R. W. DIXON

Reflection

A Transformative Approach to Recovery Using Spatial Disambiguation

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Knowledge, Acceptance, Humility

your life is worth more.

FREE EXCERPT

The Prologue & Introduction

The full book is available November 11, 2026
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SAMSHA The National Helpline—1-800-662-HELP (4357)

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First edition

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To those we've lost, who we've found, those who stayed, and those we're still searching for.

Loss leads us into places we've never known. Grief leads us into strength we've never felt. Our journey stops at another beginning, and our heart breaks for their journey.

It isn't often that we recognize life's pain that doesn't go away. Seldom is it acknowledged that we've grown stronger. More often we accept that we're weakened, and grow harder.

Wish that our wish be granted and flame still lit.

"Enlightenment comes comes from seeing one's own nature through direct, intense meditation rather than relying on rituals."
- Bodhidharma

"When a prisoner escapes and sees the true world outside, illuminated by the sun, he understands the shadows were illusions, illustrating the journey from ignorance to enlightenment."
- Plato

"Ignorance and Wisdom are identical, not different".
-Dazu Huike

"We suffer more often in imagination than in reality."
-Seneca

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Prologue

PROLOGUE

The Place Within

There comes a moment in life when the answers we have come to depend upon no longer satisfy the questions we ask ourselves.

For some, that moment arrives through loss. For others, through disappointment, uncertainty, or the repetition of circumstances they cannot seem to escape. For those who have experienced substance use, it may emerge from the realization that knowing what must change and knowing how to change it are not the same thing.

Yet, regardless of the circumstances that bring us to this moment, we are confronted with something profoundly familiar: ourselves, and often in those dark times, not knowing ourselves.

We spend much of our lives attempting to understand the world around us. We seek explanations for the circumstances we encounter, assign meaning to our experiences, and develop beliefs that influence how we perceive ourselves and others. Over time, these interpretations become the foundation upon

which we construct our understanding of reality.

But how often do we question our relationship with knowledge and our foundation itself.

How much of what we believe to be true is derived from knowledge, and how much has been shaped by experiences we have never fully examined? How often do we mistake familiarity for understanding, conviction for certainty, or acceptance for resignation?

Perhaps most importantly, how can we recognize what we do not yet understand when our existing understanding determines what we are willing or able to see?

These questions are not intended to challenge the legitimacy of our experiences. Rather, to consider that an experience and our interpretation of that experience are not equivocally rationalized in our mind.

A circumstance may remain unchanged while our understanding of it evolves. An event from our past may continue to exist within our memory, yet the meaning we attribute to it may change as we acquire knowledge. Even our expectations of the future are influenced by interpretations of events that have not yet occurred.

In this way, our understanding is neither confined to the past nor restricted to the present. It is continuously shaped through the interrelationship of experience, belief, knowledge, and how we prepare for our tomorrow.

Within this relationship lies the possibility of discovery.

And perhaps, the possibility of being empowered by change.

Reflection begins with a simple proposition: that the limitations of our understanding may exist not only in what we do not know, but also in what we have yet to question.

To explore this proposition, we must be willing to examine our experiences from perspectives beyond those to which we have become accustomed. We must recognize that our interpretations, however convincing, are not necessarily complete. We must develop the ability to observe our thoughts without immediately defending them and consider alternative meanings without abandoning the experiences from which our beliefs originated.

This process requires three essential principles: **Knowledge, Acceptance, and Humility.**

These principles are not independent destinations. They are interconnected aspects of a continuing process, each influencing and sustaining the others.

Failing to accept the knowledge of today and failing to be humble to the knowledge of tomorrow are often our first form of denial. As we discover these principles and the means in which we interact with them they establish a foundation for our introspection.

Spatial Disambiguation approaches introspection through the examination of the context, events, time, place and ambiguity of our environment and our interaction with it. It invites us to consider how our understanding changes when we distinguish the circumstances of an experience from the interpretations we have assigned to it.

At the center of this exploration is a place that is not defined by geography, circumstance, or time. A place from which we may observe the past without remaining confined to it, acknowledge the present without surrendering to it, and contemplate the future without being governed entirely by our expectations of it.

The purpose is not to erase what has occurred, deny what is occurring, or claim certainty over what has yet to happen. It is to develop a more deliberate relationship with our understanding of each.

For an individual seeking recovery, this distinction may be especially significant.

Recovery is often described in terms of the behaviors we must change, the substances we must relinquish, or the circumstances we must overcome. These considerations are important, but they do not necessarily address every question that emerges when we begin to examine it in depth.

Reflection does not promise that every question will be answered, nor does it suggest that understanding alone can resolve every challenge associated with substance use or recovery. It offers a method of guided introspection that aims to allow

discovery of the events, time, place, context and ambiguity in which substance use molded our way of thinking.

Throughout these pages, the reader will encounter perspectives, relationships, and philosophical interpretations intended to encourage examination of their own experiences. The meaning derived from these encounters will not depend solely upon the ideas presented, but upon the introspection through which those ideas are considered.

