

Zoom Room 3181862865
AN EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY WORKSHOP

Facing

Exploring

Why Inner Child Work Matters

A Foundation for Self-Care in Recovery

Accepting

INTRAPERSONAL
CHANGE PROCESS

Responding

Thom Rutledge, LCSW

PSYCHOTHERAPIST AUTHOR

This workshop is based on
Thom's books, *Simple Truth* and *Embracing Fear*

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*The first part of any problem that I must solve
is that which is between me and me.*

-TR

*As children we are victims,
as adults we are volunteers.*

-Robert Subby
Lost in the Shuffle

*Don't measure your strength by your
ability to remain in painful situations.*

-TR

A fellow showed me a picture of himself and said, "This is a photo of me when I was younger." EVERY picture is a picture of you when you were younger! - Mitch Hedberg, Comedian

Inner Child work is time travel...

It is our opportunity to respond to the harm we have experienced over the years – everything from the most maliciously intended to the most innocent mistakes of pure ignorance. We cannot change the past but luckily the harm is not in the past. It is right here with us now. Always will be until it is healed.

If I show you my black eye from being punched 2 days ago – the punch was then, the bruise is now.

When an accident victim is wheeled into the ER, there is no part of hospital staff that is tasked with trying to change the fact that the accident happened. There is certainly no one who will look at our injuries and deny that the accident happened. All the attention is on tending to the harm that has been done.

As time-traveling adults, that is what we are doing when we encounter the bruises and breaks that are here because of what has happened in the past – you know, the past that we cannot change.

We are here to attend to our injuries, to repair what we can, to begin to heal what can be healed, to accept what we cannot change, to grieve what we have lost, and to love those younger parts of ourselves who were always doing the best that they could.

This is very important work.

Why Inner Child Work Matters

A Foundation for Self-Care in Recovery

“My definition of being an adult became
I am the adult who takes excellent care of the child within me.”

-from *Simple Truth*

INTRODUCTION

The inner child metaphor has often been misunderstood, or more accurately, understood in a multitude of ways that can be confusing. I do not claim to have “the right way” to do inner child work; I only have my way, a way that I have been developing and using for more than 30 years. With the work Allen Berger and I are doing with Emotional Sobriety, it seems like an excellent time to revisit this powerful metaphor in that new context.

Inner child work has most definitely been some of the most healing therapy I have experienced in my personal work and that has also been the case in my professional work with others. It is a powerful way to get to the core of our woundedness and a highly effective way of addressing those wounds.

With this workshop, we will return to basics of inner-child work, clarifying what it is and what it is not. And we will review primary tenets of conceptual and experiential models of this therapy. As so often is the case in therapeutic work, much of it is quite simple conceptually but never easy in application. I like a term I heard from a client years ago: *deceptively simple*. As a magician, that resonates with me.

Welcome to the workshop. I suggest that we approach this topic seriously with plenty of humor (they do co-exist) and with an openness to be surprised by what we might discover, even if you are a veteran of inner-child therapy.

Thank you for your interest in my work.



Thom

MY LONG, SUCCESSFUL & ENJOYABLE CAREER IS A HAPPY ACCIDENT

I am an accidental therapist. I have no recollection of ever making a decision to become a professional people helper. Best I can tell, I must have made that decision in one of many alcoholic blackouts. In those days I was waiting to be discovered as a genius poet. Other than Mom's copy of *I'm Okay, You're Okay* by Thomas Harris, I had not a clue what a self-help book was.

I now refer to this as my happy accident and I remain grateful to the smarter, wiser beings for getting me here.

A NOTE ABOUT “RECOVERY”

I am pretty sure that I have written something about inner-child therapy in all of my books but I still tend to associate my first book (*Simple Truth*) with this topic more than any other. For that reason I will include some excerpts from that book to get us started.

Here is a bit of *Simple Truth* to help set the stage:

Throughout this book I use the word “recovery” to refer to a new path taken by those of us who have become dissatisfied enough with our old circular paths to venture out, risking letting go of old ways and experimenting with new.

The word “recovery” has become a natural part of my vocabulary as a recovering alcoholic and codependent person. But the work has come to mean much more to me than a simple reminder of where I have been (alcoholism, dysfunctional and irresponsible relationships). It speaks to me of where I am bound.

