



WELCOME

This Section of the Transformational Arts College website is a collection of previously published articles, newsletter messages, blogs, sayings and graphics about all kinds of things. Whether it is about healing, looking for inspiration, or looking for an elusive answer to an existential question you have, perhaps you may just find what you seek.

We hope this serves as a resource as well as a place to be inspired or reminded of who we are as Spiritual Beings trying to make it in our Human Form. And we know it is not always easy.

Keep coming back, let your friends know as we will be adding more and more material for your enjoyment.



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Our Spiritual Life can be our Powerhouse

January 2023 - This is about moving forward in a way that can be concrete and practical. I want to touch on the needs of our spiritual life and how big this is as a tool to heal.

Lots has been said and studies are now being done about the physical and emotional impact of the last 3 years. Little is being said about the impact on the spiritual self. Our Emotional and Spiritual Selves are like twins, they have symbiotic relationship. The emotional self is what allows us to experience the Spiritual. It is a felt sense and very difficult to explain in words what is a Spiritual experience or energy, but we feel it. The spiritual in turn provides the platform for the emotional self to experience and step fully into our lives. This is when we are balanced, and they are in sync. For most of us, as a result of the last 3 years, our Spiritual Self is hidden away because our emotional state is scary. Anxiety, depression, self-harming behaviours, harming others behaviour are not a very welcoming environment to hang out in. Not unlike our inner child that needs to be nurtured, our Spiritual Self also needs nurtured and made to feel safe in our present-day environment. The fear and anxiety we see, and experience is like a huge cloak that is suffocating the Spirit. But don't be fooled – this is no child.

Our Spirit needs a workout – fortify its brilliance. That is why we need to have a consistent Spiritual Practice. It keeps the spiritual-emotional connection building in strength. The Spiritual will not jockey for position over our ego. It knows why we are here on the planet, and it knows our ego is in charge. It may give some nudges to the ego but free will reigns supreme. Spiritual practise can be any activity that helps you to connect to your spiritual-emotional bodies. Meditation, yoga, walking in Nature, prayer, a Japanese Forest Shower, mindfulness exercises, what is important is your intent to do an activity. Someone once said their spiritual practise was reading spiritual books, to which Carolyn Myss simply replied, that is not a spiritual practise, it is called reading!.

If we are, as many people believe, in a profound shift of human consciousness and the biggest spiritual awakening since humans settled down into towns and villages, then it just makes sense that the Spiritual needs to be invited on board. We have for many reasons shut out our spiritual self and have instead fortified a connection with body, mind and ego. If we all embraced our spiritual self we would see an immediate drop in fear, and that stops judging of our self and others. The trickle down effect will ultimately embrace us all but we can affect when that happens by letting our Spiritual self join with our emotional and physical self.

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Human Energy Fields

November 2018 - Our bodies are a myriad of energies all working together or at least attempting to work together to provide us with strength, balance and stability. Most of the time we take this complex network of energy for granted until we feel we are running out of energy or become ill. It takes both a conscious awareness of our energy network as well as some action on our part in order to keep everything working together.

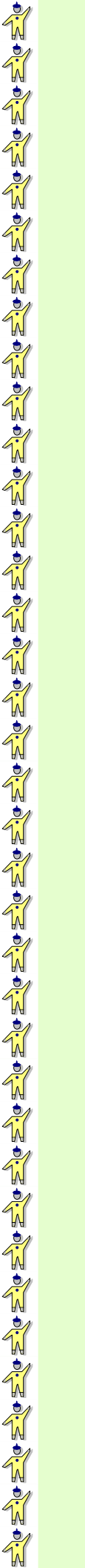
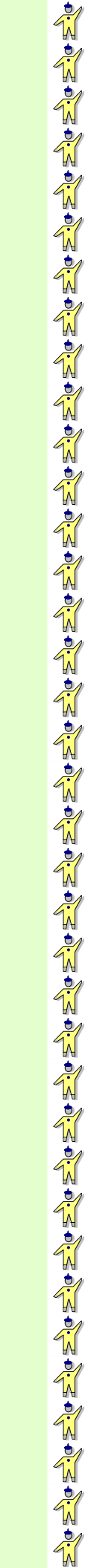
The human body at every level is a true marvel. We can ignore it and it mostly keeps functioning. We can abuse it and our bodies will find a way somehow to rebalance itself. We can do the bare minimum and we will still somehow be moved forward. Importantly if we do work with all of our available energies we can accomplish amazing things.

What follows will be a look at the many sorts of energy that we use and some things we can do to enhance them. Many things we know but it is usually the most basic of things that we ignore and take for granted. Perhaps as an exercise, rather than skimming over the obvious things, is to identify where you could benefit from fortifying the basics and seeing how your energy can shift. It is also important to recognize that every energy although identified separately is interdependent on all of the others.

Physical energy- This energy gives us the bounce in our step and the stamina to keep going. Our physical energy will decline dramatically when our body is not working properly as a result of dis-ease from heart disease to the flu. Any invader to the body will jeopardize our ability to function at full capacity. The two key elements here, apart from food, are sleep and exercise. Contrary to what many believe about their ability to function on 5 hours sleep a night, all the research shows adults need a minimum of 7 hours and many up to nine hours to properly recharge the physical body. Five hours may work over the short term but it can have long term health consequences. The benefits of exercise are well researched. It need not be an expensive gym membership. Simple things like walking all benefit the body and our energy supply. The human body was designed to be in motion. Many of our problems are from lack of activity and/or sitting all day.

