

The Enlightenment Technique



The core of the Enlightenment Intensive is contained in the Enlightenment Technique. Understanding the technique makes it possible to conduct an Enlightenment Intensive properly. There is a lot to understand. You should aim for a complete understanding of how the technique works so that you can see why it is constructed the way it is. If you do not understand it all, you will not appreciate the great truth and power that is contained in it and you will be tempted to vary it, thinking that one way is as good as the other. You will drift away from the exact technique, as many people have, with the result that the power of it will weaken and weaken and you will end up with some ordinary activity.

The Enlightenment Technique is remarkably effective. If a participant does the Enlightenment Technique on an Enlightenment Intensive, within a day and a half he will always have an enlightenment experience. The problem is getting the person to do it, and in this you will encounter two difficulties: one is the participants' understanding of what to do, and the other is the mental, emotional and physical barriers that arise when they try to do it. Your job is first to make clear to the participants what the technique is, and second, to give them the support to get through the barriers that arise. To be able to do this, you must understand very clearly not only what the technique is, but why it is that way.

How the mind is created

The age-old technique of reflecting on 'Who am I?' is a very good one, but it is slow. Berner wondered what he could do to speed it up. He had had years of experience in working on communication techniques, learning how people could communicate better with each other, especially on a one-to-one basis, and for years had worked with the dyad format and investigated its various aspects.

1. He had made some fundamental observations, one being the core principle that more mind is generated when something is not communicated between individuals. For example, if you read something in this chapter that you do not understand, then we will have put more into your mind because communication has not successfully taken place. If, on the other hand, you do understand what you have read, then we have successfully communicated and your mind has not been added to. **3.** Another important principle is that when something is completely received, it leaves the realm of the mind and enters the realm of knowingness. The Enlightenment Technique is partially built around these observations of fundamental principles.

The mind fills up with things which are not understood, integrated, or fully experienced. For example, someone may have been through a trauma in the past in which the experiences were too intense for him and he stored them in his mind for further integration at a later time. He integrated part of the experience at the time it occurred but the part that wasn't understood or accepted, that he wasn't able to experience given his current ability, was suspended in his mind.

Did you ever have a desk with a 'Pending' box on it? Well, that's the mind. You think, 'Someday I'm going to work on that stuff.' Later you work on some of it and you handle a few of the sheets on the top but then ten more come in and it is just too much to do at one time. You glance at it and you think, 'I do not understand that; I'll work on that later.' Those sheets are what the mind is made up of. Also, you throw outgoing messages into a similar basket marked 'Outgoing' but the messenger never comes by to pick them up and deliver them. Other people have not received your messages for them, and these also are

stored in your mind. **2.** For example, it would be relatively easy to contemplate 'What am I?' if one didn't have a mind. But when one tries to contemplate what he is the mind gets in the way because of all the ideas that are stored there that have to do with what he is: ideas about himself that he has not understood, ideas from the social environment which have made him think one way or the other about what he is, and a lot of things about what he is that he has not been able to get understood by other people. So, when one tries to contemplate what it is that he is, he gets all these things in the mind instead of what he actually is. That is why it takes years and years of solo contemplation to try to find one's way through the morass of the mind.

If learning data and listening to false ideas about who and what you are did any good, we would all have been enlightened long ago. Memories and fears, like the fear 'What if I were this?' are stored up in the mind along with the ideas and opinions you have heard from others and the data you have learned, and they are not enlightenment experiences either. All these are impressions in the mind.

On the other hand, there is plenty of correct information available about who and what you are, and learning this can be useful in trying to have conscious, direct knowledge of yourself because it leads you in the right direction. But information from someone else can only be helpful if you realize that what you learn from others is always indirect knowledge, and is not enlightenment.

There once was a participant who, when first asked who he was, pulled out his driver's license and showed it to his partner. This was his identity. People have identified themselves not only with ideas in the mind, but with their names, dates of birth, and other personal information like that given on a driver's license. People also identify themselves with personality traits; for example, being a 'nice guy'. There are numerous personality traits with which people identify themselves. In fact, people are not their names, facts about them or personalities, but just like an actor playing a role who has forgotten who he is, they have become identified with these things and forgotten that they too are playing a role.

9. Even worse is when people have a vested interest in certain states of

being. They have a reputation to defend, or even more basically, they are trying to tell people something about themselves by being a certain way. For example, they want to be loved. That is a pretty common want. So they act a certain way in order to invite that love: aggressive, passive or neutral, it does not matter. The mind can justify how being any way will produce whatever the person wants. So not only have people become unconsciously identified with being some thing or some way, but they often have a use for thinking of themselves as that. All of this stuff, which is stored in the mind, masks who people actually are, and it all interferes with the process of contemplation. Our job is to help them to de-identify, give up their investments, and dissolve away or separate the mind from who they are so that at last they can consciously, directly know who they really are.

Defeating the mind through communication

In the classical techniques of just contemplating, the aspirant gradually burned out the mind. If you stared at a rock long enough it would dissolve away, but it would take staring for a long time, about four hundred billion years or so. Breathing on a rock would gradually wear it down a little faster by wind erosion. Running water would make it go a little faster. Taking a hammer and smashing it would be quicker, or pouring chemicals on it might dissolve it away in minutes. So there are different rates at which you can dissolve away identifications, confusions, traumas, and vested interests contained in the mind that make the mind stick and hold on.

6. The most powerful means to dissolve the mind is through communication. This is because, as stated earlier, the mind is filled with attempted communications which were not fully communicated between individuals. Following this principle, what we do is have the participant first contemplate who he is and then communicate to a listening partner what occurred in his mind as a result of that contemplation. When the things in the mind are communicated, they dissolve and vanish out of the mind to the degree that they are received and understood by another individual. That is the crux of this principle and the crux of the power of this technique. This technique has been tested and compared to other methods of enlightenment, and depending

upon the skill of the master and the experience of the participants, this technique is about fifty to a hundred times more rapid in producing enlightenment experiences than the classical techniques.

