

An engineer's guide to better health & Applied Ecopsychology

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If I am measured by the cultural norms of modern society I have been successful. But these measurements only touch on the external observations, and when I apply measurements to my internal being, I consistently find that I am not happy, healthy, content or well balanced for anything other than a short period of time. This has led me to look long and hard for a path in life that would help me achieve internal wholeness. My life has been filled with moving from one coping mechanism to another. My search eventually allowed me to be introduced to Applied Eco-psychology. This paper has 3 parts:

- 1- What is Applied Ecopsychology? and Why would I care?
- 2- Stand at the Edge and See, (discovering living with heart instead of head),
- 3- Examples of my personal attempts to make decisions with heart.

Part 1- What is Applied Eco-psychology? & Why might I care?

First, I will address Ecopsychology in context and in relevance. In short, applied ecopsychology is a way to improve our mental and physical well-being and you should care because once you learn the method it costs you nothing but time. Learning consists of a 12 week online course called, The Orientation Course, <http://www.ecopsych.com/orient.html> which costs \$150, is university accredited and barely covers the cost of the books, DVD and logistics of running the class, surprisingly there is even financial assistance available for those who are truly interested yet face financial challenges. The good news is that after taking this class if you choose so you would never have to pay another dime to use the applied eco-psychology methods to increase your mental and physical well-being.

The bad news is you might be one of the many people who are not in a mental place where they could consider applied eco-psychology as a solution because of your close mental mindset. You, might be one of those humans, which will quickly dismiss anything that does not have double-blind scientific studies supporting it. If you are one of these people then it is my hope that by reading my experience you will become curious enough to explore applied eco-psychology for yourself. You see I used to be you, I did not like emotional based decisions or fuzzy thinking, all of my decisions in life were based on trying to find facts that were measurable and repeatable. In life, my daily job was to work as a computer engineer.

There was a man who was very bright. He could understand double bind study analysis and linear thinking. He could relate to program data and see true and falseness in statistical analysis without being taught. He could see the beauty of facts and systems that were measurable and repeatable. But there was a fact he was missing, seeing the beauty in heart loves and people's emotional reactions. This missing fact made his life empty. One fulfilling aspect of his life was his unending curiosity about unexplainable things such as how did his dog know when he was on the way home 30 minutes before he drove in the driveway, and how do miracles work and what is that weird quantum science stuff? He knew that there was a tantalizing way that facts in these questions added up to not only measurable reality but also to some beauty at the heart of life. This man may have spent the rest of his life in the security of logical thought comforted by occasional queries into the unknown. Then he had a life-debilitating event. He had a stroke.

This event spawned a new willingness to question his approach as "right",

and healthy. He began to look for a better livelihood and better way of making choices. In his search, he was introduced to applied eco-psychology. It was very foreign to his way of thinking and his in his drive to understand he decided to take a class. It helped change his life. In Project NatureConnect (applied eco-psychology), he learned to live with his senses as empirical facts that helped him be more successful in the art navigating life. This essay is about understanding applied eco-psychology and how living with “sensory” facts changed his life.

One way to understand applied eco-psychology is through words. Although applied eco-psychology itself would prefer that we attempt to understand it through experience and sensations, not words. Since you have not taken the class to experience applied eco-psychology, I will describe it as the practical use of specially created nature activities, which have arisen from the study of mind and behavior in relationship to our environments.

Continuing on in words, lets explore, but not take too long to define applied eco-psychology. By definition, when we break down applied eco-psychology, we find the following:

Applied is defined as to: “to put to use”. (MISH, 1998, p. 57)

Psychology is defined as: “ the study of mind and behavior in relation to a particular field of knowledge or activity”. (MISH, 1998, p. 943)

Eco is defined as: habitat or environment (MISH, 1998, p. 365)

Ok so now you understand. Right?

No? I did not think so. Using definitions to describe applied eco-psychology is a lot like using words to describe a roller coaster ride. To anyone who has never ridden a roller coaster ride, definitions do not promote understanding. The same is true for applied eco-psychology. It's an experience not a thing. So let's try different approach.

Please stick with me and continue reading, I will attempt to put aside definitions and words aside and move towards descriptions and examples from my own experiences. However for those of you with engineer's preference for language and definition, you might want to refer to APPENDIX 1 for a more definitional approach to eco-psychology. Just keep in mind that once again this is not a definition of applied eco-psychology. Still it could help promote some understanding.

For the rest of you, read on, for a less scholarly and more experiential feel to understanding eco-psychology.

Applied eco-psychology is a set of outdoor nature activities whose use allows us to improve our mental and physical well-being. These activities are successful because they rely on repeating and reinforcing those nature experiences shown to have benefits for others. (Cohen, 2002) These activities are successful because they allow us to connect our unsatisfied senses with nature. These activities more permanently satisfy our complete sensory self instead of only temporarily satisfying a small part our sensory self.

I suppose depending on your background and your own personal experiences might not believe the proposed rationale for why these activities are successful. Due to my own experience, I believe that Dr. Michael Cohen successfully promotes a sound rational explanation in his books and classes. However as a person who, is now in the second class of applied eco-psychology, those of a suspicious nature would consider me as someone who has drank the Kool-Aid. Thus, my own beliefs are not to be trusted.

I suppose that science, academics and engineer types will debate the validity of Dr. Cohen's methods and theories until they become too obvious to ignore. However those of us who are interested in improving our personal well-being NOW, don't have to wait, there is plenty of evidence to support that connection with nature activities do just this. Walking in a forest over a period of three days, their NK cell activity increased 26.5 percent the first day and 52.6 percent on the second. Miyazaki found that salivary cortisol, a stress hormone, was 13.4 percent lower in people who looked at forest scenery. (Thornley, 2010)

The benefits of Nature are numerous and documented. (Chalquist, 2009) The benefits listed below are why I suggest that we all should care about eco-psychology, even if we don't believe in it. Because it even some people get the benefits documented below it would reduce health care costs for everyone. Here is a partial list of some of the documented examples of the benefits provided by using applied eco-psychology nature activities. (Cohen, 2002)

<http://www.ecopsych.com/survey4.html> (Cohen, 2002)

<http://www.ecopsych.com/survey5.html> (Cohen, 2002)

<http://www.ecopsych.com/2004ecoheal.html> (Cohen, 2002)

In a study, participants were randomly assigned to one of three "treatments": A walk in a natural environment, a walk in an urban environment or relaxing in a comfortable chair. At the end of each exercise, instruments indicated that people who had taken the nature walk had significantly higher scores on overall happiness and positive affect and significantly lower scores on anger/agression. Nature walkers also performed significantly better on a cognitive performance measure.

Hartig, T., Mang M. & Evans, G.W. (1991) Restorative effects of natural environment experiences. **Environment and Behavior**, 23, 3-26
(Reported in *Nature's Path*)

IMPROVEMENTS: *People help rejuvenate and improve their lives by having a pet, going for a hike, keeping a garden, or vacationing in a beautiful place.*

Surgical patients have shorter hospitalizations, less need for pain medications, and fewer complaints about discomfort when they have hospital windows that overlook trees rather than brick walls.

Prisoners with cells that provided views of rolling landscapes were found to make fewer sick calls than inmates whose cell windows overlooked prison courtyards.

Pets have positive effects on patients with dementia. Even patients with impaired mental abilities are able to connect with cats or dogs.

Contemporary people who live in environments that are more natural, live longer.

Post-traumatic stress victims recover by connecting in nature to "something larger than themselves." in nature.

Nature-centered people and cultures seldom display or cause the problems that undermine industrial society.

*Irvine, K and Warber, S (2002). "Greening Healthcare: Practicing as if the Natural Environment Really Mattered" reviewed in **Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine** September/October 2002 (Volume 8, Number 5).

ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVE DISORDER: *Spending time in "green" settings reduced ADHD symptoms in a national study of children aged 5 to 18. The study was done by Frances Kuo, PhD, and Andrea Faber Taylor, PhD, of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Activities were done inside, outside in areas without much greenery (such as parking lots), and in "greener" spots like parks, backyards, and tree-lined streets. The kids showed fewer ADHD symptoms after spending time in nature, according to their parents. Symptoms evaluated by the questionnaire included remaining focused on unappealing tasks, completing tasks, listening and following directions, and resisting distractions. "In each of 56 analyses, green outdoor activities received more positive ratings than did activities taking place in other settings," write Kuo and Taylor. It didn't matter where the children lived. Rural or urban, coastal or inland, the findings held true for all regions of the country."*

American Journal of Public Health, September, 2004

For those of you who want even more. I would refer you again to Craig Chalquist, who takes a look at the research evidence for eco-therapy in his article, "A Look at the Eco-therapy Research Evidence". Better yet goggle key words like ecopsychology evidence or research and prove to yourself the benefits are real and proveable. Craig's article can be found at.

http://sustainability.emory.edu/uploads/articles/2009/08/2009080315530099/ecotheraphyeco.2009.0003.lowlink.pdf_v03.pdf

Outdoor activities are the main tool used by applied eco-psychology. These outdoor activities are called Natural System Thinking Process (or NSTP). In words, NSTP is a unique nature connected learning tool anyone can use to enable your psyche to automatically tap into the profound healing powers of nature. The activities are Nature Connect activities. The nature

connection is made by using our senses. NSTP's sensory science helps you to restore 48 subdued natural intelligences back into your awareness and relationships. (Cohen, 2003, p. 145) It is beyond the scope of this paper to give a complete and thorough understanding of NSTP. For that you would need to read and do the activities in *The Web of Life Imperative* by Micheal J. Cohen or take the Orientation course offered online at <http://www.ecopsych.com/orient.html> My goal is to offer my own learning and experiences while studying applied eco-psychology, that you might be able to see one example of how applied eco-psychology can make an impact on our thinking and increase one's well-being. I hope that by reading this you'll become curious and ask, "I wonder what might happen for me if I take the same class."

Here is my own definitional summary and then I'll include a few of my own real life NSTP experiences to demonstrate how nature reconnect activities have impacted me and facilitated my growth.

NSTP allows any person to reconnect to all of their inherent sensory feelings and, by doing so, begin to end the cycle of a multitude of cravings.(Cohen, 2007) In popular culture, we have accepted that there are only five sensory tools in the human body (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch). By accepting only these five we have ignored many other senses like: thirst, color, temperature, season, humidity, light, gravity, balance, hunger, hormonal, pain, play, place, time, weather, beauty and many others. (Cohen, 2007, p. 48-51) By ignoring these other senses and by living indoors we create an environment inside ourselves of the incomplete sensory satisfaction. This incomplete sensory satisfaction has led us to trying to find substitute sensory experiences. Sensory experiences like: food, smoking, drinking, dancing, exercise, sex, books, TV, movies, video games, amusement parks, sports, shopping, drugs, medication, vacations are often abused and misused. Why? Eco-psychology invites us to think that the reason might be, because these substitutes only partially or temporarily fulfill our sensory satisfaction. Therefore we are left with cravings that are not met. So we return again and again in faulty attempt to make our cravings disappear by using the only techniques that we know. (Cohen, 2007, p. 45-6) By doing this, we end up creating dissatisfaction, discontent, and eventually, maybe even, disease. NSTP counter acts this problem by re-connecting your reasoning and senses to nature to improve your well-being. This connection experience seems to more completely fulfill our senses and end or at least reduce our cravings. Connecting with nature, restores a person's vigor sustainability and peace.(Cohen, 2007, p. 66-7)

Having described a little bit about applied eco-psychology's nature reconnect's tool, "NSTP". Let's increase our understanding by a supplementing these words and theory with some real life examples of my own NSTP sensory connecting nature activities.

In chapter one of the *Web of Life Imperative* class workbook we are asked to consider that "experiences are facts". We were asked to think about a recent experience in nature and to consider how thinking about "experiences being facts" affected our thinking and pertained to this experience. What follows is part of what I wrote that day.

It was it was about 3:00 PM and I was tired from trying to meet the physical demands of my back-to-work transition program, even though I was only working mornings it was obvious to me that it was too early in my stroke recovery to seriously consider full time or even part-time work. This thought was depressing. I took my book and my wife's laptop outside to our

untamed and wild driveway circle area. I made my sore shoulder as comfortable as I could and just sat reading and thinking about what I have learned about stroke recovery. My goal was to relax. After about an hour of reading and mentally labeling my outdoor sensory experiences, I noticed that I was feeling significantly more relaxed and my shoulder was less uncomfortable. I specifically took time to catalog mentally my sensory connections as I noticed them. I remember noticing the wind in the pine trees, and the birds chirping as they flit about and look for food, the afternoon some sun was still too hot, yet in the shade the temperature was fine even refreshing, I felt more whole and complete. The freshness of the outside air was invigorating and a welcome change from the indoor air. The indoor air was not bad, nor is my house at all one that creates cabin fever, yet getting outside, in this way, was quite refreshing. Getting outside helped me feel more alive. I remember noticing the leaves on the trees, so green and the industrious ants on the ground. I was more peaceful and positive that things would work out, even though nothing had really changed. I was more convinced that my body knew exactly how to heal itself, without me constantly berating myself about having to help the healing process by doing physical, psychological, therapy. I felt in that moment more able to let myself off the hook for being responsible for ALL of my recovery. That thought, in that one moment, was a blessing. It allowed me to stop some of my constant worry. I see now, one reason why this helped. By relaxing into the current moment I was able to stop worrying about the future. By opening up my senses and cataloging what I was feeling I was able to stop the mental chatter about the future and find things in the present moment to enjoy. By turning into my senses and cataloging everything I was sensing I reinforced my mind to experience only the present not the past or the future.

I did not previously acknowledge my experiences as facts. At most I was taught to consider my experiences subjective opinions, to be suspicious of, and which were not acceptable to hold when compared to the facts of science. Nor was it culturally acceptable to use my experiences to validate myself, or the world around me. However, treating my experiences as fact, allows me to validate and more highly value all of my large number of experiences, including nature experiences. This one idea all by itself, has allowed me to mentally shift large sections of my life from "a waste of time"(society's comment) to "important self maintenance" (my own personal value). For me, this experience has made more concrete my belief in "experiences are facts". This shift in value means I no longer need (or at least have less need) for external validation or approval for what I know to be a fact of life for me. In not seeking external approval, I free myself from external demands that are inconsistent with my true needs. By having internal validation I am less likely to agree to actions, at work or at home, which are self-destructive to myself or to my relationships. Believing this does not invalidate other people's experiences or science, nor do I have to be disrespectful if someone has a different experience than I do. But this is not about other people, the focus here is about me and I find that this experience and mental shift is a positive thing for my happiness and contentment. I also do not have to let science or other people's experiences invalidate my own self knowledge and experience.

In chapter two, one of the Web of Life Imperative class workbook, we were asked to consider who we are and create moments that let's nature (earth) teach us. In doing this, I had an experience which easily met and exceeded any breakthrough or insight I had received from psychology talk therapy. Here is a journal segment I wrote on what happened and how it made an important impact on me.

I hear the water in the creek and then notice the red berries still hanging on in the late season. I stop my noticing and ask this area for permission to hang out and be present with it. After that my visual perception changes. It took me a few moments to be able to understand in words what changed. It's like my eyes refocused, now colors and textures are more vibrant than only moments ago where the same scene seemed familiar. Just asking for permission to be with nature, changed me, I feel like I'm more present with the trees and nature that I see. And I feel

like it's more present with me. I noticed that what my eyes focused on has changed. The picture I take in around me as I look registers differently in my mind than just moments ago. Colors are a bit more vibrant, physically I feel closer even though I haven't moved, and emotionally I feel like I have made contact with something living. In summary, I feel more sensory contact, with my surroundings than I did before asking permission.