It is not enough for me to hold my focus on these conditions and behaviors I am recovering from. The miracle of the new paths I have taken, and continue to take one day at a time, is found in what I am in the process of discovering of myself – literally the me I am *recovering* (meaning regaining).

It is not necessary that you share with me the identification of alcoholism or codependency in order to identify with this broader use of the word “recovery.” Herein, “recovery” simply means *possessing the courage to let go of old ineffective patterns of thought and behavior and a willingness to start fresh.*

-from *Simple Truth*

A NEW IDENTITY

We hear lots these days about discovering the child within us. This is not only descriptive of the playful, carefree elements of our personalities but also refers to a darker side of ourselves. For those of us who grew up in less-than-perfect families, the child within holds pain and cries out with needs, legitimate needs that were not met during our chronological childhoods. The child-within is an emotion-filled, vulnerable part of each of us, a part that we all at one time or another attempt to hold at arm’s distance, afraid of the repercussions of accepting the needs and pain as our own. In a nutshell: We find this child crying on our doorstep and haven’t the faintest idea what to do with him/her.

Discovering the child part is not difficult. Most of us have spent the majority of our adult lives feeling like 12-year-olds (or eight-year-olds or four-year-olds, etc) walking around in disguise, ever fearful of that dreaded day when someone would recognize that we are not adults at all – but masquerading children. This is true of reckless, irresponsible characters and super-responsible stiffs alike. We tend to view others from our twelve-year-old’s eyes, seeing everyone else as having it all together and really being adults, while we, on the other hand, are mere imposters.

“And so,” I tell my clients who have experienced the miracle of recovering their lost inner-child, “the more difficult task is yet to come: Discovering the adult-within.

The Empty Adult Become A Parent

Clearly a child within calls for a parent within. The problem many of us face is that the nearest thing to a parental figure inside is tyrannical and full of should’s, ought’s, if-only’s and shame-on-you’s (aka: Should Monsters). Most of our children within have actually been under the care and supervision of these over-protective, controlling tyrants since adolescence or early adulthood. With the discovery of the inner child, we are challenged to recognize those old messages for what they are and let them go – turning our attention to the creation and development of a brand-new adult; an adult who at first is quite empty but who is destined to become the parent our child has long awaited.

Empty is an excellent condition when it comes time to redecorate. If you stretch this far, celebrate your adult emptiness. As a brand new adult with a rediscovered child, celebrate your separateness from old dysfunctional family lessons and an outdated should monster.

Any new parent experiences loads of fear --- fear of being inadequate to the massive responsibility of protecting, loving and meeting the needs of a small human being who, by definition, is extremely needy. Being needy is perhaps the most natural characteristic of a child. Being fearful may be the most natural characteristic of the human parent.

What follows is an experience to help you begin to get your footing as a new parent to your “recovered” child.

-from *Simple Truth*

Exercise

The purpose here is to assist you in experiencing the adult part of yourself who is able and willing to accept the substantial responsibility for the vulnerable child within. It is not unusual in this experience to find oneself slipping into the identity of that child-part, feeling and releasing stored emotions from past years. When this happens, I encourage you to take time to do this important healing work. Allow your child whatever she/he needs to feel the permission “to simply be” that is being offered.

You may also find yourself slipping into the character of the should-monster or inner-tyrant during this exercise. If this happens, please avoid the temptation to tell yourself that you are doing the exercise wrong. Simply sit quietly until you can resume the exercise in the role of either the benevolent adult or the child.

Allow whatever happens to increase your awareness. This is more than anything, an exercise for that purpose: to increase awareness.

Find a photograph of yourself as a child. You may want to look through many old photographs as you reconnect with this part of your life but eventually decide on one photo of yourself as a child to use in this exercise. If you do not have access to photographs of your childhood, draw a simple picture to represent your child self. No artistic talent is required – just something that you associate with your childhood.

Put the photograph in a special ad safe place in your home. You may even choose to frame your picture. Treat it well. Now, for the next two (2) days, go to this place and sit with your photograph. Sit with your child.

If you discover that you are slipping out of your adult-self and into your child-identity during these meditations, remember that this is just as it needs to be. The only guideline offered here is to experiment with feeling the identity of both the child and adult selves. Learn to distinguish one from the other. Learn to move from one to the other. Remember: multiplicity is our nature. There is nothing crazy about this.

