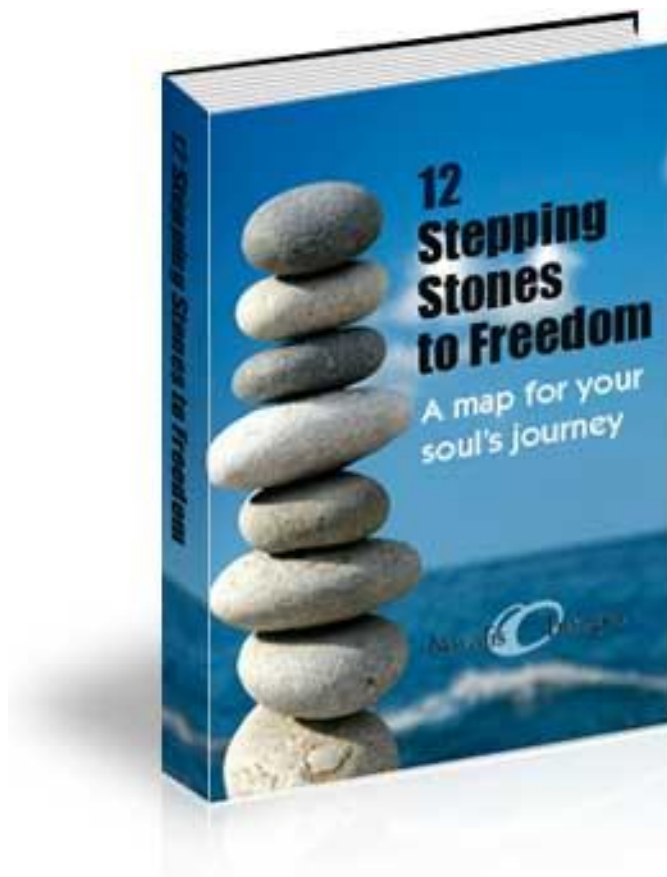


12 STEPPING STONES TO FREEDOM

A map for your soul's journey



By Ati Petrov and Joyce Friesen

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About the Authors



Joyce Friesen Ati Petrov

Ati Petrov DHHP, DIHom (Pract.) is a holistic health practitioner, integrating Heilkunst, Homeopathy, Sequential Therapy, German New Medicine and Bio-resonance therapy.

She is a graduate of the Advanced Practitioner Program (DHHP) at the Hahnemann College for Heilkunst. Ati also worked as a tutor and practitioner at the Hahnemann College for Heilkunst where she helped develop the school and clinics. Ati also completed the full practitioner program of the British Institute of Homeopathy DIHom (Pract).

Ati's training also includes German New Medicine and biofeedback assessment and therapy with the Inergetix CoRe. Always at the cutting edge of holistic research, she is currently exploring Anthroposophical Orgonomy with the Novalis Organon College in California.

As a result of her study and work in fine arts, and Cultural Studies, along with her rich life experiences and lifelong intensive reading and research, Ati has created a holistic view of life and health which she shares with her clients.

In 2008 Ati Petrov co-founded the Novalis Integra Center for Healing and Transformation along with Joyce Friesen.

Joyce Friesen, a life potentials and health coach, helps people identify their major life challenges and goals. As advisor and advocate she supports people to revolutionize their overall health and well-being.

As a result of her own experience, and over a 30-year career in medical information and management at both the Vancouver Hospital Medical Library and the Woodward Biomedical Library at the University of British Columbia, Joyce developed an integrated system for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual regeneration.

As a lifelong seeker, Joyce discovered her spiritual path during the depths of her stress and depression. She has been studying meditation with spiritual master Sri Chinmoy for over 15 years.

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INTRODUCTION

In this book we would like to offer you a glimpse into the complexity of your entire Self and the variety of ways that life impacts you every second of every day. And how the interpretation of what goes on in your environment is what will eventually show up on your radar as a physical sensation, symptom or feeling.

What follows is a description of those elements we consider essential for harmony. These are influences that impact your personality, your physical body, your emotional life, the way you do things, the way you see reality. These influences will affect you at one time of your life or another. And when they do, you react to the resulting tension that arises.

In order to stop *reacting* to life and to start making choices with more *awareness*:

- √ We need to know what makes us tick
- √ What in our environment impacts us the most
- √ Who we are in our physical body and inner essence
- √ What some of the habits that keep us spinning our wheels are, even when we can't wait to move on?

It has been a life-long project for us at Novalis Integra, to find the most effective ways of helping people discover what those influences are *for them*.

And then to offer solutions that are contemporary, adequate to the needs of our time and the way we view the world today. We believe we have found the **best approach** to a full overhaul of your life and restoration of vibrant health.

In this book, we have outlined 12 Stepping Stones. Those footholds on our journey to perfection that will best cover the bases when we are talking about health and life change. We will focus on the areas which affect us all in some significant way.

Each Stepping Stone is but one facet of a whole. We have separated them for the sake of clarity into 12 distinct themes, but in

real life there is a constant merging and shifting between the aspects of our character, the issues we are dealing with and the different levels of experience we have, be it physical, mental, emotional or spiritual.

Although the 12 Stepping Stones are equally valuable for us all, *your* weak link may be more in one area, than in another. It is important for you to find out:

- √ What needs to be strengthened
- √ What needs to be transformed
- √ Which are the tools, gifts and talents that will best help YOU achieve success

Enjoy your reading and let us know your thoughts.

It is our hope and purpose to make this important information available to as many seekers of a holistic way of living, as we can. Not only because it will open your eyes to what you already *knew in a way*, but also because we have discovered solutions to an enormous number of problems that people presently don't know how to deal with.

If you are unsatisfied or curious as to WHAT YOU CAN DO, do take a look at our programs and services. They offer solutions for every need.

Contact us:

- √ If you're curious and want to try us out
- √ If you're informed and want a specific service
- √ If you want to embark on a dedicated journey of self-discovery and transformation and would like to cross the river with our help.

Stepping Stone 1: PREPARATION

The insights in this book can help you flow through any significant situation you face. They are also central to *our* approach to problem solving and coaching.

3 questions to ask yourself no matter what you are dealing with:

- √ **Where am I?** What do I feel is in need of re-evaluation in this area of my life? What are my specific needs or weaknesses in this area? My strengths?
- √ **Where do I want to go?** What do I want to change or achieve? What are my immediate goals? What is my vision for the future?
- √ **How do I get there?** Find the best solution which is the shortest and most effective path to a shift that will bring me into alignment with my higher self.

The shift

There are many things that can be done to help you achieve what you desire, but one thing remains in your power alone. The choice to allow transformation and the choice to stop it is yours. A therapy will be as useful to you as you wish it to be.

With this in mind, enjoy the visit as you move from one Stepping Stone to another. Perhaps it will stimulate you to make some changes in your life right now!

After all, this book is not just about sharing information. It's also to let you know that what you are now reading is a method of healing and transformation developed for people just like you.

People who are seeking authentic wholistic therapy with support every step of the way. We hope to enhance your learning and help you make your life all that you have ever dreamt it to be.

From simple to complex and back again

When we learn new concepts, the pace at which we move forward is based on our natural ability to move from the simple to the complex and vice versa. We start with a good foundation of familiar concepts and we move on to more complex new ideas. We also often need to move from an over complicated life to a more simple one depending on our situation.

This allows us to keep moving without being slowed down by confusion. It also eliminates the fear of the unknown or the compulsive need for “proof” as a form of control and resistance to change. The proof is in our own experience, our own results.

So take your time, savor the experience and make it your own.

Change happens only now

The best place to start is where we find ourselves today. Tackle those problems first. This is as good as any other place, considering that our life is a repetition of harmonic themes. No matter which one you choose to deal with, change will happen. You will shift.

Each person has her own pace in life. Do not compare yourself to others, except in a very general way. The pace at which you improve depends on many factors:

- √ Most importantly on your state of health and vigor
- √ On your comfort level with change and the unknown
- √ Your innate sensitivity to the environment
- √ Your temperament and preference for quick decisive action or for gentle and contemplative gradual transformation.

You will move at your own pace and in your own time. Again, you must not compare the speed with which you can move forward. Healing is a very individual issue and has to be viewed in the context of your individual personality and situation.

“Once you start; you must continue otherwise it is a betrayal to your higher self.” Sri Chinmoy

“Every journey has a secret destination of which the traveler is unaware.” Martin Buber

“It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that matters, in the end.” Ursula K .LeGuin

Stepping Stone 2: IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU!

Do you REALLY know what makes you tick? Do you know the most important issue in your life right now? And what are the hidden factors involved? If you have a physical or emotional problem, do you know all the causes and ramifications it has for you?

Where am I?

You are a map created by the stars at your birth, by the particular patterns of your chromosomes and the cells in your body, imprinted by generations of ancestors and tradition. You are a map of your thought patterns and emotions. A map of the roads you've already traveled in this lifetime and perhaps ... in other lifetimes.

You need to know where you are right now in order to start in a new direction. A map is useless unless you know your location on it. We all think we know where we are. After all, we know our name, age and address, don't we? And we know painfully well all our problems and symptoms and life details. So what else is there to know?

Mirror, mirror on the wall ...

Very few of us see ourselves objectively. We look through many layers of assumption, habit and feedback from others, which is not always positive. We're always subjective, looking through our relationships and the labels we have accepted as being "who we are". This can all change as you shift your perspective.

To be able to attract what you want, it is worthwhile to take a closer, objective look at who you really are, and in some detail. As you discover those qualities that make up your complex individuality, you will see the bigger picture. And it will be confirmed from many sources.

Context is ALL important

We all know many things about ourselves, perhaps even in minute detail. This information has to be interpreted in the context of our present life situation and past history, as well as in the context of where we want to go next. Just knowing is not enough. Putting things into perspective and into context suddenly rewards us with a palpable picture of who we are and where we stand. It all comes alive!

Your problem is unique. It may resemble many similar complaints of other people, perhaps even some of the medicines or therapies others used have also worked for you. Context makes a huge difference for those seeking to resolve a health problem.

BUT, most of the time you need your own approach and timing. And it all depends on your particular history and circumstances that are unique.

Today we can put all that into context for you. It's quite easy after that to select the best solutions to solve YOUR problems. Most of the time they will be quite different in application from those of others, even when there are many similarities.

Your uniqueness holds the explanation for many an odd occurrence or trait. *Nothing in life is coincidental.* If there IS a master plan and you are part of it, wouldn't you want to know for sure why you are here? Most certainly it's not to suffer and lead an unhappy existence denying yourself your true destiny.

Your life's context

YOU are the center of your life experience and all that happens to you and all that you notice and take to heart is but a planet in your personal solar system.

Now is the time to learn more about the microcosm called YOU.

- √ What did you bring into the world as gifts, challenges, talents and what is your gift to the world?
- √ What is reflected in your main themes in life and why do they repeat themselves over and over again? Is it because you are meant to do something different or perhaps because you are preparing for a significant shift?

Decode your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual self by:

- √ Physical tests and measurements
- √ Astrological and numerological charts
- √ Meditation and contemplation
- √ Biofeedback technology to measure your energetic blueprint. This will give you all the information about what's going on in your system on all levels.

All of these can help build an objective picture of where you are at now.

It's important to find out as much as you can about yourself because you will then be able to better **choose** your next step, one that is in resonance with you on all levels.

In addition to learning your positive traits and gifts, you may want to scrutinize those destabilizing forces that hold you back or stand as seemingly insurmountable obstacles on your way.

We all know the feeling of something not being right or the frustration of having to do what we don't really want to do, while not being able to dedicate more time to what really makes our soul sing.

What's **holding you back** is your own false inner voice, the voice of conditioning and cultural bias. Not just outer circumstance, which is a mere mirror of inner blocks. Becoming aware of this fact and finding out what precisely holds *you* back, can save you time, suffering and money in the long run. Knowledge is power. In this case the power to make positive change.

Resonance

Resonance is the main principle by which we attract things in life. What is inside us will be reflected in what we see outside. In fact, we are blind to anything in our environment which is not resonant with us. It is non-existent as far as we are concerned.

Knowing yourself means to be aware of your personal resonances. That, in turn, helps you know why you attract certain experiences and not others. You also will know that a **shift** in your resonance patterns will bring you the experiences you do desire.

Improving your inner resonance translates into improving who you are, through awareness and through making changes where they count. Not on the surface, but in the essential patterns that make you who you are.

Action grounds intention

It's easy to talk about what you should do, but if you don't **take action**, even something as simple as writing it down, then you'll soon forget.

The exciting discovery of today will become a vague "feeling" of tomorrow. You just won't remember what it was all about ...

In order to act in your best interest, you have to understand the implications of choices as they apply to YOU in particular.

What is good for one person is not necessarily the best for another. Here again, context is paramount. The context of your situation will provide you with ideas of what the best action is for YOU.

This is why it's so important to know who you are and where you are right now, because this is the reality of present time and it is only in **present time** that true action can be undertaken. All else is acting based on illusion and fantasy, and the results show it.

You know you have successfully achieved the purpose of Stepping Stone 1, when you can easily find your location on your life map. Then you can take your next step.

"To be nobody but yourself--in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you like everybody else--means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight, and never stop fighting."

E.E. Cummings

"Be not afraid of growing slowly. Be afraid only of standing still."

Chinese Proverb

Stepping Stone 3: YOUR GOALS

In order to achieve your life purpose you came with a plan and a set of tools to best serve you on the way. When you find out more about who you are, what you brought with you, what some of the possibilities pointing to your grand plan are, you will be moving toward the fulfillment of your life purpose.

So let's take a closer look.

- √ What needs to change right away?
- √ What are you ready to let go of?
- √ What do you want to have?
- √ What would you like to improve in your life?
- √ Do you know your passion? What is it?
- √ Perhaps you don't have a passion. You can't decide what you really want to do now or for the rest of your life. Would you want to discover what that is?

Once you find all that out, you will have a big AHA moment, as it will resonate with your inner knowing. You will recognize it. You will just **know**.

It's only possible to really achieve our goals if we act on them. Action grounds intention and makes it happen!

Times are a changin'

Your symptoms, discomfort and emotional drama are your sign that change is trying to happen. These signs vary from a gentle nudge to a serious wake-up call in the guise of a grave disease or emotional trauma.

The information about who you are and where you're at from Stepping Stone 1 will provide the backdrop or context against which a particular theme or traumatic event in your life unfolds. From such a vantage point, you can better perceive the significance of such occurrences.

You will notice your repetitive themes, the meaning of the timing of one event or another. You will understand the particulars of your health condition based on your unique structure and physical and emotional traits.

Whether you need major repairs or just a tune-up for prevention, the same themes apply. All aspects of your life have impacted you already. They are all entwined in the fabric of your personality and lifestyle. One way or another you will come up against influences so deeply imbedded or hidden that you may not even be aware that they are the cause of your present suffering.

It's all about your plan

Focusing on your goals and needs will lead you in an organic manner to the resolution of all those factors that are affecting your health and sense of self. What you see from your vantage point right now is just the tip of the iceberg. The journey is an exploration of what lies beneath.

What are your goals? There are a few areas you may have in mind. So make a list of your goals and cover all the areas that matter. Do you want to:

- √ Deal with a health problem
- √ Address mental or emotional issues, either current or past
- √ Improve your life situation
- √ Plan for the next several years or for the rest of your life
- √ Want a new direction in life altogether
- √ Find your spiritual centre?

**“Life is a dance if you take the steps:
one step, then another.”**

Anonymous

Prioritizing brings clarity

When you know who you are and where you stand, you can consider the next steps to take, to lead you in the right direction.

Once you line up all your goals, desires, complaints and plans, it is time to prioritize them.