Bio-Chemical Energy- This really is the third major factor in physical energy and is the result of what we eat and drink on a daily basis. The food we eat can perk us up or it can make us sluggish and tired. Lack of water affects everything from our brain to our skin. The old adage of we are what we eat is bang on. It has become so easy to order in, pick up prepared foods on the way home or just go out to eat. The less we personally prepare our foods the less control we have over what has gone into the food. As identified by various agencies many, both children and adults, in North America are well past our healthy weights and in fact some view obesity as an epidemic. Well portioned food when combined with even moderate exercise is a key to maintaining optimal energy and body weight. It can start with just a walk around the block.

Emotional Energy- We can have much more control over emotional energy than many people imagine. While events occur that we have little control over can and do have emotional impact on us. However much of our emotional energy is generated by our belief system and internal messages. If we are waiting for something bad to happen, even unconsciously, we are on a



heightened stress level and can be irritated and edgy. This drains us of our vital energy. We can become more aware of our internal dialogue and feelings and begin to alter how we view our world. The more positive our outlook the more energy is generated. Negative emotional energy saps our physical energy as much as not eating or sleeping. While we cannot control the outside we can learn to have control over the inside.

Mental Energy- Mental energy is generated when we are stimulated by things that interest and excite us. There is a definite connection between our emotional and mental energies. When we are really interested and excited then our mental and emotional come together and give us a huge surge of energies. Having goals, direction and clarity all benefit our mental well beingness. Having to do things that are of no interest or lacking in stimulation decreases our energy and when combined with decreasing emotional energy can lead to depression and physical illness. Engaging in careers, hobbies, people and causes that create a genuine spark of interest all increase mental energy.

Sexual Energy- Studies show time the many benefits of keeping our sexual energy moving. Whether single or partnered, alone or with someone, sexual energy benefits many of our other energies. While we can choose to leave our sexual energy in the lower part of our bodies we can also choose to explore the surge of feelings created by consciously moving it throughout our bodies. In general, the western world has a belief that moving your sexual energy needs to result in orgasm, to which the benefits of stress reduction and relaxation are well known. The eastern world, long ago, began to understand that not always having an orgasm and keeping the energy moving inside our bodies had many benefits to our physical and emotional health. If any other energy in our body is running below par, sexual energy is almost always affected in many people. Exploring our sexual energy is well worth the enjoyment and the benefits are many.

Spiritual Energy- This energy is always present, but for most, it is the energy we are most unconscious of. Spiritual energy becomes conscious when we are connected to universal energy and most of our other energies are quieted down. It can be very difficult to experience spiritual energy when our emotional and mental energy are highly active. When we quiet our energies achieved through breathe work, meditation and/or prayer we discover a vast ocean of energy that we connect to and can run through our bodies. This energy has phenomenal healing benefits. It can connect all of our energies to harmonize together. It slows our physical functions, reducing stress, it can quiet our mind, giving us clarity, and it can calm our emotional energies giving us peace. As with our sexual energy, spiritual energy can feel non-existent when our emotional energy is out of whack, no matter the cause.

In breaking down the different energies in the body we may be able to identify if certain energies may need more work and awareness than others. It is extremely important to point out that all of our energies are interdependent and are affected by other energies. If one energy level is not up to par other energies may compensate for a while but eventually all our energy levels will begin to decrease. Apart from basic healthy living, the use of spiritual energy is by far the most beneficial in supporting all of our other energy levels. Through breathing, chakra clearing and meditation our spiritual energy can move freely throughout our body opening and clearing the

many avenues that our energies travel. For all of us stressed out, time-deficient people it only takes 10 to 15 minutes a day to help optimize your many energy levels. Now that is a bonus.

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**You are energy, and energy cannot be created or destroyed.
Energy just changes form. And that means You!**

-From The Secret

Living our Spirituality

Many people with an interest in Spirituality set out and read all the books, take lots of classes and talk to many people as they grapple with the numerous concepts in a very vast field. Our intellect can go into overdrive pulling apart theories and other peoples' ideas as to what it should and should not be. Even defining Spirituality begins to create limitations for others as it is a highly personal experience. Defining Spirituality and then declaring there is only one pathway and/or one encompassing theory diminishes richness of the divine and human experience in addition to the potential for each individual to embrace the sacred in their own way.

Spirituality can be very intellectual but essentially it is a lived experience. The human mind is very limited in its ability to define such experiences. It is not unlike the intellect attempting to grasp our emotional mind and what feelings are. It is very hard to describe joy or sadness without having had those feelings and, even then, words can fail to adequately describe it. Our need to define and label everything, whether emotional or spiritual, creates limitations on our ability to fully live the overall experience. The key here is that spirituality is a personal and lived experience. It is lived in the moment, and on a daily basis. It need not be elaborate, complicated or ritualistic. Even the smallest actions and thoughts reinforce how we choose to experience our spiritual nature and therefore our life in this world.

Living our Spirituality is to enhance our time on this planet. It is how we treat others and our self. It is to live with an inner sense of a connection to the world around us. It re-enforces that we are not alone on this journey, though at times, it may feel that way. To live consciously is not easy. It is much easier to go back into our habitual thoughts and actions than it is to live with awareness. Each day, especially in the beginning, requires us to make the decision as to how this day will be. Will it be lived consciously or from our habitual patterns that usually do nothing more than keeps us in the same place, experiencing the same things.

Ways to Live our Spirituality

Here are some simple things we can do to live our Spirituality in the Moment:

1. Each Morning make a conscious decision as to how you want your day to be. Decide to come from your heart and embrace today's adventure.
2. Smile at people, as is appropriate. Don't let others' bad moods wreck your day. You will be surprised at the mileage you get from a simple smile and the world needs a lot more smiles these days.
3. At times put others needs ahead of your own. The entire notion of ensuring your needs are always met is more ego centric than spiritual. At times other people need to be taken care of and helped out along the way, which is living your spirituality.
4. Live from a place of gratitude. Be aware of all you have and stop focusing on what you do not have. Our world is full of blessings. Our job is to identify them and express gratitude for them. Universal energy bestows on us that which we direct our energy towards. The more

you focus on what you do not have in your life the more you will keep attracting the same. If positive attracts positive then the opposite will be true that negative will attract negative.

