



Session Three

From Personality to Presence

by Jane Douglas

From Personality to Presence

A huge welcome to your third session, I hope this finds you well!

This next session is all about exploring the personality traits on the outer layer of your soul map. Our aim this month is to develop awareness of the difference between life as experienced from the centre of your map, (as explored in last month's exercise), compared to how life feels when you are operating from the outer layer of your map.

There are three reasons why, in the early days, this difference is not easy to spot :

- Your traits have become so familiar to you that you have stopped noticing the effect they have on you. You have, like the rest of us, fallen asleep to the subtle tension and defensiveness they create, and the ways they block connection with your soul.
- You have become very attached to your traits. The outer layer of the map is often called the 'idealised self' or the 'ego' and we have invested a lot in this vision of how we like others to see us. In fact there are times when we tend to defend our traits fiercely. It is not impossible that you may even encounter some inner resistance to your practice! When this happens it is important to remember that you are not out to 'get rid of' your personality traits or your ego. That would be a pointless endeavour on many levels. Your job is simply to bring loving awareness to your conditioned traits, so that they naturally release their grip on you.
- Your traits have got you through some pretty tough times. They have helped you cope with life's ups and downs, and it is unlikely you would have survived without them. As far as you are concerned your strategies are successful, so why would you want to meddle with them? And of course on one level you are right.

This month is all about exploring your traits in terms of the impact they have on you. Even though you may not be aware of it, when you are acting out your habitual patterns of behaviour, your breathing becomes tight and muscles become armoured. You become tense and have negative feelings. At such times you are likely to think reactively, behave poorly and make bad decisions.

Eventually, your conditioned traits became ways of being that increasingly distanced you from the immediacy of life so that you gradually lost intimacy with it. The more you continue with these patterns, the smaller and more isolated you become. You experience what I think of as an 'inner shrivelling'. In the worst cases you become dogmatic, inflexible and self-protective, and you become a victim of fear, anger, distrust, and neediness. More commonly you lose your sense of delight in life and instead of feeling full, alive, and energetic you feel depleted, empty, and dissatisfied.

This is why, after years of living like this, so many of us begin to feel a dissatisfaction with life.

Loving awareness itself will release the 'efforting' that comes along with your traits allowing you to relax. Relaxation of the ego or the idealized self allows the joy of living to naturally arise. This process is sometimes called 'ego-relaxation' and this is primary intention of your work with the R.E.S.T. Practice. Loving awareness will continue to be the single most important thing you practice on this journey.

So, if you are ready let's begin exploring the outer layer of your soul map.

To begin you may need to re-acquaint yourself with your personality traits. I invite you to re-read the description of your personality in the short guide on this webpage. Spend some time hanging out with your map open in front of you, so you can gradually feel more familiar with what your map is describing.

Do not be discouraged if you do not recognise ALL the traits described on the outer layer of your map. It often takes some time to own all aspects of yourself.

Once you have read the description of your traits again, move on to the R.E.S.T. Practice for this month.

THE R.E.S.T. PRACTICE – MONTH THREE

RECOGNISE – THE INNER GAME

In this third session you are being asked to RECOGNISE any traits you have noticed cropping up in your day or week. It is very useful to have your map open in front of you for this. Just allow your gaze to drift over the outer layer of your map and choose ONE trait you have noticed. You can choose either a 'positive' or a 'negative' trait.

The question you are asking is;

“What trait have I noticed cropping up?”

RECOGNISE - THE OUTER GAME

The outer game of the RECOGNISE section of the R.E.S.T. Practice is about preparing the background of your page. This practice is both joyful and enriching and differs depending on whether you are mixed media or single media.

- You begin by adding Gesso to the page. As you apply Gesso stay connected to what you are doing in a mindful and conscious way, bring your awareness to the sensations of each movement. (Mixed media only)
- Next you are invited to place a circle or a mandala somewhere on your page. It is not an accident that your map is a circle nor that your soul is represented by a circle on your map. Both in nature and in psychology the circle is a meaningful symbol it is a powerful tool. I often use a stencil, but you could equally draw or paint a circle or a mandala. Placing a circle into the background of your page reminds you that your soul is always waiting for you to come home to yourself. (Mixed media and single media)
- When the Gesso is dry, add colour to your page. I highly recommend that you stick to the palette of colours on your soul map. I tend to use two or three colours only. Applying the colour can be done any way with any media you like. (Mixed media only)
- Finally you are asked to draw a border around your page. The border can be any thickness and can be drawn using straight lines, wavy lines, broken lines etc. (Mixed media and single media)

EXPLORE - THE INNER GAME

The inner game of the Explore section of the R.E.S.T. Practice asks to answer some coaching style questions. This stage of the practice calls on your natural curiosity and your desire to know truth, so it is important to stay open to all the questions, especially if they feel difficult!

