

INSPIRING YOUTH WORK THROUGH
ECOCENTRIC DEVELOPMENT AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

ON THE WINGS OF THE LADYBUG



PROJECT: 2016-2-BG01-KA205-023835

ACHIEVE – INNOVATIVE METHODS FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH WORKERS



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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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Abbreviations:

ECD – Ecocentric development

PP – Positive psychology

NFL – Non formal learning

EU – European Union

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the centre of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shrivelled and closed from fear of further pain.

I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it, or fade it, or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own; if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic, remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself. If you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul. If you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see Beauty even when it is not pretty every day. And if you can source your own life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand at the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, 'Yes.'

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone and do what needs to be done to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the centre of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

The Invitation - Oriah Mountain Dreamer



This manual contains a large amount of information based on the long-term experience of the authors in the field of non-formal learning (NFL) and the interactive teaching of children, youth and adults. During its composition a lot of information related to the topic was extracted from various sources - studies, reports and scientific publications. By combining the practical experience of the team of authors with some theoretical concepts, this manual was created to bring together a large number of topics, many of which are often not touched upon in the field of NFL and in the youth sector as a whole.

Ognian Gadoularov (born 1974 in Bulgaria) has been working as a youth worker and trainer of children, youth and adults since 2007. Specialized in the topics of - personal development, motivation, youth projects and volunteering, he is active in the fields of interactive teaching and environmental education. A Certified Trainer of Trainers, he is an expert in conducting adventure programs based on the methods of experiential learning and outdoor education. Ognian is part of the Bulgarian "Erasmus +" National Agency Trainers Pool and the Trainers Network of Salto EuroMed. He worked as a business trainer from 2007 till 2013 focusing on programs for team effectiveness, sales, presentation skills and customer participated actively in the development of CSRevents for for various His favourite topics are – Sustainability and Responsible consumption, Spiritual intelligence, Training design, Anti-globalisation, Social change and Human rights.



service. He companies.



Bogdan Romanica (born 1986 in Romania) is a dedicated youth worker, trainer and NGO coordinator. Active in the youth field since 2008, he has taken part in educational activities connected with outdoor and adventure education, human rights, socio-educational animation, active citizenship, personal development, career guidance. In 2014 he had the first taste of nature-based Youth work, which became one of his biggest passions. In the following years, he began exploring new fields of nature-based human development, such as eco-psychology, deep ecology and Ecocentric development. Discovering Bill Plotkin's work and Animas Valley Institute (USA) programs, he enrolled in a long term training program with this organization, in the field of Ecocentric development. This approach became the core of his work. Nowadays he leads workshops, trainings and events for youth and adults that focus on Ecocentric development. He is doing this work mainly under Dreams for Life organization.

Eleni Michail (born 1985 in Cyprus) is a trainer and a youth worker passionate about empowering people to reach their potential and pursue a happy and meaningful life. She studied Pedagogy and has a Masters degree in Educational Management and Leadership. She has explored extensively Positive psychology and the holistic pedagogical approaches. Throughout her experience in Youth work, she has taken different roles. Her activities stretch from youth trainer to project coordinator, researcher and educator. As a youth trainer, Eleni has worked with various local, national and international youth organizations in Cyprus, Belgium and other countries. On a local level, she works with Cyprus' E+ Youth National and several governmental and non-governmental organizations in the country. She is also a research associate of the Youth Board of Cyprus, working on the National Youth Strategy and the youth policy in Cyprus. Among her areas of interest are: happiness, positive psychology, nature, non-formal learning, personal development and empowerment, volunteering, human rights, gender issues and leadership.



Agency



INTRODUCTION

The present manual is a tool that can be used to enhance the impact of Non-Formal Learning (NFL) in preparing young people for their personal, social and professional development. It is also a tool for underlining the importance of Youth work and increasing its quality. The creation of the manual "On the Wings of the Ladybug" is a result of the project "ACHIEVE-innovative methods for training and development of youth workers" which used and adapted approaches based on Ecocentric development (ECD) and

Positive Psychology (PP) in the context of the Youth field for the first time. The manual represents both a methodology for personal development of the youth workers and a set of tools/practices/methods for direct implementation when working with young people. The content is based on literature review and practical experiments and experience during the project. This manual opens new opportunities in the youth sector, especially by incorporating the suggested innovative methodologies.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project "ACHIEVE - innovative methods for training and development of youth workers" - 2016-2-BG01-KA205-023835 is a result of the cooperation between experts in the youth field from Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus, funded by the European Erasmus+ Programme under Key Action 2.

Through this project we address the current needs of the young people and the youth workers by presenting innovative approaches and methods applied for the first time in Youth work - Positive psychology and Ecocentric development.

The project is striving to train and develop the expertise of the youth workers so that they can provide meaningful services to young people. It supports the professionalization of Youth work and enriches its standards for quality and performance. Last but not least, it offers innovative integrated approaches in order to provoke the empowerment, participation, professional and personal growth of young people, and especially the disadvantaged ones.

The Intellectual outputs of the project are:

1. **The manual "On the Wings of the Ladybug"** – The manual includes theory, practical methods, recommendations, educational tools and training programs that aim at improving the qualification, personal and professional growth of the youth workers.
2. **Pocket book "Self-discovery – individual reflection and practical process"** – The pocket book offers a series of practical tools for self-discovery and personal transformation both for young people and adults.
3. **On-line learning platform** – The platform offers a database of training programs and resources related to Youth work, Ecocentric development, positive psychology and non-formal learning (www.learningforchange.net).

The full set of Materials is available for free access and distribution over the Internet:

<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplus-project-details/#project/c79ceb4b-e3a5-4248-a7ae-1173eb1999ec>



One of the main goals of this Manual is to enrich the understanding of youth workers about the application of modern approaches to their personal and professional development and the one of their target groups. In this Manual we present knowledge about the personal growth based on innovative concepts and alternative methods. We aim at supporting the establishment of developmental and educational programs combining personal transformation and social change. We also want to emphasize the group processes, the emotional state and the specific environment as crucial for the effectiveness of the learning and development.

In order to achieve this, we have selected specific information and resources that meet the abovementioned goals. We have included concepts that are not widely known in the field of Youth work (nor in formal education) – *Ecocentric development, Positive psychology and Positive education*. On the other hand, we introduce a collection of practices, activities, programs and tools; because we believe that there is a need to support the implementation of innovative approaches in Youth work and personal development.

In the **Introduction** of the Manual you will find a general description of the project, a few words about the concept in the manual as well as a **Methodology for personal development** (a set of guidelines how to use this manual for personal transformation) and a **Methodology for development of programs for Youth** based on ECD and PP (guidelines how to implement the content of the manual in your professional practice).

The thematic part of the Manual is divided into 2 sections:

Part 1 – Basic Concepts – This part covers the general principles of *Ecocentric development, Positive psychology and Positive education*.

Part 2 – Practices, Tools and Programs – This part outlines specific instruments and methods for putting to practice the theories and concepts mentioned in Part 1, when designing and implementing programs and personal growth planning. The chapter begins with a table that lists all practices and tools, providing at the same time information on the stage of development (ECD) and the PP elements they work for.

In more detail, Part 2 includes the following:

- *Practices* – The selected practices are organized in different categories and can be used as learning elements for programs for youth workers as well as for young people. At the same time, they can serve as routines of daily individual developmental plans.
- *Tools for development and learning* – The provided tools aim to support, guide and deepen the process of personal and professional development of youth workers and young people. They offer ideas for 0.5 - 1 day workshops. All the tools can be also used as elements of longer programs or to be added as elements in learning processes.
- *Sample training programs* – These training programs offer a sequence of activities and sessions for 3, 5, and 7 day long programs aiming at personal, social and professional development of the learners. The programs incorporate practices and tools illustrated in previous sections of the manual. They are suitable both for Youth workers and for young people.

While preparing the Manual, we tried to make it as suitable as possible for people with different levels of experience in the youth field and to adapt it for people with different learning and cognitive styles. For this purpose, we have included many links to additional online-based materials, resources and videos. We have selected suitable quotes and poems for inspiration and reflective questions for self-discovery. In various places across the Manual, the reader will find call-outs giving additional information, an opportunity to upgrade the knowledge on the topic, assess the level of knowledge or receive some information in a different way.



According to many contemporary authors – psychologists, pedagogists, etc. (Ken Robinson, Sugata Mitra, George Lozanov, et al) - the development of people nowadays is severely imbalanced in various directions; hyper intellectualization in the formal educational system, illiteracy and lack of access to education in the economically developing countries, lack of social and emotional skills, decreased ability to communicate and connect with others, suppressed spirituality. All these are indicators of the imbalance mentioned above. Here, we cannot miss out the poor level of health and physical culture, the lack of movement and the total breakup with nature. The occurrence and advent of so many global diseases, addiction to chemical substances (including caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol), consumer culture, rejection and rebellion against social norms, are also signs of a society suffering both on the inside and the outside. Surrounded by this reality, young people are more and more vulnerable and detached from the natural way of their physical, psychological and spiritual development. The people who try to support them in this quest (youth workers) are also burdened and incapable because of the fact that they are a product of that same society and social system.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, more and more new scientific and educational tendencies have motivated people to stand against and fight this global problem. The fascination for ancient spiritual traditions is also growing and its potential to influence the situation described above is significant. Such scientific and spiritual tendencies are Waldorf pedagogy, Maria Montessori Pedagogy, Dr. Lozanov's Suggestopedia, The theory of Multiple Intelligence by H. Gardner, psychotherapy, holistic education and holistic medicine, physical and spiritual practices like Yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong, Ecocentric development, Positive psychology, etc.

A significant characteristic of all these practices is that they incorporate all four dimensions of the human being – physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. They are also aimed at balancing these four dimensions in every individual.

This overlaps with the goal we want to achieve through the methodologies and educational approaches presented in this manual. We also believe that every human being is a combination of these four components – body, mind, soul, and spirit. In our work connected to personal development, we use them as directions or dimensions – physical, cognitive, emotional and spiritual. Here is what we have in mind when referring to these in the manual:

1. **Physical** – all life movements, processes, elements of everyday life and needs connected to our physical body and physical existence – nutrition, breathing, excretion, sports, trauma, movement, physical illness, pain, sex, physical development and aging, possession, material belongings, food, water, etc.
2. **Mental (cognitive)** – this is the dimension connected to the brain function and intellectual activity, learning, knowledge, professional development, skills for communication, speech and expression, books, processing information, analytical processes, thoughts, conclusions, logical connections, the perception of the surrounding world, etc.
3. **Emotional** – the dimension of feelings and emotions connected to the soul and the inner self, aggression, love, joy, the feeling generated by the environment, conditions and people around us, emotional connection, emotional intelligence, reactions, affection, addiction, etc.
4. **Spiritual** – the processes connected to the higher levels of consciousness and existence, a higher purpose, the meaning of life, the gift we carry within, the quest to serve, intuition, religion, belief in destiny, karma, synchronism, the signs of fate, the inexplicable events on our way, the search for meaning, experience beyond knowledge and understanding, the strive to leave a mark, the mysteries of life and death, etc.



This division is highly conditional because in most everyday human activities the more we observe, the more the different dimensions overlap. As an example, we can look into the activity of reading a book, which is an intellectual process, but it often also involves our emotions and the spiritual connectedness or even our physical development. A walk in nature is a physical activity but at the same time, it leads us to various feelings and to a deeper connection with the higher levels of our consciousness.

In this context, the elements of this manual aim:

- *To help youth workers maintain a balance between their four dimensions – physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.*
- *To find their true life purpose and develop qualities which can support young people in taking the same path.*
- *To work for a balanced and sustainable development, a happy and fulfilling life of young people who reach their full potential.*

The core approaches on which the manual is based are Ecocentric development and Positive psychology. Despite these, we have incorporated practices from many of the above mentioned scientific and spiritual trends in the section of practical methods.

The practical application is directed in three ways – a deep introspective process of self-analysis, planning and applying practices for self-development, and learning process showing how to apply all these to others:

1. Deep introspective process – a system of questions and practices for self-analysis and self-evaluation (if needed, it could be led by a guide, mentor or a coach) which helps the person clarify for themselves their current situation in each of the four dimensions – physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual - and also see their present place in life and society (it could even help reveal a life goal), to develop an action plan and choose the practices needed for striking a balance between the four dimensions.

2. Planning and applying practices for self-development – a process of selection and application of various practices (described in a separate chapter of the Manual), which can have a positive impact on self-development, well-being, and satisfaction in life. This supports the process of charging the self with meaning and enthusiasm and helps strike a balance between professional and personal life.

3. Applying the approach to work with others – a learning process in which every person who has reached their own balance gets trained how to be a facilitator (or a mentor) of other people on their path to balanced (holistic) life. Here, we have also applied several examples of youth training programs which can be directly applied or adapted to cater specific needs or environment.

In the present manual, we will cite sources from various ancient traditions as well as such from contemporary scientific and philosophical trends. Some of them are Yoga, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shamanism, Positive Psychology, Ecocentric development, Psychotherapy, etc. At first, it may seem to the reader that we mix contradictory terms and beliefs, especially with regard to the linguistic level (you will notice that in different articles, authors use different terms when describing the same processes and practices). Still, a closer reading will show the reader the reason behind using so many materials from various sources, namely – at their heart, all ancient and contemporary traditions lean on the same genuine knowledge. Even though a slight misunderstanding at the linguistic level may occur, at the level of meaning everything leads to the same universal principles and laws.

So enjoy it and use the knowledge for a good cause!
The creators' team



THE SITUATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN EUROPE

(Eleni Michail)

The European Union (EU) Youth Report 2015 has indicated that the current generation of youth is the best educated ever. One in three Europeans (between 30-34 years) has a tertiary education degree while 82% of youth (between 20-24 years) have completed upper secondary education. At the same time, youth show promising achievements in social and civic engagement. One in four youth has been a volunteer and 50% of youth are active in organization, club or association. This indicates the tremendous potential that young people have and the amount of things that can be achieved by putting all these into practice.

Yet, reality shows that 13,7 millions of youth (between 15 and 29 years) remain out of employment, education or training.¹ In 2016, an average of 10.7 % of young people (aged 18-24) in the EU-28 were early leavers from education and training, in other words, they had completed at most a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the Eurostat survey.² The economic crisis in the European Union has dramatically changed the youth labour market to a degree that in almost all European countries, several years since the start of the crisis, young people are still facing unprecedented difficulties in finding a job. Moreover, on average in the EU-28, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate for young people aged 15 to 29 is higher than that for children under the age of 16 or for the population in total.

The situation of young people is influenced by other factors too. Over the past years, several terrorist attacks and failed attempts have grabbed European headlines.³ At the same time, more than one million refugees and migrants have made the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean into Europe in 2016, a situation that stayed similar in 2017 as well. This movement represents one of the largest movements of displaced people through European borders since the Second World War.⁴ Fearmongers talk up the threat of terrorism, demagogues thunder that asylum seekers just want to steal jobs or drain the welfare system and xenophobes warn that Europe's cultural identity is at risk.

Fear, demagogues and threat are taking huge dimensions on an easy-to-manage target - the young people. Young people, lacking critical thinking of their own, are brainwashed by people, media, or social media. The attention and care deficiency from their homes lures youth into violence and abuse of fundamental values. Violence in schools is recognised as a major social problem that not only affects the wellbeing and educational achievement of students, but can undermine democratic values and civic education.⁵

The Paris Declaration 2015⁶ recognizes that youth represent the future and that the efforts to build on youth's sense of initiative and participation must be combined. More recently, the UN Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security⁷ identifies that it is imperative to invest in youth to fulfil their potential and thus help achieve peace and security.

Acknowledging the potential of youth should be followed by an investment in the work done with youth, namely Youth work and its quality. Probably the most essential element in achieving a high quality Youth work is to invest in the development youth workers with a profound understanding of the situation. Youth workers play a significant role in the personal, socio-educational and professional development of youth. In fact, the Youth Work Report 2014⁸ has identified that Youth work can result in a range of positive effects for youth which enable them to develop competences, widen their network and social capital, improve particular behaviors and develop positive relationships.

In this context, this project was born to develop innovative approaches (methodologies, tools and practices) for the holistic development of the youth workers so that they can better serve youth in general and disadvantaged youth in particular.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/youth-report-2015_en.pdf

² http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Early_leavers_from_education_and_training

³ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/judith-sunderland/fear-and-loathing-of-refu_b_9188204.html

⁴ https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toy_trainer_download-file-2836/TRY%20analyze%2010%2024.pdf

⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/innovation-education/34739292.pdf>

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

⁷ <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2015/12/un-security-council-adopts-historic-resolution-on-youth-peace-and-security/>

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/study/youth-work-report_en.pdf



METHODOLOGY FOR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

(Bogdan Romanica)

WHY SHOULD ANYONE BE INTERESTED IN ECOCENTRIC DEVELOPMENT AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Humans are characterized by a never ending search for meaning and deep understanding of life. We often ask ourselves: "What do I really want to do with my life? How can I live my life in order to be fulfilled?" We have dreams and make plans in order to reach them, but sometimes, when we accomplish them, we may think "Is that all? What's next? I thought that this is everything that I wanted". And the cycle begins again.

The human is a very complex being, who has layers and layers of consciousness, of depth, that are inviting us to discover them, so we can get closer to our true meaning and mission in life. This process can be frustrating at times and we may feel lost and finally settle down with only a piece of the full story that we can manifest.

The Ecocentric developmental Wheel created by Bill Plotkin in his book *Nature and the Human Soul*, is offering a great vision, on how our life journey may look like if we live it following our soul, our intuition, inner voice and natural gifts that we are born with. The Wheel can be seen as a compass guiding our own lives in order to become more authentic, to explore and understand more our depths, to find our place in the world and to offer our gifts through original delivery systems. Experiencing all these things should be a strong argument for anyone to explore and use the Ecocentric developmental Wheel.

The Wheel is a model, a possible map and a life perspective, and in order to use it, practical tools and concepts are required, to accomplish the developmental tasks contained within the Wheel.

We consider Positive Psychology as a great field that can be integrated and used successfully in the Ecocentric approach. Positive Psychology is a growing field, which is generating amazing results for the benefit of people. The field is there to support people in leading meaningful and fulfilling lives, to help them reach their potential, and to enhance their experiences. The theories, tools and methods used and promoted by Positive psychology address directly the developmental tasks from the Wheel. Working with emotions, developing mindfulness, stimulating positive thinking are only a few areas where the Ecocentric Wheel and Positive Psychology meet. Thus, we have all the premises to combine the two: Ecocentric development and Positive Psychology.

Having this perspective, we believe that this manual is a great asset for anyone who would like to grow in a sustainable and authentic way and to experience remarkable improvements at physical, mental, emotional and spiritual level.



HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL FOR PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

We believe that this manual has great transformative powers. In order to benefit at maximum from it, we invite you to follow a certain approach, which can lead you to personal insights and development. Of course this is just an invitation. You can find your own way through it. Before presenting the steps, we want to remind you that in this section we are discussing how this manual can help you at personal level.

So, let's begin:

1. Read the content part of Ecocentric development and Positive Psychology

It is very important to familiarize yourself with the concepts and theory. In this way you can understand this developmental approach and see how ECD and PP can help you in your life journey. It is recommended also to read more articles and books, watch videos and browse web pages related to the topic (you can find the list in the **Appendix** section of this manual - *Recommendations*)

2. Connect the theory (concepts, tools etc.) with your life and reflect on your current situation

It is important to link the theory with your life and see how it is connected to reality. You can do this by following two steps:

- a. **Reflection questions:** Go to the **Appendix** section and check the *Reflection questions*. There are questions connected with the ecocentric stages and Self discovery process. Spend some time with them and write your answers in a journal. You can gain very interesting insights about yourself and your life.
- b. **Identify in which developmental stage you are:** It is important to know where you are in your life, from the perspective of Ecocentric development. The **Appendix** section *Determining ones ECD stage* offers a few signs which will help you understand where you are in your life from the ECD perspective.

3. Make a developmental plan

- a. **Decide on which developmental tasks/sub-tasks you want to focus:** Choose from the list of developmental tasks in section *Ecocentric development*, those that you have addressed the least or those that you feel a calling to work on.
- b. **Prioritize them and choose 2-3 sub-tasks that you want to address:** Select from all the sub-tasks that you have chosen, those that are the most relevant and important for you, at this moment of your life.
- c. **Choose the practices that can help you address those sub-tasks:** Choose from the Table of practices from the *Practices* section, those practices that can be best used for addressing your sub-tasks. You can also find other practices that are not included in this manual.
- d. **Make an action plan:** Make an action plan by answering to these questions:
 - i. What do you want to do? – The practices.
 - ii. Why do you want to do it? – Why do you want to address these sub-tasks?
 - iii. When do you want to do it? – Set a realistic time. Don't rush, don't delay.
 - iv. What do you need for executing this action/practice? – Resources, place, people etc.
 - v. Who can help you with this? – Support persons, mentor, guide etc.

4. Implement the actions, make the practices: It's time "to put the practices to practice".

5. Reflect and evaluate yourself: You can answer to the following questions: What did you do? How was it to do it? How did you feel? What did you gain? What can you change/improve?

In this moment you can also go again to step 2.

6. Go back to the theory and read it again: You can always go back to the theory and study it with the new perspectives that you have after implementing the action plan. By reading it again you may get new insights and deepen your learning and development.

7. Celebrate and BE HAPPY for what you are doing: It is very important to celebrate the gains that you have; your own growth and be grateful for the life that you have.

As a method supporting your personal development you can also use:

1. **Online course - Self-discovery – individual reflection and practical process -**
<https://learningforchange.net/course/self-discovery-individual-reflection-practical-process/> ;
2. **Online course - Self-discovery – individual reflection and practical process – 2 -**
<https://learningforchange.net/course/self-discovery-individual-reflection-practical-process-2/> ;
3. **Download The Pocket book "Self-discovery – individual reflection and practical process" -**
<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/c79ceb4b-e3a5-4248-a7ae-1173eb1999ec>



HOW TO USE ECOCENTRIC DEVELOPMENT AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN YOUTH WORK

Ecocentric development and Positive psychology are two realms of human development that offer tremendous possibilities and can be used in various educational contexts with different target groups (children, youth and adults). In this section we are going to explore several aspects that could help those interested in using ECD and PP towards the development of young people.