It was not until my writing my experience down that I realized it was after my permission request and perceptual shift that I started to notice trash on the other side of the creek. Not trash like, paper and garbage, but concrete blocks, old cut lumber and even an old gate. Nothing horrible, and in fact, nature was probably using most of it as a natural habitat for insects and bugs. And I found it interesting that I interpreted this as if I was attracted to noticing nature's hurts or maybe just discomfort almost immediately after asking permission and receiving a more present friendship. It was almost like sharing my own discomfort (physical stroke limitations) with a friend and they respond in like and share their own discomforts with me. On my reflection, this insight brings tears to my eyes. Just thinking that I might have another friend who can understand me so completely.

In fact, I had to stop writing because the emotions were overwhelming. (Literally, I cried and even had blow my nose.) I figure that to anyone else this would seem unimportant and not a big thing. This insight and emotional impact is huge for me because I have struggled most of my life with wanting to be deeply and completely understood. Most of my life I've felt out-of-place and not understood. I'm sure this has been a subconscious driving force for trying to find acceptance and to compensate I over-developed my drive to please others. With this moment of insight, I have renewed hope for my own healing journey and am somewhat eager to deepen my friendship with nature. The psychological impact this moment has had on me and my self worth is, I am re-motivated to rebalance my people pleasing drive. What's also important is this came without any payment other than time and mental conversation with nature.

The changes experienced in the course work for applied eco-psychology are not unique to me. Here are some quotes from other participants in my class demonstrating their own results and beneficial thoughts while doing the NSTP activities. (Private correspondence, 2010)

-I am overcome with peace and harmony.

-I find it of great interest and a great learning experience to see how differently we each respond to things.

-...pulls me back to the present moment with no words, only awareness of how good it made various parts of me feel. A bit like meditation.

-I stopped, feeling very attracted to the water as it gently slid over the shiny black bedrock of the stream, as it had for eons. The sound was a comfort, something timeless that stopped my preoccupation and suspended me in the eternal now.

-If I feel estranged from nature, it is easy to lose my sense of worthiness, because I live in a culture that preys on and exploits that dissatisfaction in order to sell me stuff. I used to feel bad as a self-employed carpenter when I didn't have work. Now I know that is the nature of the work. Work is a part of life done as a means to an end, not the totality of life. My father worked in a factory and rarely if ever missed a day of work, so I was brought up thinking this was the only way. Not necessarily so. It is imperative in our personal growth that we seek to become aware of subconscious associations that run our lives, to root out our prejudices and miss-perceptions so that we do less harm to ourselves and less harm to others.

-I always feel better from any time spent in contemplation of nature, particularly remembering that I am a small part of an immense whole, and I have a role to play.

-I began to feel joyful, and the careworn attitude I had began to lift. I smiled, remembering that I belonged to the tree and it to me.

-Nature is the ultimate stress reliever, the restorer and renewer, the Source of all that is good in my life. I go to nature for relief, for answers and for inspiration.

One other way to demonstrate my own change is to compare my score on a series of 20 questions about NSTP taken before and after the course. A score on a scale of one to ten increases as one agrees more strongly with how much one values NSTP. My score changed by almost twenty points. This indicated a shift towards more strongly finding value in the NSTP activities.

Before 1 st class	After 1 st class	After 2 nd class	Total Possible
168	185	200	200

In summary, we have learned a little bit about what applied eco-psychology is and how NSTP nature activities work and even some of the practical benefits. Let's continue to explore how nature connect activities impacted my personal well-being. An important part of NSTP is training yourself to observe and follow your "attractions". In one NSTP activity we were asked to consider the rewards of sensory connections. In completing this activity I experienced to a major mental shift in being able to "believe" that I am capable of suppressing my language labeling part of my brain and connect with my brain's non-verbal ability to receive symbolic sensory information (my attractions). It is this and non-verbal symbolic sensory information that is nature's language and I discovered is useful and important to my ability to navigate life. Here is how I recorded it.

It snowed overnight. Two days ago my daughter (7yr) was saying she hates winter. This morning she was running around the house in joy. In this pleasant atmosphere I find myself wondering if the color white will enter into my nature connected to the today. I stepped outside say hello to nature, and ask for guidance to be attracted to that which I need for today's lesson from nature. Not feeling attracted to in the particular area for today's Nature connect activity, I stop get still and notice my quiet thoughts about (an attraction) to trying to take a picture of the edge of our steep hill. Why? I don't know. It does not make sense. But lately none of my activities with nature have been formulaic. So trusting things will become obvious as I need, I press forward go out and walk over to the hillside edge. I have a small camera phone with me. I feel like I'm supposed to go down the hill a bit and take a picture or two. Very carefully with my walking cane, I start to head down the wet leafy steep hill, I don't yet feel foolish or like they've made a bad decision, but in retrospect I think it was it was foolish from an external fact or point of view, but at this point I am simply following a intuition or feeling or attraction (attractive thought). I am sure that if anyone had been with me they would've told me not to do this. As I get close to where I know I'm going to stop and take a picture I start to slide just a bit. It is at this point when I realized how precarious of a position I am in. For the first time I start to worry, I turn around almost falling. My mobility since my stroke is clearly not up to this challenge. I've got my pictures, now I'm looking for a way back up the hill I start in one direction and stop. I start to slip and cannot find proper footing. I start thinking it's not going to work. I start to sweat in fear. How am I going to get back up the hill. Now I'm starting to worry. No one is home to help me. I'm on my own. I have forgotten that I am still connected to nature. Suddenly my eyes see another possible path up the hill that I had not considered. It's worth a chance, the risks seems limited this way, and I'll be able to use some handholds to help stabilize and put less pressure on my footholds, so I will slip less,... I hope. With my independent streak, I start off. I have

always been good at finding a safe walking and climbing path when I've been out in nature. With that confidence, I make it to the first tree and around it. Now I'm looking for my next stage up the hill. Now it looks like I've got a second stage that's doable so I head out again and soon reach the second tree. With a sigh of relief, now I'm almost sure that I'll make it up without a problem. I finish up and go in. Once inside, I suddenly realized what I think happened and what today's lesson was. I'm sure I will need to learn this lesson again and again. I think of that today, nature guided my way back up the hill, by showing my eyes a path I was attracted to, more in the sense of feeling and than actual fact. I had no way of knowing that this alternate path would be any less muddy or slippery, I was truly acting on my sight attraction. I realize now many of my experiences in nature regarding climbing and boulder jumping that I have always been guided to see appropriate next steps with my capabilities, guided by my deeper natural and unconscious connection with nature. How else, I wonder, is it that I can so confidently see the next step to take that will support me safely towards my goal. Bringing this connection into consciousness and trusting symbolic sensory information over my language labeling disconnected story (like the fear of not making it) is still hard for me. I could have gotten caught up in my fear and not even attempted any path. I could have wallowed in my anticipation of fear for quite some time, as that is my history. I am sure that nature felt my gratitude and sense of accomplishment, but I did not say thank you, I still forgot. Yes evidently, I'm still learning and I'm sure nature knows that I'm still learning, after all that's why it gave me to this trust to me this trust lesson.

In retrospect, I can now see clearly that standing at the edge of the hill and having this experience was the first conscious bridge to my own philosophy of applied eco-psychology, I call "Standing At The Edge and See".

PART 2- Stand at the Edge and See,

Having always been interested in the practical side of applying knowledge to daily life. During my first applied eco-psychology class, my mind automatically turned to wondering how applied eco-psychology could be used to process life decisions. In other words, could I use applied eco-psychology and it's experiential sensory attractions to the process for making daily decisions like: what job to take, selling a car, purchasing a cell phone, getting a pet, how to get my daughter to bed etc. This might sound ridiculous, but if you stopped reading you will miss some very interesting and funny parts.

It will be useful to understand where I was starting from as a person. In my life, I reached a point where I was easily angered, and made snap decisions that I refused to change even when proven wrong. I would find myself abstaining from making decisions and let things build up inside because of my fear of questioning others.

