

PRINCIPLE ONE

LESSON FOUR: P.A.R.T.

Welcome back.

Now, I am not above using acronyms if they help you remember something important. So here it is, here's your first tool: PART. Play the PART. P-A-R-T. Until you take loving care of yourself and your body by default, you're gonna play the PART as though you already do. PART is the tool that will help you stick to your commitments to care for yourself and your health.

P stands for Prompt: With practice, you'll see that the present moment is a strong prompt to play the part, regardless of what's going on. But to help prompts feel more tangible as you're just beginning your Principles practice, you can think of prompts as triggers or moments of decision.

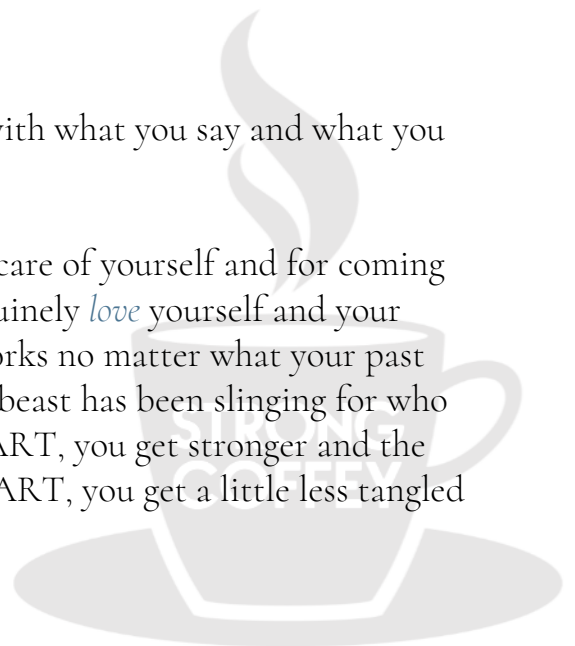
A stands for Ask and Accept: Ask yourself what you're feeling, and then accept whatever your emotional or physical truth happens to be.

R is Respond: You respond in the most caring way you can in that moment.

And finally...

T - Talk: You support yourself and your effort both with what you say and what you choose not to say.

This simple, four-step process is the recipe for taking care of yourself and for coming to care about yourself more deeply, for coming to genuinely *love* yourself and your body - not just as something that you say. And this works no matter what your past has looked like and no matter what kind of crap your beast has been slinging for who knows how long. Each and every time you play the PART, you get stronger and the beast gets weaker. Each and every time you play the PART, you get a little less tangled



in shame, and a little more connected to the love you once felt for yourself that that shame made you question.

Prompt

First, the *Prompt*. This is all about cultivating awareness in the present moment so you have the chance to make a stronger choice. Unless you practice becoming aware, odds are your thoughts, your circumstances, and your default behaviors are just gonna keep leading you to sabotage yourself. Prompts are happening all the time, since the present moment is always the perfect time to play the PART, but as you're getting familiar with the Principles, it can help to think of prompts in more tangible terms, like when you feel off, or compelled to do something counter to your commitments. Shame-based thoughts make good prompts. Situations that make you feel like throwing in the towel. All of these make for strong prompts.

Start by cultivating more of an awareness of obvious prompts to play the PART and act with care, like when you open the fridge or stand in line at the checkout counter. Odds are you have self-sabotaging defaults that naturally kick in in these moments, but recognizing those moments as prompts to play the PART will enable you to make a stronger choice. You can be on the lookout for more subtle prompts, too, like certain times of day, or when you socialize with certain people, or maybe when you sit down to watch TV at night. Any moment, situation, thought, or feeling can be a prompt to play the PART.

Shame-based ideas are a great prompt. The beast telling you you're a fraud whenever you try to set a healthy boundary. That fraud thought, that 'This isn't me, this isn't right, this'll never last' idea that's a common reaction to shame - that happens to me a lot, especially when I sit down to meditate. The first step to kicking the beast out of the driver's seat is becoming aware of the fact that it's driving. When someone offers you monkey brains, that's another obvious prompt. (And remember, monkey brains are any foods, substances, or behaviors that you don't relate to in a healthy way. Whatever you need to sub in so my examples apply to you, that's fine, sub it in.) Whatever it is, if someone offers you something that you don't relate to in a healthy way, that's a prompt. Right now, you're living on auto-pilot, blowing past thousands of prompts every day without so much as a thought. Until the present moment is your prompt by default - and that takes time and practice - you're gonna keep a list of prompts: of the moments, circumstances, thoughts, and ideas that used to arrive and pass without your notice, the moments when you still have a choice, but when your

default might be to do something harmful, or unskillful, or self-sabotaging. You can add to your list anytime: every time you notice a new prompt.

