

Green Zone Work Book

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Name: _____ Date: _____

WEEK 1

Introduction

GIVING BIRTH TO THE GREEN ZONE PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Khalid Sohail

I feel very excited to share my Green Zone Philosophy with you, as it has been very special and precious to me. It inspires me and helps me create and grow every day. I hope it becomes as meaningful to you as it has been to me. Giving birth to the Green Zone Philosophy was a significant highlight of my professional life. For me giving birth is a wonderful metaphor as it is a creative metaphor.

When I started the Creative Psychotherapy Clinic in 1995, in Whitby Ontario, Canada, I asked my dear colleague, Anne Henderson to join me as I had a lot of respect for her and she had inspired me over the years. Anne bought everything for the clinic. The only thing I bought was a statue, a statue of a woman giving birth to a baby, giving birth to herself. That has been my metaphor of therapy, of creativity and of life.

We are all giving birth to ourselves, without being aware of it. I believe human sufferings are our labour pains. Being born from our mother's womb is our physical birth but to discover our real worth, our real talent, our real potential and our special gift is our creative birth. Some of us are more successful than others. One philosopher said, 'Most of us die before we are fully born.'

Giving birth to the Green Zone Philosophy happened a few years ago when I was fifty. Most people reach creative menopause by that age but I was lucky to finally deliver after a prolonged pregnancy and strong labour pains. It was painful and exciting at the same time. It was a wonderful experience. I had to wait a long time but it was worth waiting for.

Around that time my dear friend and colleague, Bette Davis, moved from Newfoundland to Ontario to continue writing the Green Zone Book Series with me. She asked me, "How do you feel about creating the Green Zone Philosophy?" I told her that it was one of

the most exciting encounters of my entire life. When she asked me how it changed my life I shared with her that it:

- helped me find peace within myself and harmony with others,
- assisted me in creating a healthy and happy lifestyle, and
- enabled me to serve other human beings in my professional and social life.

Over the years I had:

- pursued different hobbies, passions and dreams,
- traveled to different parts of the world,
- studied different schools of thought,
- read hundreds of books, interviewed dozens of writers, artists and philosophers, and
- worked in therapy with thousands of patients.

Gradually my observations, experiences and introspections came together. From conception to creation of the Green Zone Philosophy, writing a series of books and offering seminars was a wonderful experience. It was like:

- the colours of the rainbow transforming into white light,
- discovering a refined silk thread that helped me connect together all those beads of knowledge and experiences that I had been collecting throughout my life, and
- creating a new paradigm of a happy, healthy and peaceful lifestyle for myself and others.

In my eyes the Green Zone Philosophy is a philosophy that:

- helps people have a better understanding of themselves,
- encourages them to discover unique gifts in their personalities and lives,
- and assists individuals in developing those gifts and then sharing them with others.

I feel fortunate that I have not only conceived and delivered the Green Zone Philosophy, I am also able to practice it myself everyday in my personal life and teach it in my professional life as a psychotherapist. I find teaching and learning very exhilarating as they broaden my existential horizons. I like to teach what I practice and practice what I teach. The Green Zone Philosophy is

a journey from a Green Zone Day to a Green Zone Week to a Green Zone Lifestyle. This journey in our personal and social lives extends from childhood to old age. Creating the Green Zone Philosophy and practicing it has helped me to grow as a person, therapist and a writer and I hope that I keep on growing until the day I die. Now I live in my Green Zone and help others to discover and then live in their Green Zone.

When my first Green Zone book was ready to go to the printer my valued friend and publisher, Bill Belfontaine and I had a serious discussion about the book title. Initially it was titled, *The Art of Living in the Green Zone* and after a lengthy discussion we agreed to change the name to *The Art of Living in Your Green Zone* as we believe that each human being has his/her own unique Green Zone which some of us have yet to discover.

After writing *Green Zone Living – 7 Steps to a Happy, Healthy and Peaceful Lifestyle*, Furqan Khan, Chris Anderson and Shahid Shafiq inspired me and Bette to create a series of exercises to make it easier for people to follow the 7 steps to a Green Zone Lifestyle. These exercises will be very helpful to those who want to follow this self help program through our website.

AWARENESS OF YOUR 7 STEPS TO GREEN ZONE IVING

Dr. Khalid Sohail

Bette Davis, RN BN MN

Now that you have been introduced to the leaders of the Green Zone Team and how the Green Zone Concept was born we want you to meet Michelle F. S. Harold, a mother, wife, and teacher, who has made the journey you are about to embark on and is an exceptional Green Zone role model. Near the end of Michelle's therapy, she wrote about her journey and her growth at each of the 7 Steps towards her Green Zone. To best facilitate your progress through each of these 7 Steps, we have designed a consistent format.

First, there will be an introduction to the concepts associated with each Step. Then, Michelle will explain how she navigated and integrated the knowledge and skills from that Step into her life. And finally, there will be an exercise or series of exercises to guide your development of those skills.