People with these reactions have been noted to be suffering from a Stress Response Syndrome (SRS).(Dr George S. Everly Jr., n.d., p. 1) Often produced from a long illness. This Syndrome (Illness) has become well understood since 1926. But I did not understand this. My goal here is to let you see how I discovered new understanding in which eco-psychology and its nature connect activities helped my produce my new approach to life I call, "Stand at the Edge and See" or less descriptive, "applying applied eco-psychology".

After my stroke, my wife found eco-psychology in a PBS or Nova program special and encouraged me to look it up. I did, and in my first eco-psychology class (“orientation” or eco500) I interpreted the instructions in a way that impacted my later inspiration for this practice of “stand at the edge and see”. The instructions generally asked you to find an unspoiled attractive natural area and seek out something that is attractive in that area. If more detailed instructions were given I have not been able to go back and find them. Being very literal and step oriented I needed to create for myself a system of steps to understand “how” to do this. My own interpretation of how to find what I was attracted to is this. I of slowly walk down my gravel driveway. To enhance sensing my attractions with something other than my eyes I would close my eyes and start walking one step at a time with long pauses in between. I would use the pause to see what I could sense on either side and whether or not I was feeling attracted to one side or another or having pleasurable sensations from being near something. If no feelings, I would take another step and stop and re-scanned my body from head to toe to see what I felt. Then I would take another step keeping my eyes closed and repeat scanning my body from head to toe looking for sensations of pleasure, warmth or energy. Once in a while I would open my eyes to make sure I was still on the general center of the driveway. Then I would close my eyes again and take another step. I would continue this step and check for sensations process until I found something I reacted to positively. Still keeping my eyes closed, once I found a positive sensation I then tried to locate around me where the sensation was connected to nature. Once I had a general idea about direction and height I would open my eyes and seek what plants or item in nature had attracted my senses. Sometimes shade or a cool breeze was enough to stop me. I can see now how my interpretation to break down the process for each step to find my natural attractions in nature, set me up for a major insight later in the course and eventually for inclusion my new life philosophy.

In my memory, since about the 9th grade, I have been a person who made decisions based on the “facts” I could find. This is probably because one of my “gifts” is analytical and logical thinking. On school tests, like the SAT, the analytical section was always the easiest and highest scoring for me. I became so ingrained in analytic decision-making that I often would not move on a choice unless I could make the facts on the pro and con clear. This habit over many years of practice resulted in my being stubborn; resistance to change because I believed facts were static and that I knew what the facts “were”. Well sometimes my system would work pretty well. And sometimes this system did not work very well. I was quite perplexed as to why this was. And I was in search of looking for a better way. As Dr. Phil would say, “So how’s that working for you?” I did not understand why I would fail so spectacularly at doing things like managing people but yet I was much better when working with computer problems.

I was looking for a better way because certain areas of my life were in trouble. You see my fact based decisions worked fairly well when there was only me involved. But there were areas of my life like work then later, my relationship with my wife and daughter. I see now that I was trying to enforce my view and way of working in the world onto others but back then I did not understand why it was failing. I was not satisfied with my computer network job and trying to get all the “facts” to make everything work “perfectly” all the time was exhausting. The type of life I was living, I would now describe as living in my head not heart. To me my emotions and feelings were things that only got in the way of clear thinking and action. I had developed a coping mechanism for life, which involved suppressing all my feelings and emotions. I even

forced my bodily sensations for bowel movements to only be allowed to move once a day in spite of other sensations, which told me to go to the bathroom. I developed a constant habit of not ever letting my body (hunger, thirst, fever) tell me what to do when and to always enforce my will upon my body. I simply could not understand other people who allowed their emotions to dictate their choice. For me, that was wrong way of living.

My disadvantage was that my system was not very flexible nor open to any other way of getting something done unless you could convince me about certain facts being true or untrue. My emotions and personality eventually led me into ill health and much anger over my inability to be successful and healthy. Even with 15 years focus on my health, I was not able to avoid having a stroke. And unfortunately I was not self-aware of enough to take this as a warning sign and ended up having a second stroke, which left me without movement on the left side of my body.

I was fortunate that great problems sometimes allows one to ask great questions and my post stroke condition (disabled left arm and left leg) allowed me to be totally open, asking why and to accept new understandings why what I had wasn't working and to look for a better way. In my recovery I started reading some books on neuroscience, I gained a great knowledge about how brains were fairly durable. And then I stumbled on a "fact" that altered the course of my life and thinking.

In the book, "Training your mind. Change your brain"(Begley, 2008), I learned of that outside of the brain the second-largest concentration of neurons is in the heart. I mean that the exact same neurons that exist in the brain parallel the same type of neurons that are in the heart. For me this immediately raised the thought of what would it be like to think with a heart. Having been raised in a mennonite religious tradition with much Bible reading, my next thought was how this paralleled the Proverbs Bible verse which says...*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he*, Proverbs 23:23 (King James) This set me wondering how might one "thinketh" with a heart, and how would that be different than thinking with your head.

Part of this was obvious and easy the heart has always been connected with love and so I wondered how do I process everyday decisions by using love? At this point my thinking stalled for quite some time. Although, I now had an important filters (heart logic versus head, logic versus love) for awareness and I was actively looking for more information on how to make this more concrete.

My thoughts, were reinforced, by reading the online book, "Toward Manhood", by a psychologist, (Presvento, n.d.) at the Christos Center in Cincinnati, whom I saw for post stroke depression. This reading confirmed that I needed a new direction and helped me to clarify that the paternal society had let me down by teaching me and encouraging me to suppress my sensory systems like emotions and feeling (including heart) in favor of and for processing information in my head and to only rely on "facts" validated by the scientific process and also by focusing on the warrior aspect of manhood instead of compassion.

Once again my thinking stalled and had it not been for finding applied eco-psychology as practiced and taught by Mike Cohen, I would not have synthesized my information by combining sensory information and love with the model of attraction.

Many years ago I read a book called *That which you are seeking is causing you to seek.* (Reid, 1990) I did not understand the concept or meaning. With more life experience the way Dr. Cohen explained attraction, the attraction model, finally made sense to me. (Cohen, 2010) I latched onto, that at the molecular level the pieces that make up an atom the elements inside it are attracted to each other almost like magnets and the force of attraction on one side (or one piece) is equal to the attraction force on the other side. Thus I began to understand that what I was attracted to must also have an equal force attracting me. Ok, so all of my body is put together by attraction forces and all of the universe put together by attraction forces and one of the strongest attraction forces is love. Then to my way of thinking love must be the right direction to focus on. Love is a positive thing and good thing. Interestingly that brings me back to again looking for ways of incorporating “love attractions” in processing daily decisions.

Applied eco-psychology suggests that all the natural web of life (humans and nature) is built on attractions and that there is evidence that we humans have many senses (not just 7 but 53). Dr. Cohen suggests we were built to notice these attractions and get meaning, satisfaction, and good feelings from them. (Cohen, 2007, p. 47-51) In short, we can help balance our mental health by going outside, noticing what we are attracted to and spending time contemplating that connection with nature. In other words, by noticing what we sense, and by following our attractions in nature we can increase our well-being. This is something I noticed happening to me as I used the applied eco-psychology activities. Which I outlined some of their impact in the first part of this paper.

In order to find what I was attracted to outside I would usually take a step and stop and look around to see what I “felt” with my senses, not my head. If anything jumped out from the background of nature to be attractive, then that was what I needed to pay attention to, reflect on and commune with. Or if nothing was particularly attractive then I would take another step and stop and look around I would continue this step stop and look until all I found something in nature which was particularly attractive that day. If something really caught my attention I would stop and spend time trying to not label it by name but sense it through my different senses. After identifying my sensory attractions like color, shape, smell, movement, feel and even slowly scanning my whole body from head to toe to see what part of my body might be feeling different. I would take time to notice what thoughts were appearing in my head. Sometimes times these thoughts were significant insights or revelations about my life and I would start to think differently about myself and think differently about the world around me. These changes were significant enough (outlined in part one of this paper) to have major positive impacts on my well-being mentally and physically.