You should try to understand the mechanism by which this technique works. If you do not understand it, you will never be able to really understand why the technique and the format are the way they are. You will think the technique is an arbitrary thing and you will change it. Later on you will teach people in ways based upon what you personally favor and not based upon these fundamental observations of life. You will decide that it is not such a good technique after all, and you will want to change what you are doing with it. Instead of trying to get people enlightened you will try to make them feel better or get them high or get them to have some sort of elevated experience, or have them get off on the contact with each other, or work on straightening out their relationships. All of these are noble and useful ends, but they do not lead to enlightenment.

The Zen Buddhists' method involves limited contact between individuals. Every once in a while the aspirant sees the Roshi to find out whether or not he has experienced kensho, or enlightenment. He gets in line, moves his way along to the Roshi's room, and goes in. The aspirant says a word or two, and the Roshi reaches over, grabs his bell, rings it, and dismisses him. After the person is turned down a lot, he quits going in. But the Buddhists realize the value of this contact with the master so they have the chief monk, which we call the chief monitor, drag people in. There are stories of people screaming and crying, 'I will not go see him! I made up my mind I would never go again.' But the chief monk knows the value of this contact with the master and drags them in anyway.

Originally, in Soto Zen, the monks faced a blank wall because, according to the story, this was the way Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen Buddhism, did it. But later on in the Rinzai Zen school, the monks were turned around to face each other. The reason was that doing this increased the tension. In effect, it increased the contact and built up the energy and accelerated the process of enlightenment. The Rinzai masters did another thing: they used the koan, a key question, a riddle, whereas the Soto masters did not. In Rinzai Zen, a koan such as 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?' would be contemplated. This is a classic koan that many people are familiar with. There are lots of other

koans, including 'Who am I?' But the Rinzai masters never got as far as moving those two monks a little bit closer to each other so that when one came up with something he would communicate it to the other. Thus enters the Enlightenment Technique, in which two live individuals are immediately available to each other during the entire Enlightenment Exercise.

The Enlightenment Technique adds communication to contemplation. The communication does not begin with the contemplation; it begins with an instruction from one individual to another. Berner had first thought that it might be possible to just have both people sit there contemplating and when one came up with something he would say, 'Hey, this is what I came up with.' But that does not follow a good communication cycle because it interrupts the other person's contemplation too irregularly. It is too informal. **11**

So we have the communication formally begin with one individual giving an instruction to another. This adds the power and the consciousness and the life of another being to the efforts of the contemplating partner. When one says, 'Tell me who you are,' if the other accepts that instruction as an order from his partner then the two have come together and are joining forces against the receiver's mind with its confusions, reluctances, identifications, unconsciousness, and investments. The life from both of the conscious entities is added together. No wonder this technique is so powerful.

But it is only powerful if when the first individual says to his partner, 'Tell me who you are,' he actually wants his partner to tell him who he is, and if the receiver of that instruction accepts it as an order from his partner. This is what gives the power to the technique. The giver of the instruction should mean it. It is not acceptable for people to take the attitude, 'I've got to say this, they told me to say it, but I really do not care who you are, I came here to find out who I am.' Such casual attitudes are often common in the first part of an Intensive, but as the contact and camaraderie between individuals begins to grow, the participants become interested in each other. The love and contact and openness among them grows and after a while when they say, 'Tell me who you are,' they mean it. It is important to allow this contact to build. Even though the participant has been told hundreds of times, 'Tell me who you are', and he knows that his partner is going to say it, you should not cultivate a casual attitude in the participants about receiving the instruction. You should instead

teach them to actively respond to their partners. The partner has made the request, 'Tell me who you are,' and the receiving partner's attitude should be 'Okay, I'm going to do that.' In doing this, they are working together as a team.

The power of any one individual's mind is equal to that individual's own personal power. This is because subconsciously he is putting his power into his mind. Take the ego for example, that very deep-seated identification. One thinks of oneself as something and will defend his investment in that thing being what he is. He will justify it and make it be what he is and put his own power and consciousness and life into that state of being. Therefore, it is almost impossible for an individual, by himself, to defeat his own mind because his mind has gotten its power from himself and it is equally as strong as he is.

Once the participant has accepted the instruction from his partner, the contemplation phase begins. In the following section, this phase has been broken up into various parts so that you can better understand the mechanisms of contemplation in order to be able to properly instruct your participants in how to do the technique.

Contemplation

One is trying to have an enlightenment experience with regard to something. We call that something the object of enlightenment and on an Enlightenment Intensive that object is either Who or What the individual is. In the following example, Who the individual is, is used. The one giving the instruction says, 'Tell me who you are.' Upon receiving the instruction, the partner should intend to consciously, directly know who it is that he is. But the problem is that people often do not have that intention. Instead what they do is think about themselves, and they do this by a logical process. In other words, they try to figure out who they are. They do not have their attention on the actual self at all. Instead, they are thinking over an abstract concept of selfness. It is like the difference between a volcano enthusiast reading

a book on volcanoes or going on a field trip and actually kicking a volcano in the side. **10** When people work on who they are they often think about things like psychological studies on people, and they do not go off on a field trip to actually experience themselves. They are in academic-land. They are in abstract-land instead of reality-land. They are running around in their minds dealing with ideas about themselves, and they are not dealing with themselves.

