

# NLP Group Coaching – Session 8

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Getting to Know Your True Self – Part VIII

Virginia Satir’s Third Freedom: “The Freedom to Feel What You Feel”

## 1) Virginia Satir’s Third Freedom

### A. Definition of the Third Freedom

Virginia Satir’s third freedom is the internal permission to feel what one actually feels **instead of what one ‘should’ feel**. It’s about emotional permission—**accepting** and allowing one’s true, authentic feelings without shame, judgment, censorship, or suppression.

### B. Why the Third Freedom Is Important

In NLP we teach that emotions are signals from the unconscious mind, shaped by internal maps and beliefs. Denying or suppressing feelings distorts these maps and creates incongruence. Satir’s third freedom supports emotional congruence, which enhances integrity, personal power, and connection.

### C. What the Third Freedom \*Is Not\*:

- It is not permission to act out destructively.
- It is not bypassing responsibility.
- It is not wallowing in stuck and congested negative emotions as a “victim.”
- It is not permission to blame.

### D. What the Third Freedom \*Is\*:

- The right to feel fully and authentically.
- Acceptance of feelings without judgment.
- Space for inner experience, even if messy or painful.
- The right to learn from your emotions.

### E. Repression vs. Expression

Without Freedom:

- “I shouldn’t feel angry.”
- “I’m being too sensitive.”
- “I’m scared — I shouldn’t be.”

With Freedom:

- “I feel angry. What is this telling me?”
- “I feel hurt. Let me honor that for a moment.”
- “Fear is here. I’m human. Let me stay present.”

### F. Emotional Suppression and Toxic Shame

According to John Bradshaw (Healing the Shame That Binds You), toxic shame teaches us that having certain emotions is bad or unworthy. This leads to emotional numbing, anxiety, over-control, and unresolved trauma. Satir’s freedom is the antidote — offering self-compassion and emotional acceptance.

## G. How to Learn This Freedom

### 1. Model Emotional Acceptance

*“Right now, I feel frustration — and I’m welcoming that feeling without needing to fix it.”*

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### 2. Use NLP Reframing

*“What is the positive intent behind this feeling?”*  
*“What is this emotion asking me to become aware of?”*

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### 3. Emotional Naming

A real advantage is learning how to name our emotion out loud, e.g., “I feel nervous.” Then affirm: “And I’m safe to feel this.”

Learn to use one and two-word descriptive names for emotions, e.g., “I feel tremendously annoyed. I am experiencing intense sadness.”

### 4. Core Transformation

Yes, Core Transformation can be used here too. It can help uncover the positive intent of 'unwanted' feelings and help us to connect with important core states.

### 5. Anchor Emotional Safety

Anchors can be used, either kinesthetic or visual, to anchor for the state of ‘permission to feel’ when we are feeling an important emotion.

## H. Quoting Satir

*“I own me, and therefore I can engineer me. I am me, and I am okay.”*

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## I. An Emotion Mantra

*“Every feeling is a visitor. Let it in, listen, and let it pass. None of them are ‘wrong,’ and none of them will kill me.”*

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## Demonstration – The Tree Climbing Process

Principles:

# The Tree Climbing Process

Tree Climbing aims to reach a state of “Acceptance without Approval.”

## Step 1 – Define the Limiting Root Thought

I feel like a failure.  
I’m no good.  
I’m a bad person.  
I’m not worthy.  
I’m afraid of failure.  
I’m afraid of success.  
I’m not good enough.  
I’m not enough.  
I’m lazy.  
I’m incapable.  
I’m broken.  
I’m a mess.  
I don’t believe in myself.

