

**C I R A K**

**THE FIVE LEVELS  
OF  
AWARENESS**

**A MANUAL FOR INNER PEACE  
AND OUTER PURPOSE**



All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any mechanical, photographic, or electronic process or in the form of a phonographic recording, nor may it be stored in a retrieval system, transmitted, or otherwise copied for public or private use without the publisher's prior written consent.

The author does not dispense medical advice or prescribe any technique as a form of treatment for physical, emotional, or medical problems without the advice of a physician, either directly or indirectly. The author's intent is only to offer information of a general nature to help you in your quest for emotional and spiritual well-being. Should you use any of the information in this book for yourself, the author and the publisher assume no responsibility for your actions.

Cirak and the tree ring logo are registered trademarks of Cirak Inc.

Editor: Michael Cirak

Photography: Dimas Surya Hariyanto

Coordinator: Yacinta Sri Nastiti Haryono

Iconography: Flaticon.com

Website: cirak.com

Copyright © 2025 Cirak 1st Edition ISBN: 978-1-7350140-4-3

*“In all chaos there is a cosmos, in all disorder  
a secret order.”*

~ C.G. Jung

# CONTENTS

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| LEVEL 1               | 5  |
| LEVEL 1   Lessons     | 7  |
| LEVEL 1   Reflections | 29 |
| LEVEL 1   Paradoxes   | 33 |
| LEVEL 1   Summary     | 39 |
| LEVEL 1   Next Steps  | 43 |
| LEVEL 2               | 49 |
| LEVEL 2   Lessons     | 51 |
| LEVEL 2   Reflections | 75 |
| LEVEL 2   Paradoxes   | 81 |
| LEVEL 2   Summary     | 89 |
| LEVEL 2   Next Steps  | 91 |

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| LEVEL 3               | 95  |
| LEVEL 3   Lessons     | 97  |
| LEVEL 3   Reflections | 123 |
| LEVEL 3   Paradoxes   | 133 |
| LEVEL 3   Summary     | 139 |
| LEVEL 3   Next Steps  | 143 |
| LEVEL 4               | 147 |
| LEVEL 4   Lessons     | 149 |
| LEVEL 4   Reflections | 173 |
| LEVEL 4   Paradoxes   | 181 |
| LEVEL 4   Summary     | 187 |
| LEVEL 4   Next Steps  | 191 |
| LEVEL 5               | 199 |
| LEVEL 5   Lessons     | 201 |
| LEVEL 5   Reflections | 219 |
| LEVEL 5   Paradoxes   | 233 |
| LEVEL 5   Summary     | 237 |
| LEVEL 5   Next Steps  | 243 |
| TAKEAWAYS             | 247 |
| EXAMPLES              | 285 |



# PREFACE

Ask anybody if their life has gone according to plan, and the response is usually ironic laughter, a roll of the eyes, and a telling look that it wasn't even close to what they envisioned. That's because anyone who's lived a few years has experienced the impossible-to-predict twists and turns your life can take. Even on the day-to-day level, the interplay of events, large and small, is so vast that even the most talented novelists or screenwriters struggle to recreate that sense of *you can't make this up*. Nothing is more creative than life happening because everything happens differently than you expect.

But if you ask those same people, if given the choice, would they choose a different life than the one they've lived? The answer is typically a resounding *no*. Why is that? You would think that when your life happens contrary to your expectations, you would rightfully be disappointed and

wouldn't hesitate for a moment to give it all back. So why don't you?

It's because your wisdom is tied to your struggles. Once you come out on the other side, there is a deep-rooted sense that every failure is actually a success, every loss a gain, and every mundane moment a meaningful step in taking you down the road you're meant to travel to become the person you are today. Not a single step or misstep you've taken can be discounted. That's why, when given the choice, you cannot imagine wanting another life than the one you have lived. And if you're someone who's struggling at the moment and you *can* imagine giving some or all of it back, it only means you're in the middle of some core lessons, which is what this book is all about.

*The Five Levels of Awareness* outlines the evolution of your consciousness as it plays out in everyday life. Every person must pass through these levels on their journey through the physical dimension. Each level has its associated behaviors, attitudes, perspectives, and core lessons to help you graduate from one level to the next. As such, this book does not stipulate what you should do. Rather, it looks at what you are doing, what it says about you, and where the growth opportunities lie to move forward and live your best life possible.

As you read through these pages, resist the tendency to judge yourself if you find you're not at the desired level. Awareness

is never about labeling yourself as right or wrong, better or worse, higher or lower. It's about accepting where you are and taking action to suffer less, thrive more, discover your true purpose, and fulfill your highest potential.

Lastly, should you ever feel triggered by what you read, recognize that feeling triggered is an invitation to greater self-awareness, which is the whole point of reading this book. Let feeling triggered illuminate insights into yourself and help you shift into a more authentic place. The more genuinely you self-reflect, the more personal growth you experience. By the end of this book, you will understand that life is a win-win situation.

So, what level of awareness are you?



# LEVEL I

“To”

Welcome to Level 1 awareness. The theme for this level is “To” because you think there is life, and there is you. And whenever anything happens, it happens *to* you.

