

spending frenzy you feel more alive so you spend, spend, spend in the pursuit of happiness. For a short period the acquisition of clothes, shoes, a house, a car, a new kitchen, anchors your life into some place of meaning.

You can also lose your quality of presence through physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual pain. In pain, our natural and necessary inclination is to dull the experience by withholding full attention and engagement from the world or bluffing through the pain by pushing the world away from us. If we don't return to the world when the pain thaws, we may stay disconnected for the rest of our lives. In this way, an ancient pain can distance you throughout the remainder of your life.

We all know that one of the most successful ways to stop pain and presence is to drink or use other drugs. The reason that drunks are dangerous and boring is that they are not there with you, but are lost in another world. Driving when drunk is destructive because you are not present to the road and the traffic around you. You are not in a place of survival and your inability to survive could harm others.

Marriages fail when partners no longer feel the intimacy of being present with each other. Affairs are started to try to recapture the excitement of intimacy. Children lose contact with their parents, and vice versa, when there is no present living moment in the family.

You change careers, go traveling, play extreme sports, get plastic surgery, drive fast cars, take exotic holidays, or redecorate the house, constantly seeking presence. These strategies might work for an hour, a day, or a year, but they will not solve your inner deadness. To do that, you have to work to understand your energy and to be present in Second Circle.

# 3

## The Three Circles of Energy

To go beyond is as wrong as to fall short.

—CONFUCIUS

**A natural movement of energy** should always run through you. Body, breath, voice; how you listen, think, and feel. You feel this energy and others feel it around you. This energy is completely tangible. Read the list below carefully:

- The Three Circles of Energy describe the three basic ways human energy moves.
- The movement of energy is all through your body, breath, voice, and how you listen, think, and feel.
- You feel this energy as do others around you. In this way, the energy is completely tangible.
- You can move through all Three Circles rapidly within seconds. The speed and shifts in energy can be startling.
- You need to be able to access all Three Circles during the course of the day.
- The Three Circles describe energy, not the content of that energy. So you can experience any thought or emotion in any of these Circles with different degrees of intensity.
- You have a favorite Circle, one that is habitual to you, and it is this favorite energy that is blocking your presence.

Please remember that the state of presence is your birthright, so when you discover the energy you live in most, don't despair. This right will overcome the habit.

I am deliberately outlining First and Third Circle before Second Circle. First and Third take you out of your natural presence of Second Circle. As we are all aiming for Second Circle presence, this is the final Circle we will be looking at in this chapter.

### First Circle: The Circle of Self and Withdrawal

Here, your whole focus is inward. The energy you generate falls back into you. First Circle absorbs other people's energy and draws all outward stimulus inward. When in First Circle, you are not very observant or perceptive about people or objects outside yourself. They interest you only as a means to clarify yourself, not the world around you.

At its best, First Circle is the energy of introspection and reflection. This is very useful at times, but to live predominantly in First Circle is very limiting, if not disabling. You can come across to others as self-centered, uncaring, and withdrawn, and you tend to drain rather than enliven others. Your personal power and impact on the world is compromised and you are vulnerable to being victimized.

You are in First Circle if you

- Find yourself withdrawing physically from people, feelings, or ideas
- Find you are holding your breath or breathing rapidly and shallowly
- Are asked to repeat yourself when you speak
- Find that people lean forward to hear you or notice you
- Are frequently ignored, and not missed when you leave a room
- Feel left out

- Often feel self-conscious
- Wear clothes that help you not to be noticed

By drawing energy inward, you lessen your impact on the world, but you also put yourself in danger as you are not fully noticing your surroundings.

First Circle is useful when you don't want to be noticed. You can watch the most flamboyant actors adopt this energy as they try to slip out of the stage door without being stopped for an autograph. A famous story about Marilyn Monroe tells how she was shopping in a busy store with her friend. The friend was amazed that no one recognized her. Marilyn then showed her friend how she could suddenly *be* Marilyn: she switched herself on—and was immediately swamped by fans. She went from First Circle into her presence and was immediately noticed.

If you live constantly in First Circle, your passion for life has been dulled. You are shy.

As you read this book you might realize that when you work with a hobby or get fully engaged with a passion, you will abandon First Circle and enter your presence. Great writers might be shy in public but they write their books with full presence.

You may be living in First Circle because you were chased back out of your presence by criticism, unwelcome attention, or abuse. You have learned to hide your visibility and not be noticed.

### Third Circle: The Circle of Bluff and Force

In Third Circle, all of your energy is outward-moving and non-specific, and is untargeted. It is as if you are spraying your energy out to the world with an aerosol can. Your attention is outside yourself, yet unfocused, lacking precision and detail. You get a loose connection to any situation, but miss the nuances. The world is a dimly lit audience for whom you are performing.

