The Spiritual Awakening Process

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“What is this precious love and laughter
   Budding in our hearts?
   It is the glorious sound
   Of a soul waking up!”

— Hafiz
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Introduction

Humanity has reached a critical point in its evolution.

We have made huge, unprecedented strides economically, technologically and scientifically. These have brought enormous material benefits and freedoms for some of us. However, this has also given birth to a range of disturbing social, political, ecological and economic problems, creating a soulless, highly advanced society where people feel increasingly anxious, depressed and isolated from each other, lacking the meaning and purpose of being connected to something beyond the material self.

Most of us can clearly see that we are facing struggles that exist on an immense scale. The world’s population is increasing rapidly, our ecological systems are suffering tremendously, resources are becoming scarce, food is being polluted and genetically modified, the rich continue to get richer, and the poor, poorer, and our financial systems are as unstable as ever.

Individually we aren’t any better either. Our way of life is devoid of meaning, purpose, satisfaction and fulfillment, producing an ever increasing number of people with physical, emotional and mental maladies. Anxiety and depression disorders are at an all-time high, and medications only serve to mask our real illness.

Intuitively many of us know that something in our lives and the world around us needs to change. We are beginning to realize that we need to change our way of thinking, perceiving, being and behaving in the world in order to direct our attention away from the externally focused world, to the boundlessly internal one.

In other words, we need to learn how to reconnect with our souls.

Our world is so caught up in progressing externally; in the evolution of our economies, in the advancement of our technologies, and as always, in the improvement of our material lives. But we have forgotten to explore our internal lives. And our neglect shows itself in the constant chaos and suffering we create for ourselves and the surrounding world. As a result of this profound inner emptiness and turmoil, the purpose of this book is to offer a path that can help heal these wounds. We call this process Inner Work. Inner Work is a practice that involves working with our souls so that we may heal our deeply buried grief, anger, and fear.

We are all craving for wholeness; for something that takes us beyond the mundane and ordinary, for something that reconnects us with our higher selves and makes us feel whole, providing us with a sense of belonging and purpose. We’ve turned to religion, politics, and science to provide us with the solutions to these problems, but all of these methods have failed miserably.
All throughout history we have sought to answer our internal questions with external answers. In fact, most of us still repeat this misguided search, coming up flat, dead and more frustrated and confused than before.

Religion, although with noble intentions, has caused more harm than good by creating fanatical, self-denying beliefs and ideologies that are open to interpretation. Many of us are realizing this now, and organized religion is crumbling apart quickly.

Science as an answer has merely succeeded in describing HOW the world around us works, explaining what we see and feel (for example, music is a vibration within a gaseous medium), but it can never really explain WHY anything happens. From the Big Bang Theory to Quantum Mechanics, science will describe the process of how the universe comes to be without answering our thirst for a deeper meaning that we crave for existence.

Politics is just another human construction we have dabbled in for answers. Constructs such as communism, for instance, have tried to address the issues we face by misguidedly declaring that the system can change the individual without realizing that the system only exists as an illusion. Unless the individual flaws of greed, power thirst, fear, and so forth are addressed first, these flaws will ruin the entire collective system.

Although many of us are aware of these issues, we individually and collectively continue to carry on our old habits of focusing on the external world for answers and furthering our self-centeredness, materialism, and disconnection from ourselves and the world around us. This obsession with the external world all adds up to an ever increasing sense of helplessness and insignificance while we watch our leaders fail to acknowledge these problems, or else react in highly dangerous and misguided self-preserving ways.

**The Spiritual Awakening Process**

While our current personal and global situations may be disheartening, it’s a natural result of depriving ourselves of experiencing a wider reality, of failing to expand our consciousness beyond a purely material and individualistic view of ourselves and the universe.

Our vision has always been to provide support, encouragement, a sense of belonging and a pathway to self-understanding, which our increasingly superficial societies have failed to address and teach us through life. We need to transcend the values of a society that perceives the world in a fragmented and materialistic way and strive towards creating a world that is sustainable, collectively beneficial and supports the individual spiritual thirst for a more whole, fulfilling life.

This spiritual longing is what gives birth to the lone wolves of life, the sacred fringe dwellers of our planet, the social outsiders of our world, and the Old and Mature in Soul.
To live wisely, love wholeheartedly, and mature fully as individuals and collectively as a species, we must develop our inner world just as much as our outer one. We must learn how to explore the wider realms of our consciousness, appreciating that all life is an interconnected web, an energetic essence that is composed of spirit, or living energy.

One of the ways we know how to do this is to change our way of thinking, being and behaving by cultivating soulful maturing, following the paths and techniques of Inner Work that lead us towards a more soul-aware, caring and humane way of existing.

It is time to understand that we are spiritual beings that need soulful sustenance, not soulless automatons who exist solely to indulge our minds and bodies.

To do good, to be good in this world we must act from a place of inner freedom, of soulful liberation, of freedom from all of our emotional and mental needs that are tainted by self-gratification, power, and control.

To find freedom, we must go through a spiritual awakening process.

In this book, we'll share with you why and how this process happens, as well as how to retrieve, explore and communicate with your soul. This process of Inner Work will help you to live a life infused with meaning, beauty, joy and love.
“Once the soul awakens, the search begins and you can never go back. From then on, you are inflamed with a special longing that will never again let you linger in the lowlands of complacency and partial fulfillment. The eternal makes you urgent. You are loath to let compromise or the threat of danger hold you back from striving toward the summit of fulfillment.”

— John O'Donohue
Chapter 1 – Is Your Life Crisis Really a Spiritual Calling in Disguise?

"You are not dead yet, it’s not too late to open your depths by plunging into them and drink in the life that reveals itself quietly there." — Rainer Maria Rilke

In our journey towards “civilization,” we’ve found more and more ways to numb and disconnect ourselves from Spirit. We live and work in gated communities, shopping centers, and office buildings, with air conditioned houses and cars, fences, landscapers, animal controllers, and we spend our leisure time immersed in complex and absorbing technological worlds.

To deal with our soul starvation, we drown ourselves in prescription medications, alcohol, recreational drugs, consumerism and other soul-numbing forms of escapism. We even suffocate ourselves in rigid belief systems that moralize and judge others, promising to alleviate our sense of alienation from life and existential turmoil.

But our souls are wiser than all of this. There comes a moment in our lives where we grow out of the collective values and ways of living common to our societies. At a certain point in our lives, we realize that the values, attitudes, relationships and beliefs we’ve held no longer contribute to the development of who we truly are: our authentic selves.

This awakening, this life crisis, although painful, provides a vital opportunity for us to begin our spiritual journeys towards wholeness.

Three Different Types of Crisis

In our Western soul-suppressing societies, most of us experience a “true calling” towards our life purpose, but most of us never truly “hear” or answer to them.

This spiritual calling presents itself in many ways throughout our lives such as the death of loved ones, suicidal depressions, illnesses, near death experiences, divorce, and so forth. But there are three main milestones that call to us the most loudly.

The first calling is what we modernly refer to as the “quarter-life crisis.” The quarter-life crisis happens in the first quarter of life: generally after we finish high school or university. At this time in our lives, we intuitively know that we need to “find” ourselves by leaving behind our family, friends and hometowns. These people and places formed our juvenile identities as children and teenagers.

When I answered this calling, I remembered feeling intense fear and uncertainty. Saying goodbye to everyone and everything you love is a very hard task.
The second significant calling presents itself as a “midlife crisis.” This crisis may come in the form of an affair, a divorce, severe job unhappiness, an empty nest, lifeless relationships, endless life dissatisfaction, or disappointment with the way life has gone. Ultimately, in my opinion, the midlife crisis comes at a moment where you’ve gathered enough wisdom to know that you’re not going to live forever.

Most people who experience midlife crises have spent their entire lives raising a family, or working in a career. They haven’t had the time, or capacity, to ask the important questions in life. Eventually, something triggers the question, “Is this all there is?”

The third and final calling often arrives as a deathbed crisis, if we didn’t answer the previous two callings. The inevitability of an imminent death creates such immense turmoil and ego distress that the light of consciousness is finally permitted to shine through us. Many hospice workers have confirmed this with me.

Although it’s better late than never, what a shame that so many people wait until their last moments to taste truth, deep insight, and peace. Some never even experience it.

We all have to accept our imminent death someday to live life more fully. The sooner we come to terms with this, the better. But even if we receive this calling late in life, we are still blessed to receive it.

**Surrendering to the Hurricane**

Listening to your calling and accepting your spiritual awakening comes like a great hurricane.

Suddenly everything you’ve ever known is ripped away from you and lost in the tempest. The more you struggle, the more you get thrown around mercilessly. But the moment you surrender, you stand in the eye of the hurricane peacefully allowing everything that doesn’t serve you to be swept away.

Surrendering is extremely crucial in two ways. Firstly, it allows you to let go of your former limiting self, e.g. all of your beliefs, ambitions, roles, and perceptions of how you were suppose to be. And secondly, surrendering allows you to embody your Soul, that is, all of your deepest longings, dreams, and wildest passions.

It’s natural to experience fear and resistance in the face of the hurricane. You’ll need to explore deeply what parts of you are creating resistance. There are several ways to do this but the simplest way (in my opinion) is to write down how the fear feels in your body. What images and memories arise during your process of surrendering? Writing down what happened when you were “called” to the spiritual journey is also a great exercise, for example: where were you when it happened, what catalyzed it, how did your body feel, what emotions arose within you, and other significant life events connected to this moment.
As you walk into the heart of your life crisis, you will need to confide in others who are going through similar experiences. Connecting with others can bring a great sense of emotional alleviation and kinship, and you can find many online and local groups dedicated to inner awakenings.

Be prepared to experience immense loneliness as well. After all, surrendering your former worldview separates you from your habitual way of life, including your old anchors, comforts, and even friends or family members. You'll learn how to navigate this process smoothly throughout the rest of this book.

Unfortunately, a large number of people that go through life crises handle their previous responsibilities and commitments in unhealthy ways. You don’t necessarily need to quit your job, get divorced, sell your house, abandon your children, and leave your friends to embark on the spiritual path. Instead, starting your journey means becoming more in-tune with your soul, and exploring what is no longer supporting your growth and self-exploration.

I like to think of this period in life as “spiritual simplification.” In other words, what roles, relationships, activities, and possessions are in the way of Spirit flowing through you?

Four Signs You’ve Had a Spiritual Calling

So how do we know whether we’re experiencing a profound spiritual awakening, or just a momentary mood swing or desire to escape from our life responsibilities?

Mythologist Joseph Campbell notes four qualities that accompany the spiritual calling. I’ve found them to be quite accurate and useful:

1) It's not an avoidance of responsibility

Rather than providing you an opportunity to escape from your problems or burdens, a spiritual calling feels almost ominous. We all have problems we’d rather not face in our daily lives, but if you’re experiencing a spiritual calling, you’ll somehow sense that an arduous and overwhelming journey lies ahead of you. Despite this, there is a profound desire to embark on it.

2) It's familiar yet frightening

Many describe the sensation as déjà vu or "familiarity" when listening to the voice of their souls.

3) You feel as though you’ve reached the end of your current journey

Whether you want to realize it or not, you feel as though your current path has hit a dead end. What once made you happy and excited now feels empty.

4) You weren't looking for your true calling; it found you.
Your calling was unexpected and unwanted. But now you face the fork in the road that demands your decision.

Other signs include feeling intensely powerful emotions and even altered states or mystical experiences during spiritual awakenings.

Ask yourself, what would happen if you ignored this calling? What emotions arise within you at the thought, and what do they reveal? You might also like to listen to whatever you feel drawn towards, pursue it, and pay attention to whether it feels intuitively right, or has undertones of fear. When it’s a spiritual awakening or a true calling, you’ll feel closer to home with every step.
“An awakening can happen in a flash. And in a flash, you are changed forever.”