Before we begin, it may be helpful to talk about the timing of this process. Initially, we felt we should give each Step a timeline and contemplated allotting a week for each. However, after further considering our experiences with the individuality of this work, we thought we would recommend that each person use their own wisdom to appreciate when you have learned and integrated the awareness and skills of each Step. A week may work for many but a couple of weeks may be a better pace for others. In addition, a week may work for some of the Steps, while other Steps may require more processing and in-depth work.

So without further a due, let's get started on the journey to Your Green Zone. We'd like to begin by introducing you to your guide, Michelle. Her first note focuses on how she was feeling prior to being introduced to Green Zone therapy. In the future, we will title this segment

Now, let's see what Michelle has to say!

When I first came to your clinic, I had a lot of "Red Zone" things going on in my life. My work life was a huge mess. I had a lot of difficulty in my work relationships with colleagues and administration. Being a high school teacher, I also had to deal with difficult students and difficult parents on top of not getting

along with my vice-principal and principal. I was also tired of being used by certain colleagues; expecting me to take on their work as well as my own. This stress at work caused tension at home between me and my husband. Our usual happy-go-lucky relationship was deteriorating quickly, and our marriage was full of insults, sarcasm, and hate. This took a toll on our children, and one son in particular, stuck in the middle with no way out, began venting his own feelings of anger by harming other children at school, swearing at his teachers, and threatening to kill himself. This son, who was only eleven at the time, made life difficult for his two brothers, and even more so for me. This strained relationship with my son, led to a very verbally abusive relationship with my mother, who I never really got along with anyway. So now things with her were even worse than before. I dealt with these poor relationships by complaining and crying to the people who I did have good relationships with, which ended up putting strain and tension on those good relationships, causing them to become "Red" as well. I also liked to shop a lot to make myself feel better, which led to financial worries that I had to deal with too. Nothing was going right in my life before I was introduced to the Green Zone Concept. However, very soon after reading, The Art of Living in your Green Zone, I began to feel as if there was some hope for me.

FIRST STEP - AWARENESS OF YOUR EMOTIONAL ZONES

Whether you are a teacher or a nurse, a homemaker or the president of a company, a lawyer or a professor, a farmer or a business person, you are able to improve the quality of your life and create a happy, healthy and peaceful lifestyle that we call Green Zone Living. But before we share with you the details of that philosophy and practice, let us introduce you to the foundational principles of the Green Zone Philosophy which are based on the concept of the three imaginary Emotional Zones. We call them the Green, Yellow and Red Zones, using the symbol of the traffic lights.

When you are relaxed and happy and enjoying life you are in your *Green Zone*. When you are mildly frustrated and irritated, or sad and anxious, you are in your *Yellow Zone* and when you lose control and get angry, depressed, distressed or completely withdraw, you are in your *Red Zone*. Each person is unique and experiences his/her Emotional Zones in his/her unique way. This book is an attempt to help you get in touch with your Green Zone and then live there.

The first step towards creating a Green Zone Lifestyle is to become aware of what Emotional Zone you are in at any particular time. It is a simple but a profound step. Awareness is the most significant factor to helping you stay in your Green Zone. By becoming aware of your Emotional Zones you gain control. Awareness of how you are feeling emotionally at any moment is incredibly empowering. To make any conscious change in your life, you need to feel in control, strong and powerful. It is amazing how this simple awareness can connect you to your sense of control and power.

It is a sad fact of life that most of us live our day-to-day lives without really thinking, feeling, acknowledging or cherishing the present experience. We do not live in the moment. We think without really thinking. We feel without really feeling. We talk and act without really being aware of the effects of our words and actions on others or even on ourselves.

When you are aware, you are better able to make emotionally intelligent decisions about how you will deal with your day-to-day dilemmas in a rational, constructive and mature way. If you are not aware, then you can easily be distracted and pushed into the distressing Yellow Zone or pulled into the painful Red Zone.

Now, let's see what Michelle has to say!

With the first step, becoming aware of my Emotional Zones, what I had to learn was which "colour" I was feeling, whether "Red", "Yellow", or "Green". I learned quickly that Green is basically any feeling that is positive and makes you feel good. Feeling Yellow meant that I was getting frustrated, annoyed, and was on the verge of raising my voice and saying nasty, hurtful things to people. For me, Red meant that I was absolutely being abusive to people verbally, that I couldn't carry on a conversation without yelling, screaming, insulting, hurting, or taking cheap shots at people. It meant that I was completely ticked off or depressed, lonely, in despair, and not able to function in any way at all. Once I learned these colours of emotion, I was able to identify easily what Zone I was experiencing at any given time. In the beginning of therapy, I was always feeling Yellow or Red, which to me was ok, because at least I was now conscious of what type of emotion I was experiencing. It also helped to keep track of my Emotional Zones throughout the day in my Green Zone Diary.

Now, it's your turn!