A single circumstance may possess multiple interpretations. An unfamiliar perspective may reveal a question that had previously gone unrecognized. And an understanding once believed to be complete may become the beginning of an entirely different discovery.

In this process, uncertainty need not represent failure. It may instead signify the recognition that our understanding remains capable of discovery of knowledge and limitations.

Knowledge is the quintessential component of recovery. However, without Acceptance and Humility, Knowledge would cease to exist.

This is where our exploration begins.

Not with the certainty that we possess every answer, but with the humility to recognize that there is more to understand.

Not with a demand to become someone else, but with the willingness to examine who we ourselves are.

And not with the expectation that our past must determine our future, but with the possibility that a different understanding of our experiences can reveal a different path forward.

"May the path to sustainable recovery begin not with the answers you seek, but with the Reflection that inspires you to question."

R. W. Dixon

Introduction

What we know about ourselves is immeasurably important. Knowing our weaknesses only further empowers our choice in a sober life especially when met with familiar people places and things. We see those shortcomings or failures and can articulate for ourselves and understanding that "clicks" or comes full circle. Knowledge often defines our socioeconomics, our literal circle of friends, who we feel closest to is usually those that have "been there", those that have listened, shared, related to and offered wisdom on our behalf, good bad or indifferent. We accept that without thinking, there are no questions asked, and often without reasoning or conscious because of our insecurities, weakness or within a foundation of addiction, we tend to make choices to allow our standard to fall, build it on shaky ground or ignore it completely. Often that is where what we don't know can affect our recovery, through people, places or things. It's incredibly difficult to let go of empowerment when many aspects of our lives feel powerless. The thought of being accepted along with our faults can be rare, and as we recover, our standard of self raises and we then lack the willingness to accept those "results" in our self or others too. How many times have we made excuses for the actions of others because we relied on something they provided either to our heart, our mind or our body, our addiction? This is where step work really begins to shine through. Amends - we've maybe written about times in

our life where we fell short with our responsibility either seen or unseen, knowingly or unknowingly. To those we live, care for, are responsible to nurture and love and in-fact ourselves. This isn't so much a place to hash out the dirty details of every incidence where we fell short or lacked the knowledge, thus the courage to detail all of those events and rationalize them. But a place where we can use those events to further strengthen and empower our perspective from a strong foundation and sober mind. We're establishing healthy boundaries for our self, we are aiming to have a knowledge of how and why and when we failed, and holding that perspective to empower a change in the way we think, the way we perceive and make choices. Ultimately, we are becoming one with our tenses of self. Truly in our past there is an intent to not bring with us many aspects of who we were when we were using. But we need to know, and we need to be cognizant of when we are still making excuses vs rationalizing our past. See both instances both perspectives in true light, know the colors and know if we're using them on today's pallet. In doing so we carry with us a knowledge that exists both in our conscious and our subconscious that will *Coalesce* and continue to grow powerful over addiction and the forces that led us there.

Birds of a feather...

> *We've all seen the flocks of birds migrating North in the Spring and South in the late fall early winter right? I feel like a bird on a wire. Flying with the flock, going south, headed somewhere new, competing for food, in formation. Are we a particular type of bird? I feel like the easiest answer is a complicated no. In nature we see*

animals that often molt, they have survival built into their genes. Dark brown feathers as chicks so they can hide in the nest and not be spotted, safe until their taught and strong enough to survive on their own. At what point are they ready? Looking at it as we add our BS to it it is even more perplexing. As we use and enter into environments we're asked to change our feathers that allow us to avoid suspicion often by our self, later they're shed as we embrace that we're in a flock and are South for the winter. Do we eventually shed those feathers for new "adult" versions. Are they actually our own or are we in the flock. I'm talking about our actual persona. I guess I want to point out that regardless of our intentions the flock is headed somewhere together. Granted you may be a duck in a V and in a group of 20, but literally every bird in the northern hemisphere is headed in the same direction. Euphorically and literally South. Do we in the heart of substance use or addiction have control of what feathers we have. All that matters is flight, and not being seen until being seen is what serves our environment and our use. Strength in numbers, got it. But the truth is you aren't your strongest self in feathers that aren't yours. They don't fit. We had already begun to molt into mature feathers and get out there on our own. A season, back with the flock and then here we go back at the beginning again. Do we really migrate, I mean yeah, we do, but is it natural for us to drop what we've built because of a season, another bird fly's south...

I

Reflection

It's not your fault.
We approach Recovery with an open mind, we experience an empowering method of introspection and observation, thus learning our truths.
Knowledge is the most important aspect of Recovery.
However, without Acceptance and Humility, Knowledge would cease to exist.
The context, events, time/place and ambiguity that crafted our decisions across our physical and metaphysical existence within our past, present, and future tense self, and within our conscious and subconscious.

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R. W. Dixon is the author of *Reflection* and the founder of Reflection Recovery, a Virginia nonprofit recovery community. He has practiced this framework in his own recovery since 2014.

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