— Phil Good
Chapter 2 – Spiritual Awakening Symptoms

Spiritual awakenings initiate us into the realm of the soul that we have been disconnected from for so long. Born into a society that currently values material growth over anything else, very few of us are familiar with the mystical way of life.

Everything down to the way we plan, dress, work, and talk is based on the assumption that there is only really the external physical reality – nothing else. As a result, our lives become shallow and vacuous. We may become successful, wealthy, respected, loved or even famous, but none of these things fill the void of soullessness within us.

Thankfully, there are moments in our lives when we sense this immense empty chasm within us. For a time we may ignore its mournful calls and attempt to stuff it with material comforts and superficial excitements. But we can never quite escape it. Then, one day, quite out of the blue, our lives split in half and the ground crumbles beneath us. We fall, screaming and crying, into the void of dissolution.

However, ultimately, this spiritual crisis is the best thing that could ever happen to us.

The unsettling and equally beautiful thing about spiritual awakenings are that they occur at the least expected times. There is no way you can plan for them. They lurch into your life and shake everything up like tornadoes. But the hidden gift buried deep within them is that they occur at the precise time that you need them the most.

Spiritual Awakening Signs

Spiritual awakenings are the soul’s cry for freedom. Listen to its call and your life will be transformed into something meaningful and significant. Refuse its call and your life will be like a graveyard.

Often it can be hard to distinguish the voice of the soul from the chaos of everyday existence. Below I will share with you the primary physical, mental and emotional signs of spiritual awakening to honor within yourself:

Physical Symptoms

• Amplification of sense. For example, your sight, hearing, taste, touch and/or smell becomes intensified. You may even discover that you’re a HSP (Highly Sensitive Person).
• You discover many food intolerances that you’ve never seemed to have before (or perhaps weren’t paying attention to). Examples include allergies to wheat, nuts, legumes, soy and certain spices.

• Changed sleeping patterns, i.e. you sleep more or experience more disrupted sleep, often causing insomnia

• Vivid dreams – your dreams become scary, bizarre or intense

• Dizziness – feeling lightheaded as a result of being ungrounded during the day

• Weight change – either gaining or losing a lot of weight

• Changed eating habits – what you once liked eating no longer appeals to you. Also you may crave to experiment with other foods that you’ve never tried/liked before.

• Fluctuations in energy – feeling less energized than you used to

• Decreased or increased sex drive

• Decreased immune function (more illness), and eventually increased immune functioning

Be aware that physical symptoms vary from person to person. In other words, you might experience symptoms that haven’t been included on this list. If so, be aware of them and compassionate with yourself. This list only shares the most common physical symptoms out there.

Mental and Emotional Symptoms

These symptoms are shared by the majority of people experiencing awakenings.

1. You feel as though your life is false.

   Everything that you have built, believed and worked towards seems to be false. Your life doesn’t feel as though it’s your own.

2. You are craving for meaning and purpose.

   You deeply desire to find the meaning of your life. You have no idea what your purpose is, but you want to find it desperately.

3. You realize that a lot of what you’ve been taught is a lie.

   You start to see how many beliefs, ideals, and values are not your own, but other people’s, or inherited from your culture.

4. You feel completely lost and alone.
Nothing in your life seems to make sense anymore. You feel as though you’re wandering through an endless wilderness. As a spiritual vagabond, you feel completely alone and cut off from people.

5. You see through the illusions of society.

Materialism, success, and profit no longer mean anything to you. You start feeling as though you’re a cog in the machine of society.

6. You see how unhappy most people are.

You awaken to the unhappiness and suffering of others. You may start to explore activism or read more about the human condition. It is tormenting to you to realize how much pain there is in the world.

7. You begin experiencing deep empathy and compassion.

As you start paying more attention to the many hardships faced by man and nature alike, you develop more compassion and empathy. As a result, you may find it hard to cope with the intensity of your feelings. Experiencing emotional sensitivity is a pivotal point in your spiritual awakening process: you either numb the pain you feel with addictions, or you find healthy ways to accept and express your emotions.

8. You desire to be alone.

You crave solitude. In other words, you may have once been socially active, but now you prefer to be socially withdrawn. You also spend a lot of time introspecting and enjoying the silence. At every cost, you try to reduce social contact. At this point on your spiritual path, you may lose touch with many old (but insincere) friends.


When you do talk to people, you feel an acute sense of separation. You realize that very few people are comfortable with talking about passion, emotions, meaning and the soul. In conversations, you feel restless and irritated by the small talk. You silently scream, “Can’t anyone wake up and realize what is happening?” Your distaste for frivolous chit chat draws you more into solitude. You may become a loner.

10. You want to quit your job.

Even though you worked for years getting your degree, establishing your career, and climbing the ranks, you feel nothing but emptiness. Your job no longer provides you the sense of fulfillment that you need. You desperately crave for more.

11. You thirst for authenticity and truth.

Being true to yourself becomes your priority. You hate faking and putting on the old masks that you used to wear. You want to be completely authentic. Pretense makes you feel sick and disgusted.

12. You become aware of your old negative habits.
You are painfully aware of your flaws and destructive habits. Within you, a strong urge arises to wipe the slate clean and start over.


You may go through deep bouts of existential depression or persistent anxiety. The shock of plunging into your awakening leaves you feeling unstable. You may be misdiagnosed with a mental illness.

14. You want to make the world a better place.

When everything’s said and done, you want to leave the world a better place.

15. You deeply want to understand WHO you are.

Endless questions arise about your identity and your life, for example, “Who am I?” “Why was I born?” “What am I here to do?” “What is the purpose of my existence?” As a result, you begin reading many self-help books and spiritual texts. No wonder you ended up reading this book!

16. Your intuition is heightened.

Gradually you begin to listen to the still, small voice within. You allow it to guide your decisions. Eventually, you start to uncover your hidden away gifts and talents.

17. More synchronicity.

You start becoming conscious of the many signs and omens that life brings to you. Life becomes much more receptive and interactive with you. Serendipity, or synchronicity, and déjà vu increase.

18. You feel more wonder and curiosity.

The smallest things start to bring you joy and bliss: a falling leaf, a spider's web, a child’s laughter, a puddle. Life is no longer ignored – it is seen as magical, amazing and beautiful.

19. You start to love unconditionally.

As the barriers of the ego breakdown, you begin to love other people without expectations or conditions. You lose interest in drama, conflict and anything that perpetuates hatred.

20. You see that we are all One.

Not only do you intellectually understand that we are all interconnected, but you feel it deeply within your bones. You realize that our thoughts and beliefs influence reality and that we are all fragments of one great Whole – that is, Spirit. Having experienced that we are this Oneness, you find peace at last. Sometimes this stage can take years or even an entire lifetime to experience.
As you can see, the spiritual awakening process is a profoundly life-changing experience.

“There is a candle in your heart, ready to be kindled.

There is a void in your soul, ready to be filled.

You feel it, don’t you?”

— Rumi
Chapter 3 – The Three Worlds of the Spiritual Journey

Most people in the modern world have resigned themselves to a cliched existence, indulging in endless distractions. They go through life with a minimal or pseudo-faith and avoid grasping the emptiness of their lives. They are endlessly haunted by the shallowness of their relationships, neurotic issues, and inescapable loneliness.

And yet there’s so much more to us as a species than what we know. You and I carry the most mysterious and magnificent qualities within us imaginable, yet we unknowingly guard and protect the great gift that is our Souls from the world. It’s so easy for us to feel meaningless when we perceive ourselves as mere cogs in society’s machine. The truth is that we are much more than slaves of 9 to 5 jobs. We are capable of creating deeply meaningful, mystical and fulfilling lives. We are capable of finding our true calling.

For centuries the indigenous people throughout the world have known that to explore the depths of the Soul fully we must venture into a spiritual journey of the unknown darkness within ourselves. In many ancient cultures, there were Elders and Shamans to encourage and oversee these quests toward a deeper spiritual existence. Sadly, these days in our cultures, we have lost such sacred rites and rituals. Instead, orthodox religion has replaced living spirituality with a theoretical God, dismissing and outlawing personal experimentation and union with the Divine.

Listening to Your True Calling

People have felt this pull toward something greater than themselves since the beginning of time. Ancient cultures had many stories that served to illustrate the journey to wholeness or Nirvana. These journeys mythologist Joseph Campbell described as the “Calls to Adventure.” A call to adventure is something we all experience at least once in life. When we embark on this adventure, we begin the process of gaining self-understanding and reclaiming our precious soul gifts.

The archetype of the hero or heroine discovering their true spiritual nature goes back thousands of years. The Greek’s told the story of Orpheus who descended into the underworld to rescue his bride Eurydice from Hades. The Nordic people had their hero-warrior Beowulf, and the Sumerians wrote of Inanna who battled her sister in the dark world. Through history, there have been so many stories of individuals who have struggled through hardship to find themselves.

These heroes symbolize our spiritual journeys: of leaving everything behind, entering the unknown, encountering countless unconscious monsters, and finally returning home with a sense of renewed fulfillment and wisdom.
The Three Sacred Worlds

“The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you. Don’t go back to sleep. You must ask for what you really want. Don’t go back to sleep. People are going back and forth across the doorsill where the two worlds touch. The door is round and open. Don’t go back to sleep.” — Rumi

At some point in life, we all experience the “call to adventure.” Often our journeys start when we experience sudden spiritual awakenings or the dark night of the soul. Often without wanting to, we are cast onto the path of soulful expansion.

Like you, I have wandered these paths and have at times wound up lost and confused. For this reason, I find it useful to map out the spiritual journey in a way that helps the human mind know where it is, and where it will go next. My Andean ancestry speaks of three worlds that we can experience in life: the Upper World (Hanaq Pacha), the Middle World (Kay Pacha) and the Lower World (Ukhu Pacha).

In many traditions and mythologies, these three worlds correspond to the different realms of Self. The Upper World is the home of Spirit, the Underworld the home of Souls, and the Middle World is the home of the physical body and human ego. Different practices and techniques are used in each of the three realms to help us spiritually mature and rediscover joy, peace, and wholeness.

Below I’ll explore each of these realms with you:

Middle World

Purpose: Personality development

In our everyday lives, we function within the middle world. The middle world is responsible for our ego development, and yet many people on the spiritual path ignore this vital element of inner growth. Without developing a healthy personality, our spiritual growth reaches a dead end.

In life, we all begin within the middle world, or physical realm. As children and teenagers, we go through various years of personality change and growth. Finally, as adults, we all have developed unique personalities. However, many of us fail to continue our self-development, getting lost in corporate jobs and the pursuit of money, status, and fame.

The goal of the middle world path is to develop a healthy personality or ego. Tasks involved in this process involve the exploration of core emotional wounds, self-love, and the cultivation of authenticity. A healthy adult ego will be able to love freely, be vulnerable, express creativity, and display empathy towards others.
We cannot develop a healthy personality by using techniques from the Upper or Under World such as meditation or shadow work. Instead, we must use techniques that pertain to ego development and healing such as assertiveness training, non-violent communication techniques, cognitive behavioral therapy, NLP, and other psychological avenues of self-development.

**Under World**

**Purpose:** Soul discovery

Our Soul is the vital, mysterious and wild core of our individual selves. It is a unique essence in each of us that goes deeper than our personalities. Think of the Soul as one of many rivers that runs back to the ocean of Spirit. Our Souls contain our heartfelt purposes, unique meanings, gifts, and the ultimate significance of our individual lives. To access these deep layers and qualities, we must descend into the Under World of our unconscious minds.