Start with immediate goals followed by those you will build upon later.

Once you have identified your immediate goals and you see how they really fit into the bigger plan of achieving your passion in life, you can start planning.

- √ Some things need to change right now
- √ Others are obstacles on your way to change
- √ Some do not depend on you at this time, but first, you need to get ready before you can tackle them. For example, you need to heal your knee pain first before you can sign up to dancing classes
- √ Or you want to improve your self-esteem and boost your energy before you start planning a new business venture after retiring from a boring job
- √ You may want to make sure your health stays vibrant
- √ You want to finally free your closet of the skeletons that resided there for years
- √ You may be dealing with divorce or the children leaving home and life is suddenly opening up with endless possibilities. A bit of emotional balance and lightness of spirit can help put back the bounce in your step.
- √ Some people, and perhaps you are one of them, just want to put everything in order. You are at a time in life when you have the wisdom and leisure to choose what to do in the coming years

“If we do not know what port we’re steering for, no wind is favorable.”

Seneca

The big picture

Create the big picture - your passion in life. If it is not clear initially, make it a goal to discover and confirm what makes YOU tick. Match your goals to the context of your life at this time. Where is it best to start? Focus brings clarity.

You will then have your map and you can place yourself on it. From this position you can plan your strategy, the steps to take. Which ones to take first, which next, and what can to wait.

Health

Here is a goal you could have at this time. We'll show you how to prioritize and choose what to do first and what next.

To improve our health we need to know the state of our health at this time, as well as the source of negative impacts on our physical health. Are they due to our poor lifestyle, emotional stress, or toxic exposure?

We also need to understand **what our symptoms mean**. Are we getting sicker or are we healing? Based on the information we find out, we can then create our action plan. Is our health a priority at this time? What action do we need to take immediately to prevent health problems?

Is disease really a curse?

Disease, or should we say, symptoms are what most often starts us on the path of self-discovery. The fear and pain of illness are a powerful stimulant to try out new things. It is a sign from the heavens that it's time and we cannot postpone our next step in life anymore.

The concept of disease as a means to personal growth is not new. Witness the many books written by those who healed themselves from serious disease, only to find enlightenment at the end of their ordeal.

As a spiritual phenomenon, disease brings to the forefront a much needed shift, pushing you in a direction that is beneficial to you. It is a blessing in disguise as it allows you the opportunity for growth and renewal on so many levels. The rewards of your renewal can be a:

- √ New sense of self
- √ New insight into your life
- √ New growth spurt that would not occur were it not for the suffering and the struggle

Triggers for disease

Disease starts as an invisible disturbance of the equilibrium in our system, most often precipitated by a sudden and traumatic experience.

Initially we identify it in the mind as a thought of how this event will impact us negatively and a sense of utter isolation and despair. It is soon followed by emotional turmoil or worry and some form of negative resistance. And if we are unable to resolve the conflict with our mind and emotions, within a reasonable time, our body will take protective action through physical means.

Complications of illness

Diagnosis shock is one of the main reasons for complications from illness. It is also the main source of wrong decisions being made about our health. Desperation, ignorance and fear are poor counsel when we most need help to survive and heal. And yet, most people will opt for harmful procedures and drugs in a frantic attempt to remove the symptom.

We are assisted in this counterproductive urge by the mainstream belief and fear that disease is harmful and destructive. It *seems* to be true as there is so much “proof” that it’s true.

After all, we all know that untreated symptoms can lead to harm and even death. But it doesn’t mean the process was in essence a negative one.

Suppressing and masking symptoms with medical drugs, surgery or palliative measures, will not resolve the deeper cause of disease and it

will return again and again, each time stronger and more destructive. With some planning and presence of mind this all can be avoided.

The wisdom of nature

Nature is always wise and it will always strive to help us survive, adapt and restore our health. But nature is also crude and if we don't understand what is happening, we can end up in trouble. So, yes, symptoms need to be addressed even when they are part of a healing process.

Today we have wonderful holistic medicines and therapies to do so. We need not leave healing to the crude ministering of nature. Yet, neither do we want to interfere or suppress what is in essence a healthy process.

What do symptoms mean?

Another crucial element in disease resolution AND prevention is to **understand** what it means for you. Physical disease does not just happen. It is a meaningful event.

It happened to you because of an inner receptivity or weakness that allowed it to take hold. In some philosophies you could say that you sought out that particular disease in order to strengthen or develop a side of you that was previously weak.

Finding the true meaning of your health problem will bring you peace of mind and wonderment. Life is meaningful. Your suffering is meaningful. In a way, your inner wisdom chose it for its higher purpose. The capability to heal is inherent in you and all that you need to do is to find your way back to health.

Symptoms or healing?

In most cases our symptoms are a sign of the healing efforts of our body and a harbinger of imminent change. Because we don't understand this and also probably because of a deep and unconscious fear of change, we usually try to suppress our symptoms. We try to make them "go away", wishing to go back to life as it was. If you already have symptoms, then it is already too late to go back. The only way is forward!

New research has mapped out the meaning of hundreds of symptoms of disease. It has given us a practical tool to deal with them and to understand them better. Both in order to heal, and also in order to read the deeper message it brings to us so that we don't fail to receive their hidden gifts and benefits.

It is crucial to understand where you are in the context of a disease process. To make a correct choice for action you need to find out whether your symptoms indicate a disease process or if they are signs of healing.

You will either prevent its progression by removing the real cause or you'll take measures for faster and complete healing if you know you are already on the road to restoring your health.

Today, new ways of interpreting your typical signs of disease can mean all the difference between swift improvements or protracted suffering. Unfortunately, these new methods of viewing disease are virtually unknown to our present day society, a society mesmerized by disease and controlled by mainstream drug therapy.

With this knowledge, we can be enormously reassured to learn what triggers our symptoms and what they actually mean. The first thing we discover is that most of the painful symptoms are actually a sign of healing and restoration and not of growing illness.

Swelling, pain, inflammation, bacteria and viruses, and discharges of all kinds, are our friends and not the enemy to eradicate at all cost. Learning about these new scientific findings is crucial to your wellbeing and in many cases to your survival.

In addition to physical disease or symptoms, you have to take into account your emotional state and typical thought patterns, which are also very important and will be discussed later. In the context of this Stepping Stone, your typical emotional reactions and state of mind will define the types of physical diseases or organ weaknesses you will tend toward.

Mental conflicts and emotional drama

Not only does our physical body require attention to perform its duties, but a serious crisis in our body can reflect on our emotional state and clarity or quality of thinking.

Everybody knows that a toxic liver makes us tired and depressed; that shallow breathing leads to anxiety and restlessness. And that mercury toxicity causes a foggy mind and obsessive thinking.

Central to physical problems and inner turmoil are our ways of viewing life, our thinking patterns and beliefs. Those, in turn, create an emotional response that, once triggered, can last a long time. It can also lead to further emotional imbalance and to new mental conflicts and so the vicious circle is formed.

We suffer from impressions and not reality

As important as physical health is to us, most of the time what we really suffer from is ... our way of thinking.

We can have a physical symptom, but how we interpret it will make all the difference between despair and calm. If you sprain your ankle, the swelling and the pain can be annoying, but they should not cause undue worry.

A diagnosis of arthritis, even though it is absolutely the same physical process as that of the healing of a sprained joint, can cause us feelings of self-devaluation, fear of getting old, fear of being incapacitated and many times, a dread of the years of drugs and therapy to come. What a difference in response to the same physical symptoms!

A shift in our state of mind oftentimes is all it takes for incurable disease to go into remission or for a benign problem to turn into a life drama.

Imagine a person with low self-esteem, who feels constantly criticized by others. They can easily misunderstand an otherwise well-intended comment about their work. It can crush their feelings and build resentment.

Or they could ask you a question in a quiet voice while you are absorbed in your work. Your lack of response is misinterpreted as a sign of disdain. Instead of asking again in a louder tone, they retreat in misery, as they interpret your behavior as directed at them, and another confirmation of their insignificance.

Much of our negativity and grief is unfounded and based on a misinterpretation of reality. Discovering your common false beliefs is the means to shift your view of life and feel better as a result.

Once you have overcome your health challenge and pulled out its roots, you will never again be confronted with it. You will have developed strength for life.

True Life Purpose

There are ways to uncover what you're good at, what the major plan of your life looks like, what direction you need to take in order to attain happiness in this lifetime.

Astrology, numerology, or the Enneagram are just a few examples of the many systems used to determine your greatest life potential. And *you* can use them for guidance too.

There is often little time to dream. Or if there is, we consider it daydreaming and the supposed impossibility of our desires ever coming true can actually make us sad.

Re-discover your bliss

Finding your bliss in life is a major focal point in all healing and transformation work. There is no substitute for the strong pull of your true destiny.

There is no greater reward than to uncover your life's highest realization. Everything else fits into it.

- √ Your service to your loved ones
- √ Your need for security and order
- √ Your sense of "doing the right thing"

None of these need to be sacrificed for the attainment of your dreams. Rather, your voyage can be fine-tuned to accommodate all that is beneficial while letting go all that is outlived and unnecessary. You will be surprised how much unnecessary baggage there is. And most of what really makes a difference you aren't even aware of!

As you discover the main power points in your life, your advantages and strengths, you can then use them to propel you into the direction you want to go.

While short-term goals are easy to pin point and often times are obvious because they stream from our present life challenges; long term aims can be a bit harder to determine.

For many, life has become a constant struggle to keep things going, to keep advancing in life, to deal with the myriad of little daily problems that seem to spring out of nowhere.

And yet:

- √ Without the big purpose, the big direction in which we want to unfold our life
- √ Without the promise for the future realization of our potential
- √ Without the hope that we will one day be able to really do what we love, and lots of it

We tend to fall into apathy, our life force becomes dim, and our days become grey and meaningless.

Some are so entrenched into a meaningless struggle for survival and a colorless reality that they have forgotten they ever had a dream.

Your highest spiritual purpose

We all have a dream, an inner impulse to unfold our life potential fully, to grow to our full capacity and then to strive a bit further too. It is an impulse that never dies, but it can dim to the point of insignificance. Like a nugget of gold in the dirt, it has to be uncovered and put back in a position of prominence where it can shine.

You want to be aware of what your highest spiritual purpose is, what YOU can contribute to humanity and how best to do that. As a result, there will be more harmony in the world.

After all, harmony is based on the right balance of all the parts and processes. It means we are in tune with our own highest vibration and not at odds with it.

Spiritual practices will gain a new meaning when you establish *real* goals for yourself and when you build upon the solid foundation of your true essence and your true spiritual purpose. There are many roads to enlightenment and many levels of initiation. Which one is the most suited for you and what are you striving for? You want to make sure you are not embracing the goals of somebody else.

“As above, so below. As within, so without.” The Emerald Tablet

“Inner direction develops by challenging our habitual responses to life, and insisting upon the higher response we sense within.”
Vernon Howard

“A moment's insight is sometimes worth a life's experience.”
Oliver Wendell Holmes

“Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is matter of choice. It is not something to be waited for; but rather something to be achieved.”
William Jennings Bryan

“If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live.”
Martin Luther King

“Only passions, great passions can elevate the soul to great things.”
Denis Diderot

Stepping Stone 4: YOUR BODY, YOUR TEMPLE

Since we live in a material world and we inhabit a physical body, it is unthinkable to seek balance or spiritual transformation without taking care of our bodily needs in the first place.

It's simple things, like the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe and the many other elements of a healthy physical system that we all know about but so few of us take seriously.

In truth, our physical health forms the foundation on which all else stands.

When our body is in balance, we can use all our energy for creativity and pursuing the happiness and spiritual evolution that we crave. It is a true vessel inhabited by our soul for our highest purpose to unfold.

Physical *imbalances* are quantitative. They are caused by either excess or deficiency. Although poor nutrition, lack of exercise or dehydration can produce a slew of nasty symptoms, they rarely constitute a real disease. But a weak system will lower our ability to protect ourselves so we succumb to disease easier. A deficient system also depletes us of the energy to heal.

A sick body requires energy to compensate for poor function. Our bodies work overtime when we are:

- √ Undernourished
- √ Fighting toxins and pollution
- √ Dehydrated
- √ Dragging along on weakened muscles
- √ Lacking enough oxygen
- √ Constantly fighting off pathogens and parasites that love to call a weak and susceptible terrain home

“Your body is the harp of your soul.”
Khalil Gibran

You Are What You Eat

Nutrition is popular today and you may have tried diets, various healthy foods, vitamins and supplements, super-foods and miracle herbs from the Amazon forest or some other mysterious corner of the world. Make no mistake. All these wonderful nutrients may be great and will probably benefit you in some way if you take them.

What none of them will do is **cure** disease. Remove symptoms—yes, perhaps. But again, we have to be clear about symptoms. Are they a sign of healing or of illness?

Since most symptoms are an indication of the body's healing activity, taking a beneficial supplement or food is capable of removing that symptom and we happily say we were "cured" when we actually just finished the healing successfully. If we had a true disease, it would not be the case – as witnessed by so many who did not experience the same miraculous cure.

One size does not fit all

Do you need medicine to fight disease or do you need nutrition and vitamins to promote faster healing once a disease is already overcome? As in so many things, here too one size does NOT fit all. It is important to first identify the need of each individual.

In the present world of medicine very few physicians, even the holistic ones, distinguish between a nutritional deficiency and a true disease. Without that distinction, we can easily fall into error and select wrong treatments for people.

Some **common sense** advice in the area of nutrition today would be to eat whole foods, preferably organic or locally grown, eat in season what is usual for your area, eat food that is fresh and alive. Eat mostly vegetables and fruits; a balanced diet with a little of everything.

Organic food is best, of course, but even organic food can be deficient in nutrients when grown in depleted soil.

Biodynamic food is another advanced option, for those who have access to it, as care is taken of the soil and clean growing practices are followed.

Diets

It is popular today to select the best diet to follow based on your body type or blood type. A lot of that information is true and beneficial, and a lot of it is relative and not quite true for everyone.

We all **adapt** to certain foods and we live in different parts of the world with different climates and conditions. So, as in anything else, common sense tells us to take it all with a grain of salt and remember that what works for others, may not be the best for you.

Context here is important. What are your needs at this time? Are you strong and healthy? If so, you can challenge your body if you wish to eat something that is “not for you” and you may be fine.

Are you weak and ailing? Then it is quite possible that a food you may be avoiding could save your life. After all, as the Chinese will tell you—all food is also medicine. So choose wisely and choose for yourself, in the context of your life at the time.

And since circumstances change, review your usual choices of food as you go. Perhaps you moved to a different climate where heavy meals are hard to digest? Or you are in menopause and your body is not really metabolizing as it used to? All these are common sense factors, but are easy to forget with today’s countless *rules* about eating well.

Avoid processed food with fillers, coloring and all the usual poisons—MSG, aspartame and all sugar substitutes, and artificial flavors of all kinds. Too much processed sugar is not good either. Or caffeine may be a problem for some. There are long lists of “bad foods” and toxic ingredients. They are to be avoided of course, as much as we can.

But give yourself a break and place enjoyment of food on the scales when making a decision. There is much to be said about HOW we eat. In fact research has shown that when you savor that piece of chocolate cake you will digest it just fine. If you feel guilty about eating it, you will just pack on the pounds.

Bless your food, taste your food, eat slowly, and prepare it with pleasure. Dine in good company and in good cheer. All these factors make food digestible as much as your stomach acid will!

Water

Consider this—we are 80% water. We need it coming in all the time, and the cleaner and more alive it is, the better we will feel. Denying ourselves the fresh water we need and instead consuming large amounts of sweet, carbonated drinks with artificial colors and flavors and caffeine actually dehydrates us. Water is the only real hydrating agent. Anything added to the water that is dehydrating adversely affects our health.

