

Session Transcript: What Is Real?

This client came to the session wondering what, in her experience, was actually real. She's read an article about memory which had led her to question the accuracy of her memories. She was really quite upset about the idea that what she'd taken to be real may not, in fact, be the case.

(Facilitator: Fiona Robertson)

Penelope: What is real? How do I know what is real? What can you count on really? I read an article on memory, and there's a shakiness here.

Fiona: We could follow this shakiness, so to speak, and look for what is real.

Penelope: Yes.

Fiona: Can you feel the shakiness?

Penelope: Ya. It's a tremulousness – the central channel all the way down and there is an emotion with it – I don't know what the emotion is (tears).

Fiona: So, stay with all of this, the emotion, the tremulousness there.

Penelope: A lot of images.

Fiona: Let them come...yeah, letting the images come in and letting the feeling come just as it does...(long pause)...see if any of the images settle, as it were. See if any of them stick.

Penelope: Mom and dad on my sister's wedding day. When I look at it, I can't comprehend that I won't see those people in reality. I can't put that together.

Fiona: Yeah. So, we'll take a look at the picture in a moment. Take a look at these words first, "I can't comprehend that I won't see those people in reality."

Penelope: The form is gone. It doesn't exist.

Fiona: Yes, looking at those words, too. "The form is gone. It doesn't exist." Staying with those words for a moment, "I can't comprehend that I won't see those people in reality. The form is gone. It doesn't exist." Just going by your body, see which of those words is real.

Penelope: I won't see them again. That I can't touch them.

Fiona: Staying right with these words, "I won't see them again. That I can't touch them."
Feeling this, too, just as you're doing.

Penelope: I just don't get it. I know they were there. I know they existed but...how is that possible they don't? (crying hard)

Fiona: Let all the words be there and the feelings. We'll come back to the words in a moment - just letting the feeling be here...

Penelope: It's just incomprehensible that all there is, is memories of them (crying).

Fiona: Yeah.

Penelope: Words, pictures, memories. So unreal. (crying)

Fiona: Staying right with this, just as you're doing. "All there is, is memories of them."

Penelope: And if I don't have those, and if those aren't real, what is real?

Fiona: So, take a moment with this question, as if you've written it down and you can see it there. "If those aren't real, what is real?" Seeing those words there, "If those aren't real, what is real?"

Penelope: If those memories aren't real...

Fiona: Yeah. So, just see, whatever comes in answer to this question, "What if those memories aren't real? What will happen if those memories aren't real?"

Penelope: Maybe none of it happened. Did any of it even happen?

Fiona: Stay with that question - simply looking at it - "Did any of it even happen?"
Looking at each of those words here, "Did any of it even happen? Just going by your body's response, see if any of those words are real.

Penelope: I don't know (crying hard).

Fiona: OK. That feeling...letting it come just as it is doing. Total permission to feel this now.

Penelope: One more thing I can't count on. There's nothing to count on. Nothing ,
nothing (a lot of feeling).

Fiona: Yeah. Let your body do exactly as it's doing here (long pause). Take a look at those words, "There's nothing to count on."

Penelope: Nowhere to put my feet. Nothing to stand on. Nothing to land on.

Fiona: Yeah.

Penelope: Nothing. Just nothing.

Fiona: Just see what comes in answer to this question. What will happen if there is nothing to count on, nothing to land on?

Penelope: Image of floating forever in space, black space, floating in silent black space.

Fiona: Stay with this image here. Seeing it there in your mind's eye, this image of floating forever in black space.

Penelope: Another image. I can put my finger through everything - nothing is substantial. Nothing is substantial at all (crying).

Fiona: Let this come.

Penelope: So, what am I doing? What is this all about?

Fiona: Stay with those questions for a moment. "What am I doing? What is this all about?" As you look at the questions, see if anything comes in response to them. If there's an image or more words or a feeling - simply look at those questions and see what comes in response to them.

Penelope: There's an image of a friend. This is a bunch of crap. It's all just a build up for everything. What am I trying to do? (crying)

Fiona: Stay with this.

Penelope: (crying) I don't even know what I'm doing or why I'm doing what I'm doing. It's so crazy.

Fiona: Yeah.

Penelope: I don't even know what moves me to wake in the morning or take a breath in the morning or get up. What is it?

Fiona: Stay with this question here, "What is it?" Stay with that question and see if anything comes in answer to it: a feeling, or an image. "What is it?"