For these first two days, remain silent during this time. Breathe deeply and gently, and use your out and inner senses to increase awareness of this “relationship within.”

Beginning with the third day, sit quietly to make contact with your child-self and then begin to speak to her/him. Speake aloud even if this seems awkward or silly. Speak directly to the child in the present tense. And speak as adult to a child. It may take some practice to learn to remain in your adult self as you do so. Or it may takes some practice to learn to experience the child as a reality.

When you slip into the child-self, simply notice the difference and feel whatever you feel. For the sake of this specific exercise, however, before you resume speaking, return to your adult-self. Say whatever is in your heart. This, by the way, is an excellent exercise to incorporate journaling. If you do so, I suggest that you not write during your meditation (time with your child) but immediately following.

If you wish to take this exercise one step further, try this: After four days of this meditation practice, ask a trusted friend to sit with you. Ask your friend to hold the place of your child-self, sitting quietly (maybe holding your photograph). Just as you have in the previous days, sit quietly for a time to make contact (this time with your friend as your child-self) and just as you have spoken before with the photograph, speak now to your child.

Before you begin, let your friend know that all you want them to do is to sit quietly with you and listen to whatever you say. Tell them that you do not want them to respond during the exercise, just sit, listen and experience what this is like.

Move slowly with this. Don’t rush. When you have finished speaking to your child, continue to sit quietly for at least a couple more minutes before moving out of the meditation space with your friend. Reconnect now with your friend – as your friend, no longer representing your child-self. If you want, you can close your eyes for a moment and return your child-self to your heart, where she/he belongs.

Finally, ask your friend to tell you what it was like to be with you in this role, especially what it felt like to her and receive you're the words you spoke to your child. Before you converse about the experience, really listen to what your friend has to say. This is a special gift and is valuable information for your new adult-self.

A Brand New You

If you are at all like me, you may discover that the adult part of you who has spent the last few days connecting with your inner-child feels quite unfamiliar. This is not your mother or your father – or your should monster. This is a new part of you. With this experience you have planted a magical seed. To water and nurture this seed, we all need to practice. This is a daily practice of being a quality parent to a beautiful, deserving child. This just might be the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

-from Simple Truth

Simple Truth is only available through Thom's office: <https://www.thomrutledge.com/shop>

T H E W O R K S H O P

Why Inner Child Work Matters

• ~~Inner Child Work Matters~~ because I say so.

• Inner Child Work Matters because it is a powerful metaphor for self-care that is essential to solid, long-lasting recovery from debilitating dependencies.

• Inner child is a therapeutic metaphor to represent unresolved emotional/psychological issues from childhood.

• With this metaphor, we are not working with the past because emotions are always in the present. The circumstances that gave rise to the emotions exist in time (past, present, future) but unresolved emotions travel with us in time. They may be hiding or buried – or you may be pretending they are not there. But they are.

• The inner child metaphor gives us a tangible way of remaining in our adult consciousness at times when we have previously lost our recovery footing and slipped back into the child identity.

INTRApersonal Change Process

*What I hear, I forget
What I see, I remember
What I do, I understand
-Chinese Proverb*

INTRApersonal Change Process directly addresses each person's unique internal structure of consciousness with metaphor, active imagination, role play, psychodrama, journaling, visualization, and other creative methods. Based on an understanding that the nature of consciousness is multiple, rather than singular, a client is guided to translate perceived interpersonal and situational conflict into intrapersonal problem definitions. The philosophy of "healing from the inside out," is pivotal to this therapeutic approach.

Intrapersonal relationship dynamics, in most cases, accurately mirror a person's relevant interpersonal patterns. For instance, a person who is in a negative relationship with others who are critical or condemning of her will be guided to explore an intrapersonal relationship between her authentic self and some sort of "inner-bully" that agrees with external criticisms. Or, a person experiencing an addiction or an eating disorder is taught to see herself "in relationship" with a personification of her "inner culprit."

Intrapersonal therapy focuses on these internal "codependent" relationships, with the intention of strengthening the client's ability to differentiate "self" from "problem," and teaching him to use the ability to make such a distinction to accept full responsibility for decision-making in his life. By personifying inner "characters" to represent conditions and problems such as addiction, eating disorder, anxiety, self-condemnation, the therapist is able to bring to light cognitive patterns that inhibit growth and change. By teaching clients how to identify and separate from "toxic" characters (negative beliefs about self and/or environment) and how to create --- or enhance --- "positive," supportive characters, intrapersonal therapists are able to help the client discover, define and develop (called "3-D" process) an authentic identity that includes both strength and appropriate vulnerability.