You can already tell that at Level 1, there's a lot of friction in your life. You're constantly at odds with your environment. You think the world is out to get you, that resources are scarce, and that you must fight for your slice of the pie lest you wind up with nothing. You regret the past, resent the present, and are anxious about the future. You're afraid of wasting your life if you don't meet expectations.

But most of all, you reject yourself. You're unhappy with your body, your looks, your personality, your family. You keep blaming the people, places, and things around you for how you feel and insist that they behave so as not to trigger

you. You think everyone else has it better, and everywhere you look, you find reasons why you deserve to be deeply unhappy with your lot in life.

You're so mired in combating yourself and the world around you that making time for personal development isn't even on your radar. All you do is get through the days, numb out when you can, hope that somehow something will change, and commiserate with others in the meantime.

Level 1 is the most emotionally demanding stage of your evolution because you don't see the connection between your lack of awareness and the chaos and dissatisfaction in your life. You just suffer and don't know why.



But don't worry. You're not alone. Everyone born into the physical dimension starts at Level 1 and must learn the same core lessons. No one gets special treatment, and no one is exempt. Even Jesus and the Buddha had to learn their lessons and undergo massive personal growth, as evident by their long, winding, and rather excruciating journeys.

Level 1 lessons reach deep into your psyche to surface stuck feelings and expose blind behavioral patterns. Even after mastering them, more refinement is needed in later stages. Following are the main Level 1 lessons:

## LEVEL 1 | Lessons

### LESSON I VICTIMHOOD

When you first enter the physical dimension and in the first years of growing up, there is a sense of limitlessness, of *anything goes*. You get the impression that you're the captain of your ship, the master of your fortunes. It feels like the world is your unrestricted playground, and you get to make up the rules.

Quickly, however, you realize this is not the case. You're not actually in control. Life keeps happening differently than you expect. It keeps unfolding in ways you cannot prevent or predict. You're always playing catch-up to your happiness. Whenever you achieve any success, it fades before you can truly enjoy it. You keep waiting for something to happen, that feeling of having arrived and for your life to begin. But the years roll by, and that feeling never comes.

Life starts out so promising. You think you can have your cake and eat it, too. But before you know it, you find yourself

fighting for scraps. Nothing of the life you've envisioned for yourself is coming together. Increasingly, your earthly experience looks like one big disappointment. It feels like you've been lied to on the grandest scale.



No doubt, living with Level 1 awareness is a rough existence. Everything really does feel like it's happening *to* you. You might even describe your relationship with life as abusive. The world keeps beating up on you and your plans. You should be forgiven if you feel like a victim.

Of course, the world is not out to get you. You're just abusing yourself with your thoughts about the world. But you don't realize that yet. You're primarily driven to act out your conditioning. You keep complaining and blaming because everyone around you is doing the same. It's almost like you're waiting for something to happen so you can gossip about what others did to you, never realizing you're just reinforcing your sense of victimhood. In this environment, finding fault in everyone but yourself is entirely normal.

In fact, you're so identified with being a victim that you think adversity is only happening to you. You're entirely convinced that your misery is uniquely yours, that everyone else has it much easier, and that life is being extra unfair to you.

But life is not unfair. You just haven't taken ownership of your thoughts and feelings. Nor have you realized that most of the things you feel triggered by aren't even yours. It's baggage you've inherited from your circumstances growing up. In your formative years, your brain is like a sponge without filters. You absorb everything parents, teachers, peers, society, and the media say, internalizing it as *this is me*. You wind up carrying whatever ideas of fear, scarcity, and lack you're bombarded with into adulthood, and then you wake up one day wondering how life got so complicated.



But everything has its purpose. From this Level 1 chaos, the first seeds of awareness are sown. You feel like there must be a better way to live your life. At first, you think that finding a better way means trying harder. You think it means planning better and controlling more. The Level 1 mind is entirely unprepared to surrender its beliefs. You cannot imagine letting go of the vision of the life you want, the vision you feel you were promised early on. So you keep arguing and fighting with life, even though you're not making any headway. This can go on for quite a while. But gradually, as life beats you up, you soften up.

Granted, the last thing you want to hear is that getting beat up by life is good for you. But suffering drives you forward.

By experiencing what you don't want, you learn what you do want. Level 1 is all about contrast, shaping you into the person you're meant to be by making you dig deeper than you're comfortable with, bringing out your innermost qualities. Nothing does this better than feeling like a victim.

At this stage, it may not be readily apparent why personal growth depends on accepting circumstances you don't like. But all your frustration from not getting the life you want is preparing you to live your best life ever.

## LESSON 2 SEPARATENESS

Underlying your victim mentality is a deep identification with separateness. There is you, and there is the tree. There is you, and there is your dog. There is you, and there is your partner, your children, your house, your car, the moon. There is you, and there is everything else. Everything is its own thing. At Level 1, you think you're a separate entity among a multitude of other separate entities.

There is a simple and obvious reason for this sense of separateness: your mind.

