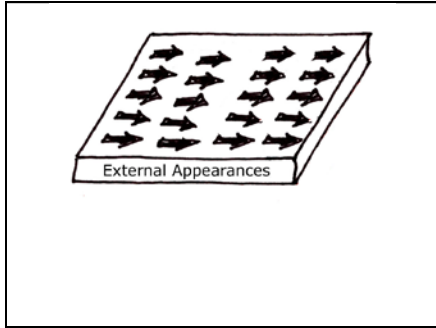


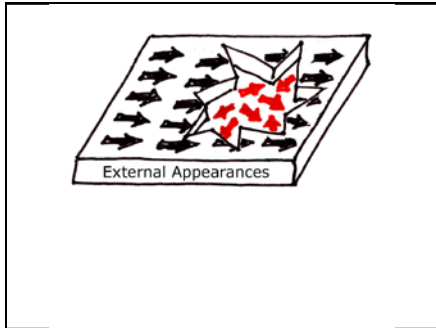
Layers of Awareness



External Appearances, Mechanical Behavior

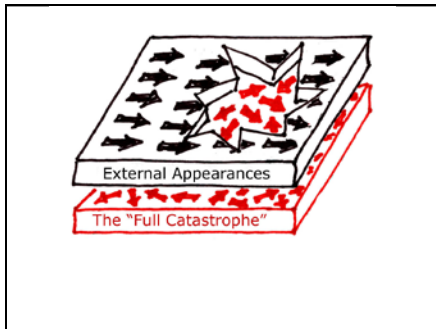
Our life is often mechanical - events trigger conditioned, lock-step behavior. When people ask us how we are, our first impulse is to say "fine", even if our life is falling apart. So much energy devoted to maintaining our image, even to ourselves. Our beliefs about how things are or should be, eclipsing the miracle of this moment; no room for wonder or new responses...

...but nothing ever stays the same, and a crisis or unexpected event sometimes shakes the status quo...



New Awareness

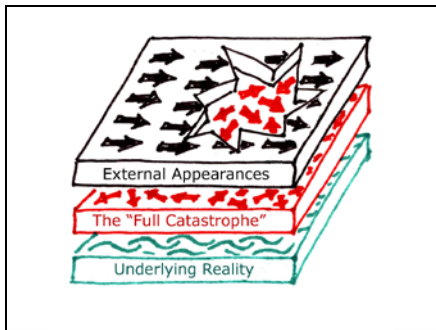
This can either be the "Oh, Shit!" awareness of something we have hidden from ourselves (conflict, disease, pain, ineffective behavior), or the "Wow!" of fresh, unconditioned input (seeing things as if for the first time, fresh, vivid)...



Full Catastrophe

... which opens a portal into the "Full Catastrophe", all of life: the pains, the joys, the ignored feelings, the wonders, the adventure, the drama...

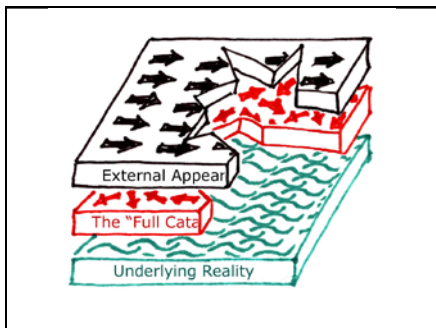
At this point, if what has opened up is painful, there may be an effort to patch up this hole so as not to be exposed to the "Full Catastrophe", by shifting attention or through addictive behavior (eating, drinking, drugs, etc.)...



Underlying Reality

... but unseen, underneath the "Full Catastrophe", the personal drama and apparent conflict, is a level of unity, peace, a sense that "everything is okay just exactly as it is".

This underlying reality is normally obscured by the layers above it, and therefore unavailable. Protecting ourselves against the full catastrophe is protecting ourselves against our true heritage...



Holistic Awareness

... At this depth, conditioned behavior, and the storms of thoughts, sensory and emotional input, all continue to exist, but it's possible to experience them and respond to them from a place of peace and non-judgmental awareness.

This level of reality, paradoxically, actually includes the two above it. It is a place *from which* one has the potential to openly experience all of what life offers, fully alive and fluidly responding without blind reactivity or pre-judgment.