5. Each day connect to the greater universal energy through meditation, prayer, contemplation or anything that resonates with you. If you need to, do it again later in the day to re-enforce your connection. It only takes a few minutes to do this.
6. Spend more time in Nature and the outdoors. Walk around your neighbourhood and admire peoples' gardens. Walk instead of drive if possible. Enjoy the abundance of beauty available in your own backyard.
7. Live more in the moment and less in the past and future. Living in the Now is one of the surest ways to stay centered and calm on the inside.
8. Slow down. Everyone appears to be in such a hurry, rushing here and there. No wonder so many people have trouble with a simple smile when they are probably so agitated on the inside. Life is not a race.

Spirituality is not an exercise in theories and concepts. Spirituality is life in action. We need to **do** our spirituality, not think about it. The entire list above is far from comprehensive but these very easy, non-time-consuming activities as well as attitudes that will enhance your life.

Attitude plays a big role in our ability to make things happen for our self. We need to want to do these things. Sometimes it feels safer to just carry on and leave things as they are but if we do nothing, then nothing will ever change. Our physical, emotional and mental health is enhanced by living our Spirituality. Our sense of inner peace and calm lowers our blood pressure and heart rate, calms our digestion and makes sleep much easier. Now imagine if we all did this every day so that each and every one of us left our home each morning calm and centered and maintained the inner sense throughout the day. The world truly would change for the better.

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Lesson #1 - Your Spiritual Journey, Meditation and Breathing **Discovering the Total Self**

2009- As both a student and instructor at Transformational! Arts College of Spiritual and Holistic Training, I have experienced the Total Self Program like a great kaleidoscope bursting with colour, vibrant energy, wisdom and learning. Each Module of the Total Self Program is like a different lens through which to see the world. Looking through these different lenses I can discover who I really am in relationship with my own essence, others, the world, and the planet. In knowing the truth that I am a sacred human, I discover who I am and what I am here to be and do for the highest good of all. I would like to share some of my reflections and one lens of this Total Self Program with you.

Module 1: Meditation and the Chakras

As I re-visit the material in this Module each time I have taught it, I have become aware of the invitation it presents to embody the knowledge of our spiritual journey. In this way it becomes part of our living and breathing awareness to help us live more in the 'now'. To live from a conscious and awake place is indeed a daily challenge and this Module provides us with tools to help us with our everyday living. This Module captures the energy of a favourite motto of mine, '*Carpe Diem, Seize the Day!*'

Understanding and drawing on the gift of our chakra system opens us up to see the many ways we can ground, be present and meditate and in so doing learn to be centered, no matter what is going on in our lives. I have learned this takes time and practice and lots of patience with self. We can use our chakra system to help us work through our own Psychospiritual issues and blocks that prevent our energy from flowing as it is meant to. This requires us to do our own inner work which takes courage, Yes, it is not easy at times and yes it is so worth it. We become conscious of the ways we both empower and disempower ourselves.. Then We are able to come from a place of choice and with intention and realign our energy again to our source. Doreen Virtue so beautifully said: '*As we heal ourselves, so do we heal our world.*'

I have seen the transformation that takes place within students as they take this eight-week journey as a group. The insights and discoveries of the various shared experiences are truly synchronistic and empowering. I come away from each class grateful for the sacred transformational witness time and time again. The more I teach this Module the more I am transformed by it. There are days that I do not see or feel this transformation in my own life and it is on these days especially, I invite myself to remember to ask the noble questions: What is the learning here? Or how is this (feeling, experience) teaching me right now? If I choose to be awake I always receive the answer which in turn helps me to walk my talk. One of Wayne Dyer's favourite Chinese proverbs sums up the practicality of this Module for me:

*"I hear and I forget
/ see and I remember
I do and I understand."*

This Module is an invitation to embrace healing and embody our Modern Mystic.

Conscious Health

In days gone by our health care was seen to by the resident family specialist who knew all the folk remedies to take care of whatever was ailing us. If in doubt or for more serious ailments, the shaman or wise woman may have been consulted. Their combined knowledge of plants, herbs and the healing properties of the natural world soon had us back on our feet experiencing life.

With the advent of the microscope a new understanding of our inner physical workings came to light. The concept of infectious agents like bacteria and viruses would forever change the face of health care. The advent of hygiene and then drugs would soon make natural health care obsolete for many people. A pill became the solution to any, if not most, problems.

In the shift from folk medicine to allopathic medicine we have given up much of our own responsibility to learn from the illness and given our power to the latest medical discovery. Now, there is no denying for a second the changes that medicine has brought to the human condition. We live longer and die less often from natural events like childbirth. A broken bone is reset and we are left with little, if any disability, from the event. People rarely die from the common cold.

The question becomes in this age of mounting health care costs and cut backs, what more can we do to take back greater responsibility for own health care? This is truly why the concept of Holistic Health is so crucial at this time. Not just to cut costs but to reclaim our responsibility in own wellness. Holistic Health Care when properly and fully applied is multi-faceted and dynamic.

Here are some of the areas that Holistic Health embraces.

