reassuring, but to reap the benefits of being with their Self, they must first risk differentiating from and noticing the Self – a frightening prospect for many protectors. This shift in the person’s center of gravity and identity from parts and their burdens to essence (Self) signifies enlightenment in most spiritual traditions. When we see through the eyes of parts, the world looks very different than when we see through the eyes of the Self.

“The Self we find in IFS encompasses a strange and wonderful duality. In the [Introduction to the Internal Family Systems Model](#) (2001), I (RS) elaborated on the dual nature of the Self as either an active inner leader or an expansive, boundaryless state of mind. To comprehend this duality, think of light: quantum physics has demonstrated that the photons that make up light sometimes act like particles and sometimes like waves in a pool of water (Zohar, 1990).¹¹ Similarly, the Self can be experienced as either an “I” or an expansive sense of space and energy. For example, when we interact with our parts or with other people, the Self is a boundary individual, but when we are instead with our parts (or with other people) the experience of being in “Self” is expansive and inclusive – paradoxically, a kind of “no self” state of mind. As IFS therapists, our primary job is to help clients access both forms;

¹¹ Zohar, D. (1990). [The Quantum Self](#). The more recent (2017) book, [The Cosmic Hologram: Information at the Center of Creation](#) by Jude Currivan, is an even deeper source of empirical evidence supporting the conception of essential Self as having fundamentally quantum properties.

our secondary job is to get out of the way as our clients become healers of their own inner families” (p. 45).

Blending of parts with the Self. “We are all born with a Self. It does not develop through stages or borrow strength and wisdom from the therapist, and it cannot be damaged. It can, however, be excluded or overwhelmed by parts. We call this *blending*. When a part blends fully, we see the world through its eyes. When a part blends partially, it’s perspective influences us. When polarized parts blend, we live in the midst of an ongoing debate and have no peace of mind. But when parts unblend, the Self is immediately present and available. ... When the Self is differentiated from parts, people experience what we are calling a Self-led state of mind. ... The Self-led mind is self-righting and has plenty of room for all feelings, views, and parts. In addition, the Self is not a passive observer. Once parts differentiate, the Self is a compassionate, collaborative leader that can be active or still as needed. Though the Self has been known and named in spiritual traditions all around the world for centuries, and most of us can remember at least a few spacious moments of inner peace that denote the Self, *for many therapists it remains the most challenging concept of the IFS model*” (p. 43-45, emphasis added).

Self-like managers. “There is a certain kind of manager who is caretaking and solicitous. Managers like this can seem very much like the client’s Self. Since they are easily confused with the clients Self, we refer to these managers as *Self-like*. ... Since Self-like parts prefer to be in the driver’s seat, they often deny being a part at first, and don’t agree to unblend quickly. Lack of progress, especially when we believe the client has good access to Self and everything should be going well, may be a sign that a Self-like part is blended” (pp. 134-135).

“Probably the most common phenomenon that baffles beginners is the “Self-like” part, a manager who can appear to be the Self (and often looks like the person at his current age) but whose caretaking and kindness nevertheless includes an agenda of keeping exiles out of mind. Self-like parts often believe they are the Self and are oriented toward pleasing people in general as well as you, the therapist, in particular by complying with whatever they believe you want in order to get the client through the session with exiles undetected” (pp. 178-179).¹²

The above views of the Self in IFS by Schwartz seem clearly in line with those of Kelly, even though Schwartz does not point out or teach the pure awareness aspects of “Self-essence” that, as described below, is of central importance for Kelly.

¹² An IFS therapist reviewer said: “To teach how to access true Self is different from teaching how to access parts, especially Self-like parts; it requires Self-Essence to distinguish Self from what I call Empathic Subtle Energy or Caretaker, in a Self-like part that has normal human compassion, empathy and curiosity.”

The IFS Self and Self-like Part as viewed by Earley. Jay Earley's 2009 book, [*Self-Therapy: A Step-By-Step Guide to Creating Wholeness and Healing Your Inner Child Using IFS*](#) has a foreword written by Schwartz. Written some eight years after Schwarz published the first edition of his book introducing the IFS approach to a primarily professional audience, Earley wrote primarily for a lay audience rather than therapeutic professionals. Thus, it is understandable that he would not dwell overmuch on subtle distinctions such as Self vs. Self-like part, which he considers to be such an advanced topic that he treats it only in [*Self-Therapy, Vol. 2*](#), subtitled, *A Step -By-Step Guide to Advanced IFS Techniques for Working with Protectors*.