EXERCISE 1 - Your Green Zone Diary

Ask yourself at different times of the day what Emotional Zone you are in. To remind you to check your emotional status, pair your check in with activities you already do regularly throughout the day, such as brushing your teeth or eating breakfast, lunch and dinner and especially when you are sitting at the traffic light.

This exercise will make you comfortable with the concept, help you be aware of your Emotional Zones and help you to embed the Green Zone concept into your daily habits.

To make it easier to keep a record of your Emotional Zones, print and use the Green Zone diary sheet below entitled, *Discovering Your Green Day*. At the end of each day, take a couple of minutes to reflect on your day and complete a page in your Green Zone Diary, highlighting how many hours you spent in each Zone and what was happening at the time. Consider the total 24 hours so that you include what is happening at night. If you have a sound sleep, then those hours are in the Green, for interrupted sleep, they may be in the Yellow, while a very sleepless night or sleep with nightmares would be in the Red Zone.

Your Green Zone Diary
DISCOVERING YOUR GREEN DAY

NAME _____ DAY _____

DATE _____

ZONE	HOURS SPENT	WHAT WAS HAPPENING?
GREEN		
YELLOW		
RED		

WEEK 2

SECOND STEP - RECOGNIZING CHANGES IN YOUR EMOTIONAL ZONES

As you keep your daily *Green Zone Diary* and become aware of your Emotional Zones, you then begin to notice the changes in your day-to-day life. These awarenesses will help you in recognizing the patterns of your emotions. Gradually, you will be able to pick out those people and situations that are associated with your Green Zone, as well as those upsetting people and stressful situations that are related to your Yellow and Red Zones.

The work of this Step is to reflect on those people and situations from your Diary, as they are the key to recognizing many of your positive and negative patterns. Gradually, awareness about them will help you to spot and change your emotional patterns.

In addition to looking at your emotional patterns linked to external factors, it is helpful to also consider the internal factors, such as your inner dialogue, the comments - either negative or positive, accurate or inaccurate - that we all make on an ongoing basis throughout our day. This inner commentary plays a major role in our self-esteem, as well as how we perceive and interpret external factors and stimuli. If you struggle with low self-confidence and poor self-esteem, you will begin to notice the negative and critical thought patterns that make you your worst enemy. You may find yourself thinking:

- I am not good enough
- I am a loser
- I am a failure as a spouse, parent, employee, or even as a human being.

If you have any of those negative patterns, they can easily keep you in your Yellow and Red Zones, and as well, lead you to interpret life experiences in an inaccurate way, putting meaning onto life encounters that others do not see. Because of your poor self-esteem and negative self-image you can put negative meanings in your life experiences and find reasons, justifications even rationalizations to stay in your Yellow and Red Zones.

A wise man once said that life is like an ocean and the human heart is like a boat. As long as the boat is intact, one does not have to worry about the outside water but if there is a hole in the boat and two gallons of water come inside the boat, those two gallons of water are more dangerous than the two million gallons of water in the ocean.

People with positive self-esteem have a heart that is intact but people with negative self-esteem have a heart with a hole and the stresses of life can easily come in and cause distress or depression.

Now, let's see what Michelle has to say!

The second step, recognizing changes in my Emotional Zones, was also easy for me to pick up on, as it was simply to figure out when I became Yellow or Red. I asked myself a number of key questions.

- *What things pushed me into those Zones?*
- *What, or who, made me feel Yellow?*
- *When did Yellow change to Red?*

And certain things came to my mind right away.

When I walked through the door after a long day of work, I was always bombarded with information from my husband or the kids needing something. Usually I'd be dealing with phone messages, signing agendas, reading notes, being asked when supper would be ready, and somebody wanting me to drive them somewhere, all before I put my bag down and took my coat off! When that happened, it made me feel overwhelmed, frustrated, and angry - all Red Zone feelings. In order to get out of the Yellow and Red Zones, I had to experience what it might be like to be in the Green Zone.

Now it's your turn!

Exercise 2 - Your Green Zone Diary

Continue to take a few minutes at the end of each day for the next several weeks to record in your *Green Zone Diary*. This will build your awareness of your Emotional Zones and help you to recognize changes in your emotional patterns. Over this time also continue to connect your Emotional Zones with your activities and people you encounter. Explore how they affect you.

Exercise 3

Through this time you can also start connecting your Emotional Zones with your inner thoughts to become aware of how your self-talk, whether positive and negative, affects your mood and emotions. Record them daily in your *Thoughts about my Green Zone Journey*, included below.

Exercise 4

Review weekly the items in the column of your *Green Zone Diary* titled, *What was happening?* Many people find it helpful to highlight in a Green, Yellow or Red highlighter the items in this column or you could also group them together on a separate page.