Unfortunately, for thousands of years, our culture has “protected” us from the hardships and dangers of the descent into the Soul. This protection has been done through the establishment of comfortable, predictable and clockwork lives that revolve around material pleasures and shallow values. In fact, thanks to religious thought, the descent into our Under Worlds has been condemned as “evil” and wayward. Only Shamanic cultures and a few Western mystical schools like Hermeticism and Alchemy have dedicated themselves to exploring the Under World.

For centuries, the descent into the Under World has been so feared and avoided because it is a perilous journey. There is a reason why Christianity referred to this place as “hell.” Within our Under Worlds lie our repressed thoughts, feelings, desires, and even denied gifts. Often when we descend, or inscend, into ourselves, we come across many demons, ghastly creatures and other parts of our Shadow Selves that we’ve been hiding from or suppressing. The Shadow Self is a part of ourselves that contains all of the repressed, feared, rejected and wounded aspects of our identities.

However, despite the fact that the Under World journey can be such a harrowing and haunting experience, it is ultimately a life-changing odyssey. Only by descending into our personal Under Worlds can we sincerely come to terms with our true life callings, talents, gifts, and deepest values.

Under World, or Inner Work techniques, include practices that allow us to access altered states of consciousness. These may include crafts such as lucid dreaming, drumming, shadow work, shamanic trances, vision quests, etc.

**Upper World**

**Purpose:** Uniting with Spirit
The Upper World journey, or that of the ascent, is what we often refer to as Self-Realization. There comes a moment in our journey between the Middle World and the Under World in which a perfect balance is formed, allowing us to move up into the Upper World. For example, it’s much harder to “Spiritually Awaken” to the Upper World when our unconscious minds are plagued with deep childhood traumas (that stem from the Under World), trust issues (Under World problem) and poor self-esteem (Middle World problem).

We enter the path of ascent into the Upper World when we learn to surrender our ego identification and soul identification. Ultimately, we not only intellectually understand that everything is One, but we experience it at a core level. At this point, we are free from the illusion of having a separate self. This experience is also commonly referred to as the state of Enlightenment.

This permanent shift of consciousness is about merging with the Infinite, Divine, Eternal and Absolute. Techniques used to taste this state of being are often found in the mystical schools of Zen, Kundalini, Taoism, Sufism and disciplines such as meditation and yoga.

Unfortunately, many people in the spiritual community believe that ascension is all that is needed to experience peace and wholeness. As a result, the Middle World and Under World paths have been cast aside as if they don’t matter. However, only focusing on your “higher chakras,” cultivating positivity and oneness with Spirit, creates lopsided individuals. When the darker and more practical elements of self-growth are ignored, the result is imbalanced and unhealthy human beings.

**Preparation For Your Journey**

The spiritual journey to enlightenment, or wholeness, is not like climbing a mountain. We rarely start at the bottom and climb to the top. Instead, for most of us the spiritual journey is like hiking through a beautiful, but a perilous range of valleys. Our spiritual journeys alternate between periods of descending and ascending. In one period of our lives, we may cultivate our connection with Spirit, while in other parts of our lives, we may plunge into the Soul to heal core wounds, or the Middle World to develop self-love.

Finally, it is possible and also quite common to get hung up in these valleys. Many of us become lost, distracted, and even forget why we were trying to get to the top of the mountain in the first place. However, with guidance, willpower, and persistence, we can make our way through. That is the purpose of this book.

In the end, you will find that the spiritual journey is like a mystical marriage between the ego, the Soul, and the Spirit. One cannot exist without the other.
"Paradoxically, we achieve true wholeness only by embracing our fragility and sometimes, our brokenness."

— Jalaja Bonheim
Chapter 4 – How to Connect With Your Soul

Immediately after experiencing a spiritual awakening, it is common for us to develop the deep longing to find our life purpose and connect with our souls. This craving marks the beginning of the spiritual odyssey. Unfortunately, the problem is that we often don’t know where to start, and usually, no matter how hard we try, we can’t seem to reconnect with our souls. This inability to connect with the soul is referred to as the Dark Night of the Soul in which we feel completely cut off from the Divine.

The reason why most of us can’t reconnect with our souls is due to an experience known as soul loss. When we experience soul loss, we feel depressed, isolated, fatigued, empty, and prone to chronic illness and anxiety. These are all hallmark symptoms of the Dark Night of the Soul.

Soul loss is the root of most issues in our society. When we undergo soul loss, we experience a hellish version of reality that feels dark, lonely, scary and broken. In this state, we are prone to hurting others, and hurting ourselves. Often, soul loss is the product of early life trauma. These traumas were often manifested as physical, emotional, psychological or even spiritual abuse from our parents, carers, teachers and friends. Because of soul loss, we find it almost impossible to communicate with our souls in the present moment.

The first step on the spiritual path is to learn how to reconnect with our souls through Inner Work. To do this, we must learn how to explore, heal, love and integrate our inner wounds. In the next few chapters, we’ll explore some of the most powerful Inner Work techniques to help you do that. But first, let’s explore soul loss more.
Chapter 5 – Are You Experiencing Soul Loss?

In our society, there is a mysterious phenomenon occurring known as “Soul Loss” arising in all people of all ages, genders, races and backgrounds.

Indigenous people have known about the occurrence of Soul Loss for millennia, and understand it as the result of an inner fragmentation caused by unawareness, a traumatic experience, or, an intense shock to the mind and body.

When we experience Soul Loss, a part of our psyche “hides” or shuts away, hindering us from expressing and experiencing our true potential and wholeness as human beings. Often, entire aspects of our psyches are completely blocked out or repressed.

When people think of Soul “Loss,” it’s easy to believe mistakenly that parts of our Soul become lost – this is not the case. Rather, Soul Loss literally means “losing touch with the soul.” Our Souls are completely whole, undivided and intact; they can never be destroyed or harmed because they are an expression of Spirit itself. Instead, it is our psyches or psychological egos that become fragmented. So when a part of our conscious self goes into hiding to form a blockage in the unconscious mind, we refer to this as Soul Loss because we lose connection to our Souls. In other words, it is psychological trauma that prevents us from fully opening ourselves to the Soul and its sacred source of power, love, and strength.

While Soul Loss may sound uncomfortably familiar to many of us, this experience is usually temporary, and with the proper Inner Work, these lost elements of ourselves can be actively reintegrated into our lives.

What Is Soul Loss?

In the shamanistic perspective, Soul Loss occurs when the soul travels off into other realms, or alternate realities, sometimes being possessed by spirits. When these parts of our souls aren't recovered, such ancient cultures believe that we can't find inner completion or wholeness.

Before psychology, this explanation was the only way primal cultures could explain such a common phenomenon to find ways to treat it – and it was helpful at the time.

Soul Loss is, in fact, the rule rather than the exception. As individuals, unless we have thoroughly gone through the spiritual awakening process, we lose our soulful energy every time we identify with our egos; every time we seek to feel whole again through addictions, stimulation seeking, dogmatic beliefs, conditional relationships, and workaholism.
Aside from our incapacity to feel whole, when we experience Soul Loss we begin experiencing feelings of weakness, fatigue, depression, anxiety and emptiness. We just know something is missing from our lives – but many of us struggle to discover what exactly is missing. To understand Soul Loss as a detachment, or disconnection, from the most vital parts of who we are, is known in psychology as “dissociation” – a root of many mental maladies.

The Psychology Behind Soul Loss

Once we recognize our souls (or consciousness) as energy, anything that creates a reduction in this energy will result in listlessness, moroseness, and depression.

To create an imbalance within the psyche is to allow the individual parts of the personality (e.g. the shadow self, anima, animus, etc.) to make themselves independent and thus escape the control of the conscious mind.

Psychologist Carl Jung understood this process as relating to our “psychic libido.” Jung proposed that our psychological personalities were composed of different “complexes” (or parts of our sense of self), and the primary one of those responsible for control over all the others was our “ego” which is the mental image we have of ourselves, or what we believe ourselves to be. Our conscious energy can be weakened due to one of these “complexes” escaping the control of our ego and being repressed into the subconscious, therefore leeching all of our psychic libido energy and creating a psychological imbalance that shatters our natural wholeness.

So what provokes one of our psychological complexes to emancipate itself and become a tyrannical usurper of consciousness? Often the answer is that identifying with something harmful, or experiencing a trauma of some kind creates this phenomenon.

An extreme example might help us understand better:

Imagine that a young child is molested or abused. In order to cope with the horrendous experience, the child escapes by disassociating, or detaching, from the situation. In the process of protecting themselves, the child creates various alter egos, or entirely different personalities within themselves as a defense mechanism. In psychology, this is treated as “multiple personality disorder” (now known as Dissociative Identity Disorder). It is easy to understand how tribal cultures would have perceived this as a loss of the Soul. But essentially, psychological disassociation is nature’s way of protecting our physical organism against intense trauma and loss by blocking these wounding situations out. In the end, however, it is our responsibility to protect our spiritual organism, or our soul.

But Soul Loss, or psychological disassociation, is not limited to these extreme cases and can be found in different degrees in most people. Addictions, eating disorders, identity disorders, post-traumatic stress, depression, codependency, narcissism, low self-esteem, and adjustment disorders are all common causes for (and symptoms of)
Soul Loss in our superficial, fast-paced, materialistic modern societies that are mostly devoid of all sense of sacredness.

A young woman who dreams of being an artist but has to live up to her parent’s expectations of being a doctor will lose a little bit of connection to her soul, ignoring an essential part of her being. Or suppose the young woman does go ahead and follow her dream of being an artist, but deep down she still depends on her parent’s approval. She then either blames them to avoid taking responsibility for pursuing her passion, or she develops low in self-esteem because she is not accepted by them. This story might sound familiar to you.

Fortunately, there are many ways of finding wholeness again.

**Signs You Might Be Experiencing Soul Loss**

There are a variety of physical, psychological and spiritual symptoms connected to Soul Loss. When we experience Soul Loss – or parts of our psyche “hiding away” or disassociating from us – the result is a loss in soulful energy, or the very vitality of our lives. This loss of energy prevents us from living healthy, fulfilling and creative lives. Sometimes Soul Loss can last for a whole lifetime, resulting in the development of a self-destructive person who we often refer to as a “lost soul” in our English language.

To recover these lost parts of ourselves, and to become balanced, whole and centered once again, we must first identify the symptoms of Soul Loss within us. Below you will find some of the most common symptoms:

- Memories and parts of your life have been blocked out.
- You experience strong periods of depression.
- Parts within you feel missing or broken.
- You experience a general numbness towards life.
- Constant feelings of fear or anxiety plague you.
- You go through long periods of insomnia.
- You feel lost or incomplete.
- You feel like a “different person” after a shocking or traumatic life event.
- You feel stuck or incapable of overcoming a certain issue in your life.
- You feel disappointed with life.
- You feel as though there are multiple “selves” within you.
- You try to escape by turning to alcohol, drugs, sex, television, or excessive busyness.
• You feel unworthy of being loved.
• You are experiencing a dark night of the soul.
• You want to find your purpose and meaning in life.
• You feel like your daily life is meaningless and task-driven.
• You avoid feeling vulnerable and keep others at a distance.
• You long for wholeness and a sense of belonging.
• You sometimes feel that you're not in control of yourself.
• You constantly feel mentally or physically fatigued for no medical reason.
• You thirst for authenticity and complete acceptance of yourself.

To be healthy, to feel whole and to live a harmonious life, you must recover the lost vital parts of yourself by learning to live a life of balance, authenticity, and self-love.

Finding the fragments of your psyche that are lost and reintegrating them into your life helps you to reconnect to the innate wholeness and vitality that is your Soul.

