

## THE NEGATIVE AUTOMATIC PROGRAM



### 6. Discovering My NAP

I was an undergraduate university student when my Negative Automatic Program became undeniably evident to me.

I would occasionally meet a coed with whom I would become suddenly infatuated. I would make her the focus of my life, the center of my universe, my reason for being, and the source of my happiness. I imagined and believed that she, at last, was "the one" who would complete me and transform my life to become full of affection, purpose, and joy. Finally, having met this angel, I would fervently hope and believe that I would be forever safe, irrevocably secure, and blissfully blessed with spiritual love.

For all of my silliness to work out, my fantastic sweetheart would have to be not only exceptional and outstanding, but also superhuman. No problem! I would simply attribute to her all the characteristics of the flawlessly idealized girl-of-my-dreams that smiled at me in the mental movies I projected on her, the same ones that had been playing in my personal "Previews of Coming Attractions." Aphrodite incarnate would have had a bit part in an old silent film compared to the vibrant holographic images I created of "Tom and His Goddess!"

All of this seemed very reasonable to the growing and delusional boy that I was in my twenties. I mean, this was the real thing! I had finally attained romance, True Love, and a personal grail to fulfill my life-long search for completion and wholeness.

Precedents had already been set! The Handsome Prince found Sleeping Beauty, Prince Valiant wooed and won Aleta, Tarzan had Jane, and The Graduate bussed "Elaine!" I bought into the "magic of love" so highly promoted and idealized by the Technicolor movies I had seen, and by the acapella songs I had listened to on the radio while parking and necking with a summer girlfriend as we drifted in my boat on the moon path of the far cove of Green Pond.

Of course, my early romances were doomed from the very outset. My unconscious, ill-conceived, and automatic program for true love was set up like a table covered with mouse traps, each with a ping-pong ball resting lightly on top. Once one was triggered, there was no controlling the chain reactions in my romantic entanglements. The majority of poor young women upon whom I unknowingly foisted this slapstick tragedy were set up for tears.

Many times had I imposed my personal delusions of romance and love upon a naive and unsuspecting victim, and then arrogantly assumed that she could and would participate, and play the part that I had imagined for her. Finally, I would guarantee her failure with three forms of sabotage: I did not tell her what I was doing (as I myself was unaware); I did not ask her permission or inquire if she was interested in the part; and I withheld the script. So, I thrice ensured that she never had a chance, even if she had known what was going on and had agreed to participate with my nuttiness.

Eventually, my infatuation would peter out and I would begin to see my current target as merely a human being, a mortal with a unique personality all her own, incapable of becoming that paragon of pulchritude, the fantastic and perfect illusion about which I was obsessed.

Suddenly I would drop her flat, dismissed and abandoned, without even a backward glance. She wouldn't know what had happened or why. She might spend the next weeks dazed and wounded, and if she telephoned me, hoping to make some sense of my nonsense, I would be too busy, getting over my own disappointment and fortifying myself for my next dumb and cruel conquest.

I could not have hurt those women worse if I had done it on purpose. I had programmed myself to do one thing (secretly obsess over a delusion of romance) while believing I was doing something else (being authentic, sincere, and worthy of intimacy).

When an involvement would not develop and blossom as I had hoped, I would disappointedly conclude I had once again picked the wrong woman as the object of my affections. Eventually I realized that there was nothing "wrong" with the women. What was "wrong" was that I was a deluded and self-deceptive "picker," using an unworkable and guaranteed-to-fail process for initiating and developing a genuine friendship and affectionate romance.

In my search for true romance, I had become an assassin of love.

I was doing what had been done to me, or what I perceived had been done to me, earlier in my life. I'd been abandoned. Without realizing it, I was playing payback on innocent and vulnerable young women, while simultaneously making sure that I would never experience the love I told myself I wanted. This way, I would never put myself at risk of having my love neglected, devalued, mistreated, abused, or ignored as had happened so many times before.

I did not realize the awful totality of what I had been doing until years later. For too long I had been woefully ignorant of my own accountability for my delusions and Negative Automatic Program, as well as for the sufferings that I had caused others.

