

Title: "Am I Really Making Progress, or Have I Just Been Imagining It?"

September 23, 2024

Greetings all,

Just a quick note to share another FAQ.

I received an email with the following comment: "Sometimes I think I'm doing good healing work and making progress, but then other days I feel so triggered about everything, and perceive that I have so many problems, that I start wondering if I've made any progress at all, or if I just imagined I had made progress." Which implies the question, "Am I really making progress, or have I just been imagining it?"

First of all, this phenomenon is very common. I'm guessing that most of us occasionally have thoughts and feelings along these lines.

Part of the picture is that when we get really triggered and our relational circuits are really off, we cannot *feel* the evidence of positive change. We might be able to remember examples of positive change cognitively (small and far away), but we cannot *feel* them. So when we are really triggered so that we are intensely connected to trauma and dysfunction that we have not yet resolved, and we cannot feel any of the positive, relational memories that provide examples of healing fruit and that would balance the picture, the triggered perspective takes up almost all of the screen.¹

In some situations, specific content from the triggered memories can also contribute. If the memories that are getting triggered forward include disappointment and discouragement along the lines of "I thought something good was happening, but it was just a mirage," then this specific implicit memory content can cause the "I'm still a huge mess and nothing is really changing after all" perception to feel especially intense and true.

The good news is that we will be able to perceive reality accurately again, once the immediate triggering calms down and we get our relational circuits back online. It will be much easier to find and remember examples of positive changes that indicate healing, and we will once again be able to *feel* these examples of healing fruit. Furthermore, our problems will (accurately) seem smaller and less powerful when we are no longer in the middle of being triggered, and any implicit-memory exaggerated discouragement that might have been triggered forward will no longer be distorting our perspective.²

¹ See chapter twelve (especially pages 110 through 115) in *Outsmarting Yourself* for additional discussion regarding why it is difficult to find or feel positive memories when we are intensely triggered and our relational circuits are really offline.

² See supplementary chapter 35e for the big lion book for additional discussion regarding why we sometimes experience dramatic ups and downs in our perceptions regarding healing and positive change. (This supplementary

Finally, we can get additional reassurance/confirmation by asking those who know us well to describe any lasting positive changes that they have noticed.

See supplementary chapter 35e for the big lion book for additional discussion regarding why we sometimes experience dramatic ups and downs in our perceptions regarding healing and positive change. (Available as a free download from our IA website:

<https://www.immanuelapproach.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Chapter35eMountaintop.pdf>)

Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

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