One day while doing a nature activity, I had a startling realization an “aha” moment where suddenly everything makes sense at a new level of understanding. Several years ago I had read a book where the author, (Chodron, 2000) mentions a process of thinking with one's heart and not with one's head and I believe used an analogy like “stand at the edge and see”. The parallel between this phrase stand at the edge see and what I was doing with my nature connect activities

seemed suddenly obvious. My interpretation of what the author was trying to say was this. In our daily life when we are doing anything, but especially when things get hard, we need to take a step by step action based on love, stop, inhibit any negative emotional reaction, reassess what's happening and repeat. In more detail we are to stop our emotional reaction, ground our self in our heart sensations, and look for the next love based attractive action (specifically not an action arising from our own sensory overload of "I can't take it anymore"). Once we find that attractive action we take another step and again stop all action and with our senses notice how we feel and assess if we are making progress (or if we are making the situation worse) and again look and it's important to wait until one finds the next attractive action based on love. One continues to repeat these steps to process your actions and motivations you move through your difficult situation.

After my nature connectivity and major insight I tried several times to capture and write down in words so I could communicate it better to myself and to others. Here is what I ended up with...

I resist authority structures and I used to label myself as having problems with authority (a label created by the in-power paternal warrior society). Using this label created additional problems, by labeling other people as the problem instead of myself. With lots of help, I have begun to understand that my problem is often due to me being impatient, having strong conflicting desires, not accepting something or someone, and also having fears from having been hurt in the past by authority structures and people. When I recognize this, I regain some control to make a new choice. I call this, STAND AT THE EDGE AND SEE (S.A.T.E.A.S.). S.A.T.E.A.S. is the ability to take any moment and inhibit having a negative action or reaction. And then wait and make a new choice based on new opportunities and new understandings (being able to wait a little longer, being able to be a little more tolerant, is respectful of the other person's freedom to learn by making their own choice and recognize that an old fear does not mean I will get hurt this time.

Usually our culture makes us feel lost or uncomfortable if we don't have a series of steps outlined to follow. We are taught that there "are" steps and they "must" occur in a specific order or chaos will result. This, I now see as pre-ordered steps and is appropriate ONLY for working with a dead/closed/static, non-moving, non-living systems like road map directions or computers. Unfortunately, we are taught to use this pre-ordered step process in all systems including people and our relationships. I rationalize now that the different reality is, that "life", "relationships" and dealing with "people" (which are all "living"/open/dynamic systems), require a different approach for successful navigation. That's where STAND AT THE EDGE AND SEE comes into play. You start down the path with a desire/goal and you take one step (it might not be step 1) but your first step is the one you are attracted to (Based on the highest good for all not imposing on others free will) as your first step. Once you take that step you stop and survey the situation from your new location. The stopping is important (this is the inhibition part) because it prevents habit, inertia, assumptions and prejudice from improperly influencing the path). Then you look (well, actually you "feel") for the next attractive step (not step 2) and repeat. This is vastly different process because it assumes that the situation WILL change each moment thus each step is evaluated for the current information, current situation, and current results and possible impacts before choosing the next step. This dynamic, moment-by-moment, re-evaluation is exactly how one plays the game of chess or sails a sailboat. This is not the end of planning. S.A.T.E.A.S. is the openness to another and better way to make decisions within the flow of current plans. This is especially useful in unfamiliar situations. Notice how the ability to make step by step complete beginning to end plans, requires knowledge and previous experience with the current situation and your goals. In life you only think you've been here before, when in reality each situation is new and unrepeatable because time has moved on. To make a successful life. The same level of play is needed. You jump into the living current of life and take a step, stop recheck your progress and

situation and respond as the current events change. One must constantly check the "current" of life, check your "learning", what is working this time, what is not working this time.

In short, you go as far as you can see, to the Edge and here you stop and wait for tensions to dissipate and if you feel like yelling or screaming, YOU DON'T. Only then can you begin to accurately see and sense your attraction to the next step for you.

STAND AT THE EDGE AND SEE, as I have defined it, is a process to deal with dynamic living systems. It honors the individual by allowing each person to follow the best path for them. It is the best fit for life because it allows for the strongest support structures (those of a positive nature) to come into use as we move along the chosen path. This process is most important to use when we get emotionally overwhelmed and want to lash out, quit, yell, react, run away, etc

If you want to read/think more I would advise reading the book,
Learning from When Things Fall Apart
Heart Advice for Difficult Times By Pema Chodron
<http://www.shambhala.com/html/catalog/items/isbn/978-1-57062-344-8.cfm?gclid=CKiuraoat6ACFQUMDQod2Gv1TQ>

Is this process easier than what I did previously? Not always, but the outcome is better. When my daughter does not listen to me, instead of the question becoming. ... "How hard do I need to spank to deter bad behavior?" The question becomes, "What is the next positive loving step I can take which will promote forward direction?"

When I use spanking or force. "What is being learned?" To fear me, I'm unpredictable, untrustworthy, I am not worthy of respect. If this is the case then why would she ever come to me when she needs help or has questions?

In practicing to understand nature as a non-language communication, I believe I am practicing to become better at reading human beings and using non-language communication. This is important because psychology and studies now tell us that over 90% of our communications are nonverbal.

I am now convinced by my own experiences that the hypothesis and tenets of applied eco-psychology are correct. We as human beings, disconnected from nature, suffer as a result the ill effects of bad health, depression and misplaced cravings.

As I see it now, here is my experience of events. This is not a flow of logic, proving any point, just statements of my own experience which act to support my thinking.

- Our indoor living satisfies only a few of our 53 senses (Cohen, 2007, p. 47-51) and even then only satisfies them temporarily creating dissatisfaction.
- In other words, Dissatisfaction is created by the incomplete use of ALL our sensory apparatus.
- Non-use of part of our sensory systems creates unused nervous systems.
- Are we not somehow incomplete when part of our nervous system does not provide input?
- The unused nervous system creates nervousness, cravings and impatience.
- So to my way of thinking, nervousness and cravings are ill affects caused by our sensory apparatus not being satisfied.

I do not say that eco-psychology will solve all health problems. And I know that many

people will have concerns about applied eco-psychology but they do not bother me because this is what worked for me. That makes it real for me. I cannot change someone's disbelief, I can only describe to others about what works for me and ask that they consider trying it and see if it seems "sensible".

It turns out that I am not the only person doing this. It may be that "stand at the edge and see" is more common than I thought. In Derrick Jensen's book listening to the land, Max Oelschlaeger in his essay on page 220 uses these words.(Jensen, 2002, p. 220)

“Get outside the escape the Logos, encounter the other, and let the other begin to influence you (.....)When you open yourself to wilderness, to eros, you can find yourself on a path with a heart you don't create the path, but you recognize this is a path with a heart. People, particularly students, always want to know what it is that I am doing, and how it is that I know what to do. I always tell them I have enough courage or faith to know all I need to do is walk to the End of this path. When I get to the end of this path I'll see where to go next. It's a bit like climbing in the mountains, you can see to go until you next need to see to go. The mountain continually reveals itself. It unfolds. A Path with heart is like that. But it only opens up to you when you're not fraudulent, when you have the faith to go with the flow..... a Path with heart is a path with freedom.

I'm sure any career counselor who found their way to this would say this is one crazy dude. That's a sure path to economic ruination and a life where you end up hopeless” and homeless.

A scientist using scientific objective principles, one could dismiss my ideas and arguments. This is not to convince people that I am right or you are wrong. As a parent and sensitive concerned human being I am convinced that I am on the right path. And I am convinced that this is a better path than I was on previously. I am convinced of this by the fact that my ability to get along with my eight-year-old daughter has improved and our relationship is better, not perfect, but much better. I would hope that by putting my story out, I would encourage others who are thinking similarly and provoke thoughtful reflection in those who have not yet considered these ideas. As a parent, there really is no choice for me but to learn to lead from the heart. It makes no sense to me to lead from punishment where when the first punishment does not provide conforming behavior then conversation becomes how hard should I hit (or how much punishment do I apply) to deter or control my child's behavior. I do not wish to be in a place where my child does what I ask her to do because she's afraid of me, or the consequences. I would prefer she acts and behaves out of compassion and respect for me. To me, using punishment and fear, is like asking how many fingers should I cut off for theft. And once all the fingers were gone if theft continues, what then should I do. Do I continue the dismemberment? As a parent there is no choice, I cannot dismember my child. I do not want to journey down the punishment path. This process will not always provide success. And sometimes I still use the least destructive punishment I can find like taking away a portion of her allowance. To me the physical action and hurt from punishments is no different than the mental and emotional scarring that occurs from yelling and emotional coercion.