Next, you'll discover how to reintegrate the lost elements of your psyche through the practice of Inner Work so that you can live a mindful and soul-centered existence.
Chapter 6 – How to Practice Soul Retrieval

When I was a young boy my Abuela (grandmother), would do something very strange. Every time I fell or hurt myself, she would quickly grab me by the head and whisper into my ear a prayer. This prayer was to call my Soul back.

I was always puzzled by her sudden prayers until she explained to me why she did them. As I mentioned previously, in shamanic cultures, Soul Loss is understood to be a spiritual illness. In other words, when a part of our psyche fragments, all kinds of emotional, physical and mental diseases occur from the diminishment of our life force energy. It is therefore seen as vital for parts of the psyche to return to wholeness again.

To some extent, we all experience a level of Soul Loss in our lives. Many people don’t feel whole. Ask yourself this question, “When was the last time I felt absolutely whole and complete?” If you’re like most people, that time may have been back in childhood. Perhaps you can’t even remember a time when you ever felt whole.

Because of the mass phenomenon of Soul Loss, issues such as addiction, chronic sickness, diseases, abusive relationships, crime, shopaholism and workaholism run rife in our society. All of these issues stem from Soul Loss.

Common causes of Soul Loss include:

• Any form of abuse, e.g. sexual, emotional, physical or mental
• An event of prolonged grief, pain and fear that made you feel helpless or impotent
• Deep-seated addictions e.g. substance dependency
• A near-death or out-of-body experience
• Being forced to act against your morals
• An experience of intense rejection or abandonment
• Witnessing the unexpected death of someone
• A sudden and shocking accident
• Entering a relationship without strong boundaries of Self (resulting in an unhealthy relationship and losing your personal power)
• Religious conditioning
• Anything that caused extreme fear within you

In this light, it’s easy to think of Soul Loss as something bad that has happened to us. However, here it’s important to realize that Soul Loss is in fact, a gift.
In the same way that you become unconscious when you’re experiencing immense amounts of physical pain, your soul is wise and knows your conscious limits. Your soul knows what your psyche can and can’t handle, so your psyche hides away as a survival mechanism to protect you from feeling the fullness of pain.

This splitting of the psyche only becomes an obstacle when the pieces aren’t actively retrieved. This fragmentation of the psyche is what leads to chronic depression, suicidal tendencies, post traumatic stress syndrome, addictions, immune deficiency problems, and grief that refuses to heal.

However, the retrieval of these psychological pieces is not the end of the work. We must then learn how to integrate them back into our lives so that we can recover the vital power, potential, and energy they possess.

Without being able to connect with our soul, we don’t feel whole. Instead, we feel weak, depressed, anxious, or empty. We feel as if something is missing, and we’ll fill that emptiness with anything we can.

However, once we’ve recovered these lost pieces, we can experience the following benefits:

• Feeling more grounded in our body and more “solid”
• Feeling energized, awake, and more alive
• Greater presence in the world
• More awareness of our choices, behaviors and decisions
• Lightness and joy
• Awareness of huge amounts of energy we didn't know we had
• Mental clarity and a new sense of hope
• Physical well-being and less sickness
• A sense of purpose and renewed direction
• Deeper sleep
• Overcoming addictive dependencies (drugs, food, work)
• A new-found wholeness and sense of belonging

To undergo Soul Retrieval, you will benefit from having an experienced guide. However, shamans are not the only healers that can perform Soul Retrieval. Other healing practices such as hypnosis, witchcraft, and psychoanalysis all have methods for integrating split-off or lost parts of the self. It is also possible to retrieve the lost parts of your psyche yourself, which we will explore a little later.
The Soul Retrieval Journey

Soul Retrieval refers to the ability to retrieve access to the soul through the integration of lost or repressed psychological pieces.

To retrieve a psychological part as a shaman, we typically enter trance states with the client. This altered state of consciousness helps us to journey into one of the three spirit worlds (generally the Underworld) where we are accompanied by spirit helpers with the intent to retrieve a particular part of the psyche. We narrate the whole journey to the client or visualize it through active imagination.

In these Soul Retrieval journeys, we encounter strong, often harsh energies that manifest themselves through the archetypal images of monsters, reptiles, dragons and other dangerous beasts. These are the Guardians of the Psyche, or in psychotherapy, they are known as defense mechanisms of the mind. We must overcome these with the help of our spirit helpers so that we can persuade the psychological part to come back.

Once we have retrieved the psychological part, we reintegrate it together with the client. This process of reintegration is usually done energetically (by blowing the energy into the body), through a ceremony, or through cognitive tools (such as inner child work or Gestalt therapy).

Soul Retrieval is only successful if the person who is healed consciously decides to use this newfound energy to cultivate healthy choices that support their wholeness. This process of healing is a two-way dance!

If you've done a lot of Inner Work, Soul Retrieval might come right at the end of your journey. On the other hand, Soul Retrieval might be the first step you take to help you rediscover your wholeness.

Soul Retrieval Techniques

While you will benefit from having a skilled healer assist with your soul retrieval, it is also possible to perform soul retrieval on yourself. However, please note that this is much more challenging, and not everyone manages to retrieve and especially reintegrate their soul parts.

There are many Inner Work practices out there that can help you to retrieve the repressed parts of your psyche. Here are a few examples:

• Visualization
• Self-hypnosis
• Automatic writing
• Art therapy
• Breathwork
• Dream analysis
• Oracle cards
• Silence and contemplation
• Mindfulness meditation
• Sacred ritual
• Surrender and non-resistance
• Exploration of core beliefs
• Discovery of core wounds
• Self-love
• Spirit Guide discovery and assistance
• Discovering your power place
• Inner Child Work
• Self-inquiry
• Shadow Work

These are only a few examples of possible soul retrieval techniques. Because there are so many methods, we'll share with you a few powerful practices in the next few chapters.
Chapter 7 – Inner Child Work

The first method of soul retrieval is something known as inner child work.

No matter how big or small, almost all of us experienced some kind of trauma as children.

These wounds could vary from having your favorite stuffed toy thrown in the trash, to being abandoned by your best childhood friend, to being physically or emotionally abused by your parents.

Inner child work is a vital component of Inner Work because it reconnects us with a wounded element of ourselves: the child within. When we reconnect with this fragmented part of ourselves, we can begin to discover the root of many of our fears, phobias, insecurities and sabotaging life patterns – this is where the authentic healing happens!

Likely, you’ll be surprised by what you discover through inner child work. Instead of simply looking at a symptom of your pain, you’ll go right to the core and reveal when a fear, phobia or certain life pattern began.

Types of Childhood Trauma

Firstly it's important to understand that there are different types of childhood trauma. These include the physical (including sexual), emotional and mental variety. When a childhood trauma is severe or repeated enough, it results in soul loss; this is why inner child work is a major soul retrieval technique.

However, not all childhood traumas result in soul loss — but they do result in a wounded psyche. When our psyche is harmed, the result is a life spent struggling with problems such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, phobias, destructive behavioral patterns, and even chronic illnesses.

Examples of childhood trauma could include:

• Being hit or smacked by your parents/grandparents/caretakers

• Having an emotionally unavailable parent who withholds affection

• Being “punished” through kicking, shaking, biting, burning, hair pulling, pinching, scratching or “washing out the mouth” with soap

• Being the recipient of molestation, shown pornography, or any other type of sexual contact from a parent, relative or friend
• Being the child of divorce
• Being given inappropriate or burdensome responsibilities (such as caring for your parents)
• Not being fed or provided a safe place to live from your parents
• Abandonment (or your caretakers leaving you alone for long periods of time without a babysitter)
• Emotional neglect, i.e. not being nurtured, encouraged or supported
• Being deliberately called names or verbally insulted
• Denigration of your personality
• Destruction of personal belongings
• Excessive demands
• Humiliation
• Car accidents, or other spontaneous traumatic events

There are many more examples of childhood trauma out there, but I just wanted to provide you with a few to give you an idea of what inner child work helps to heal. It's also important to remember that our parents weren’t the only ones responsible for provoking childhood trauma — our grandparents, brothers, sisters, extended family members, family friends, and childhood friends may have also played a part.

**What is Inner Child Work?**

This leads us to the definition of inner child work:

Inner child work is the process of contacting, understanding, embracing and healing your inner child. Your inner child represents your first original self that entered into this world; it contains your capacity to experience wonder, joy, innocence, sensitivity and playfulness.

Unfortunately, we live in a society that forces us to repress our inner child and “grow up.” But the truth is that while most adults physically “grown up,” they never quite reach emotional or psychological adulthood. In other words, most “grown ups” aren’t adults at all. This inability to reach true adulthood leaves most people in a state of puerile fears, anger and traumas that fester away in the unconscious mind for decades.

Denying and suffocating the voice of the child within causes us to accumulate heavy psychological baggage. This unexplored and unresolved baggage causes us to experience problems such as mental illnesses, physical ailments, and relationship dysfunction.
In fact, it could be said that the lack of conscious relatedness to our inner child is one of the major causes of the severe issues we see in today’s society. From the brutal way we treat the environment, to the cruel way we talk to ourselves, we have become completely separated from our original innocence.

**How to Work With Your Inner Child**

Learning to work with your inner child isn’t about becoming childish again, it is about reconnecting with your childLIKE side.

In other words, there is a big difference between being childish and childlike.

Being childish can be thought of as behaving in an immature or naive way. Being childlike on the other hand can be thought of as a state of purity and innocence.

We all have the capacity to experience our original innocence; that period in our lives when we saw the world with openness and wonder.

To remove the guilt, shame, fear, hatred, self-loathing and anger that we carry with us, we have to heal the child within. To recover from soul loss, we must show the inner child that we care for it. And to do this, we must earn the trust of our inner child through love and self-nurturing.

Here are four of the most powerful ways to perform inner child work:

1. **Speak to your inner child**

   Acknowledge your inner child and let it know that you’re there for it. Treat it with kindness and respect.

   Some self-nurturing things you could say to your inner child include, for example:

   - I love you (completely and unconditionally)
   - I hear you (and I am receptive to you)
   - I’m sorry (for the way I have treated you in the past, or for not listening)
   - Thank you (for being there for me)
   - I forgive you (for anything you believe you’ve done in the past)

   Make a habit of talking to your inner child. You could also communicate through journal work by asking your inner child a question, then writing down the response.

2. **Look at pictures of yourself as a child.**
Go through old photo albums and rediscover the face of your younger self. Let that image burn into your brain because it will serve you well throughout the rest of your inner child work. You might even like to put photos of yourself next to your bedside table, in your wallet, or around the house just to remind yourself of your inner child’s presence.

3. Recreate what you loved to do as a child.

Sit down and think about what you loved to do as a child. Maybe you liked climbing trees, playing with toy blocks, cuddling toy bears or eating warm porridge. Make time to include whatever activity you enjoyed doing as a child in your present life.

Through inner child work, people have told me that they’ve connected to sides of themselves that they never even knew existed as adults. This discovery is truly life-changing. It’s important that you make a habit of this “play time” and explore any embarrassment or silliness you feel towards it. It’s completely normal to feel a bit foolish at first, but it’s important to keep an open mind.

4. Do an inner journey.

One of the most powerful ways to reconnect with your inner child to heal childhood traumas is to do an inner journey.

For beginners, I recommend two types of inner journeys: those done through meditation, and those done through visualization.

To do these inner journeys, it is important that you first gain the trust of your inner child through the previous activities. Once you have developed a strong connection to your inner child, you can then ask it to reveal what earlier life circumstances created the trauma you’re struggling with today.