Water is a mystery substance equal to no other. There are now amazing testaments to the many fascinating and unexplainable qualities of water. Like its ability to change its structure when exposed to different environments, even to the sound of music or words!

Dehydration

Chronic dehydration can lead to serious problems like:

- √ Stomach ulcers
- √ High blood pressure
- √ Hypoglycemia
- √ Cravings
- √ Allergies
- √ Arthritis

All these problems can be easily resolved when proper hydration is restored. Water is your first and cheapest medicine to try. Of course, true disease except in some very specific cases, is not caused by dehydration, but many symptoms mimicking disease are.

Detoxifying with water

Hydration is also important to move toxins out of your body. When the bile or lymph becomes thick and sluggish we are unable to effectively flush out toxins through the usual passageways. Toxins then stay inside our body, re-circulating and causing many different nasty conditions.

Many digestive issues are also caused by poor hydration and can easily be corrected once water is restored in adequate and regular amounts.

Armoring

Another problem connected to dehydration is the much discussed issue of “armoring”.

- √ We consider excessive body fat as a form of armoring against emotional pain
- √ We talk about muscle tension and rigidity as one of the effects of armoring in the body when our emotions and thoughts cause us chronic distress
- √ We talk about armoring on the level of the cells when their walls become thick and they no longer are able to absorb nutrients well or to eliminate toxins when needed

Lack of water in the body causes it to shrivel and thicken all its walls and tissues to preserve water, leading to all the typical symptoms of body armoring:

- √ Constipation
- √ Stiffness
- √ Sluggishness
- √ Mood swings

It is best to drink pure **alive water**. Bottled water today is not guaranteed to be from a real spring. It could be coming from the tap. Even reverse osmosis and distilled water are problematic.

Alas, unless you live in nature, it is hard to come by pure spring water in the city. There are expensive varieties of Cartesian water, one of the best kinds, and other brands of natural water.

For now, using a high quality filter (Brita and other simple filters do not do the job), is the only way to get the toxins out of your drinking water. Chlorine, fluoride and many other toxins including drug residues and PCB's will remain in the water unless your filter specifically indicates they're removed. Check the micron size on your filter to be sure what's filtered out.

Using specialized methods to energize water, including the simple one of letting it sit in the sun for a few hours, can help you really hydrate your system in a way where every drop is used well.

Remember, water is the most accessible and cheapest medicine you can try out first!

Breathing

There are many forms or rules for breathing created by wonderful schools of yoga and physical health, and they can all be useful to most people.

There is one simple rule of breathing that most of us don't follow. Breathe deeply and into the abdomen, feeling your belly rise with the in-breath, and exhale fully. Most people shallow breathe with the upper part of the lungs alone.

Lack of oxygen contributes to fatigue and brain fog. Not only that, but shallow breathing mimics the breathing typical for situations of **stress**, so by virtue of not breathing deeply we set ourselves up for feeling anxious for no reason.

It is interesting to discover how much is happening when we breathe. Some say the in-breath scans our body to check if all functions are in order, and on the out-breath it sends directions to any problematic areas on how to fix the problem. So in a way we are constantly keeping an eye on things and restoring order in our organism, with each breath we take, all the time.

Breathing gives pain relief. No wonder we are taught to "breathe into" the part of the body where pain is experienced. Breathing deeply and directing the breath with your imagination to the spot where pain is felt, is a very effective way to alleviate pain and totally heal it in some cases.

Not all breathing exercises are good for everyone. Some are general common sense; others have a specific purpose that puts us into a meditative state or invigorates us. Here again context is important. One rule does not always apply to all.

As long as you don't breathe too shallow, you don't have to follow your breathing obsessively. Most of the time your breath will assume the rhythm best suited to your needs.

The quality of the air we breathe is also important. Any outdoor air, even the polluted air in big cities, is still more alive and fresh than filtered indoor air. Combined with the impact of atmospheric energies and forces, most important of which is sunlight, air should be alive, circulating, impregnated with moisture and light.

Obviously the clean fresh air in nature is best, but the problem is to find clean air. So there's a trade off. A building that has a good air filter will have cleaner air than outdoors, but it won't be as alive.

Move Dem Bones

Movement and exercise are also a popular topic in our times of sedentary life. There are fewer and fewer places to go and play, not to mention we don't have the time to do so. We don't play anymore.

Children who used to run outside and "do things" are now sitting at home bored or parked in front of the computer. It is a truly sad picture, one which is continually encouraged by our consumer society.

Passive entertainment has dumbed us down and made us flabby and sluggish. We lack being fit because we don't move enough.

Let's take the threatening sound of the word "exercise" out of the way and replace it with a more benign concept—movement.

Moving our arms, legs, twisting our torso, bending and jumping, shaking our head, swaying our thighs and whirling around—we all remember how that felt when we were children.

Now we trudge along treadmills indoors in front of a TV screen, with no destination, moving without intention and oftentimes oblivious to the movement itself as we listen to the endless babble of electronic voices. Alone! Surrounded by others doing the same, each engaged with their own piece of equipment and not with their fellow human beings.

Exercise has become a mechanical drudgery for most and an obsession for others.

It's not certain if we will ever recover our connection with the outdoors. Perhaps we will find a way back by moving forward and finding places and activities that restore us to nature in a new way.

Certainly more and more people are finding time to walk the dog, or move to the country. Women spend time in the garden and go for long walks with their friends, talking about what matters.

If you are in need to shape up faster, lose a few pounds and regain muscle strength and flexibility, there are new methods of applying our muscle action to help us burn more with less work. Dr. A. Sears' "Pace" method of exercise is one of them.

Perhaps these new methods will be the solution to our sedentary lifestyle, allowing us to compensate for long hours at the desk with short but effective calorie burning exercises.

Exercise heals

For example, living in nature and maintaining a keen interest in our environment is a major principle in the natural vision approach.

The ocular muscles are made flexible not only by exercises for the eyes, but more importantly by re-introducing the concept of a natural curiosity in life.

We should look around at things more, rather than staring at one point for hours at a book or screen.

So stop for a few minutes, look around the room, look out the window, move your body, get up, breathe, smile, dance a jig perhaps, and get that blood flowing.

Wake up to the movement of life around you!



Toxicity

And last but not least, the whole issue of toxicity. With all the talk about the environment, toxicity is a major buzz word. We are aware of toxicity, and we *are* producing a lot of it through our technology. But much can be said as well about the magnificent capability of our body to adapt and cleanse itself.

So why are some people having so many problems with toxicity? We have allergies, toxic overload, sensitivity to all kinds of environmental products to the extreme of total environmental sensitivity.

Since this is a section dedicated to physical health, we will focus more on where toxins come from and how to get them out. But we can't discuss this topic without mentioning the whole issue of susceptibility or reactivity.

If toxins were the only side to this problem then we would all be allergic and we would all be suffering from poisoning in some form.

And yet, we don't. Some people are more sensitive than others, and the toxins we react to can vary from person to person. So what decides who is vulnerable to the effects of toxicity?

Vulnerability

There are **two factors** that can make us vulnerable to toxicity: our general state of health and our lifestyle. Healthy people who avoid obvious exposure to toxins have fewer problems releasing toxins even if they do get some.

Their body is able to quickly respond with natural measures and flush them out. The liver, kidneys, lungs and other organs of elimination like the skin or lymphatic system, when working well, will do the job quite nicely. And we will have the necessary energy to deal with this challenge when our body is strong and healthy.

Fear of toxicity can contribute to our reaction to toxins—real or perceived. A major problem today with most people is the *fear of contamination, toxins, or allergens*. This anxiety about what is in the food, the water, or the air causes our body to be constantly in a fight or flight state of heightened alert and hyper-reactivity. It will actually respond to the smallest stimulation with excessive symptoms, thus confirming the initial fear of contamination.

This is a vicious circle that can only be broken through addressing the real problem, which is the fear and mental state that evoked it. Typically these people are already eating well and taking all precautions to be healthy, so *changing their state of mind has miraculous effects*.

Sources

Once we have determined if the main cause of reaction to toxins is perceived or real, we can easily list the main sources of toxicity:

1. Chemicals, including medical drugs
2. Our food and soil
3. Water which is often fluoridated and chlorinated
4. The many plastics we use, cosmetics, dyes, the list goes on
5. Drugs and toxic medical tests are a prime agent of toxicity, both directly to people who are exposed, and to the environment.

Today we consider medication a necessary measure to restore health and we accept side effects as natural and part of the process. The side effects of medical drugs are actually the effects of the poisoning they induce in your system.

Long-term medication can significantly alter the way your body functions inducing chronic toxicity, with all the common adverse reactions like constipation, anxiety, liver problems, dehydration or water retention, mental imbalance and the list goes on and on

If you are in a state of chronic poisoning due to a dependency on medication; homeopathic drainage and detoxification remedies are a brilliant answer to the problem. They are efficient, easy to take and do not interfere with any medication or therapy.

To be perfectly honest, being healthy means you won't need medical drugs.

Detoxification

There are many ways to eliminate toxins effectively. Cleanses for the colon, liver, and kidneys, chelating agents, all kinds of herbs, and sweating in a sauna are most effective.

With the rising popularity of homeopathy we are now aware how **homeopathic remedies** stimulate a natural process of toxin release from the body. And how they help us deal with symptoms of toxicity when exposure is unavoidable until such time as we can get rid of them.

Even toxicity from many years ago can easily be released from the system with homeopathic treatment.

Toxic overload

Many times care is not taken to check if the body can take the sudden toxic overload once the toxins are dislodged and floating around looking for a way out.

It is one of the main problems with natural cancer treatments and therapies that have as a main effect the breaking down of diseased tissue. Dead cells and toxic bacteria can get trapped in a weakened system, creating a poisonous effect that can even lead to death.

Drainage first

The process called drainage is an important component to successful detoxification. It is the process of support and stimulation to our organs of elimination. It strengthens them so they become healthy and can then do their job well.

To start a detoxification process without first making sure all the passages are open and ready to be used, is counter-productive at best and can lead to serious side effects at worst.

Sometimes we have a weakness or we are sick and toxic and our liver or kidneys can be exhausted and unable to deal with the job. This is the time to take some supplements, or better still, homeopathic drainage remedies. They will boost the organs, restore vitality and help with the elimination process.

It is so obvious that we forget to think about it. If your organs of elimination are not working properly, how are the toxins going to leave the body?

Electromagnetic Pollution

Microwave towers, cell phones, coils of electrical cords around our feet, a room full of computers and the hours we spend sitting in front of our own computers, not to mention sleeping next to electrical panels, or under electric blankets.

Electromagnetic pollution is creeping quickly towards the top of the list of toxicity sources. Although it belongs more in the category of environmental impacts on our health, we include it here.

There are invisible waves all around that affect us. There are ways to protect ourselves, not least of which, is avoiding them as much as possible. But we can't avoid them all.

So there are also many effective devices available today to **protect** us from electromagnetic pollution. Most of them are used to either shield you from negative radiation or to transform the pools of deadened energy into renewed and vibrant energy around you.

They can be placed near you or worn. There are also many methods of releasing static electricity, re-structuring your magnetic field and letting off some built up and blocked energy.



Stepping Stone 5:

CHANGE YOUR PAST – CREATE YOUR FUTURE

How would it feel if you could go back in time and change a thing or two? What would you change? Have you ever thought, "If I could do it again If I had said If I hadn't done it" We all have. And many times. And in some cases we tell our story again and again to whoever will listen, as if telling it will perhaps give us a solution or answer to what was then and still is now ... a problem, a hurt, a missed opportunity.

Our life is like a string of pearls. Our significant events determine our life context. Being able to examine them without prejudice allows us to connect the dots. And even in instances when we cannot grasp the full meaning of an event, the healing still happens and we can let it go.

It's been recently discovered that even the most complex things in nature are really simple patterns or fractals. They repeat themselves in predictable ways. This can be applied to our lives as well. Our relationships to ourselves, to others and to how we age are all patterns that are *predictable* ... until we decide to change them. Each wave or pattern carries with it a window of opportunity, a point of choice that allows us to choose a new outcome for the returning cycle.

Change the past

What if we told you that you *can* go back and change it all, every single one of those events that has marked your life in some way? Plus all those that caused some bodily harm, be it by injury or chemical toxicity?

I'm sure it sounds appealing, the idea to clear all past trauma and get rid of all those negative impacts that still make us cringe. Perhaps then our life will finally come together as it should. And it will! Not only that, but there is more that can be done. And in our opinion, THAT is the real gold in the pot at the end of the rainbow!

If you're ready to move on into the next phase of your life and you aren't willing to continue dragging along that familiar large bag of memories, perhaps it's time to de-clutter.

There are efficient ways of **clearing** the effects of past trauma and we have developed the best one available today. It is possible today to efficiently cut off those strings that keep us tied to the ground and unable to reach our full range of movement.

Trauma

Seeing past trauma as a **meaningful life event** is tremendously empowering. We stop seeing ourselves as losers or victims. We can finally see the reality of the matter.

Our life trauma happened at times when our life purpose was trying to come through and a lesson needed to be learned. Perhaps at the time, we were unable to understand due to our age or lack of knowledge about these things. So we were unable to respond to the situation in a beneficial way.

But then, that is the purpose of a lesson, to teach us about things we didn't know. See the repetition and the similarities in the nature of certain traumas:

- √ The accident at a time when you felt stuck in life
- √ The dog bite at a time when you felt victimized
- √ The repeated bad relationships causing you frustration

The greatest impact of this timeline work is seeing your past as a living whole. Sometimes it is enough just to open your eyes to what really needs to change. Or it gives you confirmation for how far you have already come.

Release

Releasing the effects of past trauma and letting go of old pain is not just a process of eradication of what was wrong, but it is a process of **transforming** what was perceived as bad into a meaningful event, loaded with possibilities for growth and gain.

Of course, not everything is easily forgotten. But the majority of our life drama is just that, a drama, a backdrop to our growth, a stimulant

to push us to find in ourselves qualities we did not suspect we had until life forced us to dig deeper.

To forget the pain of the process is to be able to accept the gifts it produced.

Feeling better about old stuff only happens when the negative is released fully from the fabric of our life. Only then is it possible to restore and put into perspective all events of our life. We then feel complete and at peace.

The need to feel positive about our life is the main purpose in revisiting the past and trying to solve our problems from years ago.

Some of us try psychotherapy, counseling, spiritual and energy medicine, all in an attempt to come to terms with our past trauma and restore our personal integrity today.

From darkness to light

Shedding light on darkness always dispels fear and brings understanding. We are now able to shed light into the darkness of the past and to illumine certain crucial events, allowing you to understand, resolve and retrieve from the past the bits and pieces of yourself that were frozen in time.

Not only that, but you can then **reclaim** these parts of your personality that were stunted or unfairly judged by you or others as a result.

Going there

But the hardest thing to do is to “go there”. To open up long locked doors, behind which pain may still lurk. It is hard to be objective and “above it” when we are still emotionally attached to the events as if we were still back there in space and time. And yet, the only way to feel OK about the past is to see the true meaning in it and how it forms an integral part of who we are.

For some this is a painful process, which they instinctively avoid. Going back means reliving it all in full color. To prevent that from happening, there are many therapeutic methods used to soften the process, to ease you along, and to reduce the emotional charge still connected to those past memories.

Homeopathic remedies are a big help in this regard, as they work on softening excess emotions. This allows us to be more objective, where before we were totally subjective.

Moving into the future, free of baggage with a renewed sense of self, is a position to be much desired and one that we can attain easily. And not only is it great to feel light and free again, as when we were young and full of hope, but we enrich our wisdom by learning the lessons we have already lived through. But this time with awareness and control.