Guidelines for using the Ecocentric developmental Wheel

- 🕒 Ecocentric development is based on the natural way of being, of living, thus for many people it can be easy to understand and connect with. It is our natural way of living our lives.
- 🕒 It is important to work with the ecocentric map and tasks on our own, to understand them, and then to apply the map and its principles on other people.
- 🕒 Knowing the ECD stage you are in is important, as well as knowing in which stages your beneficiaries are. *In the Appendix there is a tool for identifying the stage you are in.*
- 🕒 You can present the ECD map to your target groups and the list of tasks and sub-tasks from each stage. Then you can ask them to evaluate their level of development in each sub-task.
- 🕒 Most of the people we work with in educational contexts are in stage 3 of development, with many deficiencies from the previous stages.
- 🕒 First of all, it is important to make the transition from an ego-centric stage 3, to an eco-centric stage 3. In order to produce this shift is important to address the tasks and sub-tasks that are connected with nature.
- 🕒 Work with your target groups mainly on the tasks and sub-tasks that you are familiar with and you feel comfortable in addressing them.
- 🕒 Bring people as much as possible close to the nature. Instead of making the activities in the classroom or training room, make them outdoors, on a terrace, in a garden, in the park, in the forest.

Guidelines for using Positive psychology

- 🕒 Speak about your emotions in the working contexts and encourage your target groups to do the same, by asking them how they feel and creating spaces for expressing emotions. Be a positive example that your beneficiaries can mirror and copy.
- 🕒 Include in your work activities that generate positive emotions in your participants, then speak about the emotions. *A list of actions that generate positive emotions can be found in the sub-chapter Positive Emotions.*
- 🕒 Talk to your participants about the things that make them be in the flow and then include in your programs and projects activities that will make them experience this flow. Then speak about this.
- 🕒 Develop activities in which the participants can feel connected to a higher purpose. (Activities that serve a community, various social causes and justice, volunteering, political activism, environment protection etc.)
- 🕒 Develop educational activities that contribute to the PERMA Model (generate Positive emotions, create Engagement, develop Relationships, offer Meaning, lead to Achievements).
- 🕒 Include mindfulness practices in your work: meditation, centering practices, mindful walks, yoga, tai chi, qigong, artistic expression etc.
- 🕒 Use your body language to transmit positive energy to the people you work with. Have an open look, make eye contact, have an open chest, smile (make sure is authentic), express gratitude towards your beneficiaries, offer hugs.



Some principles and messages that you can transmit to your target groups

It is important to cultivate a healthy mindset and consciousness in our beneficiaries, which is based on ecocentric and positive psychology principles. Some of the messages we can transmit to them are the following:

- ☯ The change we need to do at global level is urgent, because of the accelerated environment destruction.
- ☯ Any action that we do has effects and consequences (positive or negative).
- ☯ Nature is an amazing teacher, connect with it and thus you will connect with yourself.
- ☯ Discover and develop your inner nature.
- ☯ Have quality family time.
- ☯ Live in communities. Make your own community (It helps in conscious personal development).
- ☯ Make positive affirmations – they help you develop more consciously.
- ☯ Art is a great tool for expression.
- ☯ Find yourself, find your way – Be authentic.
- ☯ Mindfulness is a way to happiness.
- ☯ Connect with your inner child.
- ☯ Trust the Mystery and trust the process.
- ☯ Life is simple. Simplicity is complex.
- ☯ Fall in love with the ecocentric stage you are in.
- ☯ We are all one, all connected.

Practices, rituals and processes that you can use in your work

The following activities are simple actions that you can include in your already existing work, without big efforts. You only have to allocate a space for few minutes for making one or a few practices.

- ☯ Rituals in the beginning of the day:
 - Meditation
 - Planning the day
 - Journaling
 - Setting intentions for the day
- ☯ A connection circle, where you can share emotions, things you are grateful for etc.
- ☯ Sharing positive emotions in pairs or small groups
- ☯ Read soul poetry
- ☯ Nature storytelling
- ☯ Mindful meditation indoor or outdoor
- ☯ Mindful walks in natural area
- ☯ Write a letter to yourself
- ☯ Create a toy
- ☯ Create a list with the things that make you happy and compare it with your daily activities. Make the necessary changes to do during the day more of the things that make you happy
- ☯ Sing, play music, drumming
- ☯ Dance for a few minutes



Activities that you can do to promote ECD and PP among your target groups

These are just a few activities that you can develop and include in your work. Some of these activities can be done in several hours, while others can take several days. Be creative and develop your own ideas.

- ☯ Workshops about living in harmony with nature
- ☯ Clean up activities of natural and urban places
- ☯ Organizing support groups for communities
- ☯ Creative recycling
- ☯ Vegetarian and vegan cooking workshops
- ☯ Sensory labyrinth (connected with the 8 stages of development)
- ☯ Ecstatic dance
- ☯ Five rhythms and Dancing in the dark
- ☯ Musical gatherings (drum circles, play music together etc.)
- ☯ Men/Women circles
- ☯ Family weekends
- ☯ Ecocentric hiking
- ☯ Land-art workshops
- ☯ Nature mandala
- ☯ Dream work circles
- ☯ Celebrating new seasons rituals
- ☯ The Way of Council
- ☯ Talking circles
- ☯ Gardening
- ☯ Reading clubs
- ☯ Movie nights
- ☯ Self-discovery workshops
- ☯ Summer camps for youth (learning sustenance skills in nature)
- ☯ Multiple intelligences workshop – a space for self-exploration
- ☯ 3-7 days trainings or camps
- ☯ 3-4 months long programmes

Logistical aspects that are important for promoting ECD and PP among your target groups (location, materials, food, people etc.)

These are few aspects that you can manage in order to stimulate Ecocentric development and Positive education. You don't have to go to a National Park for becoming more ecocentric and positive, but you can do simple actions that can add more value to your work and make your target group develop in a much healthier way.

☯ Location

Be as much as you can outdoor and close to nature, even if it's only a small green area. You can make your activities:

- In the park
- By the sea
- In the city
- In the forest
- By the lakes
- In interior gardens
- In individual homes
- On rooftops
- On a terrace



☯ Food

Develop a healthy life style, cultivate conscious eating habits and awareness about the food related issues. For your activities:

- Choose fresh and organic food. Local if possible.
- Choose home-made food, prepared on our own.
- Prepare food with your participants.
- Have community style meals where people bring their own food and exchange it.
- Try vegan and vegetarian food for a while, during some events (to reduce the consumption of natural resources for producing meat).

☯ Materials

- Use for your activities materials that are natural, recycled, eco-friendly.
- Always Reduce-Reuse-Recycle.
- Share materials with others, rent, borrow, instead of buying new things.

☯ People

Uniting forces with other people can produce more positive changes and transformations in your target groups. When planning your activities think of how you can cooperate with others. You can:

- Cooperate with people that do similar activities like you.
- Cooperate with community representatives, political leaders.
- Invite to your activities psychologists, therapists, musicians, yoga practitioners, biologists, ecologists, wilderness guides, shamans, writers etc.

These are just guideline and some advice that can help you facilitate Ecocentric development and Positive psychology activities in your own context, with your own target groups. Be creative and courageous in implementing them!



PART 1

GENERAL CONCEPTS

On the wings of the ladybug

*... On the slide called Life
Sometimes it's scary.
Other times it's painful.
But we can also fly.
The triggered fear is from the unknown at the end of it.
But when we know the end, sometimes it hurts.
Where to fly to, we search in this everlasting moment.
But the road is lost mysteriously
between our widely opened eyes
and our soul, deeply locked.
Where is the key to this beautiful door?
Maybe in the wings of the ladybug on our shoulder...?*

*Galina Kancheva
(Bulgaria)*



ECOCENTRIC DEVELOPMENT

A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO THE ECOCENTRIC DEVELOPMENTAL WHEEL

(Bill Plotkin, January 2015)

The Eco-Soulcentric Developmental Wheel is a model of what the stages of human life look like when we mature in full resonance with both nature ("eco") and soul — when we are in a continuous process of becoming fully human throughout the lifespan. There are eight life stages on the Wheel, two each of childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and elderhood.

The eco-soulcentric stages contrast with the egocentric stages in which most contemporary people are encumbered. Egocentrism — living as if the ego is the core of our psyche and that it should or can decide what's most important in life — is a disorder due in part to the loss of effective rites of passage but more generally due to the loss of healthy cultures and the resulting erosion or disappearance of the practices and perspectives that support optimal human development.

Optimal human development — every child, woman, and man progressing through the eco-soulcentric stages of life — is the foundation for cultural transformations that are profound, generative, and life enhancing.

The Eco-Soulcentric Wheel is laid out on the template of the four cardinal directions. The diagram accompanying this essay shows the eight stages, beginning in the east and proceeding clockwise (sunwise) around the circle, ending again in the east. On the outside of the Wheel are the eight stages. The name of each stage is a coupling of a human archetype, such as the Innocent, with an Earth archetype, such as the Nest. The diagram notes three additional aspects of each stage: **the developmental tasks**; **the gift** that people in that stage contribute to the world simply by being present in it; and **the psychospiritual center of gravity** (the hub of the person's life, what their day-to-day existence revolves around). Inside the circle of stages are the names of the nine transitions or passages between the stages. These nine transitions are the occasions for rites of passage. But the timing of the passages and the rites that mark them are not a matter of chronological age or the desires or beliefs of parents, religious authorities, or the individual-in-transition. Rather, the passages occur after the individual has had sufficient success with the developmental tasks of her or his life stage, at which point Mystery shifts the individual's center of gravity from one stage to the next.

When human maturation goes well, in other words, it is primarily due to success with the developmental tasks of our life stages. This is what moves us forward. What takes place between the major life passages — during the stages themselves — is actually much more significant than the passages and the ways we mark them with rites. But both are essential and interdependent: Without day-to-day success with the developmental tasks of the stages, we either fail to reach the next passage or do so only in a partial or distorted manner. And without effective rites of passage, we might enter the next stage in only a partial or compromised way.

In *Nature and the Human Soul: Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World* (New World Library, 2008), I've described in some detail the specific developmental tasks of each stage, as well as other aspects of the stages.

Due to the loss or degradation of vibrant cultures, most contemporary people — at least 80% — get stuck in the third of the eight life stages, which is to say in early adolescence. By "adolescence," I mean a psychosocial stage, not a chronological interval coincident with the teen years. And the early adolescence in which the majority of post-pubescent Westerners sleepwalk through the rest of their lives tends to be not even a healthy adolescence but, rather, what I've called a patho-adolescence. This is an egocentric existence focused upon the attempt to look good to others; to conform and/or to rebel against the ordinary and mainstream; to "get ahead" in the dog-eat-dog competition for material possessions, financial



wealth, and social status; and to minimize the experience of challenging realities by way of addictions (whether to substances or to compulsive behaviors such as shopping, impersonal sex, or gambling).

The natural and wholesome virtues of a healthy adolescence have become relatively rare, virtues such as the cultivation of personal authenticity that grows hand in hand with social belonging and cooperation; the discovery of the joys and responsibilities of a healthy sexual identity and of erotic embodiment in intimate relationships; the desire and capacities to contribute to and help create a healthy, just, sustainable, imaginative, and life-enhancing human community; and an ever-developing reverence and gratitude for the web of life, with all its creatures and habitats, and a desire and capacity to protect and enhance the Earth community of which we are all natural members. In a healthy, mature culture, these virtues are defining qualities of early adolescence; their development is not postponed until adulthood.

This begs the question: What, then, is adulthood, true adulthood? From the perspective of the Eco-Soulcentric Developmental Wheel, adulthood is a stage of life that has become progressively rare in the Western world over the past few millennia. It is not meaningfully defined in terms of the acceptance of "mature" responsibilities, or in terms of raising a family, contributing to community, earning a living, or honing a craft or vocation. All these achievements are fully realizable (and, except for raising a family, ordinary) in a healthy early adolescence. (In mature societies, although sexual exploration naturally begins in early adolescence, starting a family is normally postponed until the achievement of true adulthood.) Rather, true adulthood is the stage of life in which one consciously recognizes and embodies the unique life of one's soul. This is a psychospiritual state that contemporary Western society would consider mystical, but would seem quite ordinary in a healthy society.

By "soul," I mean our individual and unique place or niche in the Earth community — not our place in the human village (identified by social and vocational roles) but our place in the greater web of life (identified in terms of nature-based metaphors, human archetypes, or other mythic or poetic images). Your soul, in other words, corresponds to what poet David Whyte refers to as "the largest conversation you can have with the world" or "the truth at the center of the image you were born with." This niche, this conversation, this truth, this image, is not primarily cultural or merely human; rather it is ecological and mythopoetic, which is to say clothed and communicated in the metaphors, symbols, images, dreams, and archetypes of nature and of our own wild minds.

From the perspective of the Wheel, then, true adults are people for whom three things are true:

- (1) they experience themselves, first and foremost, as members of the Earth community (and, secondly, of a family and a human village or city, and perhaps also of an ethnic group or religion, a state or nation, etc.)
- (2) they have had one or more revelatory experiences of their unique mythopoetic place in that Earth community, and
- (3) they are embodying that mysterious place as a gift to their people and to the greater web of life.

In psychological adolescence, we appropriately define or identify ourselves in terms of our social or interpersonal roles — friend, son or daughter, lover, spouse, parent — or in terms of our job, craft, profession, or other community roles. In true adulthood, in contrast, we define and identify ourselves in terms of our soul-rooted or ecological roles — our mythopoetic identities. Here are four examples, mere intimations of the mythopoetic identities of four people I know: the woman who generates perception-expanding images and identity-destabilizing questions; the man who guides others into the oceanic depths of the psyche; the woman with a sparkling heart who walks the path of the bear; and the man who weaves cocoons of transformation for his people.

A second essential difference between adolescent and adult identities is that the former are chosen (or given or imposed by others) while the latter are discovered or remembered or reclaimed or confirmed. We are born into this life with our soul identity but are not conscious of this identity in childhood or early adolescence. Recovering or remembering this identity is the goal of the initiatory process that begins in what I call late adolescence (a psychospiritual stage reached by only a minority of contemporary humans) and that ushers us into true adulthood. The central mission of Animas Valley Institute is to assist people in recovering and embodying their soul identities.



But the process that leads to true adulthood is only one of several initiations in a full human lifetime. Each eco-soulcentric stage of life can be understood as an initiatory journey.

Gestation is the first such journey, and birth the first passage.

Early childhood (which, on the Wheel, I call "the Innocent in the Nest" — see diagram) is the second initiatory journey, and attaining consciousness of an individual, autonomous self (which I call "Naming," usually occurring around the fourth birthday) is the second passage.

Middle childhood ("the Explorer in the Garden") is the third initiatory journey, and psychosocial puberty the third passage (not to be confused with physiological puberty, which can commence anywhere from age 9 to 16).

Early adolescence ("the Thespian at the Oasis") is the fourth initiatory journey, and the following passage is Confirmation (confirmation of having achieved a social presence that is both authentic and socially accepted).

Late adolescence ("the Wanderer in the Cocoon") is the fifth initiatory journey (which includes the first descent to soul), and Soul Initiation (the commencement of true adulthood) is the fifth passage.

And there are four subsequent initiatory journeys and four passages, which together constitute the second half of life.

So you can see that from the perspective of the eco-soulcentric model, we don't progress from childhood to adulthood in one fell swoop. Rather, there are two major life stages that intervene — namely, early and late adolescence — and there is not just one life passage along the way, not even just two, but three (Puberty, Confirmation, and Soul Initiation). In men's development, for example, it's not boys to men; rather, it's boy Explorers to young male Thespians to a kind of androgynous late-adolescent Wanderer to a first-stage true man (an Apprentice at the Wellspring). These are four very different life stages, each with its particular developmental needs, milestones, and opportunities.

Although there are differences in the developmental paths of boys and girls (and differences for heterosexuals, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered), the core developmental dynamics are the same.

The greatest psychosocial differences in the manifestation of gender occur in psychological early adolescence. This is also the stage in which development is most differentiated in terms of masculinity and femininity. There are fewer gender differences both before and after early adolescence. In societies stuck in patho-adolescence, however, gender differences are magnified and amplified throughout the lifespan and often embodied and acted in unhealthy and unnatural ways.

Our genetic endowment affords us something like a free ride through the life passages of birth, naming, and puberty although, outside a healthy culture, these passages usually result in flawed or distorted versions of the first three life stages. Real maturation beyond early adolescence does not occur at all without success with the developmental tasks of early adolescence and attention to the most incomplete tasks of childhood. In healthy cultures, true elders and adults provide effective initiatory processes (and passages) for youth through the two stages of adolescence and into adulthood.

Real rites of passage primarily mark and confirm psychospiritual transitions that have already occurred; they do not bring about transitions that have not yet been developmentally earned or attained. Effective rites of passage are a huge support for those who have recently achieved a new life stage, achieved by virtue of their success with the developmental tasks of earlier stages. Well-designed rites incorporate gratitude for and ritual severance from the previous stage, an introduction to or familiarizing with the new stage, a ceremonial induction into a new way of being in the world, and a community-wide acknowledgment of and support for changes in social standing, opportunities, and responsibilities.

From the perspective of the Eco-Soulcentric Developmental Wheel, life is a sacred pilgrimage through eight stages. The first half of an eco-soulcentric life culminates with the discovery of mythopoetic destiny, the meaning of one's existence, the gift that one is blessed and burdened to contribute to the ever-unfolding dream of the Earth, the ever-evolving story of the Universe. The second half of such a life constitutes the hazardous and joyous embodiment of that destiny. The embodiment of soul destiny is the greatest gift we can offer the world. During times of radical cultural breakdown and opportunity — like our current era — the embodiment of individual destiny is the greatest generator of life-enhancing cultural change.



EGOCENTRIC LIFE AND THE CHALLENGES OF MODERN SOCIETY

(Bill Plotkin)

What shape or pattern will the human story take in the future? As of this writing, we cannot predict with any certainty the outcome of our current planetary cataclysm. In this tiny interval of the twenty-first century, we, the human species, will either learn to become a life-enhancing element within the greater Earth community...or we will not. If we fail, humanity will be reduced to a small number, we will have forsaken our potential as a species (this time around, at least) and we will have perpetrated the extinction of many thousands of species, perhaps millions — beyond those that have already perished at our hands.

CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY

In our moment of history, perhaps the most sweeping and radical transformation ever to occur on Earth is under way. This “moment” is the twenty-first century, a lifetime from a human perspective, yet a mere dust mote of duration within our planet’s 4.5 billion years of exuberant evolution.

As is so often the case, the opportunity at the heart of this moment arises from a great crisis. Over the past two hundred years, industrial civilization has been relentlessly undermining Earth’s chemistry, water cycles, atmosphere, soils, oceans, and thermal balance. Plainly said, we have been shutting down the major life systems of our planet.

Compounding the ecological crisis are decaying economies, ethnic and class conflict, and worldwide warfare. Entwined with, and perhaps underlying, these devastations are epidemic failures in individual human development.

True adulthood, or psychological maturity, has become an uncommon achievement in Western and Westernized societies, and genuine elderhood nearly nonexistent. Interwoven with arrested personal development, and perhaps inseparable from it, our everyday lives have drifted vast distances from our species’ original intimacy with the natural world and from our own uniquely individual natures, our souls.

THE CHALLENGES OF MODERN SOCIETY

In industrial growth society, however, we have for centuries minimized, suppressed, or entirely ignored the nature task in the first three stages of human development, infancy through early adolescence. This results in an adolescence so out of sync with nature that most people never mature further.

Arrested personal growth serves industrial “growth.” By suppressing the nature dimension of human development (through educational systems, social values, advertising, nature-eclipsing vocations and pastimes, city and suburb design, denatured medical and psychological practices, and other means), industrial growth society engenders an immature citizenry unable to imagine a life beyond consumerism and soul-suppressing jobs.

This neglect of our human nature constitutes an even greater impediment to personal maturation than our modern loss of effective rites of passage, and it has led to the tragedy we face today: most humans are alienated from their vital individuality — their souls — and humanity as a whole is largely alienated from the natural world that evolved us and sustains us. Soul has been demoted to a new-age spiritual fantasy or a missionary’s booty, and nature has been treated, at best, as a postcard or a vacation backdrop or, more commonly, as a hardware store or refuse heap. Too many of us lack intimacy with the natural world and with our souls, and consequently we are doing untold damage to both.



A PATHO-ADOLESCENT SOCIETY

In current Western and Westernized societies, in addition to the scarcity of true maturity, many people of adult age suffer from a variety of adolescent psychopathologies — incapacitating social insecurity, identity confusion, extremely low self-esteem, few or no social skills, narcissism, relentless greed, arrested moral development, recurrent physical violence, materialistic obsessions, little or no capacity for intimacy or empathy, substance addictions, and emotional numbness.

We see these psychopathologies most glaringly in leaders and celebrities of the Western world: Politicians blatantly motivated by image preservation, reelection prospects, power, wealth, and privilege. Moralizing religious leaders caught with their moral compasses askew. Entertainment icons killing themselves with alcohol, drugs, eating disorders, and cosmetic surgeries. Captains of industry reaching unprecedented nadirs of greed and power obsessions.

When we take an honest look at the people in charge of the governments, corporations, schools, and religious organizations of industrial growth societies, we find that too many are psychological adolescents with no deep understanding of themselves or the natural environment that makes their lives possible. Many Western men spend their lives aspiring to the adventures of early-adolescent heroism — whether on elite playing fields, in the fastest cars, the highest summits, the most beds, or the most exclusive boardrooms. Many women hope to land the best male exemplar of that adolescent hero — or become a female version of him.



With so few ripened leaders, our communities have become caravans astray in a cultural wilderness. We've lost our bearings and forgotten where we were headed in the first place. When we arrive at a difficult crossing — say, a river or a chasm — having no boats or ropes, we sadly stare and then turn away to try another direction, perhaps hoping a god or a genie might someday come along to rescue us.



Although many of our social and psychological problems surface as early as the preschool years, our cultural disorientation becomes most evident in our remarkable failures with the life passage of puberty and the stage of life that follows it. As a society, we're profoundly confused about adolescence. We don't know if it is a form of early adulthood, late childhood, a blending of both, or something else entirely. We're not sure if we should treat a thirteen-year-old as an adult or a kid; we're not even sure how to do either. Parents of teenagers toss up their hands in mutual despair and resignation. An increasing proportion of teens feel lost and confused and cannot find someone trustworthy and wise to whom they can turn.