7/8 Unfortunately, there is no way to stop people from doing this at first. If we could, we would stop them immediately. But people are not capable of this raw experience in the beginning. In fact, they try to have conscious, direct knowledge of who they are, but they cannot manage it because the mind gets in the way and comes up with ideas about who they are instead of touching the real thing. What are you to do? As a master, you could make a great mistake by encouraging the activity of thinking about, rather than dealing with, the actual object of enlightenment itself, which is the actual self. A lot of people, not understanding the Enlightenment Technique properly, have permitted this sort of thing to go on, or encouraged it. You cannot really stop it in the beginning, but you should tell the participants that what you want them to do is to intend to consciously, directly know the object itself, and not just think about or deal with thoughts about that object. However, it would be an error to give the instruction, 'Have conscious, direct knowledge of yourself,' because they cannot do it. If you tell them to do that, you are setting them up for failure. You should not tell a person to do something he cannot do. Instead, you should say, 'Intend to have conscious, direct knowledge of yourself.' That people can do. They *can* have the intent. They may have difficulty carrying it out because the mind throws up all these ideas about themselves



– the identifications, confusions, and all the things they have been told about them-selves – but they can still have the intent. In fact, these ideas come into their consciousness as a result of this intention to have conscious, direct knowledge of who they are. So contemplation, using the Enlightenment Technique, is begun by intending to have conscious, direct knowledge of the object of enlightenment.

Intending

16 What does 'intent' mean? 'We intend to move to St. Helena.' We are not hoping; we are going to go there. Intent and hope are not synonymous. Intent is more than expectation; and it is more than just a wish. None of these is going to get you to St. Helena. In plain English, intending means you are going to do it. Intent has commitment involved in it. The ego is often hesitant to make a commitment because it is afraid of failure. The difficulty in getting people to intend to consciously, directly know the object of enlightenment is that they are afraid they will fail. **17** In fact, they do fail almost all of the time and they might fail during the entire Intensive. People do not like to fail and come up empty-handed, so they say to themselves, 'Well, I'm just going to sit here. Maybe something will happen, maybe it will not.' Then they are covered. They will not really have failed because they will not really have intended. There is a certain

virtue to that approach to things, but in doing a willful technique, you must use your will. The Enlightenment Technique is willful except for the conclusion, which is the enlightenment experience itself.

18 The next question is, what is one going to intend to do? The crux of the matter is in these words: direct, and the object of enlightenment, which is you. 'Direct' and 'object' are the key words. What does direct mean? There is no way to explain it. You could hit around the edges, but in the end you are going to have to be satisfied with a primitive idea of the word direct. You can define it negatively by saying that it is through no process or means or via. Then the participant will very often think, 'Well, then how do you do it directly?' There is no how involved. They say, 'Well, then what do I do?' Your response is, 'You intend, that's what you do. You intend to consciously, *directly* know the object of your enlightenment, which is either who or what you are.' Direct knowledge does not involve process; and being conscious of what you directly know does not require any effort on your part, it simply comes along with the direct knowledge of yourself. You automatically become conscious of the *actual* who or what that you are, which is not an idea.

15 Then what is the participant's job? In doing the technique, it is to remain open to whatever may occur in his consciousness as a result of having the intention to have conscious, direct knowledge of the object of his enlightenment. That is a mouthful of words, but it is a rigorous description of what a participant has to do. He is not just to remain open to whatever may occur in his consciousness. You have to get this clear with the participants, otherwise they will just sit there and be open. At the same time, if you intend to go to St. Helena, you do not have to keep constantly thinking the thought in order to still have the intention. You do not have to think, 'I intend to go, I intend to go, I intend to go...' You just say, 'Well, I'm going. That's it. That applies from now on. That's my intent.' If one intends to directly know the object of his enlightenment, one simply means it. That is what an intent is. Then you remain open to whatever may occur in your consciousness as a result of that intention. This means not having preconceived ideas of what should occur, and not trying or intending to make your experience come out a certain way. Without intent there is no openness; without the openness you do not really have the intent.

The object of enlightenment

The problem of the object of enlightenment is a difficult one. Because of that, it is explained here in detail. The phrase 'object of enlightenment' is not satisfactory, but it is the best short phrase to describe what it is that one is trying to have conscious, direct knowledge of. There is only one object of enlightenment: you as you really are. Yet there is no ultimate object when you work on 'Who am I?' or 'What am I?' because you are not a thing. If a person thinks he is a body, he will find out he is not. If he thinks he is a mind or personality, he will find out he is not.

As a master, you need to thoroughly understand what is being said here so that you can explain it from a dozen different angles. What the participant is to take for his object of enlightenment is whatever he is thinking of himself as at the moment. If he is working on 'What am I?' he will think of or indirectly experience himself as something, or as nothing, or as whatever, and he should intend to consciously, directly know that, whatever it is. For example, even though he may know intellectually that he will not turn out to be a body, if he still actually experiences or thinks of himself as a body, he should intend to have conscious, direct knowledge of that body. At that moment that is the object of his enlightenment. The object of enlightenment is what he is identified with plus the Truth. He will not have it sorted out like that. If he did, his enlightenment would be almost complete

As he is contemplating himself as a body, something will occur in his consciousness as a result. He may experience a purple light, for instance. If that occurs, he should communicate that to his partner. Then he should again notice what his indirect experience of himself at the moment is and intend to have conscious, direct knowledge of that. If he is working on what he is, the truth of that is what he actually is, but he is identified with his body, mind and emotions, a flash of light, sun, moon and stars, or just about anything. If he says, 'I'm the glowing truth,' then he should intend to directly know himself as glowing truth. That becomes the object of his enlightenment. He should intend to have conscious, direct knowledge of what he is now, which to him at the moment would be glowing truth. When he does that, his experience of himself as 'glowing truth' will tend to break and he will de-identify from it and get closer to the Truth. The object of enlightenment is constantly changing from second to

second while doing the technique. You cannot tell the participant what the object of his enlightenment is because this would be laying the ultimate trip on him. Fortunately, you cannot lose the Truth because it is everywhere and always. Even if the participant experiences himself as a grey block, there is still the Truth of himself in there some-where. As the master, you should allow that freedom of the object to change. If you do not, you are going to slow the participant down. An object may go and come back again and again and again. Finally, the core of the thing that keeps showing up will be penetrated and the person will have an enlightenment experience.

If the participant does not actually experience himself as whatever has come up for him, glowing truth, grey block, or whatever; if he has an experience of some-thing independent of his experience of himself, he should just communicate that to his partner and not intend to have conscious, direct knowledge of it. He should intend to have conscious, direct knowledge only of what he experiences *himself* to be; everything else that occurs as a direct result of his contemplation should only be communicated. However, you should not let the participants run on and on talking about what comes up. They can waste a lot of time that way. Teach them to communicate what comes up and then return to their contemplation.