Once a prompt is on your list and you know that it's coming - like opening the fridge - you can think ahead and set yourself up to be able to make strong choices in those moments, like by making sure there's always healthy leftovers front and center on the top shelf.

Ask and Accept

The next step in Playing the PART is the A: *Ask and Accept*. Once you've recognized a prompt, ask yourself how or what you're feeling. Becoming aware of what's true for you in this moment turns obstacles into useful information, so that you can respond with care and not just react or default to old crap. How are you feeling? Are you sad? Bored? Are you hungry? Are you anxious? Tired? Afraid of something, or of someone, or of you? Do you feel self-conscious? Once you figure out what's happening inside of you - or, in far fewer moments, outside of you (and I'll give an example of what that means later in the course) - you can accept what's true for you in this moment. Ask yourself what you're feeling, and then accept whatever the answer happens to be. Accept what is true for you. Acceptance is an action step. It's an acknowledgment. You can even say it out loud: "I feel sad" or "I feel scared." Accept that you're hungry, or tired, or bored. You're accepting the feeling, remember - whatever emotional or physical experience you're having in that moment. You're not accepting self-harming or self-sabotaging ideas. And this is tricky. "I just want to" or "I just need to" or "I just want" or "I want to eat Monkey brains" or "I just need a drink" or "I just need a cigarette" - these are all thoughts. Those are Prompts. When you become aware of one of these prompts, then you ask "What am I feeling?" Then maybe you realize you're hungry, or you're nervous, or you're bored, or you're scared. You accept that basic truth, whatever it is, and suddenly you have power that you simply did not have before - the power to care and to take care of you in the way that you need to be taken care of.

Respond

The next step in playing the PART is R, *Respond*.

A strong response is driven by the desire to take good care of yourself and to make good on the commitments you've made to yourself and your body. It's walking when

you said you would walk. It's staying away from the foods or the substances or the behaviors you've figured out are doing you more harm than good. It's giving yourself the time and the space that you need and deserve to make choices on purpose, because that is the only path to wellness and health and happiness. Playing the PART - recognizing prompts, asking yourself how you feel, and accepting what's true - gives you the space and the information that you need to *respond instead of just react*.

The first Principle is *Care*, and when you *respond*, you can do so with the most caring action that you can in any given moment. Exactly how you respond to each different prompt is a completely personal decision. I'm not gonna tell you what to do, and if you're anything like me, if I did, that would just set you up to rebel. Be aware that the beast is gonna be right there with you, trying at every single freaking turn to convince you that the best choice you can make is just to do what you have always done. The strongest choice, the most caring response, can be any one of a million things, but it is never the choice that you have committed not to make. A loving response is never one of your self-harming defaults.

Remember these words, please: Care doesn't involve harm, ever. One more time: Care doesn't involve harm, ever.

Caring action does not involve harm, ever.

Talk

Last, but not least: *Talk*. If you want to unseat shame so you can live from a caring place, and get happily grounded in healthier habits, you'll need to follow mindfulness, which is the prompt; emotional intelligence, which is when you ask and accept what's true; and loving responses, which is strong, supportive talk. *If you leave this step out, you will sabotage yourself and be right back where you started.*

Words impact how you feel, they impact your self-image, and they impact how other people see and treat you. Whatever you repeat gets stronger. And whatever you say out loud becomes the stuff that you hear in your head - the talk becomes your thoughts. Berating yourself, or listing your flaws - that will keep you stuck.

The first step to the T in playing the PART - the Talk piece - is to stop giving shame-based, self-hating, self-deprecating ideas a voice. This is just the beginning. Then, you'll practice talking in ways that are supportive and kind. Talking about yourself

and what you're doing with respect and care and kindness and maybe, just maybe, eventually some enthusiasm. But don't worry; you don't have to go there now! If you default to self abuse, like I do, it may never feel natural to talk about yourself or what you are doing in a wholly positive way. And you know what? That's ok - you can still work toward that goal each day with each thing that you say. You started eating better and it feels good and it's delicious and you feel like a superhero, you're saving money, you're cooking at home and everything is great? Don't hide that. Talk it up! Tell people in your support network.

In order to play the PART, it's critical, *critical* that you find a support network - people who will understand how you got where you are and understand what you need to do to get where you want to go and then you need to talk to those people about what you are doing to get there. My group, the Klatch, is *the perfect space* to do this work. But whether it's with us or with some other group that you find or create out in the world, you must practice talking with respect about yourself and what you are doing if you want your caring responses to become habits. *Period*. If talking with pride feels too hard at first - and it does for so many of us - then your first step is to *do no harm*. Don't talk down to yourself, don't talk trash about yourself and do not give the beast a voice.