These confusions about adolescence are reflected in how we have collectively responded to puberty, which is, other than birth and death, perhaps the physically most obvious human transition. As a whole, Westernized societies don't seem to have a clue about how to prepare a young person for sexual flowering, social independence, authentic personal expression, soul discovery, or a lifetime of interdependent relationships in the more-than-human world of nature. Traditional rites of passage, stripped of their vitality centuries before, have become empty shells, like the longdiscarded husks of departed souls.

Consequently, we are seeing the most alarming signs of cultural pathology in teenagers and children. We are witnessing an increasingly high percentage of teens who are drug addicted, violent, plotting to take their own and others' lives (and often following through), imprisoned, diagnosed with severe psychological disorders, and routinely prescribed mind-altering and emotion-numbing drugs.

And almost inconceivably, some prepubertal children are exhibiting adolescent pathologies. We are witnessing seven- and eight-year-olds involved in sex and drug addictions, homicides, and gang warfare. This is perhaps the clearest and most alarming symptom of a patho-adolescent society in the terminal stages of degeneration: even childhood is robbed of its wholesomeness.

A healthy childhood is rooted in nature and a supportive family, but many children in the Western world have been uprooted from both and given sexuality and trifles instead. Having lost the training and rites that prepare a girl for becoming truly queenly, a mature woman, we have instead beauty-queen contests for five-year-olds.

THE PROMISE AND HOPE OF ADOLESCENCE

But adolescence itself is not the problem. In fact, adolescence — healthy adolescence — holds our master key to both individual development and human evolution. Adolescence, at this time, is the locus of both our crisis and our opportunity. The crisis of adolescence and the crisis of our culture are two facets of the same impasse. Seizing the opportunity in one quickens the opportunity for the other. Once enough people embrace the true nature of adolescence — its promise and potential — Western culture will transform and again become life sustaining. To the extent that we don't know what adolescence is for, we don't know what humans are for.

It is likely that people who don't understand teenagers are the same people who, in their teen years, were not understood by their parents and teachers. Consequently, in each generation the promise of adolescence goes unrealized. This is our cultural dilemma.

A fourth premise of this book is that this dilemma — which has its roots in cultural changes associated with the advent of agriculture six to ten thousand years ago — is not accidental or due to bad luck. Rather, it is an intrinsic feature of what it is to be human: it has been, and is, unavoidable. This is a quandary hundreds of generations old, one so tangled and complex that we can't be surprised that humanity is just discovering means to resolve it.

I believe our dilemma arises from the innate vulnerability, or Achilles heel, of the human species, a "sacred wound" that derives from our uniquely human mode of consciousness and that holds the secret to our destiny, our collective human soul. Our distinctive ego-based consciousness — made possible by our reflexive self-awareness — engenders both our crisis and our opportunity. Ego consciousness is our greatest liability as well as our greatest power.



The symptoms of our human wound become most apparent in adolescence. This is the phase of life in which most contemporary people get stuck and the phase in which most need the greatest support. Adolescence holds the key to our becoming fully human.

Genuine adulthood is not obtained merely by reaching a certain age, birthing or raising children, or accepting certain responsibilities. The adolescent must undergo an initiation process that requires letting go of the familiar and comfortable. She must submit to a journey of descent into the mysteries of nature and the human soul. She must plunge to the depths, in a sense to “hell,” but not at all in the way mainstream society has come to understand — and to fear. The descent that adolescents must undergo is what most scares people about teenagers (including teenagers themselves). But this is also what grieves many older people, because, somewhere inside, they know this is where they needed to go as teens but didn’t, and the question still hovers in the air in front of them as to whether it is too late.

Through psychospiritual adventure, the adolescent comes to know what she was born to do, what gift she possesses to bring to the world, what sacred quality lives in her heart, and how she might arrive at her own unique way of loving and belonging. Entry into the life of the soul demands a steep price, an ordeal, a psychological form of dying. The uninitiated adolescent does not easily give up her claim on “the good life.” Grasping this, we must invent, or reinvent, forms and methods for soul initiation.

A deeper understanding of adolescence is where our hope lies.



ECOCENTRIC DEVELOPMENT

(Bill Plotkin)

But it is not too late to change. This book (<http://www.natureandthehumansoul.com/newbook/>) suggests how we might embrace the nature task in each stage of human development and how we can address the culture task much more thoroughly and fruitfully than we do in industrial growth society. By devoting ourselves to both tasks, we can reclaim our full membership in this flowering planet and animated universe, and become more fully human, both as individuals and as societies. We can grow unimpeded into adulthood and, eventually, elderhood, and create twenty-first century life-sustaining societies.

We must go far beyond any transformation of contemporary culture. We must go back to the genetic imperative from which human cultures emerge originally and from which they can never be separated without losing their integrity and their survival capacity. None of our existing cultures can deal with this situation out of its own resources. We must invent, or reinvent, a sustainable human culture by a descent into our pre-rational, our instinctive resources. Our cultural resources have lost their integrity. They cannot be trusted. What is needed is not transcendence but "inscendence," not the brain but the gene.

Thomas Berry, the Dream of the Earth

THE GREAT TURNING

Transformational progress is already under way through the creative initiatives of countless ecocentric people and groups the world over. The Great Work has been launched in all realms of society, including technology, science, the arts, economics, education, government, and religion. A few examples: Major technological breakthroughs in clean, safe, local, renewable energy (wind, solar, small hydroelectric, and biofuels) and innovations in energy conservation methods. The science-rooted "new cosmology" — the sacred telling of the evolution of the universe and life on Earth. Local, human-scale economies and food systems that honor the "triple bottom line": people, planet, and profits. Primary and secondary education curricula rooted in ecoliteracy — the study of our relationship to nature, our first and foremost membership. The popular recent movements in South America that suggest the emergence of true Western democracies. The widespread longing for a more intimate relationship to the inscrutable mysteries of life as evidenced, for example, in the huge wave of renewed interest in nature-based and alternative spiritualities, from Celtic, goddess-oriented, and shamanic to Buddhism, Taoism, and Sufism. The burgeoning popularity and power of the environmental movement (the one movement that is surely not a "special interest"), the creation and widespread adoption of the Earth Charter (an international declaration of interdependence of all species and habitats), and the appearance of new laws (the "wild laws" of the new Earth jurisprudence) that grant essential rights to noncorporate nonhumans.

These efforts and many others are unfolding largely outside the interest and coverage of mainstream media. Yet there are numberless groups, organizations, and communities around the globe creating the infrastructure of not only a new society but also a fundamentally new mode of being human. If we succeed, this century might be known in the future as the time Earth shifted from the geological epoch of the Cenozoic (now some 65 million years old, having begun at the time of the mass extinction that ended the reign of the dinosaurs) to what Thomas Berry calls the Ecozoic Era.



CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY

Will the twenty-first century turn out to be the Great Ending or the Great Turning? Will we succeed at the Great Work? It's up to us...you and me and all others who are waking up to the extraordinary challenge, opportunity, and imperative before us. As poet Drew Dellinger asks, "What did you do...when the seasons started failing?"

My beginning premise is that a more mature human society requires more mature human individuals.

For twenty-five years, I have been asking how we might raise children, support teenagers, and ripen ourselves so we might engender a sustainable human culture.

My second premise is that nature (including our own deeper nature, soul) has always provided and still provides the best template for human maturation.

In these pages, you'll find a narrative of how we might grow whole, one life stage at a time, by embracing nature and soul as our wisest and most trustworthy guides. This model for individual human development ultimately yields a strategy for cultural transformation, a way of progressing from our current egocentric societies (materialistic, anthropocentric, competition based, class stratified, violence prone, and unsustainable) to soulcentric ones (imaginative, ecocentric, cooperation based, just, compassionate, and sustainable).

In contrast to those presented in most other developmental models, the stages of life portrayed here are essentially independent of chronological age, biological development, cognitive ability, and social role. Rather, the progression from one stage to the next is spurred by the individual's progress with the specific psychological and spiritual tasks encountered at each stage.

This, then, is an ecopsychology of human maturation, a developmental psychology with a unique angle: it's a portrayal not of typical or "average" human development but of exemplary development as it occurs in the healthiest contemporary people — and as it could occur for everyone.

A third premise is that every human being has a unique and mystical relationship to the wild world, and that the conscious discovery and cultivation of that relationship is at the core of true adulthood. In contemporary society, we think of maturity simply in terms of hard work and practical responsibilities. I believe, in contrast, that true adulthood is rooted in transpersonal experience — in a mystic affiliation with nature, experienced as a sacred calling — that is then embodied in soul-infused work and mature responsibilities. This mystical affiliation is the very core of maturity, and it is precisely what mainstream Western society has overlooked — or actively suppressed and expelled.

Although perhaps perceived by some as radical, this third premise is not the least bit original. Western civilization has buried most traces of the mystical roots of maturity, yet this knowledge has been at the heart of every indigenous tradition known to us, past and present, including those from which our own societies have emerged. Our way into the future requires new cultural forms more than older ones, but there is at least one thread of the human story that I'm confident will continue, and this is the numinous or visionary calling at the core of the mature human heart.

THE WHEEL OF LIFE

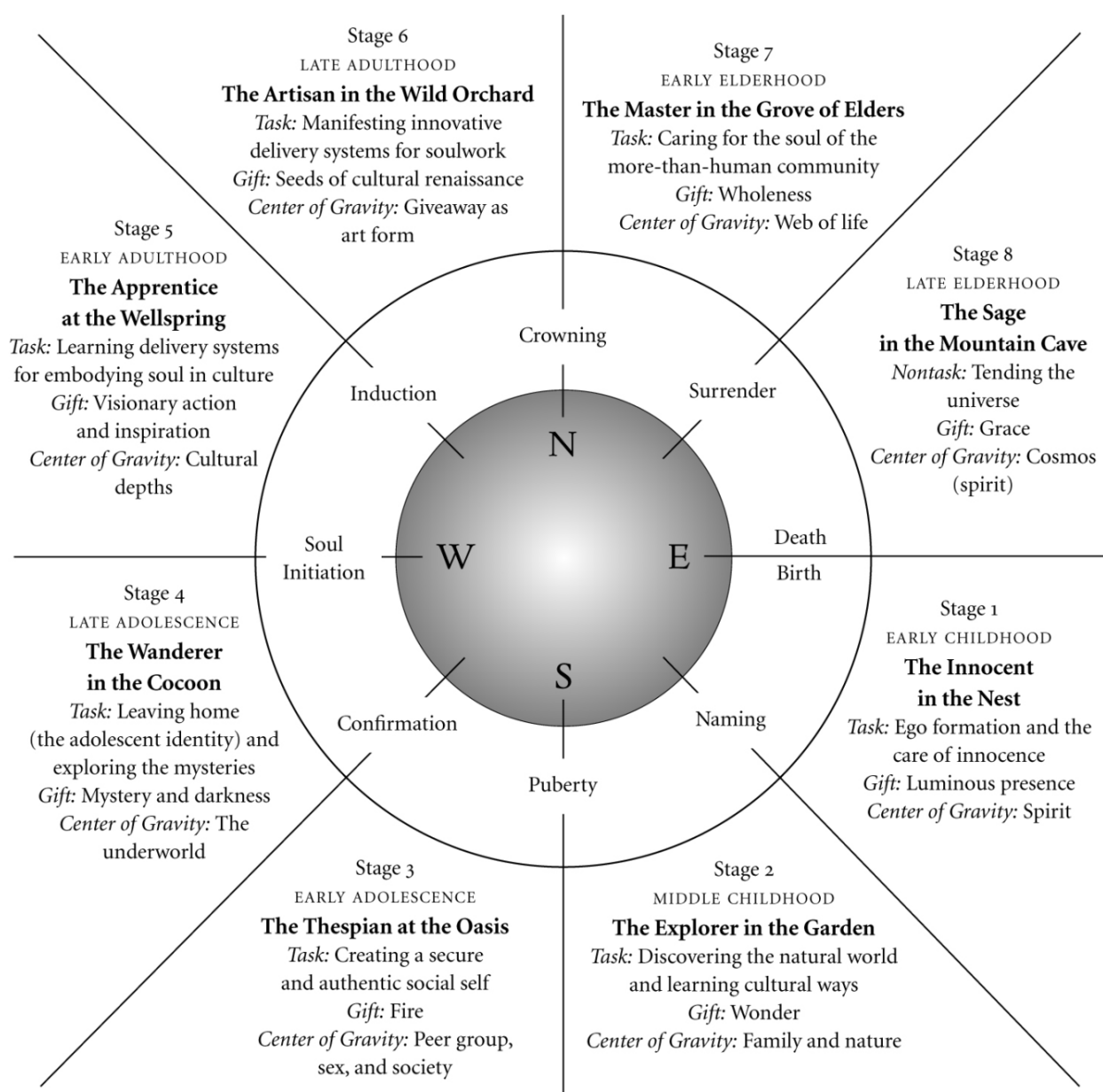
In this book you'll find a model of human development that is both ecocentric and soulcentric — that is, a nature-based model that fully honors the deeply imaginative potentials of the human psyche. I think of this model as a new natural history of the soul, a description of the organic, indigenous process by which a human child grows into a soul-initiated adult. Other times I've overheard myself say that this is a field guide for growing a genuine elder, starting, that is, at birth. This book asks the question, What do the stages of modern human development look like when we grow, in each stage, with nature and soul as our primary guides?

Twenty-five years in the making, this eight-stage model shows us how we can take root in a childhood of innocence and wonder; sprout into an adolescence of creative fire and mystery-probing adventures; blossom into an authentic adulthood of cultural artistry and visionary leadership; and finally ripen into a seed-scattering elderhood of wisdom, grace, and the holistic tending of what cultural ecologist David Abram calls the more-than-human world.



The model, which I call the Soulcentric Developmental Wheel, the Wheel of Life, or simply the Wheel, is ecocentric in two respects. First, the eight life stages are arrayed around a nature-based circle (as opposed to the familiar Western linear timeline). Beginning and ending in the east and proceeding clockwise (which is sunwise), the stages and their attributes are based primarily on the qualities of nature found in the four seasons (east-spring, south-summer, and so on) or, alternatively, the four times of day (sunrise, midday, sunset, and midnight).

Second, the developmental task that characterizes each stage has a nature-oriented dimension as well as a more familiar (to Westerners) culture-oriented dimension. Healthy human development requires a constant balancing of the influences and demands of both nature and culture. For example, in middle childhood, the nature task is learning the enchantment of the natural world through experiential outdoor immersion, while the culture task is learning the social practices, values, knowledge, history, mythology, and cosmology of our family and culture.



The Eight Soulcentric/ Ecocentric Stages of Human Development
From Nature and the Human Soul © Bill Plotkin (New World Library, 2008)
soulcraft@animas.org



SUMMARY OF ECO-SOULCENTRIC DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

EAST - Stages 1 & 8	Archetype of the direction: The Fool
Stage 1:	The Nest (early childhood)
<i>Passage into this stage:</i>	Birth
<i>Archetype of the stage:</i>	The Innocent
<i>Gift:</i>	Innocence and luminous presence
<i>Psycho-spiritual center of gravity:</i>	Spirit
<i>Circle of identity:</i>	From none/infinite to self-centric
<i>Tasks (managed by parents or caregivers):</i>	
The preservation of innocence and the formation of a healthy, intact, culturally viable ego.	

SOUTH - Stages 2 & 3	Archetype of the direction: The Orphan
Stage 2:	The Garden (middle childhood)
<i>Passage:</i>	Naming (celebrating the emergence of conscious self-awareness)
<i>Archetype of the stage:</i>	The Explorer
<i>Gift:</i>	Wonder
<i>Psycho-spiritual center of gravity:</i>	Family and nature
<i>Circle of identity:</i>	Sociocentric
<i>Task:</i>	
Learning the givens of the world and our place in it	
<i>Sub-tasks:</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discovering the enchantment of the natural world. Four realms of nature <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Wild nature (the other-than-human-world) b) The human body (including the five senses) c) Imagination (especially dreams and spontaneous imaginings) d) Emotions 2. Learning cultural ways: the social practices, values, knowledge, history, mythology, and cosmology of one's family and culture 	
Stage 3:	The Oasis (Social Individuation) (early adolescence)
<i>Passage:</i>	Puberty (when we begin to experience ourselves primarily as members of a peer group and community beyond our membership in family and nature)
<i>Archetype of the stage:</i>	The Thespian
<i>Gift:</i>	Fire
<i>Psycho-spiritual center of gravity:</i>	Peer group, sex and society
<i>Circle of identity:</i>	Ethnocentric
<i>Task:</i>	
Creating a secure and authentic social self (one that generates adequate amounts of both social acceptance and self-approval)	
<i>Sub-tasks:</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Value exploration and learning the skills of social authenticity 2. Emotional skills: emotional access, insight, action, and illumination 3. Art of conflict resolution (with both outer and inner conflicts) 4. Status-assigning skills 5. Skills with sex and sexual relationships 6. Sustenance skills 7. Studying human-nature reciprocity and ecological responsibility 8. Welcoming home the Loyal Soldier 	



WEST Stages 4 & 5	
Archetype of the direction: The Visionary	
Stage 4:	
The Cocoon (late adolescence)	
<i>Passage:</i>	Confirmation (of adequate completion of the adolescent personality and hence preparedness for the descent to soul)
<i>Archetype of the stage:</i>	The Wanderer
<i>Gift:</i>	Mystery and Darkness
<i>Psycho-spiritual center of gravity:</i>	Mysteries of soul and nature, the underworld
<i>Circle of identity:</i>	Worldcentric
<i>Task 1:</i> Leaving Home (i.e., relinquishing the adolescent identity) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Honing the skills of physical, psychological, and social self-reliance B. Relinquishing attachment to the adolescent personality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Addressing developmental deficits from earlier stages 2. Giving up addictions 3. Exploration of the Sacred Wound 4. Learning to choose authenticity over acceptance 5. Making peace with the past (the Death Lodge) 6. Learning the art of disidentification through the practice of meditation <i>Task 2:</i> Exploring the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Acquiring and using soulcraft skills (examples: dreamwork, the way of council, self-designed ceremony, nature dialogues, deep imagery, trance drumming and dancing, signs and omens, soul poetry, symbolic artwork, plant allies, fasting, tracking) B. Cultivating a soulful relationship to life Practices and disciplines that support Task 2B: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The art of solitude 2. Discovering nature as mirror 3. Wandering in nature 4. Living the questions of soul 5. Confronting one's own death 6. The art of Shadow work 7. The art of romance 8. Mindfulness practice 9. Volunteering 10. Advanced Loyal Soldier work 11. Developing the four dimensions of the Self 12. Praising the world 13. Developing a personal relationship with spirit 	
Stage 5:	
The Wellspring (early adulthood) (Soul-Rooted Individuation)	
<i>Passage:</i>	Soul Initiation (the moment we commit, utterly, to the embodiment in the world of our soul image, soul story, or soul powers)
<i>Archetype of the stage:</i>	The Soul Apprentice
<i>Gift:</i>	Visionary Action, Hope, and Inspiration
<i>Task:</i> Learning delivery systems for embodying soul in culture <i>Sub-tasks:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. identifying one or two cultural settings for our soul work 2. developing the skills of our soul work (acquiring a delivery system) and performing that work in our community 3. further explorations of our soul image/story and the nature of our soul powers 4. the soul-rooted individuation of the personality (i.e., differentiating the self in relation to soul, as opposed to the earlier differentiation in relation to society) 	



NORTH Stages 6 & 7	Archetype of the direction: The Warrior-Martyr
Stage 6:	The Wild Orchard (late adulthood)
<i>Passage:</i> embodiment)	Induction (confirmation of mastery of at least one form of soul)
<i>Archetype of the stage:</i>	The Artisan
<i>Gift:</i>	Seeds of Cultural Renaissance
<i>Tasks:</i>	
1. Creating and implementing innovative delivery systems for soul	
2. Advanced cultivation and integration of the four dimensions of the Self	
Stage 7:	The Grove of Elders (early elderhood)
<i>Passage:</i>	Crowning (initiation into true elderhood)
<i>Archetype of the stage:</i>	The Master
<i>Gift:</i>	Wholeness
<i>Task:</i>	
Caring for the soul of the more-than-human community	
Examples:	
1. defending and nurturing the innocence and wonder of children	
2. mentoring and initiating adolescents	
3. mentoring adults in their soul work	
4. guiding the evolution or transformation of the culture	
5. maintaining the balance between the human and more-than-human worlds	

EAST Stages 8 & 1	Archetype of the direction: The Fool
Stage 8:	The Mountain Cave (late elderhood)
<i>Passage:</i> to spirit)	Surrender (of the goal-oriented ego; primary life orientation returns)
<i>Archetype of the stage:</i>	The Sage
<i>Gift:</i>	Grace
<i>Non-Tasks:</i>	
Tending the universe	
Examples:	
1. sharing of wisdom	
2. the coordination of the human with the cosmological	
3. mentoring by means of an enduring imaginal presence	
4. preparation for death	
<i>Final passage:</i> Death	



BECOMING FULLY HUMAN

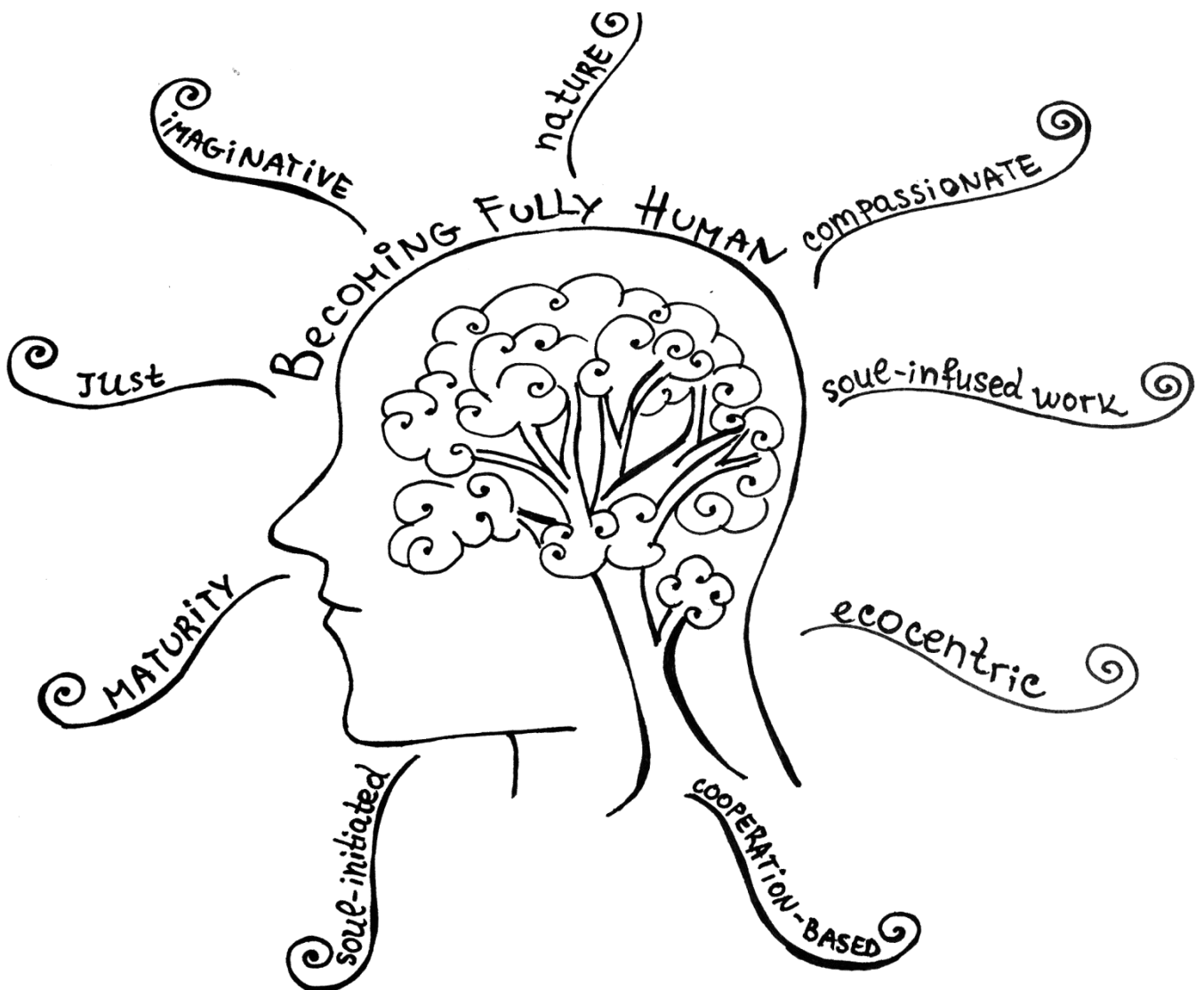
(Bill Plotkin)

Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown explain that the Great Turning is happening simultaneously in three areas or dimensions that are mutually reinforcing and equally necessary. They identify these as

- ☉ “holding actions” to slow the damage to Earth and its beings;
- ☉ analysis of structural causes and the creation of alternative institutions; and
- ☉ a fundamental shift in worldview and values.