In Third Circle you attract attention, and you may even make a favorable first impression. This is deceptively useful in situations where you need to engage superficially with people in groups and gain their immediate compliance or cooperation. It's good for getting parties started, and for rallying the troops. The drawback is that you are not engaging specifically with anything and therefore cannot take energy back in. This energy lacks intimacy; others feel that they don't really matter to you and therefore the energy is impersonal to them. In Third Circle, you may speak eloquently, sound enthusiastic and charming, but you don't listen well. You look through people rather than at them, skimming the surface of every interaction.

Third Circle is a forceful shield that protects you and your vulnerability from the intrusions of the world, and you will sometimes need to hold that shield up to the world. If, however, this energy is the norm, you are not receiving any energy from the world. You are alone and fighting to control your life without allowing anyone to help. At worst, others experience you as insensitive, arrogant, and overbearing.

You are in Third Circle if you

- Notice people withdrawing from you or making space for you
- Find yourself taking up more space than you need
- Breathe with noise, pulling the air into your body and taking the oxygen from others
- Are told often that you are too loud, either in speech or laughter
- Don't really notice the people you are speaking to or the room you are in
- Don't notice if people are not enjoying themselves as you are
- Feel that you have to inject energy into every social event at any price to yourself and others
- Take command of a discussion even if you have only heard

a fragment of what is being discussed, so that you are accused of interrupting others

- Wear clothes that get you noticed

Third Circle has its uses. You can enter this circle to protect yourself, channeling the energy out from yourself and keeping others at bay. Passing through a crowd is a physical example of this. If ever I'm in a pressing crowd that I need to pass through, I listen for a loud voice going my way and follow in its wake. The loud voice is an indication of Third Circle, and the individual with that voice has no problems pushing his or her way through others. Third Circle energy can stop an unwanted conversation or intrusion and defend your privacy. You can be pleasant and enthusiastic without fully committing to people.

People working in the service industries are normally highly skilled in Third Circle. They have to feign charm and concern for hundreds of others. It is actually impossible to do this and still be fully present with all those strangers. So the solution is Third Circle. Royalty and celebrities keep a distance from their public with Third Circle energy, pushing strangers away. In these cases they pretend intimacy but stay defended.

If you know you fall into a Third Circle habit, it is probably because your back was pushed up against the wall at some time in your life and you came out fighting! You were desperate to be felt and seen, not reduced and ignored.

Maybe now you will realize you don't have to fight all the time.

### Second Circle: The Energy of Connecting

In Second Circle, your energy is focused. It moves out toward the object of your attention, touches it, and then receives energy back from it. You are living in a two-way street—you give to and are responsive with that energy, reacting and communicat-

ing freely. You are in the moment—in the so-called “zone”—and moment to moment you give and take. Both giving and taking, in that moment, are equal to each other. In Second Circle, you touch and influence another person rather than impress or impose your will on them. You influence them by allowing them to influence you. You hear others and take in what they are really saying. Second Circle energy, when positive, is generous. It begets intimacy.

When the power and precision of Second Circle energy is fueled by malice or darker emotions, then the receiver is in real danger. Second Circle is inappropriate when it touches people who do not want to fully engage with you. Those who have no clear path of escape from you (such as students or employees) will experience it as invasive.

Positive presence through Second Circle is the most powerful, creative, and intimate way of interacting with the world. The art of being present is the art of operating from Second Circle.

You know you are in Second Circle if you

- Feel centered and alert
- Feel your body belongs to you
- Feel the earth through your feet
- Feel your breath is easy and complete
- Know you reach people and they hear you when you speak
- Notice details in others—their eyes, their moods, their anxieties
- Are curious about a new idea—not judgmental
- Hear clearly
- Acknowledge the feelings of others
- See, hear, smell, touch something new, which focuses this energy in the whole of you

In Second Circle you are noticed, heard, remembered—and powerful. This focus of clear energy has its problems. Let’s go

back and begin to appreciate how dangerous your present power might be to others around you.

A weak father doesn’t really want his son to challenge him with presence. Children are told not to stare or show too much interest in certain things. Cultural factors come into play. Some women are punished for not being in First Circle. In some countries, the release of Second Circle emotion is encouraged; in others, it is thought to be distasteful. In some families, certain subjects are never discussed in Second Circle. When I first taught in India, I realized I was asking women teachers to be in Second Circle, which was completely against their upbringing. I was equally shocked to teach Second Circle to emotionally expressive Russians—very different from their less emotionally expressive English counterparts.

I am telling you all this to make you extremely aware of how clever you can be in hiding your Second Circle.

Remember the experience of standing at a party talking to someone you feel obliged to please and being bored by them but too polite to move away, even if you are more interested in someone across the room. You act and mask a charming Third Circle to the person you are with, but your Second Circle energy is attached to the person across the room. You don’t need to look at them; you can feel and connect with them across space with your Second Circle energy. And what about those occasions when you overhear people gossiping? You long to hear what they are saying but know that they won’t include you. You act as if you are concentrating on a task like tidying your desk, but your real focused Second energy is on their conversation.