The Physical

- 1) Body Work - whether it be Swedish, Shiatsu, or Reflexology they all provide an important role in releasing blocked energy and muscles but also they re-enforce the importance of touch in our wellness.
- 2) Aromatherapy- not only provides the above advantages of bodywork but also is enhanced by the use of aromas and fragrances, which stimulate and/or soothe our immune and nervous systems. No home should be without lavender to soothe us and citrus scents to stimulate and clear our thoughts.
- 3) Herbal Medicine and Homeopathy- provide important and complementary adjuncts to any treatment program.
- 4) Diet and Exercise- goes without saying the importance of these two areas in any wellness program. The research is pretty irrefutable as to their benefits.

The Emotional

- 1) Clear old emotions- The older the hurts and anger we hold onto from our past, the more problems we will potentially have with our health. The key here is not just to be aware of them but to actually clear and transform the old energies into

- something we can learn from and put into our history. Recycling our old feelings is not good for the environment or our body!
- 2) Let go of situations and relationships that no longer work for us- Moving on is part of the human experience. Many people get stuck and then ill if they do not allow the natural movement of life to be part of their experience.
 - 3) Know your inner dialogue- we all have beliefs and messages from the past that we use to stop us in our tracks from doing what we need to do. We use these same messages to beat ourselves up with. All affect the robustness of our life.

The Spiritual

- 1) Looks for a deeper meaning for our experiences- This idea is based on the concept that things happen to us at the physical and emotional levels in order for us to more closely examine our life and see what or where we may need to shift or learn. It is **NOT** a concept we use to beat our self up with because we are sick. It is a tool to move forward, with or without our illness.
- 2) Spiritual Tools – Meditation, yoga, prayer, and the use of sound are only a couple of the tools that the spiritual area can provide to us to enhance our search for deeper meaning and wellness. All the research studies to date back up the importance and effectiveness of these tools.
- 3) Spiritual Clarity- a knowledge of the human soul and its needs will move us from emotional recycling and the ‘Why me’ syndrome toward understanding and inner peace about our life, our health and our journey.

The above list of areas embraced by the Holistic Practitioner barely touches on the vastness of this important and comprehensive approach to health and wellness. It does need to be stressed that this is not an either-or situation, with Holistic on one side and Allopathic medicine on the other. The two can and do work together very nicely. While acute medical needs such as accidents, heart attacks, and severe infections are blessed with the knowledge and expertise of the allopathic medical community, Holistic treatment when done knowledgably can enhance and speed up a person’s recovery time.

Much of what we need to do in taking back personal responsibility lies within prevention. The Holistic approach to wellness addresses many areas of our lives and provides tools to potentially circumvent illness before it takes its toll on our life. Our resistance to change is probably the biggest stumbling block to lifestyle and emotional shifts which would enhance our wellness. Our innate need to maintain the status quo even if it is hurting us is a leading contributor to our lack of well being.

The Holistic Practitioner addresses these areas not only for themselves, but those who help others professionally, and do enormous service in the health and wellness of individuals. Human’s are very complex and need to be treated accordingly. All things are interconnected at many different levels and the kindest thing we can do is recognize their complexity and address as many levels of the human experience that is available for us to learn from and to enhance, in our self and in others.

Spiritual Awakening

1999 - The majority of us travel through life, taking it as it comes. We flow with life's punches, seek out both sensual and emotional pleasures, and invest ourselves in our ambitions to get ahead. Our world is primarily defined by external matters. We may believe in a God, but even that is probably more of an external experience, confined to the conventional structure of church or temple.

But sometimes, our unquestioning journey through life begins to waiver, It may be gradual or brought on by a sudden event such as the loss of a loved one or of a job, but we begin to ponder one question. We begin to wonder what is life all about, is there meaning for *my* own life. Things which we valued before hold little or no meaning at this point. We begin to feel disconnected from not only our external world, but from our internal world as well. We may feel lost, useless and powerless. Our value systems, which guided us up to this point, no longer hold relevance.

During this phase, feeling like a stranger in an even stranger place, we may seek help from the medical community. They may diagnose depression, anxiety disorder, or some other emotional/mental disturbance, prescribing medication to keep us functioning. When, in fact, what we really need at this point is guidance from a spiritual mentor or director, someone who understands that this is a progressive experience in our spiritual growth and not a regressive movement in your mental health.

A Tug from the Soul

The good news here, your soul has finally got your attention and is guiding you to re-evaluate your life choices and bring them into line with your soul's purpose. The soul does not have many tools at its disposal to get your attention, especially for those raised in a secular society in which the concept of the soul is only mentioned as part of the after-life experience. Since the soul is always with us, not just after death, it seeks to guide us through a limited number of ways. It has our intuition to use, but most of us rarely heed the gut feelings we get, opting for our intelligence to guide us. Our soul uses our dreams, if we remember them and listen to them, and it has our meditations, if we take the time to meditate. The ultimate obstacle our soul faces is the free will we have to make our own choices.

The soul is up against all that is human as it endeavours to fulfill its choice in taking on a physical experience for its growth. St. John of the Cross referred to it as the "dark night of the soul", it is also referred to as a spiritual emergency. During this time the soul pulls back some of its energy, the very energy which sustains our sense of aliveness. The result is for us to experience this disconnectedness from the world and particularly, from all the external things we have used to define ourselves. The attempt is to get us to look to the inside, to connect with our own soul and discover the direction we may need to go in our life.

Since most of us are unaware of *any* inner dimensions of the human experience, we are unable to figure out what is wrong with us. We assume it is time for big changes to our externals. As we may feel disconnected and dissatisfied with our existence, We seek to re-establish what the norm is for us. We may seek out a new job or career, take on a new lover, divorce our spouse, or take up adrenaline producing activities such as bungee jumping. All this activity is an attempt to reconnect and restimulate ourselves back into a feeling of aliveness. While all this new activity may give a new sense of fervour, that inner niggles, questioning what this is all about, never goes away. We have succeeded in slowing down the process but, eventually, we will encounter another tug from our soul to take a look inside ourselves.