Redefine Your Story

You are older and you have more life experience now than in the past. Use this wisdom to review that which long ago may have been hurtful and confusing, perhaps only due to your inexperience. If you remove the emotional charge that keeps you locked into grief or resentment, you can look at what happened objectively and you can then better see the why and how of things, which are the real facts.

Shed your baggage and move forward. Let go of the past. Reaching back to reframe your story allows you to take charge of your life in present time. Seeing it all in a new light helps you fully accept and bring in *all* your experiences. It was all good, always. You just did not see it that way at the time.

To do that, you need to write a short biography. List all the events that were significant in your life, the bad ones and the good ones. Writing up a timeline of your past events is very therapeutic and has been used exclusively as a method of healing by some.

The first thing you will notice is that your memory fails you. It may seem that some years and times are not there anymore. There is a blank in their place. Do not worry, but keep going and focus on those you do remember. Intertwine the little stories of what precipitated each significant milestone and how you went through it. Before you know it, one memory leads to another.

Stepping Stone 6:

RELEASE NEGATIVE EMOTIONS AND THOUGHTS

One of our juiciest topics of conversation nowadays is about our stressful lives. And don't we just love to complain. And isn't it always somebody's fault Negativity is a major cause for disease, both physical and emotional. It sets us up for unpleasant shocks and it keeps us in constant fight or flight mode, exhausting our brain and body.

Our society caters to negativity. There's constant bad news on TV, even bad advertisements, all capitalizing on our fear of something, and all offering miracle solutions if we just follow simple instructions. It's perfect for the negative person who believes in the quick fix. It's just another outlet for more negativity and complaining.

Since our culture, the media and society at large has adopted many negative traits as normal today, it is no longer easy to convince anyone that change is good for them.

After all, sarcasm is now considered being down to earth. Anxiety is considered caution. Lack of basic trust in life is translated into constant search for PROOF. Although nobody agrees ever on what constitutes "proof". To be normal today is to be labeled "naïve".

Negative people also tend to first see:

- √ What doesn't work
- √ What takes too long
- √ What did not satisfy their own narrow and excessive criteria of success

So they give up quickly before anything has time to work. They are typically underachievers who don't know how to be patient and persistent or overachievers who drive themselves and others at a frantic pace.

Negativity is such a prevailing state of mind today that we need to spend some time to explore it. And the many ways it affects our health, those we love, our emotional balance and our ability to grow and fit into society.

Before we start, we want to affirm that some negative states of mind are induced by real pain and abuse. There are deep reasons for that and a lot can be said about why we find ourselves in such a situation. But right now we want to discuss just plain negativity, the kind resulting from and causing life stress.

Mind/Body Connection

There is a whole new scientific approach to disease that has confirmed the **direct relationship between a life trauma and where it will show up in the body**. It all depends on how we interpreted the shocking event. For example, if you suddenly receive the news that you have been let go from your job there are different ways in which it can impact you:

- √ A healthy and balanced person will absorb the sudden shock, feel bad for a while and then quickly will look for solutions and a way to feel good about the event. "Now that I don't have to go to work from 9 to 5, I can spend more time with my family. I am a good professional and soon I will find another job."
- √ A person with low self-esteem may take it as proof that they are not good enough and that is why they were chosen to be fired. They can feel severely devalued and such a mental conflict can even cause osteoporosis in the long run if it's left to brew too long.
- √ Another person with anger issues can take it as an insult and affront and may perceive it as an attack. Such a response can appear in the body as liver disease, Irritable Bowel Syndrome or heart palpitations.

Stress and depression

Depression and anxiety are the most common "diseases" related to negative thinking. They keep us immersed in our own bubble of suffering and unable to face the world and take our place in it.

People who are in such a state harm themselves, for which we pity them. But they also harm all those around them by spreading doom and gloom everywhere they go, forcing others to take care of their lot in life.

It serves the drug cartels to label negativity and fear of life as depression and mood disorders. It's a great opportunity for them to sell their drugs.

But we buy into this deception because we prefer to be seen as ill and helpless rather than a negative and selfish person. Due to the fact that we are as harsh toward ourselves as to our environment, we need all the help we can get to not feel bad about being negative and insecure.

We **pay dearly** for the elusive comfort of knowing we have a disease for which there is medication. We pop the pills and we feel ... flat. But we're still critical and suspicious toward life.

On top of that we develop toxic side effects and the possibility of getting seriously ill. Of course, a negative perspective on life will make us see that as confirmation of the worst expectations.

Negative thinking can **weaken our immune system**. Stress and depression are directly connected to negativity. It can cause our body to overcompensate for our lack of vitality. It also sets us up for all kinds of emotional trauma. Our body receives signals of distress many times and of many different kinds when we are negative.

How We Affect Others

Complaining

Stress is "real", but embracing it and fueling it with resistance and constant complaining, keeps us rooted in **victim mode** and does not leave any room for happiness to shine in.

Negative thinking thrives on thoughts of the past and of the future. Rarely are negative people present in the now. If they were, they would have no cause for complaint.

When we complain and recount our problems, we listen to ourselves over and over. We **self-hypnotize** in a way. Even if something were not true, if you repeat it long enough it will start feeling familiar and before you know it you will accept it as a truth due to its familiarity.

To get rid of this insidious habit we just have to **STOP**. If you catch yourself complaining, stop immediately and reframe your thoughts. State the facts in a neutral way and put on a positive spin. Think of a solution and do not dwell on the problem.

The Solution

It is common for negative people to complain about the obstacles in their way. To get rid of them they are constantly looking for solutions and help. Yet when help is offered, they will not engage. Why? Because they haven't learned the first rule of self-responsibility—**acceptance**.

It takes time for things to work and it takes dedication and ... we just have to do it. Nobody out there can wave a magic wand and save us. Because we need to change our attitude before anything else will change.

Judging

When we say something is "good" or something is "bad" we are judging a situation. We do this when we relate to others as well. We say someone is "good" or they are "bad". These are value statements. They relate to our perception of what we value.

However, these statements impact others. Most of our negative judgments are unconscious. We seem only to see them reflected back to us by:

- √ Others' behaviour
- √ Things that happen to us
- √ Our judgments about people and life.

Blaming

It doesn't matter whose fault it was. At the end of the day, something happened. What's more important is what will you do about it? And it's not just about denial and positive thinking either, it's about responsibility and action.

We close ourselves off from joy when we choose to see the bad side of things. We engage in negative behavior, recounting bad events, gossiping, blaming others, sharing with a friend your woes ad infinitum. When we do that we have no time to experience happiness in our life.

The Solution

When you feel hurt or unjustly dealt with, look at the situation, see your role in it, take some time to try and see things from the other person's perspective. Find a solution or let it go, and move on. Blaming others will not help you succeed, it just reaffirms to everyone that you are a victim. And who wants to be around a victim?

Controlling

The majority of negative behaviors are caused by a need to control the environment. We often fear our environment or we feel insignificant. The only way we have learned to assert ourselves is by controlling others. After all, people who think in negative terms find fault in everything.

I am right, the world is crazy. In other words, the world is not right. But what is right? The right concept is the one that *they* have. In a way, negativity is a remnant of the childhood years when saying "no" was a delightful way to flex our newly discovered sense of self. Now, as an adult, this knee-jerk control mechanism is turned against anyone who dares oppose us.

Staying negative and trying to control others stunts our development. We spend too much time spinning our wheels and we can't move ahead.

Our blurred view of the world shows us no safe road to take, so we stand at the crossroads and yell at anyone who walks by. The sad part is that such an attitude is contagious and it can spread to all those around us, our loved ones, our friends, blighting all who come in contact with us. Soon we find ourselves alone.

Criticizing

List the negative statements or observations you may have. Now turn them around and apply them to yourself. Can you see an area in your

life when you have done or been that way? It's sad to observe that what we criticize is often what is actually going on inside us.

Those things we most criticize are usually the same things that, on some level, we do ourselves. We all know people who complain of everyone else being angry and impolite and yet you see them being rude and impatient themselves.

Negative people quickly lose energy due to their worry, fear and anger. Their energy deficit causes them much distress and they seek to replenish it. A quick way of doing so is by tapping into someone else's energy and boosting themselves a bit. Have you ever felt drained after an encounter with a complainer? Did they leave that same meeting feeling relaxed and chipper? Well, they came to you, dumped their load on your back, sucked some of your abundant life energy and once you ran out of any more to give, they moved on in search of their next victim.

Being psychic vampires

People who do this are psychic vampires. Most people would be horrified if they knew they did that. Many do it unconsciously, draining mostly their loved ones, close friends and co-workers. Anyone close at hand is easy prey.

All those who feel obliged out of sympathy or duty to lend a friendly ear pay dearly for their natural compassion.

And the negative person never gets enough because as soon as they recharge their batteries they are emptied again.

Being moody

We are already unhappy and we expect to be more so. Being moody causes us more unhappiness and causes us more negative response from those around us, so we end up feeling as if life has proven to us how bad it can be. With this mindset, we can't get out of the trap.

Staying too long in a brooding mood can cause you to become confrontational, apathetic, and even cynical. Life can then seem flat and devoid of any excitement or purpose. After all, so much can go wrong, and usually does. So we feel we are helpless. Misery loves company and there are many who will happily share with us their own disgruntlement or fear.

And there's more

There are other common effects of negativity:

- √ Fear
- √ Suppressed anger
- √ Pessimism
- √ Low self-esteem that is devastating to our morale

The worst of it is that we fall into a vicious circle when we feel negative and it's difficult to get off the wheel.

And so we suffer. There is no judgment on suffering. It contributes to our growth and strength. Yet there is no virtue in continuing to suffer. Yet, some people seem to suffer all the time no matter what we do to help them.

On the outside it seems that they are victims of circumstance. The reality is that unconsciously these people have withdrawn from life and are refusing to stand up and contribute to humanity.

Getting Out

So how do we extricate ourselves from the variety of stages of negativity we may be prone to? Only through **awareness**. Listen to people; investigate your inner dialogue and motivations. Learn more about yourself.

Trust

Trust has to be developed first before we can let go of the crutch of negativity. Trust in ourselves, life, and the universe.

It's like learning to walk. We knew we could do it. It's the same with anything else that's new in life. Once you try, it becomes easier. It's like building up a muscle.

Knowledge is power

Learn about yourself and about what is real in life. Learn about the many ways you can improve your situation, no matter how bad it is. This whole book is about the many ways to regain our inner and outer balance. Ultimately, all healthy balanced people have trust. Working on any aspect of our health and improving ourselves is the solution to begin to live in trust and not in fear.

Vibes

Are you always aware of those “bad vibes” around you? Sometimes, you may feel something is not right, but unless you consciously know how to protect yourself, your energy field is vulnerable to attack. You didn’t consciously invite the negativity in, but it got in anyway and then it starts affecting you.

Like the “bad vibes”, there are other hostile or negative forces around us at all times. They are eagerly waiting for us to open up and let them in. It happens to all of us, almost always unconsciously. How often do you consciously ask for protection so you don’t fall into their trap?

Drop the crutch

Negativity and disease can be a crutch in life. One we hold on to desperately because we imagine that living is so hard. And yet, because we have not tried to walk on our own two feet, we have not experienced the joy of having real control and freedom to move in any direction. So we stay paralyzed in insecurity holding on to our crutch.

Wake up

Wake up to the beauty of life and to your own perfection. There are many ways to live to the fullest. There are many chances for change and improvement at every step of the way. But you have to WANT change. You have to want to feel good and happy and strong.

Get grounded

When our gaze is focused on the past or when it gets glazed in imaginations of a dire future, we fail to see what is right in front of us.

Life passes us by and we spend it in dream states or, should we dare say, in nightmare states.

In present time are all our opportunities and joys, encapsulated in possibility. Ones we can grasp only if we see them.

"There's nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

Shakespeare

"Thought is cause: experience is effect. If you don't like the effects in your life, you have to change the nature of your thinking."

Marianne Williamson

"You are searching for the magic key that will unlock the door to the source of power; and yet you have the key in your own hands, and you may use it the moment you learn to control your thoughts"

Napoleon Hill

"Too often we enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought."

John F Kennedy

"The world we have made as a result of the level of thinking we have done, thus far, creates problems we cannot solve at the same level of thinking at which we created them."

Albert Einstein

"If we allow ourselves to be influenced by others' thoughts – what's the point of having our own?"

Anon

Stepping Stone 7:

RELATIONSHIPS ... OUR PARTNERS – OUR MIRRORS

You've probably commented more than once about certain crucial relationships and the way they have been instrumental in your life. Or you may be sighing about your tendency to choose unwisely because you always end up with the wrong type of partner. Some relationships are unavoidable—parents, children, siblings. As they say, we can choose our friends, but not our family. But is that really so?

In a way, it is true that our relationships define who we are. After all, it's only when we relate to others that we get to try out our many personalities and to experience the endless nuances of emotions available to us.

We can try them for size, we can fine tune our way of doing and being. We can expand our life experience. All this with a little help from our friends and loved ones.

As we will see in this section not all that is good is beneficial to us and not all hurtful people are really the villains we believe they are. As so much else in life, nothing is what it seems and it can be quite interesting and rewarding to take a closer look at this part of our experience.

Know thyself

To better understand our primary relationships we have to put them into the context of:

- √ Who we are
- √ Who we *were* at the time when a significant event with them occurred.

As we discover more and more facets of our personality, we come to realize that we have the opportunity to become who we choose to be. We hold in us the potential to be many people and to exhibit many different behaviors.

To some, straying from their usual character is nothing short of deception. Once we get our label at home, in the community, in school or at work, we tend to act as is expected of us.

And we start seeing ourselves the way others say they see us. It's a complicated web of half-truths and misconceptions, assumptions and plain misunderstanding. And yet, we call that world real, the real "me", the "trap" and so on. No matter what we call it, the tendency is to feel restricted by this costume we are obligated to wear.

Relationships are related to who we are. They have a personal significance for us that's much deeper than what is seen by others on the surface. If we accepted this, then perhaps we would choose to face them with trust and interest, instead of allowing everyone to tell us what a relationship means and what to do about it. Of course, we learn from observing others, but we learn what really matters to US from our own experience and judgment.

Self-esteem

Before we tackle the whole murky area of who said what and who did what and why, let's make this point clear. People with a healthy sense of self have good self-esteem. They tend to take responsibility for their deeds and so they can easily act in any way they choose. The idea is that no matter what, they can take care of themselves and the image they project to the world.

Low self-esteem on the other hand, indicates an ignorance of who we truly are and a fear that if we were to find out, we may not like what we see. So we pretend.

We look at others for cues of who we need to be in order to be loved, appreciated, and respected. But this can never work because people have all kinds of agendas and reasons to interact with us the way they do. Not least because, like us, they too are caught in the trap of maintaining an image *they* think that *we* expect of them. And so it goes on

Constant Evolution

Our development never stops, it never ends. We are never the same person, even though, paradoxically, we ARE the same person deep down inside. And it's true that our essence is the same. But our true inner self evolves.

Our outer ego or personality changes many times in a lifetime. Partly because of age, but partly also because as we learn we tend to change our behavior and the way we relate to others. Both spiritually and practically, we never stay the same for too long.

The good thing about change is that even bad things pass and we move on. We also grow as we change. It's impossible to really stagnate. Even when we obstinately refuse to change, we still do. We become tougher, more rigid, more shut down as we dig in and refuse to let go.

On the other hand, when we are able to move forward and meet our destiny, we are pleasantly surprised by the ease with which we adjust to the new. Sometimes it's uncannily familiar and we often hear people say that it was "as if I'd always been there" or "as if we'd always known each other".