Similarly, Earley does not say much about accessing a "true" Self, other than that you should quiet yourself by some type of meditation, and make sure that you don't have any feelings other than compassionate curiosity when you undertake an IFS session, so as to ensure that your IFS work is done while in Self, rather than being blended with any protector or exile parts. For me, this was evidently not enough. I needed a deeper dive, such as Kelly provided with the experiential concept of "Self-essence," described below.¹³

The IFS Self and Self-like Part as viewed by Kelly. Loch Kelly has written an extensive, six-page narrative, "What is Self?", based on a conversation with Richard Schwartz. It is available online at <https://ifsc.ca/wp-content/uploads/What-is-Self-Loch-Kelly.pdf>.

A more concise summary is provided by page 144 of Kelly's book, *The Way of Effortless Mindfulness*:

"Just as it is possible to distinguish and know our parts as managers, exiles, and firefighters, we can learn to know three aspects of Self. Richard Schwartz divides Self into "Self-energy" and "Self-leadership," to which I've added "Self-essence."

- *Self-essence* is the way we experience Self with awake awareness – pure Self, the authentic fundamental nature of who we are: invisible, intelligent awake awareness.
- *Self-energy* is our Self knowing parts and other people, and experiencing from awareness-energy through being relational and connected.
- *Self-leadership* is grounded in Self-essence and Self-energy becoming full embodiment of open-hearted awareness, where we can live our daily life from."

Kelly expands each of these three aspects on pages 144-147:

FACET ONE - SELF-ESSENCE

¹³ As noted in the Abstract, what Kelly defines as Self-essence, and how to achieve a "heart-mind" experience of it, provided the specific "missing ingredient" I was searching for when I undertook the whole inquiry process described in this white paper. Thus, it was interesting to me that, in an online webinar by Jay Earley introducing his teaching about "Capacities," when I asked him about Self-essence in IFS Self-therapy, Jay said that "Although Essence is a key part of the [Diamond Approach](#) which we personally follow, it is not part of IFS."

“...Awake awareness is intelligence prior to thought that is invisible yet palpable. Self-essence is not found as either inside versus outside but is both spacious and pervasive, transcendent and imminent – everywhere, nowhere in particular, and very much here. Because it is wordless, and not a thing or an object, we might overlook it. Self-essence – invisible intelligent awareness – is our boundless ground.

“In my process of understanding and teaching Self-essence, I've come up with 11 I's to illustrate it:

Invisible	Intelligent	Innate
Is	Indestructible	Infinite
Immediate	Illumined	Inherent
Inspired	Ineffable.	

“Self-essence does not change or grow, it just is. Self-essence cannot be heard or destroyed. Self-essence is often difficult to see because we see from Self-essence. From Self-essence there is seen the whole without the feeling of a particular location of a seer. Self-essence is the foundation of all expressions of Self, although its subtlety is often not felt directly because it is so close, so invisible, and is not a state.

“Self-essence is not known as an object but knows itself first as awake awareness. It is unconditioned and is inherent within our conditioning and precedes energy: it is that from which energy arises. We can learn to let parts know that they are safe to give us more space or to step back to discover Self-essence. Self-essence is the transcendent clear light of awareness.¹⁴

FACET TWO - SELF-ENERGY

“Self-essence arises or comes into existence as energy. It is like the quantum field: Self-essence is an invisible source, prior to energy. In turn, Self-energy is both wave—flowing boundless dynamism with relational qualities—and particle—active, compassionate, embodied, and full of vitality. the waves and particles are made of the invisible potential of the quantum field of Self-essence.

“Self-energy is connected through the type of awake awareness we know as awareness-energy. It is how we feel the sense of interconnected relationship from Self to parts within us and with other people and all things around us. It is from Self-essence that Self-energy's natural qualities arise as creative energetic expressions. Self-energy is the healing light of liberation, as there is the capacity for movement, expression, and transformation.

“The qualities of Self-energy, or eight C's, created by Schwartz [as stated above] are:

¹⁴ I understand Kelly's conceptions of Self-essence to be congruent with Buddhist conceptions of the “empty-fullness” (Sūnyata) of Self, as laid out by [Bhikkhu Anālayo](#) and similar pundits.