10 Often people are dealing with ideas. The participant is having an idea of him-self or he is trying to define himself instead of have conscious, direct knowledge of himself. That is all some people can do, so you have to start there with them. In the beginning you should be satisfied with that. After a day or two of being in thought-land, the person says, 'Well, I do not know. I just...you know... I'm lost.' Finally he has given up on definitions and he is totally lost. He has made progress. So you say to him, 'Tell me what you are to yourself right now.' He says, 'I'm a frustrated person.' Now that is real to him. Then you say, 'Okay. Now intend to have conscious, direct knowledge of that one who is frustrated.' He says, 'Oh, I get it. You mean me.' This is how you get them on to this business. Then you have to keep refining the instruction as they gradually comprehend what you are referring to when you are explaining what they should do. Just explaining the words of the technique does not take long, but to get them to really understand 'intention' and 'object' and 'open' and 'direct result of your contemplation' takes work.

Dealing with a real thing instead of a concept or something else that isn't real to them makes a tremendous difference. They tend not to get tired or sleepy or bored if they have a real object. They get into it because it is real to them and not just words. This is very valuable. It is better to have a person dealing with his frustration than dealing with a concept of himself. Concepts are just in thought-land and no one can ever have an enlightenment experience in thought-land. When the person is finally dealing with something real about himself, he gets the impact of the power and reality of the question, and it is a tremendous step forward for him. At this point, participants begin to realize that we are not just playing, that Enlightenment Intensives are after the real thing. Teaching participants to correctly contemplate the object of enlightenment is a very important aspect of the Enlightenment Technique, and you should understand it thoroughly.

Being open to the object of enlightenment

13 Unfortunately, as has been stated, most people will have difficulty grasping what you want them to do, so during an Enlightenment Intensive, you have to explain to them over and over and over again what it is that they are to do in their contemplation because the mind keeps trying to do something else, and people unfortunately are identified with the mind. They think that what the mind is doing is what they are doing. So if the mind starts doing something, they start justifying why *they* are doing it. You have to convince them that they can ignore what the mind is doing and go ahead and intend to have conscious, direct knowledge of who they are. The mind is thinking about who they are and trying to remember and figure it out and visualize it, using all the different mechanisms that the mind uses, but you should tell them not to invest themselves in these mechanisms of the mind. In the next phase of doing the technique, they will communicate these things to their partners, which will remove them from the mind. But with regard to the contemplation phase, the way you help the participants to break the identification between themselves and their minds is by telling them to just be open to whatever may occur. This is the final clincher on the contemplation activity. Being open means not to have preconceived ideas, not to try to put something there to get enlightened on.

People have preconceived ideas about who and what they are that come from the mind. They have preconceived ideas about what enlightenment is or is supposed to be like. They are always wrong. There may be some element of correctness to their preconceived ideas, but so far as enlightenment is concerned, they are wrong because their ideas are ideas and as long as they are ideas, they are not enlightenment. Enlightenment is not an idea; it is a fact of pure conscious, direct knowledge.

12 In explaining the Enlightenment Technique, the term 'open' is used, which is a very primitive word in English. However, there is no better word. You could say 'surrender'. It is the same thing, but you will probably have more luck with 'open'. People will sometimes ask you, 'What do you mean by "open" '? What is meant is just the ordinary, everyday meaning that everyone knows open means. If they do not grasp that, you will not do better with any amount of words. When you open a door, you open a door; when you open a can of beer, you open a can of beer. There is nothing hidden or mystical or deep about it. The participants leave the field of consciousness open to whatever may occur as the result of having the intention to consciously, directly know the object of enlightenment.

Communicating only what comes up as a result of contemplation

Now when something does occur in the participant's consciousness that is a result of having the intent and being open to the object of enlightenment, he should communicate this as well as he can to his partner. Here is where the power of this particular technique takes over. Up to this point the technique is really not much different from any good Zen master's instruction, but now the individual is to communicate what has occurred in his consciousness as a result of his intention and openness. Other things that occur in his consciousness should be ignored. He should not wrestle with them mentally by trying to clear them out of the mind or looking them over or thinking about them. Ignoring is a very powerful technique. When you do not add your energy or your life to something, it tends to wither, or at least wander away. It is not possible for a participant on an Enlightenment Intensive to deal with everything in the mind. To deal with everything in the mind is a ten to twelve year project, working eight to

ten hours a day. Working eighteen hours a day for three days on an Enlightenment Intensive is not going to compensate for that. Therefore, one should ignore those things that are not precisely relevant to one's intent in doing the Enlightenment Technique.

The standard to use to discriminate between what is relevant and what is not is this: if, to the participant himself, something has come up as a result of his contemplation, then that is what he should communicate. But if, to him, something has come up *not* as a result of his contemplation, or if he does not see any connection between what has come up and his contemplation, then he should ignore it. This is how to handle the communication aspect of the technique, and this is how you should explain it to the participants. It is a subjective judgment on the part of the participant whether or not to communicate something, and that judgment should be based on whether or not the participant feels that something has occurred as a result of his intention to consciously, directly know the object of his enlightenment, who or what he is. The participants are not to communicate just whatever occurs. They are to communicate only that which occurs as a direct result of intending.

You should explain this to the participants and see how well they do with it. If someone is taking advantage of the communication aspect of the technique to just chitchat, stop him. Become his subjective judgment for him, and intervene. If you need to, sit down next to him and, whenever he says something, inquire if it is directly connected to his intention to consciously, directly know himself. Have him explain the connection. He will be cured in ten minutes or so.