Penelope: An image of Adyashanti (spiritual teacher).

Fiona: Have a look at him...seeing his image...going by your body, see if that image is real.

Penelope: Just an image.

Fiona: Let the feeling come, just as it comes...give it all the space it needs.

Penelope: (crying hard) Nothing is real. Why is that so hard? Why does that seem so complicated?

Fiona Yeah.

Penelope: Nothing is as it seems. Is what it is.

Fiona: So, stay with both these phrases for a moment, "Nothing is real. Nothing is as it seems." See which one is most accurate.

Penelope: Nothing is as it seems.

Fiona: So, stay with these words, "Nothing is as it seems." First of all, see what else comes with the words.

Penelope: (laughing) I don't remember. It seems ludicrous being serious about it all, but I don't know if that's just me jumping out of it.

Fiona: Stay with the ludicrousness of it. Let this response come.

Penelope: It feels like the opposite of what I was feeling. It's like, let's just go to the beach. Let's smoke a fag. It either really matters or it doesn't matter, is how it seems in the moment.

Fiona: So, stay with this experience, "Let's go to the beach or smoke a fag."

Penelope: Such innocence, such sweetness.

Fiona: Can you feel the innocence of it, that sweetness?

Penelope: Ya, I can.

Fiona: Okay...stay with that.

Penelope: Lightness, ease, no thinking. Just here and now.

Fiona: So, simply being here and now. Just taking in the ease and lightness.

Penelope: An image of my mind comes. So flipping busy.

Fiona: Yeah, have a look at it.

Penelope: I really don't want to lose it but sometimes, it's really like a mad professor, running around with a little magnifying glass—'Is it here? Is it here? Where is it? What is it? How is it?' It's exhausting.

Fiona: So, take a moment to watch this, the professor with her magnifying glass.

Penelope: (laughing) I can't laugh too loud because if she turns around and sees me that won't be funny. So I have to be quiet and have my fun while she's doing her work and don't upset her.

Fiona: Just see, what would happen if she did turn around and see you laughing? What's the worst that could happen if she did turn around and see us or hear us?

Penelope: She'd unleash her wrath, I think, for playing around and joking around and having fun.

Fiona: What would happen if she did unleash her wrath?

Penelope: A total explosion. Kapow! Nuclear annihilation. I see an image like Hiroshima.

Fiona: Take a look at it, watching that nuclear annihilation. Just going by your body, see if this image is real.

Penelope: No. An image.

Fiona: So come back to Professor Brain with the magnifying glass.

Penelope: (laughing) She needs some lightening up.

Fiona: So, you can see here there. Can you feel her in some shape or form? Is there a sense where she is located? Is there a felt sense?

Penelope: I can see her.

Fiona: So have a look at her.

Penelope: She's got a moustache, black eyebrows, beak-like nose. Owl. I'll see if I can feel it – I can't get a feel. I can feel the light laughter place, just don't understand the dichotomy: either this or like this. And when it's like this nothing is serious. Nothing is serious. It's just great fun and laughter.

Fiona: So, take a moment with that dichotomy. First of all look at the words, "It's this or this," and see how that dichotomy comes to you. Is there an image of it or a feeling of it?

Penelope: First of all loads of images come. The words are I'm either responsible or I'm not responsible. Images of when I took a year off and had fun...wild, crazy fun. Some part of me felt irresponsible.

Fiona: So, stay with these images here. That whole year when you had fun. As you look at these images, first of all, how does your body respond to them? Is there a feeling or a sensation?

Penelope: Openness, lightness, don't feel weighed down, not thinking.

Fiona: So, let the images play through and feel the openness and lightness of them.

Penelope: There is a judgment; it was really indulgent.

Fiona: We'll come to judgment itself in a moment. Can you see where the judgment is emanating from?

Penelope: From a partial image.

Fiona: Stay with that image. Have a good look and as you look, see what the judgment is exactly. Is it that you were indulgent or irresponsible or something else?

Penelope: 'This is indulgent...this kind of activity of lollygagging around, being open sexually, meandering here and there, what's the point of that?'

Fiona: As you stay with the image, can you see what was most indulgent ... being guided by your body, is there something particular in the image?

Penelope: Image of a woman...she was beautiful, gorgeous and sweet, but there was something...oozing this sensuality.

Fiona: Have a look at her there. Oozing sensuality. What do you notice?

