



Brain Science, Psychological Trauma, and the God Who Is With Us, Part IV: Conditions and Resources Necessary for Resolving Traumatic Memories

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Note: This essay was originally written in 2007, before I became aware of the research on memory reconsolidation. I made a lot of edits for the 2025 update, but I did not totally re-write the essay from the ground up. This 2025 update is *mostly* synchronized with more recent material, but there are pieces that you will recognize as being written before I learned about the research on memory reconsolidation for experiential learning.¹

Note also: Large portions of the original version of this essay (updated and expanded) are now included in *Outsmarting Yourself* and in the big lion book. Wherever there is overlapping material between this essay and the books, the content in the books is more recent, and benefits from many edits and updates.

Immanuel approach reminder: It is always important to remember that Jesus knows every detail regarding how the brain, mind, and spirit are designed. When the recipient has a strong connection with Jesus, and the facilitator is mostly just coaching the recipient to focus on Jesus, ask for guidance and help, and then cooperate with whatever Jesus invites them to do, the facilitator can lead the recipient through trauma-healing work without needing to understand any of this material regarding the conditions and resources necessary for resolving traumatic memories.

I. Introduction: From the material presented in parts II & III, we know that for painful events to avoid becoming traumatic they need to complete the journey through the brain/mind pathway designed to process our experiences. If one or more processing tasks is not successfully completed, the painful experience will become a traumatic experience (and then a traumatic memory). Memories for traumatic experiences are qualitatively different from memories for non-traumatic experiences, and two of the most important differences are that memories for traumatic experiences are much more difficult to access and much more difficult to modify. Even when a traumatic memory is activated, and the right conditions are in place so that it can be modified, the person must complete the unfinished processing tasks in order to resolve the toxic content. Very specific additional conditions must be in place and very specific resources must be available for the person to successfully complete this remedial processing work.

The bad news is that traumatic memories are difficult to access. However, the good news is that traumatic memories are *consistently* accessible under the right conditions. The bad news is that traumatic memories are difficult to modify. However, the good news is that traumatic memories are *consistently* open to modification under the right conditions. The bad news is that the toxic content carried in traumatic memories cannot be resolved unless very specific conditions are in place and unless very specific resources are available. The good news is that toxic traumatic memory content can be *consistently* resolved when the right conditions *are* in place and the

¹My most recent material regarding memory reconsolidation, and how it applies to the permanent resolution of traumatic memories, is presented in both of my new introduction books (*An Introduction to the Immanuel Approach* and *An Introduction to the Immanuel Approach for Mental Health Professionals*). Pages 76 to 82 in both books.

necessary resources *are* available.

Any time these necessary conditions are in place and these necessary resources are available, you can access, open to modification, and then permanently resolve the toxic content carried in traumatic memories. Any time a therapy session or emotional healing ministry session produces *permanent resolution* of traumatic memories, it is because these necessary conditions have been met and these necessary resources have been available. For example, this is exactly what happens when Immanuel Approach healing work is successful, this is exactly what happens when a Theophostic session is successful, and this is exactly what happens when Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is successful.

This all leads to a very practical and very important bottom line: If you want to *strategically* design a psychotherapy or emotional healing ministry intervention that *consistently* accomplishes permanent resolution for traumatic memories,² you need to:

- figure out, and then *intentionally* set up the conditions necessary for accessing traumatic memories;
- figure out, and then *intentionally* set up the conditions necessary for traumatic memories to be open to modification; and
- figure out, and then *intentionally* set up the conditions and provide the resources necessary for the person to successfully complete unfinished processing tasks.

Neither Dr. Shapiro, the developer of EMDR, nor Dr. Smith, the developer of Theophostic, formulated the question in exactly this way, but this is essentially what they both try to do in the material they teach regarding practical tools and techniques.

Using a recipe for making bread provides a good analogy. If your recipe has accurately identified *all* of the necessary ingredients, and you are careful to include all of these ingredients, you will get bread every time. However, if your recipe has failed to identify all of the necessary ingredients, then your results will be inconsistent. If the individual practitioner follows the incomplete recipe, *and then also intuitively or accidentally includes the additional ingredients*, you will still get bread; but if the individual practitioner does not include the additional ingredients, you will get something else. In fact, you can include *most* of the ingredients for bread, *excluding only two very small items – yeast and salt* – and you will get something that is neither attractive nor good to eat.

Note regarding process: In actual Immanuel Approach sessions, we don't start by systematically setting up all of these conditions, and then press the button to set the healing in motion. In actual sessions, we start this part of the session with the simple intervention of coaching the person to focus on Jesus and ask Him to help access the underlying traumatic memories. If this works, great! If not, we then “trouble-shoot” regarding why the memories aren't coming forward, and understanding the material discussed below can be very helpful for this trouble-shooting part of the process. After the memories have been accessed, we proceed with the simple step of asking

²Note that resolving traumatic memories is an important *part* of establishing optimal emotional health, but this should not be the *only* focus of therapy and ministry. For example: helping the person connect with Jesus is even *more important* than resolving traumatic memories, and other important objectives include helping the person increase his capacity, helping the person address areas of immaturity, helping the person do remedial work in areas where they are missing important life skills, and helping the person develop appropriate sources of joy.

the Lord for guidance and assistance regarding specific remedial processing tasks. As long as the healing process keeps moving forward with this simple intervention, great! If we encounter difficulty, we then “trouble-shoot” regarding what might be in the way of modifying the memories and/or what might be in the way of identifying and completing remedial processing tasks. And understanding the material discussed below will again be very helpful for this trouble-shooting part of the process.

II. Conditions necessary for accessing traumatic memories: Accessing traumatic memories is more difficult for experiences that occur earlier in childhood (decreased maturity of the hippocampus at the time of the original trauma), more difficult for memories that become stuck at lower levels in the processing pathway, and especially more difficult for dissociated traumatic memories. Never the less, the principles below regarding conditions necessary for access still apply to all traumatic memories.

A. Adequate capacity: One of the most important conditions necessary for accessing traumatic memories is adequate involuntary capacity, so that the person is able to load the traumatic content into her normal conscious awareness. If the person does not have adequate involuntary capacity, you can resolve all blockages and apply every possible activating stimuli, but with no results. As discussed in Parts II and III, if the person does *not* have adequate involuntary capacity, she will simply be unable to bring the traumatic content into her normal conscious awareness. She will also need adequate voluntary capacity so that she can choose to cooperate with accessing the memories. As mentioned in Part II, attuned, mutual-mind connection with others can augment both involuntary and voluntary capacity.

B. Appropriate activating stimuli: Some traumatic memories can be accessed by the directly voluntary retrieval system for autobiographical memories. This conscious, voluntary, strategic search system is run by circuits in the frontal lobes, and uses the hippocampus-based filing system.³ You put in a search request, such as “boy scout camping trips,” and it feels like your frontal lobe strategic search system just reaches out to the appropriate folder and accesses a series of memories from your years as a Boy Scout. My second grade diarrhea trauma provides an example of a traumatic memory that can be accessed by this voluntary autobiographical memory retrieval system. I can send in a search request along the lines of “really embarrassing experiences in grade school,” or “humiliating diarrhea moments,” and my voluntary strategic search system will access this memory without needing to use any other memory access tools or techniques. My frontal lobe and hippocampus-based memory retrieval mechanisms provide *conscious, voluntary, direct* access to this memory any time I wish to recall it; and all the components come forward, organized into an autobiographical memory package.

However, many traumatic memories cannot be accessed through these directly voluntary retrieval mechanisms. As described in Part II, painful experiences that overwhelm the person’s involuntary capacity are shunted to an alternative processing pathway, and these traumatic events are then carried in dissociated memories that are totally unavailable to the conscious, voluntary strategic search system. Traumatic experiences that are not dissociated, but that are sufficiently intense to seriously impair the hippocampus, provide another example of memories that cannot be accessed through the direct, strategic retrieval mechanisms. These memories cannot be accessed by the direct, strategic search system because the impaired hippocampus is not able to perform its librarian functions at the time the memories are stored, *so there is no*

³For a layperson-accessible discussion of the frontal lobe conscious voluntary strategic search in explicit autobiographical recall vs memory activation through association stimulation, see Schacter, Daniel L. *Searching for Memory*. (New York: Basic Books) 1996, especially pages 280-308 (chapter 10).

appropriately labeled folder. Furthermore, even with traumatic memories that *can* be accessed through the strategic search system, components of the memories will often get triggered forward as disconnected implicit memory pieces; and when this happens, the direct, strategic search system is *not* able to make the connection between the implicit memory pieces and the underlying traumatic memories. For example, if a triggering stimuli activates the shame component of my diarrhea trauma, so that *just this piece* comes forward as implicit memory, I will *not* be able to ask “where’s this shame coming from?” and then use my voluntary strategic search function to find the underlying trauma.