At the start of the Intensive, for the first few hours, people tend to either talk and talk or sit there and not say much. You should let that occur. As soon as possible, however, you should instill in the participants the power of discrimination between what is relevant to communicate and what isn't, and simultaneously encourage them to communicate to their partners those things which they feel are relevant. We cannot set down firm guidelines for what to communicate. The only guideline is, 'Do you see any direct connection to your contemplation, or not?' On an Enlightenment Intensive, it is better to give people the benefit of the doubt and guide them to follow the general guideline. That will leave room for error but the trend will be in the right direction, and that is better than having to spend a lot of time learning and applying rules. Errors

are not so bad unless they are consistent. When they are consistent, step in and make the correction.

Trying to get your partner to understand you

Another aspect of the communication part of the Enlightenment Technique, which you should make clear to the participants, is this: when a participant communicates something to his partner, he should be trying to get the partner to understand what he has to communicate, rather than just saying the thought out loud. If you as a participant say, 'Who I am is a computer analyst' and you see a blank stare on your partner's face, then you can tell he does not understand what a computer analyst is. He may think it is a new kind of psychiatrist who does his psychoanalytical work by using computers. As a master you should clarify to the participants that they are to try to get their partner to grasp or have an understanding of what has been said. Notice the use of the word 'try'. Every word of this Enlightenment Technique is carefully chosen: they should *try* to get their partner to understand. After reasonable efforts of trying – a vague phrase, but the best we can use – if an understanding is not being reached, the participant can abandon trying to get that particular communication across. The reason you should not go for complete understanding is that it is not necessarily possible. As the master, you could step in and say, 'Explain that to me'. It might take ten seconds for you to understand it. In most cases, just have them go on to other things.

Some people have strange things in their minds which they either don't like to tell to people, or which are so obvious that they just skip over them when communicating. For example, every time something comes up, it has to jump over a little white knob before the person can say it to his partner. This has been going on for the person's whole life: before he says anything, it's got to first jump over a white knob. But he doesn't say to his partner, 'What's going on in my consciousness is that something comes along and jumps over this little white knob, and then I say it to you.' He never bothers to mention this idiotic mental mechanism, and because he does not communicate it, it stays there, clogging up his mind. As a result he thinks, 'I know what I am, I am a white knob,' or some ridiculous thing like that. As long as the mechanism has come up as a result of his intention to directly know himself and be open to whatever

may occur, he should say it, no matter how absurd he thinks he sounds: 'Am I going to be understood? Am I going to be a fool? Do they think I'm brilliant, do they think I'm crazy?' Once he says it, the mechanism will leave his field of consciousness. He should try to give his partners a good enough idea of the thing so they can have some appreciation of what it is about. They are never going to get it all.

Creating a safe environment

One of the most serious problems in communication is the participants skip-ping over things that are obvious, things that they just do not say or do not want to say. There could be a variety of reasons why they will not say it: they want to protect their image, they are embarrassed, or they think that it is not permissible to discuss certain things in a group situation like this, especially sex. 'I know who I really am. I'm a rapist. In my heart, I'm a rapist. I never let it out, but I'm a rapist.' They are afraid to say something like that. You have to invite them to say these things. You have to create an atmosphere in which it is all right to say these things that they usually do not say about themselves. There are a variety of ways to do this. One is to invite them by saying, 'It's okay. This is the place. In order to really make progress this is a necessity, so we all do it,' and that kind of thing. But the most important thing of all is to create a safe situation in which it actually *is* all right to say these things. You create this by not having a consequence put on people when they do say something. If they see that some time has gone by and no matter what they have said so far, no consequence has been put on it, then they will risk the heavy ones.

The main person who puts consequences on communications is the listening partner. This is so important that it is a major error if you permit trip laying to occur. Trip laying is one of the most serious things that can creep into an Enlightenment Intensive. It is serious because it happens often and easily. There are lots of ways it can happen. For example, a person finally says, 'Yes, I know who I am, I'm an angel.' Then his partner says, 'Hah, if you're an angel, I'm Saint Peter himself.' At that point, about three-quarters of the participants would resign from the human race, or the race of angels. They will say, 'Okay, that's it. I'm saying nothing about anything that's close to my heart,' and close down. As a master, do not permit trip laying. Stop it instantly – firmly and nicely, but instantly. Stop any evaluation or judgment which occurs

ver-bally or through gestures or facial expressions about the person's communications. Ridicule is the worst. One very subtle thing you have to watch that listening partners will do, and this is probably the greatest weakness in the whole enlightenment format, is that when it comes their turn to talk, they talk about what the other person just got through saying. For example, someone will say, 'Well, I think you're on the right track.' Your greatest problem in determining whether a partner is laying a trip or not will be to hear, either through your monitors or your own ears, what the listening partners are saying at the changeover when it comes their turn to speak. You have to work with the partners to get them not to judge or lay a trip.

When the communicating partner is speaking, it is easy to tell when the listening partner has spoken out of turn. When you see any lip move at all on that whole line of listening partners – whomp! You are right there correcting it. Your attention has to be on all those people. Your monitors are involved in individual situations, but you have got to have your attention on the whole crowd. You should have your psychic ear so attuned, backed up with your physical ear and your eyeball, that you are in touch with every one of those people and if they say something, you snap your fingers and call your monitor over and say, 'So and so is talking out of turn.' Your monitors have to work very hard to see to it that the partners do not speak out of turn, especially during the opening two or three periods.

The communicating partner is not likely to lay trips because he is to say only what occurs as a result of his contemplation of himself; therefore, he should be speaking only about himself. If, in the course of doing this, he mentions others on the Intensive, monitors should allow it so long as he is actually speaking about what is coming up for him as a result of contemplating himself. If there is any doubt, he should be helped by the monitor or you to do so. The communicating partner should not be restricted in his communications, but if you or your monitors notice that a participant tends to lay trips on certain other participants, he should not work with those people.