Spiritual Madness

As our society has lost any understanding of or, in many cases, interest in the inner workings of the human spiritual experience, Spiritual awakening is often relegated to the medical community. As we are unable to get the soul empirically tested in the laboratory, it is shoved into the realm of mental health. The other factor which sends us running to the medical world is our society's fear of becoming insane. While the effects caused by the dark night of the soul may mimic some mental disorders, it is in no way to be considered a pathology.

The mystical traditions of the world all embrace profound levels of altered states of consciousness. Their Spiritual practices are directed toward these altered states so as to induce a direct experience of the divine. If a mental health worker were to observe an individual in such an ecstatic state that person would probably be pronounced psychotic and be medicated. However, because such an experience is intentionally induced in a group setting for religious purposes, this altered state of mind is supported. Examples exist throughout history. If in fact they can be invoked, then it leads us to perhaps understand that such states can be provoked in an individual experiencing crisis in their personal lives apart from any religious group.

Not everyone will experience spiritual awakening. It is completely determined by the lessons our souls have chosen for this incarnation. However, it is not out of line to state, through observation, that the number of people awakening to their own souls are increasing by leaps and bounds each year.

The important thing to remember is you are not going crazy in this phase of awakening.

Take the time to listen to your inner world. Prayer, meditation, movement, drumming, chanting, and chakra work can help to move the individual through this state of disconnectedness. The important thing is to find someone who understands the awakening phases to guide you through the experience.

If you are having trouble with your experiences in your daily life, then you may need to slow down the process by cutting back on your spiritual practices, change your diet to a heavier, more grounding diet which would have to include meat for a short period of time. Exercise is beneficial, as long as it is not a heavy work-out or long runs, as they have a natural tendency to alter consciousness. These suggestions are for those who do not have the time or luxury of diving full force into their awakening as many have families and jobs eating up much of their attention and energy,

The process of awakening, while disconcerting at first, needs to be viewed not with fear, but as a powerful process which brings us into an inner connectedness and guidance system which will enhance our life experiences. The greater inner connectedness we have, the more connected we will feel with our external world and to the universe. It is only through understanding our soul's role will we be able to embrace the experience of awakening and not fear it as a form of breakdown but view it for what it really is - a breakthrough.

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Myths About Spirituality

January 2018 - As with many things on our planet the field of spirituality has developed a number of myths that people are trying to actualize as absolute truths. Individuals are struggling with ideas and concepts in their lives that they cannot bring into being simply because they are myths and therefore, unattainable. The problem can be individuals are left feeling inadequate or that they are doing something wrong because they cannot make the myth come true.

Over time the frustration of being unable to achieve certain things can turn people off and invariably we will walk away from anything we decide we are not accomplishing or will move to more extreme measures in order to make it happen. The following will look at just a few of the more predominant myths that may impede an individual's growth.

Myth # 1- Spiritual People are always happy and content

Spirituality, when combined with emotional healing, is a series of practices, attitudes and beliefs that can and do make people experience their lives with greater energy and enjoyment but it also internally urges us to go deeper into ourselves for greater understanding. It does provide new and different skills and coping mechanisms that we may not have previously had to deal with our life. A key reality is life can be and most often is difficult at various times. These difficulties teach us about our self and each other. Painful things will happen, we will have losses, sickness and death will occur and change is always inevitable. Spirituality gives us tools on many levels, not just to pilot our way through these things, but also to learn from them. We will not always be happy and content every day, at every hour, it is not part of the human spiritual and emotional journey.

Myth #2- Spiritual people don't get sick.

Actually people on a spiritual path can get very ill and even die. We need to get past this idea that illness and death are somehow failures and wellness is the only option that proves how spiritual we are. Many spiritual people will in fact get very seriously ill as a way to learn and discover many things. Illness, disease and the death and dying process are all powerful learning tools. It teaches not only the individual going through it but also those in contact with that person. Many people with serious conditions like cancer and AIDS have said that if it were not for their illness they may never have discovered the many possibilities life can hold. We equate healing with being healthy; they are not the same thing. Profound levels of healing occur in the death and dying process. We need to understand that death is also an option in the healing process. Whether you are the healer or the person seeking healing, we need to know there are many options to learn on the spiritual journey and that no matter the outcome, none are a failure.

Myth #3- Spiritual people must live in some form of poverty.

This myth is probably derived from the Christian parable that basically says, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter into heaven. This concept, while altered somewhat, has become part of the spiritual ideas that hurt many people in their ability to be successful. Their beliefs about money severely limit their possibilities. Abundance and prosperity are key ideas in spirituality and can often cause a lot of confusion for many people. Money must be seen as nothing more than energy. It is a socially agreed upon form of energy exchange. All energy from the spiritual to the physical is part of the human experience. It is our attitudes and how we use it that is important. Prosperity and abundance are there for the taking, just like it is in all of nature. It is perhaps the human behaviours of greed and hoarding that reinforce the poverty myth and continue to fuel scarcity thinking of never enough. Being in the flow allows all energy including money to be part of our life.