Other than in the context of interacting with Jesus,⁴ the underlying traumatic memories in each of these situations can only be accessed *indirectly*, by activating non-strategic-search-system association networks. Instead of being consciously, intentionally, directly retrieved through the strategic search system, these memories are accessed when triggering stimuli, that match some aspect of the original experience, activate one or more of the memory components through association stimulation. In this alternative retrieval system, instead of finding a hippocampus-labeled memory by putting a language-based idea, like “Boy Scout camping trips” in the “search box,” you activate the target memories by focusing on triggers. This alternative retrieval system actually has its own “search” function, but it works in a very different way. In this alternative system, you put *triggers* in the “search box” by focusing on them and stirring up the corresponding negative thoughts and emotions, *and connecting with these negative thoughts and emotions is what drives the association network search process.*

For example, if you have claustrophobia and are trying to access the traumatic memories that fuel it, you can imagine being stuck in a crowded elevator, intentionally initiate thoughts such as “I’m trapped” and “I can’t get out,” and then let yourself feel the anxiety instead of trying to manage it or push it away. Or if you feel intense shame whenever someone criticizes you, and you’re trying to access the underlying trauma that cause this reaction, you can think about a particularly intense incident of being criticized and feeling shame, intentionally repeat the shame-inducing thoughts that went through your mind (for example, “I’m such a loser, I can’t do anything right”), and let yourself feel the shame instead of trying to manage it or push it away. Or if you notice that certain content in movies or books especially upsets you, and you’re trying to access the underlying traumatic memories, you can focus on the upsetting content, intentionally reinforce any negative thoughts that come forward, and then let yourself feel the negative emotions instead of trying to manage them or push them away.⁵ Or if you experience intense despair, along with the recurrent thought, “I will always lose the things I love” after your 50 cent goldfish dies, and you’re trying to access the underlying unresolved loss trauma, you can focus on the memory of losing your goldfish, intentionally rehearse the negative thought, and let yourself feel the despair instead of trying to manage it or push it away. In some scenarios, pieces of implicit memory will come forward as unexplained physical sensations, and you can focus on these physical sensations as triggers that will lead to the underlying trauma.

The general principle regarding these memory-access tools in the context of emotional healing sessions is: “Intentionally watch for the things that trigger you, focus on these triggers as

⁴The *Maggie #2: “If I leave, she could die”* session provides an excellent example of accessing an underlying traumatic memory in the context of interacting with Jesus. Instead of using the usual “focus on the trigger and stir up the negative thoughts and emotions” approach that works by activating association network connections, she just focuses on Jesus and asks Him to bring forward the underlying memories.

⁵Some of my personal healing breakthroughs have started with noticing that certain types of scenes in movies and/or books consistently triggered specific thoughts and emotions.

starting points for your sessions, and then ‘lean into’ any negative thoughts and emotions that come forward.”

Another way to think about this is that triggers create a situation in the present that is similar to the original experience, and each matching detail in the present will contribute another pathway through which the association network can activate the target memory. Therefore, the closer the current triggering scenario is to the original experience, the more powerful the overall effect will be. For example, if a veteran has traumatic memories from combat in Viet Nam, then hot, humid weather will often be a trigger, since it simulates the weather conditions that were present in the jungles of Viet Nam. Fire works will often be a trigger, since they simulate the sounds and smells of the explosions associated with battle. Being with friends who were with him in Viet Nam will often be a trigger because the presence of these friends was part of his combat experience. The sound of helicopter blades will often be a trigger, since helicopters were present in many of his traumatic memories. And if you put all of these together, you will get an especially powerful trigger – this veteran’s combat memories will be intensely activated if he’s in Virginia on July 4th (hot, humid weather), he goes to a fireworks display with buddies from Viet Nam, and a helicopter flies over.⁶

Applying this to therapy/emotional healing ministry: In many situations we are only aware of the triggered thoughts and emotions in the present, and don’t have any information regarding the underlying traumatic memories. In these situations, we focus on the triggers and “lean into” the negative thoughts and emotions that get stirred up, as just described. However, in some situations we *do* have information regarding the memories we are trying to activate. For example, combat veterans, first responders, people with unresolved trauma related to accidents or natural disasters, people with unresolved trauma around losing someone they love, and people with a variety of unresolved traumatic experiences from later in childhood will usually have quite a lot of information about the target memories they are trying to work with. We can even get information about *early* childhood trauma if we can find older family members who are willing to tell us about the experiences we are trying to work on.⁷ In these situations, if the person is having difficulty connecting with the traumatic content, you can powerfully activate the target memories by setting up conditions that simulate the original situation as closely as possible.⁸

C. Psychological and/or spiritual blockages have been resolved: As mentioned in Part III,

⁶Anybody familiar with PTSD will realize that this hypothetical scenario would probably never occur in real life, since veterans are aware of the things that trigger them and carefully avoid situations where multiple triggers are clustered together.

⁷For example, this is exactly what happened with my 2 year old separation trauma, where my older brother and parents supplied information that helped me work more effectively to resolve these memories.

⁸Note that a number of forms of psychotherapy, such as psychodrama, exposure therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, EMDR, and Theophostic-based therapy use the technique of activating traumatic memories by intentionally creating a situation in the present that simulates the original experience they are trying to work with. See, for example, Johnson, Carl H.; Gilmore, Jerome D.; Shenoy, Ramakrishnan S., “Use of feeding procedures in the treatment of a stress-related anxiety disorder.” *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 1982, Vol. 13, No. 3, pages 235-237; Rothbaum, Barbara Olasov, and Foa, Edna B. “Cognitive-Behavioral therapy for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder,” Chapter 22 (pages 491-509) in Van der Kolk, Bessel A, McFarlane, Alexander C, Weisaeth, Lars, Editors. *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*. (New York: Guilford Press) 1996; Shapiro, Francine & Silk Forrest, Margot. *EMDR: The Breakthrough Therapy for Overcoming Anxiety, Stress, and Trauma* (HarperCollins: New York, NY), 1997, page 73 (description of and reference to “in-vivo” techniques); and Smith, Ed, personal communications regarding techniques he has used to activate traumatic memories, 2002. ****Ideal to also include references to articles/textbooks re psychodrama****

there are psychological and spiritual phenomena that can prevent unresolved traumatic content from coming into our conscious awareness, and these blockages must be addressed for the person to be able to fully access the traumatic memory files.

Psychological defenses: We all develop a variety of psychological defenses to manage our traumatic memories, and most of these defenses include some component of trying to keep the unresolved content *out* of our conscious awareness. When we decide that we want to intentionally activate these memories, as part of psychotherapy or emotional healing ministry, the defenses that have been developed and practiced over many years do not simply vaporize. In order to access traumatic memories, the person must identify and dismantle⁹ any psychological defenses that hinder him from adequately connecting to the material that needs to be processed.

Self protective vows: As described in Part III, Charlotte and I once worked with a woman who was not able to receive benefit from emotional healing ministry because a vow had been blocking her from connecting with the emotional component of her traumatic memories. As also described earlier, she was able to connect fully with the emotions, and then also receive healing, as soon as she released her vow to never feel the pain from her many traumatic childhood experiences. We have seen similar phenomena in many other sessions, with vows such as “I will never think about this,” “I won’t remember this,” and “I will never feel these emotions again” understandably blocking access to the memories. At this point, our perception is that self protective vows are one of the most common and most important hindrances to accessing traumatic memories.¹⁰

Immanuel thoughts regarding psychological defenses: “How to identify and dismantle defenses that hinder emotional healing” is a large topic that I cannot fully address in this essay. But to the extent that we can perceive the Lord’s Immanuel presence, connect with Him, synchronize with Him, and engage with Him directly, Jesus can help us identify and dismantle our defenses. Furthermore, He will do this carefully, so as to avoid pain and disruption whenever possible.¹¹

Blocking beliefs (guardian lies): As described in Part III, blocking beliefs (guardian lies) are another psychological phenomena that can hinder attempts to access traumatic memories. For example, I have frequently encountered clients who believe things like “I’ll go crazy if I remember that,” “I’ll die if I feel that pain,” “I’ll never get back out if I fall into those emotions,” or “I can’t handle that memory.” Not surprisingly, beliefs such as these hinder

⁹You can sometimes *temporarily* overwhelm and/or navigate around blockages, even though they have not been resolved, and this can provide a *temporary* window of opportunity. However, the long term healing journey is usually better served by taking the time to permanently dismantle psychological and spiritual blockages. For example, Charlotte and I have facilitated sessions where we employed some kind of clever intervention to temporarily get around defenses that were still in place, and this resulted in single sessions with dramatic results. However, these people then dropped out of healing ministry for months (or even years) because they had been frightened by emotional intensity that had resulted from temporarily tricking/overwhelming their defenses (as opposed to their defenses being willingly surrendered and dismantled).