The story of Adam and Eve perfectly depicts how this separateness came to be. Initially, the two are part of unity consciousness, enjoying the infinite peace and abundance

that flows from being one with the source of all creation. But then they eat from the Tree of Knowledge and get pulled into their heads. They start believing their thoughts and begin judging things, and a divide emerges between themselves and the world around them. This shift from a pure state of being to living in mind-made separateness represents their expulsion from paradise.



The same thing has happened to you. You've been conditioned to live in your head, obsessed with labeling, defining, and analyzing everything you encounter. You're not wrong to want to explore the physical dimension—it's an incredible place! But trying to judge your way through life makes you lonely, afraid, and miserable. You cut yourself off from loving your life.

The suffering from feeling separate is substantial. You lack trust or confidence in life. You're anxious that the odds are stacked against you. Because when you think it's you against the Universe, they are. You're constantly overwhelmed and unsure of what step to take next. The world keeps reinforcing that you should be better at planning and judging, but all that does is separate you even more from the world. You look around and see everybody else doing the

same. Everyone lives in their little separate madhouse. But nobody notices it because everyone's copying each other.



The primary Level 1 task is to judge less and allow more. Blame less and accept more. Think less and feel more. Hate less and love more. It's a long, drawn-out process that impacts all areas of your life. But this is how you gradually come out of separateness and back together to have a shared and mutually respectful experience of your common humanity. You might be thinking, *Why does life have to be so complicated? Why can't I just be happy?* Well, you can. But that's exactly what gets in the way of it: *thinking*.

### LESSON 3

#### ABSENT-MINDEDNESS

Being absent-minded means your body is here, but your mind is elsewhere. You're thinking about things that have nothing to do with what's currently happening. The most amazing sunset, the ideal love interest, or the business opportunity of a lifetime could be right in front of you. Yet, you miss it because you're lost in thought.

While you're lost in thought, you're not just absent-minded. You're lost to your senses. The sights, sounds, and smells

of your environment become muted. It takes a loud, sharp knock or sound to snap you out of this state. Being lost in thought is also when you're most likely to get into an accident. Accidents happen when you're not paying attention. And not just physical accidents. When you're absent-minded, you also make bad decisions.

Absent-mindedness begins with believing your thoughts. Whenever a thought comes along, you accept its content as something you must engage with. You haven't yet developed the ability to choose which thoughts to give your attention to. Each new thought takes you over completely, pulling you down the rabbit hole of overthinking.

There, you keep replaying certain situations, accompanied by an ongoing mental commentary of how you should have said this or that or what you will do next time it happens. The Level 1 mind doesn't grasp that you can't change an incident once it's happened. Nor can you prepare for the future because nothing happens the same way twice. Even if the elements of a situation were exactly the same, reality always feels different than your projections about it.



Absent-mindedness is the single biggest drain on your life. It's the state that gives rise to anxiety and fear. The noise in your head becomes overwhelming, and your creativity

comes to a grinding halt. You stress about all the things that *could* or *should* happen. You're constantly ruminating about *what if*. Then you get burnt out or bored and think there's something wrong with you. You put so much time and effort into living a long and healthy life. Yet, you're not present most of the time because you're thinking about things that make you sick.

There is substantial research on mind-wandering, what Western psychology calls *rumination*. The typical person spends half their day lost in thought. With Level 1 awareness, you can expect this to be even higher. It's no wonder then that you're exhausted. It's no wonder you feel lost. You don't know yourself outside of this constant entanglement with thoughts. You think your value to society is based on how well you can think. Then, you try to find yourself somewhere in all that thinking activity. You think you are who you think you are.



The solution to staying out of the trap of overthinking is to become more aware of your thoughts. Then, you are free to engage only with thoughts that benefit you. But this is not so easy. You are deeply attached to your thoughts. You've spent your whole life listening to and following your hyperactive mind. It has you convinced that your thoughts

are real, solid, and reliable and that thinking more is how you solve problems and get through life.

Yet, it's easy to see how the opposite is the case. Most thoughts are simply not true because they're either replaying the past or trying to predict the future, both of which are pure fabrications of the mind. Furthermore, if you probe deeper, you quickly find that thoughts are incredibly fickle, flippant, and unstable. It's called *the monkey mind* for a reason. It can't stay focused on anything for more than a few seconds.

Try it out for yourself. Focus on the breath at the entrance of your nostrils. There's a sensitive area there, below the nostrils and above the upper lip, where you can feel the touch of your incoming and outgoing breath. If you have trouble locating your breath, you can breathe slightly harder once or twice, and once you feel your breath, return to natural breathing. Go ahead and put all your attention on that sensitive spot. Do it for one minute, and then continue reading.

How long did it take before thoughts about other things pulled your attention away? Unless you're an experienced meditator, you likely can't keep your attention on your breath for more than a few seconds.

This inability to stay focused on something as basic as your breath can be shocking at first. Realizing that your mind is about as steady as a flickering candle is not exactly reassuring.

But that's what you've been working with all your life. This mind that can't stay still. It can't let anything just be. It constantly looks to control, define, and predict the next unknown moment. It obsessively labels things as good or bad, right or wrong, pleasant or unpleasant, to make it known and then moves on. One could say this is a holdover from an earlier point in evolution when the mind needed to protect you from imminent danger. But in the modern world, this behavior is misplaced. The result is constant mental chatter that keeps you feeling separate, lost, and confused.