Calm	Curiosity	Compassion
Confidence	Courage	Clarity
Connectedness	Creativity	

FACET THREE - SELF-LEADERSHIP

“Self is grounded in Self-essence, interconnected and related through Self-energy, and acts from Self-leadership. Self-leadership is the ability to create and relate from open-hearted awareness and heart-mind. With Self-leadership, we blend and shift the location of our identity from parts to Self. In Self-leadership, we can feel the spacious awareness of Self-essence and Self-energy’s dynamic aliveness, full embodiment, and the compassionate relationship to all parts and people. From Self-leadership, you can make choices while being free of the agenda of parts. Being in Self-leadership does not get rid of parts or reduce parts to a smoothie, but, as Dan Siegel¹⁵ says, it is more like a colorful fruit salad of parts.

“Schwartz’s nine Ps of Self-leadership are:

Patience	Persistence	Perspective
Presence	Pure Perception	Peace
Precision	Purpose	Playfulness

“In Self-leadership, we speak for parts rather than from parts. Self knows that all is well while also having the motivation to actively be part of the solutions in the world. Self-leadership operates from our compassionate, wise heart-mind connected to Self-essence, as if using Wi-Fi to bring personal information and memory files down from the office of our head to our new home in our heart-mind. Self-leadership feels grounded in Self-essence, feels itself within our body, and feels the parts with Self-energy as it looks out from the eyes of the heart to people and to the world with new motivation and vision for action. Self-leadership is simultaneously aware of all the dimensions of Self—our parts—and other people and the world. Self-leadership has the light of compassionate wisdom in action.”

Kelly’s Conceptual Foundations of Effortless Mindfulness

Earlier, on page 85 of *The Way of Effortless Mindfulness*, Loch Kelly distinguishes eight distinct types of awareness that aid experiential understanding of his conceptions, such as effortless mindfulness and open-hearted awareness.

¹⁵ Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain to Shape Who We Are*, 2nd ed., 2015, p. 199.

The first four types of awareness are related to small mind, small self, and deliberate mindfulness:

1. Attention
2. Self-awareness
3. Subtle energy awareness
4. Mindful awareness

These are followed by four types of awareness that are related to awareness-based mind, Self, and effortless mindfulness:

5. Awake awareness
6. Local awake awareness
7. Awake awareness-energy
8. Open-hearted awareness

Each of these eight types are treated in depth on pp. 85-91.

Then, as he opens the following chapter 6 (pp. 93 – 129), Kelly states “In this chapter (a practice book within a book!), I share mindful glimpses for each of the five foundations of effortless mindfulness we explored in chapter 3:

1. Awareness of awake awareness
2. Awake awareness as aware of itself
3. Awareness from awake awareness-energy
4. Awake awareness-energy embodied
5. Open-hearted awareness.”

My reason for listing each of the above distinctions, is to make clear how incredibly nuanced are the experiential distinctions involved in Kelly’s theory. But in doing so, I need to stress again how he urges the folly of trying to grasp them with the conceptual mind of the egoic self. To repeat: Kelly’s primary recommendation for the experiential accessing of these foundations is by way of a step-by-step series of mindful glimpses, each of which involves the stepping away from thinking and opening in various ways to a supra-mentally non-conceptual awareness-based knowing, which is prior to thought; what thought is made of.

Summary Conclusions from Draft Version 1.3

My primary conclusions from this stage of my inquiry were:

1. The writings on Self and Self-like part by Richard Schwartz, Jay Earley and Loch Kelly are all more or less synonymous at least as regards more superficial levels of consciousness. However, for an Enneagram Type 5 thinker like me, only the writings of Loch Kelly provided what I needed to experientially discern the transcendental level of Self-essence that is of central importance in his Effortless Mindfulness approach .
2. What Kelly defines as Self-essence, together with Self-energy and Self-leadership, and how to access a non-conceptual “heart-mind” experience of it/them, turned out to be the

specific “missing ingredient” I was searching for in order to resolve my sense of ambiguity between Self and Self-like part in IFS.