¹⁰For a much more detailed discussion of self protective vows, see “Vows: Clutter that can hinder emotional healing,” in the kclehman.com Website Archives section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

¹¹For additional discussion regarding how to identify and dismantle defenses that hinder emotional healing, see “Psychological Defenses and Immanuel Approach Emotional Healing,” available as a free download from the Special Subjects/Advanced Topics section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

accessing the corresponding memories.¹²

Choosing away from healing: In my experience this is rare, but occasionally we encounter someone who is making a free-will choice to turn away from healing. For example, some unfortunate individuals become attached to the victim role, and learn to gather secondary benefits from their status as a victim. Occasionally, these people decide that they do not want to be healed because they are not willing to let go of the benefits of being a victim, and one of the easiest ways to implement this choice is to block attempts to access traumatic memories (either consciously or unconsciously).

Demonic opposition: As mentioned in Part III, demonic spirits like trauma. Unresolved traumas make it easier for them to gain access to a person's mind, they use the toxic power in traumatic memories to intimidate and manipulate, the pain in traumatic memories often pushes people to sinful behaviors that gives demonic spirits more space in a person's life, and I am sure there are other ways in which they take advantage of unresolved traumas. If demonic spirits are present, they will therefore always oppose emotional healing, and blocking attempts to access the traumatic memories is one of the simplest ways to do this.¹³

We often use the analogy of demonic spirits being like germs. Demonic spirits infect emotional wounds in much the same way that germs infect physical wounds, and just as germs hinder the healing process for physical wounds, demonic spirits hinder the healing process for emotional wounds.

Other?: It is always good to remember that there may be "other" spiritual and/or psychological blockages that we have not yet included in our formulation. For example, what about the possibility that generational curses might hinder access to traumatic memories? Or what about the possibility that mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, that have an especially strong biological component, might hinder access to traumatic memories in ways that we do not yet understand?

D. Immanuel thoughts regarding conditions necessary for accessing traumatic memories: As with every aspect of working with psychological trauma, engaging with the living presence of Jesus is the perfect resource for establishing the conditions necessary for accessing traumatic memories.

As discussed repeatedly in Part II, Jesus is the ideal source of *mutual mind capacity augmentation*. He is always present, even for people who have meager community. Since He loves us with perfect love, He is always glad to be with us, even in our pain. And He has beyond-elder maturity and infinite capacity, so He is always able to *stay* with us, no matter how intense our pain might be or how long it might last. To the extent a person is able to perceive the Lord's presence and synchronize with Him, she will have a mutual mind connection that can augment both involuntary and voluntary capacity.

Engaging with Jesus' Immanuel presence is also the ideal resource with respect to *activating*

¹²As mentioned in Part III, people are often not even aware of these blocking beliefs, but if you know what to look for you can spot them as the person encounters resistance while trying to access unresolved trauma.

¹³For a detailed discussion of dealing with demonic blockages, see "Dealing with Demonic Interference/Opposition During the Session: Prayers and Commands to Neutralize Demonic Interference," in the kclehman.com Website Archives section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

the memory files. In some sessions, Jesus seems to directly activate the target traumatic memory without even using the usual tool of focusing on triggers. For example, in the live video session *Maggie: "If I leave, she could die,"* Maggie does not use triggers to activate the target memory, but rather focuses directly on Jesus and asks Him to bring the memory forward.¹⁴ Much more common (in sessions where the person has a less intense connection with Jesus?), is for the person to *both* perceive the Lord's presence *and* focus on the trigger, and then ask Jesus to help activate the underlying traumatic memory.

And engaging with Jesus' Immanuel presence is the ideal resource with respect to *identifying and resolving blockages*, since He already knows what they are, He knows how to resolve them, He has the resources necessary to resolve them, and He earnestly desires to help the person resolve them. If the person is having difficulty accessing memories, coach her to focus on Jesus, ask Him to reveal the blockages, and ask Him to help resolve them.

III. Conditions necessary for modifying traumatic memories:

A. Working *inside* the traumatic memory: As described in Part III, to permanently modify a traumatic memory, you must be working *inside* the memory, as opposed to loading information into non-traumatic memory files while the traumatic memory file is closed. This condition should already be in place if you have successfully set up the conditions for accessing the unresolved traumatic content. That is, if the traumatic memory is open so that the person is fully connected to the unresolved traumatic content, he *is* working inside the memory. It is also important to help the person *stay* inside the traumatic content. Even after initially connecting, people can sometimes shift back to an "outside" perspective, where they are observing and talking about the experience from the perspective of an observer. When this happens, it is important to notice that the person is no longer connected to the unresolved content, and then help him get back *inside* the memories.

2025 addendum regarding memory reconsolidation: The recent, compelling research regarding memory reconsolidation identifies "the memory needs to be activated" as one of the requirements for permanent resolution of traumatic memories. This is essentially the same as "you need to be working *inside* the traumatic memory."¹⁵

B. Psychological and/or spiritual blockages have been resolved: Just as we often encounter psychological and spiritual phenomena that can prevent traumatic memories from being *accessed*, we also often encounter psychological and spiritual phenomena that can prevent traumatic memories from being *modified*. These blockages must be removed for the traumatic memory files to be open to modification.

Self protective vows: Much like the way in which they can block attempts to *access* traumatic memories, self protective vows can also keep the person from *modifying* traumatic memories. For example, some of my painful childhood experiences were playground traumas of being intimidated and humiliated by bullies. As I struggled with painful feelings of helplessness and powerlessness, I concluded that I wouldn't be so powerless if I could get

¹⁴This is an interesting, new phenomena that we have just begun to observe in some of our most recent Immanuel Approach sessions.

¹⁵Again, my most recent material regarding memory reconsolidation, and how it applies to the permanent resolution of traumatic memories, is presented in both of my new introduction books (*An Introduction to the Immanuel Approach* and *An Introduction to the Immanuel Approach for Mental Health Professionals*). Pages 76 to 82 in both books.

revenge, and told myself that some day the tables would turn. I also concluded that I needed to hold onto the pain and bitterness to make sure I would remember to get revenge. And a natural result of believing these lies was to make vows along the lines of: “Thirty years from now, when you are unemployed and I am in charge, I will humiliate you just like you are humiliating me now,” and “I will hold onto this pain and this anger to make sure I don’t forget.” In recent years, as I was trying to resolve these traumatic memories, these beliefs and vows got in the way of releasing the bitterness and resolving the pain. I had to resolve these blocking beliefs and self protective vows before I could modify and resolve the toxic content in these memories.

Blocking beliefs (guardian lies): Much like the way in which they can block attempts to *access* traumatic memories, blocking beliefs (guardian lies) can also hinder attempts to *modify* traumatic memories. For example, soldiers with combat trauma often have blocking beliefs along the lines of: “If I lose my fear I’ll get careless, and get myself killed just like...,” or “Carrying this pain is how I honor my fallen comrades. Allowing Jesus to heal this pain would be to betray and abandon my friends who died in the jungle.” Needless to say, this kind of belief gets in the way of participating in therapy or ministry that would modify and resolve the traumatic memories. As I am sure you have already realized, the discussion of self protective vows also includes an example of blocking beliefs that hinder modification of traumatic memories.

Free-will choice away from healing: As described above, we occasionally encounter someone who is making a free-will choice to turn away from healing. The example in the above discussion is one of the most common scenarios – people become attached to the victim role, and decide that they do not want to be healed because they are not willing to let go of the benefits of being a victim.

One of the easiest ways to implement the choice away from healing is to block attempts to access traumatic memories, and another way to implement this choice is to block attempts to modify traumatic memories (either consciously or unconsciously).

Demonic opposition: As discussed above, demonic spirits like trauma for a number of reasons, and will try to prevent emotional healing whenever they are present. They will certainly hinder the modification of toxic content if they can get away with it.