How to do a meditation journey:

Connecting to your inner child through meditation is a passive process: just breathe deeply, relax, allow yourself to witness your thoughts, and ask your question. For example, you might like to ask, “Dear inner child, when was the first time I experienced trauma in my life?”

Allow yourself to witness the thoughts that rise and fall within your mind. Your inner child may or may not decide to reveal the answer to you. Remember to be patient, loving and accepting. If your inner child doesn’t want to reveal the answer, embrace that. It’s important that your inner child feels safe, secure, and ready.
You might like to repeat your question every now if nothing of significance arises inside of your mind. Remember that your inner child can communicate with you through words, thoughts, feelings and even memories. This process could take anywhere from a couple of minutes to 1 hour or more.

Tips — To do the inner child meditation journey, you’ll need to have experience meditating. Learning to witness your thoughts can take a lot of practice, so if you’re not used to meditating, you might struggle with this technique.

*How to do a visualization journey:*

A more active way to connect with your inner child and earlier life traumas is through visualization.

To connect with your inner child through visualization, you must create a “power place” or safe place. To do this, you must visualize a beautiful garden or any place in which you feel safe, empowered and whole. After entering your power place, you can then invite your inner child to speak with you.

Here are a few steps:

• Relax, close your eyes and breathe deeply.

• Imagine that you’re walking down a dark, but friendly staircase.

• At the bottom of the staircase is your power place, or safe place. In this place you feel strong, safe and supported.

• Feel the anticipation arise as you descend down to the bottom of the staircase. What will your power place look like?

• Once you have arrived at the bottom of the staircase, open the door that appears in front of you. Look inside. This is your power place. What does it look like?

• Spend a bit of time in your power place. Soak it in. What does it look like, smell like and sound like? For example, your power place might be next to the ocean, within a botanical garden, or inside of a children’s nursery.

• After you have acquainted yourself with your power place, imagine that your younger self has entered, perhaps through a door or waterfall. If you want to connect with your baby self, you might discover them resting in a patch of grass or in a cot.

• Say hello, hug your younger self and make them feel home.

• When you’re ready, ask your inner child your question, e.g. “When was the first time you/I felt sad or scared or experienced trauma?” You might like to phrase the question in child terminology.
• Await their response. Keep in mind that your inner child may interact with you through words, thoughts, images, or even telepathically.

• If your inner child isn’t prepared to speak to you yet, honor their decision. Refrain from trying to force or persuade them to talk to you. Remember that gaining, and maintaining, their trust is essential.

• Make sure that you hug them, thank them, and tell them how much they mean to you.

• Say goodbye to them.

• Leave your power place and ascend up the stairs.

• Return to normal consciousness.

These are very basic steps, but they provide a good outline of how to perform an inner child visualization journey.

As children, we perceived the world very differently from our adult selves. Because of this, many of the things we presently assume never hurt us as children may have left deep scars within our psyches. The difference between our adult perception and childlike understanding is why it’s important never to make assumptions about your inner child.

Through inner child work, you can learn to grieve, heal and resolve any sources of trauma you’ve been unconsciously holding on to for years. This type of Inner Work can liberate you and allow you to reconnect with your soul, find your purpose, and experience authentic joy and fulfillment.
"You have to love yourself because no amount of love from others is sufficient to fill the yearning that your soul requires from you."

— Dodinsky
Chapter 8 – Self-Love

The second method of soul retrieval is something known as self-love.

All throughout our early lives we were taught how to read, how to write, how to calculate, mold, alter, build, destroy, theorize, study and analyze life. We were taught how to say “please” and “thank you,” as well as what was acceptable and unacceptable to others and society at large … but most of us failed to be educated in one essential dimension of life: self-love.

For most of us, self-denial and self-sacrifice were two of the main values taught in our childhoods, and continue to be emphasized as the markers of a “kind, caring and worthy human being” to this very day.

Unfortunately, these two values teach us nothing more than the profound emotional and psychological pain of being a self-imposed martyr with no real understanding of genuine self-love.

So what is the result of not being taught the value of self-love in childhood, and adopting the socially acceptable guise of a martyr later in life?

The result of not practicing self-love is depression, bitterness, anxiety, resentment, and grief.

The truth is that without first learning how to love ourselves, how can we truly know how to love others? This maxim applies to each and every being on the planet regardless of race, gender, religion or culture.

To use an analogy, how can an empty cup be used to quench the thirst of another? It is impossible. Likewise, it is impossible for us to give love if we haven’t first filled ourselves.

Coming to terms with the fact that we were brainwashed to behave as self-sacrificial martyrs can be hard to accept at first. The good news is that with time and persistence, we can learn how to heal ourselves. In essence, we can teach ourselves to become doctors of the soul; healing our wounds, curing our sicknesses, and maintaining optimum health through the development of self-love.

Here are some powerful self-love practices to assist in your process of soul retrieval:

1. Change your diet

Swap processed, fatty and sugary foods, with whole, unprocessed and low-fat foods. So much research has shown the link between food and the mind. Eating the wrong
types of food is a sign of self-neglect and contributes to physical, emotional and even mental illnesses. Try slowly cutting out junk food, and experience the immense benefits!

2. Identify your negative thinking patterns

Within all of us, there are subtle and incessant voices that sabotage and paralyze us, and these are the voices of our subpersonalities. Cultivating self-awareness through practices such as mindfulness meditation is the key to overcoming negative self-talk.

3. Get 7-8 hours of sleep every night

Also, ensure you set a stable bedtime! Getting less than the recommended 7-8 hours of sleep every night lowers your immunity, contributes to chronic fatigue, moodiness, depression, anxiety issues, and chronic pain (or fibromyalgia). Aim to go to bed around 10 pm and rise at 6 am. You will feel the difference mentally and emotionally!

4. Learn quiet assertiveness

It is not necessary to be obnoxious about what you do and don’t want out of others and life in general. But it is essential to know how to stand up for yourself and set healthy boundaries.

5. Explore your mental traps

Low self-esteem is often a result of false and unrealistic thought patterns that are deeply ingrained within us. These patterns are composed of mental traps such as assumptions, beliefs, comparisons, desires, expectations and ideals about ourselves and others. One great way to explore your mental traps is by keeping a daily diary of your private thoughts and feelings.

6. Treat yourself like you would your best friend

Often, we are our worst mortal enemies. In order to heal ourselves, it is important for us to change our relationships with ourselves consciously, and treat ourselves with compassion and consideration just as we would with a best friend.

7. Welcome solitude into your life

When we don’t make space in our lives to be alone, it is easy for us to burn out, become disoriented and even ill. Each day, make time for yourself to unwind, relax and reflect, alone. Solitude gives you insight, perspective and reinstates harmony in your life.

8. Meditate for self-awareness

Becoming self-aware is a key skill in life, a gift that allows you to identify your self-destructive patterns of thought and behavior, and find more peace and balance in life. Meditation, although frustrating and seemingly meaningless at first, is a silently strong practice with endless benefits. Aim for 10-15 minutes each morning first thing.

9. Identify toxic people in your life
Toxic people make us feel wretched and significantly lower the quality of our daily lives. Toxic people are often judgmental, manipulative, clingy, backstabbing, ruthless, aggressive, controlling, deceitful, self-pitying and self-destructive. While it is important to learn that such people act out from a place of pain, it’s also vital to take care of yourself. Learning to cut away those who hinder your self-growth is a difficult, but necessary step on your journey of healing.

10. Seek supportive companions

Supportive people encourage us, uplift us, and inspire us. These people have often obtained a high level of self-love and because of their ability to respect themselves, they can easily respect and love others. Often it is not necessary to seek these people out as we naturally gravitate towards them on our paths! However, it always helps to instigate friendships and connections with these types of people as they can help us out in dark periods of our journeys.

11. Learn to trust your intuition

Our unconscious minds are oceans of wisdom, understanding, and insight. Intuition – that mysterious inner guide we all have – is a manifestation of this vast untapped world within us. Learning to trust your intuition will help you to live a life true to yourself and your deepest needs.

12. Take a walk or jog each day

Walking or jogging is not always possible, but regular exercise has an immense benefit on your body, mind, and soul, proving that you are actively taking care of yourself.

13. Stop spending so much time on social networks

Did you know that the average American adult checks their social media accounts at least once every waking hour of the day? In total, that equals about 4 or more hours each day spent on websites and apps such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and Pinterest. And that number is increasing.

We waste so much of our time on social media. Often we are motivated by the ability to obtain “likes,” “shares,” “followers” and “friends,” constructing a cyber alter-ego that craves for social acceptance and esteem. For this reason, social media is often a sickly environment to expose ourselves continually to each day, and many studies have shown its detrimental effects on our health, including an increase of depression and low self-esteem. Try turning off and unplugging your digital devices regularly, opting for real world interaction instead.

14. Reassess your wardrobe

Colors are said to significantly impact our psychology (hence “color psychology”). After all, every color is a specific vibration. People who replace their black, gray and dull colored clothing with brighter alternatives notice an interesting difference in their mental states. Wearing light blue, for instance, stimulates feelings of openness, and yellow for
example boosts optimism. Dull colors like khaki, granite, and charcoal, on the other hand, are all associated with feelings of apathy, aloofness, pessimism, and despondency.

15. Make time to explore your passion

What drives you, fires you up, fills you with a sense of accomplishment? When we suppress our needs to cater to other’s needs, we often lose sight of what truly makes us happy in life. Many of us abandon our dreams at an early age, and go on to live meaningless lives of drudgery and socially approved pursuits (such as having a “good” career, big house, nice car, perfect family, etc.). It is important, therefore, to ask yourself “What is my passion?” Remember, passions are not static, and they can evolve with us. Whether painting, writing, dancing, designing, building or whatever excites you – pursue it – even if on the sidelines!

16. Focus on reducing sources of stress in your life

Prolonged stress contributes to so many illnesses in our lives, so it is important to learn how to reduce and deal with it when it comes. Often stress can be reduced by dropping our desires and expectations for ourselves, other people and situations in life. Stress can also be reduced by practicing many of the things I have mentioned in this chapter, e.g. having a healthy diet, 7-8 hours sleep per night, targeting negative thought-patterns, and so forth.

17. Accept your flaws, celebrate your strengths

It is important to come to terms with the fact that you are imperfect – there is NO denying it. By accepting your flaws, the doorway to self-improvement is opened. Embrace your warts and pimples, don’t run away from them. Likewise, learn how to celebrate your strengths! Keep a journal of affirmations and honestly list each day every little thing you appreciate about yourself. Balance is essential.

There are so many more ways to show love to yourself such as developing self-forgiveness and clearly defined barriers, but these are the main essential methods. Becoming a doctor of your soul and developing self-love is often a lifelong journey and one that we can educate and inspire others with as well.

18. Accept, rather than punish yourself

Does a good friend punish you with an onslaught of verbal criticism for hours? No. A true friend accepts both the good and bad in you without passing vicious judgment. A true friend realizes that no one is perfect, and everyone has some kind of monster, whether large or small, within them. Be a true friend to yourself. Not only is acceptance the healthier option, but it also opens doorways that allow you to solve your problems, rather than to wallow in them.

19. Laugh at yourself
Not in a mocking or self-derisive way, but as a friend would. Be good-natured towards yourself and find humor in the strange little things you say, think and do. When you stop taking yourself so seriously, you open yourself up to more inner harmony and wholeness.

20. Realize that you are fundamentally worthy

Most of us equate failures in our lives with us personally being failures. We need to remember that if we outsource our self-worth and self-esteem, we will always wind up feeling like miserable failures. Why? Because the thoughts, opinions, beliefs and expectations that we use as yardsticks to measure our success and worth are outside of our control. They constantly fluctuate and change often causing us to feel like failures because we never cultivated an inner and innate sense of worthiness.