**The Limiting Root Thought Is:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 2 – Label How Bad It Is

Hold the thought in mind. Rate it. On a scale of 0 to 10, how bad does it feel to you?  
Circle How Bad It Seems:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## Step 3 – Start Climbing

**Hold That Thought:** \_\_\_\_\_ **The Limiting**  
**Belief** \_\_\_\_\_

**How do you feel about that?** \_\_\_\_\_ **“I feel**  
**BLANK.”** \_\_\_\_\_

**You feel BLANK. Notice it. (Pause) How do you feel about “BLANK”?** \_\_\_\_\_ **“I feel**  
**BLANK.”** \_\_\_\_\_

**Keep asking until you feel you can accept that feeling/thought/or viewpoint at THAT level. Tip: Go until the emotions aren’t looping anymore, or, aren’t negative any more, or are at “sad,” “frustrated,” “annoyed,” or any other less intense emotional state.**

## Step 4 – Accept That Emotion/Feeling/Opinion/Thought/Viewpoint

When you get to the level you CAN accept without approving, ***accept it.***

**I accept:** \_\_\_\_\_ **this feeling at this level.**

### **Step 5 – Test It**

Now that you have accepted the last limb of the tree, test it by trying to get back the original feeling about the subject.

Try to get the old feeling back. How does it feel now?

Circle Now How Bad It Seems:

**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

### **Step 6 – You’re Done, Unless...**

If you get anything above a 3 now, climb again. You may have more than one tree to climb on this subject. (Repeat until you are below a 3 on the “How-Bad-It-Seems” Scale.)

## Appendix A. Tree Climbing (Word for Word Self-Coaching Script)

Instructions: Remember, the objective is to reach a state of “*acceptance without approval*.” If you happen to climb up to something like angry, and then you notice you say angry again a couple of limbs up, that's okay; it's just another layer of “angry.” Just write it down and keep climbing.

Eventually, you get to this place, which feels flat. It feels like it just makes sense; it is what it is, you feel justified. It feels like, “Well, that's what I feel.” At that point you are where you accept the emotion without approving it.

Steps:

1. Identify a three to five word statement that identifies what the limiting root thought is.

Write it down.

2. Hold that thought in mind. Notice, on a scale of zero to 10, how bad it seems to you? Write down the number.

It's well worth climbing a tree if it's above a three.

3. Now go to the next limb. You ask yourself: How do I feel about that? And label it somehow with any word you want. When you can identify some kind of label for it, write it down.
4. Go to the next limb and do it again. How do you feel about that feeling at that limb? Write it down.
5. Repeat. How do you feel about that at that level?
6. Repeat until you get to *acceptance without approval*. When you get there, write it down.
7. You are at the top layer at the top of the tree; test it. Think of the limiting root thought again. Say it. Hold the thought and try to feel bad about it.

If it seems different... if, when you think about it, on a scale of zero to 10, if it's three or below, you've done it. But, if you get a four or above, do it again. (Label THAT feeling and climb from there.) Get to acceptance at the topic. 90% of the time, most people get accept the topic on the first climb. If not, they'll usually get it on the second climb. Rarely is a third tree needed.

# Appendix B. The Jane Christensen Story

As told by Benjamin Hardy, PhD in the book, *Personality Isn't Permanent*

## 1. The Accident

In the summer of 1996, Jane Christensen went water skiing for her first and only time. Although incredibly healthy and fit, the 36-year-old Jane was also inexperienced. When another boat came too close, creating waves under Jane's skis, she didn't think to let go. Before she knew it, she was airborne with her right leg thrown awkwardly over the back of her head. When she hit the water, the pain was unbearable. She couldn't move and needed help getting out of the water. The pain was paralyzing.

## 2. The Diagnosis and Initial Resignation

When she went to the doctor, she learned that her hamstring was 90% disconnected from her glutes—almost completely torn off. The doctor told her she'd never be able to run again. This was incredibly devastating, given that Jane led an active lifestyle and had run a marathon just a few months earlier. Although it was a bitter pill to swallow, she took the doctor's words as gospel and resigned herself to never running again—a premature cognitive commitment rooted in the aftermath of the accident.

Jane recovered quickly and resumed her normal, healthy, and active lifestyle, albeit without running. She avoided facing the trauma, and her fixed mindset regarding her ability to run solidified.