I had much growing up to do and plenty of programming to discover, make sense of, master, and disconnect. At last, it was time to become accountable for my automaticity. I felt simultaneously scared, open to growth, confused, and optimistic.

I also realized I was not the only person walking around with strange and nasty programming. While daydreaming one day, I imagined meeting a woman acting out her own particular version of my dangerous delusions and automatic "self-protecting" programming. I wondered what would happen if all my self-limiting stuff and her self-limiting stuff were to become insidiously entangled. At that moment I realized that it had already happened several times.

In retrospect, I regard some of those encounters as horrific soap operas that even Rod Serling, author of the *Twilight Zone*, would not have believed.

I eventually realized that I had placed my personal center outside of myself, and that I had been expecting to find another person to fill an emotional void inside me. I was like a bird, with one wing being my Free Will and the other my NAP. I could flutter in dizzy circles; but I couldn't fly.

Until I became proactive and accountable for discovering my true nature and advancing my way of being, my spirit would never have the chance to soar. Nor could it fly alongside the spirit of a bright, self-aware, empowered, independent, purposeful, and happy woman.

## 7. The Dysfunctional Family Feud

The NAP affects everyone, including our family members. Here is a reminder of how one NAP can cause other NAPs to react so that everyone suffers.

In the 1950s there was a warm and cozy television show, "Father Knows Best," which invited us into the lives of the Anderson family. Jim Anderson was the wise and loving patriarch and Margaret was the stylish "fifties" housewife. The kids were Betty, Bud, and Kathy.

Dad was always patient, kind, and friendly with his children. By the end of the show he had always solved a problem, taught his children another valuable lesson about life, and proved once more that Father Knows Best. Here is an episode that never aired on television.

Father comes home from work one evening not at all like his usual easy-going self. He has had about ten cups of strong Colombian coffee during the day, and he is feeling wired and irritable. Additionally, his major career project is way behind schedule, and Father has had a BAD DAY.

As he walks in through the back door to the kitchen, the first thing he says is, "Oh, no, Margaret, not spaghetti, again!" Seconds later he is wearing it. Mom stomps out of the room and sees Bud doing his homework at the dining room table. "Bud, how many times do I have to tell you? This table is an heirloom and if you scratch it, I'll never hear the end of it from your grandmother. Now go to your room this instant!"

Bud was feeling fine just a moment ago. Now his NAP clicks on. Angrily, he grabs his books and runs up to his room to find Betty looking through his collection of phonograph record albums (archaic devices for storing music).

"Betty, leave my stuff alone! Who said you could come into my room anyway? Get out of here!"

Betty walks out quietly, but her feelings are hurt and her NAP has slipped into gear. As she passes Kathy in the hall, she says quietly, "Out of my way, you little twerp!"

Kathy, the youngest, pouts, and seeing the puppy, kicks it. "Bad dog!"

The Andersons all reacted. Their automatic pilots were wired on similar circuitry and the same frequencies. They all reacted to their Negative Automatic Programs, and to each other's NAPs.

Once their NAPs got started, like dominoes, they had to knock each other over. Each of the five family members forgot there is almost always the option to choose not to "play dominoes," to not react and throw one's power away, or to fail to exercise one's power responsively and positively. Each person was accountable for his or her own behavior, and for his or her feelings of upset.

Any one of them could have stepped out of the automatic drama, and shifted to a positive response. It would have taken only one person's attentive and conscious choice to initiate an appropriate interaction. Under the influence of colluding NAPs, they forgot to not take impersonal treatment personally.

Margaret might have responded to Jim something like this: "Dear, you're obviously in a bad mood and easily irritated! I'll put on some water for herbal tea and then we can sit down together. I want to know everything that's on your mind. I think you need to blow off some steam, gripe and moan, and unburden yourself. I'm here for you, okay?"

In this instance, she is wise to realize that Jim, like anyone under stress, is vulnerable to being taken over by his NAP, at least temporarily. Once she realizes that her husband's apparently insensitive behavior is being generated by his NAP, she will know not to take this insensitive and curt behavior personally. She will be able to keep herself in neutral emotionally, and to respond to him consciously and purposefully. This will give him an opportunity to release his stress, become self-aware in the present moment, escape from his NAP, and step out of his amnesia.