21. Learn how to support and comfort yourself

When it comes to supporting ourselves, we often drown out our pain by indulging in food, sex, gambling and other addictions including self-pity and other self-destructive behaviors. Learning how to face our hurt, instead of escaping from it, is one of the most essential (and most difficult) ways of developing self-love. When we listen to our emotional needs and open ourselves up to the vulnerability of experiencing shame, anger, and grief, we can then take the appropriate steps to help assuage the hurt we feel in a healthy and productive way.

Self-love is complete forgiveness, acceptance, and respect for who you are deep down – all your beautiful and perceived hideous parts included. When you love yourself, you take care of yourself, honor your limitations, listen to your needs and respect your dreams enough to act on them. When you love yourself, your happiness, health, and fulfillment are all of the paramount importance because you realize that without loving yourself, you will never be able to love others genuinely.

I hope these tips and techniques help you to cultivate more self-love in your life. The more love you have for yourself, the easier it will be to retrieve, reintegrate and heal any of your lost soul parts.
"There is no coming to consciousness without pain. People will do anything, no matter how absurd, in order to avoid facing their own soul. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious."

— Carl Gustav Jung
Chapter 9 – Shadow Work

The final method of soul retrieval is something known as Shadow Work.

Our spiritual journey is a bit like Dante's Inferno. Before making our way out of "hell," we must walk through the depths of our inner darkness. Many religions symbolize these experiences well. Two famous examples include the case of Jesus who had to face Satan in the desert and Buddha's encounter with Mara (the Buddhist Satan) before his "awakening."

Shadow Work is the practice of exploring your inner darkness. It involves identifying, accepting, loving and integrating all the parts of you that you believe are secretly shameful, embarrassing, unacceptable, ugly or scary. This dark and repressed place within us is known as the Shadow Self.

Shadow Work is about self-discovery, understanding, acceptance, healing and the development of unconditional self-love.

All throughout the history of humankind Shadow Work has played an influential yet mysterious and occult role in helping us discover what is causing us mental illness, physical dis-ease and even insanity resulting in crimes of all kinds.

Traditionally, Shadow Work fell in the realm of the Shamans, or medicine people, as well as the priests and priestesses of the archaic periods of history. These days, Shadow Work falls more commonly in the realms of psychotherapy, with psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists setting up practices and writing books of all kinds on the topic.

However, more often than not, the prescription drugs and behavioral therapy recommended and appointed to us does little to truly cure our deepest and darkest thoughts and desires.

The Birth of the Shadow Self

We were all born pure, like blank canvases. But at some point during our childhood development, we learned knowledge that taught us to separate things into good and evil.

All throughout our lives since we were tiny infants we were distinctly taught what is “good” and what is “bad,” what is “right” and what is “wrong,” and what is “virtuous” and what is a plain old “sin.”

We were taught that if we stepped out of line in any way, we would either be punished by our parents, the authorities, or by some God. We were even taught in our religious
education that God/Divinity could “hear all of our thoughts” and knows the “hidden intentions of our hearts.” This religious brainwashing was enough to make us constantly feel on edge, and ridden with guilt!

In essence, we grew up with a 24/7 surveillance system around us. If it wasn’t our parents who caught us, it was the police, and if it wasn’t the police, it was a wrathful God.

Naturally, this sensationalized the “bad,” “evil” and “sinful” acts of life, giving them an all too tempting air of mystery.

To the naturally curious and inquisitive human being, this is paramount to painting big red words on a wall that say “DON’T PRESS THIS BUTTON!” or “DON’T OPEN THIS DOOR!” Naturally, most of us will push that button and will open that door at some point, giving in to the tempting and sensationalized air of mystery that “evil” and “sinful” acts are given.

But the aftermath is what we suffer from the most.

Once we do taste what it’s like to have dark and disturbing thoughts, most of us fearfully push them out of our minds or shame-facedly repress them. Eventually, this results in us building up so many of these “bad” and “evil” thoughts that we either become physically or psychologically sick … or act on them to purge the overwhelmingly tempting curiosity from our systems. Often, this is what forms the rapists, adulterers, thieves, child molesters and sadists of life.

As a result of repressing that which is perceived as “bad” within us, the Shadow Self is born.

The Shadow Self is a place within us that forms part of the unconscious mind and is composed of all of our repressed ideas, instincts, impulses, weaknesses, desires, perversions and embarrassing fears. This place is often described as the darker side of the psyche, representing wildness, chaos and the unknown.

A War Inside

When we think in the unrealistic and absolutist terms of “good” and “bad,” it is easy for us to label ourselves as either “good people” or “bad people.”

Those of us who have dark thoughts (which is most people) tend to harbor the deep unconscious conviction that “there is something wrong with me,” or “I am a terrible person.” Sometimes, this is even enough to prompt us to act on our thoughts and become self-fulfilling prophecies.

The reality is that having a dark or disturbing thought does not make you a “bad” or evil” person. It just makes you a wounded person that needs love and healing.
This discovery can be hard to believe due to our learned way of dividing the world into a simplistic “black” or “white” perspective. But in reality, life is a vast and complex spectrum of interconnected grays.

Without facing these thoughts and repressed desires within us, we increase the power of our Shadow Selves. As a result, a significant part of Shadow Work involves developing self-responsibility by accepting that yes, we do have the power and ability to go through with our thoughts, but we choose not to.

In the end, we must realize that there is nothing intrinsically “good” or “bad” about having such thoughts, and for us to move on with our lives, we must completely accept them.

However, it’s important to note that not all of our Shadow parts are necessarily thoughts. Our Shadow Selves can also contain suppressed talents, traumas, memories, desires and even gifts.

Furthermore, not all of our Shadow parts can be consciously accessed. In fact, the majority of our Shadow elements are completely unconscious and locked away, lurking in the very corners of our psyches. Consequently, this is why learning how to practice Shadow Work is so vital.

How to Practice Shadow Work

Shadow Work is primarily a practice of radical self-love, acceptance, and inner integration. When I write about loving or integrating your Shadow Self, I do not mean to indulge in any desire that arises within you. Indulging your anger, for instance, will just result in more anger.

By embracing your inner darkness, I mean that it is necessary for you to “accept” it. Accepting your darkness will allow you to take responsibility for yourself, and once you truly acknowledge your darkness instead of avoiding it, suddenly, it will stop having control over you.

By being honest with ourselves and accepting our shadow elements, we are free to witness the uncharted areas of our minds. This brutal honesty allows us to see that we are not these dark elements, but instead that we simply possess thoughts, feelings, and drives that come and go. You cannot just go “beyond hatred” if first, you don’t admit to yourself that you do in fact possess hateful feelings.

To completely experience self-love we must learn to experience our Shadow Selves, and voyage into the dark, murky waters of the unknown courageously. Otherwise, every time we condemn other people for their shadow traits, we’re in essence condemning our hypocritical selves in the process.

A whole and balanced self is a reconciliation of all parts, an inner unification. It is not an indulgence of the darker parts of our natures, but an acceptance and direct experience
of them in the light of mindful awareness and deep honesty. This approach is the entire opposite of many self-denying traditional spiritual methods of subduing, denying, or ascetically disciplining the self.

Thankfully, exploring your darkness is not necessarily all doom and gloom. In fact, you may be surprised by the endless array of creative and interesting “things” you find that have been secretly stored away for many years.

To accept and embrace your Shadow Self is to go back and become “whole” again and thus taste a glimpse of what authentic “holiness” is.

Here are some simple, but powerful Shadow Work techniques that will help you to reconnect with your soul again:

1. Art therapy

Art is the highest form of self-expression and also an excellent way to allow your shadow to manifest itself. In Psychology an effective way of better understanding a child patient is to give them paper and crayons and let them draw whatever comes to mind.

In adults, expressing our inner selves is a bit harder, as that shadow has been repressed a lot more deeply and for a longer period. However, if you allow yourself to feel any of these darker emotions, without fearing judgment from yourself while drawing or painting, for example, you’ll begin to gain insight into your Shadow Self and reveal more about your obscure inner half.

2. Journal work

Goethe’s play “Faust” is, in my opinion, one of the best works featuring the meeting of an Ego and his Shadow Self. Goethe’s story details the life of a Professor who becomes so separated and overwhelmed by his Shadow elements that he comes to the verge of suicide, only to realize that the redemption of the ego is solely possible if the Shadow is redeemed at the same time.

Writing a story where you project your Shadow elements onto the characters is a great way to learn more about your inner darkness. If stories aren’t your thing, keeping a journal or diary every day for a few weeks where you record both good and bad emotions can shine a light on the darker elements of your nature. Reading through these feelings can help you recover the balance you need in your life, and accept both light and dark emotions within you.

3. Identify sources of projection
Unless you consciously work on your Shadow through some of the above techniques, you'll begin to find that your Shadow is actively projected onto someone or something else, so as to avoid responsibility for it.

This experience, however, can become another way of exploring your Shadow by becoming mindful and conscious of what it is you unconsciously choose to project your Shadow onto. What's unusual and hard to understand is that we not only project our negative traits onto others but our good ones as well. It's as if we unconsciously refuse to embrace our good elements because the Ego is afraid that these positive aspects will change and upset our current personality structure.

Becoming aware of what you're projecting your Shadow onto is easy. All you have to do is observe what it is you secretly like or dislike.

For instance, current movies and television shows reflect our deep interest in the darker aspects of ourselves. Why else would we have such fascination with this constant battle between good and evil forces? Superhero, fantasy or action films depict the Heroes vs. Villains dichotomy, while we also fall in love with charming characters who embrace their dark sides such as Dexter, The Joker, or Walter White (Breaking Bad).

Often our noblest traits are also projected onto the people we like, admire or love. However, the opposite is also true, and the most defenseless of beings can become the carriers of our projected Shadow Selves. Children, for example, provide the perfect outlet for our anger, frustration, and all other negative emotions. The smallest of accidents or naughty actions can be punished with disproportionately destructive wrath. Pets, unfortunately, are just as vulnerable. The truth is that, in general, projection is always easier than assimilation.

But projection, no matter whether light or dark is always something detrimental. You not only burden another person with your dark elements or pressures of idolization, but you also avoid responsibility for your Shadow and lose the opportunity of finding a state of ecstatic wholeness.

To discover what you're projecting, you need to observe closely everything in your life that makes you angry, disturbed, uncomfortable, or elicits some emotional reaction from you.

Ask yourself, “What am I projecting?” “What or who is the recipient of my projection?” and “Why have I projected this belief or feeling about myself?”

Likely, you will discover patterns frequently emerging in your life. For example, you might be outraged or embarrassed every time sex appears in a TV show or movie you like (possibly revealing sexual repression or mistaken beliefs about sex that you've adopted throughout life). Or you might be terrified of seeing death or dead people (potentially revealing your resistance to the nature of life or a childhood trauma). Or you might be disgusted by alternative political, sexual and spiritual lifestyles (possibly revealing your hidden desire to do the same).
There are so many possibilities out there, and I encourage you to go slowly, take your time, and one by one explore what makes you angry, afraid or disgusted. You might also like to supplement this activity with journal work, or keep a record of what you discover.

4. Dream Work

In the West, psychologists believe that dreams are the unconscious mind’s way of making sense of reality. But in ancient cultures, such as in Egypt and Greece, dreams were messages from the spirits, gods, or divine realm. Many indigenous cultures have also used dreams as a gateway to higher consciousness and revelation (e.g. Native Americans).

These days, most healers agree that dreams express important messages and truths about our lives and destinies. In my experience, dreams can serve as doorways to our Shadow Selves and true inner feelings.