What fouls up ordinary communications between people is judging and interrupting, especially between husband and wife. Even the judgment could be put up with if they didn't interrupt each other when they were trying to say something. There is one simple principle: do not interrupt. Take turns. You talk for five minutes; I talk for five minutes. If a husband and wife just did that and

still laid trips on each other, they would make it through. So participants should not speak when it is not their turn, and when it is their turn to speak, they should be speaking about and dealing with their own situation, the things that have come up in their consciousness as a result of their contemplation. It is often easy to detect when they are not doing this because when the changeover comes they start talking immediately. There is no period of contemplation that takes place first. Sometimes you can go in and query them, 'I notice you're talking immediately. Are you having the intent and doing your contemplation?' 'Well, I was thinking while the other person was talking.' 'You're supposed to be listening while the other person is talking. Even if something comes up while you're the listener, you should contemplate only when it's your turn.' When you see someone laying a trip or speaking without contemplating, check into it and correct it if necessary.

The role of the listening partners is to listen and understand as well as they can. There is no guarantee that they are going to be able to understand everything, but they should try to understand as well as they can, and to say nothing. The only thing they say is the instruction and 'Thank you', when the monitor says, 'Thank your partner'. Watch gestures and facial expressions. Some people get really good at it. These can be even more evaluative because gestures are powerfully received. On the other hand, you may get the automaton type with the unblinking, straight-faced robot effect. You will see the active partner lean over and snap his fingers in front of his partner's face and say, 'Hey, Harry, you there'? The listening partner can laugh if his partner says something that is funny, but not unless the partner is laughing first. Some people are so weak that if their listening partner starts to laugh first, they will start to laugh too, but they really feel ridiculed. If something is actually funny and they are laughing about it, that is okay. Sometimes they fall right off their stools, because some things are just so hysterically funny. Be very liberal about permitting that kind of thing, but if you see them express judgment, be right there to stop it.

Half contemplation and half communication

Over the long run the participants should be talking approximately half the time and contemplating half the time. In any one five-minute period, a

participant may talk more because he did not get a chance to finish communicating what occurred in his contemplation in his last turn. Or he may contemplate the whole time. However, some people will just talk all the time, and others will contemplate all the time. Neither is correct. Contemplation and communication should average out to approximately half and half. Watch them to see whether they are doing it that way or whether they talk or contemplate all the time.

At first they all tend to talk a lot. They have got a lot of ready-made answers and preconceived ideas about who they are. They are not really experiencing much of anything and their contemplation is weak. Let them run off at the mouth for a while, but by eleven o'clock on the first morning, start to turn the screws, and get them to tighten up on how they are doing the technique. By that time you can tell who the talkers are. They almost never contemplate, and they will defend themselves gloriously by saying, 'Well, I know what I want to say. I've been thinking during the whole time my partner's been talking,' or 'I think as I go.' There are people who think as they go and there is a certain virtue to this, but somewhere along the line they have got to get over thinking and start to intend to have a conscious, direct knowing of their object and be open to whatever may occur. Some people talk their way from one end of an Intensive to the other, and if they ever do have an enlightenment experience, it is very shallow. Your job is to watch these people and cut them off at some point. 'You' as master includes all your monitors; they are extensions of you.

The self-correcting nature of the Technique

People will fall short of doing the technique perfectly. If you ask them on the opening gun to do it precisely as it is set forth in this manual, you will have almost one-hundred-percent failure. They cannot do it. **14** You have to keep reminding them, instructing them, see where they are failing the most, correct that part and take what you get. It is like a corralling job. You have your ponies, and your monitors and you are gradually corralling them down through a chute. They will bounce this way and they will run off that way and one will go that way and a whole crowd will go with him because they heard him doing it that way, and you send out your sideman and he corrals them back and gradually, little by

little, you get them through this chute of doing the technique. Some of them will still be lagging and not doing it too well by the end of the Intensive, but the technique is self-correcting and this is one of its greatest virtues. It tends to reinforce itself when the participants do it according to the way you tell them. When a technique is self-reinforcing and feeds back into itself, and people do that technique even close to the right way, they say, 'Ah, yes, results, progress, I'm get-ting somewhere, it feels right in my guts,' and they are encouraged to do it more that way. As time goes on and their experience gradually grows, they are brought closer and closer to doing the technique correctly.

Say someone has only been thinking about who he is and has not been dealing with himself at all. Yet you have told him to intend to consciously, directly know himself. You have said, 'Not an idea about yourself, but the real self'. Well, he heard that and sometime on the first day he discovers, 'Hey, I'm just dealing with ideas about myself. What about the real me?' At that point his internal sense of Truth has been touched. He has finally heard what you said twelve hours before. The clever ones will say, 'Why didn't you tell me in the first place?' knowing that you did. They know it was their own difficulties and technique errors that were in the way. Those who are not so kind do not put it that way, but you do not care as long as they are learning to do the technique correctly.

You could just type the technique on a card and give it to them and gradually let them learn it for themselves, and after five or ten Intensives they would begin to catch on. You could do that, but it is better to take considerable time and effort to explain it, especially as their experience grows. A very good time to explain the technique is in the five-minute break before they resume the dyad. During each five-minute period before they begin again, you can explain a different aspect or facet of the technique. Slowly it will begin to soak in, hour-by-hour, day-by-day.

The interval between contemplation and communication

On the first Intensive, there were no five-minute changeovers. The participants were allowed to talk until they indicated they were finished by saying, 'Okay'. At that point they would change over. However, some people were not very considerate of other people, and during one sitting one partner

might talk ninety-five percent of the time and the other would talk five percent of the time. It just wasn't fair, so that is one reason for the five-minute changeover. Another reason is that when the time spent talking went on too long, people got so deeply involved that they got in over their heads. They would get so intensely into the depths of the mind and into emotional states that they would get lost and swept away. They would cry and kick the floor and lose all sense of the world. They would get hysterical, go unconscious or doze off. The reason for dozing off, getting sleepy, heavy-headed or spaced out is that the flow is going in one direction for too long. What you have to do is reverse the flow. Changing roles snaps them out of the state. Some people will complain, 'I was just getting going and I got cut off with that gong. I was just getting rolling.' Yes, perhaps there is a liability to the gong firing off arbitrarily, but the other liabilities are much greater. Besides, when they talk about just getting into it, what that means is that they were sinking deeply into their minds and their emotional traumas and those were starting to take over. When that happens, they lose their orientation toward enlightenment and get caught up in phenomena and dramatizing. That is all right for Primal Therapy, Spiritual Emotional Release, and that sort of thing, but that is not what we are trying to do on an Enlightenment Intensive; we are trying to get people enlightened.