The first dimension includes a great variety of endeavors to defend life on Earth, including campaigns for progressive legislation and regulations, political actions and lawsuits that slow down the destruction of Earth’s life systems, and direct actions such as boycotts, blockades, whistle-blowing, protesting, and civil disobedience. This is the more immediate, short-term work that provides time for the other two dimensions of building a life-sustaining society.

The second dimension asks us to deeply understand and demystify the dynamics of the industrial growth society so that we truly know how it works and why it is both seductive and destructive, and then to create alternative structures and practices in all our major cultural establishments, including economics, food and energy systems, government, and education. This book highlights some of these alternatives, especially in the realms of parenting and education.



The primary focus of this book, however, is on the third dimension of the Great Turning, which Joanna and Molly deem “the most basic.” They note that, in order to take root and survive, the alternative institutions created as part of the second dimension must be sourced in a worldview profoundly different from the one that created the industrial growth society. They see such a shift in human consciousness emerging in the grief that so many of us are feeling for a plundered world; in our new understandings from ecology, physics, ecopsychology, and other fields about what it means to be human on an animate planet; and in our deepening embrace of the mystical traditions of both indigenous and Western peoples.

The Wheel of Life provides a means to support and quicken this foundational shift in worldview and values; it offers a set of guidelines for actualizing our greater human potential. As Thomas Berry tells us in this chapter’s epigraph, “We must go far beyond any transformation of contemporary culture....None of our existing cultures can deal with [our current world] situation out of its own resources.” In addition to creating new cultural establishments, we must enable our very mode of being human to evolve.

But I do not mean something implausible or fanciful. I mean what simply amounts to growing up. Rather than become something other-than-human or superhuman, we are summoned to become fully human. We must mature into people who are, first and foremost, citizens of Earth and residents of the universe, and our identity and core values must be recast accordingly. This kind of maturation entails a quantum leap beyond the stage of development in which the majority of people live today. And yet we must begin now to engender the future human.

Consequently, the question of individual human development becomes critical. How can we grow whole so that an ecocentric identity becomes the rule rather than the exception? How can we foster a global ecological citizenry?

There are **three reasons** that enhanced human maturation is essential to the Great Turning.

First, we live in a largely adolescent world. And it is, in great measure, a pathological adolescence. There is absolutely nothing wrong with (healthy) adolescence, but our cultural resources have been so degraded over the centuries that the majority of humans in “developed” societies now never reach true adulthood. An adolescent world, being unnatural and unbalanced, inevitably spawns a variety of cultural pathologies, resulting in contemporary societies that are materialistic, greed-based, hostilely competitive, violent, racist, sexist, ageist, and ultimately self-destructive. These societal symptoms of patho-adolescence, which we see everywhere in the industrialized world today, are not at the root of our human nature, but rather are an effect of egocentrism on our humanity.

The Great Work cannot be completed as long as there are billions of people living a patho-adolescent lifestyle of conspicuous consumption — or aspiring to one — while billions of others live in abject poverty, or as long as there remains a majority of voter support for politicians (from either the right or left) with patho-adolescent ambitions and agendas, or as long as we live within political and corporate systems that suppress all alternatives to the industrial growth society.

As soon as enough people in contemporary societies progress beyond adolescence, the entire consumer-driven economy and egocentric lifestyle will implode. The adolescent society is actually quite unstable due to its incongruence with the primary patterns of living systems. The industrial growth society is simply incompatible with collective human maturity. No true adult wants to be a consumer, worker bee, or tycoon, or a soldier in an imperial war, and none would go through these motions if there were other options at hand. The enlivened soul and wild nature are deadly to industrial growth economies — and vice versa.

The second reason that human maturation is essential to the Great Turning is that the most potent seeds of cultural renaissance come from the uniquely creative work of authentic adults. All such adults are true artists, visionaries, and leaders, whether they live and work quietly in small arenas, such as families, farms, and classrooms, or very publicly on grand stages. They are our most reliable agents of cultural change. This book suggests a set of guidelines for restoring and refining the process of human maturation so that increasing numbers might grow into true twenty-first-century adults, into mature transformers of culture.



Thomas Berry writes, *"We must invent, or reinvent, a sustainable human culture by a descent into our pre-rational, our instinctive resources....What is needed is not transcendence but 'inscendence.'"* This descent, this inscendence, is the journey of soul discovery, which can be engaged only by those who have moved beyond the early adolescence in which our society has stalled. Through an individual's initiatory time in the underworld of soul, she uncovers a dream, a vision, or a revelation that will "inspire, guide, and drive the action" for the rest of life, as Thomas says. "The dream provides the energy for adult action."

The most inspiring work in the world today is being performed by those who have undergone this initiatory passage, those who have returned with precious resources for a soulcentric or life-sustaining society. This is the descent of which Thomas writes, the mature hero's journey described by mythologist Joseph Campbell, the descent to the goddess portrayed by Jungian therapist Sylvia Brinton Perera, the process of individuation identified by Carl Jung and other depth psychologists such as James Hillman and Marion Woodman, and the subject of my first book, *Soulcraft: Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche*. We cannot simply think our way out of our current planetary impasse — not even with blue-ribbon panels of the world's best minds. As Albert Einstein noted, "No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it." A viable plan for transforming our culture will not come from the worldview or the values that produced it. Viable cultural systems have always been sourced in the soul-rooted revelations, visions, and dreams of those with the courage to wander across borders into exotic psychospiritual realms, those like Crazy Horse, Gandhi, Jesus, and Buddha, and the equally inspiring but (in a patho-adolescent society) less-celebrated visionary women such as Mother Teresa, Hildegard von Bingen, and Wangari Maathai.

Mature revelation demands mature people. Positive cultural change is the natural outcome of healthy individual development, because mature people vitalize culture through their individual and collective actions. Cultural health and individual health engender one another. This book explores nature's ways — and every vital culture's ways — for raising healthy children; preparing adolescents for the initiatory adventure that opens the way to mature, authentic adulthood; and enhancing the cultural artistry and fulfillment of adult and elder lives.

The third reason individual maturation is essential is that, to succeed, the Great Turning must be overseen by true elders like Thomas Berry and Joanna Macy and tens of thousands of others like them. In its largest scope, the human venture must be guided not by assemblies of adolescent politicians and corporate officers, not even by mature, initiated adults, but by genuine councils of wise elders.



FIVE FACETS OF THE WHEEL

(Bill Plotkin)

The Wheel of Life represents not one but five things:

- ☉ A map or story of optimal human development
- ☉ A set of guidelines for individual psychological healing and wholing
- ☉ A design tool for creating healthy human communities and life-sustaining societies
- ☉ A deep cultural therapy — a way to heal and transform our existing human cultures
- ☉ A portrait of the emerging stage of human evolution

A MAP OR STORY OF OPTIMAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The human life cycle is best understood as a story. The Wheel tells a story, in eight acts, of becoming fully human, and it offers a map for reaching that destination. It is at once a model of how human development would unfold in a modern, soulcentric, life-sustaining society — a hypothetical one — and of how it can and does unfold now in our existing egocentric society when there is sufficient support from soul-centered parents, teachers, extended family networks, schools, religious organizations, and social programs.

The Wheel is ecocentric in that it models individual human development from the perspective of nature's cycles, rhythms, and patterns. Half the time, I call it the Ecocentric Developmental Wheel. The Wheel is also soulcentric, in two ways. First, it shows how soul attempts to guide our individual development. Second, it envisions the principal goal of maturation to be the conscious discovery and embodiment of our souls. It can equally well be called the Soulcentric Developmental Wheel.

If we look at the biographies of our society's most celebrated geniuses, artists, and visionaries, we find that most of them had regular immersions in the wild, especially in childhood, and that all of them had great sensitivity to the stirrings of the soul's deep imagination.

A SET OF GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALING AND WHOLING

There are two general approaches to alleviating psychological problems: pathology-centered and wholeness-centered (holistic). (This is also true for medical problems more generally.) Using the pathology approach, we ask, "What symptoms of dysfunction is this person exhibiting, and what can be done to eliminate these symptoms and/or this dysfunction?" Common psychological symptoms include anxiety, depression, obsessions, eating disorders, addictions, and mania. A shallow version of the pathology approach simply attempts to eliminate or suppress the behavioral, somatic, or emotional symptoms. A deeper approach tries to understand the psychodynamics of the dysfunction and then foster healing by addressing the deeper causes.

All pathology approaches begin and end with a symptom focus: you don't know what, if anything, is needed until symptoms appear, and you don't know your intervention has succeeded until the symptoms diminish. Some pathology approaches attend only to the individual, and others consider the individual's difficulties to be symptoms of the larger system in which the individual is a member (his family, school, or community). The system perspective with the widest lens, found among ecopsychologists, conceives of individual pathologies as symptoms of environmental illness, illness generated by human activity; as symptoms of our disordered human relationship with nature.

With the holistic approach, in contrast, dysfunction is not a central focus. We ask instead, "What qualities or capacities are missing from this person's embodiment of wholeness, and what can be done to cultivate these qualities or capacities?" The goal is to encourage and foster something functional and fulfilling rather than to remove something dysfunctional and deadening. Missing psychological qualities might be, for example, innocence, wonder, body awareness, nature reverence, creativity, and the development of values and virtues. Capacities of wholeness include social skills, cultural knowledge, emotional and imaginal skills, conflict resolution, and self-reliance.



Although the identification of symptoms can be useful in the holistic approach, there's no need to wait for signs that something has gone "wrong" before making an assessment of your own or another's embodiment of wholeness. When symptoms are observed, the holistic approach views them as indicators of the qualities of wholeness that the psyche is attempting to activate — as opposed to something dysfunctional that needs to be removed. The symptom is honored as a message from the person's wholeness and becomes a guide for identifying what needs to be encouraged and cultivated. The holistic premise is that most dysfunctions and their symptoms are resolved in the course of restoring or engendering wholeness, which is far more than a cure. Any dysfunction is itself viewed as a symptom — of compromised or unrealized wholeness. In a successful pathology-approach, in contrast, pathology is cured but wholeness is rarely achieved or even attempted.

For example, with a holistic approach to depression (by which I mean, not sadness, but unassimilated emotions), not only is it rare to use antidepressants (which the holistic perspective views primarily as symptom blockers), but also the experiential release and assimilation of the emotions — say, grief following a major loss — would be considered only a partial treatment. The holistic practitioner would, in addition, coach the bereaved in fully developing his emotional skills (including emotional access through bodily experience, followed by intrapsychic insight and adaptive action or affective expression), since such skills are an essential component of every person's wholeness.

The pathology approach is reactive (eliminating dysfunctions when they appear), while the holistic approach is proactive (cultivating wholeness, whether or not there are observable symptoms) and can be employed anytime, on a regular basis, and by most anyone.

A crucial component of a holistic approach to individual development is a map or model of psychological wholeness. Without one, there's no systematic way to assess what elements of wholeness are missing. We need a map or model that is sensible, functional, sufficiently differentiated and nuanced, and both realistic and inclusive of the exceptional. With such a map or model, we can assess a person's wholeness independent of symptoms — in fact, without identifying symptoms at all.

The Wheel is a model of human wholeness differentiated into eight life stages. For each life stage, there is a set of qualities and capacities that a healthy person in that stage would be expected to develop. The Wheel, then, can be used as a tool for assessing deficits in wholeness. In describing how each of the developmental qualities and capacities is cultivated, the Wheel also provides specific guidelines for addressing developmental deficits. It is specifically an ecopsychological version of the holistic approach to individual development that looks at human wholeness through the lens of nature's patterns and cycles, which themselves always function holistically.

The Wheel suggests that the most common psychological symptoms result from neglecting developmental tasks in the first three stages of life. The ideal response is to, when possible, address these tasks with or without professional support. (Severe symptoms, like suicidal thinking or acute emotional trauma, must, of course, be attended to first, preferably by a well-trained professional.)

A holistic approach provides options well beyond prevention methods. Consider teen drug use, for example. Common prevention efforts include drug education, tellings teens to "just say no," teen-center drug-alternative activities, addiction counseling, positive and negative reinforcement (bribes and threats), and incarceration. All of these "treatments" are reactions to the symptom of drug use itself; they are attempts merely to eliminate the symptom, to get teens to stop using drugs. A holistic approach to drug use, in contrast, does not focus primarily on drugs but offers teens the opportunity to address their developmental deficits through a great variety of experiences, deficits that might have no obvious relationship to drug use or abuse. For example, one of the common wholeness deficits among drug-abusing teens is the unfulfilled and utterly natural longing to directly experience the mysteries of life. This is a common deficit in Western societies due to the near absence of cultural practices for fulfilling this normal feature of teenage wholeness. An adequate holistic approach to teen drug use must include, among other things, instruction in effective and suitable methods for altering consciousness and exploring the mysteries of nature and psyche.



Another example concerns the current epidemic in childhood depression, obesity, and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). All three are most commonly treated with drugs and behavior therapy, with very limited genuine success. Recent research suggests that these dysfunctions are symptoms of wholeness deficits, especially of those qualities awakened by free-play time in nature, qualities like wonder, imagination, creativity, the love of learning, intimacy, and joy. This research shows that children with these dysfunctions, when allowed regular unstructured time in nature, show a rapid decrease in depression, obesity, and ADHD.

A core hypothesis stemming from the holistic use of the Wheel is that the “mental health” needs of a large percentage of troubled children, teens, and older persons would be much better addressed by helping them with their unfinished developmental tasks from the first three life stages than by pathology-centered psychotherapies or symptom-suppressing medication.

Another hypothesis is that the reason for the demonstrated effectiveness of the increasingly popular wilderness-based therapies is that they cultivate specific dimensions of human wholeness that contemporary societies neglect. Chief among these dimensions is the visceral, emotional, and imaginative discovery of nature’s enchantment, something normally achieved in a healthy middle childhood (stage 2 on the Wheel). This sort of nature learning calls for regular time outdoors in natural environments but does not require a full-on wilderness setting. Other dimensions include value clarification, the development of affective and self-reliance skills, and the acquisition of ecological responsibility — all normally achieved in a healthy early adolescence (stage 3 on the Wheel), and all of which can be fostered perfectly well outside wilderness settings.

A third hypothesis that follows from developmental holism — there are many possible — is that the demonstrated effectiveness of meditation as a psychotherapeutic complement derives from the fact that it restores a dimension of wholeness that is ideally preserved and protected in early childhood (stage 1 on the Wheel) but rarely retained by people in patho-adolescent societies, namely, the capacity for present-centeredness or innocence.

A DESIGN TOOL FOR CREATING HEALTHY HUMAN COMMUNITIES AND LIFE-SUSTAINING SOCIETIES

This is the third of the five facets of the Wheel.

A healthy society is, among other things, sustainable, just, and compassionate. It is sustainable because it is expressly organized as an integral component of the greater community of Earth; it establishes a niche for itself that benefits both its people and the greater geo-biological community of which it is a member. It is a just society because it provides equal opportunities and benefits for all persons. It is compassionate because it shares its wealth with all other societies and with the greater web of life; it does not exploit other peoples or species. A healthy society also embraces and celebrates our enchanted human senses, bodies, and emotions and encourages our imaginative exploration of the mysteries of psyche and nature. As a design tool, the Wheel does not dictate any specific versions of a life-sustaining society. To the contrary, any community — whether a family, village, or nation — can use it to help create its own version of an ecocentric culture. To cultivate an authentic, viable society, the specific design of its component establishments must be rooted in the revelatory experiences of its individual members as well as in the dreams shared by the majority of its people.

Such a society cannot be created by simply sitting down and planning one, no matter how enlightened the designers or design principles. It arises only through a natural process of cultural evolution galvanized by soul-infused actions. The specific form the society will take is unpredictable. Being transcultural, the Wheel both respects and requires cultural diversity.

The primary way the Wheel functions as a design tool for healthy societies is by assisting communities in creating and implementing developmental practices— especially parenting, educational, and initiatory practices for children and adolescents — that allow for optimum individual maturation. In doing these things, the community begets true adults and elders, who in turn engender, through their lives and work,



specific cultural forms that are authentic, vital, and effective because they arise from soul, which is to say, from nature. In other words, the Wheel has an indirect function in creating healthy cultures. It can help communities establish the conditions for the growth of mature individuals who, in turn, establish life-sustaining cultural practices and customs (including those that go into making schools, governments, spiritual organizations, and economies).

The Wheel, then, is a deep-structure model designed to be transcultural. It is deep-structural in that it characterizes the stages of life, and the transitions between them, in terms of their essence, depth, or significance, not in terms of their specific cultural practices, traditions, myths, or ceremonies. What makes for developmental progress within any stage is the intrapsychic and interpersonal significance of what the individual and her community does, as opposed to the specific cultural practices in which she engages. It is the meaning and developmental consequences of her actions that count, not the particular cultural forms or styles through which she achieves them.

Readers familiar with biologist Rupert Sheldrake's work might recognize that the Wheel is a description of the "morphic field" underlying human psychospiritual development. A morphic field is the underlying formative pattern of a self-organizing system, such as an oak, a bear, a human, an ecosystem, Earth, the Milky Way, or the universe. The morphic field depicted by the Wheel gives the entire human life cycle its distinguishing properties. In Buckminster Fuller's terms, the Wheel identifies the nature-generated "pattern integrity" of human development. And to borrow an idea from the physicist David Bohm, the Wheel corresponds to the "implicate order" of human maturation. Bohm's term refers to the generative field underlying specific manifest forms, from atoms to humans to galaxies.

As one example, in the fourth stage of the Wheel, developmental progress requires a person to wander far from the familiar "home" of his adolescent ways of belonging, doing, and being. He must, as poet Mary Oliver puts it, "[stride] deeper and deeper into the world." His culture will greatly influence the manner in which he wanders, as will his gender, physical constitution, psychological temperament, age, and bioregion. In one culture, his wandering might take him geographically far from his hometown or village. In another culture, geographic movement will have little importance for the true depth of his wandering. What is critical is not whether he engages in this practice or that, or undergoes this ritual or another, but that his wandering changes his relationship to the world, that he leaves the home of his adolescent identity, and that his border crossings usher him into the mysteries of nature and psyche. These deep-structure changes are necessary to maintain the pattern integrity of stage 4 and, thereby, of the entire Wheel and of the whole human-Earth relationship.

Only a deep-structure model of human development can approach the goal of being transcultural. Another way to say this: The Wheel itself is not a spiritual path but is designed to be compatible with most. A specific spiritual discipline is a tradition-based method to meet one or more spiritual goals. The Wheel makes room for all spiritual goals without identifying particular traditions for reaching them (except by occasional illustration) and illuminates the relationship between spiritual goals and other developmental goals, stages, archetypes, and so on.

Another example: What really makes a person an elder has nothing to do with, say, chronological age, number of grandchildren, retirement, or even achievement in a certain craft or career. Rather, it has to do with a way of belonging to the world that is consciously centered on the soul of the more-than-human community.

In addition to being transcultural, the Wheel is gender-neutral, a portrayal of the deep structure of both male and female development. While there are obvious differences between masculine and feminine humans and the way they develop, these differences are either on the surface (different styles) or in the middle depths (the social practices and psychological dynamics by which the deep-structure outcomes are reached). The surface and middle-depth differences between masculine and feminine are greatest in early adolescence (stage 3). Because this is the stage in which Western societies have stalled, and because our societies are not informed by the deep structure of human development, gender differences have seemed bigger and more definitive to us than they really are.



With the social advances brought by feminism in the late twentieth century, some have contended that healthy female development differs from that of male development, and that the imposition of male patterns on women continues the centuries-old oppression by the patriarchy. While I agree, my perspective is somewhat different. There is no question that women have been economically, educationally, and politically oppressed in patriarchal societies (as have most minority and lower-class men), but both men and women have been cut off from soul and nature, and both have consequently faced great difficulties in maturing. Although healthy female development is different from patho-adolescent masculine development, this is equally true for healthy male development.