Any type of violence (verbal or nonverbal) is for me a huge question and has taken much of my attention in the past year. ...I'm not claiming to have a definitive answer. But I have made some observations. (I've found it useful to make a distinction between the giver and the receiver of violence, when making my observations.) This is not as premeditated as it sounds. Before my stroke, I was dealing with some anger issues and I now since taking Project NatureConnect classes, I have had some additional unique experiences to observe my own "senses" during certain events.

First observation, there is definitely a difference in "intention". In observing being the recipient of violence. I will submit for your consideration that if the intent is known ahead of time, I found that I receive the actions differently when I do not know the intention. At least, this has been my observation of myself when dealing with different managers at work or my dentist.

A dentist who forces me to do "x" which involves pain, without engaging me in conversation about my own needs or what is going to happen, gets much less leniency, cooperation. And the dentist who first has a conversation (consent) about how to help me be more comfortable with the procedure and then does the same "x" (procedure). This dentist gets much more leniency, forgiveness and cooperation from me. For me, the difference is how I perceive the dentists intention, to the one perceived as more caring gets less negative energy, comments, and feedback from me.

For the second observation, I would like to talk about my experience giving a form of violence (yelling). I try my best to not get angry at my daughter. After all she is only 7-8 years old. It is not yet reasonable to expect her to pick up everything all the time, or to be as patient as I am when she is hungry. And I am human and I have my own weak days and my own weaknesses. Putting that aside, I have noticed that regardless of "intent" if I yell at another her, I do not feel "well" (often my feeling is in my gut, my appetite is off, not hungry) for the some amount of time after the event. It does not seem to matter why I yelled. I have noticed that the more I can reduce the intensity of my anger before I yell or get upset the more quickly I recover and begin to feel "well" again. I also noticed that, if I go and say "I'm sorry", and the other person accepts, that this also speeds my recovery and I begin to feel "well" again sooner. And I have noticed that if I can say in a normal voice what I am frustrated about without yelling I do not have the experience of feeling bad or losing my appetite. I feel frustrated but I do not feel incomplete, as I do when I yell.

I am still, waiting to see what I experience if I have to yell in an "emergency" type of situation, where the yelling is only an attention getter. Of course I'm not willing to create an emergency just to test.

The best language analogy I have come across is one from the Web of Life Imperative book using the example of a circle with a slice cut off neither the circle nor the slice are whole. In my own experience, the person giving the violence (even yelling) is like the circle getting a slice cut off and for a while both of the circle and the slice (Thus the giver and recipient of violence) are not whole.

My thought is....., "Can one change reality by fighting?" It seems as if when I fight, I simply create more entrenchment in the defensive positions of other people. And it seems to me as if I'd make the problem even more grounded in physical reality. It seems a better way to change reality is to come up with a new system that makes the old system obsolete. In my own thoughts, I, see nature reconnect activities as a new system that makes my old system obsolete. This is why I'm putting my: time, attention and money in alignment with practicing stand at the edge and see.

PART 3 - Examples of my personal attempts to make decisions with heart (S.A.T.E.A.S.).

Over a year ago I decided to see what was possible with using a process like, "stand at the edge and see" to make decisions on a daily basis. Here are some of my personal experiences attempting to use "stand at the edge and see".

Example

1-Bedtime "IN the bed or ON"

My 7-year-old daughter about her has the interesting cause and effect about getting ready for bed and she is all quiet and calm all the way through the process until it gets time to actually get into the bed. Then suddenly she has lots of energy and want to bounce around, turn somersaults, sings songs, talk about the day and in general be active instead of quieting down. Needless to say after about a year of this I get annoyed easily at the process and I really have to work at stopping and inhibiting my response to say something negative. But that is exactly what I used to do. I used to get upset and raise my voice or say things that were negative or try to impose some type of consequence. "Sit down on your bottom or your bottom is going to get quite hot, or I'll do X ... " type of statements. Now with some children these types of approaches might work, (but they do not with my girl, stubborn like me I guess). It's not the type of parent I want to be and neither is it a leadership style that I want to model. So instead in a quiet voice I say, "Mary Beth shhhhhhhhh," and once I have her attention I remind her that 1) I would like to hear about her day and 2) could we please bring our voices down and whisper because it's time to bring our engine down. Rarely does this work the first time that I say it. But instead of getting upset I stop and wait, inhibiting my emotional frustration, I try to find something else to occupy my mind while I wait for a bit, like reading a page of my book, and then after giving her some time I try it again. Something like, "in a singsong voice I'll say Marrrry beeeetthhhhh, can we try to find a way to bring our engine down and be a little more quiet." More than once I've gotten a reply back, "But daddy I'm only seven years old. There isn't anyone in the world who can shut off instantly." Well after numerous times of trying to argue with that statement I have learned there is a better way. Also asking her to suppress her feelings and emotions is only contributing to disconnecting my daughter's conscious mind from her physical senses. This approach is equal to forcing an override of her sensory system's knowledge. Again I have to inhibit my emotional frustration and look for a more attractive response. And as I am learning in eco-psychology, that disconnecting ourselves from our physical senses prevents us from living in the immediate moment and teaches us to dominate things, ourselves and others. It also invites us to think about how this type of disconnect also

gets in the way of us from thinking reasonably (substitute sensibly), staying in balance, and building responsible relationships. At this point, I found, I have a higher success rate if I say something like, "I notice that you don't have to use your hands when you turn a somersault on the bed anymore do you think you can do two in a row without falling off the end of the bed". No, no, no, I don't really say that, but I want to. Instead it's more like, "turning somersaults seems to be little easier for you now how about you show me how you can do 10 more before you get into bed." You see this response confirms to my child is at I am interested, aware and attracted to noticing what she does and instead of her energy being totally jammed up at my insistence, instead it allows her to have some outlet to find a way into a lower engine and sooth herself to sleep. I want to promote reliance on her self not me. If I promote reliance on me, what will happen in the teen years when I am not with her?

Now if I was lucky that would be the end of the night and she would get into bed and would fall asleep. But you see I have no ordinary child and I obviously need more training. So next my teacher will say, "I'm in bed." When really she is only on the bed. Again I have learned that at this point I must inhibit my desire to argue about a stupid prepositional phrase. A better approach is to simply comment that, "okay Mary Beth I can see how you can see it that way how about instead I ask you to get under the covers and close your eyes." This approach bypasses the argument, which if I entertain will go on and on until she gets frustrated and will say with the flair of a dramatic seven-year-old, "This is the worst night of my life I want to run away". Yes, she actually said that one time. Well that approach and ending does not seem to promote restful sleep for either her or me.

Again if I was lucky that would be the end of the night, but this is no ordinary teacher. And obviously my learning must take place on several levels, 1) beyond the bed, 2) on the bed, and 3) in the bed. So now with my daughter under the covers she will toss and turn and throw her legs over me and rub up and down my left side. This rubbing up and down really annoys me physically you see my nerves are working to reattach and make new brain connections since having my stroke. And having someone rub up and down my left side is kind of like receiving small electrical shocks or having someone scratch on the chalkboard with their fingernails. It takes all of my discipline to not blow up, yell, holler, hit cry out or blame. Not that I haven't tried these, after all I'm not a saint. But that they don't work evidently my teacher is smarter than to let me off the hook with letting one of these techniques work. Know what I have to do is again inhibit my unattractive responses and find a response which is understanding and based in caring for the other person. So far my best responses have been too quietly 1) read a book to her until she quiets down, 2) read a book to myself so that I can distract my brain from the electrical chills and thrills running through my arm and leg, or 3) in a quiet voice saying, "do you think you could try to close your eyes and make believe that you are dead." OK... OK that's not what I say... it's more like "would you please try to close their eyes and be still, when you rub my arm and leg it does not help me feel good." Now generally this does not work the first time I say it so I quietly wait and repeat the same words every two or three minutes and finally after another 30 minutes or so she will quiet down and fall asleep. I'm never really sure if the teacher got tired of teaching or just got tired. I suppose it doesn't really matter I too can now relax and go to sleep. What I like about this example, when I do it right, is that I have sacrificed time but I have not sacrificed respect or created an emotional disconnect.