Myth #4- To be spiritual, I have to be perfect

This myth of perfection perhaps more people than any other. Likely rooted in our Christian societies' admonishment to be perfect, as God in heaven is perfect, this one small phrase robs people of many opportunities and re-enforces our inadequacies. Humans are not supposed to be nor will we be perfect. Our souls have chosen to be here in the physical world because of the many challenges and possibilities provided for our growth by being human. Perfection is a state of stasis; in other words, there is no further growth occurring. Everything we know from spirituality or from science indicate that all things are in a state of flux and growth including the universe. Humans are a part of the natural world and not set apart from it except in our own mind and mythology. Let nature be your guide as to what is possible and not possible. No one would stand in front of a tree or flower and proclaim it is not perfect, it just is and it is exactly how it is supposed to be. Let's apply that to ourselves. We are just as we are supposed to be, growing and changing each day and year.

Myth #5- Spiritual people never feel empty or lonely.

The feelings of emptiness and loneliness that we can feel are so much a part of the human condition and they are often the very catalyst that opens the door to our own awareness. Humans are by nature very social beings. We need people around us at various times. Some people more so than others but the key here is we need each other. Our interactions are instrumental in our learning process. While some insight may be gained all alone in the woods, it's the challenges of our interpersonal relationships that provide the most learning about ourselves. We are designed to be with and learn from each other. This encompasses all forms of relationships, not just intimate, sexual ones. While spirituality helps move us to embrace the divine within

and to develop spiritual practices that consistently reinforce that connection, we still need to have others in the human form to connect with. Loneliness and emptiness will always be with us at various phases of our life. Spiritual practices do help to fill the void.

Myth#6- Spiritual people must be able to meet their own needs

An extension in some ways of never feeling lonely or empty is the notion that we have to meet all of our needs ourself. What we want to learn is how to have our needs met in a healthy way and without demanding that others do so. If we are trying to meet all our needs by our self, is it any wonder we may feel empty and lonely? We want to learn to have our needs met through any number of people. No one person in our life, like a spouse, can possibly meet every single need we may have, nor should they have to. People demanding to have their needs met can turn many people away from us. We want to have lots of different people from all walks of life to share with us our different needs and interests. As humans we all have needs and always will have needs from the most basic of food and shelter, to the most esoteric. They are what fuel our growth and journey.

A good exercise may be to find which myths you may have been holding as true and find other ones that may be holding you back. A way to possibly know if you are chasing a myth is to identify things in your own process that you just can't seem to 'get'. Ideas you keep struggling with over and over again and they are not clicking. As humans we all have myths that we want to believe about our self to be true, over time the veil lifts and we see more of who we really are, perhaps taking a look at your own personal myths may help to move you forward. We cannot 'get' a myth; we can only 'get' what is true. The pursuit of a myth is both frustrating and harmful.

Spirituality is intended to simplify our lives through beliefs, attitudes and practices which enhance the human experience while embracing the divine connection. We make it much too difficult. It is not how long you lived but how you lived your time here on the planet. Keep it Simple and remember the basics!

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President – Transformational Arts College

**The most powerful myths, in the history of
humankind, are the one's we tell ourself.**

Gord Riddell



Our Struggle for Peace

Once again as we prepare this Column a part of the world is caught up in war. This article is not about that war but it does lead us to question the on-going conflicts we observe globally and what can we learn from them. Perhaps the first thing we need to recognize is the world is a macrocosm of our own microcosm. In other words, the outside reflects what is going on inside ourselves.


Conflict has become a way of life for most people. We have air rage, road rage, relationship and work conflicts. Many people spend a great deal of time fighting with people in their heads. Given the opportunity we do not hesitate to express our displeasure directly. Anger has become a way of life. The more stressors we have in our lives the more likely we are to become volatile.

Control

The biggest majority of our conflicts derive directly from our control issues. Yes, we all have control issues and they account for about 90% of our anger! When people do not do as we expect, anticipate or do it they way we would have and we have an emotional reaction to it then we have control issues. When someone driving in front of us cuts us off we can fly into a rage, our flight is delayed or the subway is behind schedule we fly into a rage. We personalize the experience as though it was being done intentionally just to us. Simple requests for assistance such as helping with the dishes only to discover the other person does not do dishes the way we do, and again we become angry.

Having control issues per se is really not the problem. Control issues help us feel safe in our environment, they help us to do a good job in whatever our endeavor, they reinforce our sense of personal values. The problem occurs when we project these things on to other people and expect them to behave exactly the way we want or need them to be. Even when people do not know what our requirements are, we can be moved to anger very quickly because they "should" have known. Even if we do not express our discontent outwardly we are still in conflict on the inside and filling ourselves with that energy.

Things to ask yourself

- 1) How is it your way is the only right way to do something?
 - 2) Is there a place here for you to learn something different?
 - 3) What is your pay off for keeping yourself in conflict? In other words, what do you get from it personally?
 - 4) If you did not feel internal conflict most of the time, what would you feel?
 - 5) What other ways can you find to feel safe and secure in your environment without needing to control everything and everyone in it?
 - 6) What is your biggest fear about letting go of your control?
 - 7) Could you live with your fears' worst-case scenario?
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Things to do

- 1) Determine how important it is that the dishes were not done your way. At least they are done!
- 2) Learn to breathe, meditate and experience for yourself what an inner peacefulness is like.
- 3) Learn you do not have all the answers. Or know all the rules. There are none.
- 4) Learn to let go. This does not mean giving up your personal values. It is part of learning to realize most of what is a big deal today will probably not even be remembered in the future.
- 5) Learn to lighten up and laugh a lot more than you may be doing now.
- 6) Celebrate the differences of each individual in your life and see them for who they really are. It is all the individuals in our life, in so many different roles, who are our teachers.
- 7) Pick your fights wisely. Is this really worth destroying a relationship or job over?
- 8) Is your anger proportional to the event? If you are raging about the way the dishes were done, it is clearly not about the dishes. Dig deeper to find out what is really going on inside of you.
- 9) If you do flare up at someone be the first to apologize.
- 10) Recognize the only person you can change is yourself.
- 11) Practise acceptance of yourself and others.