C. Immanuel thoughts regarding conditions necessary for modifying traumatic memories: As with every aspect of working with psychological trauma, engaging with the living presence of Jesus is the perfect resource for establishing the conditions necessary to be able to modify traumatic memories. As discussed above, connecting and synchronizing with the living person of Jesus is the ideal resource for accessing traumatic memories, and this opens the traumatic memory files so that you can work *inside* the memories. And just as with psychological and spiritual blockages that hinder *access*, engaging with Jesus’ Immanuel presence is the ideal resource for identifying and resolving blockages that hinder *modification* of toxic content.

D. Something must be different (2025 Addition): The recent, compelling research regarding memory reconsolidation identifies “some aspect of the experiential learning context¹⁶ must be

¹⁶For trauma healing work, “some aspect of the experiential learning context must be significantly different” = “some aspect of the person’s experience of being inside the traumatic memory must be significantly different.”

significantly different” as one of the requirements for traumatic memories to be open to modification, so that they can be permanently resolved. The *bad* news with respect to this point is that if nothing is different, the neurological circuits that carry the traumatic memory just get reinforced. The *good* news is that experiencing the living presence of Jesus, *with you inside of the traumatic memory*, always qualifies for some aspect of the experiential learning context being significantly different.¹⁷

IV. Conditions and resources necessary for completing unfinished processing tasks:

General conditions and resources necessary for all processing tasks:

A. Organized attachment: As discussed in Part II, in order to complete the tasks in the pain processing pathway, a person must at least maintain one of the organized forms of attachment. A person can't participate in any kind of work to complete remedial processing tasks if they are in a state of acute disorganized attachment.

B. Adequate involuntary and voluntary capacity: As discussed in Part II, in order to resolve toxic content, the person must have enough *involuntary* capacity to be able to load the content into his normal conscious awareness and to be able to stay emotionally connected, and he must have enough *voluntary* capacity to choose to stay connected for the time required to complete the necessary processing tasks. As also mentioned in Part II, attuned, mutual-mind connection with others can augment both involuntary and voluntary capacity. The presence of attuned, mutual-mind connection is therefore a special resource that can make it possible for a person to complete remedial processing tasks *even though she does not have adequate capacity on her own*.

C. Working *inside* the traumatic memory: As discussed in Part II, you must be working *inside* the unresolved content to be able to accomplish remedial processing tasks. One of the clearest indicators that a traumatic memory is sufficiently activated, and that you are working *inside* the unresolved content, is that the toxic content from the unfinished processing tasks *feels true in the present*. For example, if the memory you are working with includes level 4 failure to find a satisfying solution, then the perception of being unable to find a satisfying solution must *feel true in the present*; and you must have the subjective experience of *feeling inadequate, in the present*, as you are working with the memory. Or if the memory you are working with includes level 5 failure to make sense out of the situation, then you must have the subjective experience of *feeling confused, in the present*, as you are working with the memory. Or if the memory you are working with includes level 5 distorted interpretations, then the distorted interpretations must *feel true, in the present*, and you must have the subjective experience of feeling the left-sided emotions associated with the distorted interpretations *in the present, as you are working with the memory*.

As mentioned above, if you have successfully set up the conditions for accessing the

¹⁷ One proposed explanation regarding this second necessary condition is that metabolic resources are required to open the synapses back up, and the brain needs to have a good reason to invest these resources. If everything just looks the same, the brain thinks, “Why invest resources to open up the circuits if we are just going to relearn the same lesson?” In contrast, if something is significantly different, the brain concludes that it is worth the investment to make space for the possibility of new learning that might be adaptive in some way. (See page 7 of Bruce Ecker, “Memory Reconsolidation Understood and Misunderstood,” *International Journal of Neuropsychotherapy*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2015): pages 2-46.)

unresolved traumatic content, the file will already be open and the person will already be working “inside” the memory. As also mentioned above, the person will sometimes shift to an “outside observer” perspective, even after initially connecting. When this happens, it is important to notice that the person is no longer connected to the unresolved content, and then help him get back *inside* the memories.

2025 addendum regarding memory reconsolidation: Again, the recent, compelling research regarding memory reconsolidation identifies “the memory needs to be activated” as one of the requirements for permanent resolution of traumatic memories. This is essentially the same as “you need to be working *inside* the traumatic memory.”

D. Psychological and/or spiritual blockages have been resolved: Just as we often encounter psychological and spiritual phenomena that can get in the way of accessing or modifying traumatic memories, we also often encounter psychological and spiritual phenomena that can block the completion of remedial processing tasks. These blockages must be removed for the toxic content to be resolved.

1.) Blocking beliefs (guardian lies): Much like the ways in which they can block attempts to *access* or *modify* traumatic memories, blocking beliefs can also keep the person from completing the processing tasks that will resolve the toxic content. For example, we have seen people with blocking beliefs that cause them to resist the level 4 processing task of becoming more competent. If a child is forced to take on inappropriate responsibilities, she might come to the blocking belief: “If I’m able to do something, I’ll be forced to do it even when I don’t want to. The only way I can prevent people from taking advantage of me is to be incompetent.” This blocking belief will obviously get in the way of completing the level 4 processing task of learning how to handle new difficult situations, and will need to be resolved before she will cooperate with attempts to resolve the “I don’t know how to handle this situation” component of traumatic memories.

2.) Free-will choice away from healing: As described above, we occasionally encounter someone who is making a free-will choice to turn away from healing. If a person is truly making a free-will choice to turn away from healing, then there are many ways in which they can block attempts to complete remedial processing tasks (either consciously or unconsciously).

3.) Demonic opposition: As discussed above, demonic spirits like trauma for a number of reasons, and will try to prevent emotional healing whenever they are present. They will certainly hinder remedial processing and the resolution of toxic content if they can get away with it.

4.) Psychological defenses: As mentioned above, we all develop a variety of psychological defenses to manage our traumatic memories, and most of these defenses include some component of trying to avoid the full impact of the toxic content. This is certainly understandable, and actually helps us function in day to day life, but it gets in the way of doing remedial work with respect to the pain processing pathway. As mentioned above, “How to identify and dismantle defenses that hinder emotional healing” is a large topic that I cannot fully address in this essay, but I do want to take some space to discuss several points that I think are especially important:

Defenses that directly oppose specific remedial processing tasks: My observation is that

some defenses, such as self protective vows, can directly oppose *specific* remedial processing tasks. For example, the person might have traumatic memories where she was betrayed by important men in her life, and part of the toxic content carried in these memories will be the level 5 distorted interpretations that **no** men can be trusted. With these unresolved traumatic memories and associated beliefs, she may have a guardian lie, such as “I will get hurt if I let go of my fear of men – I need this distrust to keep me safe;” and this guardian lie could lead her to vow “I will never let myself trust men,” which could also be formulated as “*I will never let myself believe that men are trustworthy.*” This vow will obviously block her from being able to receive the truth that some men are trustworthy, and this guardian lie and vow will have to be resolved before she is able to allow correction of her level 5 distorted beliefs about *all* men being unworthy of trust.

In my experience, it is helpful to actively watch for these defenses, and to deliberately dismantle them when I find them.

“Describe everything” as a relational discipline: In Part V, I talk about a part of the Immanuel approach that I call the “Describe everything” discipline. Practicing this discipline in the context of one or more close relationships can help you become increasingly aware of the thoughts and emotions that flow through your mind, and this increasing awareness will make it easier to spot unpleasant thoughts and emotions that you choose to look away from. This, in turn, will make it easier to see the places where you are using psychological defenses to avoid unresolved painful content.¹⁸

“Standing straight in the pain”¹⁹: In contrast to the small number of defenses that directly oppose specific processing tasks, most defenses hinder remedial processing work by keeping the person from “standing straight in the pain” – the place she needs to be to participate in the healing process. Sometimes it is helpful to deliberately focus on identifying and dismantling the defenses, such as with the self protective vows just discussed; but at other times it seems to be more helpful to focus on standing straight in the pain as opposed to focusing on the defenses that can hinder this. In fact, my perception is that “standing straight in the pain” is a skill that you can learn by practicing, and my perception is that deliberately practicing “standing straight in the pain” is one of the simplest and most powerful ways to dismantle defenses that hinder us from resolving traumatic memories. Just as persistently practicing the “describe everything” discipline can *expose* many of the defenses that get in the way of accessing traumatic memories and completing remedial processing tasks, persistently practicing “standing straight in the pain” can *dismantle* many of the defenses that get in the way of accessing traumatic memories and completing remedial processing tasks.

So what does it look like to “stand straight in the pain”?