Another way to discern how erratic your thoughts are is by questioning them. Often, you can dissolve thoughts that have long tormented you simply by asking yourself *is this true?* This works because you must be aware of the thought in order to ask the question. And that means you're no longer identified with the thought. The basic principle is when you experience things from awareness, they have no power over you. Questioning your thoughts is like poking a hole in the balloons of your beliefs and watching them pop.

Another exercise to break up old thought patterns is to keep your attention on your pinky finger for a minute. Examine it intently, looking at the tiniest details, all its creases and

folds. After a while, it will start looking odd and foreign, as if you've never seen this peculiar appendage before. If you stay with it long enough, this sentiment spreads to other fingers, your hand, arm, and the rest of your body. It can suddenly feel surreal that you even exist—that anything exists. That's because when you're extremely focused on the details of something, thoughts about it fade away, and you're just in your pure experience of it. You move past your mental labels and definitions and into a nebulous space where you realize nothing is anything. Doing that gets increasingly uncomfortable because you are dissolving the reality upon which you've built your identity and view of the world, which otherwise is held together by nothing but a thin layer of beliefs that needs constant reinforcement. And if you stop reinforcing them, that reality ceases to exist – including yourself.



Another classic characteristic of thoughts is that they're repetitive. The vast majority of thoughts you think daily are the same thoughts you thought yesterday, the day before, and the day before that. In fact, you very rarely think of anything new because the mind only knows what it already knows. What keeps you up at night is not a breath-taking smattering of novel ideas and ground-breaking concepts. What keeps you up at night is a handful of endlessly

repetitive thought loops that take you down the same rabbit holes as the night before. And even though it drives you nuts, you might say this endless repetition is by design, as it reinforces existing beliefs, which your mind loves. Because if you stop believing, your whole mind-made reality threatens to fall apart.

Also, most of your thoughts are negative. Again, this could be a holdover from the past when humans needed to be more alert to immediate dangers in their environment. Fortunately, there are few imminent threats today, but the mind is still wired to look for them. It looks to fulfill its purpose of protecting you by amplifying insignificant issues. Think of office politics or family dynamics as prominent examples where a nothing burger routinely leads to major drama.

An alternative explanation of why you're wired for negativity is a more insidious one. The mind is an absolute control freak. It could very well be spewing those negative thoughts in order to keep you in fear and it firmly in the driver's seat. After all, there's no better vehicle for staying in control than fear. From that perspective, it seems reasonable to think the mind favors negative thoughts because they ensure you stay identified with your mind.



Much has been written about positive psychology. But even if you could only think positively, it wouldn't make a difference. The main issue with your mind is not its inherent negativity. The main issue is that you can't switch it off. It's always on. It won't leave you alone, even when you desperately want it to, so you can get some rest.

Your busy mind keeps you up at night and occupies you during the day, adversely affecting everything you do. You don't sleep well, eat well, or listen well. You're not able to focus or enjoy yourself. No matter how expensive your front-row seats are at the theater, you can't stay present enough to appreciate the show. Choice overload and analysis paralysis make even simple tasks like shopping torture. You stay mired in constant comparison and self-judgment. All you see is lack and scarcity. You are ruled by fear and limiting beliefs. Your productivity and outlook on life suffer. There are many challenges in life. But the noise in your head is the biggest one.

Living in your head consumes your resources, depletes your energy, and limits your perspective to self-preservation. It prevents you from seeing yourself as an expression of the life force that inhabits everything, including the trillions of cells

working in unison to create you. The Level 1 mind is utterly blind to the sheer miracle of your existence.

## LESSON 4

### ATTACHMENTS

Level 1 teaches you how to discern between healthy and unhealthy attachments. Greater awareness of the differences can have an immediate positive impact on your quality of life.

Attachments are energetic connections that form between people, animals, places, and things. More specifically, you become attached to the feeling those things evoke in you. You can become attached to your dog, house, car, money, or memories as much as a life partner.

At first, this doesn't seem like a problem. And it isn't. Forming attachments is normal and inevitable. Whenever you engage with anyone or anything, an energetic exchange happens and a connection is invoked, even if only in the slightest, seemingly unnoticed way. You can think of it as *touching each others lives*. Forming attachments to your environment is the essential experience of life in the physical plane.

However, attachments become unhealthy when they contain conditions, expectations, or dependencies. With

these behaviors, you make others responsible for filling the void of what you're missing inside, putting tremendous pressure on the relationship. Any shift in the dynamic causes friction. Whatever the conditions are covering up - such as a lack of self-worth or fear of abandonment - is exposed. Even small changes in schedule or routines, or when someone sets new boundaries, can cause disruption and upset in the elaborate control grid a Level 1 traveler creates to avoid looking at themselves.

In fact, at Level 1, most of your attachments are unhealthy. Most of the connections you have formed to the world around you contain some element of clinging, craving, resisting, and controlling. At this point in your evolution, you still think manipulating your environment is what life is about. That demanding certain behaviors from others means you care for them. That wanting to dominate is a virtue. You're not yet aware that this is all compensation and avoidance behavior.