As you recall the pattern you have noticed ask yourself..

- Where, when and with who does this traits tend to show up in my life?
 - Does this pattern ensure I am accepted, liked or get me approval?
 - How does this pattern keep me safe?
 - What does this pattern help me avoid? (Doing, Saying or Feeling?)
- Where does this trait create tension in my body?
- What do I experience in my body when I engage in this trait?
 - Does it clutter my mind, or 'numb' my mind?
 - Does it close my heart?
 - Does it mean I lose connection with my body?
- How is my experience of this trait different to my experience of the essential quality of my soul?

EXPLORE - THE OUTER GAME

The outer game of this section of the R.E.S.T. Practice invites you to 'free write' the answers to these questions in the body of your page, preferably avoiding writing in your border.

Your journal is a non-judgemental place therefore it is the perfect companion for free writing. Free writing is writing without editing or censoring yourself and without interrupting the continuous stream of awareness. Be unrestricted and unfettered, allow yourself to become absorbed.

SURRENDER – THE INNER GAME

In this step you are being asked to experience what you have just written in the Explore section. You are being asked to surrender and soften into your embodied experience by moving your awareness from your mind into your body.

Your awareness is invited to 'feel' without analysis or judgement, simply to allow what is happening to be exactly as it is. Some days your awareness will have a lot to notice, some days very little seems to be happening. That is fine, simply continue to surrender and allow your inner experience by simply repeating to yourself...

"I am willing to allow this experience to be as big as it wants to be."

SURRENDER - THE OUTER GAME

The outer game of the SURRENDER section is about doodling. Doodling is a wonderful way to surrender and soften to your inner experience because it takes your conscious mind 'off-line' and allows you to 'go with' rather than 'fight against' what is happening. Doodling is an antidote to inner resistance!

Your doodling does not have to consciously reflect your experience in anyway, you are not attempting to draw your feelings or your soul! This is simple mark making in whatever form it comes to you.

Sometimes I find myself scribbling with crayons like a child, sometimes I am less able to 'let go' and my doodling is more 'restrained.' Often my doodling escapes from the borders of my page and covers up my free-writing. There are no rules as to how to do this, no right way.

What always happens at this stage is after a while you notice that your doodling or scribbling seems to naturally slow and come to a stop and you find yourself coming to a space of deeper stillness.

This is the perfect space to lead you into the final step.

TRANSFORM – THE INNER GAME

As your practice develops you will come to think of this part of the R.E.S.T. Practice as a sacred conversation in which you are being guided to know the truth about yourself and your life. This step in the R.E.S.T. Practice is a form of deep listening, where you are literally listening into the stillness of your inner being. To assist with this inner listening you are invited to bring your awareness to the circular symbol of your soul that you placed on your page at the beginning of this practice whilst staying in full contact with your inner stillness. Here you are invited to ask your soul...

“What would you have me know/do/become?”

Do not force an answer, simply listen for any messages that emerge. To assist with your listening you are invited to use the selection of tissue paper ‘soul messages’ and images from your pack. Staying connected to the experience of your soul, flick through the images and words on the sheets and select those that seem to be ‘whispering’ to you. Sometimes you will be drawn to an image, sometimes words, sometimes both.

TRANSFORM - THE OUTER GAME

The outer game of this final stage is about collaging (gluing) the message and/or images onto your page. (Of course if you wish to write your own ‘soul message’ on your page, go ahead!)

Finally, you are invited to add further doodles and decoration to integrate your soul message. Integrating your message is about absorbing the wisdom of your soul. This stage is a chance to really relax into yourself, to come home to yourself. It is not uncommon for this stage to last hours!

My wish is that over time your pages quickly become a rich and valuable source of messages for you, precious objects that show you the way back to your soul when you most need it.

It is my profound wish that your practice and your pages walk you home.