Pay attention to your dreams and the images, symbols and scenarios within them. What stands out to you? What is your Shadow Self expressing to you? You might like to keep a dream journal and record your immediate impressions. Please note that dream dictionaries can sometimes help you out, but they rarely convey the true message your dream is trying to transmit to you. Why? Dreams and the archetypes/symbolism within them are highly contextual and personal. A snake, for instance, could be a positive sign for one person, and a negative sign for another.

Shadow Integration

Once you have begun exploring the different parts of your Shadow Self, it is essential that you learn how to integrate them. In other words, what do you do after you’ve discovered a repressed fear, belief, memory or trauma?

The answer is self-love. In fact, self-love and Shadow Work go hand-in-hand: both support each other, and both are inseparable. Without learning to forgive, accept, love and nurture yourself completely through your new discoveries, you will fall back into the same old patterns of repression and self-loathing.

Some incredibly effective forms of Shadow integration can include:

• Creating a healing ritual for yourself
• Giving yourself the space and freedom to grieve
• Practicing mindfulness and non-resistance
• Practicing self-compassion and nurturing
• Creatively expressing your emotions through song, artwork, dance or writing
There are many other techniques, but these are some of the main ones out there. Always choose a practice that feels the most authentic to your need for healing.

Shadow Work is a powerful form of soul retrieval that empowers you on your spiritual awakening journey. To genuinely become a whole and healed person, you must integrate your Shadow into your being. In other words, you must 100% OWN your Shadow, rather than avoiding or repressing it.

Remember that what you internalize is almost always externalized in one form or another.

Own your Shadow and you will own your life.
"Sometimes the route we think is the 'high road' is actually a shortcut called avoidance."

— Randi Buckley
Chapter 10 – Common Traps on the Spiritual Awakening Journey

There is one significant pitfall that we are all at risk of experiencing on our spiritual awakening journey.

This pitfall is essentially our tendency to ignore the entirety of what it means to be a human being. In other words, it can be very easy for us to ignore the darker elements of who we are, and instead focus on emphasizing our lighter, more comfortable elements of “awakening.”

When we ignore many of the deep-seated and uncomfortable aspects of ourselves, we do ourselves a disservice.

While it is noble for us to want to search for the good within everything, and while it is virtuous for us to want to use “love” to solve all of humanity’s problems, we often fail to acknowledge that we must first overcome the issues we face. These issues include the many erroneous beliefs, psychological traumas, and neglected inner parts that we’ve failed to heal. Only after we honestly assess ourselves can we allow “love” and “light” to be our guiding forces.

For the next part of your journey, it is important that you're aware of the many traps out there that can easily ensnare you on your path. Without being conscious of these traps, it is easy for you to get sidetracked, confused and lost – sometimes for many years.

6 Ways of Getting Stuck on the Spiritual Awakening Journey

An enormous obstacle on our journeys of Inner Work and spiritual wholeness is our tendency to become enamored by the promise of “peace” and “love,” and in the process, shy away from experiencing the more challenging and darker elements of self-exploration. It’s not that love and light don’t have their places in our journeys — they most certainly do. But if these brighter, more appealing qualities are emphasized to the degree that involves the repression of darkness, and resistance to the harder aspects of inner exploration, then we are creating an imbalance within ourselves.

Often the reason why we embark on a spiritual path in the first place is that we have experienced immense struggles and pain in the past (that are manifested as a spiritual awakening), and have observed the struggles of others around us hopelessly. This suffering tends to awaken a thirst within us to find fulfilling answers that solve why all of these things happen. However, ignoring these “heavier” elements of life in exchange for the “lighter” elements is not a wise approach.

The truth is that when we think about soul healing and spiritual wholeness, we tend to think of these experiences as immediately transcending, or miraculously going beyond who we are right now, rather than representing the fulfillment of our inner potentials.
Let me illustrate what I mean by this:

Imagine the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. The caterpillar does not transform into a cocoon and go beyond being a caterpillar. The caterpillar is still a caterpillar inside the cocoon, and it is still a caterpillar once it evolves into a butterfly — only, apart from being a fully actualized caterpillar, it has now grown wings.

The nature of transformation is not to ignore aspects of our nature and fool ourselves into thinking that we have overcome these elements. Transformation is a process of transcending what was before by integrating it (or combining all parts within us to make a whole) entirely. In doing so, something new within us can blossom.

There are many mistakes that we make on our journeys of inner healing. Here are the main ones:

1. Trying to lose your ego/self

Many people talk about going “beyond the ego,” losing it, and portray it as something evil. The reality is that our sense of self is essential for the development of our individuality and is not innately “bad.” Our ego is necessary for our survival as it causes us to see that our physical selves are separate from others, and therefore we must care for ourselves.

By trying to lose our egos, or by thinking of them as solely “illusions,” we run the risk of developing a profound sense of futility with life, a pointlessness in doing anything or relating to anyone. For example, this feeling of futility can be reflected in the belief that “I don’t exist so what’s the point of doing anything?” or “Others don’t exist either, so why bother ‘forgiving’ or cultivating deep relationships with them?”

It is necessary to realize that transcending your “self” firstly implies developing a healthy and functional ego that operates in the world harmoniously. To create a harmonious ego, we first need to develop inner wholeness by healing our core wounds and retrieving our soul parts. Our egos will always be there, but the difference is that when they are healthy and when we are aware of their existence, we stop listening to them and blindly allowing them to influence our decisions or actions.

2. Always being “positive”

Cultivating the habit of positively seeing the world makes a great difference to many people, especially if they are prone to habitually making negative judgments.

While developing the ability to see the “silver lining” of life can be very beneficial, the very nature of developing a positive attitude involves a constant judgment of the world. In other words, forcing a positive attitude means making constant judgments that separate the world, people and situations into "good" and "bad." This division of the world leads to attacking anything that is perceived as negative with the belief that
thinking positively will make it less bad. This type of thinking can sometimes be harmful as we don’t always succeed in our positive expectations, and consequently, we can end up feeling devastated that we failed in changing the outcome.

When we stop judging the world as black and white, when we stop labeling things that happen to us as “good” and “bad,” we stop resisting life. We also become less stressed, and there is no necessity for forcefully imposing a positive outlook on everything.

3. Trying to become like a child

It is often said that we must return to the state of being a “child” to experience divinity or oneness, just as we were said to have experienced before we developed a sense of self that created separation between us and existence.

The unity with life experienced by a child is not the same as the unity experienced by an adult. The child experiences a state of “fusion” with life as they haven’t yet developed a separate identity and consequently have never tasted anything else. However, the adult who has developed, integrated, and transcended their sense of self, acquires an entirely different experience of unity and deep connection with life. This unity experienced by the adult is one of responsibility, and of awareness of the interconnection between themselves and existence.

This sense of responsibility is what determines whether we regress to a “childish” state where we shift our personal responsibility onto outside forces (like God or Karma), or whether we develop a “childlike being” that is entirely aware of the effects of our actions due to our feeling of unity with life.

4. Believing that logic and rationality is “evil”

As we progress through our lifelong process of soulful evolution, we begin to experience moments of complete inner silence, deep peace, inner revelations, and insights into our unity with existence beyond our individual sense of self. It is through these experiences that we start becoming anti-mind.

These experiences are often moments where we don’t use our thoughts. Instead, we intuitively feel and experience these realizations about our true nature. Sometimes through these experiences, we tend to start thinking that logic and rationality is an “evil” part of ourselves that prevents us from experiencing these profound sensations more. And so we begin to associate all kinds of non-rational states with “spiritual experiences.”

Our minds are tools, which when not mastered, can lead us astray and can cause us immense amounts of suffering. But the important thing to remember is that the mind itself isn’t at fault; we are at fault for allowing it to control us in such extreme ways. It is our logic and rationality that stops us from jumping in front of oncoming traffic because we feel “One” with the truck.
Let your passion and intuition be the sails of your ship, but allow reason to be the rudder that guides you when necessary.

5. Only focusing on higher chakras

Hinduism teaches the idea that we all possess seven different bodily energy centers that we can access. In fact, this notion of energy centers being present within the human body is found in many different cultures in some form or another (for example, in Peru we call them “Chunpis,” or “Belts” of power which extend around our bodies).

Many teachings that use Chakra centers for their work encourage you to focus on your “higher” centers such as the “Crown,” “Head,” and “Heart” chakras while ignoring the lower ones such as the Sacral and Root Chakras. For many people who require a lot of harmonizing done in their lower centers, this does not lead to a balanced being.

Let me give you an illustration that might explain what I mean better:

Imagine a very tall building where the first few floors are ignored completely and are rarely maintained, while the top floors are glorified, swept, mended, and polished daily. The reality is that no matter how beautiful the top of the building is if the lower floors are not given the attention they need, the whole building will crumble to the ground as the lower floors form the very foundation of the entire structure.

6. Ignoring your darkness

As mentioned above, we all create a self-image or an ego that we present to other people.

In doing so, we simultaneously create a “Shadow Self,” which is essentially composed of the elements that we want to prevent other people and ourselves from seeing. Therefore, we repress many elements of ourselves that we perceive as “bad,” or “dirty.” Such traits include, for example, our sexuality, our fears, our vulnerabilities, our secret desires, our “immoral” thoughts and so forth. When we reject these various elements of ourselves, we create a “dual nature” within us.

Our Shadow Selves often only manifest themselves under certain types of pressure that prevent us from containing them anymore. Examples include when we are under great stress, experience intense emotions like anxiety, or any other experience that brings our guard down (in Shamanism we often encounter people’s Shadows during altered states of consciousness).

These “disowned” parts of ourselves can influence a lot of our behavior, and drain a lot of our energy. Our Shadow Selves, or our personal “demons,” are made all the worse when we are taught through cultural and quasi-spiritual influence to focus solely on getting in touch with, and manifesting, our “inner gods” and “goddesses.”
The chronic tendency of ours to avoid our inner darkness is why it's important for you to revise the chapter of Shadow Work in this book!

**True Inner Healing**

To become whole and healed beings, we must walk the path of the middle: we must experience both the light and dark, “good” and “bad,” and beautiful and horrific parts of ourselves. The only way to truly and authentically progress on your journey of spiritual awakening is to experience, and integrate, as much of your nature as possible.
"Through our soul is our contact with heaven."

— Sholem Asch
Chapter 11 – Soul Communication

Once you have explored the sources of your soul loss, and undergone the many practices associated with soul retrieval, contacting the soul become a simple and joyful experience.

The entire purpose of a spiritual awakening is to learn how to retrieve, heal, but also communicate with your soul. We refer to this as Soul Communication.

Soul Communication is such an important skill to develop because it can help you discover not only your life purpose but also many of your spiritual gifts and talents. Soul Communication also opens the sacred doorway into experiencing complete wholeness, or enlightenment.

Contacting the Soul

Every day, our souls speak to us in a thousand different ways.

However, shamans, medicine people, mystics and sages throughout the ages have always known that the soul doesn't speak the human language.

Instead, our souls communicate with us through symbols, metaphors, archetypes, poetry, deep feelings, and magic. The human language is far too limiting to express the full spectrum of profound knowledge, insight, and revelation that the soul has to share.

As such, most of us were never taught to tune into the dancing rhythms of our deepest selves. Instead, due to our social conditioning, we have come to rely heavily on the mind only and its interpretation of reality. Unfortunately, our emphasis on hard data, facts, and linear logic has left a gaping hole inside of us. We fill this empty hole with consumerism, addictions, violence and endless distractions.

Sometimes, a traumatic or extreme event in our lives shakes us out of our habitual way of perceiving existence. But usually, most of us tend to miss the big, glaring daily signs that the soul within us is trying to communicate with us. Not only that, but we tend to actively mistrust, ignore or doubt any sacred form of communication that we receive.