Penelope: The thought comes in: I was the total opposite of that. She was light and a beautiful being.

Fiona: As you look at her, who were you in relation to her? Is there a word that sums up what the opposite of her is?

Penelope: Staid.

Fiona: Stay with "staid." See the word and, going by your body, see if you are that word. Are you the staid one?

Penelope: I don't feel like that

Fiona: And see if it's real. Is the word real, going by the body's response?

Penelope: No, it's just a word; a series of lines put together.

Fiona: What's the feeling that's here right now?

Penelope: There is actually quite a stillness.

Fiona: Be in the stillness. Be the stillness for a moment. Resting in stillness.

Penelope: There are two images now of the beautiful woman. There's the first image of her still and how kind and sweet she was. At that time, she was with a guy and she did nothing. And then an image of a few years ago. She had left this guy and she was working hard and she was beautiful still and as kind and sweet as she had always been. Don't know why those two images showed up.

Fiona: Have a look at them both.

Penelope: It's the opposite again – on the one image, she looks tired, working hard. On the other, people are doing things for her. The question comes: Which one is real?

Fiona: So, go with that question.

Penelope: Neither one of them are real. Just images (tears).

Fiona: Let this feeling come.

Penelope: Nothing is real. I really don't know why I'm crying about that.

Fiona: So, simply look at those words and let the feeling come as it does. "Nothing is real." Seeing those words there and letting your body respond to them, however that happens.

Penelope: Just a very, very, very deep silence.

Fiona: Yeah. Be in it. Resting here. Deep silence.

Penelope: Two things come: a very bright sun and an image of my partner lying in bed in the next room. He just got home last night and is he real?

Fiona: So, have a look at that image of your partner, lying in bed there, just as you see it. Letting your body answer, see if that image is real.

Penelope: Well, it's an image, but he is lying in bed.

Fiona: So, stay with the words, "He is lying in bed," and, as you look at them, see which of the words are real. "He is lying in bed." Is it all of them or particular words?

Penelope: None of the words are real.

Fiona: So, come back to the question, "What is real?" and see if anything presents itself by way of an answer, so to speak.

Penelope: Great, vast silence again.

Fiona: Stay with it ...this silence here. See if it's real, just going by your body.

Penelope: Chills up and down my back and the words, 'if this isn't real, we are at the end of the line.'

Fiona: Yeah...so let your body do just as it's doing - the chills – and then see those words, "If this isn't real we are at the end of the line." Are any of those words real?

Penelope: No, just words.

Fiona: So, just whatever comes in answer to this question, what if we are at the end of the line? What will happen if this great, vast silence isn't real? What then?

Penelope: A lot of chills up my neck.

Fiona: Let them come. Let this energy do exactly as it's doing. What do you notice?

Penelope: What I notice is there's nothing happening. Like no breath even until I remember to breathe. It was all very still.

Fiona: Take a moment here just to sit and to breathe and be simply here, just as you are.

Penelope: I'm left with that question, "What if this is it?"

Fiona: So, have a look at that question, "What if this is it?" What if this is it?

Penelope: Body is very quiet. There are no images. Words are, it seems, OK. It seems alright (laughs).

Fiona: So, take a moment with this and see if it is OK if this is it.

Penelope: It's OK right now.

Fiona: Take a moment to rest here. Just experiencing the okayness of this.

Penelope: Just a little bit of image of the beautiful woman...watching it go...feeling a gratitude to her.

Fiona: So, just being with the image and feeling the gratitude.

Penelope: No two people are alike. It's like the snowflakes.

Fiona: Stay with that thought, "No two people are alike. It's like the snowflakes." Are those words real, any of them?

Penelope: No.

Fiona: What's the feeling that's here right now?

Penelope: Hard to describe.

Fiona: Simply feel it and if descriptive words come, that's fine. Otherwise, just simply experience it.

Penelope: The words of a song, "Bright Morning Star Arising".

Fiona: Stay with the words of this song, "Bright Morning Star Arising," and looking at them, or listening to them, are those words real?

Penelope: They are just words. That question, 'What is real?'—there is something about that question—it's very beautiful in the moment. Is anything real? Is anything real?

Fiona: Stay with that question and let it resonate. Just see if anything else comes with it.

Penelope: No.

Fiona: So, take a look at this word, 'real,' for a moment, on its own. 'real' and first see, going by the body, is that word real?

Penelope: No.

