



Healing IMAGES at the PERIPHERY of LIFE

Jaqueline Lapa Sussman, MS, LPC

WE HAVE OFTEN heard all the answers to our most important questions are inside us. We are told by all of the world's spiritual traditions that by following our truth, inner voice, or intuitive knowing, we can find within ourselves the answers to life's problems. And we know even when we seek advice from others, acceptance of their counsel must first be congruent with our own inner sense. Nevertheless, connecting to our innate knowing is difficult to attain at times, especially when we find ourselves in situations where we feel blocked, hopeless or trapped.

There is a method that offers us the ability to go within and literally see the situations that trouble us and gain answers to our problems that is completely accurate and totally personal. It is called Eidetic (I-det-ik) imaging. Eidetic images are bright, lively pictures seen in the mind's eye, much like a movie. They are accurate, clear visions of all of our life's experiences from birth to the present. Just as computers store information that can be retrieved at a later date, our brains store retrievable images of all the events of our lives. But, unlike the bits of cold data stored by a computer these holographic memories stored in our minds are coupled with the emotions we felt and the meanings we formed at the time of each original experience.

Eidetic images are not products of our imagination or a fantasy. They are actual three-dimensional records that are accurate, consistent and repeatable. They can be scanned for details and looked at for new emotional perspectives. Recalling these total sensory images provides us with the ability to explore any past or present person or situation in order to see our conflicts in a new light and to discover resolutions that are not possible through mere thinking or reasoning. In the course of viewing and reviewing our problems or conflicts through the images in our mind's eye, solutions seem to magically appear from a deep source within us.

Today, Dr. Akhter Ahsen is recognized as the originator of the field of Eidetic Image Psychology and is the leading theorist in the scientific and clinical study of mental imagery. As a result of his seminal studies, scientific research, numerous books and articles, this work is studied in universities all over the world and countless people have benefited from the practical applications he has developed. Even though the concept of Eidetic imaging harks back to the ancient Greeks, it is also at the cutting edge of modern image psychology, as developed by Dr. Ahsen. The ancient Greeks called Eidetic visions "The

Gifts of the Gods." They knew these images were the vehicles by which we can access the innate mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual strengths we each possess, but all too often lose in the process of coping with life's disappointments, hurts, and traumas.

We can use Eidetic Images in many situations to help us and especially so when we are feeling particularly hopeless, discouraged or blocked. When we can't see our way out, our images will bring forth answers that heal us. I would like to discuss a special Eidetic Imaging technique called "Peripheral Images," that allows us to find solutions for stuck emotional states by moving one's attention away from the center of the image.

Sometimes, when a person is viewing an Eidetic image of his or her specific hopeless situation, it may feel like there is no resolution in the picture. Dr. Ahsen discovered that by shifting one's focus from the center of the image (which typically contains the full thrust of the feeling of hopelessness) to its edge or periphery, a new infusion of healing energies regarding the nature of the hopeless situation can be accessed, which alleviates one's obstruction. It can be likened to moving to the top of a mountain to get a more panoramic view of a situation and in the process discover solutions.

The Peripheral Image exercise can be used in most situations by anyone to heal obstacles and desperate states, such as, in invigorating one's congested creative juices; resolving anxieties involving raising one's child; dealing with painful relationship problems; analyzing problems at work; or coping with a present or past trauma. The healing answers always arise from within the person, and are therefore congruent with one's natural energies and essential self.

The Story of Gladys

Gladys was in a relationship with Joe, whom she loved and wanted to marry. However, anytime Joe wanted to spend alone and intimate time with her for more than two days, Gladys felt claustrophobic and wanted to run away. She tried analyzing the problem but no rational explanation alleviated her strong desire to get away from her beau. She knew that in reality Joe was not a controlling, needy or demanding person. He gave Gladys the physical and temporal space she needed to be with her friends, travel alone, express all of her emotions freely, pursue her career and whatever else she needed. He deeply respected and valued her independent spirit.

Gladys came to me feeling perplexed and hopeless over the prospect that she would never be able to sustain intimacy with a man so that she could marry and have children. I asked her to see an image in her mind of being with Joe for longer than two days. She saw herself spending time with Joe, and as the third day approached, a terror of being trapped enveloped her entire body. This was a revelation to Gladys because prior to seeing the image, she could not identify the source of her need to bolt. As she examined the image more closely, a second Eidetic image suddenly appeared of Gladys growing up with her chronically ill sister. As a teenager, her father demanded Gladys spend most of her free time caring for her sister and disregard her own needs and desires. Her father apparently had no understanding for her wish to spend time with friends, to date boys, and to just be young and have fun.