By watching empirically in actual sessions, and trying various lengths of time, Berner found that four minutes and thirty-seven-and-a-half seconds is the optimum length of time for a communication cycle. The participant will start to double-cycle at that point. In other words, for an individual to contemplate and communicate what comes up, on average, takes a little over four-and-a-half minutes. Past that point, an-other contemplation begins. There is an advantage to not making it a full five minutes because of that reason, and also because it gives you a little extra time to make up for any sloppiness in following the schedule. If you make it shorter than four minutes and forty seconds, the participants do not have a chance to get enough into their contemplation or to communicate fully to their partners.

The empty mind

The mind contains ideas, impressions, memories, intentions, and doubts, and is the source of the ego (the false sense of self, the 'I' which is identified with being or doing), and the intellect (comparing, discriminating, judging,

justifying, logical thinking, etc.). The mind extends beyond the field of consciousness into the unconscious. No one is ever conscious of the entire mind at once, but instead brings parts of the mind into awareness from time to time. You may have noticed that sometimes you have one thing in your mind and sometimes another thing, and sometimes your mind is doing one thing and then another. The content and activity of the mind change when you take various parts of the mind and bring them into your field of consciousness. If you bring a part of the mind that has nothing in it into your field of consciousness, you have a blank mind. Many people confuse having the blank part of the mind, or the void, filling the field of consciousness, with the enlightened state. It is not enlightenment. If someone has told you it is, they are simply wrong. Yes, a blank mind filling the field of consciousness enhances the probability of an enlightenment experience occurring. The chances are greater than if the mind is full of things. When the mind is empty, even for just a fraction of a second, then enlightenment is possible.

There are basically two classical techniques for emptying the mind. One burns or dissolves away the contents of the mind, and the other temporarily separates the mind from the field of consciousness. Most techniques aim at the latter, because in any reasonable period of time, it is very unlikely that one is going to dissolve away all the content of the mind so that there is nothing left in the mind at all. The dissolution of the entire mind is possible and is what advanced meditation techniques attempt to do, but this can take upwards of thirty years. Many Buddhists practice contemplating the void in order to try to get a blank mind. This is one way of moving the mind away from the field of consciousness. While the mind is lurking over in the distance, ready to strike, one can directly know the Truth. The Enlightenment Intensive both separates the mind from the field of consciousness and dissolves it.

Contemplation in the Enlightenment Technique involves both having an object that one puts one's attention on, and being open to that object with the intention of consciously, directly knowing it. Having one's attention on the object, for example, who one is, brings ideas, memories, identifications, conclusions, beliefs, traumas, and other things associated with who one is, into one's consciousness. But as those things are brought up, one's openness to directly knowing who one is tends to move them away. Being open to the Truth defeats the tendency to hold on to things in the mind. Contemplation with an

object works faster than contemplation without an object because focusing on an object brings up only the mind around the object, which is more easily emptied out than the whole mind. This contemplation technique leads to enlightenment by moving the mind away from the field of consciousness.

The Enlightenment Technique, by the addition of communication, works faster than any other technique for enlightenment, in that those things associated with the object of contemplation that come to the forefront of the contemplator's mind are communicated to the listening partner, and are dissolved away to the degree that they are communicated and to the degree that they are understood by the partner. This process enables the contemplator to accept and assimilate the things in his mind, resulting in their dissolution. Dissolution of the mind added to separation of the mind, supported by the Intensive format, results in a rapid emptying of the mind.

Many participants get enlightened during walking and sitting contemplation. Why is this, since communication is the most powerful aspect of this technique? Underlying the powerful urge to communicate that most people have is the desire to be understood. When one communicates things about oneself that one feels are very important for others to understand, and they *are* understood, those things, no longer mixed up with the *desire* to be understood, are clarified to oneself. After this has occurred during an Enlightenment Exercise, there is more space between the individual and his mind, and the participant has an opportunity to do deep self-inspection in a period of silent, solo contemplation. Here he can choose to confront or face up to what is left in his mind, and if he accepts it, it will dissolve. At that point there is nothing left, and enlightenment will either happen or it will not. If one would just decide to give up trying to get understood, the dissolution of the mind would happen much faster. But since most people will not consider this option, and since it would be very difficult for most people even if they did, we give them the opportunity to get themselves understood during the Enlightenment Exercise. If one were to give up *all* desires, including the underlay that supports the entire mind, i.e. the urge to know by perceiving through a *via*, as in seeing, sensing, touching, tasting, hearing, feeling, etc., one would be completely and permanently enlightened.

By doing the Enlightenment Technique, the part of the mind that is filled with thoughts of who or what one is is separated from the field of consciousness

and is dissolved out of existence by being communicated to the partner, leaving that part of the mind pure and clean. Then, when one intends to consciously, directly know who or what he is, and the part of the mind related to who or what he is comes in, it is empty because its content has all been previously brought up and communicated out and there isn't anything left to bring up any more. There is nothing left in his out-basket or in-basket and the participant has a blank mind on the subject of who or what he is. This is not enlightenment, but is a situation in which enlightenment can very likely occur, for all that is left is the self. The participant is now in the optimum state for a conscious, direct knowing of who he is.

Unfortunately, people sit for hours in that state and still do not have conscious, direct knowledge of who they are. What is to be done about it? There is almost nothing that can be done. Somewhere along the line they will either get enlightened, or they will not. Other factors that affect the probability will be addressed in succeeding chapters.

Getting close to enlightenment

When people are set in the technique and the mind is finally gone, they have reached a very nice place. At this point, all you have to do as a master is keep them there and sooner or later they will have the enlightenment experience. When it finally happens, it is self-evident.