1.) The person must be accepting, facing, and acknowledging the truth about what

¹⁸For additional discussion of using the “Describe everything” discipline in the context of close personal relationships, see Part VI, section A, “The ‘Describe everything’ discipline in the context of close personal relationships.”

¹⁹We heard this phrase from healing minister and author Leanne Payne, at one of her Pastoral Care Ministries Schools. Some of her comments on “standing straight in the pain” are found in her book *The Healing Presence* (Baker, Grand Rapids: 1989, 1995). See pages 58 and following for Payne’s discussion of an image from C.S. Lewis of “bentness,” and see also pages 204&205 for additional discussion of standing straight in the pain.

happened in the traumatic memories, as opposed to fighting it, running away from it, or denying it. My experience with the memories of being separated from my parents at two years old provides a good example. Mom had Mononucleosis during her pregnancy with my younger sister. Between the pregnancy and the mono, she was so ill that Dad had to carry her across the hallway to the bathroom, *and* so ill that my brother and I were sent to stay with friends in another city for three weeks because Mom was too sick to care for us.

To put this in perspective: a two-year-old will experience a three week separation from his parents in much the same way as he'll experience his parents dying suddenly – they disappear suddenly, and stay away longer than any possible two-year-old ability to understand or cope with their absence. Furthermore, a two year old perceives his parents to be omnipotent – he believes nothing happens unless they allow it, and that nothing could make them do anything they don't want to do. This means he will believe he is separated from his parents because they *want* to be away from him, and he will believe that they can hear his calls and could come if they wanted to, but that they are *choosing* to ignore his cries for help.

By the end of three weeks of separation, I had come to many erroneous conclusions, including: "I'm on my own (the Ones I need are not here with me)," "It's hopeless and I'm powerless – the Ones I need are not coming, and nothing I can do will make them come," "There's no possible justification for allowing this to happen to me – I can't trust their hearts for me," "They won't help me when I'm overwhelmed and need their help," and "This situation is overwhelming – it's more than I can handle, and I might as well just give up and disconnect." Along with these erroneous conclusions came a miserable morass of associated emotions – loneliness, rejection, hopelessness, powerlessness, feeling overwhelmed, and confusion. And I was also very angry that they had left me, that they were allowing me to suffer so intensely, and that they wouldn't come when I called for them.

Possibly the most toxic effect of this experience is that I have often transferred these thoughts and feelings towards my parents onto the Lord. Any time this memory got triggered, *and my interaction with the Lord in the present triggering situation paralleled some part of the original memory*, then *the Lord* would be the target for the corresponding triggered beliefs and emotions. For example, any time I would become stuck in a situation that felt overwhelming, and call out to the Lord for help, but then not be able to perceive His presence or help, the beliefs and emotions from this 2 year old separation memory would be activated, *with my interactions with the Lord in the present triggering situation paralleling my interactions with my parents in the original memory*. Whenever this happened, it would *feel intensely true* that I couldn't trust God's heart towards me because He chooses to allow things for which there is no possible justification, it would *feel intensely true* that He's not with me now, and won't come even though I call and call for Him, and it would *feel intensely true* that He won't help me when I'm overwhelmed by a situation and need His help.

Working with these memories was one of the most difficult challenges in my personal healing journey, and an important contributing factor was that I remained stuck for many years at the point of trying to make it different – when I was triggered, *and inside the thoughts and emotions from the memory*, I would fight the truth of what had actually happened instead of turning to the Lord for help. But I never realized that this was what I

was doing, since the triggered content would sneak forward as “invisible” implicit memory, and I would believe my VLE explanation about how the triggering stimuli in the present were actually causing the implicit memory content. Therefore, it always *felt* like I was fighting some “legitimate” problem in the present, while in reality I was still trying to change the underlying traumatic memory.

For example, I would encounter some problem that I was temporarily unable to handle, such as the electrical system in our car getting flooded. I would feel overwhelmed, ask the Lord for help, and then not be able to perceive His presence or assistance. When this would happen I would feel intensely powerless, discouraged, betrayed, abandoned, and angry; and it would *feel* like my pain and anger were really about the situation in the present, and especially about the Lord failing to respond to my calls for help.

Instead of recognizing the implicit content from unresolved memories, standing straight in the pain, and turning to the Lord for healing, I would fight the pain in the present by focusing on the triggers. I would focus on the car’s failure to start and on the Lord’s failure to respond, with the intense subjective perception that the true source of my distress would be resolved if I could just get Him to come, be with me, and help me start the car. I would plead with the Lord, asking and asking and asking that He manifest more tangibly. I would argue with Him, trying to convince Him that His response was inadequate and unacceptable, and trying to convince Him to intervene more powerfully. I would have an intense subjective perception that the Lord was refusing to be with me or help me. And I would point my frustrated anger at *Him*, trying to punish Him with every hurtful accusation I could think of.

As the reader can probably perceive, the painful thoughts and emotions that welled up in response to a car that wouldn’t start and in response to my inability to perceive the Lord’s presence or assistance were really implicit memory content from my 2 year old trauma. I was still fighting with that old, unresolved experience. I was still calling my parents, angry that they weren’t responding to my pleas, and trying to fix the problem by finding a way to make them come and help me.

In order to get healed, I had to recognize that the painful thoughts and emotions were actually implicit memory content from an underlying unresolved trauma, I had to release my attempts to fight with the memory content as if I could change it, and I had to accept the truth of the painful history that had already occurred (Mom and Dad didn’t come back for a long, long time, it was overwhelming, there was nothing I could do about it,...etc.)²⁰ When I finally stopped fighting it, I could stand straight in the pain: “This is what happened. I can’t fix this memory pain by focusing on the car or my present perception that the Lord is ignoring my calls for help. *In this memory place*, I am overwhelmed, I am calling and calling but they don’t come, and I feel powerless, discouraged, betrayed,...etc.” *And then I could invite the Lord to be with me in this place and cooperate with His healing work.*

In some way, it felt like fighting with the memory pain by focusing on the triggers, *as if the implicit memory content was a problem in the present that I could change*, was pointing my attention and energy in the wrong direction; and this “pointing in the wrong

²⁰Note that I am *not* talking about accepting the erroneous, distorted beliefs associated with the unresolved trauma, but rather about accepting the actual history.

direction” hindered me from being able to let Jesus be with me, comfort me, and work with me to resolve the toxic content.

2.) The person must be facing and acknowledging the toxic content, as opposed to fighting it, running away from it, or denying it:

For example, if the person is working with the level 5 toxic content of distorted interpretations regarding the meaning of the experience with respect to the person’s self, he needs to be facing and acknowledging the distorted beliefs, as opposed to fighting them, running away from them, or denying them. Note that I am *not* saying the person needs to accept that the erroneous trauma-associated beliefs are true (because they aren’t). I *am* saying that the person needs to face and acknowledge “When I’m triggered, and blended with the thoughts and emotions from the inside of this memory, it feels true that _____ (fill in the distorted trauma-associated beliefs).” And furthermore, the person needs to let himself connect to the implicit memory package from the traumatic event, so that *from the inside of the memory*, he can say “Lord Jesus, it *feels* true that _____ (fill in the distorted trauma-associated beliefs). Please help me to know Your truth in this place.”

3.) The person needs to be facing, acknowledging, and “standing straight” in the emotional pain associated with unresolved trauma, as opposed to fighting it, running away from it, or denying it: For example, my kindergarten and first grade experiences with being dyslexic included many experiences of feeling inadequate. Not only did I feel inadequate because I could not learn how to read, I also experienced a much more important layer of inadequacy as I was unable to successfully navigate the experience of failing at a task *others could do easily, even though I was trying my hardest*. On top of the “double-decker” level 4 inadequacy, I also came to the distorted level 5 conclusion that being unable to read meant I was stupid, and this distorted interpretation and the associated left-sided shame made it even harder to successfully navigate the situation. This experience was repeated many, many times over the course of two years. Not surprisingly, I developed a very specific *inadequate – “I’m stupid” – shame* reaction that would get triggered by any situation where I was having difficulty but others were doing well.