I have noticed that we often are not willing to sacrifice time when dealing children and because of that sometime of violence and verbal or physical then in suits in order to try to get compliance with a child's behavior.

Example 2- The Car "Exploring the fit"

After having my left side paralyzed due to a stroke we decided it would be better for the family if I had a different car to drive. I needed a car that was an automatic shift, instead of the stick shift that we currently had. In my usual mode of independence, I see a problem, thus its up to me to fix it without input or help. I start looking for used cars that fit "my" criteria for what we should have as a replacement car, without consulting my wife. Of course that's a warning sign, but I didn't see it. I forge ahead with months of research focusing on low-cost and high gas mileage. I'm feeling really good about my decision that the Honda fit is a good replacement car for us. I test drive one and still agree it's good, so I asked my wife to test drive one. Here's where we run into problems. She says it's not attractive, in my mind, I'm thinking attraction is not one of the top criteria by which one should choose buying a car. I also don't understand what was so unattractive about the Honda fit. I'm fortunate to be taking one of the PNC (Project NatureConnect) classes where we're learning about attractions and how sensory experiences are "facts". I'm lucky that I did not press the point that night and with a nights reflection of sleep and class nature reconnect activities the next day I was better able to put aside my ego and months of work so that I could consider my wife's input and sensory information on an equal status to my own concerns which were based on science and fact. Here I made a connection between experiences are "facts" and decided that my wife's un-attraction to the car I had found was indeed a "facts" that I should respect I was able to reengage in the conversation about the car. I explained my frustration and asked her to please just at least test drive the car and see if her attraction changed. I was fortunate that she agreed. Yet even after a test drive she was not attracted to this car, I was very disappointed.

We tried to engage in some conversations about what type of car would be a good replacement car. But neither of us could find anything that sparked the agreement on both sides. I am fortunate to have a wife who is so solidly connected to her senses because it helps act as a model for me as to what I strive to become to balance out my "fact" bias. My wife is so solidly connected to her senses that it is almost impossible for her to override the communications those senses provide. Yet it is hard for me who learned at a very young age to override almost any sensory connection insisting that I ruled by body not that my body ruled me. I learned to be very disciplined and overly compulsive about having to do things in a certain way. In this way my wife and I are opposites and yes it has caused many problems.

In about June of 2007 we decided to post our used Saturn wagon on craigslist. Usually I don't like to start a project without being able to see or understand all of the steps from beginning to end. In this case, I was strongly motivated to contribute as much as I could to the family by driving whenever I could, like taking my daughter to and from school, no bus yet. So strongly motivated, that I skipped past, thinking about what replacement car we would purchase to replace the Saturn. I decided to go ahead and post the car to sell it. This was an example of

taking the first attracted step. At the moment of making the decision I was more concerned about how long it would take to sell the car. I was afraid that in this recession economy it would take 3 to 6 months to sell the Saturn.

Now good things happen when you are in the right place at the right time doing the right thing. Some people would call this being in the flow of life. I don't need to name it to enjoy it. Here's what happened. I posted the car on craigslist at 4 PM, at 8 PM that night I got a call from an interested lady who wanted to come by tomorrow at noon and see the car. I agreed thinking this was going to be too easy to be true. And it was easy. The lady checked the car at noon and was still interested. Then she brought her husband around after work at five o'clock and he too agreed it would work for them. With only minutes to spare we made it to the notary public for witnessing the deed transfer just before closing. So within 25 hours I had sold my car. The transaction happened so fast to that I forgot to get my spare house key out of the car where I hid it. And I forgot to give the new owner the emergency plastic key, but none of this was really critical. Now my wife comes home and I tell her, "I sold the car it's gone." After seeing the surprise in her face and concern I stated, "well I guess I've created a new problem." My wife laughed at me and said, "Yeah how do we get Mary Beth to school tomorrow". After stopping and taking stock of our current situation I made some phone calls to arrange help getting her to school. Then my wife and I sat down to figure out the next step which was what kind of car should we get to replace? At first, we couldn't agree on most anything but we kept trying to find what's the next step here. I noticed how my wife didn't get mad at me for selling the car so quickly and I noticed that I didn't get mad at her not being attracted to the inexpensive cars I was suggesting. So this is an example of inhibiting your emotional reactions in order to more purely see your sensory attractions to new solutions without having the disturbance of additional emotions to have to filter out. Finally she said, "Let me look at the type of car I would really love to have. Let's see if it's possible?" (I inhibited my skepticism) So she did search, and within seconds found an example on craigslist of exactly the car even down to the color that she thought would match her ideal. I could see examples of why it would be good solution but was afraid it was too expensive and did not get good enough gas mileage. Still I offered to go and check it out the next day. After all when things fall in my lap so easily, I've learned it's not wise to completely ignore doors that are opening.

A friend, Amanda, went with me and we checked out the car it drove well and seems to be quite good as a used-car. Not having any major strikes against it mechanically or repair wise it was time to look for the next attractive step. So I called and told my wife if she had time to come by on her way home from work. Now Amanda's boyfriend is a top-level professional auto mechanic, and it turns out he was getting off of work and only across the street and five minutes away from where we were looking at this car. Amanda offers to see if Jeff could come over and check out the car also. Jeff looked it over and pronounced it a solid car nothing at all wrong with it. Then it turns out that he knows a friend (another auto mechanic) at this business location or at so he goes in and asks his friend if they can go over the repair records of the car. They do this and report again the car is solid and there is nothing in any of the repair records that point to any potential problems. They are both very surprised that the car is in such great shape. Now I'm both excited and distraught, it seems we have a good option with this car, but it still offends my sense of gas mileage and overall cost. With great timing my wife polls in to look at the car. I gave her the quick summary, which consists of saying we will never know more about another

car than we do this one. My wife takes me aside and says that she just got news today that her employment contract for next year has been officially confirmed and extended to her today which should make our budget more reasonable to afford this purchase. Knowing that, I encourage her to take the test drive. Afterwards she is still positive about the car. As we talk about it looking for the next attractive step we are still encouraged to move forward but we have concern about the interest rate on financing of the loan. Next, we talked to the salesman and express our concern he thinks he knows a way to help us out through one credit union that he deals with and sure enough they are able to get the interest rate into our range. So we went ahead and purchased the car. That means in the course of almost 50 hours we have sold a car and purchased a new used one. And our hardest decision now is figuring out who gets to drive the new one home.

All the way through this process we only kept moving forward because we did not find things standing in our way or being unattractive. It seemed like all the way through the process we had help showing up to answer questions about concerns and help removing the roadblocks that would have made this decision unattractive. To many this sequence of events would only be interpreted as a lucky and chance set of events. However I have often found that when I am paying attention to my senses and making choices that match while the outlaw the flow of events seems like chance it's not. It's a matter of having chosen the right path in the beginning, which had the most sensory agreement. This is not something that you can measure with scientific tools yet. It is something that you can currently only measure with your human senses.