I learned very quickly when I started to teach children with speech impediments to get them physically helping me with a task like stacking books or chopping a carrot—anything to dupe them into thinking my whole attention wasn’t on them. In this way they were freed from feeling a Second Circle scrutiny on their speech problem and 80 percent of the time this freedom

from scrutiny enabled them to speak without an impediment. We would chat away, and after a while I would say, "You know you haven't stuttered for twenty minutes." And they hadn't!

Historically, servants have had to learn to perform this mix of energy in order to serve but not intrude and this is a form of survival. It is a way of keeping your job with difficult and demanding employers. A good waiter serves you attentively at lunch, seemingly not hearing your conversation, but in fact alert to your every need. He is deliberately flattening himself into First Circle, but that actually masks a strong Second Circle attention on you.

My mother was brilliant at eavesdropping. On returning from family meals in restaurants, she would report in painstaking detail the conversations that were occurring on tables around ours. A sad reflection on her interest in her own family's meal-time conversations!

Recently, a friend and I were having a very intense and personally revealing discussion in the back of a taxi. Neither of us noticed the driver; he seemed completely preoccupied in driving. But when she left the cab, he turned to me and commented on what we had been talking about. I felt foolish and duped. By forgetting the driver's presence—however well disguised—I had handed a stranger intimate information about both our lives.

The fashion of "cool" is a studied physical manifestation of First Circle. If it was a true First Circle, then in the state of cool you are not aware of anyone around you. You are completely self-involved. Mostly, cool is a First Circle front hiding an acute Second Circle attention to the world. There is a historic suggestion that the term "cool" comes from the black American slave who didn't dare look at or challenge the master, let alone the mistress. The front of this "cool" is a display of physical powerlessness, to avoid punishment but actually stay highly tuned in Second Circle to survive a ruthless owner. Sitting on a London tube train or New York subway late at night it is very advisable

to manifest First Circle but stay alert to the whole car in Second Circle. Teaching in prisons, I have seen this energy mix very clearly. Most inmates want to stay out of trouble, so they feign First Circle but actually must be in Second Circle.

Cool is only destructive if it has completely closed you down in First. You can observe this in privileged children, who manifest the cool shutdown because they have a highly acute understanding of energy levels, without ever knowing that they should stay attentive if they want to survive.

When I have taught groups of prostitutes, they understand this energy mix well. They have to please and flatter their clients, so pretend an intimate connection to them in Second Circle. In fact, they are really surviving by being in Second Circle with their surroundings and in First Circle with the client. They have no interest in intimacy with a paying customer. Paying for sex is a transaction that is devoid of equality. Who actually has the upper hand in this deal is up for debate. High-class prostitutes can believe they do; the more desperate and less protected know otherwise. As you work in Second Circle more, you will know when others are feigning an energy, but only if you are in Second Circle yourself.

What Are You? Where Are You?

I think by now you have a good idea of your favorite Circle and how often you are present in the world. Please remember that you are using every Circle but do have a habitual one. Take time and make a list of all the most important people in your life. Here is an example:

|          |          |            |         |
|----------|----------|------------|---------|
| Parents  | Partners | Teachers   | Friends |
| Children | Siblings | Colleagues |         |

Is there any specific pattern of energy to your interaction with each of these people? Who is present with you? Who allows your presence? Who blocks it?

Here are some questions to consider:

Do you experience Second Circle equal intimacy with anyone? Who? How often?

Does Second Circle frighten you? Does it thrill you?

Do you trust in Second Circle?

Can you love in Second Circle?

Are there tasks that take away your presence?

Are there sports or pastimes that focus you into Second Circle?

I don't expect you to be able to answer all these questions right away, but I think even answering three or four will begin to bring together pieces of a jigsaw or glass in a stained-glass window. A pattern and shape to your energy will emerge, and with that will come an awareness of patterns of energy around you.

Over days, weeks, and even years, you will find answers to more of these questions, and with these answers you will begin to understand the impact you have on the world and its impact on you. You will begin to shift out of habits that tie you down, and to move energy in yourself and others with ease and fluidity.

## 4

### How to Move into Second Circle

There are certain topics that have many people fidgeting and wriggling in their seats. This is a sure sign of unease, if not distress. Isn't it wonderful that ideas can produce such physical reactions? The discomfort comes from fear, and fear can create knee-jerk reactions in even the most reasonable individual.

So, what are these topics, and why am I proposing ideas that will cause distress? First, the topics:

**Transformation:** Well, a lot of people don't like change, but change is inevitable. Even if your stuck habits *feel* safe, they are not;

**Power:** Many of us are frightened of power, mistaking it for force, and even those with power are uneasy discussing it. All our deep fears about power are due to its potential misuse by us or against us;

**Gender:** Both men and women are tired of discussing the differences, but the basic issues have not yet been resolved, only repositioned.

Why do I feel compelled to discuss these subjects? Well, Second Circle presence is about being in the moment, and being in the moment keeps you open to change. Presence is constantly undergoing a process of transformation. Then, to be intimate