Thoughts about my Green Zone Journey

[illegible]

WEEK 3

THIRD STEP - RECOVERING FROM YOUR YELLOW AND RED ZONES

After recognizing the negative patterns, the next Step is learning to recover from your Yellow and Red Zones. It is a journey towards empowering yourself and taking control of your own life. When you let someone push you into the Yellow Zone or let a situation pull you into the Red Zone, it means that you were vulnerable and you gave your power to that person or situation. But after you fall into a Red Zone ditch, it is your responsibility to recover and come back to your Green Zone. We are all human and we are all pushed into the Yellow or Red Zone from time to time but it is better to drive through the Yellow and Red Zone rather than park there for a long time.

Recovering from the Yellow and Red Zone might be as simple as taking some time off to relax or getting some support from a friend or consulting a wise woman or man. Your dear ones can often be a source of the reassurance and support but you may need to ask for it, as they cannot read your mind and heart. You may have to call, visit or invite them to meet with you to share your dilemma and ask their advice. By doing so, you will decrease your distress and increase your time in the Green Zone.

Now, let's see what Michelle has to say!

So in the third step, recovering from my Yellow and Red Zones, I had to figure out what things made me feel Green - happy, excited, joyful, pleased, relaxed, and so on. And then, I had to actually do those Green Zone activities. For example, I knew that spending quiet time alone, doing something for myself would make me feel relaxed, calm, and energized. So in therapy my homework was to spend one hour every evening for a month by myself, doing something that made me feel good. At first, this seemed impossible. How would I be able to get a whole hour to myself with a husband who works evenings, and three children at home who needed help with homework, uniforms washed, supper made, and fights to be broken up? Not to mention the marking and other work related stuff that had to be done for the next day? But I found a way to make time to be in my Green Zone. At first I wasn't able to do an entire hour, but I

Exercise 5

[illegible]

Exercise 6

Create a Green Zone Hour a day to:

- do self care and self nurturing,
- restart a hobby you loved when you were young,
- take up a new interest - something you always wanted to do, and
- identify protected play time.

WEEK 4

FOURTH STEP - RESTRAINING FROM GOING TO THE YELLOW AND RED ZONES

After recognizing your positive and negative patterns and learning to recover from Yellow and Red Zones, you are ready for the next Step. It is the Step of restraining. Now that you are aware that some people push you into the Yellow Zone and some situations pull you into the Red Zone, it is helpful to examine all the ways in which you can handle these situations differently so that you can restrain yourself from entering the Yellow and Red Zones in the future. If you have reached a stage of helplessness in life, you might think that there is no way out and you are trapped, but in reality there are always different options and choices available that you have never thought of before to deal with a challenging situation. If you discuss your struggles with your friends you may be surprised how a different point of view can help you find new ways to deal with old problems.

After those discussions you can plan a strategy to deal with Yellow Zone people and Red Zone situations. You might be able to avoid some of these situations and people completely or decrease the frequency or intensity of the interaction. Consider one of the techniques we use at our clinic to stay in the Green Zone, we call it creating an *Emotional Raincoat*.

Creating an Emotional Raincoat

Over the years we have developed the concept of the *Emotional Raincoat* which is a symbolic term for the strategies, usually planned in advance, to help buffer the tension of a recurring Yellow or Red Zone situation. Many of our friends and clients find that concept very helpful in dealing with stressful situations. Let's consider a couple of examples.

1. On Friday afternoons after work, if I (K.S.) am going to a visit a friend, I realize that I have to deal with the Red Zone traffic. To create my Emotional Raincoat I call my friend before leaving so that he does not worry if I am late for dinner. I also take my favourite music CD on which I

have taped all my favourite singers from Kenny Rogers to Kenny G and I listen to them in the jammed traffic so that I do not get stressed by the hustle and bustle.

2. Our client loves his brother but does not like his sister-in-law. He believes his brother married a 'bitch' who turns into a 'witch' when she is angry. To cope with that situation, he meets his brother in a restaurant or a park or on the beach and avoids his sister-in-law. That is his Emotional Raincoat.

3. A friend loves her sister but does not like her brother-in-law. She thinks her sister married a 'jerk' who turns into a 'wolf' when he is angry. Her Emotional Raincoat is her nieces and nephews. When the children are around her brother-in-law is respectful, so when she visits with them, she plans it as a family event so she not only gets to spend time with her nieces and nephews whom she adores, but their presence makes it a Green Zone visit.

4. One of our colleagues realized that his mother made a lot of critical Red Zone comments to him when he saw her on his own but not when they were with family. Instantaneously, he was able to bring their relationship into the Green Zone by asking his sister and her family, with whom he had a Green Zone relationship, to join them when they got together.

Are you starting to get the idea? So now, spend some time using your creativity to devise your own Emotional Raincoats. To support your change in behaviour, keep a record of your Emotional Raincoat strategies in your Diary.

After you have created one strategy for each stressful situation, you will be amazed how your number of hours in your Green Zone will increase and the number of hours in the Yellow and Red Zones will be reduced resulting in a major change in your life. Many friends, colleagues and clients have doubled their Green Zone Hours within a few weeks using these techniques.

Now, let's hear what Michelle has to say!

