



Role of Truth Carried In Non-traumatic Memories¹

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People who are immersed in emotional healing ministries that emphasize receiving truth from God (such as Theophostic and the Immanuel Approach) can sometimes undervalue truth carried in non-traumatic memories.² Therefore, I think these comments about the role of non-traumatic memory truth are especially important for those of us who have been immersed in this kind of ministry. So what is the value, or function, or role of cognitive-semantic truth carried in non-traumatic memories and experiential-learning truth carried in non-traumatic memories?

I. Can be the source of truth that replaces the erroneous, distorted beliefs carried in unresolved trauma: The truth that replaces the erroneous beliefs carried in unresolved trauma can sometimes come from the person's own non-traumatic experiential-learning memory files. This transfer of truth from non-traumatic memories to traumatic memories can only happen when very specific necessary conditions are in place,³ but when these conditions are met, non-traumatic experiential-learning memories are actually *often* the source of truth that permanently replaces erroneous, distorted beliefs carried in unresolved trauma.

My own healing journey has provided many examples of this phenomena. In many Immanuel Approach sessions I *have* perceived replacement truth coming directly from Jesus; however, in all of my EMDR healing experiences and in almost all of my Theophostic sessions it seemed like truth from non-traumatic memory files simply transferred across to the traumatic memories carrying the distorted beliefs in question. As all of the conditions for opening and modifying the traumatic memories anchoring the distorted belief were met, I could feel myself, *from the inside of the unresolved traumatic memory*, become aware of truth in my own mind (in my non-traumatic experiential-learning memory files) that I suddenly realized was true. At that moment, my subjective experience was that, even from the *inside* of the triggered, activated traumatic memory package, the distorted, erroneous belief no longer felt true. It felt, subjectively, like the erroneous, distorted belief from the inside of the traumatic memory was simply replaced with the truth carried in my non-traumatic experiential-learning memory files.

Before receiving healing, whenever I had been *inside* the triggered place, I was *aware* of the truth in my non-traumatic memory files, but it had always seemed far away, without power, and did

¹ For a detailed case-study example of the role of truth carried in non-traumatic memories, see the second half of Lehman, Karl D., "Immanuel, An Especially Pernicious Blockage, and the Normal Belief Memory System," in the Special Subjects/Advanced Topics" section of the Resources page, www.immanuelapproach.com.

² "Truth carried in non-traumatic memories" includes both cognitive semantic information (such as truths learned from studying scripture and brain science), and also truths/beliefs learned from non-traumatic experiences (such as truth about the Lord's character and heart learned from interacting with Jesus in Immanuel sessions as the recipient, or from watching Jesus interact with recipients in sessions you facilitate).

³ For a brief discussion of these very specific conditions, and the memory-reconsolidation research that identified/clarified these conditions, see pages 76 to 82 in either of my new introduction books (*An Introduction to the Immanuel Approach* and *An Introduction to the Immanuel Approach for Mental Health Professionals*).

not *feel* true. I could remember that it was there, and I was aware of its presence, but somehow I couldn't access it so that it *felt* true, or had power to displace the distorted, triggered beliefs. At the moment of healing it felt like the usual barrier between the traumatic and non-traumatic memories went down, and I was suddenly able to access the non-traumatic memory truth in a new way, so that it could come into the traumatic memory in a way that *felt* true and had power to permanently correct the distorted beliefs.

Note that my description of this kind of “healing moment,” that seems to occur when there is finally an effective connection between the traumatic memory carrying the distorted belief and the non-traumatic experiential-learning memory carrying the relevant truth, is very consistent with memory-reconsolidation research. According to the theory based on this recent, compelling research, the traumatic memory is open to permanent modification/resolution because the traumatic memory is activated and because something is different (there is an attuned, caring therapist with them). And then, in this context, as the recipient connects emotionally with both the traumatic memory carrying the distorted belief and the non-traumatic experiential memory carrying truth, the non-traumatic experiential-learning memory can supply the *corrective experience* that is required as the third ingredient for permanently resolving the trauma-anchored distorted interpretation.⁴ My hypothesis is that this is the usual mechanism for the “healing moments” in psychotherapy sessions with any of the methods that apply memory-reconsolidation principles (for example, EMDR and Coherence Therapy).

Note also that truth carried in non-traumatic memories is especially important for those who initially have lots of blockages in the way of connecting with Jesus more directly *because non-traumatic experiential-learning memories will then be the primary source of replacement truth*. That is, those who initially have difficulty perceiving and connecting with Jesus will need to rely more heavily on truth carried in their own non-traumatic experiential-learning memory files. The more truth they have in their non-traumatic memories, the better off they will be!