One of the most unhealthy attachments of the Level 1 mind is to outside influences. Here, you care deeply about how you are perceived, affecting your confidence and peace of mind. Opinions backed by many people carry even more leverage, impacting what direction you take in life. It's easy

to lose yourself in outside voices that appear to quell your inner anxiety. You find yourself gravitating towards crowds, mimicking social behavior, going around virtue signaling, glued to the latest news and trends, unable to recognize that everything you hear, read, and see is just someone else's view of the world and is motivated by *their* truth, not yours.

By joining the crowd, you get pulled into the feeling of being part of something bigger than just dealing with your personal issues. Surrendering your troubled identity to that of the collective is like throwing a giant blanket over all your wounds and worries about not being good enough. It creates a layer of noise that distracts you from your fears of loneliness and anxiety about your future. The group dynamic supersedes the self and gives you the impression that your life is under control and has meaning.

But don't worry. You cannot avoid your evolution. Experiencing groupthink is one of the most important lessons. The longer you are lost to yourself, the more contrast builds to your true self. The sense that you're not living your own life reaches a tipping point that catapults you out of the group and onto your path of self-realization.



Lastly, as a Level 1 traveler, you're also particularly attached to your physical form. How could you not be? You've just

arrived in your body, injected into a world of senses and sensations. An endless multiplicity of sights, sounds, scents, tastes, and touches beckons you to join the celebration of aliveness. The physical world is constantly reaching out to you, wanting to pull you into the infinite detail, quietly calling attention to the impossibility of its existence and the incredible intelligence behind it. You should not feel guilty for being seduced into everything the physical dimension has to offer.

Indeed, the material world won't let you go so easily. In fact, your attachments to the physical are like superglue. Look how you keep insisting life should happen your way. Look how you keep planning and getting upset when things happen differently. Look how you can't stop thinking and keep reacting to your thoughts and feelings. Look how you cling to what you believe is true and resist change at all costs. This way of living is cemented in you like the foundation of a skyscraper.

No wonder it takes forever for new insights to form about the nature of your existence. No wonder it takes deep trauma for you to let go of the control you think you have. This trauma, in turn, takes forever to heal from, affecting you and everyone in your environment, often for generations. With Level 1 life skills and emotional intelligence, the process is gradual and tedious, and progress is barely noticeable. It only makes rational sense for reincarnation to exist. You couldn't

possibly master all Level 1 lessons in one lifetime, let alone those at higher levels of awareness yet to come.



Letting go of unhealthy attachments can be more challenging than it seems because it is coupled with a massive fear of change. Even when you know a particular situation is unhealthy - perhaps a dead-end job or toxic relationship - it can still be hard to get out of it, so great is the fear of the unknown. As the saying goes, *the devil you know is better than the one you don't*. That's why implementing change is a gradual process. Your suffering needs to outweigh your fear of the unknown before you invite corrective measures.

Looking closely, you can see how fear of the unknown is an unhealthy attachment to your imagination. You're not afraid of what is happening. You're afraid of what you imagine *might* happen. You feel compelled to control what could happen if you don't. For the Level 1 mind, one of the hardest things to accept is that your plan—and all the hopes and dreams you've attached to it—might not be the plan life has in store for you. To let go of whatever milestones you've set for yourself - be it in your career, lifestyle, or relationships - means letting go of the controlled vision of the future you've constructed in your head. Deconstructing this future

does not happen without significant yelling, kicking, and screaming.

## LESSON 5

### KNOWLEDGE

The Level 1 mind thinks it can know life. It thinks it can organize everything into neat compartments of right and wrong, good and bad, real and unreal, and call it *truth*. It loves to latch onto narratives inherited from your lineage, promoted by education, approved by science, reinforced by history, hammered in by politics, and upheld by what the collective consensus calls *facts*. Any message claiming to know how life works is a soothing balm for the mind on its singular mission of planning out your life ahead of living it.

What makes knowledge so appealing is that it gives you confidence in a permanent and predictable world. But this is one grand illusion. Every definition contains countless fleeting elements, including the context of who you are, where you are, who you're with, confirmation bias, sanctioned perspectives of your profession, who commissioned the research, generational and cultural factors, etc. Even your mood, time of day, and whether you're hungry or tired influence how you interpret data. Thus, every so-called fact is contextual, and no context ever

repeats. Every finding is unique and becomes outdated the moment you formulate it.

As such, there's never a moment where you can truly know something. Nothing is knowable because everything is always in motion. Everything keeps changing and evolving. Even if you had all the memory, storage, and processing power in the world, life never stands still long enough for you to be able to say something *is* something. Nothing is something for more than the blink of a moment.



Once you think you know something, it loses its aliveness. It's no longer happening—it's already part of the past. Your knowing of it creates separateness again, keeping you stuck in your mind's definitions and labels, essentially surrounded by dead things. If this is what you build your life around, it's no wonder you feel disconnected and lonely and that life is happening *to* you.