Sometimes perceptual activities interpose themselves at this point, like feelings and visualizations such as pure light. People will often feel that what they are is a bright light. But a bright light is not enlightenment; a bright light is a bright light.

When people are at this point of being almost there, almost always they are still trying to see who or what they are. They think, 'Where am I'? About all you can do is try to dissuade them from trying to perceive the actual one that they are. They are actually identified with the perceiver, the one who perceives things, and so they are trying to see. What you do is try to get them to give that up. When they do and discover that they are the seer, they de-identify from the seer and they say, 'Wait a minute, now I can't even see? You will not let me do that? What have I got left?' They may have physiological troubles at this point; they may have pains or get sick to their stomach, because now the Truth is

imminent and intimate, and they will try anything to avoid it. They are not doing this willfully. This is just the effect of what is now happening: the separating out of several identifications which are core states of being. At some point, through no mechanism at all, through no process at all, and from having done absolutely nothing, they will become enlightened. In the end, enlightenment is not a willful thing. It is a spontaneous event. You cannot make it happen. All you can do is set up the situation in which the probability is maximized. The Enlightenment Technique is designed to do that and it does.

Conclusion

The technique as it is given here is polished and proven. One of the greatest virtues of the Enlightenment Technique is that it tends to be self-correcting. If you were to set two people down with the intention to get enlightened, by the time three or four months had gone by, they would end up, if they were sincere and intelligent people, with this same technique. In fact, that is how the technique developed. Although the basic concept came to Berner in a flash, the final form came from his working with hundreds of people for hundreds of thousands of hours. From 1968 to 1978 he spent about a tenth of his life on Enlightenment Intensives, about one full year, and he analyzed the technique, breaking it down, piece by piece, inch by inch. The technique as it is presented here is the result of his extensive experiments.

The core of the Enlightenment Intensive is contained in the technique. The rest of the material in this book is built around that core. Interviews with the participants are based primarily on the technique, and the master's talks are primarily about explaining the technique. If you understand the technique inside and out, the rest of it, including being a master, will fall into line after a while. So study the technique, write it out, go over it, and memorize it word for word. Do whatever you have to do to understand it completely.

The Enlightenment Technique

In any Enlightenment Intensive only the following exact technique is to be used:

1. **Position:** Two individuals (not involved in trying to straighten out their

relationship), both sitting on chairs or on the floor, a distance apart that is mutually acceptable to them.

2. **Instruction:** One partner says directly to his partner 'Tell me who you are'. The only other instruction to be used is, 'Tell me what you are'. Only the 'Tell me' form is to be used.
3. **Reception:** He, the one who has just listened to the instruction, accepts the instruction from his partner.
4. **Contemplation:** Having accepted the instruction, the contemplator sets out or intends to consciously, directly know, in this case, who he is. He is to be open to a conscious, direct knowing of who he is, while keeping his intention to have conscious, direct knowledge of himself. Help the participant to do the technique as well as he can and accept that; do not insist on perfection to start with; gradually work with him toward that. It is the master's job to gradually teach and encourage the person to contemplate.
5. **Communication:** He, the contemplator, is to communicate to his partner as well as he can whatever occurs in his consciousness as a direct result of contemplating. He must use words plus any other method to communicate.
6. **Listening:** His partner is to watch, listen and understand as well as he can. He should say nothing, and should not nod, smile or evaluate his partner in any way.

The contemplating partner is to repeat steps four and five on his own, keeping a rough balance between time spent contemplating and communicating, until the five minute gong sounds.

7. **Acknowledgment:** The listening partner then says to his partner, the contemplator, 'Thank you', or any other words that convey the same meaning as thank you, without putting a value judgment out, so that his partner is acknowledged for his response to the original instruction, number two above.

The roles reverse: The former contemplator says to his partner, 'Tell me who you are.' Steps three to eight are repeated.

All errors consist of varying the technique, either by leaving out a step, doing it only partially, or doing something else instead.

Study Questions

Chapter 3: The Enlightenment Technique

1. According to this chapter, how does the mind come into being?
2. How does identification interfere with enlightenment?
3. What does communicating the contents of the mind do to the mind?
4. What should the active participant do first with the instruction from the listening partner?
5. Explain how the technique works, in detail.
6. What are the two processes involving the mind that make enlightenment most likely?
7. How would you tell a participant to contemplate?
8. If a participant is thinking about who they are, is this the best way of doing the technique?
9. What makes someone have a vested interest in staying identified with certain states of being?
10. What is the difference between a participant being in 'abstract land' and being in 'reality land'?
11. What is the effect of having a live individual giving the instruction, and that instruction being received by the active partner?
12. What is the meaning of 'being open' when doing the contemplation in the Enlightenment Intensive technique?
13. What are the two main difficulties that keep a participant from doing the technique?
14. How does a master get a participant through his difficulties in doing the technique?
15. What is the relationship between being open and intending to have conscious, direct knowledge?

16. What does intent mean?
17. Why do people find it difficult to consciously intend?
18. What is the participant to intend to do when doing the Enlightenment Technique?
19. What is the next step in the technique after the participant has intended to have conscious, direct knowledge of the object of his enlightenment?
20. When doing the Enlightenment Technique what should the participant take as his object of enlightenment?
21. Why can't you tell a participant what his object of enlightenment is?
22. As a master, if you see a participant changing his object of enlightenment, should you or should you not stop him? Why?
23. What are the advantages of being in contact with a real object of enlightenment?
24. What are the main things people have preconceived ideas about in an Enlightenment Intensive?
25. What is the factor that provides the power of the enlightenment technique?
26. In this technique, what things should be communicated and what things should not be communicated?
27. What should the participant do with things that come up in his mind that are not a result of his contemplation?
28. What does one do as the listening partner?
29. How is the technique self-reinforcing?
30. Why is the standard period of the Enlightenment Exercise five minutes (or four minutes and forty seconds) in duration and not longer or shorter than that?
31. Why is allowing trip laying a major error?