Relationships also evolve

We change, people change, our interests in each other change.

- √ A child needs and trusts the parent
- √ A teenager needs to discover and forge her own personality and rebels against all that used to be familiar
- √ A young adult explores, nurtures a fragile ego, and looks ahead toward who she wants to become
- √ A mature adult looks back from the position of experience and lets go of some things and quietly cherishes others.

Some people we meet only briefly and then we part quite quickly. Others stay with us only part of the way. Still others are around for many years and we may enjoy a long and beautiful connection.

Of course, we never stop being surprised when what we thought was THE relationship of a lifetime ends in a few months or when a business venture on which we relied, falls through almost before it started.

Understanding the significance of each of our relationships requires that we put it into context. Hindsight helps a lot in that regard. We need to wait and see what will happen next if we are to see the full picture.

Perhaps that short-term love affair was meant to help us realize how much we love music and art and that person came into our life to introduce us to that side of ourselves and nothing more. Perhaps that business venture was not meant to be, but you learned some good

skills and it gave you a foothold into some important area for your future success.

Perspective and context are as important here, as in any other area we choose to scrutinize and understand better. What may seem a disaster to some is perceived as life as usual by others.

The magnificent fact about relationships is that no matter what we do, we still end up learning valuable lessons. Relationships are a foolproof school of life and everyone graduates since there are no grades or measures for failure or success.

Important Relationships

Let us examine the most important relationships in life, those with our parents and siblings, with our lovers and partners and those with our friends.

1. **Parents and family in general are our first introduction to others.** This is a complex and bitter-sweet relationship and one that stays with us all our life. We must understand that this fundamental connection in our life evolves as we grow and mature.

As with anything we do, we tend to react to situations without too much insight. Our ties to our parents are loaded with drama. Whose fault is that? Actually, nobody is at fault.

But it takes maturity and the experience of having built a life of our own, for us to realize that our parents did the best they could for us. And like us, they did not always choose wisely. Most of the time they did not know what to do, and most probably were plagued with problems of their own while we were growing up.

Childhood trauma is considered the major source for life-long neuroses. We all speak of our inner child, of our childhood hurts and feelings of abandonment. But as you learn more about life and how it works, you come to realize that what happens in your childhood is not disconnected from the rest of who you are and it is not the main cause for suffering.

In fact, you could consider your first challenges in life as the first manifestation of your character and your life lessons. It is a snapshot of you coming into life fully loaded and from the very get-go attracting those circumstances and events that you

resonate with. Some painful events are not easy to understand in that context because the issues involved run deep and their roots may be invisible from a superficial consideration.

Healing the relationship with our parents can happen when we start seeing our family as beings worthy of compassion and respect. It helps if we can assume responsibility for our part in any adverse event and not to blame others for our suffering. It does not serve you to be a victim.

Seeing your relationship with your parents as a playground for your soul to learn and grow, is much more mature and empowering. Sometimes, a spiritual view on difficult experiences is the only way to come to terms with what happened, and forgive those who caused us pain so we can let go.

Spiritually speaking, suffering and pain is a way to develop in the direction we need to grow. Our parents' role was to nurture and protect us as best they could, until we were strong enough to continue on our own.

2. **Partners are the main focus of our emotional life.** Children may sometimes sit at the top of the list, but our love life is where we really spend most of our drama time. We fall in love, we suffer from love, we crave love and love is our endless ongoing discourse with friends and therapists and anyone who will listen.

Our partner is our mirror. We have climbed on the stage where the drama of our life is performed and we are the main actors. We try out roles and parts, we have fun, we give each other lines. As long as we know the script and cue each other to say our lines, we are safe. What happens, though, is that soon after the initial euphoria of being in love ends, we fall into a whole different dynamic. We confuse the real live person with a role.

3. **Friends are our blessing.** If we are lucky to have at least one good friend, and the more there are the better for us, then we can discover the relief of being loved for who we are and the pleasure of playing and being together without agenda, pressure or fear of disappointment.

Friends are companions who share freely and who are there to enjoy us as much as we enjoy them. The pleasure is mutual and the trust is there as well. A true friend is someone we can confide in and someone who will tell us the truth in a way that is

not hurtful, someone who will cheer us on and boost our confidence and hold our hand.

When on a healing path, a friend is an invaluable asset. Sometimes, when embarking into un-chartered territory such as holistic healing, having a friend share our interest and our journey is a blessing and can make all the difference in our getting to the finish line.

Relationship problems

There are three major problems we face when we are in a relationship: our expectations, our co-dependent attitudes and we miss the point.

1. **Expectations can be a relationship killer.** For some reason we expect the others to read our thoughts and to know what we want. We also expect them to fit the idealistic portrait we drew of them in our mind without telling them.

This kind of clairvoyance is very rare and so most of us end up feeling “cheated” by the other. Actually, we have cheated ourselves. If someone is forced to play a part in order to please us and keep us interested, did we not inadvertently push them into that role?

This unhealthy dynamic, combined with poor communications, is the main cause for failed relationships. It is also a sign of our neurotic society, which expects instant gratification and does not want to take the time to get to know, nurture and develop relationships.

2. **Co-dependence is the next big obstacle to living harmoniously.** Its danger lies in the deceptive impression it creates about things “working out OK”. What happens more often than not is that we project on our partner some of our “shadow” traits.

Those are sides to our personality we don’t like. For example, we may not like anger, so we allow our partner to be the angry one instead. In their turn, they project their emotional insecurity on us, leaving the role of the romantic or emotional one in the family to us.

3. **Missing the point is a common situation** and we end up reading too much into something, seeing what was not there. At the same time, we miss important messages because we are not looking, and this leads to repetitive situations in our life. Each one is another opportunity for us to “get it”.

Here, as with acquaintances and friends, it is important to remember to consider our connections to others from a bigger perspective.

We can have a brief affair whose purpose was to place something new on our radar and once that purpose was achieved the relationship loses its reason for existence and circumstance breaks it up. To miss the point means for us to read too much into it

Quite often we miss the point because we are not grounded in reality. We live in our dreams and imaginations, creating a perception too far from reality to be of any use to us.

We can also miss the point when we have our own issues. We are so preoccupied with them that we filter everything that happens to us through the lens of our biases and inner distress. As a result, we cannot see the truth even when it’s spelled out for us and we end up feeling deceived and taken advantage of.

True connection

A true connection occurs when we become a witness to each other’s life. Think about it. How many times have you heard people say that they are lonely, they feel invisible, not validated. Nobody cares, nobody notices.

Perhaps you realized at an early age that you are all alone in the universe and nobody else is quite like you and that you will never be completely understood by another.

This sense of separation exists in each one of us. But it takes just one true connection to dispel this myth of separation. And suddenly we feel imbedded in the world. We feel that we exist. Why is that? Because it takes one person to really see and hear us, one person to be there with us and witness our life. That’s all it takes.

When a parent does that for us during our years of development it is a real blessing and we grow up as secure and open individuals.

In its ideal form, marriage or the union of two souls would be a commitment to do that for each other. More than anything else we crave to be seen as we are and accepted fully. When a soul mate shares our life, we experience the heights of love in an environment of mutual sharing from the core.

When a friend offers us her undivided attention, we know that there is someone in the world who stands by us at all times.

Relationships in their ideal form are a form of mutual validation by the witness in our life and also a powerful mechanism for our inner development. The way we experience them can give us invaluable clues to our own identity.

“The world is shrinking as connectivity increases, but contacts will never replace relationships. In fact, the human dynamic is more powerful today than ever.”

Michael Hughes

“If we listened to our intellect, we'd never have a love affair. We'd never have a friendship. We'd never go into business, because we'd be too cynical. Well, that's nonsense. You've got to jump off cliffs all the time and build your wings on the way down.”

Annie Dillard

“Relationship is surely the mirror in which you discover yourself.”

Krishnamurti

Stepping Stone 8: HABITS THAT HOLD YOU BACK

We all feel sometimes as if our brain needs de-cluttering more than our closet. Parasitic thoughts spring up by habit as if by their own will. We find ourselves thinking them even when we don't believe in them anymore. The same can be said about habitual emotions and those can make us act like phonies. They can also burden us enormously. Worst of all are our habitual behaviors, those things we keep doing even though we know better. And yet, before we know it, there we go again!

It takes time to break a habit because we have to be constantly aware of it and as we notice it we have to keep replacing it with a new and better action. It can be done, but most of us lose interest early in the game and we give up.

But what if habits just quietly dwindled away one day, with no apparent effort on your side? That can easily happen if two conditions are met: changing the way you think and changing the way you feel.

Thought patterns

The easiest place to start is with the mind. To some extent we have control over what we will think and what we will choose to believe. Provided we have some capacity to reason and some common sense, we are able to "change our mind" when we wish to do so.

It's possible to discover the unconscious thought patterns that are habit forming. We all have hidden and automatic thoughts and beliefs which were ingrained in us by our culture, parents, tradition and the people we look up to.

They are not always true or useful to us and yet we may be conducting our whole life based on these false beliefs.

Discovering these deeply hidden thoughts can change the foundation of how we see ourselves and the world we live in. From there, changing the negative, petty, toxic everyday attitudes and notions is not too hard.

After all, they all sprang from one or another wrong core belief.

Emotions

Most of our emotions are triggered by beliefs and thoughts. If we think something is scary we feel fear. If we believe we are not lovable, we feel sadness.

But once our emotions are set off, it can take some time before we can calm down and come back to our senses. In other words, we are not totally aware or in control of what triggers our emotions and thought processes.

When we react emotionally we make mistakes. And yet, almost always our actions are dictated by our emotions and not by our reason. Why is that? Because our emotions reflect our true thinking and not the thoughts we use to try and convince ourselves to “do the right thing”.

Rage and jealousy push us to irrational extremes much to the horror of our mind which would much rather have kept some decorum. And yet, our emotions reflect deeply held beliefs about our inadequacy and fears of abandonment and betrayal. Those are the true thoughts driving our emotional response and from there, our actions.

Allergies, addictions and cravings

These are all driven by faulty thoughts and emotionality out of proportion with reality. It is as if we live in a dream world created entirely by our imbalanced imagination. Mostly, we see in allergies and addictions, a deep emotional need for them as compensation or as a coping mechanism without which we feel we cannot survive.

They are the end result of wrong thoughts leading to excessive emotions, mostly of fear, but also anger or grief. Allergies are notoriously connected to our interpretation of the world as a dangerous place.

People who have a deep connection with the environment, who are healthy and trusting in the bigger scheme of things, tend to rarely have allergies. Those who are sensitive and thus in need of constant protection tend to also be sensitive in mind and in body.

A psyche always on alert, always watching, always scanning for danger, sends an unending flow of signals causing emotional stress which ultimately involves the body.

Cause

While it is true that our negative attitudes cause us grief, things are not so simple. To believe that we are the direct cause of all our illnesses, addictions or allergies is only partially true.

Our higher self or soul will live through a difficult experience for karmic reasons in order to **enrich itself and mature**. This does not mean that we, as a person in this life, chose in any rational way to suffer. Few consciously choose to suffer.

Good Riddance

Whatever the cause of our bad habits, to avoid responsibility is a pitfall to be avoided at all costs.

- √ We DO have responsibility to increase our awareness as we seek solutions
- √ We are responsible for taking action once we know what we need to do. To knowingly allow ourselves to sit in the rut will increase our suffering
- √ When we know, we must choose to act

It's not always easy to bridge the gap between knowing and doing. As you know, psychotherapy shows us what is wrong, but only from an intellectual viewpoint, and often leaves us hanging there.

We need to go beyond the intellectual mind for our enlightenment. We need to heal the heart at a deep level. And to do so, we have to release an old truth or belief and replace it with a newer and healthier one. Replace the bad with the good.

Change your thoughts

Once your thinking and views on life change, you will no longer react in the same way and with the same emotions as you did before. Someone who believes that he is a loser will easily be offended and can be quite defensive. But if they become proud of who they are they can as easily become more tolerant and pleasant to be around.

We can spend years suffering from anxiety or having anger problems for no other reason but the beliefs we hold. Our mind categorizes events based on its own basic criteria so depending on what we consider right or wrong we will respond with emotions that correspond.

A person is vulnerable to emotional trauma when there are strong hidden beliefs at play. Changing the way we think about things automatically takes the emotional charge away.

Take action

On the other hand, no habit can be broken and no thought can be made our own unless it is grounded in action. That is why so many approaches meant to influence our subconscious mind use a variety of tapping or other motion to drive the message home. Other approaches use writing or chanting or other forms of thought expression through action.

In our actions we find the weakest link. When we act out of habit, which is what we do most of the time, we are not really aware of what we are doing.

Try to follow your actions throughout the day. You will notice that after a bit you get lost in thought, caught up in emotions and you stop noticing what you are doing. We even drive like that, automatically, not really paying attention to the road while we are elsewhere in our mind.

It is as if we need to see and hear ourselves do something to believe it. Looking at it from that perspective, think of the messages you are sending yourself daily with your habitual and perhaps faulty action.

Words you repeat which are negative, unrestrained emotional outbursts for the sake of indulgence, habits that are harmful to the body or mind but which have become a soothing ritual that lulls you into believing it is alright when it's not.

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is therefore not an act but a habit.”

Aristotle

“Do not ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

Harold Whitman

Stepping Stone 9: I BELIEVE

Our Core Beliefs form a body of inner knowledge and guidance that operates behind the scenes and directs every action we take. Most of these beliefs are not conscious so we act upon them without knowing. And even when we do know they exist and what they are, we can't seem to help ourselves. We keep doing things we want to avoid, against our "better judgment". What makes such beliefs so hard to identify and to turn around? And how can we find out about ours?

What's a belief?

A belief can be true or not. Generally the word is used to indicate something that is not yet proven to be true, but which we **accept as true**. We believe many things, about the world, ourselves, others, about how things work and what it all means.

Mostly we function based on our belief system, and less so, based on our truth. This is so because it takes time to find out if something is really true for us or not.

Proof of things can be so illusive and relative. So we tend to accept certain things as true and we don't question them once they are accepted. We often confuse what we BELIEVE to be true with truth.

Our conscious mind does not have the capacity to be aware of everything. We would go mad within seconds of becoming aware of everything around us in all detail all of the time.

Our subconscious mind is more powerful than our conscious mind. With our subconscious we process enormous amounts of information all the time. We also respond constantly to millions of stimuli in our environment, most of which are not even registered consciously.

Our subconscious mind acts based on its knowledge. Much of the time the knowledge is accurate and reflects a real environment and real situations, sensations, immediate needs, and bodily functions.

Some of the time, the data upon which choices are made isn't true, nor is it real in any physical sense. This is the realm of our beliefs and our interpretation of reality based on those beliefs.

People are made in such a way that we don't tolerate a vacuum very well. Think of silence. Most people will start talking out of nervousness if you sit with them silently too long. So it is with ignorance. When

confronted with something we don't understand we feel a compulsion to explain it anyway, to put a label on it. We jump to conclusions. We make assumptions. We make something up if nothing else comes to mind.

Where do they come from?

As we mentioned before, beliefs emerge out of the void created by ignorance.

Most of our belief system was well developed even **before we were born**, by those who preceded us: our culture, tradition, family, and social system. We are born into a world of beliefs and we immediately absorb with our entire body and psyche those that are directly related to us. We organically develop in a soup of belief.

We carry forward the beliefs of our heritage into each life. It is imbedded into the cells that come from our parents. Up to the age of seven we are carriers of the family heritage completely.

If we were to develop naturally and optimally, at about that age we would start forming our own unique personality. We would become our own person and we would pull out of the family mold. This rarely happens, at least not as well as we would like.