II. Helps to *expose* the true nature of the problem, helps the person *choose to cooperate* with the Lord's healing work, and helps the person *choose righteous behavior*: A second important role of truth carried in non-traumatic memories is to help *expose* wrong choices and unresolved traumatic content, including distorted interpretations and the associated dysfunctional left-hemisphere emotions.⁵ A third important role of truth carried in non-traumatic memories is to help the person *choose to cooperate* with the Lord's healing work. And a fourth important role of truth carried in non-traumatic memories is to help the person *choose righteous behavior*, even when unresolved traumatic content is triggered forward and *feels* true.

My experience is that when we are triggered, the toxic content associated with the triggered traumatic memories is activated *but we are still **also** aware of the truth carried in our non-*

⁴ For a brief discussion of memory reconsolidation, and how it applies to the permanent resolution of traumatic memories, see pages 76 to 82 in either of my new introduction books (*An Introduction to the Immanuel Approach* and *An Introduction to the Immanuel Approach for Mental Health Professionals*).

⁵ For discussion of left-hemisphere emotions (emotions that are fueled by what we believe to be true, such as left-sided shame that is fuel by believing “I am bad,” or “I am worthless”), and right-hemisphere emotions (emotions that are *not* fueled by what we believe, such as right-hemisphere fear that is produced by the amygdala before the left hemisphere even begins to formulate thoughts about being in danger), see Karl Lehman, “Brain Science, Psychological Trauma, and the God Who Is with Us: Part II,” available as a free download from the “Special Subjects/Advanced Topics” section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

traumatic memory files. There is always a battle between the unresolved traumatic content and the truth in our non-traumatic memories, and one or the other is more or less dominant, depending on the strength of the truths carried in our non-traumatic memories, the intensity of the current triggers, the intensity of the traumatic memory content, and the extent to which the traumatic content includes unfinished processing tasks that impair our ability to function at levels 3, 4, and 5.⁶ If the truth carried in our non-traumatic memories is sufficiently compelling, the truth will *expose* the erroneous beliefs, the associated dysfunctional emotions, and any other toxic content associated with the unresolved trauma. If the truth carried in our non-traumatic memories is sufficiently compelling, then when we are in the furnace of really difficult situations – when triggered traumatic content is intense and *feels* true in the present – the truth carried in our non-traumatic memory files can help us *choose to cooperate* with the Lord’s healing work. And if the truth carried in our non-traumatic memories is sufficiently compelling, then when we are in the furnace of really difficult situations – when triggered traumatic content is intense and *feels* true in the present – the truth in our non-traumatic memories can help us *choose righteous behavior*.⁷

For example, when I’m triggered to my two-year-old separation trauma, if I have sufficient Immanuel truth in my non-traumatic memory files⁸ I can counter the enemies schemes with: “Even though ‘He’s not with me,’ ‘He won’t come,’ ‘There’s no excuse,’ and ‘I can’t trust His heart towards me’ *feel* true, I know, from the Immanuel truth carried in my non-traumatic memories, that the Lord *is* good and that He *is* here with me. But since these Immanuel truths don’t *feel* true, ***there must be something in the way***.” And recognizing “*there must be something in the way*” is the first step in exposing the vows, other reactive choices, and invisible implicit-memory content that hinder me from perceiving His presence. If the Immanuel truth in my non-traumatic memories is sufficiently compelling, when it comes into conflict with the distorted, toxic content, instead of being overwhelmed by the triggered beliefs and emotions, ***the truth carried in my non-traumatic memory files will expose the triggered beliefs and emotions for what they really are***.

If the truth carried in my non-traumatic memories is sufficiently compelling, and especially if I understand implicit memory and recognize the triggered beliefs and emotions for what they are, I can ***choose to cooperate*** with the Lord’s healing work *even when I am in the furnace of being intensely triggered*. Even though “God has abandoned me,” “He won’t come,” and “It’s His fault and His responsibility to fix it”⁹ all feel true, I can still *choose* to submit these distorted trauma-

⁶ For those who are familiar with Richard Schwartz’s Internal Family Systems theory, we can add “the degree to which the triggered material has *blended* with our *core selves*.”

⁷ My perception is that truth carried in non-traumatic memories is a resource that can augment our maturity skills and help us to complete the unfinished processing tasks carried in the traumatic memories. Along these lines, note that recognizing the triggered material for what it really is (even in the middle of being triggered), choosing to cooperate with the Lord (even in the middle of being triggered), and choosing righteous behavior (even in the middle of being triggered) are all examples of the level 4 maturity task of “acting like our true selves.”