The essential issue concerning oppression is not gender-based or race-based but egocentric versus soulcentric. In my view, the core problem with patriarchal (and matriarchal) societies is their patho-adolescent egocentrism, which generates economic-class oppression, not their conspicuous suppression of the feminine or glorification of the (immature) masculine. Men have no monopoly on egocentrism. Men and masculinity are no more the problem than are women and femininity. I believe that most people would agree that we will not create a healthier society by affording women the equal right to be as pathologically egocentric as a large proportion of men have been for millennia, to acquire the equal opportunity to excel in the patho-adolescent, class-dividing world of prestige, position, and wealth, academic and corporate ladder-climbing, and power broking. Rather, mature men and women must join together to foster soulcentric development for both genders and for all races and cultures.

A DEEP CULTURAL THERAPY — A WAY TO HEAL AND TRANSFORM

Speaking bluntly, Thomas Berry, a lifelong student of world cultures, refers to the current, near-universal commitment to industrial progress, unlimited growth, and a consumer society as “the supreme pathology of all history.” A valid response to such a pathology, he says, must include remedial treatment:

The entrancement with industrial civilization...must be considered as a profound cultural disorientation. It can be dealt with only by a corresponding deep cultural therapy....

At such a moment a new revelatory experience is needed, an experience wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process. This awakening is our human participation in the dream of the Earth, the dream that is carried in its integrity not in any of Earth’s cultural expressions but in the depths of our genetic coding. Therein the Earth functions at a depth beyond our capacity for active thought. We can only be sensitized to what is being revealed to us. We probably have not had such participation in the dream of the Earth since earlier shamanic times, but therein lies our hope for the future for ourselves and for the entire Earth community.

Thomas is suggesting that the cultural therapy we need springs from revelatory or visionary experience, an awakening to the dream of the Earth. Given that such an awakening calls for the journey to our individual depths, then our cultural healing requires a means to facilitate that descent — a contemporary methodology corresponding to what we had in “earlier shamanic times.” The Wheel proposes a means to galvanize a human awakening to the dream of the Earth, an awakening impelled by an identifiable series of developmental experiences, starting at or before birth, evoked and guided by parents, educators, initiators, mentors, and elders.

If it is true, as the human ecologist Paul Shepard and others have observed, that our environmental crises are due to a widespread failure of personal development, especially among the people in power in industrialized nations (mostly wealthy males), then a radical overhaul in our way of parenting and educating children is in order. How do we raise children to become compassionate, nature-revering, visionary, actively engaged adults? And how do we enable these adults to become, in time, true elders with the capacities of heart and mind to care for the soul of the more-than-human community?

The deep cultural therapy we need and seek requires profound changes in the way we embody and support every stage of human growth. The Wheel suggests the broad outlines of such a therapy.



A PORTRAIT OF THE EMERGING STAGE OF HUMAN EVOLUTION

Thomas Berry refers to the great transformations in the evolution of the universe as “moments of grace.” These are “privileged moments” in which “the future is defined in some enduring pattern of its functioning.” The supernova that gave birth to our solar system is one such moment of grace. Others include the appearance on Earth of the first living cell and, later, the emergence of a cell capable of metabolizing oxygen. The advent of humans — primates with conscious self-awareness — is another such moment.

We might think of these junctures as moments of grace because, in them, the unutterably creative and mysterious imagination of the cosmos manifests itself most profoundly. Each of these extraordinary turning points is one of both crisis and opportunity. Says Thomas, “The catastrophic moments are also creative moments.”

And now we, both as a species and as a planet, have arrived at another crisis, a most dangerous and unique opportunity that requires what Thomas calls “a comprehensive change in consciousness.” Will we cooperate with grace, with the imagination of the cosmos, during this potential turning point? I say “cooperate,” because, unlike any previous transformation known to us in the unfolding story of the universe, this one, if it is to happen, will require the conscious and deliberate cooperation of a sentient life-form. The cooperation with grace needed here is beyond anything humanity has previously achieved. It requires not only worldwide collaboration between individuals, communities, and nation-states but also, more daunting, something akin to the collectively activated human imagination, as suggested earlier in the idea of Homo imaginens. Innumerable new, generative images must be retrieved from the depths of the individual psyche and of Earth’s own dream, images that are the seeds of cultural renaissance. And then, as a grand network of cooperating communities, we must come together to build a new world from those images.

The Wheel, then, is a portrait of this emerging stage of human evolution, a planetary moment when humanity develops, as Thomas writes, “a profound mystique of the natural world” and experiences “the deep mysteries of existence through the wonders of the world about us.” Collectively, the eight stages of the Wheel present a profile of the future human, a human capable of consciously cooperating with grace — the deep imagination of the cosmos.

Just as the universe evolves through moments of crisis, so do individual humans. Each of the nine life-stage passages on the Wheel evokes a crisis, a death-rebirth transition. And just as grace is an element in the universe’s evolution, so it is in our personal unfolding. Our conscious cooperation with grace makes all the difference at our life passages, especially after early adolescence (stage 3). I believe that learning to cooperate consciously with grace — as individuals and as a species — is one of the essential elements in our current evolutionary opening.

Adapted from – Bill Plotkin, “Nature and the human soul”, (New World Library, Novato, California 2008);
<http://www.natureandthehumansoul.com/newbook/default.htm> ; <https://animas.org/>

*“When a man moves away from nature, his heart
becomes hard.”
Native American Proverb*



www.whatthepensaid.com

Bill Plotkin



Bill Plotkin, Ph.D., is a depth psychologist, wilderness guide, and agent of cultural evolution. As founder of southwest Colorado's Animas Valley Institute, he has, since 1980, guided thousands of women and men through nature-based initiatory passages, including a contemporary, Western adaptation of the pan-cultural vision fast. He's also been a research psychologist (studying nonordinary states of consciousness), professor of psychology, rock musician, and whitewater river guide. In 1979, on a solo winter ascent of an Adirondack mountain, Bill experienced a "call to spiritual adventure," leading him to abandon academia in search of his true calling.

Bill Plotkin is the author of *Soulcraft: Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche* (an experiential guidebook), *Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World* (a

nature-based stage model of human development), and *Wild Mind: A Field Guide to the Human Psyche* (an ecocentric map of the psyche — for healing, growing whole, and cultural transformation). He holds a doctorate in psychology from the University of Colorado at Boulder. To learn more about Bill Plotkin and the Animas Valley Institute, visit <http://www.animas.org>.



The Sun and the Wind

*The Sun and The Wind got together
and danced on the floor of my soul.
I started asking questions and speaking with The Wind,
but He gave me a kiss that sealed my lips...
"There is no need for questions", He whispered
"Let the afternoon light of The Sun
take you in the darkest of darkness.
There, your ancestors are calling for your True Heart,
a heart that speaks in tears and laughter."*

*Ana Fiț
(Romania)*



POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Psychology has, since World War II, become a science mostly about healing. It focuses on repairing damage within a disease model of human functioning. This almost exclusive concentration to pathology neglects the fulfilled individual and the thriving community.⁹ In one metaphor, psychology was said to be learning how to bring people up from negative eight to zero but not as good at understanding how people rise from zero to positive eight.¹⁰

In this spectrum, the field of positive psychology has been initiated and flourished the last 2 decades. The field is founded on the belief that people can, want and should lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of life, love and work.¹¹

This online course is dedicated to positive psychology, as well as its key elements. It serves as an opportunity for helping our young people (and every individual) to explore their full potential and to enable them to lead meaningful lives in a flourishing community!

Enjoy it!

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions.¹²

In the past decade, psychologists have become concerned with prevention. How can psychologists prevent problems like depression or substance abuse or schizophrenia in young people who are genetically vulnerable or who live in worlds that nurture these problems? How can psychologists prevent murderous schoolyard violence in children who have access to weapons, poor parental supervision, and a mean streak? What psychologists have learned over 50 years is that the disease model does not move psychology closer to the prevention of these serious problems. Indeed, the major strides in prevention have come largely from a perspective focused on systematically building competency, not on correcting weakness.

Prevention researchers have discovered that there are human strengths that act as buffers against mental illness: courage, future mindedness, optimism, interpersonal skill, faith, work ethic, hope, honesty, perseverance, and the capacity for flow and insight, to name several. Much of the task of prevention in this new century will be to create a science of human strength whose mission will be to understand and learn how to foster these virtues in young people.

Working exclusively on personal weakness and on damaged brains, however, has rendered science poorly equipped to effectively prevent illness. Psychologists need now to call for massive research on human strengths and virtues. Practitioners need to recognize that much of the best work they already do in the consulting room is to amplify strengths rather than repair the weaknesses of their clients. Psychologists working with families, schools, religious communities, and corporations, need to develop climates that foster these strengths. The major psychological theories have changed to undergird a new science of strength and resilience. No longer do the dominant theories view the individual as a passive vessel responding to stimuli; rather, individuals are now seen as decision makers, with choices, preferences, and the possibility of becoming masterful, efficacious, or in malignant circumstances, helpless and hopeless. Science and practice that rely on this worldview may have the direct effect of preventing many of the major emotional disorders. They may also have two side effects: They may make the lives of clients physically healthier, given all that psychologists are learning about the effects of mental wellbeing on the body. This

⁹ Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000)

¹⁰ Gamble & Haidt (2005)

¹¹ <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/>

¹² Gamble & Haidt (2005)



science and practice will also reorient psychology back to its two neglected missions-- making normal people stronger and more productive and making high human potential actual.¹³

The aim of positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities. The field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present). At the individual level, it is about positive individual traits: the capacity for love, courage, interpersonal skill, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom. At the group level, it is about the civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic.¹⁴

Having this in mind, one can say that positive psychology builds the capacities of the community, by helping individuals develop basic but fundamental competences that are neglected in the 21st century lives and educational systems. These competences include the ability to be authentic, grateful, joyful, resilient, mindful, happy and many more!

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND THE REGULAR PSYCHOLOGY

Positive psychology does not imply that the rest of psychology is negative, although it is understandable that the name may imply that to some people. In fact, the large majority of the gross academic product of psychology is neutral, focusing on neither wellbeing nor distress. Positive psychology grew largely from the recognition of an imbalance in clinical psychology, in which most research does indeed focus on mental illness. Researchers in cognitive, developmental, social, and personality psychology may not believe that things are so out of balance.

Despite these inequities, positive psychology's aim is not the denial of the distressing, unpleasant, or negative aspects of life, nor is it an effort to see them through rose-colored glasses. Those who study topics in positive psychology fully acknowledge the existence of human suffering, selfishness, dysfunctional family systems, and ineffective institutions. But the aim of positive psychology is to study the other side of the coin—the ways that people feel joy, show altruism, and create healthy families and institutions—thereby addressing the full spectrum of human experience. Moreover, positive psychology makes the argument that these positive topics of inquiry are important to understand in their own right, not solely as buffers against the problems, stressors, and disorders of life (although we believe the evidence is clear that many positive processes shield us from negative outcomes, a point we return to later). Sheldon and King (2001) defined positive psychology as “nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues,” one that “revisits the average person” (p. 216; *italics added*). In this definition is the acknowledgment that our field as a whole is relatively silent regarding what is typical, because what is typical is positive.¹⁵

¹³ Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000)

¹⁴ Seligman (2000)

¹⁵ Gamble & Haidt (2005)



POSITIVE EMOTIONS

It is true that emotion, a concept often cast as ethereal, was an early topic within psychology (e.g., Cannon, 1929; James, 1884). Yet, emotions science did not emerge as an organized subspecialty until the mid-1980s, as marked by the formation of the International Society for Research on Emotions (ISRE) in 1984, the first multidisciplinary professional association for scholars specializing in this area. It is fair to say that in the 30 years since, research on emotions has exploded. Yet even decades after emotions became a rigorous and accepted topic of scientific inquiry, psychology's inferiority complex held sway to keep the focus on the most serious of emotions, namely, fear, anger, sadness, and the like. Even disgust made its way to the fore (e.g., Rozin & Fallon, 1987). It was as if the light-hearted emotions within the human repertoire might somehow weaken the fibers of the cloak of rigor that has been so important for psychology to don.

In this context, Barbara Fredrickson has sought to create an evidence-based understanding of light-hearted moments, charting their variety, the ways they change how the human mind works, and how, little-by-little, they change people's lives. Fredrickson sets the stage for this review by briefly describing 10 key positive emotions. This is by no means an exhaustive list. She choose to focus on these 10 emotions not only because they are the targets of increasing research but also because evidence from the lab suggests that these 10 are experienced relatively frequently in people's daily life. With one important exception, she describes them in the order of their relative frequency, starting with the positive emotions people appear to feel most often and moving on to those that they feel more rarely. The exception is love, which in their studies emerges as the most frequently experienced positive emotion. As described below, she sees good reason to describe it last.



Like all emotions, positive emotions are brief, multisystem responses to some change in the way people interpret—or appraise—their current circumstances. When this multisystem response registers that circumstances are somehow bad for the self, a negative emotion arises; when it registers good prospects or good fortune, a positive emotion arises. To foreshadow the broaden-and-build theory, for each of these 10 positive emotions, she describes (a) the appraisal patterns that trigger it, (b) the broadened thought–action repertoire it sparks, and (c) the durable resources that it helps to build. Table 1.1 offers these in summary form across its first four columns.

Joy. Joy emerges when one's current circumstances present unexpected good fortune. People feel joy, for instance, when receiving good news or a pleasant surprise. Joy creates the urge to play and get involved, or what Frijda (1986) termed free activation, defined as an “aimless, unasked-for readiness to engage in whatever interaction presents itself” (p. 89). The durable resources created through play are the skills acquired through the experiential learning it prompts.

Gratitude. Gratitude emerges when people acknowledge another person as the source of their unexpected good fortune. Joy becomes gratitude, for instance, when awareness of one's own good fortune is combined with admiration for another person for thoughtfully going out of their way to create that good fortune (Algoe, 2012). Gratitude creates the urge to creatively consider new ways to be kind and



generous oneself. The durable resources accrued when people act on this urge are new skills for expressing kindness and care to others.

Serenity. Also called contentment, serenity emerges when people interpret their current circumstances as utterly cherished, right, or satisfying. People feel serenity, for instance, when they feel comfortable, at ease in, or at one with their situation. Serenity creates the urge to savor those current circumstances and integrate them into new priorities or values. The durable resources created through savoring and integrating include a more refined and complex sense of oneself and of one's priorities.

Interest. Interest arises in circumstances appraised as safe but offering novelty. People feel interest, for instance, when they encounter something that is mysterious or challenging, yet not overwhelming. Interest creates the urge to explore, to learn, to immerse oneself in the novelty and thereby expand the self (Izard, 1977; Silvia, 2008). The knowledge so gained becomes a durable resource.

Hope. Whereas most positive emotions arise in circumstances appraised as safe, hope is the exception. Hope arises in dire circumstances in which people fear the worst yet yearn for better (Lazarus, 1991). People feel hope, for instance, in grim situations in which they can envision at least a chance that things might change for the better. Hope creates the urge to draw on one's own capabilities and inventiveness to turn things around. The durable resources it builds include optimism and resilience to adversity.

Pride. Pride emerges when people take appropriate credit from some socially valued good outcome. People feel pride, for instance, when they accomplish an important goal (Tracy & Robins, 2007). Pride creates the urge to fantasize about even bigger accomplishments in similar arenas. The big dreams sparked by pride contribute to the durable resource of achievement motivation (Williams & DeSteno, 2008).

Amusement. Amusement occurs when people appraise their current circumstances as involving some sort of non-serious social incongruity. It can erupt, for instance, in the wake of a harmless speech error or physical blunder. Amusement creates urges to share a laugh and find creative ways to continue the joviality. As people follow these urges, they build and solidify enduring social bonds (Gervais & Wilson, 2005).

Inspiration. Inspiration arises when people witness human excellence in some manner. People feel inspired, for instance, when they see someone else do a good deed or perform at an unparalleled level. Inspiration creates the urge to excel oneself, to reach one's own higher ground or personal best. The durable resource it builds is the motivation for personal growth (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Thrash & Elliot, 2004).

Awe. Awe emerges when people encounter goodness on a grand scale. People feel awe, for instance, when overwhelmed by something (or someone) beautiful or powerful that seems larger than life. The experience of awe compels people to absorb and accommodate this new vastness they have encountered. The durable resources awe creates are new worldviews (Shiota, Keltner, & Mossman, 2007).

Love. Love, which appears to be the positive emotion people feel most frequently, arises when any other of the positive emotions is felt in the context of a safe, interpersonal connection or relationship. Love broadens thought–action repertoires both in an “all of the above” manner and by creating momentary perceptions of social connection and self-expansion. Likewise, love builds a wide range of enduring resources, especially social bonds and community.

Adapted from Chapter “Positive Emotions Broaden and Build” by Barbara Fredrickson

Emotion label	Appraisal theme	Thought-action tendency	Resources accrued	Core trio in mDES item
Joy	Safe, familiar unexpectedly good	Play, get involved	Skills gained via experiential learning	Joyful, glad, or happy
Gratitude	Receive a gift or benefit	Creative urge to be prosocial	Skills for showing care, loyalty, social bonds	Grateful, appreciative, or thankful
Serenity (a.k.a., contentment)	Safe, familiar, low effort	Savor and integrate	New priorities, new views of self	Serene, content, or peaceful
Interest	Safe, novel	Explore, learn	Knowledge	Interested, alert, or curious
Hope	Fearing the worst, yearning for better	Plan for a better future	Resilience, optimism	Hopeful, optimistic, or encouraged
Pride	Socially valued achievement	Dream big	Achievement motivation	Proud, confident, or self-assured
Amusement	Nonserious social incongruity	Share joviality, laugh	Social bonds	Amused, fun-loving, or silly
Inspiration	Witness human excellence	Strive toward own higher ground	Motivation for personal growth	Inspired, uplifted, or elevated
Awe	Encounter beauty or goodness on a grand scale	Absorb and accommodate	New worldviews	Awe, wonder, amazement
Love	Any/all of the above in an interpersonal connection	Any/all of the above, with mutual care	Any/all of the above, especially social bonds	Love, closeness, or trust



BROADEN AND BUILD THEORY

According to the “broaden and build theory”, formulated by Fredrickson (1998), positive emotions often initiate a cycle of more positive emotions. Specifically, positive emotions can facilitate the development of skills, networks, resources, and capacities, which in turn promote wellbeing and fulfillment. Negative emotions tend to correspond to specific inclinations (Frijda, 1986& Frijda, Kuipers, & Schure, 1989& Lazarus, 1991& Tooby & Cosmides, 1990). Fear tends to coincide with the inclination to escape or avoid the immediate context. Anger is associated with the inclination to attack or maintain a course of action. Disgust is associated with the inclination to expel or shun some stimulus, and so forth. The corresponding physiological reactions facilitate these behavioral tendencies (Levenson, 1994). In contrast, positive emotions seldom correspond to threatening contexts and thus such feelings do not need to evoke a specific set of inclinations or responses. In particular, positive emotions amplify the breath of attention and thinking-called the broaden hypothesis. Specifically, in contrast to negative emotions, which direct the attention of individuals towards potential threats and problems, positive emotions broaden the attention of individuals. For example, attention is directed towards a more extensive set of objects in the environment (Wadlinger & Isaacowitz, 2006). Similarly, individuals will consider a more extensive repertoire of possible actions in response to some event (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005)& joy, for example, corresponds to playful creativity and exploration (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988). In addition, individuals are more receptive to novel and exciting experiences (Kahn & Isen, 1993). Finally, individuals will embrace feedback and criticism (Raghunathan & Trope, 2002).

When the breadth of attention is extensive, individuals can develop skills and capacities that enhance their resilience, wellbeing, progress, and satisfaction--called the build hypothesis. That is, individuals might develop more intellectual skills, enabling these individuals to solve problems. Second, they could also cultivate psychological capacities, such as the ability to regulate their emotions. Third, they might develop more stable and trusting relationships. Finally, even their physical health tends to improve. Several studies have shown that interventions designed to promote positive emotions do indeed enhance resilience, relationships, wellbeing, and satisfaction. Here are a few examples of how positive emotions broaden and build our human capacities:

- ☉ Positive emotions trigger flexible thinking. Positive emotions seem to motivate a focus on global, broad patterns rather than specific details and features.
- ☉ Positive affective states can also influence the memory of individuals. Specifically, when individuals experience a positive mood, their memory of peripheral or extraneous details tends to improve
- ☉ Positive emotions also seem to facilitate openness to information, feedback, and advice. For example, when individuals experience positive emotions, their decisions are especially likely to incorporate subtle cues and sources of information
- ☉ Positive emotions facilitate the formation of relationships. Specifically, positive emotions activate mechanisms that facilitate the acquisition of additional resources, including the formation of close relationships.
- ☉ Positive emotions cultivate resilience. Positive affect might facilitate the development of psychological capacities that enhance resilience (see Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007). The flexibility and repertoire of action plans that coincide with positive affect might facilitate the capacity to regulate or overcome negative affect-called the undoing hypothesis (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998). That is, over time, individuals who experience many positive emotions might acquire the capacity to recover rapidly from possible adversities.
- ☉ Positive emotions contribute to moral reasoning. When individuals experience a positive mood, their moral judgments tend to be more nuanced and sophisticated.

You can see the table of positive emotions in the previous section to see what resources each particular emotion accrues in human.

Adapted from <http://www.sicotests.com/psyarticle.asp?id=246>



Most of us probably don't believe we need a formal definition of happiness; we know it when we feel it, and we often use the term to describe a range of positive emotions, including joy, pride, contentment, and gratitude.

But to understand the causes and effects of happiness, researchers first need to define it. Many of them use the term interchangeably with "subjective well-being," which they measure by simply asking people to report how satisfied they feel with their own lives and how much positive and negative emotion they're experiencing. In her 2007 book *The How of Happiness*, positive psychology researcher Sonja Lyubomirsky elaborates, describing happiness as "the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one's life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile."¹⁶

Researchers think of happiness as having satisfaction and meaning in your life. It's the propensity to feel positive emotions, the capacity to recover from negative emotions quickly, and holding a sense of purpose. Happiness is not having a lot of privilege or money. It's not constant pleasure. It's a broader thing: Our ability to connect with others, to have meaningful relationships, to have a community. Time and again—across decades of research and across all studies—people who say they're happy have strong connections with community and with other people. That's sort of the recipe for happiness.¹⁷

3 TYPES OF HAPPINESS

A review of the literature led us to identify three constituents of happiness: (i) **pleasure** (or positive emotion); (ii) **flow** or engagement; and (iii) **meaning**.