And because we do not have the capacity of intelligent discernment at such an early age, we accept belief as truth. We do not question the truisms we hear early in life. Everyone around us acts upon them and because of that the world around us seems to confirm them as truths.

But this happens more so in our childhood and formative years when we lack experience and power to think otherwise. Even later in life we tend to accept things without questioning if we see that "everybody else" accepts them.

Our culture and society imprints on us its belief systems and rules and natural individual development is stifled early in life. We tend to become late bloomers as far as our individuality is concerned.

Some of us never really get there and we stay stuck on the level of tribal or family patterns of life, without even knowing we're doing so. Our life can become difficult as our individuality strives to emerge and the chains of traditional beliefs hold us back.

Not knowing what beliefs form your sense of self and behaviors in life is the main problem here. Without any inkling about why you do certain things you should not be doing, you cannot stop yourself.

There are ways today to uncover the hidden subconscious signals upon which your life is built. Like a house of cards, it stands on many outlived, antiquated, invalid and childish beliefs that you no longer consciously hold. But they are still guiding your life choices without your awareness. The first step is to find out what those are and where they come from.

Biology of belief

From the findings of cellular biology we have confirmation for what German New Medicine and countless mind-body therapies have known all along. Our impression of our environment is what can cause us distress and ultimately lead to disease.

What we believe can cause us to react to an otherwise neutral life event in a traumatic way. If something affects us deeply and we believe it's bad, then we want desperately to change it. Our mind sends signals to our body to respond to the "danger" by changing its functions to help us find a way out.

Our emotions keep the whole process alive as we continue to stay in stress mode, all of it triggered by our thoughts about the problem. Our body has to intervene and save the integrity of the organism. It alters its functions. Symptoms emerge.

We are biologically hard-wired to survive adversity. Yet, physical survival can entail unpleasant symptoms as our body frantically goes out of its normal way to fix a problem. A problem that was created in our mind and reinforced by our emotions.

Until recently everyone believed that all our possibilities are encrypted in our DNA. Today, science is showing us that our body will *create DNA* when it needs to produce a certain impact as a response to our environment. Our mind literally sends a request for a certain action in the body and if we don't have the DNA to get it all going, then our body will create it!

Is it possible that we will even create a cancer DNA if our body wants to compensate for something with a tumor? Bruce Lipton certainly thinks so and he has very clearly and elegantly presented the whole mechanism in his book "The Biology of Belief" and in his series of

YouTube videos "From Victim to Master of Your Health". A must see for anyone interested in full life balance.

YOUR Beliefs

Your body is your instrument and so is your mind. To be able to distinguish clearly what is happening in your environment, you have to be free of inner misconceptions, biases, addictions and manipulative desires, free of fear. You need:

- √ A healthy body
- √ Strong emotional health, to be able to see an unpalatable truth without flinching and judging
- √ A strong and illumined mind that will be capable of observing reality, rather than viewing it through the prism of its own agenda

This is a very rare combination. Most of us are at some stage of achieving that balance and some of us are starting to accept the fact that there IS something more to what meets the eye out there and that maybe, just maybe, we may want to look further.

Perhaps we will even review some of our own assumptions. Most people are on the level of automatic deference of decisions to "others" and to what is the commonly accepted truth of the day. Most are not yet ready to face the truth of who they are.

To know truth we have to develop our ability to recognize it. It is a combination of an inner knowing, a "gut knowing" and a confirmation by our intelligence that it's reasonable, it's true. The key here is the developing of an inner ability to recognize truth, an inner organ, we could say, for measuring the truth around us.

You know you know when you're able to discuss an issue and you're not at all upset if your position is attacked by another. Truth is bigger than any emotionality or ego-competition.

You remain peaceful when your statement is attacked or ridiculed because it does not really matter what others think about it. For example, if you know it to be true that a solar eclipse is but a temporary event, you are not scared by ignorant fears that the "sun has died" or that this is a sign for disaster to come.

When we're not sure of our position, we tend to get defensive when we're questioned or confronted because our own doubt is stirred up.

When we know something to be true for us, we are benevolent about it and about the ignorance of others. We do not try to defend or sell it to others.

Note the heated arguments on religious topics, a common arena for conflict to arise. Why do some people get so agitated if their choice to be vegetarian or to follow a certain faith is questioned or ridiculed?

We want to convert others to our views because, as we know, the more people that share a belief, the more we can pass it on as truth and our doubts can temporarily relax. We can say everyone agrees with me, so I must be right.

As we know, "truth" has been disproven again and again. New discoveries invalidate old "truths" and shed light on many a superstition and false belief.

Human nature being what it is we continue to hold on to our beliefs and to not question the "truths" of the day. It gives us the sense of security that we're right.

Obstacles to change

Fear of the unknown is a major obstacle to growth and empowerment. The fear of finding out unpleasant facts about ourselves and our hidden intents prohibits us from going deeper into our inner self. It stops us from accepting positive change. Most people prefer to suffer in ignorance than to find out something that they may not like.

We may fear the **guilt** that could follow when we see the folly of what we created or we may not want to lose the rewards of our false creation, even when we know in our hearts that it cannot really be true. So we prefer self-deception as a form of protection.

Such is the enslavement of our belief system. Belief springs out of **ignorance**. If we don't know something we tend to feel nervous. Nobody likes to *not know*. So we make something up to fill the void and to have an explanation.

We have a belief in the place of our truth. Soon enough we forget we made it up and we start acting based on this belief. We can even go as

far as creating rules for others and standards for what is good and bad, based on this unproven belief we have created.

People have a deep need to **connect with others**, to feel part of the group and be accepted. This is part of our survival. The pull *is* that strong.

But there is no security in being in a crowd. We follow the herd stampeding toward the precipice. When we follow the herd mentality we follow others to our doom. It's when we willingly give away our personal power and identity to merge with others, we lose ourselves.

One of the hardest obstacles to surmount when revealing and releasing core beliefs is the arch belief that if we were to be ourselves we would be abandoned by others.

Separation from others is painful on so many levels that we are willing to sacrifice a lot to stay connected.

But there is more. We are *never* truly alone, even though we are on our own. Our souls yearn to merge and be connected and to commune with other souls and the Divine.

If you believe that only science holds all the answers and that only someone in **authority** has the answers, you may never venture into holistic medicine or a spiritual practice that is not sanctioned by the "powers that be". If "they" don't have the answer to your problem, being open minded can save your life.

Change your beliefs and save your life

All great discoveries were made by people who thought out of the box and defied the authority of the day. Human nature prefers to follow authority and be guided. It's easier that way. But therein lies the danger. If those you rely on for help don't have the answer or your best interest at heart, then you will suffer due to your own self-limitation.

If you fear change because you believe that change leads to disaster, then you will prefer to stay sick and weak as change feels too threatening.

If you cater to others because you believe that being in service means negating yourself, you will then be unwilling to unfold your real gifts to humanity out of false humility.

If you are too mistrusting of others, you will fail to recognize your true friends and you will not allow love in for fear of betrayal. You will remain a lonely person who blames others.

To get rid of automated subconscious programming that may not be serving you anymore, you first have to become more conscious of the possibility. And also you have to develop the courage and desire to change.

- √ Do you want to carry that burden around all your life?
- √ Do you want to live your life based on someone else's ideas?
- √ Do you want to pass all this on to your children?

You can let go of that burden and lighten your load. Not by tossing it all out and getting rid of "something bad and scary". Instead of carrying an extra burden, you can open the backpack and sort it out.

Re-claim what is useful, return what is not yours and leave the rest where it belongs—in the past.

Those who've had the courage to face and tackle their beliefs and inner conflicts, know it's worse to hold on to what is no longer working, than to go through the brief pain of transformation and reap the many rewards after. Not least of which is true peace of mind.

The process of transforming false beliefs into healthy truth is not automatic. There are countless instances of spontaneous enlightenment and great understanding. But usually we go through a gradual process of re-evaluation of our life, our sense of self, and a process of re-balancing on all levels.

We reduce the charge of negative emotions attached to our belief system. We let go of the many irrational fears and compulsions that weave a web around us. We gradually learn to accept our truth without the fear and resistance that tends to be triggered when we confront our beliefs.

There are many techniques today to uncover and reframe false beliefs and hidden negative thought patterns. As you reset your inner patterning, you will be able to develop more self-empowering action, your horizon will widen amazingly and life will again become full of possibilities and not of restraints.

Reframing

Reframing is always the best way to go, and the one of least resistance. Most of the time what we fear most is to be wrong. If you are convinced that facing your false beliefs will reveal to you the hidden treasure they hold, the key for your future happiness, you will be more eager to dig them out. The result:

- √ A more neutral stance around your beliefs and the damage they have already caused
- √ Taking a look at your life and seeing it is “all good”
- √ Knowing that your issues all have meaning and purpose
- √ Making adjustments based on what you know now

Think of this. When you refuse or fear to take a look at your beliefs, you may be allowing your grandmother’s ideas to influence your choices. You may be perpetuating the outdated survival fears of an ancestor who lived in different times with quite a different agenda and character from your own.

Build a better world by building a better you

At the end of the day, the more balanced each one of us is, the more open, more enlightened, the more truth we can contribute to humanity as a whole.

Cleaning up our own act is an enormous contribution and a gift of love to our fellow human beings. It’s a higher purpose to keep in mind as you contemplate making some changes in your life for the better.

“Believe there are no limits but the sky.” Cervantes

“The thing always happens that you really believe in. And the belief in a thing makes it happen. And I think nothing will happen until you thoroughly and deeply believe in it.”

Frank Lloyd Wright

Stepping Stone 10:

GROUNDED IN PRESENT TIME

Everyone today is talking about the power of living in the NOW, in the present moment, and being grounded. We try to stop our mental chatter, quiet our emotions and to connect with higher knowing or our higher self. So how can we achieve that when all that surrounds us seems to be pushing us the other way?

Living in the present is the first rule for anyone embarking on a journey of self-discovery or transformation. We cannot understand or change our life unless we are firmly grounded in present time. Living in the past or frantically trying to predict the future can certainly create a flurry of emotions, but they are futile endeavors if you are seeking positive change.

Let go of the past

When we walk with our head turned back all the time, back toward old grief, offence, and betrayal, we forsake the reality of our present day and the joys of what we hold in our hands.

The past is there to give us expertise and show us, with hindsight, the meaning of a process we have already gone through. It is rich in information, which can be used to move us forward. It is poor in support in our present endeavors.

We carry our past within us, as a lived-through experience. As we mentioned earlier in this book, the past can be re-visited with awareness and a keen perceptive eye, to pluck out the gems of wisdom it holds for us, and to let go the misconceptions and perceived hurts we still regard as real today. For all else in this life, the past has to be left where it belongs—in the past. Today is the only time you have to live your real life.

The tricky future

When we constantly chase after an elusive future deal or, even worse, cringe from the expected calamity just waiting to befall us, we are not living in the present. Even the most anxiety-ridden people will confess that few of their doom and gloom predictions ever come true, except in their feverish negative minds.

Many have said that out of their die-hard pessimism, they have conjured up the exact result they so dreaded. As with some other things in life, sometimes it is hard to say what came first, pessimism or difficulties in life. To a pessimist, life constantly confirms his belief in hopelessness.

As long as we refuse to embrace real life, warts and all, we will be excluded from its beauty as well. One could say, in a way, that pessimists are idealists whose ideals are too high and unrealistic. Of course, someone who is so out of touch with reality would not know what IS realistic at all.

Lost In Thought?

A bad place to get lost indeed. More so because we're oblivious to the fact that we're actually lost. It goes like this. If you were dreaming all the time, how would you know you were dreaming? It would be real life to you. Unless you wake up and compare. Then you know. So it is with thought. We spend most of our time lost up there, wandering around and keeping busy, but not really in touch with reality or with ourselves.

And if we do venture into our hearts, we spend a few marvelous moments there in silence and soon after we are up there again, spinning endless thoughts.

But the results of an overactive negative imagination can be disastrous. For example, buying into a diagnosis for imminent death due to disease can actually sap us of much needed strength for healing. It can activate survival functions in the body that can create complications, and it can lead us to a state of indifference and loss of will to live.

We suffer needlessly. We cannot hear the voice of reason, of friends or family. We are cut off from reality and living in a world created by memories, assumptions and inner fears. Considering that our society is one of predominantly "thinking" people, no wonder we are prone to stress and sickness.

We make ourselves sick with worry and we make others sick as we pass on to them our imaginations for reality. Witness the impact of the news. How about the increasing "white coat syndrome"? We fear doctors and what they might find wrong with us.

Everything around us supports this mental dreamland:

- √ The highly intellectualized school system
- √ A society that forbids being tough
- √ Hugging is considered inappropriate touch
- √ Emotions and poetry are ridiculed
- √ A constant obsession with technology
- √ Our work
- √ The diminishing direct contact with nature or with other people

In general, mental work is sanctioned by society. High value is put on words and intellect. The arts, intuition and sensitivity are regarded as entertainment at best. At worst, they are regarded as trivial and whimsical remnants of the past.

We come down into our body even less. In fact, we are so unfamiliar with our normal bodily sensations that we have lost the sense of true hunger. We have replaced it with cravings. We no longer hear our body's plight for rest. We drive it to full exhaustion in an urge to fulfill the mind's constant demands and plans.

Reality or fiction

There is a reason why it's hard to wake up to reality or stay conscious for long periods of time. The habit is so strong and the illusion so appealing that we constantly fall into the usual dreamy state of counterfeit reality.

In fact, the mind itself does not distinguish between reality and fiction. Have you ever had this trick played on you? You plunged your hand into a Halloween jar full of spaghetti. But the laughing children told you it was "brains" or "worms". Did your mind distinguish between spaghetti and "brains" or "worms"?

We don't trust ourselves. We go to others to find out how we're doing. Are we doing well? Is something wrong with us? We want the doctor to look and see. And if she finds something we didn't even know existed, we suddenly jump from what was life as usual before, to a life of dread and worry. We pay no attention to the fact that we feel OK.

Our profound fears, addictions or avoidance mechanisms can keep us from approaching reality for too long.

Sometimes it's the oppressive influence of the environment around us. From all directions we are constantly pushed under. Again and again we emerge from non-reality for a breath of air.

Reconnection

The beauty of change is that it is always happening with you in its center. You would not perceive it if you were not part of it. And once you have seen it, it means that you have the ability to deal with it.

Most people who have a strong sense of self know this. Nothing can come your way unless you already have the capability to deal with it. So no calamity can befall you unless you have the strength and the tools to overcome it and to enrich yourself from the experience.

Reality exists only in the present moment. It shifts from moment to moment. It is both constant and permanently changing. No moment of the past will be repeated.

There are too many future possibilities to bother trying to account for them all. Prediction is a futile effort. The only way to stay safe, to keep moving in the right direction, to be in your groove or in the flow is by staying connected to reality, to present time, and constantly adjusting to change as it emerges.

Willing to receive

To receive the bounty you so long for, you have to have the capacity to not only notice it when it appears, but you must receive it with open arms. Also, you have to be willing to take good care of it as well. But, most importantly, if you are not even there when opportunity knocks, how will you be able to open the door?

Let intuition be your guide

Our intuition is that part of us that always stays connected to real time. Intuition is not linear and logical. It is a direct glimpse into what is, and what can be. It's our intimate relationship with true reality. When we are in touch with our intuition, we are never lost. Intuition is more than the instinctual feeling in the pit of our stomach. Intuition comes from a higher plane of knowing.

The problem is our inability to distinguish or to hear our intuition at all. We doubt it or lack experience in interpreting what it tells us. Learning to listen and trust our intuition is our only reality.