The fourth step, restraining from going to the Yellow and Red, was challenging. It required me to deal with Yellow and Red Zone people and situations, while remaining in the Green. This was difficult, especially if the people I was dealing with did not know about the Green Zone. I had to think of things that would bring me back to the Green if I did slip into Yellow and Red with other people. One thing I came up with was that it would be ok to say to someone that I would get back to them at a later time. So, for example, if my colleague needed me to do them a favour that would require a lot of time, effort, and energy that I didn't want to invest, usually I would have become very upset, uncomfortable, I would have felt like I was being used and that this colleague was a lazy so-and-so who could go to you-know-where, because I had enough "favours" that I had to do for myself. But Step Four taught me that instead, I could say, "I'll think about it and get back to you later." By saying this, I bought myself time to calm down, think rationally, and come back to them in a more positive mood, with a confident answer that would state clearly what I was able, or not able, to do for them.

Step Four was eventually a lot easier once I started telling the people in my life what the Green Zone Model was and what it meant.

Now, it's your turn!

Exercise 7 - Your Green Zone Diary

Of course, it is still important to maintain your daily Green Zone Diary.

Exercise 8 - Creating an Emotional Raincoat

Identify things you can do to create an Emotional Raincoat, in other words, what can you do to prevent a crisis and avoid or change negative patterns. It is often helpful to first, write a list of general strategies to get back to your Green Zone. Think of ways to take even a brief time out such as taking a few deep breaths, going for a walk or talking to a friend. The more challenging and recurring situations will most likely require some thought and specific planning. If you have a friend, family member or colleague whom you trust, they can often help you design a workable and respectful Green Zone strategy as part of your Emotional Raincoat.

WEEK 5

FIFTH STEP - CREATING GREEN ZONE RELATIONSHIPS

Like individuals, relationships also have a personality, character and lifestyle. As well, intimate relationships have a life cycle of their own. They are born, they grow and they die, either by separation, divorce or death. We encourage people to assess the quality of their relationships and discover the Zone in which each of them is living.

Healthy relationships thrive in the Green Zone and have Green Zone communication styles. In such relationships, people feel free to spontaneously express their affection and are able to resolve their conflicts.

Unhealthy relationships live in the Yellow and Red Zones. In these relationships people feel inhibited and tense. Seldom is there a free flow of feelings and the differences turn into conflicts. Resolving the problems becomes very difficult and in many cases people need a mediator or a therapist to assist them to find their way.

Three Ways to Deal with Conflicts – RESOLVING, DISSOLVING, MEDIATING

If most of your relationships are in the Green Zone, you are one of the fortunate. However, what ever the status of your relationships, the next Step is to focus on appreciating your Green Zone relationships as well as working on those Yellow and Red relationships that are a source of stress in your life.

There are three ways you can deal with Yellow and Red Zone relationships and they are by resolving, dissolving or mediating.

To *resolve* the conflicts of Yellow and Red Zone relationships both parties need to be willing and able to communicate in the Green Zone. You can talk to these people in person or write a letter inviting them for a heart to heart dialogue. Sometimes it is fruitful to first write in your diary, putting all your thoughts and feelings on paper before you write the letter to the person concerned. As you write in your diary, you may become aware of the underling dynamics of the problem, For example, while one of our clients was doing this exercise she

realised that she had been harboring anger and resentment for a long time towards the person with whom she was struggling. After identifying your feelings and the underling dynamics you are often more able to make a genuine attempt to improve the relationship. You can then write a letter to them and suggest a face-to-face meeting or a response to your letter. It is not unusual to write those letters several times before they are Green Zone letters that you feel confident to share. Remember Green Zone dialogue only takes place if both parties are in the Green Zone so that a genuine attempt to resolve your issues is likely to happen.

If the other person is not willing to resolve the conflicts and create a Green Zone relationship, then you may come to the decision that you need to *dissolve* the relationship completely. With some personal soul searching you might be able to come to the conclusion that it is best to say goodbye to an unhealthy relationship thus putting your mind at ease and not wasting your positive energy in negative relationships.

If you cannot resolve the painful conflicts or dissolve the unhealthy relationships on your own you might request the help of a *mediator*, either a friend or a therapist.

Now, let's see what Michelle has to say!

Step Five, creating Green Zone relationships, came with mixed reactions. In this step, I was to tell the people in my life about the Green, Yellow, and Red Zones. This would help to create Green Zone relationships between me and the important people in my life. It meant that I would have to tell them about my therapy and how I now communicated and thought about feelings. This was fine when it came to my family, because they knew I was in therapy and that I was trying something new.

The terms "Red", "Yellow", and "Green" became the new language used in my home with my children, husband, brother, and parents. Whenever one of us was feeling a certain way, the Green Zone colours would come up to describe that feeling. For example, when I become overwhelmed now as I walk into the house from work, I just tell the kids that, "Mommy's feeling a little Yellow right now, could you come back to me when my coat is off, and my bag is away? I'll be Green by then. Thanks". Quite often I'll also hear one of my kids say to another, "You're making me feel "Red" and I don't like it!" So, it's working at home.