3. For most people, the best way to master what Kelly is teaching is frequent use of “mindful glimpse” exercises. These are like guided micro-meditations, structured in different ways to fit different types of learners; all of which are an invitation to pause and shift your awareness, for at least a brief time, to a new level of consciousness. By doing “*many glimpses, many times*,” Kelly asserts that you can “train to remain” and gradually transform your neural networks to abide in effortless awake awareness, even in the midst of normal life activities.
4. For me, Kelly’s best brief single online demonstration of mindful glimpses were the 15 minute Youtube video, “[How to Shift from Head to Heart](#).” Two others are: “[Glimpses of Awake Awareness](#)” (13 min.), and “[A Glimpse of Flow Consciousness by Loch Kelly](#) (37 min.)
5. I found that the way that *Effortless Mindfulness Now* interweaves Kelly’s mindful glimpse exercises with the teaching narrative of the main text, made this audio-only presentation—which I listened to while doing exercise machines and/or hiking—my preferred resource for experientially learning of Kelly’s whole system. As embedded on page 9 above, Chapter 18 of this book has, what for me, is the single best mindful glimpse for integrative Self-essence/energy/leadership. The *Shift into Freedom Training* audiobook, on the other hand, is my preferred source for repeated exploration of a broad range specific mindful glimpse exercises. For the reader’s convenience, the names of these glimpse exercises are listed in an Appendix below.
6. Although my own practice of “many glimpses, many times” has been spotty at best during the past several months while doing the research and writing of draft Ver. 1 of this autobiographical narrative, during this time I have experienced a gradual uptick in the success of my IFS self-therapy work, as well as an increase in *joie de vivre*.

Additional Narrative for Draft Version 2

The night after I finished the first draft version of this white paper, I had a dream that went lucid, such that I could use the creative flow-state of dream lucidity to either open into some issue I need insight about at this time, or into whatever I might choose to ask about.¹⁶

Almost immediately, what came to mind was not only awareness that my writing of this white paper was essentially done from a “Self-like part,” but awareness also that the enormous

¹⁶ My attainment of lucid dreaming fluency is described in a parallel white paper entitled [Lucid Dreaming as a Method of Approach for Exploring 'Levy's Premise'](#) (a premise that *reality is something we all co-dream up together*). Like this white paper, it contains an abundance of linked sources to assist people who want to learn more about lucid dreaming and related concepts.

investment of time and energy that I have put into the white paper was something of an egoically protective distraction from my doing of multiple daily mindful glimpses for experiential realization of Kelly's ideas about "true Self." But I also wanted to use this white paper as an intellectual birthday gift to my very bright granddaughter, Alena Davis, before using it elsewhere. Nevertheless, I was left with rather sad feelings of remorse that, by so doing, I had missed the gold ring in this initial cycle of this inquiry merry-go-round, i.e., I avoided experiential realization of self-essence/"true self" while pressing myself to finish this writing.

All this shifted after I had a spinal microsurgery on March 26, 2021, in which the principal anesthetic was Propofol. In my case, its after-effects turned out to be significantly psychedelic, enabling me to experience a bit of full samadhi in deeply centered meditation while these after-effects wore off.

Then, when I went to bed, I almost immediately fell into a lucid dream in which I asked "What would be most useful for me to experience at this time?"

The answer I got was "How to get into the experience of Self-essence as laid out by Loch Kelly." So, armed with the flow-state of dream lucidity that almost always brings useful answers to the questions asked of it, I mentally began what I was able to recall as the steps that he teaches for moving through *five levels of mind*, leading to Self-essence:

1. To start off, I "unhooked" from the thoughts and thinking that characterize the first level—egoic or "ordinary mind";
2. Next, to get into the second level of "subtle mind," I shifted to a focus on the part of me that was *watching* me think thoughts and perceive things through the senses, especially bodily sensations and emotional feelings, i.e., my perceiving self – mindfully experiencing this as a discrete level of consciousness.
3. Then, as I began to attempt a shift into a nonconceptual focus on the third level, "Spacious Awareness" of pure intelligence ... *SNAP!* ... Suddenly an endlessly spacious, totally non-physical domain of pure intelligence appeared and flooded me with the *feeling* of it as experientially real and available to me as me.
4. As I felt into the utter intelligence of it, I thought to ask, "Can I converse with you and get answers to questions I have?" In a non-verbally telepathic way, it answered, "Of course!"