## 3. A New Emotional Trigger

Fast forward to 2011: Jane's husband surprisingly lost what they thought to be a secure job. Instead of looking for new employment, he decided to take an early retirement. This was a shock to Jane—and infuriating. She worked hard running a business and didn't like seeing her husband spending his day on the golf course, but she kept this to herself. She didn't want to hurt his feelings or be viewed by others as a complainer, so she bottled up her growing rage.

Then something happened that didn't make immediate sense. The pain in her right hamstring came back—and it was just as excruciating as when the water skiing accident occurred 15 years prior. Not only that, but her left foot also began to throb. The pain was out of nowhere, unexplainable, and intense.

## 4. A Second Misdiagnosis

Jane went to see a doctor. His explanation was that she was now over 50 years old, and her leg pain was part of the natural process of aging. He diagnosed her with tendonitis and arthritis. It didn't make sense to Jane, but just as she had done 15 years earlier, she accepted the doctor's diagnosis.

*“I guess I’m just getting older,”* was the narrative that formulated in Jane’s mind—born out of a cognitive commitment she had accepted, which eventually turned into her biological reality. Subsequently, the pain only got worse. Her fitness became increasingly limited.

During the hiking season of 2011, she didn’t hike a single time, despite it being her favorite pastime. Her pain affected her work as well. Meanwhile, her rage and frustration toward her husband festered quietly. Sometimes she was so angry she couldn’t even walk. All the while, she never told anyone about the pain she was experiencing. Being the owner of a health business and someone whom others saw as a beacon of health and positivity, she wanted to maintain her appearance.

She was a perfectionist and had been one since she was a little girl. She didn’t want anyone to think she was struggling.

## **5. The Turning Point**

Fast forward to 2014: Jane attended a business and marketing event. At that event, she was introduced to Joe Polish, the founder of Genius Network and Genius Recovery. When Joe saw Jane walk up with a limp, he asked her about it.

“What’s going on with you?” he said, motioning to her leg.

Jane brushed it off. “Oh, nothing, just some leg pain.”

“What do you mean leg pain? Did you have an injury or something?”

“Yeah, I was in a water skiing accident, and I’m over 50 now.”

“Was this accident recent?”

“No, it was almost 20 years ago.”

“Wait, you’re experiencing pain from something 20 years ago?”

“I guess so. I don’t really know,” Jane replied.

Joe then connected Jane to a friend, Steven Ozanich, who was an expert on the connection between suppressed emotions and physical pain.

## **6. The Emotional Link**

A few days later, Jane was on the phone with Steven. He didn’t ask her anything about her physical symptoms, whether she was seeing doctors, or doing physical therapy. Instead, he just asked her a bunch of questions about her life.

“Are you married?”

“Yes.”

“What does your husband do for work?”

“Well, he’s not employed. He lost his job three years ago.”

“How does that make you feel?”

“It’s actually really hard to deal with.”

“No, I asked you, how does this make you *feel*?” Steven pushed.

Jane continued to fumble about her emotions. “It’s difficult.”

“No, seriously, how does your husband being unemployed make you feel?”

“It makes me feel upset.”

“Just upset?”

“To be completely honest with you, it really pisses me off.”

“It sounds like you’re really angry about this.”

“I am. Sometimes I feel a lot of anger.”

“When did the pain in your legs start?”

“About three years ago, right around when my husband lost his job.”

“All right, here’s what’s happening,” Steven said. “Your pain has absolutely nothing to do with your water skiing injury. Your pain is stemming from the emotions you have toward your husband. You need to find a way to express your emotions.”

That’s where their first conversation ended. He told her to read his book, *The Great Pain Deception*, and after she did so, they could have another conversation.

## **7. The Healing Begins**

Jane immediately bought the book, but when it arrived, she didn’t read it. Although the conversation had been interesting, it didn’t resonate with her. She couldn’t accept the idea that her suppressed emotions were the real cause of her problems.

Several months later, in February 2015, Jane got an email from Steven:

“Hey Jane, how are you doing?”

