

Yearning:

We long for less pain and more joy.

Desire for a better life is the first step in healing emotional pain. For many of us the Yearning Step is first taken days, weeks or even years before our first coming to Vital Cycles. Many of us began this step when we were unhappy enough to seek help in general, even if we had not yet identified trauma in our lives. Some of us began this step when we were inspired by others who seemed to have a life with more joy. Many of us struggled getting to this step, because we had unwittingly suppressed the yearning with addictions or other coping behaviors that masked excruciating pain. Thus we were only able to feel this yearning when we began to address our coping behaviors. Being able to face the pain allows our yearning for change to grow, which motivates us on our healing journey.

The amount we focus on “less pain” versus “more joy” shifts over time. At the beginning of our healing process, joy may be an alien concept for some of us. For some of us even the idea of less pain can be inaccessible - we may need to simply hold onto an idea such as “For now, I will try this instead of suicide.” Some of us may find at first that our emotions are so shut down that it is difficult to even be aware of how we feel. Yet even in our darkest moments, some small part of us yearns for the pain to go away. This gradually transitions to a yearning for more joy in life.

Yearning can cover a variety of desires and thoughts. Over time we discover the different things we yearn for. Some examples of “yearning for less pain and more joy” are:

Longing to move from:

- Despair to hope
- Feeling worthless to feeling worthwhile
- Loneliness to meaningful connection with others
- Feeling adrift to having a sense of purpose and meaning in life
- Self-hatred to self-understanding to self-love
- Self-blame to understanding ourselves
- Feeling helpless to feeling empowered
- Feeling stuck in life to moving hopefully on the path of healing
- Fearful to self-confident
- Emotional numbness to emotional awareness and being able to feel all emotions

Acknowledging and welcoming our yearnings motivates us toward positive change. Guided by the Focus Principle, we focus on gaining more joy, and come up with better solutions than when we focus on less pain. The more we cycle through the steps, the more often we’re able to focus on joy to motivate us.

Activities: (The following activities can be done in a Healing Journal and/or with the support of others.)

Activity 1: Look at the list above and write down the ones you yearn for.

- Make sure to write down what you want to move to as well as what you want to move away from.
- Add other things you yearn for that healing might bring.
- List what you would be willing to do to make these yearnings come true.

Activity 2: Write a list of things in your life that bring you joy. Write in-depth about one of these things.