I immediately *grokked*¹⁷ that this must be the paradigm shift to the non-conceptual domain of consciousness that Kelly *actually* meant by Self-Essence, Self-Energy and Self Leadership. And

¹⁷ Having a meaning that was itself originally beyond verbal definition, [Grok](#) is a wonderfully appropriate word for awake awareness of Self-essence/energy/leadership. It has come to more or less mean "to understand intuitively or by empathy; to establish rapport with and merge with; to blend so thoroughly that the observer becomes a part of the observed."

additionally, that this experience is what the premonitions mentioned in the Foreword pointed to.

I then asked for advice on “How best to get back here from ordinary states of consciousness?” It suggested that “I should look to things I already know.” Whereupon I mentally reviewed Loch Kelly’s teaching about mindful glimpses, with this newly successful “glimpse” as something to effortlessly experience again as I do other mindful glimpse exercises; and also visualizing methods I know on my own for getting back to advanced states of consciousness that are beyond that which verbally conceptual.

However, the seeking and getting answers to these questions re-opened the egoically conceptual/thinking part of me again, leading me to mentally reflect on things like: how the utterly non-physical “spacious awareness” domain seems to exist *beyond* the mind; and thus, how the term, “effortless *mindfulness* – although a good marketing hook for Loch Kelly’s teaching – feels like something of an oxymoronic phrase, because this domain is obviously *beyond* the mind.

Thus distracted, I did not think to lucidly continue on to the 4th and 5th levels at that time. But, with a bit of laughter, I concluded that there would be ample time to do that later; and letting go of such thoughts, I gently slipped into normal sleep.

The next day, as I was telling my partner, Janet Rowlett, about my post-surgery experience and of the exercise described above, I felt myself effortlessly slipping into the balanced heart-mind awake awareness of the 4th and 5th levels, and thus, felt that my whole “Self vs. Self-like part” inquiry could now be considered an experiential success.

After the above experience, I formed the intention to discover or create for myself:

How to trigger effortless relaxation into awake awareness of ‘true’ Self [heart-mind anchored Self-essence, Self-energy and Self-leadership] whenever needed.

Toward this end, I initially found the following items to synchronistically help me fulfill this intention:

- a) The elegant portrayal of the Self by [Harry Palmer](#) (author of the Avatar® courses that I did back in the 1990’s):
 - . *Awareness* is that which is without limitation.
 - . *Consciousness* is awareness projected into limitations.
 - . *The Self* is Aware Will.
- b) The experience of accessing Self-Essence/Energy/Leadership as described above on page 18, and by doing the mindful glimpse process contained in Chapter 18 of the Kelly’s audiobook, [Effortless Mindfulness Now](#), a recording of which I have embedded on page 9.

- c) An imaginal vision of balanced emotional maturity produced by my own [Imaginal ReVisioning](#)SM (IReV) process.¹⁸

In this instance, the IReV process enabled me to shift from an imaginal vision of myself as hopelessly depressed by a repeating, but unresolved problem with my partner; to a transformed vision of myself experientially feeling the emotional maturity of a balanced and fully integrated Self. At the end of this process, I “grounded” the [imaginal energy](#) of the transformational vision into all aspects of my being (physical, emotional, mental, motivational and spiritual).¹⁹ Subsequently, my partner and I were able to resolve the problem, and the transformed imaginal vision of myself has manifested in other ways as well – as for example, by us lovingly deciding that it would be good for both of us if I were to move into an independent living retirement community; which I have now done and am finding it an enormously freeing experience as am finishing this white paper and moving on to the memoir for which this writing will be a part.

- d) The “GAP” technique – an even simpler way to tap into pure awareness – put forward in the elegant book, [Pure Awareness: Five Simple Techniques for Experiencing Your Essential Nature](#), by Tom Stone.²⁰

By repeatedly reexperiencing the *feeling* associated with each of these three items (as in a mindful glimpse) and relaxing into the utter simplicity of awake awareness, my intention seems to have been fulfilled; bringing an occasional avalanche of flow-state experiences such as creative intuition, and access to discarnate Wisdom Sources; plus, other personal growth experiences that are beyond the scope of this narrative to cover, other than to simply mention the *joie de vivre* of connecting to the Holy Spirit of awake awareness.

An unexpected outcome of this flow-state creativity, was the following idea. Why not try the so-called “[Two-Chair](#)” technique²¹ to help me stay in ‘true Self’ with a difficult protector part that had resisted cooperation using the conventional IFS approach?