“I’m good, but I’m still in pain. I haven’t read your book yet, but I promise I will.”

Immediately after sending the email, she grabbed Steven’s book off her shelf and read the whole thing that week. By the time she finished it, the pain in both of her legs felt 90% gone. She emailed Steven back excitedly and scheduled another call.

## **8. Knowledge Therapy and Major Shifts**

He explained that her pain was gone because of *knowledge therapy*, which made her aware of the true cause of her pain and problems.

During the second call, Steven asked what Jane had been doing over the years for the pain. She had tried all sorts of expensive therapies and treatments, even flying across the country to try experimental methods.

Steven told her to stop everything:

“No more acupuncture, massage, chiropractic, and so on. Stop all of that stuff. It fuels the belief that this is a physical problem. Carry on with life as if everything was normal. If you’re working out and you start to feel the pain, just keep exercising. Push through as though the pain wasn’t happening. In addition to stopping all of the physical treatments, you need to start expressing your emotions.”

### **From that moment forward, Jane made four shifts:**

1. She immediately stopped all of the physical therapy she was doing, which she was spending tens of thousands of dollars on.
2. She started what she calls her *Rage Journal*, where she expressed all of her frustration and anger.
3. She began talking to her husband about how she was feeling.
4. She started running again.

With these four behavioral shifts, Jane’s entire life changed. She realized that to stay pain-free, she needed to express her emotions as they occurred. She couldn’t bottle them up anymore. Being able to run again also built her confidence.

## **9. A New Jane**

Fast forward to 2019: Jane is 58 years old and more active and healthier than she’s ever been since the accident. She hasn’t had pain in her legs for over four years. People around her are shocked, as she seems to look younger every year. She continues to push people to the limit in the fitness classes she teaches. Her radiance glows in brightness.

Jane is a lot more understanding about her past. She isn’t as judgmental toward her husband and sees how she created stress in the marriage over the years. She sees herself dying very old, completely healthy, fit, and pain-free. She also sees herself happily married to her husband for

the remainder of their lives—something she hadn't been sure of over her last several years of frustration.

Jane's perfectionism and emotional rigidity have been replaced with increased psychological flexibility. She used to get frustrated and angry about messes or disorganization in their home. Now, she's more flexible in her personal relationships. Some things just really don't matter, like if the bed isn't made.

While she maintains high standards at work, she's become more open to allowing her employees to execute their own ideas without needing things done her way. Jane is in far greater touch with her emotions.

## **10. Emotional Mastery**

Now, when she notices herself being triggered or when she feels stressed or anxious due to work demands or something going on in her relationships, she gives herself space and pulls out her journal to process her thoughts. She never goes anywhere without her Rage Journal.

Before expressing her thoughts and feelings with others, she processes and organizes them first in her journal. This makes her communication clearer and based more on her chosen *secondary emotions*, rather than her initial reactions. Journaling and connecting with herself helps her avoid making premature cognitive commitments during emotionally difficult situations. It allows her to reconnect with her future self and the life she wants to create.

She's learned to communicate her needs, sets better boundaries, and is less of a people pleaser. Her emotional development and flexibility as a person have evolved—and thus, her personality has changed. She's less rigid and stuck in the past. She's more in touch with the present, more connected to others, and pulled forward by her future self.

## **11. The Bigger Picture**

Jane's story is her own—and is one of many. People experience pain for different reasons. While this is not intended as medical advice, it is alarming how many people experience chronic physical pain for reasons that stem from underlying psychological trauma.

Your memories are physical, and your body is emotional. As Bessel van der Kolk, M.D., wrote in *The Body Keeps the Score*, “The experiences in our lives become our biology.”

In Jane's case, her trauma created a memory stored in her leg. Emotions, like memory, have physical markers in the body. According to Dr. Candace Pert, every cell is lined with receptors that receive emotional messages via neuropeptides—what she called “The Molecules of Emotion.” These messages shape your biology.

To change your body and life, you must change your emotions. You must change your story.