At many points, this process could have been stopped being attractive:

- I could have been un-trusting of the buyer of my Saturn
- The buyer might have insisted on a lower price
- I could have decided not to sell before knowing the replacement vehicle
- I could have been insistent that the purchase price was too high or mph too low
- The interest rate might not have come in at an acceptable number
- Amanda's friends might not have been available
- Someone else might have got the car first
- My wife might not have gotten her contract extended for a second year
- The sales process might have tried to add lots of extended fees and costs

Example 3 Supper

It's been a long day and I just spent an hour trying to put together supper for my daughter and her friend. They arrived home tired but happy from theater camp. I asked them to eat, they sit down and eat a bit and soon bounce up to go play on some idea. I ask them to come back or maybe I should put the food away because it looks like they are done. They come running back and eat a little bit more but soon are up and away again. I wait again and then ask them if it's okay if I put away the food and clean up. I feel like they are not paying a lot of attention to my words, although they indicate it's okay to put the food away. Realizing there could be problems later I attempt to explain one more time that this is it for food for tonight there is not a second supper later. This elicits no response so I let it go. After some good playtime my daughter's friend goes home and about an hour later my daughter says she's hungry and asks what's for

supper? I call he explained that we had supper when she came home. In a very authoritative voice she tells me know that wasn't supper that was the snack. At this point I'm a little frustrated because I thought I was clear about supper and had asked several times if it was located put away food. I calmly tell my daughter I'm not making a second supper. At this point she gets really mad at me calls me names, tells me I'm not a good parent, and insists that we have supper. I point to the last bit of food on the counter which I have not put away and tell her she can have some of that but that I'm not making a second supper and when I put food on the table she needs to eat. With the advantage of reflection I can see now how asking her to eat when she does not feel hungry or to eat more than she is hungry for is encouraging her to override her sensory input. It can't really be good to teach someone to eat when they aren't hungry.

I know that she had a tiring day at theater camp, and it is not appropriate to push because her patience and self-control has already been sapped by the demands of theater camp. I learned this from the book SWITCH (Heath & Heath, 2010, p. 6-11) which quoted several innovative studies, helping to isolate and prove that self-discipline and self-control is a finite personal resource. It's also unreasonable for me to ask her to regulate and override her eating when she is not hungry. That is me helping to teach her that it is right and appropriate to dominate her sensory apparatus. Yet I am also tired and frustrated. Here I explain in a not so kind voice that she is wrong and must adjust because it told her three times that supper was ending. I decided the best thing to do is to stop and take out the trash and try to be calm. Here I started off right I paused and noticed that my voice tone was the wrong voice to use with her at this point. I need a better solution. By giving both of us a break I'm hoping to reset and start over, but I did not communicate that to her. That was my mistake.

It's still super hot and muggy outside I come back onto the porch and go to open the door. Oh life and children are set up to challenge you the most. Yes that's right the door is locked, no it did not lock itself my daughter is frustrated and mad at me and she has locked the door. I don't have keys and I know there is no other door that is unlocked. This instance triggers an emotional response, which I should have but did not inhibit. With the palm of my hand I pound hard on the wood siding of our house and yell at her to open the door. This is a very poor choice and poor response yet I seem to have a run out of patience. To my credit I did stop and lower my voice and more calm way repeat my request for her to open the door and I added please. To my daughter's credit she did come and open the door immediately. I went and sat down nursing my sore palm. At this point I am not a very proud parent, and at the same time I immediately think that this is a great example of what not to do.

The good news is we both settled down gave each other some space. I checked some e-mails for my class and my daughter made herself a plain about her and jelly sandwich. I took some time and apologize for the way I handled things and said I need to find a better way to respond and work with you. And surprisingly my daughter said she was sorry too. She stopped and then she surprised me again, without prompting, she said she was sorry for locking me out. I thanked her for an apology and explained that being locked out had upset me. She got some food in her I got to sit down and relax we both were on the road to recovery. This gave both of us more latitude mom is not home so we are looking for something to do. Dad being the computer

guy and stuck with childcare answers yes to the request of watching short Muppet videos on YouTube.

My daughter and I sit back and together watch corny jokes by the two Muppet hecklers that are old men and sit in the box seats. We laugh together and bond a bit, I renew my internal commitment to try to stand at the edge and see. I realize in this instance both my daughter and I had been at the end of our reserves, and that was the more we can avoid that the better our interactions will go. I spent too much time trying to make supper, which exhausted me. I also make a written note that this experience makes the perfect example to include for others about what not to do.

Appendix 1- Ecopsychology Principles

For engineers who benefit from language definitions.

The fundamentals of the general study of ecopsychology are in the process of being developed. The following statements are offered not as definitive principles, but rather as working hypotheses or premises of ecopsychology. (Compiled by [Will Keepin](#))⁵ These statements are the closest I can find to a scholarly definition of eco-psychology. While these statement applied to eco-psychology in general they are not as helpful to understanding APPLIED eco-psychology.

- The Earth is a living system. Human beings are fundamentally interconnected with the Earth and with all life. Neither the Earth's problems nor humanity's problems can be resolved without taking full account of this interconnection.
- Ecopsychology seeks to heal the alienation between person and planet, and establish a healthy relationship between the two. A key element of this is recognizing that the needs of the person are the same as the needs of the planet. The rights of the person are the same as the rights of the planet.
- Rather than viewing the ecological dilemma as a crisis "out there" in our physical environment, ecopsychology recognizes that human consciousness is intricately involved in creating and maintaining the ecological crisis.
- Ecopsychology calls for a *new cosmology* that embraces not only scientific models and understandings, but also spiritual teachings, ancient wisdom, and the non-Western knowledge of indigenous cultures.
- Ecopsychology calls for a profound revisioning of mental health and human consciousness. Today's dominant models of human consciousness define the human being as an isolated and fragmented entity living in a mechanical purposeless universe. This model of human reality is a product of the old cosmology: the scientific industrial era that now weighs heavily on the planet.
- The drive to live in harmony with the natural world and its rhythms is primal innate. Suppression of that drive is just as disorienting and damaging as suppression of other human needs.
- The very notion of *sanity* must be redefined to include our planetary home. Today's psychology and psychotherapy "stop at the city limits, as if the soul might be saved while the biosphere crumbles" (Roszak). A healthy mature human being naturally develops an ethical responsibility for the Earth.
- Ecopsychology utilizes a pluralistic epistemology and methodology, drawing on mythological and archetypal understandings, intuitive and emotional modalities, scientific approaches, and spiritual practices.
- Ecopsychology embraces the goals of gender equity (equality between women and men; masculine and feminine), racial equity (equality for non-white races), and "cultural justice" (honoring and learning from non-Western cultures and indigenous peoples of the world).
- The practice of ecopsychology is in its infancy. It currently draws on:
 1. deep ecology and experiential modalities
 2. wilderness experience, nature as healer
 3. psychological work with ecological activists
 4. gender healing and ecofeminism
 5. spiritual practices and philosophies
 6. environmental activism(Compiled by [Will Keepin](#))(Keepin, 1995)

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Biographical information

Clark Ray Mumaw

Clark grew up in rural farmland in northern Indiana near the conservative Amish settlements. In a family of four boys woods and nature played a big part of where Clark spent his time. Later on his family took two months summer camping trips hunting for various rock types out West. During high school and college Clark spent many summers working as a camp counselor at Camp Amigo in southern Michigan. His attendance to a predominantly Mennonite college in northern Indiana called Goshen College was completed with a bachelor of arts in psychology. Not excited by a career in psychology Clark followed his interest in the newly invented personal computer. This eventually led to a job in New Hampshire doing phone support for 11 different accounting packages for about 2 years. The next 10 years Clark lived in the Washington DC area as a Beltway bandit: supporting installing and troubleshooting Novel personal computer networks. After moving to Oxford Ohio Clark worked for seven years at Miami University as a file server software engineer for Central information technology services. This life was interrupted by a stroke, his second, and on dismissal from the hospital Clark needed a wheelchair due to almost complete paralysis in his left arm and left leg. Clark now finds himself working towards a PhD in eco-psychology, which he plans to use as a new career path teaching others how to benefit from nature like he has. His recovery is progressing well enough to hope for a full recovery. Clark lives in Oxford, OH and it may be reached at CRMUMAW@ yahoo.com.