Curiously, the mind is not concerned with the consequences of feeling separate, even if it leads to anxiety, depression, and fear. Instead, it is singularly focused on knowing things because knowing something makes it seem fixed and predictable. From there, it can be factored into your plans for predicting the future. And thus, the illusion grows that the

more you know, the easier life gets and the more successful you will be.

But it's not just living in an illusion. That which you celebrate as knowledge comes at a tremendous cost. Not only are you left with the great fallacy that you know something, but you're imprinted with the picture of a static world into which you can project your goals and reasonably expect to achieve them. This is what leads you to feel like a victim in the first place. You become entirely cordoned off from considering that many other forces are at play than just your wants and needs. This is why you feel so lonely in a big, scary world.

It's ironic that your greatest obstacle to growing your awareness is what you value the most: your knowledge. But don't worry. Level 1 will continue to show you the fallibility of planning your life based on what you think you know. This lesson might not come easily, but it's sure to come.



Finally, it's important to note that the mind should not be vilified. To truly honor the temporary structure of whatever you're experiencing would require the mind to formulate a constant sequence of new definitions, one for each new impression. It would be impractical and overwhelming to

operate this way. It's much more feasible to slap a broad label on it.

That aside, the mind is a fantastic instrument that can receive and translate external stimuli into physical sensations, provide context and situational awareness, and synthesize complex information into digestible chunks. It also makes your heart beat, regulates your body's autonomous functions, and stores your experience in memory so you don't have to learn the same tasks over and over again. It's an amazing tool if you use it for its intended purpose.

It's also great for gathering information and executing once you've made a decision. But the decision itself cannot come from the mind. It cannot come from feeling separate. It cannot come from your mental labels of things. It can only come from your inner truth.

## **LEVEL 1 | Reflections**

Level 1 is a tough place because you're unaware of your limiting beliefs and self-harming behaviors. The silver lining is that some refuge can be found in ignorance. Still, the lessons hit you hard and fast, like a boxer fighting a ghost, not knowing where the blows are coming from, far from realizing it's your own mind.

### **COMPARISON**

The mind loves to compare itself to others, usually looking for validation of its knowledge. But all this constant comparison does is fuel your inner critic. You're always looking around to prove to yourself that others have it easier. Oh, how strong that victim mindset is.

Assume for a moment that whoever you're comparing yourself to does, indeed, have it easier. Maybe they've done the inner work to be where they are now. Maybe they've already been through the darkness and have come out on the other side. You can't look at somebody's profile and know the trials and tribulations they've been through. You can't tell by how they're dressed if their life resembles anything close to how they wanted it to go.

You just can't know the twists and turns a person's life has taken. Those who seem to have it easier may be coming off the tail end of many lifetimes full of struggle. And unless you've experienced regression therapy, you can't know the twists and turns your own life has taken, either.

Ultimately, blame, jealousy, and thinking others have it better are nothing but self-harm. Comparing yourself to others never leads to a more positive outlook. Moving through Level 1 means learning to focus on yourself, knowing that everyone has to jump through the same hoops, and now it's your turn. Whatever others do is no longer your concern. You can trust that no one gets a free ride. You're just meeting them at their current station in life. At one point, they were just like you. At one point, you will be just like them. The only sure thing is that everyone has to master the same five levels of awareness.

### **CONTRAST**

Many people see the spiritual path but aren't quite ready to dedicate themselves to it. They know there is a deeper essence to themselves but don't feel called to go there yet. No problem. Live out your attachments and habit patterns fully. They contain more lessons to be learned. Remember, all your actions build contrast—between the expectations you create and the life that actually happens. This contrast

pushes you forward. It's not a bad thing. It's simply what is needed for the energies to play themselves out so you can move forward. Contrast is superfood for your journey. The tension from trying to control the uncontrollable, predict the unpredictable, and feeling separate eventually catapults you to higher levels of awareness.

## **SUFFERING**

While Level 1 is full of suffering, the good news is that life won't let you suffer forever. This is somewhat cynical, given that life has empowered you to create your own suffering in the first place. But alas, there's no use complaining or questioning the wisdom of the Universe.

What matters is that you would rather sit here reading this book than be out frolicking with the crowd. That you would rather heal inner wounds and reach higher consciousness than indulge in mind-numbing escapism speaks volumes. That facing emotional pain is more important than avoiding it points to a deep commitment to self-love. No longer being afraid to feel your feelings shows your readiness to go deeper and discover life's inner workings. You are taking your well-being into your own hands, dissolving blockages, and graduating to higher realms of awareness.



## **LEVEL 1 | Paradoxes**

Paradoxes are what make your healing journey so challenging. How the mind assumes things work is often exactly opposite to how they actually do. But that's only because you've been conditioned by a Level 1 world ruled by the five senses, where anything you can't see, taste, touch, smell, or feel isn't considered real. It disavows even the most basic principles of how the Universe works, which is based on energy.

All paradoxes share the same characteristic: they point to the path of least resistance. For a paradox to sink in, you must be open to the unknown and show a genuine interest to let a deeper truth reveal itself. When it does, it's like lightning strikes. A whole new world opens up, and a piece of life's puzzle clicks into place.