Pleasure: The first route to greater happiness is hedonic, increasing positive emotion. When people refer in casual conversation to being happy, they are often referring to this route. Within limits, we can increase our positive emotion about the past (e.g. by cultivating gratitude and forgiveness), our positive emotion about the present (e.g. by savouring and mindfulness) and our positive emotion about the future (e.g. by building hope and optimism). However, unlike the other two routes to happiness, the route relying on positive emotions has clear limits. Positive affectivity is heritable, and we speculate that, for important evolutionary reasons, our emotions fluctuate within a genetically determined range. It is possible (and worthwhile) to increase the amount of positive emotion in our lives, but we can boost our hedonics only so high.

Flow: The second route to happiness involves the pursuit of 'gratification'. The key characteristic of a gratification is that it engages us fully. It absorbs us. Individuals may find gratification in participating in a great conversation, fixing a bike, reading a good book, teaching a child, playing the guitar or accomplishing a difficult task at work. We can take shortcuts to pleasures (e.g. eating ice cream, masturbating, having a massage or using drugs), but no shortcuts exist to gratification. We must involve ourselves fully, and the pursuit of gratifications requires us to draw on character strengths such as creativity, social intelligence, sense of humour, perseverance, and an appreciation of beauty and excellence. Although gratifications are activities that may be enjoyable, they are not necessarily accompanied by positive emotions. We may say afterwards that the concert was 'fun', but what we mean is that during it, we were one with music, undistracted by thought or emotion. Indeed, the pursuit of a gratification may be, at times, unpleasant. Consider, for example, the gratification that comes from training for an endurance event such as a marathon. At any given point during the gruelling event, a runner may be discouraged or exhausted or even in physical pain; however, they may describe the overall experience as intensely gratifying. Finding flow in gratifications need not involve anything larger than the self.

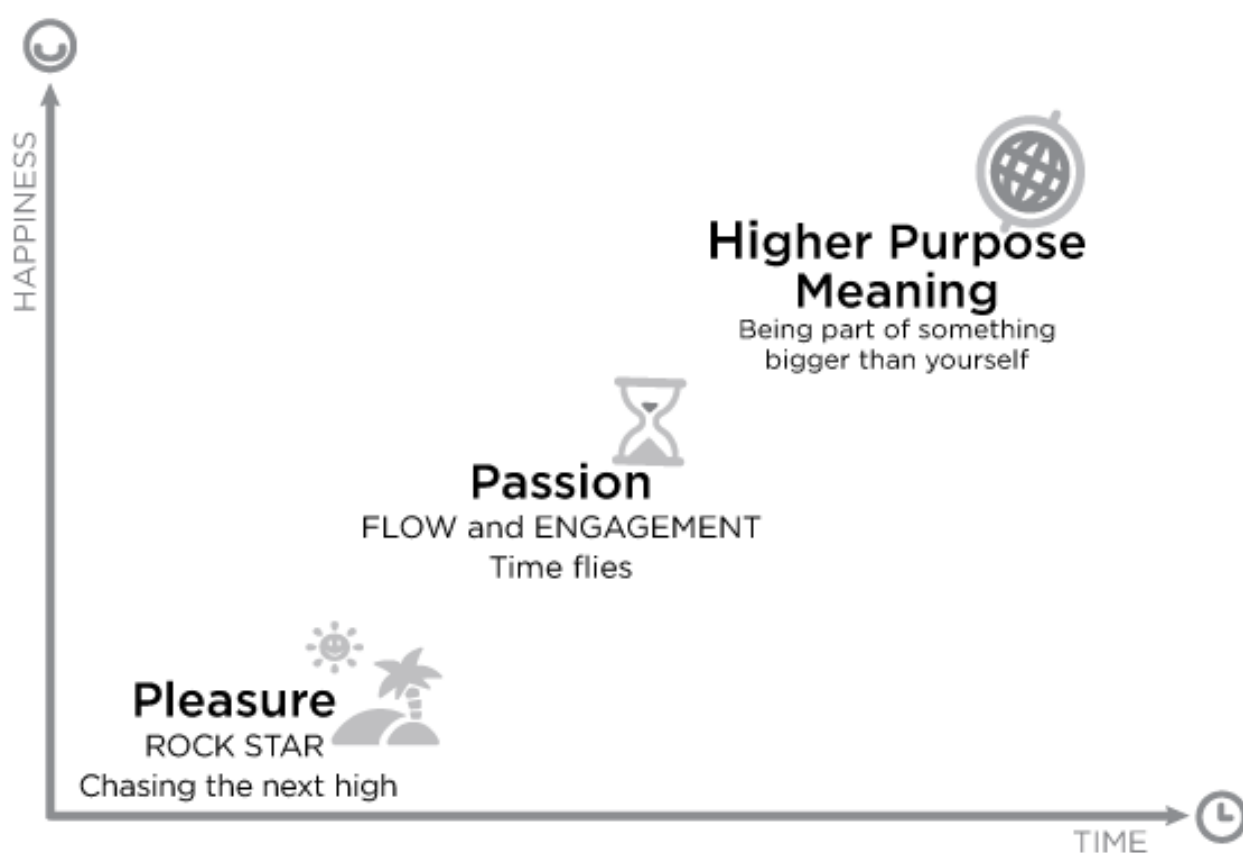
¹⁶ <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/happiness/definition#>

¹⁷ <http://www.berkeleywellness.com/healthy-mind/mind-body/article/what-science-happiness>



Meaning: Although the pursuit of gratifications involves deploying our strengths, a third route to happiness comes from using these strengths to belong to and in the service of something larger than ourselves; something such as knowledge, goodness, family, community, politics, justice or a higher spiritual power. The third route gives life meaning. It satisfies a longing for purpose in life and is the antidote to a 'fidgeting until we die' syndrome. Peterson et al. (2005) develop reliable measures for all three routes to happiness and demonstrate that people differ in their tendency to rely on one rather than another. We call a tendency to pursue happiness by boosting positive emotion, 'the pleasant life'; the tendency to pursue happiness via the gratifications, 'the good life'; and the tendency to pursue happiness via using our strengths towards something larger than ourselves, 'the meaningful life'. A person who uses all three routes to happiness leads the 'full life', and recent empirical evidence suggests that those who lead the full life have much the greater life satisfaction (Peterson et al. 2005).

3 TYPES OF HAPPINESS



Adapted from "A balanced psychology and a full life" -

<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/sites/ppc.sas.upenn.edu/files/balancedpsychologyarticle.pdf>



The PERMA model was designed by Martin Seligman with five core elements of psychological well-being and happiness. Seligman believes that these five elements can help people reach a life of fulfillment, happiness, and meaning. This model can also be applied to institutions to develop programs to help people develop new cognitive and emotional tools.

P – Positive Emotion

This element of the model is one of the most obvious connections to happiness. Being able to focus on positive emotions is more than just smiling, it is the ability to be optimistic and view the past, present, and future in a positive perspective.

This positive view of life can help you in relationships, work, and inspire you to be more creative and take more chances. In everyone's life, there are highs and lows, focusing on the lows increase your chances of developing depression, therefore, you should focus on the high and positive aspects of life. There are also many health benefits to optimism and positivity.

Distinguishing between pleasure and enjoyment is important in this element of the model. Pleasure is connected to satisfying bodily needs for survival; such as thirst, hunger, and sleep. Whereas enjoyment comes from intellectual stimulation and creativity, for example when a child completes a complex lego car that requires his concentration, he will be beaming with joy and satisfaction from his work.

This type of positive emotion is needed, as when someone enjoys the tasks in their lives they are more likely to persevere and battle challenges through creative and alternative solutions.

E – Engagement

It is important in our lives to be able to find activities that needs our full engagement. Engagement in the activities in our lives is important for us to learn, grow and nurture our personal happiness.

Everyone is different and we all find enjoyment in different things whether it's playing an instrument, playing a sport, dancing, working on an interesting project at work or even just a hobby.

We all need something in our lives that entirely absorbs us into the present moment, creating a 'flow' of blissful immersion into the task or activity. This type of 'flow' of engagement is important to stretch our intelligence, skills, and emotional capabilities.

R – Relationships

Relationships and social connections are one of the most important aspect of life. Humans are social animals that thrive on connection, love, intimacy, and a strong emotional and physical interaction with other humans. Building positive relationships with your parents, siblings, peers, and friends are important to spread love and joy. Having strong relationships gives you support in difficult times.

In an interview with Dr. Mitch Prinstein's about his course on the psychology of popularity, he mentioned that there has been researching that shows that pain centers in our brain become activated when we are at risk of being isolated. This is because, in an evolutionary perspective, isolation would be the worse thing we could do for survival.

M – Meaning

Having a purpose and meaning to why each of us is on this earth is important to living a life of happiness and fulfillment. Rather than the pursuit of pleasure and material wealth, there is an actual meaning to our life. Such meaning gives people a reason for their life and that there is a greater purpose to life.

To understand the greater impact of your work and why you chose to the pursuit that work will help you enjoy the tasks more and become more satisfied and happier.

A – Accomplishments

Having goals and ambition in life can help us to achieve things that can give us a sense of accomplishment. You should make realistic goals that can be met and just putting in the effort to achieving those goals can already give you a sense of satisfaction when you finally achieve those goals a sense of pride and fulfillment will be reached. Having accomplishments in life is important to push ourselves to thrive and flourish.



How to Apply the PERMA Model in Your Life

Being aware of the PERMA model is the first step to applying this theory to your life. Keep referring back to the 5 elements of the model to help you apply it to each aspect of your life. Remember to think in a positive perspective at home and at work.

Find the things that make you happy and can make you fully engaged. You could even put goals to achieving more and challenging yourself in the activities you enjoy. Focus on your relationships with your family and friends by finding ways to connect and enjoy each others company. Find the meaning to your life and what gives you a sense of purpose, it's different for everyone.

Adapted from <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/perma-model/>

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment. Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there's a "right" or "wrong" way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we're sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.¹⁸

THE EFFECTS OF MINDFULNESS

Several disciplines and practices can cultivate mindfulness, such as yoga, tai chi and qigong, but most of the literature has focused on mindfulness that is developed through mindfulness meditation — those self-regulation practices that focus on training attention and awareness in order to bring mental processes under greater voluntary control and thereby foster general mental well-being and development and/or specific capacities such as calmness, clarity and concentration (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). Researchers theorize that mindfulness meditation promotes metacognitive awareness, decreases rumination via disengagement from perseverative cognitive activities and enhances attentional capacities through gains in working memory. These cognitive gains, in turn, contribute to effective emotion-regulation strategies.

More specifically, research on mindfulness has identified these benefits:

Reduced rumination. Several studies have shown that mindfulness reduces rumination. In one study, for example, Chambers et al. (2008) asked 20 novice meditators to participate in a 10-day intensive mindfulness meditation retreat. After the retreat, the meditation group had significantly higher self-reported mindfulness and a decreased negative affect compared with a control group. They also experienced fewer depressive symptoms and less rumination. In addition, the meditators had significantly better working memory capacity and were better able to sustain attention during a performance task compared with the control group.

Stress reduction. Many studies show that practicing mindfulness reduces stress. In 2010, Hoffman et al. conducted a meta-analysis of 39 studies that explored the use of mindfulness-based stress reduction and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. The researchers concluded that mindfulness-based therapy may be useful in altering affective and cognitive processes that underlie multiple clinical issues. Those findings are consistent with evidence that mindfulness meditation increases positive affect and decreases anxiety and negative affect. In one study, participants randomly assigned to an eight-week mindfulness-based stress reduction group were compared with controls on self-reported measures of depression, anxiety and psychopathology, and on neural reactivity as measured by fMRI after watching sad films (Farb et al., 2010). The researchers found that the participants who experienced mindfulness-based stress reduction had significantly less anxiety, depression and somatic distress compared with the control group. In addition, the fMRI data indicated that the mindfulness group had less neural reactivity when they were exposed to the films than the control group, and they displayed distinctly different neural responses while watching the films than they did before their mindfulness training. These findings suggest that mindfulness meditation shifts people's ability to use emotion regulation strategies in a way that enables

¹⁸ <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/mindfulness/definition>



them to experience emotion selectively, and that the emotions they experience may be processed differently in the brain (Farb et al., 2010; Williams, 2010).

Boosts to working memory. Improvements to working memory appear to be another benefit of mindfulness, research finds. A 2010 study by Jha et al., for example, documented the benefits of mindfulness meditation among a military group who participated in an eight-week mindfulness training, a nonmeditating military group and a group of nonmeditating civilians. Both military groups were in a highly stressful period before deployment. The researchers found that the nonmeditating military group had decreased working memory capacity over time, whereas working memory capacity among nonmeditating civilians was stable across time. Within the meditating military group, however, working memory capacity increased with meditation practice. In addition, meditation practice was directly related to self-reported positive affect and inversely related to self-reported negative affect.

Focus. Another study examined how mindfulness meditation affected participants' ability to focus attention and suppress distracting information. The researchers compared a group of experienced mindfulness meditators with a control group that had no meditation experience. They found that the meditation group had significantly better performance on all measures of attention and had higher self-reported mindfulness. Mindfulness meditation practice and self-reported mindfulness were correlated directly with cognitive flexibility and attentional functioning (Moore and Malinowski, 2009).

Less emotional reactivity. Research also supports the notion that mindfulness meditation decreases emotional reactivity. In a study of people who had anywhere from one month to 29 years of mindfulness meditation practice, researchers found that mindfulness meditation practice helped people disengage from emotionally upsetting pictures and enabled them to focus better on a cognitive task as compared with people who saw the pictures but did not meditate (Ortner et al., 2007).

More cognitive flexibility. Another line of research suggests that in addition to helping people become less reactive, mindfulness meditation may also give them greater cognitive flexibility. One study found that people who practice mindfulness meditation appear to develop the skill of self-observation, which neurologically disengages the automatic pathways that were created by prior learning and enables present-moment input to be integrated in a new way (Siegel, 2007a). Meditation also activates the brain region associated with more adaptive responses to stressful or negative situations (Cahn & Polich, 2006; Davidson et al., 2003). Activation of this region corresponds with faster recovery to baseline after being negatively provoked (Davidson, 2000; Davidson, Jackson, & Kalin, 2000).

Relationship satisfaction. Several studies find that a person's ability to be mindful can help predict relationship satisfaction — the ability to respond well to relationship stress and the skill in communicating one's emotions to a partner. Empirical evidence suggests that mindfulness protects against the emotionally stressful effects of relationship conflict (Barnes et al., 2007), is positively associated with the ability to express oneself in various social situations (Dekeyser et al., 2008) and predicts relationship satisfaction (Barnes et al., 2007; Wachs & Cordova, 2007).

Other benefits. Mindfulness has been shown to enhance self-insight, morality, intuition and fear modulation, all functions associated with the brain's middle prefrontal lobe area. Evidence also suggests that mindfulness meditation has numerous health benefits, including increased immune functioning (Davidson et al., 2003; see Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004 for a review of physical health benefits), improvement to well-being (Carmody & Baer, 2008) and reduction in psychological distress (Coffey & Hartman, 2008; Ostafin et al., 2006). In addition, mindfulness meditation practice appears to increase information processing speed (Moore & Malinowski, 2009), as well as decrease task effort and having thoughts that are unrelated to the task at hand (Lutz et al., 2009). Last, mindfulness cultivates also empathy, compassion and contribute to better quality of life.

Adapted from <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/ce-corner.aspx>



POSITIVE EDUCATION

Positive education is defined as education for both traditional skills and for happiness. The high prevalence worldwide of depression among young people, the small rise in life satisfaction, and the synergy between learning and positive emotion all argue that the skills for happiness should be taught in school. There is substantial evidence from well controlled studies that skills that increase resilience, positive emotion, engagement and meaning can be taught to schoolchildren.¹⁹

Positive education emphasises the importance of training the heart as well as the mind in education. Education has always focused on academics and fostering positive character strength development. The goal of positive education is to help reveal and develop the child's ability to effectively engage their combination of character strengths (Linkins et al., 2015).²⁰ Positive education is an education both for well-being and academic accomplishment. Its approaches don't see academic and well-being goals as mutually exclusive.

To establish a well-being strategy that will lead to a flourishing school, Mathew A White argues for the following six steps²¹:

- ☉ **Leadership and vision:** a clear vision of what well-being means for each school. This is not a cookie-cutter approach; this needs to be developed by the senior leadership of a school.
- ☉ **Strategy and management:** a clear structure, with defined roles and responsibilities, to manage a well-being goal within a school's strategy with oversight of positive education programs.
- ☉ **Community partnerships:** The most influential schools develop partnerships with families and key experts in the field. They become beacons of hope in their communities.
- ☉ **Measurement:** If you treasure it, you will measure it! Developing effective well-being measures that align with whole school strategy provide schools with the tools to make informed decisions and track group trends over time.
- ☉ **Evidence-based interventions:** Schools should consult well-being literature to choose programs that clearly align with their definition of well-being and are consistent with the other defined goals and core values of their school culture.
- ☉ **Communication:** Schools should work well in advance to develop clear, consistent answers to the why, what, and how of well-being to bring the community along with them.

So, positive education is an education for well-being and academic accomplishment. It is systematic, challenging, creative, reflective, and intellectually demanding. It is an approach that encourages students to be self-aware and to develop self-regulation, optimism, strength of character, and connections with their peers.

Australia has been leading the way in positive education with the foundation of the Positive Education Schools Association (PESA) and the influence of the International Positive Education Network (IPEN). Both PESA and IPEN are excellent resources for people who want to learn more about a positive education approach.

¹⁹ Seligman, (2009)

²⁰ <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/what-is-positive-education/>

²¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/positive-education/201511/where-is-the-education-in-positive-education>



PART 2

PRACTICES, TOOLS AND PROGRAMS

The cloaked figure

Follow me, the cloaked figure.

Down the corridor of avoidance, embrace the darkness with patience.

Here you'll find the long forgotten treasures, hidden by your ancestors

Love and Fear distilled,

Be stilled by it.

In silence you'll find your essence.

*Alexandru Mare
(Romania)*



Action is the key element for producing learning and transformation, at personal and social level. Reading theory and enlightening one's mind could be a beautiful afternoon activity, but the intention behind this manual is to produce positive learning and transformation. One important step in producing change is having knowledge and understanding on things, and then using this knowledge in different contexts to improve what needs to be improved. The first part of this manual sets the foundations for a new educational approach, that can be more sustainable, holistic and in deeper connection with the natural flow of life, the Earth and the planetary changes. Ecocentric development and Positive Psychology, go hand in hand in this process. Ecocentric development is offering a possible frame, a general idea of human development, through the model of 8 stages of development, while positive psychology is filling the frame with practical, easy to use and enriching human development concepts and tools.

The following section, *Practices*, is absolutely required for meeting the intention of this manual. Through this manual we target change makers from the fields of Youth work and education. The first part of the manual is offering new perspectives and reasons why to follow the Ecocentric development and positive psychology concepts, while this part contains the tools and methods for how to do it.

The practices presented in this manual intend to be used for addressing various developmental tasks from the Ecocentric developmental Wheel. All the practices are also following the concepts and principles of positive psychology; thus, accomplishing these practices will lead to the development of a positive mindset and attitudes towards life, which is fundamental for the lifelong development of anyone. The collection of practices has a holistic approach, because they address the development of all the human dimensions: psychical, mental, emotional, spiritual.

They also follow the principles of experiential learning and non-formal education and can be easily used and adapted by the youth workers and educators interested in this approach. The practices can be used singularly, one practice in one context, or in a sequence of practices, combined in a more complex program. To be easy to use, each practice is presented in the following structure:

- 🕒 **Description:** A short and comprehensive description of the practice, for general understanding.
- 🕒 **Put it into practice:** An explanation with the steps that could be followed in order to implement the practice.
- 🕒 **Suggestions:** From the authors of this manual and based on their experience, some guidelines what to take into consideration in order to create the appropriate learning experience, with the maximum outcome.
- 🕒 **More details:** A list of links which contain the source of the information and other relevant sources connected with the practice, for deepening the understanding and further explorations.

The practices are grouped in several clusters, based on the context where they can be used. Each cluster has a short introduction, which will help the reader see the connections between the Ecocentric development and positive psychology theory and the context where they can be used.

We encourage the reader to see these practices as a model, which can be changed and adapted to the personal interest and background of the user and to the needs of the target groups.



PRACTICES LIST

In the table below you will find a list of all Practices and Tools for development and learning. The table is database with references which Developmental stage and PP elements each practice address:

Stages/elements addressed	Stages of ECD				Positive psychology elements									
	1	2	3	4	Mindfulness	Joy	Gratitude	Serenity	Interest	Inspiration	Awe	Love	Trust	Pride
PRACTICES														
Interpersonal methods														
Volunteering		x	x		x	x	x		x	x		x		x
Positive affirmations to others			x		x	x	x			x		x	x	
Storytelling	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x				x
Mirroring people	x	x	x	x	x		x		x			x	x	
Primitive skills														
Collecting medicinal herbs		x	x		x			x	x		x		x	x
Building shelters, forts		x	x		x	x			x					x
Fire making		x	x		x			x	x		x			x
Bread making		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x				x
Nature based methods														
Nature Observation	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x			
Star gazing	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x			
Tracking	x	x			x				x					x
Wandering in nature	x	x		x	x			x	x	x	x			
Solo time in nature			x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x			x
Gardening	x	x			x	x	x	x	x				x	x
Watching Sunrise	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Grounding/ Earthing		x		x	x			x		x				
Physical methods														
Yoga		x			x			x						
Fasting				x	x			x						x
Five Tibetan Rites		x	x		x			x						x
Extreme outdoor sports			x		x	x			x		x			x
Slacklining			x		x	x			x					x
Art methods														
Listening to music and singing		x	x		x	x				x				
Drum circle	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Improvisation theatre	x		x		x	x			x	x			x	
Creative arts	x	x			x	x			x	x				x
Land art	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x
Rock balancing	x	x			x			x	x	x	x		x	x
Soul poetry			x	x	x				x	x	x			x
Origami	x	x			x	x		x	x	x				x
Symbolic practices														
Ceremonies and rites of passage			x	x	x		x			x			x	
Synchronicities, signs and omens			x	x	x		x		x	x	x		x	
Symbolic art work	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Sacred geometry		x		x	x			x	x					x
Totem building		x		x	x			x	x	x	x			x
Praying		x		x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	
Vision Quest			x	x	x		x	x					x	



Stages/elements addressed	Stages of ECD				Positive psychology elements									
	1	2	3	4	Mindfulness	Joy	Gratitude	Serenity	Interest	Inspiration	Awe	Love	Trust	Pride
PRACTICES														
Intrapersonal practices														
Journaling			X	X	X	X		X	X					
Learn a new language	X	X	X		X	X			X	X				X
Do something new	X	X	X		X	X			X					X
Positive affirmations to yourself			X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	
Go to a children's museum	X		X		X	X			X					
Contemplative practices														
Centering	X		X	X	X			X					X	
Meditation	X		X	X	X			X					X	
Silence	X		X	X	X			X					X	
Labyrinth walking	X		X	X	X				X					
TOOLS FOR DEVELOPMENT														
Darplay	X	X	X		X		X		X	X			X	X
The way of council			X	X	X		X			X		X	X	
Five Rhythms (Ecstatic Dance)		X	X		X	X							X	
SOLO		X	X	X	X				X	X	X		X	X
Personal challenge		X	X			X			X	X			X	X
Letter to yourself			X	X	X		X					X	X	X
Interspecies dialogue		X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X			
Authentic movement			X	X	X	X		X						
Mindful walk in nature	X	X			X	X		X	X		X		X	
A philosophical talk - offering			X	X	X		X		X	X		X		
Love and connection	X	X	X		X	X	X					X		
The black dot	X	X	X	X	X				X					

INTERPERSONAL METHODS

This cluster contains the following practices: Volunteering, Positive affirmations to others, Storytelling, Mirroring people.