How can we begin to tune into the subtle voice of the soul and rewire our conditioned brains? How can we listen to our soul's vital messages and nourish ourselves with its life-changing wisdom?

Signs to Look Out For
Soul communication isn’t just reserved for medicine men or women, or enlightened people; it is a birthright of every man, woman, and child.

For years both of us lived without the guidance of our souls, actively ignoring or numbing them out. Since reconnecting with our souls, we’ve discovered that they offer endless gifts, insights, teachings and direction that help us to connect with our innate wholeness, and guide others to do the same.

If you’d like to learn soul communication, you must first pay attention to the signs that your soul is subtly sending you. There are many types of signs out there, but below we have compiled some of the main ones you should look out for:

1. Dream signs

Our souls communicate with us through endless images, symbols, and scenarios in our dreamscape. In fact, our dreams can be thought of as portals into the unconscious mind. Your unconscious mind is a bridge to the soul and an unlimited source of wisdom. Pay attention to your dreams. What metaphorical or literal message is being conveyed to you? What objects, people, sounds or words stand out and call your attention?

2. Lucid dreams

Spontaneous lucid dreams involve suddenly becoming aware that you’re dreaming while asleep. Becoming conscious within your dream world is not only spiritually symbolic (literally of “waking up”), but it is also an opportunity to explore the hidden realm of your unconscious mind. This opportunity from your soul might be rare, or it could be constant without any effort on your behalf.

If you’re in the habit of having spontaneous lucid dreams, treat it as a sacred gift. Very few people have access to the depths of the unconscious realms. Treat this as an opportunity to ask yourself questions and find guidance that you wouldn’t be able to otherwise access in waking life.

Otherwise, you might like to look into the practice of actively learning how to lucid dream.

3. Repetitive words or numbers

How many times have you looked at the clock and seen “11:11,” “12:12,” “13:13,” “4:44”? Many skeptics say that putting importance into repetitive words and numbers is a reflection of something called “confirmation bias” (the tendency to interpret events in favor of your beliefs), but this is not necessarily the case. It’s easy to be cynical and use a purely logical approach, but it’s much harder to explore the personal meaning of these experiences.

Regardless of the meaning, we assign to repetitive words and numbers, the function of them is to momentarily “wake us up.” Otherwise, why would we give them so much
significance? Whenever I see a repeated number or hear a name/word said continuously, I take it as a sign of soul communication.

So whenever you hear or see a picture, word or number repeated, ask yourself, what is the hidden message?

4. Animal omens and guides

Most of us come across animals every day. Quite often, these animals serve as omens and guides that symbolize warnings or types of wisdom. When you pay attention to these different animals, you realize that each one has a specific teaching, message or energy type.

It's important to keep in mind that the meaning you assign to the different animals you see is highly personal and not necessarily the “orthodox” meaning already established out there. So don't feel the need to go by the “textbook” definition. Go with your gut.

One way of discovering your unique messages is to observe what animals you consistently come across every day. Watch these animals and try to understand what their teachings are. What are they revealing? How do they behave, move or sound? Paying attention to the animals that appear to you throughout your days is an important form of soul communication.

For example, you might continually come across crows. Watching these crows, you might realize that they are always loud and agitated. The message you might assign to these animal messengers could be that you need to pay more attention to the emotions you have suppressed so that they can be released.

5. Synchronicity or serendipity

Have you ever had a string of events happen in a way that seemed unique or out of the ordinary? You might refer to these events as “serendipity” when in fact they may have been something known as “synchronicity.”

What is synchronicity? Synchronicities are moments of meaningful coincidence, where our inner and outer worlds align. Often synchronicity is a good way to tell that you are on the right soul path because everything feels as though it is unfolding without your conscious effort. You might even have the sensation that Life/Spirit/God is playing an active hand in making your dreams or aspirations come true.

For example, you might be wanting to quit your job to follow your dreams as a therapist. Throughout the next few days, you have vivid dreams of helping to counsel people. Then, at work, you receive the news that you're getting a pay cut. After that, you see numerous bumper stickers on cars that say “Natural Therapist Association Member.” Finally, you discover an advert in the local newspaper for a therapist course being held in your area. This scenario is one example of synchronicity.

Science attests to the fact that everything is energy, and is thus connected. Therefore, it is my personal belief that nothing happens by chance, and coincidence is an illusion. I
believe, at a core Soul and Spirit level, everything is interconnected. So what is synchronicity? In my understanding, it is when the vibration of our thoughts matches the vibration of our personal destinies. In other words, picture synchronicity like a funnel of water: you don’t need to force the water to go through, the water goes through effortlessly.

So watch out for moments of synchronicity — they are powerful reflections that you’re on the right path.

6. Gut feelings

A gut feeling is an unexplainable sensation that tells you to do (or not do) something. Another synonym for this phrase is the word intuition. We all know what intuition is, but most of us have trouble listening to it.

Intuition is different from the inner voice of fear because it is subtle, calm and centered, as opposed to being frantic or aggressive. This distinction is crucial to make. Many people believe they are being guided by intuition when in fact they are being guided by their fearful inner talk.

Intuition, or gut feelings, can be thought of as the voice of our souls communicating to us. Whenever you feel drawn towards something or someone (without a fearful motive), you can be sure that this is your soul trying to guide you.

7. Visions during meditation

Meditation is another way to contact your soul. Your soul “space” is the calm, wise, spacious and infinitely loving place you may have entered before on occasion while meditating.

Meditating for extended periods of time (30 minutes or more) is a powerful way to experience your soul space, and what has been referred to as the mystical experience. One common mystical experience people have during meditation involves tuning into visions or spontaneous names. These visions or names can sometimes be direct messages from the soul. I’ve even had people tell me that they’ve received unknown songs or melodies during meditation. Personally, I have experienced spontaneous visions and words.

But how can you tell apart normal mental chatter from soulful visions, names or songs? Typically, the images you see or words you hear will have a particular theme that seems foreign (e.g. it could be from an ancient culture such as an African tribe), and the images, sounds or melodies will be very repetitive. You will also have the sensation that you somehow need to pay attention to these spontaneous occurrences.

I recommend keeping a meditation journal to record these visions, images, words or songs. Maintaining a journal will help you to articulate better what your soul is trying to express.
How to Speak to Your Soul

There are many ways for you to communicate actively with your soul. However, the easiest and most powerful method is simply to say a daily prayer.

Here is an example you could use, or build on yourself:

“Dear soul, I love you. Thank you for supporting my life. I’m so honored and appreciative of your presence. If you have any messages for me, please communicate them to me. I am open and receptive. I welcome your guidance.”

See how you go with this prayer and ensure that you pay attention to any emotional, physical or mental sensations that arise. You might like to record what you find in a specially dedicated journal.

I hope that you’re now more aware of the deep craving of your soul to make itself known to you. Deep down, we all crave for oneness and wholeness. By learning the language of your soul, you can open a sacred doorway into the world of reclaimed strength, beauty, love, and innocence.
“Your own Self-Realization is the greatest service you can render the world.”

— Ramana Maharshi
Conclusion

There is no personal growth, no awakening in life and no awakening to life, without first seeing and acknowledging our existing dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction is not the usual day-to-day kind but is rather a deep, internal disappointment. It is the gaping inner void we all possess which constantly reminds us that something is missing from our lives, and also that something at a core level is lost. Usually, the very thing that is lost is a connection to our souls.

Although this period of unhappiness, confusion and longing may feel like a bad thing at first, it is the greatest blessing you could receive. While the spiritual awakening process may seem like a harrowing experience, it’s sole purpose is to initiate you into your spiritual journey. Your spiritual journey is the very path that leads you to total peace, liberation and the discovery that your soul was, and has always been, perfectly whole. It is only the walls, blocks and pain you’ve buried inside that cause you to feel unwhole.

Every spiritual journey is different, just as every soul is different. At times you will climb the mountains of the soul and experience the incandescent bliss of Divinity. At other times, you will plunge into the cavernous depths of your inner being and wrestle with long hidden monsters. However, despite what path you’re currently walking, it’s vital to remember that any pain or fear you’re experiencing is completely normal. All trials and tribulations that you’re experiencing right now are working together to fashion you into the awakened being you’re destined to become. Like a caterpillar in a cocoon, everything that is not serving your highest good is slowly dissolving away. This discovery, in and of itself, is a huge relief and joyous gift.

By progressing through the three worlds of your spiritual journey (the Upper World, Middle World and Under World), you will be able to meet, discover and understand any parts of you which have been wounded or repressed. And through soul retrieval, you will be able to welcome, release, heal and integrate these wounded parts through the use of inner child work, self-love and shadow work. In this book, we’ve also given you simple exercises and other methods of soul retrieval which you might like to explore further on your journey.

As a part of your spiritual path, it’s important that you’re mindful of the traps out there that many people fall into, often for entire lifetimes. We explored the six most common spiritual bypassing traps earlier in this book. Often these spiritual traps are based on the false beliefs that certain feelings and experiences are “wrong” and therefore should be avoided or denied.

Finally, part of your Inner Work involves learning how to communicate with your soul in everyday life. When you make a habit of identifying the many signs and omens that appear each day, you will discover that your soul is always trying to support you in everything you do. One of the best ways to communicate with your soul at any moment
is through prayer. We encourage you to experiment with prayer and see how it profoundly impacts your life.

The more you consciously commit to retrieving, accessing and communing with your soul every day, the more you'll feel grounded, whole and at peace. Very soon you'll discover how magical, wise, loving and supportive life truly is when you're centered in your Soul.
“I am not this hair, I am not this skin, I am the soul that lives within.”

— Jalal ad-Din Rumi
Closing Prayer

Great Spirit who flows through all the Universe, teach me the way.

Teach me to open my heart to forgiveness as I make peace with my past.

Teach me to surrender to the present that I may experience the eternal bliss that is Now.

Teach me to have hope for the future that I may live a life of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment.

As the light of my Soul illuminates my darkness, may I continue to be guided towards truth and liberation.

Although the path is difficult, and the way is steep, I pray that the light of Consciousness brings me home.

Although I will face demons, may the strength of my Soul bring me courage.

Although I will unearth my pain, may the boundless compassion of my True Nature heal all wounds.

Great Spirit, I pray that I may retrieve every lost and disconnected part of my being.

Help me to heal and connect with my inner child.

Support me in my quest to understand and unconditionally embrace my Shadow Self.

As I walk this sacred path, let every barrier obscuring my Everlasting Light dissolve.

As I release every belief, ideal, resentment and fear that isn't serving my highest good, may I come to embody my Soul.

Thank you for your this spiritual awakening process.

May I come to hear You, see You, feel You, and be with You, each and every day, for You and I are One.

Amen.
About the Authors

Aletheia Luna is an influential psychospiritual writer whose work has changed the lives of thousands of people worldwide. After escaping the religious sect she was raised in, Luna experienced a profound existential crisis that led to her spiritual awakening. As a spiritual counselor, diviner, and author, Luna’s mission is to help others become conscious of their entrapment and find joy, empowerment, and liberation in any circumstance.

Mateo Sol is a prominent psychospiritual counselor and mentor whose work has influenced the lives of thousands of people worldwide. Born into a family with a history of drug addiction, schizophrenia, and mental illness, Mateo Sol was taught about the plight of the human condition from a young age. As a spiritual counselor and mentor, Sol’s mission is to help others experience freedom, wholeness, and peace in any stage of life.

Together, Luna and Sol are spiritual mentors who blend a mixture of psychological and spiritual insight throughout their writings. They believe in teaching a down-to-earth approach to inner growth and seek to explore both the light and shadow side of humanity and spirituality.
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Bibliography