The Continuum of Learning



- Concepts are useless without applied practice

- Practice makes... Practice

- Repetition is the key to mastery
- Repetition is the key to mastery
- Repetition is the key to mastery
- Repetition is the key to mastery

Emotional Sobriety and Fear

We freak ourselves out about the future much better than we predict it. -TR

Emotional Sobriety is a philosophy to be applied, not a goal to reach. Emotional Sobriety is a daily practice that requires our conscious attention to the details of how we are responding, both interpersonally and INTRApersonally, to the world we inhabit. In other words, emotional sobriety calls for us to accept full responsibility not only for our behavioral responses but also for how we interpret our experiences. Emotional sobriety provides new perspectives and specific techniques that afford us opportunities to change from the inside out. Emotional sobriety teaches, and reminds us daily, that the mind (your mind and my mind) is all that we control.

Emotional sobriety engages us in rational thinking, compassion for self and others —and challenges us to clearly define our beliefs and values.

Central to the practice of emotional sobriety is healing our relationship with our emotional selves. Emotional healing, for it to be authentic and lasting, will always include honing in on fear. How we respond to what scares us is a determining factor in the effectiveness of our emotional sobriety practice — aka quality of life.

Responding to Inner Child Fear

One of the primary principles in my book, *Embracing Fear*, is that fear is a natural part of the human experience. Fear is not a problem to be solved but, like other emotions, it is a responsive energy within us intended to communicate valuable information. Specifically, the purpose of fear is to alert us to danger, right? Unfortunately, being raised (and programmed) in our less-than-perfect families, communities, schools, churches, etc. we have learned to scare ourselves even when there is no real danger present. We have also learned a wide variety of not-very-effective ways of responding to perceived fear. We deny, distract, run, hide, ignore or we might focus exclusively on our fears to the point that they define us.

Reassurance is to fear as food is to hunger. When we are hungry we seek food; when we are afraid, we seek reassurance. Unfortunately, this need is often met with well-intended efforts to reassure us that are actually minimizations (*it's not that bad*) and/or criticisms (*there's nothing to be afraid of*). These responses can feel invalidating even if we don't know why. People are often surprised to learn that simply acknowledging (respecting) that the person is afraid is a much better form of validation.

All this to say that for the purposes of this workshop and practice of these techniques after the workshop, when you identify fear within your experience, proceed to offer reassurance from your adult self to your child self. A good way to do this is to first invite your inner child to tell you something about their fear.

A Relationship with Your Inner Child

- Inner Child delivers unresolved/unexpressed emotions to us in the here and now. Unresolved childhood emotions have a significant impact on how we perceive our current life and relationships.
- The understandable stiff-arm response.
- Now that I have found you... Grow Up!
- Should Monster (condemnation) communicates directly to the child
- Adult self as protector (strong energy)
- Adult self as nurturer. (gentle energy)
- Adult between Child and Should Monster
- Acting as if this is not a metaphor and never forgetting that this is a metaphor.

Reminders...

- Everyone forgets. We don't need better memories; we need a recovery practice that has plenty of reminders. Elements of our daily practice (reading, meditation, walking, meetings, and each other are the Post-It Notes to keep us awake and on track.
- Think relationship. Use the separation. When you become possessed, refresh your separation. (Short version: Me, Not Me)
- Remember that wisdom is available when we ask
- Inner saboteurs can guide us toward wisdom (spring-board technique)
- Weird is good.
- A word about medication
- Practice makes practice. Build and adjust your daily practice

Wrap Up...

- What are some of your takeaways from today?
 - Are there any commitments or goals you want to speak out loud with our group as witnesses?
 - Anything you want to say to the group as we close?
-

Sometimes when I bring up the concept of the inner child, I can either see -- or at least feel -- my client roll her eyes. Inner child has become a cliché in the worlds of therapy and recovery. I can have fun with the idea of inner child as much as anyone but when it comes to this work, the metaphor of inner child (and inner parent) is extremely powerful, and perhaps more often than we would like, necessary for the deep and lasting healing we plan to attain.