Taking time to unravel paradoxes is an effective way to expand your awareness and worldview. They make you realize that you've been working much harder than you need to. That life is designed to be easy and uncomplicated. That you're going against universal principles when something is difficult. You also wake up to how remarkable it is that you can be oriented one particular way, swearing it is the truth. And then, in an instant, grasping a paradox dissolves a big piece of your truth structure, and you see the world with completely new eyes.

Here are the most common paradoxes you encounter at Level 1:

### PARADOX #1

#### **Pushing away feelings keeps them stuck.**

This is an obvious one that everyone can relate to. Yet, it's one of the hardest realizations to internalize.

You become conditioned to push away feelings you don't like feeling. But that's how they stay stuck. Anything you resist, an energetic chord forms that binds you to it. By pushing away uncomfortable emotions, they get buried. But they're still there. When something in your environment triggers you, stuck feelings come roaring back to the surface, often much more intense than before.

That's because each time you push down a feeling, you add more energy to the ball of unresolved emotions. It grows and hits you harder each time it surfaces. If you refuse to confront it and keep pushing it back down, some of the pressurized energy seeps into other parts of your body, becoming a physical malady. If this goes on long enough, it becomes so severe it can kill you.

Once again, the solution is to learn to let things be as they are. Feelings are no different. It may be hard at first to break

the patterns of reactivity. But once you get the hang of it, it's life-changing. You realize all feelings come and go, no matter how difficult they are. You recognize that being at the mercy of your environment dictating how you feel is no way to live. To be truly free, your feelings must be free to arise and pass.

## PARADOX #2

### **The answer comes when you stop thinking about it.**

Thinking isn't just an aspect of the mind. It's its sole purpose. All it does is think, think, think. Think your way to every answer. Think your way out of every dilemma. Think about the past and the future. Re-think things you've already thought of. Think about what to think of next. This includes problems that don't exist yet but that you can imagine. In fact, anything you don't know yet is a problem because not knowing itself is a threat. Your entire future being unknown is the biggest concern of all.

There must be a better way to use the mind for what it's designed for. And there is. How often have you felt weary trying to remember something, so you let it go and turn your attention elsewhere, and suddenly, out of nowhere, the answer pops into your head?

This is your inner wisdom at work. The brain is great for absorbing information but cannot decide what option is right for you. That means the best use of your faculties is to define the problem, step away, and let the answer reveal itself. In fact, the more precisely you formulate the question, the closer to the answer you get. A perfectly structured question and its answer are almost identical.

### PARADOX #3

**The more you detach the closer you  
become.**

Ironically, the Level 1 mind creates unhealthy attachments, thinking they will bring you closer to whomever you are attached to. But they actually keep you apart. An unhealthy attachment is when you expect someone else to fulfill something you're missing inside. That leads to a dynamic of dependency, including keeping you energetically and emotionally distant and unavailable.

Once you detach, however, the energetic dependency that holds you apart dissolves. And this is where something magical happens. One would expect detachment to result in both energies drifting apart. But the opposite happens. You gravitate towards one another. With the unhealthy part of

your attachment gone, only the healthy part remains. And that brings you closer. What a beautiful design.

### PARADOX #4

#### **Your life happens when you stop trying to make it happen**

No matter what your mind tells you or what the world around you tries to impress upon you, life cannot be predicted, planned, or controlled. Things never go according to plan. There are always unforeseens because you cannot foresee the future. There are always unknowns because you cannot know everything. All you can do is show up and respond to what's already there.

As long as you believe your thoughts, you stay small. As long as you insist on your plan, you suffer. But once you accept that you know nothing, your life can take on the direction and momentum it always wanted to, but that you were obstructing, thinking you knew better.

You don't have to make life happen before living it. Let living it shape you, form you, and take you on the wildest ride imaginable. Along the way, watch yourself turn into the confident, authentic, and complete person you always wanted to be.



## LEVEL 1 | Summary

Level 1 is packed with fundamental lessons. These lessons help you diffuse self-imposed pressure and broaden your perspective so that you no longer feel like life is happening *to* you.

To master Level 1, you must work through feelings of victimhood and separateness, which dominate your life experience and account for much of your suffering. By establishing a mindfulness practice, you become more aware of your thoughts and spend less time absent-minded. This rewires your brain to react less, leading to clear decisions, healthy attachments, and shifting from relying on knowledge to navigating from your inner voice.

In summary, here are the main skills and behaviors you develop during Level 1. You can check off which ones you've mastered and build greater awareness around the ones that still need work. You're ready to graduate from Level 1 when:

- You understand that as long as you feel like a victim, you stay stuck in negativity.
- You realize how incredibly fickle and random your monkey mind is.

- You're shocked to realize how much time you spend lost in thought.
- You comprehend that pushing away your feelings keeps them stuck.
- You're aware that you're afraid of being alone.
- You understand that judging others makes you feel separate from them.
- You realize you keep insisting life should happen your way and that you get upset when it doesn't.
- You notice how often you get into arguments because you think you're right and everyone else is wrong.
- You realize you've been chasing outcomes because you believe your happiness depends on them.
- You notice you're afraid of change and how you try to create permanence in your life.
- You realize you're addicted to big emotions, big experiences. Feeling ecstatic is meaningful for you.
- You understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy attachments.
- You recognize how overrated and unreliable knowledge is.