Gladys had many fights with her father, but the guilt and weight of her sister's condition won out and she spent most of her time caring for her sister. As she reviewed this second image, Gladys realized the atmospheric feeling in her childhood home was depressed and heavy, and this was the exact same feeling that came over her when she spent time with Joe. She understood that during her youth she had associated deeply caring for someone with being trapped. However, even this new-found realization, which came through seeing the image, did not free Gladys from her need to run away. Simply understanding or knowing something often does not change nor alter the symptom one has.

I then asked Gladys to go to the periphery of the image of caring for her sister. She suddenly saw herself outside in the backyard. There was a sense of freedom and fresh air, which filled her lungs and invigorated her. Next, she went to the periphery of the image of the backyard and spontaneously saw herself floating on clouds. For the first time in a long time, Gladys felt free with an enduring sense of peace and endless spaciousness. The image was the polar opposite of feeling stifled and enclosed. As she deeply concentrated on the image imbued with the sense of freedom, peace and endless spaciousness, she realized the truth: in her soul, she was always free. Absorbing that knowledge deep within her being, Gladys then saw herself go back and interact with Joe with that same sense of spacious freedom, a profound part of her genuine spirit which she had lost. She saw that she had always been free and that she could get close to Joe and still have space as she desired. As a result of this realization, the need to bolt was no longer there. She understood that the power existed within her being, and not in the reactivation of her father's control from the past.

Susan's Story

Susan was feeling hopeless about her husband John's rages. She said, "When my husband gets frustrated about the house being too cluttered he starts yelling loudly, saying things like, 'I can't stand the way the house looks. Do something.' I want to say, 'Why can't you pick up after yourself? Look at all the clutter that is yours!' But, I know if I respond with the same angry energy, it will escalate into a huge argument, so I keep quiet. John will ultimately win. He will just out-yell me. So, I clam up. He eventually gets over it. But, I am left with feeling resent-

ful and frustrated. I then become passive aggressive and slam things down as I clean up and I get cold and distant. Even, if I speak more calmly, John still yells louder. So I feel hopeless about this."

I asked Susan to see an image of the situation to gain more clarity. She said, "I see myself standing a distance from John. I feel heavy in my chest, anxious and angry. I see John red-faced, yelling. Actually, he looks a little frightened." Suddenly, the image brought a new revelation about John that Susan had never observed before.

I then asked Susan to go the periphery of that image. She responded, "I go upstairs and get into my bed. I feel safe, more relaxed there. When I see John from my bed I see him in a new way. He is yelling but, looks frightened, out of control and sad. Suddenly, I feel compassion for him. I can see that he is not yelling at me. His outbursts are about his own frustration. Quite frankly, he has ADD and when anything gets a little messy, it is very hard for him to think straight."

All of this new information was coming from Susan's own internal images and not from my interpretation or insight. I asked her how she was feeling seeing the image. She said, "Actually, I feel compassion for him." I asked her to go to the next periphery. "I see that I get out of my bed and do what I need to do. I feel strong. John's rage is a storm that needs to pass. I am not affected by it. I see that when I don't react to his outburst John calms down and apologizes. I see that compassion and understanding are my strength."

Here is the image instruction for you. Remember: when you see the image, there will be emotions, bodily sensations and meanings that appear. You may keep your eyes open or closed as you do this.

Peripheral Image Instruction

1. See an image in which you feel hopeless or despairing. What do you see? Allow all the details to emerge.
2. Go to the edge, to the periphery of the image. Where do you go? What do you see? How do you feel there? See your original hopeless situation from this perspective and notice what you see now?
3. If needed, go to the edge, the periphery of this image. Where are you? How do you feel being there? See the original situation again. What happens now?
4. Repeat going to the edge of each new image until you get a shift in your original stuck feeling. Some of the peripheral images may be negative and others positive. Keep going to the periphery until you get relief and illumination or a new understanding. ■

Reference: "Principles of Unvivid Experience: The Girdle of Aphrodite." *JMI* 1987 11 (2), 1-52.

Jaqueline Lapa Sussman, MS, LPC is one of the foremost practitioners of Eidetic Imagery in the world. She is the author of two books and has written numerous articles on Eidetic Image Psychology. You can contact her at: www.jaquelinesussman.com or e-mail her at Jackielsus@aol.com. She does phone sessions with people all over the world.