Conflicts do and will happen. We are only human after all but we do not need to live in a state of perpetual conflict and anger. Before you get yourself worked up, ask what is this feeling of anger really all about. The more aware you are of your feeling states the easier it will be to shift unwanted reactions away. Responding to a situation is much more empowering than knee jerk reactions.

It is so vitally important for us to recognize the correlation between our own internal emotional states and those of the outside world. If we really believe a peaceful planet is attainable then we have to start with our self and find ways to allow peace within our self, our relationships, families and communities. Peace is not something that is decreed or comes from the signing of agreements or treaties; it is a state of being. It is not a feeling or an intermittent behaviour; it is something we strive to ultimately become. It will only come from the inside out.



Inside Out

Revision 2023 - Once again parts of the world is caught up in armed conflicts. This article is not about war but it does lead us to question the on-going conflicts we observe globally and what can be learned from them. Perhaps the first thing we need to recognize is the world is a macrocosm of our own microcosm. In other words, the outside reflects what is going on inside ourselves.

Conflict has become a way of life for many people. We have air rage, road rage, relationship and work conflicts and the trauma of Covid-19 lockdowns. Many people spend a great deal of time fighting with people in their heads. Given the opportunity we do not hesitate to express our displeasure directly. Anger has become a way of life. The more stressors we have in our lives the more likely we are to become volatile.



























































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Things to consider

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The Silent Battle: Men's Mental Health, Breaking Stigmas, and Overcoming Challenges

July 2023 - In our society, men face unique challenges when it comes to mental health. From a young age, they are often socialized to suppress their emotions, resulting in a stigma around seeking help. The impact of societal expectations, the struggle to open up, and the importance of breaking the silence surrounding men's mental health need to be brought into the light. Additionally, we need to develop an awareness concerning the issues of suicide, substance abuse, and male sexual abuse that often intertwine with men's mental health struggles.

Societal Expectations and Emotional Suppression: From childhood, boys are often taught to be strong, independent, and self-reliant. They are discouraged from showing vulnerability or expressing emotions other than anger. This societal expectation places immense pressure on men, leaving them feeling isolated, lonely and unable to seek support for their mental health struggles. The fear of being labeled as weak or feminine prevents many men from sharing their feelings, leading to deep-seated emotional suppression. The burden of conforming to societal norms contributes to the internalization of emotions and a reluctance to seek help, perpetuating a cycle that hinders men's emotional well-being.

The Struggle to Open Up: Opening up about mental health issues can be particularly challenging for men due to various factors. Men are often conditioned to view seeking help as a sign of weakness, fearing judgment or ridicule from others. The expectation to conform to traditional masculine ideals further exacerbates the struggle, as vulnerability is mistakenly equated with a lack of masculinity. The fear of being perceived as less competent or inadequate prevents many men from seeking professional help or confiding in loved ones. This toxic cycle of silence and shame isolates men, making it difficult to cope with their mental health challenges effectively.

Suicide, Substance Abuse, and Male Sexual Abuse: The repercussions of men's mental health struggles are deeply concerning. Suicide rates among men are significantly higher compared to women (75% more), primarily due to factors such as undiagnosed depression, social isolation, and a perceived inability to seek help. Substance abuse often becomes a coping mechanism for men battling mental health issues, providing temporary relief but exacerbating their problems in the long run. Moreover, male sexual abuse, though often overlooked and stigmatized, can have severe psychological consequences, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. The reluctance to disclose experiences of sexual abuse further isolates men and intensifies the internalized shame and guilt associated with it.

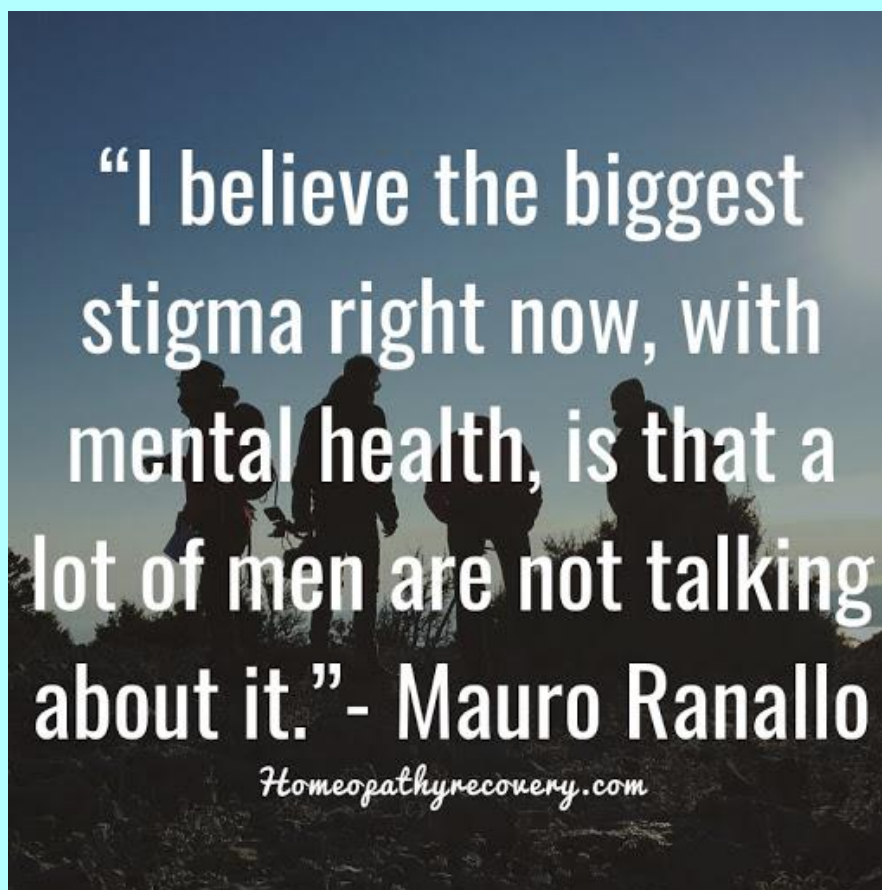
Breaking the Silence and Promoting Healing: Breaking the silence surrounding men's mental health and related challenges is crucial for fostering a healthier society. Encouraging open conversations about emotions and providing safe spaces for men to share their experiences is essential. Challenging outdated notions of masculinity and promoting empathy and understanding are vital steps toward destigmatizing men's mental health struggles, as well as issues like substance abuse and male sexual abuse. Education and awareness campaigns can help dispel myths, provide resources, and create support