Fiona: So, is there anything else with it or behind it, so to speak, this word, 'real'? Is there a sense or sensation of it, or an image? Anything else that gives it meaning?

Penelope: Image from the Velveteen Rabbit. The Velveteen Rabbit thinks he's real (describes the scene with the Skin Horse); when you are loved for a very long time, that's real.

Fiona: So, stay with the Skin Horse's words, "Real takes a long time—when you are loved for a very long time, that's real." ... Taking in those words, "Real takes a long time—when you are loved for a very long time, that's real." Just going by your body, see if any of those words are real.

Penelope: (laughing) They are all just words.

Fiona: So, just come back to the word, 'real' and see if anything else comes with it - images or sensations, feelings - anything that makes the word 'real' real.

Penelope: The thought that comes - don't know why it seems so obvious that this form isn't real. I can only see the shapes and colors, blah, blah, blah, but other things seem real – it seems strange.

Fiona: Take a look and see what it is that seems real.

Penelope: I can't.

Fiona: Take a moment to rest here exactly as you are.

Penelope: But if I think of going into the bedroom and touching that form that's called my partner, it seems real. But I realize I can do the same thing with that, that I do with this body.

Fiona: Sure. So, play that image through. See if anything in that image is real. You get up, go to the bedroom.

Penelope: (laughter) Just an image.

Fiona: Look at that image. Just going by your body, see if it's unreal.

Penelope: It's an image. Seems it's neither real nor unreal. That's my head.

Fiona: So, see if your body has a take on this.

Penelope: No, neither real or unreal.

Fiona: So, just check to see...can you find anything that is either real or unreal?

Penelope: My heartbeat feels real.

Fiona: So, take a moment to feel it, just sitting here and feeling your heartbeat. Can you see it in some shape or form?

Penelope: Yeah. I can see it, an image of my heart.

Fiona: Have a look at it. That image of your heart, is that real?

Penelope: No, that's not real.

Fiona: Is it unreal, that image?

Penelope: No.

Fiona: So, simply look at that image 'til it naturally fades...seeing it there in your mind's eye.

Penelope: It's gone.

Fiona: Come back to the felt sense of your heartbeat, and as you feel it see if anything else comes with it, any other words or images.

Penelope: There's an image of me clutching my heart. I gotta keep this. This I gotta keep.

Fiona: So, we'll come to that image, but first look at these words, "I gotta keep this." See if those words are real.

Penelope: No.

Fiona: Come back to the image of you clutching your heart. See if it's real.

Penelope: It's already gone.

Fiona: Bring your awareness back to the felt sense of your heartbeat there. Just have a listen. sitting here, hearing the heart beat.

Penelope: It's my life line.

Fiona: Yeah. Stay with those words, "It's my life line," and just see if anything else comes with them. Is there a feeling or an image?

Penelope: Image of my brother. He got caught in a net. I pulled him out.

Fiona: This memory here, of you pulling your brother out of the net. As you look, just going by your body, see if that image is real.

Penelope: No.

Fiona: So, come back to these words again, "It's my life line," and again see if anything else comes with them. Is there a sensation or another image or....

Penelope: No.

Fiona: Are those words real, "It's my life line"?

Penelope: More words come with it, 'I'd die.'

Fiona: So, can you see exactly what it is, 'your life line'? What is it that, without it, you'd die?

Penelope: My heart stops.

Fiona: So, look at those words, "my heart stops," and first of all see if any of those words are your life line.

Penelope: No.

Fiona: Are any of those words real?

Penelope: No.

Fiona: So, check in with your body and see what feeling or sensation is here just now.

Penelope: That tremendous, vast silence is here.

Fiona: Take some time there. This vast silence. Can you find your life line anywhere here?

Penelope: No, can't even hear my heart beat.

Fiona: So, Simply being here in this silence, being the silence. Resting here, and then just take a look and see if there is any kind of dichotomy here.

Penelope: Word showing up is 'perfection.'

Fiona: Stay with the experience of that word, this vast silence here (long pause) and then take a look and see if there is anything else for us to look at. Is there anything that we've overlooked or does this feel complete?

Penelope: 'You're perfect just as you are,' are the words that come.

Fiona: Take those words on board, "You're perfect just as you are," and then see if any of those words are real, going by your body.

Penelope: No (laughs). Just words.

Fiona: Rest here for a moment. Letting all of this settle. Taking your time. Whenever you are ready, open your eyes.