⁸ “Immanuel truth in my non-traumatic memory files” can include both cognitive semantic truth (for example, biblical principles I have learned from studying the Bible), and experiential-learning truth (for example, truth about the Lord’s character and heart learned from interacting with Jesus in previous Immanuel sessions, or from watching Jesus interact with recipients in sessions I have facilitated).

⁹ This “It’s His fault and His responsibility to fix it” belief is associated with matching feelings of helplessness and matching choices to wait for someone else to come and fix the problem. This external-locus-of-control package

anchored beliefs to the Immanuel truth carried in my non-traumatic memories, and then *choose* to pray “Lord, please show me what’s in the way. Show me what ***I need to do differently*** – show me any misplaced beliefs that ***I am transferring onto You***, and any choices ***I am making*** that are preventing me from perceiving Your presence and receiving Your help.” As the Lord then reveals the blocking choices, I can revoke these choices. As the Lord reveals the memories carrying the beliefs and emotions that have been misplaced onto Him, I can ask Him to help me perceive His presence with me in these memories, and ask Him to bring truth into these memories to permanently replace the distorted beliefs and resolve the associated distorted emotions.¹⁰

If the truth carried in my non-traumatic memory files is sufficiently compelling, I can *choose righteous behavior, even when I am in the furnace of being intensely triggered*. When I am triggered, and I *do not* have enough non-traumatic-memory truth to challenge the combination of triggered traumatic content and VLE confabulations, then I make choices that are hurtful to myself and others ***and I feel entitled to them***. I feel entitled to them, defend them, and justify them, instead of asking for help to chose to act differently. However, truth carried in non-traumatic memories can help me choose constructive behavior and avoid toxic behavior. If I have non-traumatic memory truth that is *sufficiently compelling*, I can *choose constructive behavior even when I am triggered*.

My experience with getting triggered to my two-year-old separation memories provides a good example. Before I understood triggering, implicit memory, VLE explanations, or the specific components of this particular traumatic memory package, when these memories would get triggered I would become intensely blended with my child implicit-memory thoughts and emotions, and I would swallow my VLE confabulations hook, line, and sinker, with absolutely no insight regarding what was really happening. It would *feel true, in the present*, that the Lord wasn’t with me when I needed Him, that He wouldn’t come even though I was calling and calling, that I couldn’t trust His heart for me,...etc. Furthermore, my two-year-old implicit memories included the small-child external-locus-of-control component, so it would also *feel* reasonable that I should be allowed to signal my distress by simply being increasingly unpleasant, and it would *feel* reasonable that it was Charlotte’s responsibility to figure out what was wrong, and her responsibility to do whatever was necessary to fix it. So instead of *asking* for her help, and appreciating anything she was able to give me, I would simply become increasingly unpleasant and then judge her and point more unpleasantness in her direction if she didn’t do whatever was necessary to make me feel better.

of beliefs, emotions, and choices is *developmentally appropriate for a very young child*, but becomes an especially sneaky, immobilizing trap when it comes forward as triggered implicit memory content. For additional discussion of this external-locus-of-control package, see *Outsmarting Yourself*, chapter ten, pages 98-102.

¹⁰ After I ask the Lord for help, it seems that sometimes truth carried in my non-traumatic experiential-learning memories simply transfers across, *without* any subjective perception of the Lord’s presence. In these cases, since I have asked Him to bring truth, I believe *in faith* that He is facilitating the normal brain-mind process of truth transferring from non-traumatic memory files to the traumatic memory files where the distorted beliefs are carried. In other situations, I *can* perceive the Lord’s presence in some way, and it is clear that He is facilitating the process of truth transferring from my non-traumatic experiential-learning memories to my traumatic memories. For example, I will perceive His presence in some way, and it will feel like He is pointing out to me the truths in my non-traumatic memories that He wants me to notice. In still other situations, I can subjectively perceive His presence in some way, and He *directly brings new truth that has never occurred to me before*.

And I felt entitled to my triggered thoughts and emotions, and to my inappropriate, hurtful behavior, and would defend them. I had no insight regarding how my anti-Immanuel thoughts and emotions were actually implicit memory content coming from childhood wounds that had been triggered forward, and I had no understanding regarding how my hurtful, entitled, external-locus-of-control behavior was also coming from my two-year-old implicit memory package. My triggered thoughts and emotions *felt* true in the present, I accepted my VLE confabulated explanations regarding both the Lord and Charlotte as valid, and my inappropriate, hurtful behavior towards Charlotte *felt* reasonable. It *felt* reasonable and appropriate to point my negative emotions and unpleasant behavior at Charlotte until she did whatever was necessary to fix the problem.