Creating Green Zone language at work was a little harder for me, and so I only made it known to one or two people who I trust, feel comfortable with, and who I knew would appreciate the concept. This

has created Green Zone relationships with them as well. There are other people at work who I have not shared the Green Zones Concept with, which I will discuss later in Step Six.

Now, it's your turn!

Exercise 9 - Your Green Zone Diary

Congratulations, you are now able to graduate to keeping your Green Zone Diary once a week, if you wish.

Exercise 10

Consider the significant relationships in your life and ask yourself which Zone you predominantly interact with them. In the table below, list those relationships and their Zone.

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	GREEN	YELLOW	RED
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

Exercise 11

Write a letter to one person with whom you have a Green Zone Relationship and thank him / her for enriching your life and introduce them to the Green Zone Philosophy. Plan to send the letter or meet with the person and read the letter. Record the encounter in your *Thoughts about my Green Zone Journey*.

EXERCISE 12

Write a letter to one person that you have a Yellow or Red Zone Relationship. Write to fully express your feelings without worrying about the other person's feelings as this letter is for you, not that person.

EXERCISE 13

Read your letter again and decide whether you want to dissolve and end the relationship or resolve and repair that relationship. Feel free to consult a Green Zone friend or relative.

EXERCISE 14

If you decide to resolve and repair the relationship, write another letter to the person with whom you have the Yellow or Red Zone relationship inviting the person to discuss the issues and work to heal the relationship. Again, it may be helpful, particularly in the beginning or with very strained relationships to get some feedback from a Green Zone person. It may also be helpful to start with the situations that are easiest and most likely to succeed.

WEEK 6

SIXTH STEP - CREATING GREEN ZONE SYSTEMS

Once people recognize their own Emotional Zones and then are aware of the quality of their relationships, we next encourage them to recognize the systems in which they live. Most people live in a number of systems simultaneously:

- Family System
- Work System
- Social/Community System

Like individuals and relationships, human systems also have an individual character and live in different Zones. Recognizing the Zones of each of these systems and your relationships within them is very important in recognizing the changes in your Emotional Zones. Systems have a major impact on individuals because, in most cases, systems are more powerful than individuals.

Family System

We were all part of a family system as we are growing up. Then most of us get married and have a family of our own. Fortunate are those who grew up in healthy Green Zone families and were nurtured by their parents. Growing up in a Green Zone family ensures a confident personality with positive self-image, self-worth, and self-confidence. In Green Zone families, people have positive role models and are more likely to have Green Zone relationships in the future.

People who grow up in Yellow and Red Zone families often encounter tension, anxiety and poor communication in their various environments. Those who grow up in the Yellow Zone are chronically anxious, frustrated, angry or sad. They might have managed to acquire a family, a job and even a social circle of acquaintances, but they lack a meaningful sense of happiness. It is not uncommon for them to visit the Red Zone by having panic attacks, losing control and having fights with their loved ones or getting so depressed that they feel immobilized. When they continue to exist in the Red Zone, and do not get proper help to deal

with painful issues, they get stuck and are unable to get out of the Red Zone on their own. In many cases they need professional help.

Work System

Many people, besides being part of a family system are also part of a work system. It is important for people to recognize the Emotional Zone in which the work system exists. A work system in the Green Zone has a fair and just environment where people feel appreciated and their concerns are taken seriously. In Yellow and Red Zones workplaces people feel like robots. Decisions are made from the top down, for political and economic reasons. There is, too often, a dehumanizing atmosphere. The communication between workers and management often breaks down and conflicts are not resolved.

Due to political and economic changes, many workplaces, which started out in the Green Zone have transformed over the years, gradually regressing to the Yellow or Red Zones. In the face of staff cut backs, arbitrary transfers, and the imposition of new technology without adequate training, many employees struggle in vain with increased workloads and other challenges in the workplace.

We see many in therapy who have become increasingly frustrated and angry, feeling unenthusiastic and burnt out. People working in such Red Zones suffer from a wide range of physical ailments and emotional problems. Many times suppressed aggression is shown as physical symptoms or what is also referred to as psychosomatic conditions, which includes high blood pressure, back pain or migraines. Some need intensive psychotherapy to deal with their repressed hostility and ongoing stress.

After recognizing that the work system is in the Red Zone, some people decide to leave and join a Green Zone System. But if you feel you have no other option but to work in that stressful work environment you can develop strategies to buffer the workplace stress, such as a circle of colleagues who can support each other and you may wish to create an Emotional Raincoat so that you are less affected by the toxicity.

It is important to be aware that systems are emotionally stronger than individuals. Consequently, it is very hard for individuals to be in the Green Zone if the system is in the Red. It is amazing to see how many people find it necessary to take sick leave or short and long term disability in stressful work environments.