Like dominoes, NAP reactions beget NAP reactions. Real communication can occur only when we are attentive, accepting, compassionate, and patient.

## 8. NAP Logic

Growthful, intimate, and mutually satisfying relationships cannot function if our NAPs are present. Our NAPs sabotage warm, authentic, and responsive human relationships, as when I was an assassin of love.

The NAP operates like this: NAP is always right. If someone says or does anything that does not match the NAPs obsessive requirements, it is disapproved. Anything disapproved must "mean" something. This meaning must then lead to a conclusion. This conclusion must be judged and weighted. This heavy judgment must result in a position being taken about the person who said or did something that was disapproved. (This is true even if we disapprove of something we have done ourselves!)

It may go like this: You show up an hour overdue for dinner with a friend, not having called to say that you will be late. When you arrive, your host acts cool and distant upon opening the door.

You explain that you were stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic on a bridge for forty-five minutes because a jumbo airliner had an emergency landing on the freeway, blocking traffic. This explanation is accepted for reasons known only to the mind of your host. EXCUSE APPROVED. Great; you begin your visit with positive rapport.

Or it may go like this: You show up an hour late for dinner with a friend, not having called to say you will be late. Your host is a bit cool and distant upon opening the door. You explain that you got stuck in a meeting and lost track of time. Indeed, you didn't realize you were forty minutes late until you were already in your car and on the road. Rather than leaving the freeway to call, and arriving even later, you decided to just keep going and to drive faster. You apologize for being late. This explanation is not accepted for reasons known only to the NAP of your host. EXCUSE DISAPPROVED.

Then it goes something like this: Your host's NAP decides that your lateness means that getting together for dinner really was not that important to you. It then concludes that you must not really respect or like the "NAPs person" (the person "being had" by his or her NAP.) Next it judges that your behavior was wrong and inconsiderate. Finally, the NAP takes a position that you are not really someone the NAP can depend on to predictably and punctually satisfy its needs, obsessions, ego, or addictions. So, next time (if there is a next time), the host's NAP will have to make very sure that you are manipulated, controlled, shamed, and/or guilted into being absolutely and precisely on time for sure!

## 9. How the NAP Works

Suffering, and denial of one's own personal accountability for creating that suffering, are indicators that we are behaving in dysfunctional ways because of the NAP.

No one gets up in the morning and decides, "Let's see. It's a beautiful new day full of potentials and possibilities. How can I make today yukky and awful for myself? I know! I'll skip a nourishing breakfast to make sure that my blood sugar level is low, so I'll be tired and easily irritated all day.

Then I'll get into a bad mood, act cold and indifferent to someone who loves me, blame them at first, guilt myself about it afterwards, be late for an appointment, make a promise I won't be able to keep, worry, resent someone else's happiness, get an upset stomach, be sarcastic to a co-worker, beat myself up about my body-image, and feel alienated, angry, unloving, and unlovable."

"What a wonderful plan! And since, in the past, I have often achieved this abysmal state of unhappiness before noon, perhaps that I could make it contagious so it can spread to others?"

No one would choose to experience a day like this on purpose, and yet we humans often act out similar scenarios. Therefore, this way of being must be automatic. It may be literally "normal" to automatically endure confusion, frustration, and suffering. If we allow ourselves to succumb to the NAP. However, the predictable result is that we will never experience vitality and joy.

Sometimes we walk around as if we are in an old horror movie from the 1930s, *The Walking Dead*. Zombies. Or we appear to be unconscious, as if Captain Kirk had just blasted us with his phazer set on "stun." We seem to be stuck in trances alone and with each other. We often act like androids, those human-looking robots that run entirely on automatic programs.

Reactions are automatic. With no awareness of what we are doing, we just do it. Sometimes having the capacity to react automatically can be very useful in keeping us safe and alive, such as when we stomp on the brakes or swerve when someone cuts us off in traffic. (And at other times, we provoke others to hit their brakes and swerve as we drive without paying attention.) Automaticity and quick reactions can occasionally serve us well: 'Hearing a child's cry over a lot of background noises. 'Catching a plate just as it starts to fall from the counter.