Before I understood triggering, implicit memory, VLE confabulations, or the specific components of this particular traumatic memory package, *I did **not** have truth in my cognitive-semantic memory files that could adequately challenge my triggered, erroneous beliefs and emotions, my VLE confabulations, or my hurtful, inappropriate behavior choices.*

However, this has been steadily changing over the past several years¹¹ as I have been learning about triggering, about implicit memories, about VLE confabulation, and about the specific components of this particular traumatic memory package. Now, when lingering splinters from my two-year-old separation memory get triggered,¹² I still experience anti-Immanuel beliefs and emotions, small-child external-locus-of-control thoughts and emotions, and VLE confabulated explanations, *but now I usually quickly recognize these triggered implicit memory contents and VLE confabulations for what they are.* Instead of arguing with Charlotte about why my anti-Immanuel beliefs and emotions are true in the present, and pointing my external-locus-of-control stuff at her, I usually quickly acknowledge both of these pieces as triggered implicit-memory contents, and ask her for help in working with the Lord to find and resolve the remaining splinters.

Before, my triggered thoughts and emotions, my hurtful and inappropriate behavior, my confabulated explanations, and my lack of insight would usually trigger and alienate my number-one ally. Instead of getting help in exposing and resolving my toxic traumatic content, I would get a miserable experience of back and forth escalating triggering. *Now*, when I quickly recognize the triggered implicit memory content for what it is, acknowledge to Charlotte that I am triggered, and ask her for help in an appropriate fashion, I am much more likely to get assistance.

It is important to note that I make these constructive choices *while I am still triggered, while the triggered beliefs and emotions still **feel** true, while the VLE confabulations still **feel** valid, and while the entitled, hurtful behavior still **feels** reasonable.* Furthermore, while I am making these new, constructive choices, I am acutely aware of the new truth in my cognitive-semantic memory

¹¹ Note that this paragraph and the following two paragraphs are from the perspective of when I first wrote this material in preparation for my presentation about pernicious blockages (2005).

¹² Much of this two-year-old separation trauma has been resolved, so that these anti-Immanuel beliefs and emotions, and these external-locus-of-control implicit-memory contents, don't get triggered as often or as intensely. But the point here is that when the remaining splinters *do* get triggered, and these anti-Immanuel and external-locus-of-control implicit-memory contents *do* get activated, I am now able to make new, much more constructive choices with respect to how to respond to these situations.

files *and I can feel it helping – it feels, subjectively*, like holding onto this non-traumatic-memory truth helps me to make these new, constructive choices.

To summarize regarding the three points presented in this section: Having clear, strong, cognitive-semantic-memory truth regarding implicit memory phenomena, regarding VLE confabulations, and regarding the various kinds of traumatic content that can come forward, helps us *recognize these things in ourselves*. And having this clear, strong non-traumatic memory truth also helps us *choose “out”* of their influence by helping us own our triggered beliefs and emotions, by helping us surrender our confabulated explanations, by helping us revoke any wrong choices, and by helping us turn to the Lord and to others for help.

III. Increases the efficiency and effectiveness of emotional healing work: Truth carried in our cognitive-semantic non-traumatic memory files can dramatically increase the efficiency and the effectiveness of emotional healing work. For example, knowing about the necessary conditions for opening and permanently modifying traumatic memory files allows us to intentionally and systematically establish these conditions in emotional healing sessions. When we accurately identify these necessary conditions, and systematically establish them, then the success rate for permanently correcting distorted beliefs associated with unresolved trauma goes way up. None of this will work if the person receiving ministry does not *choose* to cooperate with the Lord’s healing work, *but once the person does choose to cooperate*, applying these principles from truth carried in our cognitive-semantic memory files dramatically increases the efficiency and effectiveness.

Using specific tools and dealing with specific hindrances provide additional examples. I ask the people I work with to do a lot of homework reading, because then when we are in actual sessions we can simply refer to information that is already present in their cognitive-semantic memory files instead of taking time to present the information as new material. For example, the technique of reporting everything that comes into your mind during a session is very important, but people often have difficulty with it. If the person receiving ministry has studied my material regarding the *compelling* reasons for applying this tool, then, when we are in a session and I notice that she seems to be analyzing and editing before reporting, I can simply remind her of the material she has already studied instead of taking time in the session to discuss the reasons for submitting to this important discipline.