Forty years later, I’m playing scrabble with Charlotte. Charlotte: “Oh, look at this! I can spell ‘quiz,’ with a triple letter score for “z” and a double word score for the whole word! Let’s see...that comes to 97 points.” Karl: “Well, I can spell trigger, with a triple letter bonus on the two-point “g”, but all the other letters are just one-pointers. How come my word is longer than yours, but I only get 15 points?!” This goes on, move after move, until we finish the first game with Charlotte at 758 and Karl at 247. To make matters worse, and accomplish even more effective triggering, Charlotte occasionally tries to be helpful by pointing out how I could have earned three times as many points if I had used the same letters to spell a different word, strategically placed at a spot on the board that would have made use of bonuses. She’s trying to help me become a better scrabble player by offering coaching tips, and I experience her comments as implying that I’m an idiot. After three or four games where her score can be measured as a *multiple* of mine, we end the evening with me feeling inadequate, stupid, and humiliated. Boy, that was fun! (sarcasm intended).

At this point, I would usually try to fight and/or avoid the pain by focusing on the triggers. I would attack Charlotte, blaming her for “making” me feel bad. I would argue

that it was *her* fault I was upset, since *she* was the one who kept playing so hard even when she was already way ahead, and since *she* was the one who kept pointing out how I could have made better moves, obviously implying that I was incompetent and stupid. And I would argue that the relational difficulty we were experiencing could be solved if *she* would just stop hurting me – *I* would be *fine* if she would just stop beating my pants off and then making insensitive remarks implying that I was stupid. In addition to focusing on the Charlotte part of the trigger, I would also focus on the Scrabble part of the trigger, diligently working on strategic word-game skills so that I would be less vulnerable to this particular source of feeling inadequate and humiliated. These responses all try to avoid or fight the pain in the present by focusing on managing the triggers. Again, this points my energy and attention in the wrong direction.

In contrast to these responses that try to fight/avoid the pain by focusing on the triggers, as I have been embracing a lifestyle of personal healing and practicing the skill of recognizing when I'm triggered, I have been increasingly able to respond to this kind of triggering situation by "standing straight in the pain" and turning to Jesus for healing. I recognize that I'm triggered, choose to *not* focus my attention on the triggers, choose to stay with the painful feelings of inadequacy and shame, ask Jesus to help me connect with the underlying memories, invite Him to be with me in the place where the pain is really coming from, and then work with Him to resolve the unfinished processing tasks.

In brief review from our Part II discussion of emotional experiences, emotional pain associated with unresolved trauma might include: the painful chaos of disorganized attachment in memories where the person was traumatized by his primary caregivers; absence attachment pain in memories where the person did not have adequate bonded relationships; negative right-sided emotions in memories where the person never got to the point where level 4 calms the brain back down; the painful subjective experience of being non-relational and without joy in memories where the person was not able to maintain access his relational connection circuits; unpleasant feelings of inadequacy in memories where the person was unable to find a satisfying way to navigate the situation; unpleasant confusion in memories where the person was not able to make sense out of the situation; and negative left-sided emotions associated with distorted beliefs in memories where the person came to erroneous conclusions regarding the meaning of the experience.

For a much more detailed discussion regarding how to practice "standing straight in the pain," see Lehman, Charlotte E.T., and Lehman, Karl D., "Spiritual disciplines and emotional healing ministry: Choosing healing," available as a free download from www.immanuelapproach.com.

Immanuel thoughts regarding psychological defenses: As with every place in which we encounter psychological defenses, to the extent that we can perceive the Lord's Immanuel presence, connect with Him, synchronize with Him, and engage with Him directly, Jesus can help us identify and dismantle our defenses. Furthermore, He will do this carefully, so as to avoid pain and disruption whenever possible.

Specific conditions and resources necessary for the specific processing tasks at each level:

The general idea here is to apply the information provided in Part II in order to figure out the specific conditions and resources needed to complete each unfinished processing task.

E. Specific processing tasks at Level 3: As described in Part II, even though level 3 maturity

skills are ideally learned from our parents before we leave infancy, most of us still have areas of level 3 maturity skill weakness where we need to do remedial work; *and engaging in this “remedial work” is a strategic task that will prepare us for both encountering new painful experiences and for resolving old traumatic memories.* The primary way we can do this is to engage in the same kind of “practice” that occurs between infants and their parents: we get into painful situations that produce negative right-sided emotions with intensity beyond our level 3 skills, causing us to *lose* access to our relational connection circuits, and then we work with someone who can attune to us and help us *regain* access to our relational connection circuits.²¹ Just as with infants, we strengthen the neurological bridge between our negative emotion circuits and our relational connection circuits each time we get stranded on a negative emotion neurological island, someone joins us on our island through attunement, and then we simultaneously experience *both* the negative emotion *and* relational connection. Furthermore, in addition to building our own level 3 maturity skills we can also deliberately find community that is able to provide adequate augmentation.

If the person has developed strong level 3 maturity skills since the time of the original experience, he might be able to take care of unfinished level 3 business carried in the traumatic memories without needing any additional conditions or resources. If he can *partially* blend with the ego state package carried in the traumatic memory, so that he is sufficiently connected to the traumatic memory for the circuits carrying the memory to be activated, but still also retaining enough of his adult self to be able to function as his own therapist, he can attune to himself in the memory and bring his own relational circuits back online. And if he can maintain this as he processes through the memory, he will be able to successfully complete the level 3 processing task of maintaining access to his relational connection circuits.

However, this partial blending and functioning as his own therapist is quite difficult. If the person is not able to pull this off, then he will need an external other who has the overall maturity to be glad to be with him in his painful emotions, who has the capacity to stay with him in his painful emotions, and who has the skills to initiate attunement, share his negative emotions, and join him in his negative emotions. When this additional resource is available, his first level 3 processing task will be to *re-establish* access to his relational connection circuits by establishing attuned relational connection with the external other. Then, with the help of attuned relational connection with this external other, he will be able to successfully complete the level 3 processing task of going through the memory while *maintaining* access to his relational connection circuits. As discussed in more detail below, the ideal external other is the living, tangible, interactive presence of Jesus.

F. Specific processing tasks at Level 4: As mentioned in Part II, normal development includes continuing to build our level 4 skills throughout our lives. One way to build level 4 maturity skills is to experiment and practice with gradually increasing challenges. Another way to learn level 4 maturity skills is to observe others who already know how to handle the situations we are trying to master – to observe others *modeling* holding onto their true hearts and accomplishing satisfying solutions in the situations we are still struggling with. An especially effective way to develop level 4 skills is to be in a difficult situation that we do not yet know how to handle, *and as we are in the situation*, observe and imitate a more skilled individual who is modeling a good way to navigate the situation. Furthermore, in addition to

²¹In my experience, one of the best ways in which to do this level 3 remedial skill building is to do emotional healing work for traumatic memories where you were not able to maintain access to your relational connection circuits.

building our own level 4 maturity skills we can also deliberately find community that is able to provide adequate augmentation.

Practical application comments: With level 4 processing, *maturity skill augmentation and maturity skill training no longer require attuned relational connection in the context of a one-on-one relationship*. With level 3, maturity skill community augmentation and maturity skill training *inherently* require an external other who can help the person re-establish access to his relational connection circuits by initiating attuned relational connection. Therefore, with level 3 processing, if someone needs maturity skill augmentation and training, the community needs to provide *attuned relational connection* which can only be accomplished in the context of a *one-on-one relationship*. With level 4 processing, in contrast, attuned relational connection with an external other is the source for community augmentation of *capacity*, but attuned relational connection is *not* necessary for the modeling that is especially effective in providing maturity skill augmentation and training. You can augment and grow your level 4 skills by observing a more experienced person modeling appropriate responses *even by watching from a distance, and even though you have no relationship with the person*.

This point has very practical implications as we are thinking about how to help people with inadequate level 4 skills. The fact that level 4 maturity skill modeling and observation does *not* require one-on-one attuned relational connection *means that level 4 skill augmentation and training can occur in group settings, and that this resource can also be transmitted through media*, such as videos of experts modeling satisfying responses to difficult situations. For example, live ministry demonstrations, in front of a group or recorded on video, can provide right-hemisphere level 4 modeling regarding how to handle difficult situations in ministry sessions.²²

Returning to conditions required for healing trauma, and specifically conditions required for completing processing tasks at level 4: If the person has developed his level 4 maturity skills since the time of the original experience, so that he has now *successfully* navigated similar situations, he might be able to take care of the unfinished level 4 processing task without needing any additional conditions or resources. If he can *partially* blend with the ego state package carried in the traumatic memory, so that he is sufficiently connected to the traumatic memory for the circuits carrying the memory to be activated, but still also retain enough of his adult self to be able to function as his own therapist, he can find one of the memories in which he successfully navigated a similar situation. And if he can connect emotionally with both memories simultaneously, he can produce the corrective experience that memory reconsolidation research shows is necessary – from *inside* the memory, he will be able to run an internal simulation of successfully navigating the original painful experience, and thereby complete the level 4 processing task.