There are many ways to develop our stunted intuition, to release it from its dungeon and to allow it to guide us ahead. There are many practices and teachings that can help us do that.

One thing, though we need to keep in mind:

- √ Unless you are free of disease
- √ Free of mental blocks
- √ Free of false beliefs
- √ Unless you are able to take hold of your emotionality in a healthy way

You will constantly confuse intuition with wishful thinking or with the tricks of the mind we are so prone to.

So to develop good intuition we have to transform ourselves from a stagnating disconnected fearful entity of little physical vigor, into a strong healthy individual who is able to assume responsibility for his lot in life. One who is able to embrace her destiny with trust and is in touch with her full potential.

The first step toward becoming reacquainted with our intuition is the development of faith or trust. We need to trust that vague but strong signal. You are driving down the road, you feel an urge to take a different route, you follow your intuition and you avert a terrible accident. This is a very familiar story. Most people do not take a different route. They do not even notice they had a hunch. All of that remains unregistered and all they see is the effect of something inexplicable. They feel it is a chance event in life, a random blow of fate.

Learning about intuition opens up a new world. Try this. Next time you get a strong feeling about something, follow it through. Stay alert and observe what happens, especially what follows. You will get your confirmation once you see the whole process playing itself out and you see what happens next. In the beginning you have no real knowledge about what will happen. And yet, your intuition somehow senses what lies ahead and signals it to you. The actual facts that follow will confirm its correctness.

Start with small experiments. You are going to a meeting and a thought comes to stop and pick up your colleague on the way. You feel no real desire to do so. Your intuition says to keep going, plus you will be late if you stop. You override your arising guilt and drive on. You get to the meeting in time. Your colleague is already there. Had you stopped, you would have been late. And there was nobody needing a lift anyway. Your intuition to continue was correct.

Learning to pay attention not only will provide you with much proof about the validity of your intuitive knowledge, it will also help you in two more areas.

1. **You will eventually start learning to read life “between the lines”.** What is going on that is not apparent, can't be explained in simple linear logic and yet, is no less real. It's actually more real than what you take as reality.

You start seeing real life happening behind the false front of conjured structures that you allow to guide your life. You are able to find your way in this real world and it pays off. The sense of security and faith that you can see what actually IS, and not another dream conjured by your preoccupied mind.

2. **You will learn to trust yourself more.** You will begin to hear your body and your heart more. You will KNOW what works for you and what does not. You will KNOW what is your emotion and what is somebody else's energy impinging on your personal space. You will KNOW when you are right and when you are off the mark. And most importantly, you will KNOW when you are in present, real time and when you've been a space cadet again.

Being healthy and clear of mind and heart, developing our intuition and learning to know ourselves better will help us stay in present time.

Together with a good grounding and meditation practice done several times a day, we can face life and counter the heavy impact of a dreamy environment.

We can truly say then that we are in this world, but not of it!

“Living in the past is a dull and lonely business; looking back strains the neck muscles, causes you to bump into people not going your way.”

Edna Ferber

“It is only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth, and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up, that we will begin to live each day to the fullest; as if it was the only one we had.”

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

Alan Kay

“We must not allow other people's limited perceptions to define us.”

Virginia Satir

“The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift.”

Albert Einstein

“Intuition is freedom beyond the mind.”

Sri Chinmoy

Stepping Stone 11: BUILDING COMMUNITY

What does it feel like to be both detached but also intensely present? How do we offer compassion to others without taking sides? What about injustice in the world? What to do about that? Our role in the world and our sense of self as defined by bigger standards is forever a source of doubt, of our own worth, of our contribution and of the existence of justice at all.

True care for the world comes with the development of perspective.

Look at yourself. See where you are right now, where you sit or stand, what you are doing.

Consider your life situation and daily problems.

Then pull back from that picture and envision your home and everyone in it. See each person going about their daily routines with all their cares and issues. Pull further back and see your neighborhood, the whole block from a bird's view. You'll see many houses full of many people, each immersed in their own world, each with their issues, some more serious than yours, others less so. Then pull back further and see the city, the country ... the world. See the world full of people, each with his and her concerns, some worse than yours, some less so. How does it make you feel about your problems? Are your cares and concerns still overwhelming and all consuming? What if you pull back all the way into space? Do you see our planet?

For some reason people assume that being whole, healthy and spiritual negates adversity. And that life after a healing transformation will be one of flowing bliss with no more strife or pain.

We expect the world to see our inner light and give us its nod of approval. We certainly don't expect to ever again to be seriously ill or suffer. After all we've found our center, we are grounded and present. We have worked hard on our health.

So we are surprised when our life doesn't go on as usual. Not only that, but it rushes in and engulfs our inner peace, threatening to wipe out all our achievements, and to leave us naked and doubting ourselves, our choices and even God.

Everyone who has gone through a process of personal transformation has had a moment like that. And once it is over, many have felt it was a test, a passage to the attainment of real consciousness.

It seems as if the universe were testing us. Are we really there yet? Do we really understand? Are we really living without fear and ego trips? Are we ready to let go of our habits and really do something new this time just on faith?

When this "test" is faced with trust and inner resilience, when we stand our ground and allow the moment to unfold, we are soon shown the illusory nature of adversity.

We finally understand that not all that seems scary is actually so, and that when we are fearless and armed with our intuitive trust in life, we can't make a mistake. We are just having an experience. As we stand back we see the great black cloud suddenly dispel and disappear.

Those who make each step based on faith and those who apply all they learn *in practice*, face each new adversity with courage, a day at a time, and do not rush to conclusions and live in despair.

But then there are those who throw their arms up in exasperation.

- √ “After all this work and all this time, how come I am still having my old problems?”
- √ “I should not be having this shock in life if I am clear and healthy and spiritual”
- √ “When will this ever end?”
- √ “When will I finally only have happiness and bliss?”

The answer is, not while you still breathe and live. Such is the nature of life. It is a continuum and it weaves through cycle after cycle, as we unfold our limitless capacities and enrich our essence.

Our dynamic world

Yes, our world is one of **duality**. We’re imbedded in time and space and it seems that things should move or stop and not both. But actually we live in a dynamic world, one of ever changing, ever shifting relationships between each dual aspect of life and between all dual pairs as a whole. We live in a pulsating world that both evolves and devolves all at the same time. Nothing is ever still.

Life will not stand still for you no matter how much desire or frustration you feel in that regard. Many have realized it and have dedicated their time to finding the best way to navigate this ever fluctuating reality.

There is no static goal in life. Reaching any goal in any part of our life is just a stepping stone to a higher goal. This is self transcendence. It’s a continual unfolding as we reach ever higher and deeper levels of existence.

But once we reach a certain point, much as we want to stop and rest and perhaps even stay there forever, life continues to flow and we with it.

If your purpose was to become stronger, happier and wealthier in material or spiritual affairs, you probably have attained that to some extent already. But if that was your sole mission, you may not be too happy with the results.

True consciousness involves the realization that we are not dealing with absolutes while on this plane, but rather with levels and degrees.

Books abound with tips on how to do it, from ancient wisdom to present day instructions in just a "few easy steps". Each person will find the best way according to his or her level of understanding, personal development, and soul evolution.

One thing is for sure, we have to keep going, to our last breath.

Living in community

1. **Be yourself.** Go deep within and get in touch with your intuition regarding any important cause or issue. Are you drawn to it? And if you are, is it for the right reason?

Most of us fall back on our old ways of being when participating in the community. It is as if when we're around others, we start acting a part we are all too familiar with. We may try to blend and accept opinions we don't necessarily share.

It's at such times we need to pause, re-focus and remind ourselves who we are. We need to find our center and come from that place of knowing to evaluate the situation at hand and the people we are dealing with. We apply the same principles as we apply to ourselves in our own journey.

2. **Most of us have a natural inclination to help others** and that is a wonderful quality, an expression of our love and caring for the other.

How can you help without controlling? How can you help without robbing others of their autonomy and power? How can you participate in a situation without imposing judgment or adding to a disease? Do you help peace when you go to war? Are you wise when you criticize and attack others, even if they merit your wrath?

3. **Give love and care in proportion to the need.** We have to be careful not to impose our own views and ideals on others.

Respecting the right of others to fail, make mistakes, suffer and learn from suffering, and to stumble as long as they need to in

order to learn to walk. To respect the soul journey of another without meddling is a high art.

Most of us lack the nerve to watch others suffer. It almost hurts more to watch from the side than to be the one in pain. And yet, it's the highest form of love to allow the other room for their own development at their own pace.

Much as we sometimes wish they could join us at the top of the mountain WE have climbed, we must allow others to savor the process, as much as we did our own.

Does that mean that if we've climbed up the tree of consciousness a little bit higher than someone else, we won't lend a supporting hand? Absolutely not, but we need to keep two things in mind. One is, did they genuinely ask for our help. The other is what does our intuition tells us about helping them.

4. In many similar situations what we're actually doing is **pushing our stuff on others**. We're not supporting, guiding, holding hands or just listening. We're seeking solutions for them packaged with our own brand of action we expect them to follow, along with our own emotional distress when they do not fare well even when we helped.
5. Many times people want to help and **they do so out of their own need to feel good**, more than from any place of understanding of others. This can be called meddling. We meddle benevolently in the lives of our loved ones all the time.

Why? Sometimes we meddle because we fear that they'll make a mistake and suffer. We would then have to watch the suffering and feel guilty. Other times because we already know how something can work and we lack the patience to let them take their time and discover it for themselves.

Most of the time, we intervene because someone asked us for help. We do it in the only way we know, by telling them what we would do.

Every time we approach others out of our own ego, we do more harm than good. You know that's the case, when you feel disappointment or rage when the "helped one" does not get the results YOU planned for her, because she did not do as YOU told her. So when she comes back

to ask for help again, you are not happy because she didn't follow your instructions before.

Community Strife - Social Injustice

World Crises

One issue, though that gives some of us no rest is our relationship to the rest of the world. When we have achieved a certain level of awareness we feel we have to DO something when we see people causing harm to themselves, others or the environment.

How can we cope with all these serious issues? These are real problems and we feel we have to take a stand. Where will this world end up if we don't take a stand and join this movement or that? So goes the argument.

When looking at what is wrong with the world, are you coming from a position of judgment or one of discernment?

- √ To consider others helpless, is to decide that one is wrong and the other is a victim
- √ To feel that without our participation things won't be sorted out, is a sign of our ego
- √ To presume that we have the answers just because we have more learning, is ignorant
- √ To presume that we have the power to alter another's life and they don't, is meddling

These are all signs of arrogance and lack of trust in the capability of others to live their life in the best way for them.

“The next Buddha may take the form of a community, a community practicing understanding and loving kindness, a community practicing mindful living. And the practice can be carried out as a group, as a city, as a nation.”

Thich Nhat Hanh

We're all in this together

How we fit in is defined by where we stand on the whole issue of what matters, what serves a higher purpose, what contributes in the long run to the advancement of humanity.

Not least of all, we need to consider how our participation resonates with who we are and our own unfolding.

- √ Is it the right time and place?
- √ Will we learn and grow from our participation?
- √ Will the process itself be enriched and helped?
- √ Or are we still in our weak ego state of desire for a certain outcome?
- √ Are we emotionally attached to what happens or to one side or another?
- √ Is our ego looking for entertainment and competition?

We are in it together and as much as your help is for those in need, so are they in the world to help *you*. A healthier approach to being in service is to acknowledge the gift you receive from all those you come in contact with. Realize that you are receiving as much as you are offering to those you want to help.

We can share knowledge with others, or express opinions if asked, and tell our story. We can even help others unconditionally, without commenting on their choices.

Like Mother Theresa we can be there for others in service when they can't do it for themselves. But to presume that though word or action we should intervene in someone else's life path isn't healthy for us or the other.

And yet we do it all the time. We try to impose our own views and judgments on other people. You know you're doing it when you get annoyed when someone disagrees with you or questions your qualifications.

This is especially true, if you are in the **healing professions**. To some, being a healer means you can fix someone else. And yet, nobody can fix anybody but themselves.

You get frustrated when your patient isn't getting better in spite of your ministrations. Aside from the practical knowledge you have, all else is equal and the patient is as much a part of the healing as the healer is. Intellectual knowledge is not a measure for inner growth or inner power.

Discernment

Discernment is a process that helps us to consider different ways of being and acting in the world. It involves weighing options and taking into consideration which option will most benefit our families, the world, and us. It includes a sense of perspective and envisioning the effects of a decision from all sides.

When we approach a problem with discernment, we apply to it our whole nature, only part of which is our process of thinking. Whether it's making personal choices, approaching issues related to the larger community of our peers, or the world at large.

So we must carefully decide on which action to take that best corresponds to our truth and level of understanding and to avoid ego interference and biased choices.

Detachment

Detachment is a difficult concept to understand in our world today since we are in constant conflict between right and wrong

- √ Many feel attacked by others
- √ People feel they are taken advantage of
- √ We live in fear of one cataclysm or another

It is also hard to pull out of the drama without seeming callous or indifferent. Especially for those of us who want to save the world and make it a better place.

Does detachment mean that we don't care? Does inaction mean letting the bad guys win? When we look at it more closely, detachment means to care deeply and from a place of unconditional love and acceptance.

Our contribution

When we see strife in the world and feel moved to take a stance, we need to consult our inner knowing, our instinct and intuition. We must dig deep into our motivations and personal bias.

The world is always in one crisis or another, much as a person is, except on a bigger scale. In fact, the results of one world event or another is the cumulative expression of the inner state of whole nations or communities. World affairs are an expression of our collective consciousness and desires.

We can contribute at any time no matter how imperfect we may feel we are. Participating in the community means blending with it, while we add our own flavor and gifts to those of others. In this way we form a larger whole.

Contribution means you'll become a part of something bigger and you needn't be perfect to do so. Don't wait until you know everything there is to know and don't wait until you've perfected your skills. Certainly don't wait until you have finished all your chores before you do anything meaningful in your life.

Striving for perfection is both commendable and despicable. After all, since perfection exists only on the spiritual plane, striving for it in a human way is only a hidden resistance mechanism. It just postpones your contribution to the world. It is an elegant way to bow out of participating and doing your part. It is spiritual cowardice.

With the passage of time and as the situation requires it, your contribution will also improve, organically and dynamically. You will adjust to what is needed most, calling forth from you what you do best. So don't withhold it from the world.

Fear of failure is our worst enemy. There is no such a thing as winning or losing except in the world of competition. It is all a matter of perspective as to who won or who lost. History and human bias has shown us that again and again.

To win one thing can mean to lose another and often times that is the case. Beware of the tyranny of your lower self, the ego mentality that wants to win at all costs. It spins illusions and creates emotionality that can hold you tied up forever.

Do your best now and don't wait to become better. Each moment you act will be the best you can be at that point in time. If you strive to do your best, whether you win or lose is not important. If you do want to compete, compete with yourself. See how much improvement you can make. Then no matter whether you win or lose you are just having an experience. Surrender the result with gratitude because you have been able to participate.

“Anyone who proposes to do good must not expect people to roll stones out of his way, but must accept his lot calmly, even if they roll a few stones upon it.”

Albert Schweitzer

Not of this world

To not be of this world is to refuse to add our own ego force to the already over-populated arena of ego clashes. It also means to refrain from passing judgment on others who are not as enlightened as we are; those who are still caught up in constant madness. It is only through Grace that we're even aware of what an ego clash is.

To not be of the world also means to be able to observe what happens without constantly getting emotionally caught up. After all, if everyone were to succumb to mass hysteria, who is there to guide us to sanity?