When I tried it, the formerly obstinate part was very cooperative and loved speaking with his own voice. He even suggested a new role for himself that was constructively non-extreme. In fact, this two-chair method worked so well that I anticipate using again by myself, and perhaps also trying it with an IFS practice partner.

¹⁸ A 14 page introductory white paper, [Shift-It! With the Transformative Power of Imaginal ReVisioning](#), describes the origin of this process, its underlying theory of how and why it works, and a variety of brief illustrative case examples.

¹⁹ A 27 minute video demonstrating my use of the full IReV process with an IFS practice partner, Lesley Anderson Blake, can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpNBTTuhO8M>.

²⁰ Please note that the online links, published in the book for audible guidance for each of the five techniques, are dead. I am therefore recording them myself. When done, I will post them online myself, and share the links here in the footnote in subsequent versions of this white paper.

²¹ A 10 minute video demonstrating the Two Chair technique can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6koIAANBFJE>.

Concluding Assessment

What is the bottom line of the experiential inquiry described here? What does it fundamentally mean — both for me, and for the two target audiences noted in the abstract: *IFS practitioners* who may not know about Loch Kelly’s work, and *people who are new to IFS*?

The best way I know to answer this question is by way of a concept called “internal” vs. “external” validity, although I’m sorry to introduce yet another bit of technical jargon in my answer.

In my doctoral training, my primary mentor — the renowned social research methodologist and philosopher of science, [Donald T. Campbell](#) — insisted that the assessment of new findings should always include both their internal and external validity. **Internal validity** refers to the degree to which — within the scope of the investigation — the causal relationship being tested is trustworthy and not influenced by other factors or variables. **External validity** refers to the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other situations, groups or events. These are often simplified as *rigor* vs. *vigor*.

I have zero doubt about the *internal validity* of Loch Kelly’s teaching about ‘true’ Self in IFS and in life; its thrust is consistent with the [Perennial Philosophy](#) that I highly trust, and it has opened flow-state access for me to a variety of subtle wisdom sources and insights that validate Kelly’s teaching. In short, it provides a satisfactory resolution to my quest re: Self vs. Self-like part in IFS and in life.

By way of ending, I feel it important to emphasize my understanding that once you have learned how to do conventional IFS successfully, it does demonstrably work — and work well — if you don’t get tripped up by a problem such as is the focus of this white paper.

Thus, it is my hope that this white paper shall not diminish the effectiveness of professional IFS teachers and therapists such as those named herein; that instead, it will be successful in calling attention to a new and more subtle “best practice” paradigm for IFS, that I submit is worthy of serious consideration.

I should transparently add, however, that I am not yet able to *reliably* remember to manifest “Self-essence/energy/leadership,” especially when emotionally triggered by something or somebody in life. Sometimes, yes, sometimes no — truly a work in process, just as are the working drafts of this white paper. As regards *external validity*, the generalization of my experience suggests that even compulsive thinkers can master the perplexing paradox of Kelly’s doctrine if they repeatedly relax into it with full intention, paying attention to what works for their own experience of Self. But Kelly’s “effortless mindfulness” approach may have little experiential applicability for people not interested in learning how make an actual “jump-step” to non-egoic and supra-conceptual Self- awareness as a way of being and doing in IFS and/or in life.

Afterword

In initial drafts, a second personal anecdote in the Foreword contained a story involving channeled material that, for me, positioned the cosmic importance of the intended message of

this white paper. Due to the advice of an early reviewer, I removed this story in order to avoid it being “off-putting” to scientifically-oriented psychotherapists for whom channeled information has little credibility, and who, thereby, would not even read further.

After living for some weeks with the deepened intuitive guidance of Self-essence, however, it has become clear to me that this story does, indeed, need to be included. Hence, this Afterword.

Dream Premonitions of Self-Essence work. About ten years ago in 2011, I had a perplexing series of almost identical dream experiences. Each of them involved a very intense experience about something that I was given to know was of utmost importance. But when I woke up, I had absolutely no memory of what it was that seemed so important. All that remained after each such dream was the awareness that the now forgotten dream had involved something vitally important that I should discover and pay attention to.