In our book, *The Art of Working in Your Green Zone*, we have identified different factors that force the work system into the toxic Red Zone. We also discuss what steps workers, union representatives and managers can take to bring the system into the Green Zone. If managers and union leaders are sensitive to the needs of their co-workers they can develop programs to educate their staff and managers about workplace stress. Understanding what it is and what to do about it is an essential element in building workplaces that are in the Green Zone. Leaders, who themselves follow the Green Zone Philosophy, are those who appreciate that spending money to prevent burnout in the long run is more advantageous to the organization and the individual than paying huge amounts in medical and sick benefits to try to correct the problem after the fact. Managers and union leaders who work together in cooperation to help their workers create healthy work environments are responsibly managing human and financial resources. We suggest that you read - *The Art of Working in Your Green Zone*.

Social System

To create a Green Zone Lifestyle it is also important to be aware of all the social and cultural circles and organizations you are involved in and assess whether they live in the Green, Yellow or Red Zone. The strength of the numbers in a Yellow or Red Zone system can be hard to buffer yourself from and are often, difficult if not impossible to change. It might be wise to find Green Zone Systems that you can enjoy as they will help you grow.

Now, let's see what Michelle has to say!

Step Six is all about creating Green Zone systems with your family, your work, and within in your community. Some systems are easy to do this with and others are not so easy. For those systems or people who I cannot create a Green Zone relationship with, either because I am not comfortable, or they are not willing, I try to remember to wear my Emotional Raincoat. So for example, I do not get along well with my principal at work. But I also do not have to interact with him on a regular basis, so it is not a relationship I would consider making Green by telling him about the Green Zone. Instead, every time I must interact with him, I walk into the potentially Red situation and/or conversation feeling Green and wearing an imaginary raincoat (or in my case, an imaginary suit of armor) that will "protect" me from any Red things he may say or do. This suit of armor acts as my shield against any Red Zone attacks that

may come my way. This allows me to hear what he is saying without becoming Red. It also allows me to respond to him in a Green manner and leave the situation still feeling Green, and not allow him to affect how I feel in a major way. Sometimes, it is hard to wear the suit of armor or raincoat, and even though you may walk in wearing it, it somehow is not the right size, and ends up coming off, exposing you to the Red environment, and getting you covered in Red feelings. When this happens, I deal with it by accepting it. There are times when I have gone into a situation feeling Green, and my suit of armor has not worked, and so I come out feeling Red. In this case, I accept that I have felt some negative feelings, or thought some negative thoughts, or even reacted in a negative way, but I do not stay negative. I try to drive through the Red Zone instead of parking in it and staying that way. I have had to do that many times -drive through the Yellow and Red Zones - but I always make a U-turn back to the Green Zone. I believe this is healthy. It becomes unhealthy when I park in Red and stay there overnight.

Now, it's your turn!

EXERCISE 15

Reflect on your Family System and decide what Zone it lives in. Devise a group of strategies to help you and your family members repair it. A family meeting is a great way to introduce the Green Zone concept and to discuss your concerns and strategies. Begin the discussion by acknowledging the Green Zone aspects of your family system.

EXERCISE 16

Reflect on your Work System and decide what Zone it lives in. If it is in the Green Zone find a way to thank your boss and colleagues verbally or in writing for providing you with a Green Zone work environment. If it is the Yellow or Red Zone, decide whether you want to resolve the issues or dissolve the relationship and start looking for a Green Zone Work System.

EXERCISE 17

Reflect on your Social Systems and decide what Zone each lives in. Thank the members of at least one Green Zone System. Pick at least one Yellow/Red Zone System and decide to resolve the issues or dissolve the relationship and look for other Green Zone Social Systems.

EXERCISE 18

Consult all those people who can help you make positive changes in your Family / Work / Social Systems.

WEEK 7**SEVENTH STEP - CREATING A GREEN ZONE LIFESTYLE**

Over the years we have discovered that there are three paths that lead to a Green Zone Lifestyle. They can work nicely together or separately and can be addressed at different points in our life. They include:

1. Creating,
2. Sharing and
3. Serving humanity.

For anyone to begin the journey to creativity, the first step is to discover a special interest. All children enjoy playing but too few adults allow themselves to smile, laugh and be playful, to use humour or to feel an active part of life. The special interest can be related to any aspect of life and can give birth to worthwhile hobbies. Some begin with a visit to a library, pursuing a special sport, or joining friends in special projects. As time passes, these special interests and hobbies can grow to become more meaningful and gradually transform into your passion.

Developing that passion, that interest, is the first step to pursuing a dream. The second step is sharing that special gift with others. Passionate people are energized and motivated and inspire these feelings in others. They help others to move beyond the mundane activities and relationships we all encounter. Others see that they are a focus, a sense of direction, a direction that is guided by their hearts rather than tradition. They are role models for a sense of tranquility that blossoms into peace of mind and a Green Zone lifestyle.