A session I facilitated several weeks ago provides a good example of the value of truth carried in non-traumatic memories when working with specific hindrances. We were coming to the end of the time available for the session but the person was still in a very painful, unresolved place. At this point, I realized that a combination guardian lie/vow was hindering him from being able to perceive the Lord’s presence. Since he was already familiar with these concepts, all I had to do was name the guardian lie and vow, and say that I thought they were in the way. He was able to quickly and efficiently cooperate with resolving the guardian lie and vow, and then was able to perceive the Lord’s presence and receive powerful healing in the last minutes of the session. *The necessary information was already present in his cognitive-semantic memory files, so that he could simply plug this package of material in at the appropriate spot in the session and keep moving forward.* If he had *not* already been familiar with these concepts, we would have had to stop to discuss them, we would have run out of time half way through my explanations, and he would have left the session still unable to perceive the Lord’s presence and still miserably tangled in his triggered thoughts and emotions.

IV. Provides reference points for our error-trapping “safety nets”: *Information in our non-traumatic memory files provides the reference points for both the left-sided and right-sided error trapping “safety nets” that protect us from unintentional error and/or malicious deception.*

The more I study psychological and neurological research about the mind and brain, the more I appreciate how the Lord has carefully designed the right and left sides of the brain to work together in an elegant and complimentary fashion. Not only do they work together to solve problems and develop new ideas, but they also provide complementary error trapping “safety nets” that help protect us from being misled by unintentional error and/or malicious deception.

For example, the left sided system provides an error trapping “safety net” based on language, linear thought, cognitive information, and logical analysis:

“Yes, I realize that you have an intuitive hunch this should work, and that you have a subjective sense that this idea is from the Holy Spirit, but is it consistent with scripture? Is it consistent with firmly established scientific data and principles? And if you do try it, make sure to include follow-up that carefully evaluates the ‘fruit.’”

There have been many situations in which cognitive information and careful logical thought has helped to distinguish between intuitive brainstorm ideas that were brilliant and intuitive “brainstorms” that turned out to be very bad ideas. And there have been many situations in which cognitive information and logical analysis has helped to distinguish between true guidance from the Holy Spirit and triggered thoughts and emotions that had been mistaken for guidance from the Holy Spirit.¹³

On the other hand, the right-sided experiential system provides a non-logical, intuitive error trapping safety net:

“Yes, I know it sounds good, and seems to make sense, but it just doesn’t *feel* right. I especially have a sense of uneasiness about their conclusions regarding _____ (fill in the blank). I’m going to go over the whole thing again and see if I can figure out what’s bothering me.”

There have been many situations in which a subjective, intuitive sense of caution has helped catch an important error/deception that had slipped past the left-sided logical analysis.

And the raw material that both error-trapping safety-net systems use is the information carried in non-traumatic memories – the information in our cognitive semantic memory files and the truth in our non-traumatic experiential-learning memory files are the *reference points* that both systems use as they search for error and/or deception.¹⁴ This is another reason why it is so important to have good teaching and good experiential learning that put *accurate* information into our non-traumatic memory files.

¹³ For discussion of how triggered thoughts and emotions can be mistaken for guidance from the Holy Spirit, see the essays, “Triggered ‘Positive’ Thoughts and Emotions,” and “Guidance from Holy Spirit vs Triggering.” (Both available as free downloads from the Special Subjects/Advanced Topics section of www.immanuelapproach.com.)

¹⁴ Note that the Holy Spirit can also supernaturally supply information and guidance that does not come from information in our non-traumatic memory files.

V. Supplies the truth that we use to run our “normal” lives: A quiet, but *HUGE*, function of truth in our non-traumatic memories is to govern our “normal” lives – *truths in our non-traumatic memory files are the beliefs and factual reference points that feel true, and that guide our thoughts, emotions, and choices whenever we are not triggered.*

VI. Supplies the truth that we use in cognitive-therapy type tools: The effectiveness of cognitive therapy is compellingly demonstrated by many careful research studies, and in my assessment cognitive-therapy type tools are an important part of a well rounded tool box. Truth carried in our non-traumatic memory systems, such as truth that we learn from scripture and truth we learn from science, is an important, necessary ingredient for cognitive therapy.

VII. Non-traumatic memory truth cannot directly resolve trauma: Now that we have discussed these various functions of truth carried in our non-traumatic memories, I want to emphasize again a very important point: putting truth into our non-traumatic memory files – even powerful, faith-building, experiential truth such as witnessing the Lord heal others – *can not*, by itself, resolve the erroneous beliefs that are carried as part of unresolved traumatic memories. Trying to *directly* resolve trauma-associated lies by putting truth into non-traumatic memory files is a fruitless and endless endeavor. Truth in non-traumatic memories *can be a part of permanent healing*, in all the ways just described above, but you cannot *directly* correct distorted, erroneous beliefs *carried in traumatic memories* by just loading more and more cognitive semantic truth and experiential truth into non-traumatic memory files.