Let's just get on the same page about what the inner child represents in the work of INTRApersonal Process.

In this context, inner child does not refer to the carefree, playful part of our personality. On the contrary, inner child represents the hurts, confusions, and unprocessed pain from dysfunctional and abusive relationships in our childhoods. The inner child is a brilliant survivor, a part of us that figured out how to adapt to an environment that was neglectful, abusive, or both. But also, that inner child is a bundle of unmet needs still waiting to be met. We know this intuitively which is why very often, even the idea of the inner child scares us. Discovering the inner child is the beginning of a lot of hard work. Emotional work. It is not unusual for a client to say that they hate their inner child. Perfectly understandable when we understand what the inner child represents.

To do the best work we can with the inner child, most of us need what psychotherapist and author, Alice Miller, calls an experienced Enlightened Witness to accompany us through this stretch of the road less traveled.

More to be revealed. Yikes!

The Inner Parent Ain't No Joke

Sometimes when I bring up the concept of the inner child, I can either see -- or at least feel -- my client roll her eyes. Inner child has become a cliché in the worlds of therapy and recovery. I can have fun with the idea of inner child as much as anyone but when it comes to this work, the metaphor of inner child (and inner parent) is extremely powerful, and perhaps more often than we would like, necessary for the deep and lasting healing we plan to attain.

Let's just get on the same page about what the inner child represents in the work of INTRApersonal Process.

First, referring to this metaphor as inner child work is a bit of a misnomer. We don't really have to work hard to discover our inner child because that part of our personality (that holds the unprocessed experiences and unexpressed feelings from our past) is not hidden, it is just not identified. The inner child is the part of us that is ultra-sensitive, the part of us that takes things so personally and the part of us who is on the front lines facing our inner condemning saboteurs. We are, in fact, inner child abusers.

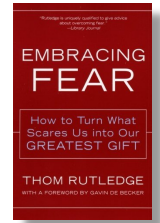
We do need to identify our inner child but the real work in this process is discovering and strengthening the inner parent to care for the inner child. Being fully aware of the inner child's feelings and needs and being the parent that takes care of that child is an important part of defining ourselves as emotionally sober.

When we understand this and decide to do the INTRApersonal work, none of us feel prepared. It is not unusual to experience some significant resistance to this.

And on and on we go.

This is how *Embracing Fear* ends:

As usual, I have discovered my Bully trying to wedge his foot in the door, trying to tell me what my greatest fears should be. But no matter how often I fall for the Bully's little tricks, slipping back into my own neurosis, I am committed to maintaining my connection to what I know is, and should be, my greatest fear: the fear of not listening to the wisdom within me, the fear of not following my heart.



It only recently occurred to me that the wise little voice within me, the one who taught me the NO FEAR motto, is none other than the Ally. My own healthy fear is the wise voice that will guide me past the control of the Bully. My own healthy fear will help me remember what is important and will remind me to stay away from dangerous perfectionism. In fact, my own healthy fear recently wrote this new Nutshell for my office wall: *Continual fear of making a mistake is a terrible mistake.*

The Ally tells me now to add something to the NO FEAR motto. The little addendum to the campus lecture says, “Take the risk. You are worth it.”

I say the same to you.

To download free handouts and articles, go to <https://www.thomrutledge.com/free-downloads>

When we have a toothache we know that
not having a toothache is happiness.

-Thich Nhat Hanh

Thank you, thank you...



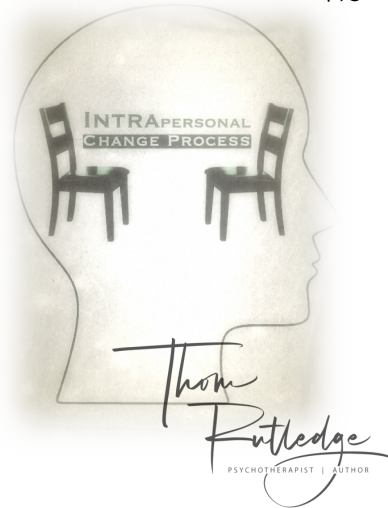
See you later

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We are what we rehearse.