However, this partial blending and functioning as his own therapist is quite difficult. If the person is not able to pull this off, then he will need an external other to help him complete level 4 processing. One option is for a therapist/healing minister to help him through the process just described – to help him find one of the memories in which he successfully navigated a similar situation, to help him connect emotionally with both memories simultaneously, and to help him produce the corrective experience of running an internal simulation of successfully navigating

²²As another example (hypothetically), the Lehman's set of excellent live ministry DVDs could provide right-hemisphere level 4 modeling regarding how to facilitate Immanuel interventions and Immanuel approach emotional healing sessions.

the original painful scenario (again, from *inside* the trauma memory).

As discussed in more detail below, the ideal option is for the recipient to engage with the living presence of Jesus from inside the traumatic memory. Jesus can *model* a life-giving, satisfying way to navigate the scenario, or He can just reveal the level-4 “answer” directly into the recipients awareness. (I don’t know how Jesus does this, but I have experienced it and it is amazingly effective.)

G. Specific processing tasks at Level 5: As mentioned in Part II, normal development includes continuing to build our level 5 skills throughout our lives. One way to learn level 5 maturity skills is to receive believable²³ explanations and accurate interpretations from others. Another way to build level 5 maturity skills is to practice with observation and “figuring things out,” starting with simple problems and then gradually progressing to increasingly difficult challenges. An especially effective way to develop level 5 skills is to go back and forth between receiving explanations and interpretations from others and practicing our own observation and analysis.²⁴

Making sense out of the situation: If the person has developed his level 5 maturity skills since the time of the original experience, so that he has now been able to make sense out of similar situations, he might be able to take care of the unfinished level-5 make-sense-out-of-the-situation processing task without needing any additional conditions or resources. If he can *partially* blend with the ego state package carried in the traumatic memory, so that he is sufficiently connected to the traumatic memory for the circuits carrying the memory to be activated, but still also retain enough of his adult self to be able to function as his own therapist, he can find one of the memories in which he successfully made sense out of a similar situation. And if he can connect emotionally with both memories simultaneously, he can produce the corrective experience that memory reconsolidation research shows is necessary – from *inside* the memory, he will be able to make sense out of the original painful experience (instead of just feeling confused).

However, this partial blending and functioning as his own therapist is quite difficult. If the person is not able to pull this off, then he will need an external other to help him complete level-5 processing. One option is for a therapist/healing minister to help him through the process just described – to help him find one of the memories in which he was able to make sense out of a similar situation, to help him connect emotionally with both memories simultaneously, and to help him produce the corrective experience of making sense out of the original painful scenario (again, from *inside* the trauma memory).

And again, the ideal option is for the recipient to engage with the living presence of Jesus from inside the traumatic memory. Jesus helps the recipient see the situation through His eyes, and then it makes sense.

²³Believable explanations are anchored in facts that we accept as valid, start where we are currently at in each situation, and then provide sound logical trails to final models that are both internally coherent and consistent with our experience. For a brief discussion of research regarding effective/believable explanations, see Bransford, John D., Brown, Ann L., Cocking, Rodney R., Donovan, Suzanne M., Pellegrino, James W. (Eds.) *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School (Expanded Edition)*. (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press) 2000, pages 179-182.

²⁴For a simple, yet compelling study demonstrating the special power of this combined approach, see Schwartz, Daniel L.; Bransford, John D., “A Time for Telling”, *Cognition and Instruction*, Vol. No. 4, 1998, pages 475 - 572.

Interpreting the meaning of the experience with respect to your self: If the person has developed his level-5 maturity skills since the time of the original experience, so that he has been able to correctly interpret the meaning of similar situations, he might be able to take care of the unfinished level-5 correctly-interpret-the-meaning-of-the-experience processing task without needing any additional conditions or resources. If he can *partially* blend with the ego state package carried in the traumatic memory, so that he is sufficiently connected to the traumatic memory for the circuits carrying the memory to be activated, but still also retain enough of his adult self to be able to function as his own therapist, he can find one of the memories in which he successfully interpreted the meaning of a similar situation. And if he can connect emotionally with both memories simultaneously, he can produce the corrective experience that memory reconsolidation research shows is necessary – from *inside* the memory, he will be able to correctly interpret the meaning of the original scenario.

However, this partial blending and functioning as his own therapist is quite difficult. If the person is not able to pull this off, then he will need an external other to help him complete level-5 processing. One option is for a therapist/healing minister to help him through the process just described – to help him find one of the memories in which he was able to correctly interpret the meaning of a similar situation, to help him connect emotionally with both memories simultaneously, and to help him produce the corrective experience of correctly interpret the meaning of the original painful scenario (again, from *inside* the trauma memory).

And once again, the ideal option is for the recipient to engage with the living presence of Jesus from inside the traumatic memory. As described in more detail below, Jesus will provide some sort of corrective experience in the context of His living interactions with the recipient.

Practical application comments: Just as with level 4, with level 5 processing *maturity skill augmentation and maturity skill training no longer require attuned relational connection in the context of a one-on-one relationship*. As discussed above, with level 3 processing, if someone needs maturity skill augmentation and training, the community needs to provide *attuned relational connection* which can only be accomplished in the context of a *one-on-one relationship*. With level 5 processing, in contrast, attuned relational connection with an external other is the source for community augmentation of *capacity*, but attuned relational connection is *not* necessary for the explanations and coaching that are the source of maturity skill augmentation and training. You can receive explanations by listening to a lecture, watching a video, or even reading a book; and you can benefit from coaching regarding observation and analysis even though you have no relationship with the person.

This point has very practical implications as we are thinking about how to help people with inadequate level 5 maturity skills. The fact that level 5 maturity skill explanations and coaching do *not* require one-on-one attuned relational connection *means that level 5 skill augmentation and training can occur in group settings, and that this resource can also be transmitted through media*, such as books or videotaped lectures.

Immanuel thoughts regarding conditions and resources necessary for successful completion of processing tasks: Connecting and synchronizing with Jesus is the ideal resource regarding the general conditions necessary for all processing tasks, and also regarding the specific conditions and resources necessary for the specific processing tasks at each level.

A. Maintaining organized attachment (level 1): Connecting and synchronizing with Jesus is the perfect resource for help with maintaining organized attachment. He is always present, even for people who have meager community. He loves us with perfect love and is always glad to be with us. He never gets triggered, overwhelmed, judgmental or contemptuous. Relationally, He is perfectly present, perfectly glad to be with us, perfectly safe, and He responds perfectly to the unique situations we bring to Him – the perfect ingredients for secure attachment. To the extent you are able to perceive the Lord's presence and synchronize with Him, you will have a secure attachment context in which to process painful experiences (both painful experiences in the present and memories of unresolved painful experiences from the past). Furthermore, over time, as you build a stable secure attachment foundation with Jesus, *your baseline attachment style can actually change from any of the forms of insecure attachment to secure attachment.*

And Jesus can be with the recipient, providing this secure attachment foundation, even while they are inside traumatic memories that include disorganized attachment as part of the original trauma.

B. Adequate involuntary and voluntary capacity (level 2): Connecting and synchronizing with Jesus' Immanuel presence is the best possible source of mutual mind augmentation for both voluntary and involuntary capacity. He is always present, even for people who have meager community. Since He loves us with perfect love, He is always glad to be with us, even in our pain. And He has beyond-elder maturity and infinite capacity, so He is always able to *stay* with us, no matter how intense our pain might be or how long it might last. To the extent a person is able to perceive the Lord's presence and receive His attunement, she will have the best possible mutual mind connection for augmenting her capacity.

And Jesus can be with the recipient, providing capacity augmentation, even while they are working inside traumatic memories. This will be especially valuable in helping them to *stay* connected as they are working through the memory.

C. Working *inside* the memory: As discussed above, Interacting with Jesus' Immanuel presence is the ideal resource for accessing traumatic memories, and this opens the memory files so that you can work *inside* the traumatic memories.

D. Resolving psychological and spiritual blockages: Engaging with Jesus' Immanuel presence is the ideal resource with respect to identifying and resolving psychological and spiritual blockages, since He already knows what they are, He knows how to resolve them, He has the resources necessary to resolve them, and He earnestly desires to help the person resolve them. As mentioned above, to the extent that we can perceive the Lord's Immanuel presence, connect with Him, synchronize with Him, and engage with Him directly, Jesus can help us identify and dismantle our defenses. Furthermore, He is especially wise and careful with respect to psychological defenses, dismantling them in ways that avoid pain and disruption whenever possible

If the person is having difficulty with successful completion of processing tasks, coach her to focus on Jesus, ask Him to reveal the blockages, and ask Him to help resolve them.