Creativity can be expressed in everyday life, in acts of cooking, baking, knitting, sewing, interior decoration, gardening, creating games with children and the thousands of other activities open to us all. For some, their creativity is expressed in creative arts, whether they be poems, or stories, songs or paintings. Even for those people who suffer from a lot of pain in their hearts, we encourage them to read the biographies of artists like Frieda Kahlo and Vincent Van Gogh who transformed their pains into paintings and writers like Virginia Woolf whose

novels are as entertaining as enlightening. These artists gradually realized that their hardships provided them with raw material for their masterpieces. When suffering finds a meaning it no longer remains an affliction, it transforms into a work of art.

Many Creative Personalities whether poets or philosophers, musicians or painters like to visit the Yellow and Red Zones to get raw material and then come back to the Green Zone to create their masterpieces. Those who cannot come back from the Yellow and Red Zones suffer from emotional problems and may ultimately have a nervous breakdown needing help from the mental health professionals to get back to their Green Zone.

Over the centuries, scientists, artists, mystics and social reformers have used their creativity to serve humanity thus playing a significant role in the evolution of humanity. Creative people are in the minority but they lead the majority, inspiring them to get in touch with their own creativity. They are then able to share with others and serve their own communities, in particular and humanity, in general.

Now, let's see what Michelle has to say!

The seventh step is the final Step to following the Green Zone Model and the one that I am still currently working on, and I will probably work on for the rest of my life. It requires me to create a Green Zone lifestyle. It means I will try to live in the Green Zone for the rest of my life while trying to serve the world in a peaceful, Green Zone way. For me, it means that I will try to set an example for other people by living in the Green Zone. It means interacting with others in a Green way, seeing the world in a Green way, and contributing to my family, my work, and my community in a Green way. This can be difficult because it requires a constant effort in the beginning to always be aware of living in the Green, but as time goes on, it seems to get easier and easier. I'm finding that the more I feel Green, is the more I act Green, and so the more I live Green, which shows in everything I do. When I first started this Journey, I was in a very Red place. It was so Red, it was almost black. The relationships in my life were crumbling, my work was falling apart, my finances were melting into a sea of debt, my mood was negative, my behaviour was abusive, and my children were becoming what I had become: desperate, lonely, depressed, and in despair. And within a very short amount of time, I was able to understand and work through my troubles in just seven little Steps - The 7 Steps of the Green Zone. For that, Dr. Sohail, I will never be able to repay you, except to promise you that I will carry on your concept of the Red, Yellow, and Green

Zones for the rest of my life, passing it on to my students and my children, who will hopefully, one day, live Green too, making the world just a little more Green; and it's all because of you.

Now, it's your turn

EXERCISE 19

Consult with your friends and family and discuss your hobbies with them to see if they share your interests. Also talk about creating your *Family of the Heart* who can meet regularly to talk about and participate in your shared hobbies.

EXERCISE 20

Reflect on your life and see if you can do some voluntary work to serve your community on a regular basis. Many find that it makes life more meaningful.

EXERCISE 21

Arrange a weekly Green Zone Meeting with your family and friends to discuss concerns.

EXERCISE 22

Discuss in your Green Zone meeting to have regular date nights with your partner, as well as regular fun meetings with the family and friends.

EXERCISE 23

Reflect and review your Green Zone Self Help Program. Write your Green Zone Story highlighting positive changes you have made in your life in the last few months.

EXERCISE 24

Plan your future by reflecting on:

What is your hobby, passion and dream?

What is your special gift?

What will make your life more successful and meaningful?

Can you use your passion to serve your community?

What can help you in fulfilling your dream?

What did you learn about yourself in the last few months?

After creating a Green Zone Lifestyle make a weekly plan to maintain it. Rather than becoming your worst enemy we would like you to become your best friend.

If after working hard through this process you are still spending most of your time in your Yellow or Red Zone, you can consult your doctor to see a therapist or you can write to us for further consultation.

Free Advanced Reading - *From Breakdowns to Breakthroughs*:

Our clients have often written what we call their *Green Zone Story*, which is the account of their progress in therapy, in other words, their journey from the Yellow or Red Zone to their Green Zone. A *Green Zone Story* is often written as a way of saying 'thank you' to us at the completion of therapy but more importantly, it is a major part of acknowledging and celebrating their accomplishments through the process. Over the years, many *Green Zone Stories* have been included in our books, so we thought it would only be fitting to add some of the more recent ones to enhance your journey.

The next segment entitled, *From Breakdowns to Breakthroughs*, is the beginning of a book we may expand more on in the future and publish. It consists of an introductory article on psychotherapy followed by 7 Green Zone Stories. It is concluded with a chapter on the Green Zone, written by Mr. Mutaal Mooquin, an avid student of psychology who approached us after attending a seminar we conducted.

Please look through the various chapters on peoples' differing experiences with Green Zone to find those you may feel more connected to. We hope this provides you with some additional support through your process. And of course, we would love it if you would send us your Green Zone Story!

Best wishes on your journey to your Green Zone.

Sohail and Bette