- You notice how much time you spend thinking about how you come across to others.
- You can tell how constant comparison only leads to feeling bad about yourself.
- You understand that contrast gives you perspective.
- You sense there must be a better way and are ready to do something about your suffering.



## **LEVEL 1 | Next Steps**

Don't worry if you can't check off all the boxes. At first, the depth and complexity of Level 1 awareness building might be overwhelming. You might question if you have what it takes to get through it. After all, you've spent your whole life reacting, resisting, and wanting things your way. You've spent decades over-anticipating, overthinking, and over-planning. Now, you find yourself hard-wired with certain behaviors and perspectives. Where does one begin to come out of it? And can the process be accelerated?

To graduate from Level 1, you must reverse the process: come out of your head and back into your body. Establishing a meditation practice is a must. Self-reflection through journaling or books like this should be ongoing. Movement exercises like nature walks, yoga, qi gong, and pilates must become part of your upgraded lifestyle. Pockets of stillness need to be established. Basic principles of well-being must be implemented, including better sleep, nutrition, exercise, and mental health. And an overall reduction of unnecessary stress is required. You cannot function properly if you're always in fight or flight mode. These elements provide the foundation and the fuel for doing the inner work.

Here are some straightforward steps to guide you through Level 1:

**1. Spend mornings in Noble Silence.** That means refraining from speaking for as long as possible until your first interaction, work call, or similar. If you absolutely must speak, do so softly and with clear intention, and then return to silence. Examine how silence makes you feel. Notice any discomfort and the tendency to cover it up with unnecessary chatter, checking messages, etc. Make the most of your mornings by extending the calmness you inherited from the previous night's sleep as far into the new day as possible.

**2. Establish a morning self-care routine.** This could involve a simple grounding activity like a taking a short walk, standing barefoot in the grass, or making yourself laugh by thinking of something funny. It can mean making a healthy breakfast and enjoying your morning coffee or tea with greater intention. It can involve tuning into how you feel today and picking out a matching wardrobe. It can also mean indulging in skincare and essential oils, playing calming music, or reading a chapter from your favorite book. If you're more adventurous, consider taking ice-cold showers. It shocks your circadian rhythm into starting the 24-hour cycle, making sure you get tired in the evening when you're supposed to sleep. It also leads to more psychological resilience because you regularly do something uncomfortable. And it trains your cold response so you stay

healthy more easily during cold seasons. Whatever activity you choose, stay connected to your senses. Your senses connect you to your body and keep you engaged. That means feeling the fabric when making your bed or folding laundry. Take in the aroma and watch the swirls as you pour that cup of coffee. Feel the water, soap, and steam while taking that warm shower. Turn your existing daily routines into deeper sensory experiences. It's a fun, effective, and enriching way to become more embodied and sets the tone for the rest of your day. Most importantly, hold off looking at your phone, email, or messages until after your morning self-care routine.

**3. Do breathwork.** Do this simple breath exercise before you go into an important meeting, jump on a call, or sit down to respond to emails: Focus on the incoming and outgoing breath at the entrance of your nostrils. Look for the touch of your breath, and once you feel it, continue breathing naturally. Whenever you notice that your mind has drifted, simply notice it, and without frustration, bring your attention back to the touch of your breath at the entrance of your nostrils. Do this for at least 5 minutes a day. Even one in-and-out breath is effective in keeping you out of your head and in your body. This will be your go-to meditation as you move into higher levels of awareness.

**4. Start a daily journaling practice.** Journaling is a powerful processing tool. While thoughts are floating around in your head, they're incredibly vague and erratic. Writing them down forces you to use more scrutiny and apply boundaries. Often, this results in the realization that the thought isn't true or is way overblown. Put down at least three sentences, even if you don't know what to write about. See if more flows from there. Journaling once or twice daily can significantly help process emotions and relieve the pressure from overthinking.

**5. Get comfortable not knowing.** The next time a question arises that you don't know the answer to, resist the urge to look it up. Notice what it feels like in your body not to know something and practice getting comfortable with that feeling. You can introduce this as a fun activity to your group of friends. Make it a point of pride not to know. This will translate into greater comfort about the future and make you available to the vast ocean of creativity that flows from the unknown.

**6. Notice details.** Wherever you are, examine details with curiosity and interest. There is always something new to discover. Focusing on details keeps the world around you looking and feeling fresh. If it's a location, notice the decor.

If you're with a person, notice what they're wearing. You can comment on it if appropriate. Showing interest brings you closer together. Let the details of the world around you pull you out of your self-absorbed mind and into the aliveness of what's in front of you.

**7. Focus on yourself.** The tendency to look at what others are doing is deeply ingrained. So much so that detractors of personal development call it selfish. But far from it, getting comfortable being you is what this path is all about. After all, you bring yourself to everything you do. Your environment can only benefit from a more joyful, balanced, radiant, and content you. So focus on yourself with hypervigilance and without remorse. There will come a time when you will want to serve others. Until then, focus on yourself first.