These practices focus on developing the interpersonal skills of people, improving especially their mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions. They can contribute to the Ecocentric developmental tasks that are connected with culture, community and society. They also increase the social capital of people, address the needs of belonging, contribution, engagement, being listened, thus leading to a positive mindset and attitude towards life and others.



VOLUNTEERING

Description

Volunteering is the act of a person who offers himself or herself for a service without taking any credit for it. You offer your services and your skills to the community, or to the world because you want it. You have that desire in your heart for helping anybody who need help and you offer it selflessness. Volunteering is a happy action, which you gain nothing else except respect and love.



Volunteering can be related to giving, offering or serving to others and it has the **following benefits:**

- 🕒 Builds Community
- 🕒 Ends Loneliness
- 🕒 Increases Socializing
- 🕒 Builds Bonds, Creates Friends
- 🕒 Develops Emotional Stability
- 🕒 Improves Self-Esteem
- 🕒 Helps Those Most Affected By Mental Illness
- 🕒 Promotes Longevity
- 🕒 Reduces Risk of Alzheimer's
- 🕒 Leads to Graceful Aging
- 🕒 Improves School and College Experience
- 🕒 Provides Better Job Prospects

Put it in practice

If you want to be volunteer you can start by little things and then go to the bigger ones. For example you can help your family members, friends, neighbors or strangers in the street that need your contribution. Here are a **few steps about how to do it:**

- 🕒 Choose your target: select who you are going to help
- 🕒 Assess his/her needs: think about what this person needs at this moment. Maybe his/her needs are materialistic (food, water, clothes, furniture, money etc). Maybe he/she needs help in some of his/her activities (for example to take the dog for a walk, to cook, to babysit, to go for a nature walk, etc) Last but most important, this person might need time or compassion, company or laughter!
- 🕒 Plan your offering: choose what you are going to offer to this person based on his/her needs. Always remember that what you are going to offer has to be within your capacities (financial, physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, etc)
- 🕒 Approach the person and make your offering! But still, before you offer your gift, you need to make sure that the recipient wants to accept your offering and does not find it offensive. You may start a conversation telling the person that you would like to offer something to him/her and then based on the answer you continue. Volunteering must be fun for both parts!
- 🕒 Last, observe carefully the impact your offering had on the person! Later on, take a journal and write a few words about it

Suggestions

If you are interested in strengthening your volunteering experience, think about offering some organized services to the local or international community. Take a look at the links below for more details.

<http://www.wikihow.com/Volunteer>

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities-for-individuals/young-people/european-voluntary-service_en

More Details

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volunteering>

<https://www.thebalance.com/unexpected-benefits-of-volunteering-4132453>



POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS TO OTHERS

Description

Positive affirmations are a powerful way to bring positive energy into your life and can result in life-changing results in any area of your life. They are an important aspect of positive thinking and are critical to the development of a positive mental attitude. To give affirmation is to positively assert approval of someone or something. A positive affirmation is a statement of something positive about another person, said with utmost conviction, belief and emotion. Our affirmation can be given in recognition of a person's skills, personality, or actions. The problem is that a lot of times we assume that others know how much we appreciate them. Then we fall into the trap of expressing nothing meaningful about the value they add to our life. But it shouldn't be that way!

Here are **three reasons why we should consider giving affirmation to others**:

- 🕒 Giving affirmation to others changes our perspective
Pointing out the negative isn't that hard. In fact, it comes quite naturally to many of us. Identifying the positive, however, requires effort. But when we commit to looking for the strengths and good attributes in others, we tend to find them. This shifts our attitude and perspective, and in time, helps us to develop a new habit.
- 🕒 Giving affirmation to others helps build relationships
Positive affirmation empowers others and strengthens self-esteem. Receiving affirmation also helps to increase their confidence, resulting in improved well-being and performance.
- 🕒 Giving affirmation makes way for constructive feedback
If you're known for giving affirmation, your criticism — if feedback — will be better received. People who ordinarily look for positives, afford themselves the privilege of offering negative feedback when needed.

Put it in Practice

As with feedback, how we give affirmation is worth giving some thought to, so here are **some things to consider**:

- 🕒 Overcome feeling awkward
- 🕒 Be clear on what you want to affirm
- 🕒 Choose an appropriate time
- 🕒 Start with a smile
- 🕒 Make it personal by using "You"
- 🕒 Give it in the present tense
- 🕒 Make it specific
- 🕒 Give supporting evidence
- 🕒 Put it in writing
- 🕒 If appropriate, make it public
- 🕒 Say it from the heart



By making a daily practice of giving affirmation, you'll have a more positive outlook in life, be the kind of person others want to be around, and position yourself to be able to offer feedback that'll help others to be their best.

Suggestions

You may want to frame your positive affirmations with a special e-card. Here is a useful link which may inspire you! However, keep in mind that with this e-card you must focus on your positive affirmations to another person, not your wishes! <http://gratefulness.org/connect/send-an-e-card/>

More details

<http://nicholasferguson.org/3-reasons-why-you-should-give-affirmation-to-others/>
<http://www.motivation-for-dreamers.com/positive-affirmations.html>



STORYTELLING

Description

Storytelling is the social and cultural activity of sharing stories. Human beings are designed to live by telling and listening to stories. From the earliest beginnings of history, our understanding of the world around us has been passed on through stories. The experience of sharing stories with others bonds and unites communities and cultures. There are **six specific elements that exist in any telling**:

- 🕒 the representation of a story
- 🕒 interactivity
- 🕒 verbal or semiotic language
- 🕒 "showing" the story
- 🕒 usage of actions such as vocalisation, physical movement and/or gesture
- 🕒 encouragement of the active imagination of the listeners.

With time and practice these specific elements can be improved by any storyteller.

Stories or narratives have been shared as a means of entertainment, education, cultural preservation and instilling moral values. In your story you usually include a plot, some characters, a part to take place and a precept.



Put it in practice

Whether you're telling a joke, telling a fairy tale, or trying to persuade someone with a little empirical evidence, telling a story well is an important skill. While it comes naturally to some, for others this skill is a learned one. Here are **the steps you need to take in order to tell your story properly**:

- 🕒 Come up with an idea of the ideal story you want to tell. *This time we ask you to share a story related to your mastery. It can be something you have already experienced or something you have already achieved!* Create your own plot based on real events. Remind yourself about the place, time frame and people involved, including yourself.
- 🕒 Choose an audience to narrative to. It can be children, adults, your friends, your class, or anyone you want to inspire.
- 🕒 Engage your audience. Start your storytelling by interacting with your audience or doing something to grab their attention.
- 🕒 Build the scene. Throughout your storytelling, you want to create an immersive experience. You want to tell your audience the story in a way that makes them feel like they're there.
- 🕒 Build tension and release tension. Of course, the entire arc of a story should be building tension and building tension, until the climactic point in the story and the falling action of the conclusion.
- 🕒 Focus on what's important. When telling a story, it is important to include details, to create that sense of immersion. However, you don't want the story to take on a "rambling" feel.
- 🕒 Keep the flow logical. This is where knowing your story and practicing become important. Tell the story in a way that is logical and flows smoothly.
- 🕒 Make it feel conclusive. It's awkward when an audience isn't sure if you're done or not.

Suggestions

To write your perfect story, it would be good to make notes, put all your ideas down in a paper and try to combine them all together. That will be a lot easier to make you think and create. Also if you feel like you are stuck and you cannot think of anything, then go outside of the house, sit somewhere and check your notebook. It will definitely inspire you to write a story!

More details

https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-1431/S-cookbook-web.pdf
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storytelling>
<http://www.wikihow.com/Tell-a-Story>
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/work-in-progress/2013/12/11/how-to-tell-a-good-story/#4961595d584c>
<https://www.ted.com/topics/storytelling>



MIRRORING PEOPLE

Description

A mirror is a reflection we give a person that starts with the words, "So what I think I am hearing you saying is..." A mirror provides an instant decisive test to the communication process. It helps both communicator and receiver. Our mirror is the feedback signal that lets the speaker know if we heard them correctly or if they have communicated their meaning with sufficient skill and clarity.

For true listening to occur the listener must concentrate totally on the other and this entails what some psychologists refer to as bracketing, which is the temporary giving up of, or setting aside of one's obsession with one's own inner world. Not only do we need to set aside one's own prejudices, frames of reference, desires, judgments, expectations etc., but also we have to actually bracket our very thoughts themselves. We need to put our inner mental river on hold and this few people know how to do. Listening is not easy. The goal in real listening is to experience the speaker's world from the inside, stepping into his or her shoes.

"Real listening requires that we get our own reactions and responses out of the way in order to hear exactly what the other person is saying. The first step is to quiet the feelings and thoughts jangling around inside of us and to put aside all reactions and "tapes" playing in our heads, spinning tunes of past feelings and ideas and future expectations," said Christopher Hills. Mirroring is the quickest and most direct way to melt the separation that most people feel and experience with each other.

Put it in practice

Mirroring can be very threatening to us because we become psychologically and spiritually naked. The invisible becomes visible exposing all the interfering mental activity that is going on in the background. Mirroring reveals the structure of our blocks to communication thus leading us quickly to deeper communication.

Christopher Hills laid out **three levels of listening**. They are:

- ☉ *The word level* – Often this is sufficient to make a communicator feel heard; other times it is a mere parroting of words by someone who has no intention of understanding a persons feelings at all.
- ☉ *The essence level* – reflects some understanding of the essence of what the other person has said. Here we use our own words to sum up what we think we heard the other saying. Often another can use many words but we can mirror back with few words but still cover the points perfectly well.
- ☉ *The being level* – tunes into the voice, the body language, and the general vibration of the person who is sharing. On this level we listen with our heart and open intuition. We become adept at listening to the space in-between the words to the being that is using them. This is the level of feeling and sensing the core of the others being as you listen.

All loving relationships are occurring on the level of heart and being. Our lack of listening cuts into this world of experience and in general most people are more comfortable dealing on the superficial level of non-listening. When we listen with our being we do not react defensively to what the other person is saying. Mirroring trains us to put our mind's reactions aside long enough to hear the true message and communication of people.

Suggestions

Someone can practice mirroring in a progressive manner. Begin mirroring on the first level. See how it goes, how the persons feels, then you can increase the depth of your mirroring, by using the being level elements. You can mirror non-human beings (animals, clouds, weather, trees etc.). You can do this alone. In this way you can practice mirroring what you observe with your senses, but also use your imagination and intuition. You can ask your communication partner about the effects of your mirroring and you can ask for feedback.

Source: <http://drsircus.com/spiritual-psychology/mirroring-and-the-art-of-listening/>

More details

<http://www.scienceofpeople.com/2015/08/the-power-of-mirroring/>



This cluster contains the following practices: Foraging and collecting medicinal herbs, Building shelters, Forts in the forest, Fire making, Bread making.

Through these practices the participants can get closer to nature and understand it, develop their naturalistic intelligence and practical skills. They offer a way for gaining independence, solve problems and generate solutions, build things, learn survival skills and connect with the basics of life. They can address very well the tasks of the first 3 stages of Ecocentric development. At the same time someone can develop through them trust, mindfulness, express gratitude, be in the flow, find pleasure in doing simple things, experience personal and group accomplishment.

FORAGING AND COLLECTING MEDICINAL HERBS

Description

Foraging, at its most basic level, is the act of finding and harvesting wild foods. Some people may simple call it "gathering."

Foraging can involve hiking in the mountains searching for elusive morels, heading out to the local (pesticide-free!) park to pick dandelion greens, or even picking the apples from the branches of your neighbor's tree that hang over into your yard.

Foraging most commonly refers to going mushroom hunting, something only people practiced in the fine and delicate art of mushroom identification should engage in.

Yet there are many edible plants that grow "wild" all around us—the trick, as with mushrooms, is knowing when and where to look.

One of the most enjoyable things about foraging is the way it compels a greater awareness of one's surroundings – the need to slow down, pause and look.

Put it in practice

Foraging and collecting medicinal herbs can be a very useful educational practice. You can do this activity alone or with a group of people. Each climate area and region has its own indigenous plants. Look for local brochures and booklets which present them. Talk to the locals in order to get to know the plants.

Suggestions

- 🕒 Before eating any wild plant, make 100% sure it's not poisonous.
- 🕒 Find a mentor.
- 🕒 Get a Good Book.
- 🕒 Learn the few dangerous species in your area before venturing into the wild to forage.
- 🕒 Don't rely on common names.
- 🕒 Use all of your senses.
- 🕒 Learn habitat.
- 🕒 Learn companion plants.

Sources

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/foraging>

<https://www.thespruce.com/what-is-foraging-2216581>

<https://www.wildedible.com/foraging>

More details

<https://rootsvt.com/adult/wild-edible-plant-foraging>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89LczuHr3BA>



BUILDING/MAKING SHELTERS, FORTS IN THE FOREST

Description

The longer a child plays the deeper and more meaningful their play becomes. When forest play is extended both short term (1 hour vs. 30 minutes) and long term (2 years vs. the two months of good weather) the more the children discover, the more creative they become, and the more they “do”. Richard Louv, in his book *Last Child in the Woods*, discusses the idea that in the early 1900’s being in nature was not a passive activity, rather it was about doing something. It was about fully engaging in the environment and interacting with it. Louv uses fort and shelters building as a prime example of “doing” in nature.

Suggestions

Safety is one of the most important things when building forts and shelters. Use the proper tools, pay attention to the materials that you use. If you can work with persons that have more experience it will be very helpful. Before using the shelter/fort test its structure and resistance, to be sure that it will not collapse over you.

Sources: <http://playingwithsticks.ca/doing-in-nature-building-forts-shelters/>

Put it in practice

All the necessary details are found here:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Build-an-Outdoor-Fort>

<http://boyslife.org/outdoors/3473/taking-shelter/>

More details

<http://boyslife.org/outdoors/3473/taking-shelter/>

<http://www.survivalsullivan.com/top-14-primitive-skills-need-master/>



FIRE MAKING

Description

It is a very simple activity which has special effects on those who take part in it. The modern life style has kept the fire far from us. Different heating systems have replaced the fire, thus we have become disconnected from one of the natural elements (fire, water, earth, air).

The fire is like a medicine and its hypnotic powers heal the body, gently nurture the heart and bring the mind in a calm and meditative state. All these things make us be more present and connected, with ourselves, the others and the nature. Fire is a perfect tool of mindfulness.

Gathering the wood from the forest, making the fire, sitting in a circle around it and keeping the fire alive are ancestral elements which make us be more whole and rooted in nature.

Making fire could be very empowering for youth who lack self-confidence and practical skills.

Suggestions

Whenever when you deal with fire follow the safety instructions and regulations. Do not allow underage people to make fire unsupervised. Ensure presence of materials for fire fighting.

Put it in practice

Getting involved in fire making the youth can gain:

- ☛ Motor skills (cutting and carrying wood),
- ☛ Physical resistance
- ☛ Confidence
- ☛ Respect for nature
- ☛ Understanding of nature
- ☛ Responsibility and initiative.

Around the fire beautiful stories can emerge from the hearts of the people, warmed by the fire, thus the sense of community, compassion and joy will emerge.



More details

<http://www.instructables.com/id/7-Methods-of-Primitive-Fire-Starting/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6R7hss0_gLY



BREAD MAKING

Description

Bread is an important element in many cultures. Bread is bringing people together, is nurturing them and make them strong and happy.

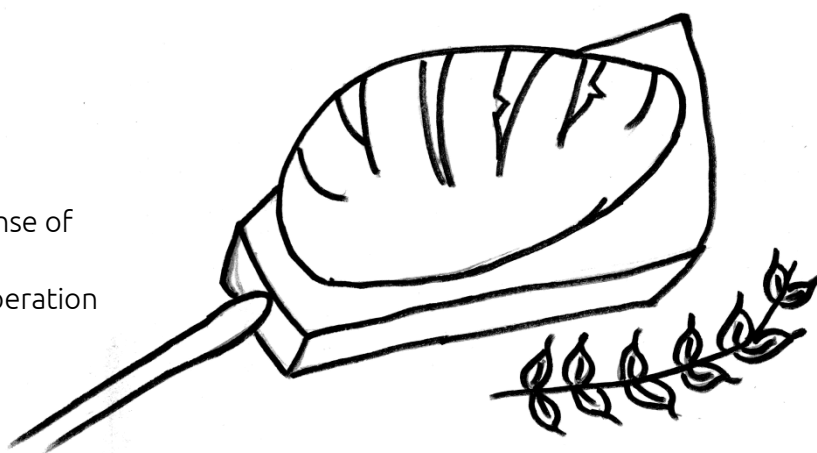
Throughout time making bread was a complex process which brought people together. Having bread on the table was full year hard work: preparing the soil, planting the seeds, growing the wheat, harvesting the crop, producing the flour, working with the hands for making the dough and the bread which could feed a big family for a whole week is ready. Bread is an indispensable food for many people, but due to the modernization of agriculture and food industry most of the people experience the bread making chain only in the shop from where they buy it in a plastic bag, already sliced.

Making bread is such an interesting and rich process, when the bread maker can gain lots of things, besides a tasty and personalized piece of bread.

Put it in practice

Making bread can contribute to:

- ☉ The activation and enhancement of the senses (touch, smell, taste etc.).
- ☉ Motor skills development.
- ☉ Experiencing positive attitudes and a sense of community.
- ☉ Development of team working and cooperation skills.
- ☉ Participation and active involvement.
- ☉ Creativity development, by trying new recipes and ingredients.
- ☉ Understanding of natural process by working with different elements (flour, water, salt, yeast, seeds), fire etc.
- ☉ Increasing respect for the food and limiting food waste.
- ☉ Development of abstract and symbolic thinking by understanding the importance of bread in different cultures, bread ceremonies etc.



Suggestions

The Sourdough Starter

Before you can make a loaf of sourdough bread, you need to make a sourdough starter. This is a culture of flour and water for growing wild yeast and developing those bacterias. Having a "ripe," or fully developed, starter ensures a good rise and good flavor development in your sourdough bread.

You can make your own starter in about five days. On the first day, you mix flour and water into a batter, and let them sit at room temperature overnight. Wild yeast are everywhere — on the flour, in the air, on your hands — and they will quickly start to thrive in this culture. Over the next few days, you'll need to feed the yeast and bacteria by pouring off some of the culture and adding fresh flour and water. You'll know it's ready to use to make bread when the culture becomes very bubbly within just a few hours of feeding, and when it smells sour but fresh.

More details

<http://www.lepainquotidien.com/editorial/the-10-steps-of-bread-making/#.Wlc4rDdx3Dc>

<http://www.scienceinschool.org/2012/issue23/bread>

<https://www.allotment-garden.org/recipe/bread-making-guide/bread-making-guide-ingredients-and-method/>



This cluster contains the following practices: Nature Observation, Star gazing, Tracking, Solo time in nature, Interspecies dialogue, Grounding/ Earthing (Barefoot walking).

These practices contribute to the development of the ecological consciousness, thus leading to eco-awakening (the moment when humans realize that they are interrelated with the large planetary/cosmic eco-system). At the same time the practices are a great way for stimulating mindfulness, for self-reflection and introspection, and for experiencing positive emotions. Being in direct contact with nature, those involved can experience a long of benefits at physical, mental, emotional and spiritual level. (The list can be found at the section *Nature as a source for sustainable life*).

NATURE OBSERVATION

Description

Haven't you got tired from all the monotony in your life, from the grey color you see around you? Don't you feel the need for fresh air and oxygen? We bet you do! People are spending more and more time inside concrete walls, staring at screen. A simple act can help you feel better, is simply to observe nature. The ability to observe nature is an inherent human skill which, when developed provides a cure for nature-deficit disorder. You see, you feel, you listen, you smell and mostly you relax in the magical landscapes of the world. You look and you think, you breathe and you clear your mind, and that's it, you refill yourself with energy and fresh air.

Put it in practice

First of all stand up and prepare your things for some nature exposure. Prepare your meal if you are going to eat, wear something comfortable and you are ready to go. Do a small road trip, to the forest, to the river, to the beach, to a small village, anywhere you would like. You can either walk, or bike or if it's a long distance go by car. When you arrive at your destination, give yourself a couple of minutes to explore, to see around. Then, find a good spot, sit there relax and observe. Just that! Observe the beauty of nature activating all your senses.

Suggestions

You need to stay seated in your observation point at least 20-30 minutes! While being there, let your senses be open and eavesdrop the nature. Some of the most mysterious things in nature happen when we look carefully, rather than rushing to our next point. Thus, be patient and let the nature amaze you with its details!

If you want, after 30 minutes have passed you can switch to another seating point for enriching your experience!