TR



About the Presenter

Thom Rutledge, LCSW is a psychotherapist, in practice for 40 years, and a bestselling author. His work has been featured on NBC's Today Show, Australia's Channel 10 and he has consulted with The Dr. Phil Show. Before we all had access to the internet, Thom was a frequent guest on national and local talk radio programs around the country. Currently, Thom is cohost (with Allen Berger, PhD) of the weekly podcast, Emotional Sobriety and is a co-facilitator of the free weekly Emotional Sobriety Zoom Workshop.

Subscribe to Emotional Sobriety, the Podcast via Apple, Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts.

The Emotional Sobriety Zoom Workshop is free and meets every Thursday evening, 7:00 pm Pacific Time.
Log-in: 330 149 513 / Passcode: 375986

Thom maintains a private consulting practice based in Nashville, Tennessee. He sees clients in his Nashville office and does remote consultations internationally. He works with some clients regularly but many consult Thom short-term with specific issues or when they are feeling stuck in personal growth efforts.

If you are interested in setting a time to meet with Thom, email him at thomrutledgeauthor@gmail.com.

Books by Thom Rutledge

Embracing Fear: *Turning What Scares Us into Our Greatest Gift*

The Self-Forgiveness Handbook: *Treating Yourself with the Love and Respect You May Not Know You Deserve*

Life Without Ed: *How One Woman Declared Independence from Her Eating Disorder & How You Can Too*

What Love Is: *Reflections on the True Meaning & Authentic Practice of Love*

The Greater Possibilities: *125 Reflections on the Method & Meaning of Genuine Success*

Simple Truth: *Ideas & Experiences for People from Less-Than-Perfect Families**

The Antidote: *Responding to the ridiculous & dangerous over-simplifications of The Secret (a Kindle e-book)*

*All of these books are available from Amazon.com and other online booksellers except *Simple Truth*. *Simple Truth* can be ordered from Thom's website: www.thomrutledge.com/shop

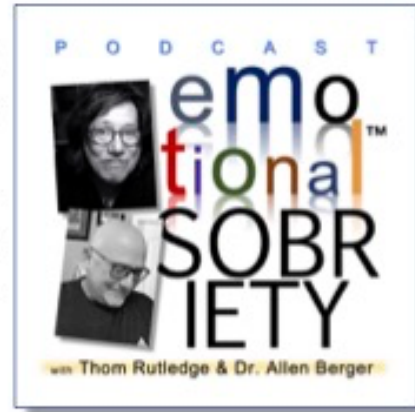
Let the best in you be in charge of the rest of you.

-Allen Berger, Ph.D.

Learn from the past and then get the hell out of there! -Thom Rutledge, LCSW

Join these two master psychotherapists, with more than 90 years of combined clinical experience, for their continuing conversation about what makes us tick.

Berger & Rutledge (not to be confused with the vaudeville comedy team) will not hesitate to share what they think but they will never claim to have all the answers. In fact, both of them believe finding the best questions is far more important.



IN EXPLORING EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY WE HAVE REDISCOVERED THOM'S VERY FIRST BOOK,
Simple Truth: Ideas & Experiences for People from Less-Than-Perfect Families



This delightful and dynamic little book includes ten (10) therapeutic exercises created to help meet the ultimate psychological challenge: Unconditional Self-Acceptance.

-From the back cover

*"No more rehashing how we came to need self-help books!
With Simple Truth, the healing begins on page one."*

-Philip Loydpierson, LCSW
Charlotte, NC
Founder of The Joshua Project

"Thom is a magician. He transforms confusion into clarity."

-Robert Stepbach, Ed.D.
Nashville, TN

MESSAGE FROM THOM

Simple Truth is a testament to my recovery from, among many other things, simply not believing in myself. Remind me one day and I'll tell you the wonderful story about how this book came to exist. I am both proud and grateful that after all these years – and many other books – I still hear from readers who benefit from this book. I especially appreciate that counselors use the book with recovery groups, because in large measure, *Simple Truth* emerged from my work in group therapy. Currently *Simple Truth* is not available anywhere other than my office. If you would like a copy (or copies to share), just shoot me an email. I thank you for your interest in the work Allen and I are doing together and for your interest in this book, sort of my first born. -Thom. [SEND EMAIL TO THOMRUTLEDGEAUTHOR@GMAIL.COM](mailto:THOMRUTLEDGEAUTHOR@GMAIL.COM)

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