At other times our automaticity is programmed to initiate experiences that do NOT now serve us in positive or nourishing ways. Our automatic programming, once innocently set up by our child-self as an apparent survival mechanism, may now be inappropriately reactive, and even dangerous. Old ways of being, still available for instant NAP recall, may limit us today.

## 10. The Prime Directive

The NAP has a control mechanism that I like to call "The Prime Directive," the sole function of which is to perpetuate and protect the NAP.

In our efforts to liberate ourselves from our NAPs, we have an unfortunate automatic tendency to falsely conclude that we can use NAP methods to stop behaving automatically. This is a common and misguided notion that we can use our minds to get us out of the trouble that our minds got us into originally. This may seem reasonable and logical only because it is so simple and common.

The Prime Directive is an insidious attribute of the NAP that ensures that I am rarely aware of the NAP while it is operating. In essence, the Prime Directive is a meta-NAP. It does not "matter" to the program how I feel, or whether I find myself confused, frustrated, powerless, and miserable. Like the NAP, the Prime Directive doesn't "care."

The Prime Directive will protect the NAP at all costs, even at the cost of the quality of life or the actual physical survival of the host human being. Consider as self-limiting and growth-denying examples: Addictions to alcohol, eating and starving disorders, drugs, drama, emotional entanglements, gambling, junk foods, narcissism, righteousness, risk taking, sex, and shopping. Now, add some of the feelings that accompany addictions: alienation, anger, anxiety, blame,

confusion, depression, fear, guilt, ego-mania, hate, helplessness, panic, rage, resentment, self-loathing, suffering, and unworthiness to receive love.

Addiction is a Self-limiting, NAP-induced behavior. One gets loaded on some behavior, chemical, or experience in order to avoid, ignore, and deny how "low-dead" one feels. And the more one gets loaded, the more one feels low and dead. And then, one may again get loaded.

Consider any one of the Self-limiting and growth-denying examples mentioned above. Even when we are experiencing repeated confusion, frustration, and dissatisfaction, we rarely interrupt the cycle of unhappiness with a positive intervention as simple as opening up and sharing our vulnerabilities a friend, ending an involvement with a toxic person, or confronting a problematic pattern of behavior by seeing a counselor or therapist. Why not?

The Prime Directive is a perfect control mechanism set in place to thwart my Self-awareness and our proactive liberation from the NAP. It keeps us stuck in believing the strange logic of irrational justifications like:

- "I'm not going to share my, or our, dirty laundry with anyone. This is private!"
- "I can't leave him or her. I love him or her. I NEED him or her!"
- "I am not addicted. I can quit any time. In fact, I've done it lots of times.
- What do psychologists know, anyhow?

## 11. Shame and Guilt

Being miserable is much more enjoyable if it's NOT MY FAULT! Shame and guilt are creations of the NAP.

I can experience shame because I have concluded that I am helpless, unworthy, and unlovable. I can feel guilty because of something I did not do and should have done . . . or did do and should not have done.

Sadly, shame and guilt are learned behaviors. They are communicable and highly infectious, going from NAP to NAP. Entire families, organizations, and even religions can be infected.

The more I try to not feel ashamed or guilty, the more stuck I get. Shame and guilt are evidence of an active NAP. Transcending the NAP requires honesty, compassion for oneself, acceptance, and courage by the person working on recovery. Avoidance of contact with other infected parties and regular doses of proactivity, humor, and accountability are strongly recommended.

Shame and guilt result in beating ourselves up emotionally, and are not natural conditions of being a spirit having a human experience. Beating yourself up on the inside of your head makes just as much sense as using a two-by-four on the outside of your head.

Beating ourselves up emotionally does not result in heightened awareness, liberation from the NAP, transcending the Prime Directive, and recovery from Spiritual Amnesia. The real consequences are confusion, guilt, frustration, shame, and continuing in a state of befuddled disempowerment.

**Playing the game of life With A Full Deck**  
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