To be not of this world of insanity means to find a new world to plug into. One that is populated by more and more people like you, people who are seeking inner peace. People who are trying to uphold the light in the world, each one on their own, but all connected by that common impulse.

You are not alone. There are many who, like you, crave a better world. And many who, like you, are making a move toward personal improvement as a gift to all others, a gift of heightened consciousness, energy vibration and the gift of an open heart, to hasten the process of evolution for everyone else.

In the world

To be in the world but not of it requires clarity of mind and soul and grounding in what truly matters. We must be able to face the world with discernment and participate only in those causes or movements where we feel true resonance.

To participate where we know we will learn and in the process we will also form an organic part of the process we participate in. In other words, as we join one cause or another, we become the cause. We introduce our own distinct impulse and flavour into the whole. It shifts and through our participation so do we.

Stand up and be counted. Words inspire us and they bring out our better side out. We remember our dreams, we are proud of our achievements, we find new resolve to make that next step and do our part.

Look around yourself and ask yourself, how many are standing shoulder to shoulder with you? Not many. And that is not for lack of people who like you:

- √ Have high aspirations and ideals
- √ Love to share
- √ Desire to save the world

Most of us leave it all on the level of our private dreams. We are too shy or too insecure to stand up and be counted.

There are many talented people who fail to share their gift with others. They fail to enrich the world with their wisdom or love, because they don't speak up. They prefer to stay in the shadows. Many more are too overwhelmed by life and its pressures, to be able to find the time and strength to be of any real service to the world.

You can inspire others just with your presence. Being enlightened is a state that can be felt by others. Improving who you are and striving to unfold your full potential is an invaluable gift to humanity. As others see you become that which they crave, they will have the heart to attempt it as well. And as more people hold this energy, its impact will increase until we reach a crucial point when suddenly everyone is able to make the jump easily.

No matter the scale of the community you want to join, as you improve yourself, the whole group will shift and change. As your energy becomes stronger and your light brighter, others will be inspired to improve and change.

Negative forces will recede automatically, even without the need of action on your part. Most of the time, just standing your ground without compromise is enough to shift any controversial situation.

To be in this world means to fully live life with others, to participate and act in everyday life without withdrawing into an ivory tower of spiritual arrogance. We take our place in nature, in the community, and in the family. We behave in a way that reflects all we are and all we know. We live with strength and humility.

At the end of the day, our best contribution to the world is to develop our capacities and potentialities as best we can.

The power of the world always works in circles, and everything tries to be round. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls; birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun and moon, both round, come forth and go down again in a circle. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a person is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves.

Black Elk

Stepping Stone 12:

WHO AM I? WHY AM I HERE?

The central question posed throughout the centuries and to this day is "Who am I and what's my purpose in this world". It has as many answers as there are faiths and religions. But throughout each religion there is a silver thread linking us together in the great mission of the earth.

Even science today is attempting to produce its own materialistic answer to this profound query. One that is incomplete and deceptive. An answer that's missing is the crucial connection between our soul and our divine journey through time and eternity.

We don't want to end this book without touching upon the eternal themes of **the meaning of our existence**.

We live in times when more and more people feel the urge to find more meaning in life. Many fear ridicule and many more fear it may be "wrong" to embark along the path of spirituality. Let's be clear, spirituality does not mean religion.

Religion

In the West religion used to tend more to our spiritual needs. It was an integral part of our life and not separate from it. It was an organic component and usually the prevalent one in our life.

Unfortunately, in our age of materialistic Western thinking, all spirituality runs the danger of either being labeled a religion or dismissed as inconsequential.

Today religion is becoming rigid and has failed to move forward and address our spiritual needs. And if you're seeing and feeling this, you're ready for *the change*.

You have outgrown the limited materialistic or simplistic views of life. You're ready for a new understanding of who you are and what your role is in this life and in the ageless unfolding of the universe.

Let's look at it in another way. We all live in different houses. When we go to school we have to leave our house and follow the road to our school. So it is with spirituality. Religions are like houses. Our house or religion belongs to us. But when we go to study spirituality, we all join together and go to the same school. Paths are many; Truth is one.

Science

Today, the role of spirituality has been usurped by science, the new god of our times. It's a deity that has no time or even interest in matters of the soul. We have in science and medicine a deity that deals in cells, atoms, numbers and statistics yet rarely considers human emotions or life's challenges.

And yet within these cells and atoms, the Divine also lives. Matter and the Divine are one. There is no separation except in our minds. Science is of the mind and deals in separation and dividing everything into its smallest component. Spirituality, on the other hand, seeks to unite and bring oneness to all. In some future time, science and spirituality will become one as they both come from the same Source.

But what is the mission of your soul in your lifetime on earth?

You know you are ready to fulfill your mission, when you desire to add your voice to the people who are elevating human consciousness, one person at a time. When you allow the world the freedom to develop at its own pace, while at the same time influencing it by being your highest self, you bring peace to planet earth.

The Heroine's Journey

And that's not all. There is seemingly little support in society today for the budding interest in the natural, holistic and spiritual in life when it falls outside the usual well known dogmas of science or religion.

Choosing to use holistic therapies can also cause unease in some of our relationships. A partner using holistic medicine can be confronted by lack of acceptance, or what's worse, suspicion or even hostility on the part of the other partner.

A gravely ill person desires to avoid the suffering caused by conventional medicine and chooses more natural healing only to be pressured by their loved ones to do otherwise.

Practical living and spiritual practice go hand in hand. In fact, true spiritual practice is nothing else but practical living. In our heart of hearts we all know that, of course. And yet, how much of your day to day life is truly following what you really know?

We cheat all the time and think we can escape the consequences. It's just human nature. And then we complain that we aren't having the results offered by this or that expert or therapist.

A good question to ask yourself when you feel stuck is: "What have I actually changed in the way I live? I want this [problem] to resolve and yet have I changed anything in the way I live. Am I just maintaining my problem and keeping it in place?" So let's take a closer look.

Suffering

Unconsciously we choose our suffering and pain. Of course, nobody in their conscious mind chooses to suffer. We actually do all we can to stop suffering and to avoid it. And that's what we should do. But suffering is there in order to push us into finding solutions to end it. It's there to wake us up to the existence of a problem we might otherwise not be aware of. If you eat a poison, your body will let you know immediately. It will purge itself to help you survive. If you pay attention, next time you'll be careful not to put that poison into your mouth.

Suffering and pain contribute to the progress of our soul back to Source. Spiritually speaking, your inner wisdom, your higher self, has put on your path of conflict:

- √ To strengthen you
- √ To help you develop qualities you didn't know you had
- √ To enrich your experience of the cosmic game
- √ To help you transform past ignorance into knowledge so that you can avoid future mistakes

It is all good, even though we feel we are hard done by the experience as we move through it. Learning to confront the troubles in our life helps us develop strength and faith in ourselves.

Rather than blaming some unknown or suspected culprit, we can feel secure in the knowledge that the conditions under which we are living our life right now WE planned.

It's like a play. The stage is set and the curtain has been raised for you to perform your part and advance along the spiritual path. Your present conditions are the best possible ones for your advancement.

Challenges

Recognizing challenges and problems as **opportunities** is an enormous step forward. This needs to become part of how we experience life, automatically if we want to evolve spiritually.

Adversity is part of learning to accept life's challenges as opportunities. It's there to:

- √ Help you move in the right direction
- √ Speed up your growth
- √ Offer you gifts you otherwise would not receive

Embracing life challenges does not mean assuming some form of guilt or considering life drama as a punishment for our ignorance. This is a game of our lower ego, to be avoided if we want to make progress.

Life is what it is and we don't know yet what it's all about. In fact, we know very little of the way the universe works. There is higher wisdom which we cannot yet fathom from our humble human position.

Once you understand the deep gift of strife and tension as a way to squeeze out of you, by sheer pressure, those treasures that lie deep within, you will be able to take life with calm and even some excitement.

You will be gazing beyond the immediate discomfort and distress toward your future, toward new heights to which you are being propelled. What does this mean for you?

As soon as life shifts you will notice it. You will experience discomfort or irritation. You will be inconvenienced. Embrace those abrasive moments, like the annoying ring of the morning alarm clock. They were set up by you, by your own inner wisdom, to wake you up each time you start drifting off into fantasyland again.

It's human nature to get comfortable and tend toward inertia. Each time we make a step forward and we achieve a leap in our development, we tend to stay and savour it, oftentimes too long.

There's an unconscious yearning to stop and look around to enjoy the flowers. Those who are wise continue climbing, their aspiration pushing them to higher and loftier goals.

“Opportunities to find deeper powers within ourselves come when life seems most challenging.”

Joseph Campbell

Connecting To All That Is

Being centered and grounded should be a daily act of life. How we begin our day will determine how the rest of the day unfolds. When we start our day with prayers and meditation, then throughout the day we'll be able to maintain a higher level of consciousness. Troubles and bad vibes will be less likely to affect us.

We are imbedded in a universe vaster than our limited intellectual mind can grasp. And yet, we do have the obligation to learn and improve ourselves. Our life difficulties are the tasks we present to ourselves to help us move in the right direction. To be become one with all that is.

When our spiritual practice becomes a habit, we will be well along the path to a new way of life. Love and tolerance of others will be our way of being, not just of acting. With a strong sense of self we will be in tune with our true nature. There'll be no more need to convince ourselves as we sing and smile throughout the day.

Connecting to life energy with deep breathing needs to become a habit as well. Nourishing our bodies, our divine temple, by eating good food

should become a natural and enjoyable experience, not a rule to follow.

There is a depth of meaning in what happens to you. As we have mentioned before, there are layers and layers of significance in the patterns of our life, our emotions and thoughts and in what happens or doesn't happen to us.

With hindsight, you will be able to see the reason why calamity befell you. Once you have emerged victorious you will understand what the purpose was. You will also see its meaning when you fail and lose miserably. Seek to see what you gained from that loss. What did you avoid or prevent by virtue of not winning? The possible learning is endless, should you wish to reach out for it.

Cause and effect

The concept of cause and effect or karma is both very simple, yet very complex. But it's something we want to introduce here because it's a basic principle of creation.

It's cause and consequence, a concept we are quite familiar with. Karmic development includes the process of creating the qualities or possibilities for the future, now.

In other words, certain actions you take today, certain emotional trials you experience, a certain amount of effort you put into your development now, will pay off in the future.

On the other hand if you choose not to act, but live your life as a couch potato that too will create your future, probably one of lack and poverty.

Alas, we know so little about the details of this way of understanding our life, the tendency is to wave it off as just more new age fancy or ancient superstition. But it's not. It's a fundamental law of the Universe.

Have I been here before?

But there's more. We cannot end this chapter without mentioning the concept of the soul's repeated lifetimes on earth. It's not possible for a soul to accomplish everything it desires in one short lifetime.

Each time we incarnate the essence of our experiences are also brought with us. Certain talents, likes and dislikes, aptitudes and tendencies will be evident from early in life and will develop more or less depending on how much they are needed in this lifetime. On the other hand, what we learn and acquire in this lifetime on the level of our whole development—not just as intellectual knowledge—we will carry forward into our next lifetime.

With the experiences in each lifetime our eternal soul evolves and is enriched. Once we leave the earth plan, our soul enriches the spiritual realms between incarnations.

From this perspective, our life today starts looking quite different.

The day will come when these ideas will be examined in the light of scientific inquiry. We will then realize how little science really knows. At that time science and spirituality will merge. The inner life and the outer life will become one.

The end is the beginning

When all factors of importance are taken into account we will realize how different life can be. Until that time, we will continue to understand life at the level where we are at right now.

So we must not stop. We must always continue to strive towards our development and the unfolding of our true being.

Our present life prepares us for our future life. The knowledge of the passage of our soul through many lives is not new. In fact it has existed for millennia. All great spiritual masters talk about reincarnation.

It is also a concept rarely considered seriously in the West, but rather taken as a belief not a fact. And yet, were we to stop and think about the possibility it would give us a totally different perspective on life.

Even if we don't take the view of a next life on earth, if we take the view of what we can change in this life, for ourselves and others we will have made progress.

So if you notice that you are coming across something again and again in your life, take action! Heed the nudges. Who knows, you may reap the benefits in this life ... or the next! Karma means that you will reap

the rewards of what you do, whether it is in this life or some future life. All great spiritual traditions have a variation on the saying "As you sow, so shall you reap".

If you are successful in healing your body, harnessing the willfulness of our mind, keeping your emotions in balance, finding your path in life, you will soon learn the trick all those "in the know" have learned already. You will learn to read life between the lines.

Life is a storybook

Join all those who seem to live a charmed life. They are not blessed by the good luck fairy, but rather they have learned to read life between the lines. They know that the inner reality is more powerful than the outer reality.

They see the true reality behind the world of illusion that keeps most people captive. They have learned to listen to their intuition, act with intent and out of their heart, to practice detachment with love, and to be passionate about what has meaning in their life.

They are not surprised and baffled by life's twists and turns. They do not expect a life without challenge. They suffer like you from setbacks on their way. But they are secure in knowing that all will be well at the end. And what is the end? It's another cycle of transformation and self transcendence. In fact there is no end. We are eternal beings walking along Eternity's road.

Be dis-illusioned. Drop the blindfold of illusion with which you walk through life. Go beyond the fantasy. Embrace the truth of vision.

Create the reality of your heart's desire—now. Life will be richer than you could have ever imagined. Learn to read between the lines of life and take hold of the reins of your own destiny. You are not alone, there are many who await your arrival.

If your soul is moved and you feel deep resonance with a new concept, method, idea, dance, or practical tip, anything you feel is significant for you, take action.

There is no other time like the present. If you do not act today, tomorrow a new idea will come to take you into a new direction and your opportunity will have passed.

Start NOW!

Our minds have been so overburdened with endless bits of information we no longer know what's true for us.

Thinking alone is flighty. As soon as one thought is in, no matter how powerful, soon it will be replaced by the next, and the next. Our monkey mind just keeps chattering.

To counter this situation, we have one piece of advice. If you like a new idea or if you feel drawn to a new practice then *take action*.

At least write down a few notes or talk to a close friend and share your excitement and plans.

Take that course, write that list, try that therapy. Action solidifies a concept into a memory and a concrete experience. We learn and acquire new capabilities only by doing.

“Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.” George Bernard Shaw

“Life has been your art. You have set yourself to music. Your days are your sonnets.” Oscar Wilde

If what you have read has inspired you, we would be honoured if you joined us as we continue to explore, aspire, and transcend.

At Novalis Integra we have programs and services to fit any of your dreams, goals and visions. We'll show you the short cuts so you can walk along your path with joy.

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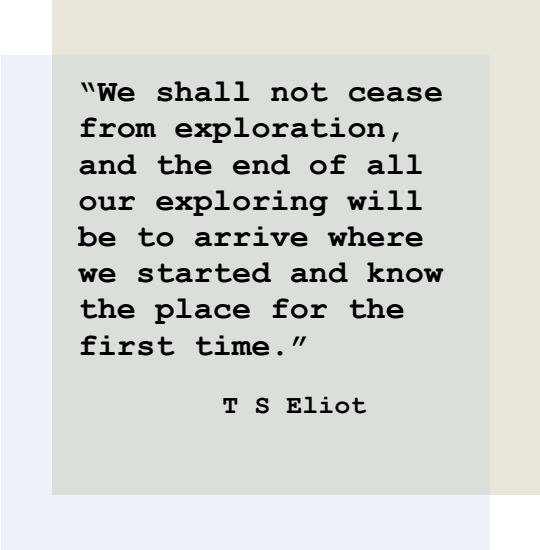
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And remember:



"We shall not cease
from exploration,
and the end of all
our exploring will
be to arrive where
we started and know
the place for the
first time."

T S Eliot