networks tailored specifically for men. By creating an environment that promotes emotional well-being, we can empower men to seek help without fear of judgment, ultimately leading to happier, healthier lives and reducing the prevalence of suicide, substance abuse, and unreported male sexual abuse.

Men's mental health is a pressing issue, hindered by societal expectations that promote emotional suppression and discourage seeking help. By addressing the challenges and breaking the silence, we can create a compassionate society that supports men's mental well-being and addresses the interconnected issues they face. If you have males in your life, become a safe support to their lived experience. Hold in confidence their stories, to never judge or question, even if you don't understand. Examine your beliefs of what is masculine, what is a male, and how unconsciously those beliefs seep out unintentionally.

Equity is vitally important, it must be inclusive, and it must embrace diversity. This can be accomplished by breaking the Silence.

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The Shift Continues

March 2022 – After a full 2 years of being subjected to the Covid-19 Pandemic, its lockdowns and restrictions, its unpredictability and Public Health Regulations we felt some hope as daily numbers declined. We survived the vaccinations, the mandates for travel, border-crossings and the lack of things to do, like no restaurants, no bars, no theatres or cinemas. When the pandemic hit, people seemed to freeze. Ensnared and frozen mentally and emotionally in our homes, we worked, raised and schooled our children, looked for things to do and tried to relax while maintaining our individual social bubbles.

As we are returning to work, returning to classes, people seemed to be thawing out and moving again. But then a delusional world 'leader' decided this is a good time to attack its next-door neighbour and attempt to annex the entire country through military bullying. But this time, people did not freeze up. Instead our energy is very chaotic right now, many people feel edgy and irritated. The energy of our planet is very electricity-like. As Yoda in Stars Wars said-"There is a disturbance in the Force. "War and violence are the darkest part of the Human Shadow, and we are seeing it loud and clear as Russia's military attacks Ukraine. It is not the military that start wars, that is what politicians do. While I know many hearts are sad and outraged for the Ukrainian people, we also want to remember the citizens of Russia who did not cause this war and by all accounts, do not want this attack on their neighbour to continue.

Thousands of Russians have been arrested for protesting Putin's actions. Now more than ever spiritual practices are necessary to help us through this time. If you have believed since the beginning of the pandemic period that we were part of a great shift occurring spiritually, globally, and the Russian/Ukraine conflict is the next phase of that shift. If you didn't believe anything about spiritual shifts and the like, perhaps you might want to re-consider. As I said earlier what we are seeing, and experiencing is the dark part of the Human Shadow. It is the masculine energy, and it is rising powerfully to offset the rise of feminine energy. Wealth, money, belongings, entitlement, judgement, exclusionary behaviour and beliefs all have been the backbone of our society for the last 200 years and it has not worked. With exceptions!

Except for the 1% who got richer, the world is poorer in many ways. The divide between the haves and the have nots has grown wider and deeper with each passing decade. Although many issues rose to the surface in the last 2 years, from racism, to 2SLGBTQI+, gender, homelessness and ageism, we perhaps were not getting it as we needed to, It is hard to get anything when you feel frozen in place and feel you have no control. Now the big issue, manifestations of money, everyone's trigger point, is on the table. This time though we are not frozen but are being hit with feelings and energies that can motivate us. Although we may have no control (and we all hate that!) it doesn't mean we don't have hope.

Throughout history it has never been a large group or country that caused the biggest changes, but it has been individuals. Think of Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, Larry and many more. Your prayers, energy, donations, associations all can contribute Kramer to shifting away from this harsh reality. You are as important to this shift as any Gandhi or Mandela.

We are all here for a reason, be present in this moment, knowing that you can contribute to the greatest shift of energy and consciousness in the planet's history.

EDIT: NOV. 2023 - We have now been confronted with attack by Hamas on Israel and their retaliation. All the while, a year and a half later, Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues on. The Israeli / Hamas situation fits into what I have talking about above. It is part of the overall shift we on the planet are continuing to experience. The effect nonetheless is stressful and heartbreaking. The powers that be are sliding in the idea that these conflicts threaten the planet entering into World War 3.

Throughout the 1900's and now the 2000's the world has seen on-going conflicts. While we think of the 2 World Wars as being "the" wars, since 1945 we have seen many wars. The Korean War, the India - Pakistan - Bangladesh wars, the Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War and so on. Something to consider, perhaps we have been living World War 3 for the last 70 years. It looks different, acts differently, skirmishes rise and fall and power shifts but that is what previously happened except all at once. We often get it wrong when things look differently only to discover it is the same thing we swore never again.

Consider that each conflict collectively contributes to the shift in energies and we must contribute to this shift by ensuring we put our energy of compassion, caring and kindness out there in the world at every opportunity. Eventually, we may just get it right..

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