Being totally baffled about this repeated experience, I sought out the guidance of the gifted psychic sensitive [Kurt Leland](#), who channels a group of higher consciousness entities he calls “[Charles](#).” When I asked what meaning or significance the series of dream experiences noted above might have, Leland channeled Charles as indicating that for me to understand what these dreams are all about, I first needed to understand something of the cosmic context involved. To do this, Charles began by describing a sequence of ascending levels of “soul maturity” that human beings evolve through, ending with “...old soul, transcendent soul, and infinite soul.”²²

Charles then explained how cosmic guidance is often manifested initially as an urge from infinite-level entities, from whence it is translated into conceptually coherent imaginal thought-forms by entities at the transcendental-level (both those who are currently incarnated and those who are currently discarnate), and then transmitted on down to successively less advanced souls and the social processes they empower, finally entering the stormy seas of cultural emergence.

Charles further suggested that a communication mode, frequently used in this manifestation process, is one that involves the use of robot-like semi-conscious entities, called “elementals.” According to Charles, the elemental can be thought of as an instrument in subtle consciousness containing a recorded thought-form message that is addressed to a specific person – and that the messenger-elemental will keep on knocking on the psychic door [as in a dream] of the intended recipient until the message is received; after which the elemental simply dis-corporates, vanishing completely.

After getting this channeled information from Kurt Leland/Charles, I noticed that the frequency of this dream experience dwindled to, perhaps, one a month; and gradually, in meditation, I got a clear sense that the dream itself had to do with something of an educational nature, as

²² Afterwards, Kurt Leland told me that the sequence Charles described is essentially the same as that put forth in the so-called “[Michael Teachings](#),” which I learned more about from [The Michael Handbook: A Channeled System for Self-Understanding](#), by Jose Stevens and Simon Warlick-Smith.

though it was something new that I should teach. At this time, I had been retired from university teaching for about ten years, but was aware that I still missed teaching. And although I had no idea what the subject matter of such teaching might involve, I did have an inkling that it might have to do with the evolutionary “ascension” of consciousness – a concept I was experientially investigating at the time.

Soon thereafter, this particular type of dream experience virtually ceased, and I have had almost no thoughts about it for years, until the lucid awakening to a glimpse of Self-essence – described on page 19 – opened me into remembering what Charles had said in 2011 about this series of dreams; and triggering as well, an intuitive awareness that *the hidden message of these dreams was a premonition about the future need for publicized teaching of what this white paper is all about: Accessing your ‘True’ Self.*

Call for peer reviews

This is where working draft version 2.4 ends. Version 3.0 will reflect additional feedback from readers, especially professional peers. I am especially interested in learning:

- What you found confusing, and needing clarification
- What you liked most and/or found most helpful
- What you liked least and/or may have found of little value
- What you would like to see added, changed or removed
- If you would like to see an edited version be published, and if so, where?

Thank you!

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Appendix

List of mindful glimpse exercises in the audio version of Loch Kelly's [*Shift Into Freedom Training*](#) book

(Note: It is good to begin by listening to the author's narrative introduction at the beginning, and to the list of pointers given in Chapter 29 early on, not just at the end. The use of *** designates glimpse exercises that I and my practice partner found particularly useful.)

Chapters 1 and 2: Author's narrative introduction to the topic

3. No problem to solve
4. Awareness yoga
5. Four modes of expression of awake awareness: spacious awareness/presence (realization of non-duality)/open hearted awareness/local awareness
6. Glimpse: coming back to your senses
7. Glimpse: awareness following the breath home
8. Glimpse: awareness of space ****
9. Glimpse: awareness of awareness
10. Glimpse: making a U Turn ***
11. Glimpse: Unhook, drop, open, see, include, know, let be - brief explanation of five levels of mind
12. Glimpse series experiencing each of the five levels of mind
13. Open eyed meditation
14. Glimpse: panoramic awareness
15. Glimpse: effortless focus - ***
16. Glimpse: balanced awareness – leads to effortless awareness while doing other things in life ***
17. Glimpse: getting heart-mind online (stay... stay... stay...) ****
18. Glimpse: emotional freedom *****
19. Glimpse: Om sweet home in your heart
20. Glimpse: embodied presence
21. Glimpse: the now
22. Glimpse: infinite no self
23. Glimpse: open hearted connection ("Awake awareness has your back" - Tonglin) *****
24. Glimpse: the memory door
25. Glimpse: cave of the heart**
26. Glimpse: all parts are welcome
27. Glimpse: the four fields of the ground of being
28. Explore the four fields
29. Narrative list of pointers to help do glimpses throughout the day ***