E. Specific processing tasks at Level 3: A living, relational connection with Jesus is the best possible source of attuned mutual mind skill augmentation for specific processing tasks at level 3. Immanuel is always present, even when our family or friends are not. He loves us with perfect love and has beyond-elder maturity, so he is always glad to be with us, even when we

are in pain. He has infinite capacity to *stay* with us, no matter what kind of experiences we are dealing with. And He is the ultimate master with respect to maturity skills, and is therefore always able to initiate attunement and help us regain access to our relational connection circuits, recover the relational aspect of our selves, re-establish attuned relational connection, and re-establish relational connection joy. To the extent we are able to perceive the Lord's presence, connect with Him, and synchronize with Him, we will have the best possible attuned relational connection for augmenting our level 3 skills.

Finally, Jesus is with us *inside* the traumatic memory. From *inside* the memory, where losing access to our relational circuits is part of the toxic content carried in the trauma, Jesus can be with us and offer attunement, thereby providing the best possible resource for bringing our relational circuits back online. Regardless of our level 3 skills, if we can connect with Jesus inside the traumatic memory, receiving His attunement will bring our relational circuits back online and cover the level 3 processing task for this particular memory.

F. Specific processing tasks at Level 4: Connecting and synchronizing with Jesus is the best possible source of modeling and mentoring skill-augmentation for specific processing tasks at level 4. Even if there is no one in your community who can help you with a particular level 4 processing problem, Immanuel is always present. Jesus is the ultimate master with respect to level 4 skills for handling difficult situations;²⁵ He is always with us, in the painful experiences we are trying to navigate and in traumatic memories we are trying to process; and He is an excellent teacher, mentor, model, and leader. He is brilliant, creative, appropriate, and kind, and can be both gentle and firm as needed. To the extent we are able to perceive the Lord's presence, observe Him, and follow His example, we will have the best possible augmentation for our level 4 maturity skills.

As already noted in Part II, one of the ways Jesus can be especially valuable with respect to processing tasks at level 4 is that He can be with us *inside* our traumatic memories. Others in our community can be with us in difficult situations, and can therefore augment our level 4 skills by providing an example that we can follow *while we are in the situation*. However, others in our community cannot provide modeling for us inside traumatic memories. Only Jesus can be with us *inside* traumatic memories, and thereby augment our level 4 skills by providing examples that we can follow *while we are working inside the memories*.

G. Specific processing tasks at Level 5: Engaging directly with Jesus' living presence is the best possible source of explanation and corrective interpretation skill augmentation for specific processing tasks at level 5. Even if you cannot find anyone in your community who can help you with your level 5 skill problems, Immanuel is always present. Jesus is *The Truth*, and He is *The Word* by whom all things were created, so He probably has enough level 5 skill to help you with your level 5 processing tasks of making sense out of your experience and replacing distorted interpretations with accurate conclusions. I have also seen Jesus resolve seemingly impossible level 5 processing tasks by responding with some form of "Trust Me." And the key in these situations, where Jesus appears to resolve the level 5 processing tasks by asking the people to focus on Him and trust Him, is that *the people receiving ministry are satisfied*. To the extent we are able to perceive the Lord's presence and synchronize with Him, we will have the best possible augmentation for our level 5 skills.

²⁵I think perfectly navigating the redemption of the world through crucifixion and carrying the sins of all mankind provides pretty good evidence that Jesus can handle difficult situations.

And just as with processing tasks at all other levels, one of the ways Jesus can be especially valuable with respect to processing tasks at level 5 is that He can be with us *inside* our traumatic memories. This is especially significant in light of memory reconsolidation research showing that, in order to correct an experiential-learning distorted interpretation associated with a traumatic memory, we need to have a *corrective experience*, with the opposite meaning from the original distorted interpretation, while *inside* of the traumatic memory. As described above, human therapists can accomplish this by helping the recipient to connect with/get inside of a traumatic memory, and then helping them to connect with a memory for an experience with opposite meaning while still also inside of the traumatic memory. However, Jesus can be *with* the recipient *inside* of the memory, and directly provide a corrective experience as He interacts with them. My experience is that coaching the recipient to engage directly with Jesus inside the memory is much simpler than humanly coordinating the connection with a corrective experience from the recipient's memories, and my observation is that corrective experiences from direct interactions with Jesus are much more powerful.

V. Setting up these conditions and providing these resources in the context of the Immanuel

Approach: My experience with this information regarding the conditions and resources necessary for resolving trauma is very similar to my experience with information regarding the pain processing pathway. When a person has *not* been able to perceive the Lord's presence, connect with Him, stay synchronized with Him, and receive guidance from Him, it has been very helpful for me to deliberately apply this information as I lead the session. However, for people who *are* able to perceive the Lord's presence, connect with Him, and receive help from Him, this potentially complicated process can become very simple. Repeatedly turning to the Lord and staying synchronized with the Lord can address all of these concerns, without needing to explicitly manage the conditions necessary for accessing traumatic memories, the conditions necessary for modifying traumatic memories, and the conditions and resources necessary for resolving unfinished processing tasks. With people who *are* able to perceive the Lord's presence, connect with Him deeply, and receive guidance from Him, all I do is help them perceive the Lord's presence, help them connect with the Him and synchronize with Him, help them *stay* synchronized with Him, coach them to keep asking Him for guidance regarding "what's the next step I need to take?," and coach them to engage with the Lord directly whenever they encounter problems in the process.

I have been able to use this Immanuel Approach approach with people who had complex, severely traumatic memories, inadequate voluntary and involuntary capacity, unprocessed material at multiple levels, and lies scattered everywhere. Never the less, even though I did not deliberately incorporate these principles in my leadership of the session, these people were able to access their traumatic memories, they were able to allow modification, and they were able to successfully complete remedial processing tasks so that toxic content was permanently resolved. Looking back on these sessions, I can see that Jesus clearly understood all these principles and concerns, and that He addressed them brilliantly.

An intermediate situation is presented by the many people who can perceive the Lord's presence, connect with Him, and receive help from Him, *but there is still enough stuff in the way that the Immanuel connection is only weak-to-moderate*. In these cases, the Lord's presence and help make it much easier than if I had to carry the *full* responsibility for applying this information regarding the conditions and resources necessary for resolving traumatic memories; but the weak-to-moderate Immanuel connection impairs their ability to receive His help to the point that it is still valuable for me to lead the session with awareness of these principles.

VI. Summary/conclusions:

- When these conditions have been met and these resources are available, the person is able to access the traumatic memories, the traumatic memories become open to modification, and the toxic content is resolved as the remedial processing tasks are successfully completed.
- These principles have been very valuable in helping me resolve some complex situations that had been stuck prior to applying these principles.
- *To the extent that a person is able to perceive the Lord's presence, synchronize with Him, and receive help from Him, the process can be simplified by organizing the session around the presence of Jesus and letting Him apply these principles as they are needed.*

Part IV addendum: “But where are the practical details regarding how to set up these conditions and provide these resources in sessions where Immanuel connection does *not* care for these specifics?”

That will need to be a separate essay/book: My primary objectives in this essay are 1.) to provide the foundational information with respect to understanding the pain processing pathway and traumatic memories; 2.) provide the “big picture” of understanding emotional healing ministry from the perspective of deliberately setting up the conditions and resources necessary for accessing, modifying, and resolving traumatic memories; and 3.) presenting the Immanuel Approach, where, as much as possible, we let Jesus lead with respect to setting up the necessary conditions and supplying the necessary resources. The practical application details regarding how to do this when the Immanuel connection is weak-moderate, so that we need to lead the process to a much greater extent, will need to be the topic of a separate essay/book.²⁶

2025 Addendum: in the almost twenty years since first writing this essay, I have steadily moved toward focusing more and more on troubleshooting regarding the recipient's connection with Jesus, so that He can provide guidance regarding all of these details. I still occasionally encounter advanced scenarios for which I need to take responsibility for applying these principles as I lead the session, but most of the time I focus on the connection with Jesus, and the Jesus-connection eventually improves to the point where the session moves forward without my needing to apply this material.

²⁶Much of this intermediate-advanced material is now included in Karl Lehman, *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life*, (Evanston IL: Immanuel Publishing, 2016), and also a variety of essays that address intermediate-advanced principles and techniques.