More details

<http://www.nature-mentor.com/easy-guide-to-nature-observation.html>



STAR GAZING

Description

Star gazing means to gaze at or observe the stars. Star gazing is a hobby whose participants enjoy watching the sky, and the abundance of objects found in it. Star gazing is usually associated with viewing the night sky when most celestial objects and events are visible, but sometimes people may also enjoy simply gazing at the stars at night. People often look at the sky using nothing more than their eyes, but occasionally they can use also binoculars, or telescopes.

Put it in practice

Stars gazing can be a unique experience, stimulating the feeling of amazement and awe! Let yourself surrender into the magic of our universe and just observe the mythical sky!

Most people that think about observing celestial objects think of far-away skylscapes in the desert where the man-made lights are eliminated. While this might be useful later on, such a place is rarely easy to reach. Most amateur astronomers live in town; your backyard is a good enough place to start learning.

A few reminders:

- ☾ **Keep all bright lights out of sight.** Choose a night without a full moon (unless you want to have a moon gazing time), turn off the porch light, find some kind of shadow to get the neighbors security light out of your eyes.
- ☾ **The sky should be as clear as possible.** Even broken clouds will prevent you from seeing the patterns you need to see to start learning how to recognize constellations.
- ☾ **You need a good horizon.** You need to be able to observe most of the way to the horizon without trees or buildings. The North horizon is particularly important.
- ☾ **Don't go too far.** Being close to your observation spot means you can go there more often, which is a very good thing when learning.

Sometimes the backyards isn't the best place. But often a neighborhood park, river, lake shore, or overlook is great. Darker skies means more stars.

Make sure you get familiar and comfortable with the place before you actually have to star gaze. It is better to identify your spot during the day and then return to it at sunset.

Do not forget to bring with you flash lights that will help you return back! And why not get a friend to join you?

Suggestions

Do you want to find out more about it? Just follow these links!

<http://curious.astro.cornell.edu/observational-astronomy/stargazing>

<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-star-gazing.htm> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUbG8jboh4M>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9P8Veb_AJ0

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMu5k3lk7JU>

More details

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amateur_astronomy

<https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Stargazing>



TRACKING



Description

Tracking in hunting and ecology is the science and art of observing animal tracks and other signs, with the goal of gaining understanding of the landscape and the animal being tracked (quarry). A further goal of tracking is the deeper understanding of the systems and patterns that make up the environment surrounding and incorporating the tracker.

The practice of tracking may focus on, but is not limited to, the patterns and systems of the local animal life and ecology. Trackers must be able to recognize and follow animals through their tracks, signs, and

trails, also known as spoor. Spoor may include tracks, scat, feathers, kills, scratching posts, trails, drag marks, sounds, scents, marking posts, the behavior of other animals, habitat cues, and any other clues about the identity and whereabouts of the quarry.

The skilled tracker is able to discern these clues, recreate what transpired on the landscape, and make predictions about the quarry. The tracker may attempt to predict the current location of the quarry and follow the quarry's spoor to that location, in an activity known as trailing.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tracking_\(hunting\)#Tracking_as_an_art_and_science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tracking_(hunting)#Tracking_as_an_art_and_science)

Put it in practice

The first thing to learn about tracking is knowing where to look for animals. Much of this is done by what is called "sign tracking". Signs are anything besides a track proper that is an indication of an animal (e.g. trails, scat etc.). About 1/2 of tracking is sign tracking the other 1/2 is working with actual tracks.

In most landscapes, there are "islands" where many species will be found. One way to look is to find the best "islands" for herbivores. Wherever there are herbivores, carnivores will follow. The areas between the islands will tend to be scarce of animals except as an area for animals to pass through.

Animals will tend to take the easiest route of travel across a landscape (just like you and I - around boulders etc.) unless they are being pursued. This results in the creation of a number of "roadway systems" within the habitat.

Suggestions

Learning to track is a sacred responsibility. It gives you the ability to come into the center of the lives and homes of animals. You must treasure this gift and respect the animals by being non-intrusive. Getting too close to animals can cause serious disturbances including: abandoning young, disturbing nesting grounds, damaging foraging areas, and may even cause the animal's death. For example, in winter, many animals are severely stressed to gather enough energy to stay alive. Escaping from a human presence could rob them of enough energy that they can no longer sustain themselves. Always remember that you are only a visitor into their habitat.

Source and details: <https://outdooraction.princeton.edu/nature/guide-animal-tracking>

More details

<http://www.artofmanliness.com/2016/01/11/how-to-track-animals-a-primer-on-identifying-footprints/>
<http://www.wildernesscollege.com/tracking-animals-2.html>





WANDERING IN NATURE

Description

Wandering in nature is a great way to soothe your mind. It can be described as an alternative walk in nature where there are no aims to achieve. Wandering in nature does not aim at exercising, following a particular trail or achieving a particular goal, although you may accomplish them also on the way. Wandering in nature is about immersing yourself in the greatness of the wild and the mother earth and letting the signs to guide your way.

Put it in practice

The best way to enjoy wandering in nature is to take your time. An ideal pace lets you appreciate nature's tranquility and subtle gifts while still getting some exercise. Walking in the nature can actually increase your ability to focus and concentrate.

While wandering in nature **take care of the following:**

- 🕒 Listen closely to birds and insects, the wind moving past different leaves, and the sounds of earth underfoot.
- 🕒 Go alone or remain silent. Talking makes it difficult to tune in to nature.
- 🕒 Draw all your senses to one thing – a tree, a flower, a rock. Pay attention to how it looks, smells and feels.
- 🕒 Follow your instinct all the time!

Suggestions

Although you are asked to immerse into nature, make sure you find your way back from the journey you will take while wandering in nature!

More details

<https://wilderness.org/article/insider-tips-nature-walking>



SOLO TIME IN NATURE

Description

Modern life has become a non-stop race between different stimulus to capture our attention and to influence us to make certain decisions. From big banners and commercials on the street, to social networks, links and online ads, all distract us and keep us away from the important things in our lives.

Thus we need moments of silence and solitude, when we can reflect on the important things of our life, on our dreams and visions, past and future, thoughts and emotions.

The perfect experience for this is having a solo time in nature. A moment when we are hiding in the forest, between the trees, next to a lake, on top of a hill, by a water stream etc.

We can go there for a day or two or only for few hours. We can get a journal, some food and proper gear for making a protective shelter or just a backpack with some warm clothes.

Some people don't take with them not even a watch, phone, nor a journal, because they want to be SOLO. Doesn't matter how you experience your solo time, the only thing that is important is not to be distracted (from other people, books, technology etc.).

When you are alone in the forest you become more like the forest. You connect with the rhythm of the Earth and with the Universe within and without. Nature will be your guide and protector, so you may return safe from this solo adventure. Going in the nature with an open heart and with clear intentions can help the Wanderer find revelations which are nowhere else available but in that place.

Put it in practice

By having a solo time in nature **the youth can:**

- ☯ Become more connected with their inner and true being.
- ☯ Discover more about nature and the natural beings and elements.
- ☯ Develop survival skills by making a shelter, spending a night alone in the forest.
- ☯ Gain confidence and courage by being alone in nature.
- ☯ Enhance their existential intelligence.
- ☯ Develop respect and care for nature and adopt an ecological mindset.
- ☯ Stimulate their reflections abilities and see their lives from different perspectives.

Suggestions

See Tool for learning "SOLO" in next section of this Manual.

More details

<https://matadornetwork.com/bnt/why-solo-adventures-in-nature-make-you-stronger/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Gl5rqy2hf8>

<http://jee.sagepub.com/content/34/1/1.abstract>



GARDENING

Description

Gardening is the practice of growing and cultivating plants as part of horticulture. You can take care of plants like flowers, trees, root vegetables, leafy vegetables, fruits, herbs, by watering them and helping them to grow. It has been said by many, that gardening boosts your immune system. Thanks to beneficial bacteria found in soil, gardening can improve your immune system, helping you get sick less and fight off infections easier, according to research published in Science. Working in the garden can also help prevent certain allergies and decrease the severity of a reaction, according to a separate study done by the University of Copenhagen. These other healthy habits will keep your immune system revved. Below, you can see some more **benefits from gardening**:

- ☺ Provides a great workout that feels more fun than work
- ☺ Nourishes your spirit
- ☺ Helps slow climate change
- ☺ Gives you better self-esteem
- ☺ Sharpens your brain



Put it in practice

Firstly, identify the place you have for gardening. Is it some indoor or outdoor place? Is it some public space of shared gardening? Then get an idea. What kind of garden would you like to have? Do you want to plant trees and take their fruits, or some vegetables to eat, or some beautiful flowers to decorate your garden? It's up to you...and the place you have! Then pick a nice spot so you can plant some plants and make sure that it will not be hidden from the sun. Clear the soil of the area you want to plant, dig and boost the soil with some organic compost. After that, go to a florist and choose the right kind of plants. Ask your florist what are the best plants for this season and the climate you live in. Return to your garden and start planting! Enjoy the process and observe the benefits on you! Once you finish water them and keep it up on a regular basis!

Suggestions

If it the first time you will ever garden, you don't have to go too far. Take it easy for the first time. Like for example pick some plants, which can endure all the seasons. And of course you don't have to full up your garden immediately. Step by step, you will create a beautiful garden to take care of and you can add occasionally more plants, so it can get bigger. In addition you can also decorate your garden with scarecrow or something else. It might be hard and difficult to have your own garden, but when you spent time gardening, you will start feeling a connection with nature. And you can sit back, and admire what you made with your garden.

More details

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gardening>

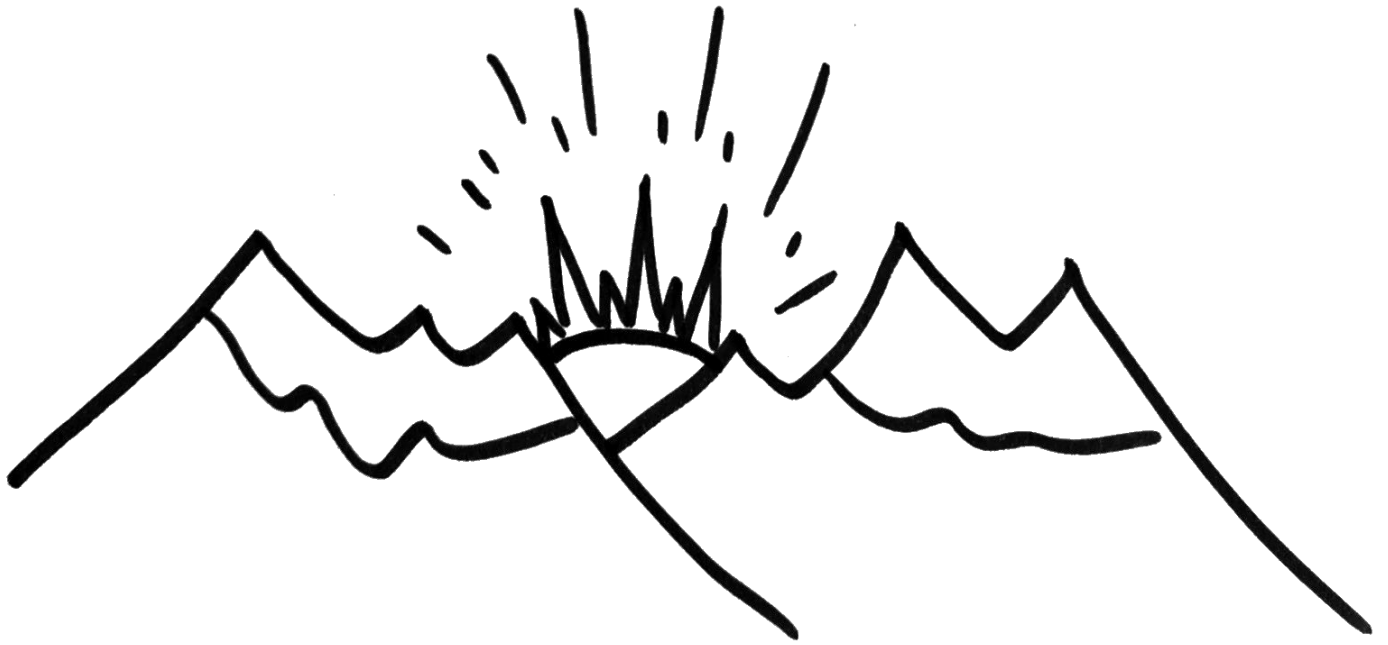
<http://www.bhg.com/gardening/>

http://www.gardensalive.com/product/first-time-veggie-gardenwhere-to-start/you_bet_your_garden

<https://www.rd.com/health/wellness/health-benefits-of-gardening/>

<http://www.bhg.com/gardening/yard/garden-care/ten-steps-to-beginning-a-garden/>





WATCHING SUNRISE

Description

Watching Sunrise is the act of staring at the sun when it first appears in the sky, early in the morning. You see the birth of the sun at the dawn of the day. Sunrise is a magnificent time of day. It is an awakening of the planet, birds, trees, and wildlife. It is always a new beginning. Witnessing this beautiful daybreak can bring joy into the ordinary life.

Here are **4 stunning benefits** from watching the sunrise:

- ☺ You will be in a better mood throughout the day.
- ☺ You will see colors that you never knew could exist in nature.
- ☺ It will make you more grateful for the earth.
- ☺ The sunrise will bring you hope

Put it in practice

Decide the spot from which you are going to watch the sunrise. Does your rooftop provide a clear sight of the sun rising or do you need to go somewhere else? You may of course choose to watch the sunrise from a top of a mountain or a shore of the sea! Put your alarm early in the morning, to wake up, according to what time the sun shows up at your country. If you don't know, you can search it on Google. Then get dressed and reach your place. Wait patiently until the sun's birth and when that happens, watch as the sun slowly peeks out over the horizon. Find the edge and see the sky change from blood-red to orange to pink and purple and blue as the sun goes up and pay attention to the rays breaking through the clouds. But mostly, feel the air beginning to warm around you and enjoy the experience.

Suggestions

I will advise you to watch the sunrise during fall or winter, when the sunrises later in the day, and it would be easier for you to do not fell asleep. Also you can make a nice cup of warm tea/coffee and drink it while you watch the sunrise. You can bring a blanket with you to make it more cozy and comfortable to you. After the sun comes out, I would suggest you to go for a walk, and see how the sunshine hugs flowers and trees and give light to the world.

More details

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/9-stunning-benefits-watching-sunrise-jennifer-elizabeth-masters>

<http://www.tujawellness.com/wellness-411/5-reasons-to-get-up-early-and-see-the-sunrise.html>

<http://health.allwomenstalk.com/reasons-to-get-up-early-instead-of-sleeping-in/12>



GROUNDING/ EARTHING (BAREFOOT WALKING)

Description

In short, earthing or grounding is putting the body in direct and uninterrupted contact with the earth. This means that skin needs to touch soil, sand, water, or a conductive surface that is in contact with the earth. From a scientific perspective, the idea is that the earth has a mild negative charge to it. Over time, especially in modern life, our bodies build up a positive charge. Direct contact with the earth can even out this positive charge and return the body to a neutral state.

Many people don't have this contact with the earth anymore, and some experts wonder if this is a contributor to the (many) rising health problems we face today. As a population, we wear rubber shoes and live indoors. In theory, many of us could go years without directly touching the earth at all, even if we're outside.

Over time, the theory is that this positive charge builds and can lead to health problems.

Put it in practice

While the research on grounding is relatively new, the practice is timeless. Past societies went barefoot or wore leather footwear made from hides that allowed the energy from the Earth to rise up into their bodies. They were grounded.

Here's the bottom line: You have lost your electrical roots, so to speak. You're disconnected, and this disconnection may be a seriously overlooked cause of human pain and discomfort and the steeply rising incidence of chronic illness worldwide.

The good news is, you can reconnect. Weather and schedule permitting, go barefoot for a half-hour or so outside and see what a difference that makes on your pain or stress level. Sit, stand, or walk on soil, grass, sand, or concrete. These are all conductive surfaces from which your body can draw the Earth's energy. Wood, asphalt, and vinyl are not conductive.

Ideally, you want to sustain the Earthing experience and make it a part of your daily routine.

Benefits of Earthing & Grounding:

- 🕒 Reducing inflammation
- 🕒 Reducing chronic pain
- 🕒 Improving Sleep
- 🕒 Increasing Energy
- 🕒 Lowering stress and promoting calmness by reducing stress hormones.
- 🕒 Normalizing biological rhythms including circadian rhythm
- 🕒 Normalizing blood pressure and blood flow
- 🕒 Relieving muscle tension and headache
- 🕒 Improving menstrual and female hormone symptoms
- 🕒 Protecting the body from effects of EMFs



Suggestions

Obviously, walking outside barefoot is the easiest and cheapest way to ground yourself or practice earthing. If you are close to an ocean or swimmable natural body of water, this is another great way. To work, the skin must be in direct contact with rock, dirt or water. The beach/ocean is possibly the best place as not only are sand and salt water extremely conductive, but salt water is also very high in magnesium. Perhaps this is why many people seem to sleep better on vacation at the beach!

More details

<https://chopra.com/articles/grounding-the-human-body-the-healing-benefits-of-earthing>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRUKbnZekqo>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4378297/>



This cluster contains the following practices: Yoga, Fasting, Five Tibetan Rites, Extreme outdoor sports, Slacklining.

These methods focus more on the physical dimension, but the effects one could experience through them have a big impact on mental, emotional and spiritual (especially fasting and yoga) level. These practices are diverse and address different personal interests and working rhythms. Some of them require specific materials, while others only the personal will. By practicing them, one could gain mindfulness, focus, higher levels of energy, resistance, overcoming personal limits, courage, trust, develop a sense of achievement and many more.

FIVE TIBETAN RITES

Description

The **Five Tibetan Rites** is a system of exercises reported to be more than 2,500 years old which were first publicized by Peter Kelder in a 1939 publication titled *The Eye of Revelation*.

The Rites are said to be a form of Tibetan yoga similar to the yoga series that originated in India. However, the Five Rites and traditional Tibetan yoga both emphasize "a continuous sequence of movement" (Sanskrit: vinyasa), whereas Indian forms focus on "static positions". Although the Rites have circulated amongst yogis for decades, skeptics say that Tibetans have never recognized them as being authentic Tibetan practices.

The Five Tibetan Rites are also referred to as "The Five Rites", "The Five Tibetans" and "The Five Rites of Rejuvenation"

Source – adapted from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Tibetan_Rites

Put it in practice

The most important thing you should know is that the **5 Tibetan Rites work in conjunction with each other**, so if you want to fully experience the remarkable benefits of these ancient Five Tibetan exercises it's best to do all five of them daily. However, if you are extremely overweight don't do Rites #4 and #5 until you've developed enough core strength.

Suggestions

Tip #1. If your physical condition is average, start with just 5-7 repetitions for each of the 5 Tibetan Rites and build to the full set of 21 adding 2-3 more repetitions each week.

It's much more important to take your time and focus on doing the exercises correctly, rather than pushing yourself to achieve doing the full set in the shortest amount of time.

Tip #2. Avoid doing the Rites in the evening because they build a lot of energy that lasts for hours and you'll find it hard to fall asleep.

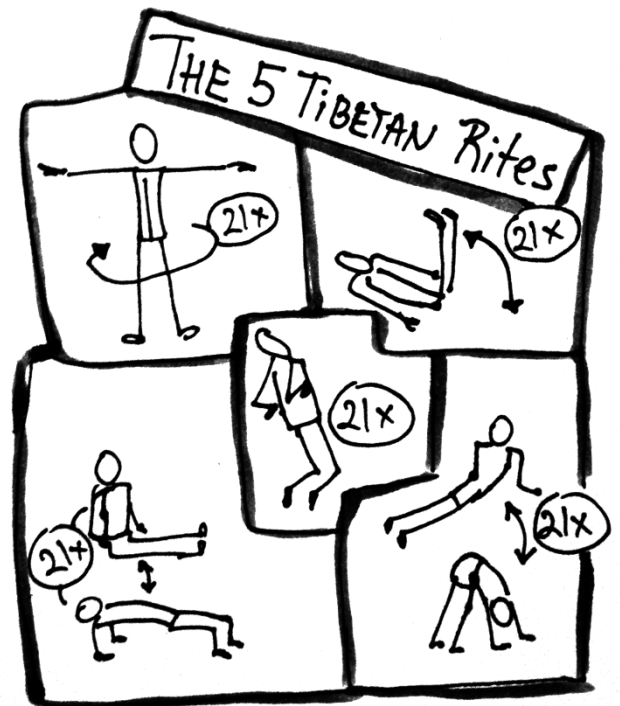
Tip #3. Perform the 5 Tibetans on an empty stomach, in a well-ventilated area (outside if possible, but NOT in the sun) and wear comfortable, loose clothing.

More details

http://www.mkprojects.com/pf_TibetanRites.htm

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJASBgYRStE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVmhHjkHYjk>



YOGA

Description

Yoga is a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines which originated in ancient India. There is a broad variety of yoga schools, practices, and goals in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Among the most well-known types of yoga are Hatha yoga and Rāja yoga.

The origins of yoga have been speculated to date back to pre-Vedic Indian traditions; it is mentioned in the Rigveda, but most likely developed around the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, in ancient India's ascetic and śramana movements. The chronology of earliest texts describing yoga-practices is unclear, varyingly credited to Hindu Upanishads. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali date from the first half of the 1st millennium CE, but only gained prominence in the West in the 20th century. Hatha yoga texts emerged around the 11th century with origins in tantra.

Adapted from – <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoga>

Most of us are accustomed to looking outside of ourselves for fulfillment. We are living in a world that conditions us to believe that outer attainments can give us what we want. Yet again and again our experiences show us that nothing external can completely fulfill the deep longing within for “something more.” Most of the time, however, we find ourselves striving toward that which always seems to lie just beyond our reach. We are caught up in doing rather than being, in action rather than awareness. It is hard for us to picture a state of complete calmness and repose in which thoughts and feelings cease to dance in perpetual motion. Yet it is through such a state of quietude that we can touch a level of joy and understanding impossible to achieve otherwise.

It is said in the Bible: “Be still and know that I am God.” In these few words lies the key to the science of Yoga. This ancient spiritual science offers a direct means of stilling the natural turbulence of thoughts and restlessness of body that prevent us from knowing what we really are.

Ordinarily our awareness and energies are directed outward, to the things of this world, which we perceive through the limited instruments of our five senses. Because human reason has to rely upon the partial and often deceptive data supplied by the physical senses, we must learn to tap deeper and more subtle levels of awareness if we would solve the enigmas of life — Who am I? Why am I here? How do I realize Truth? Yoga is a simple process of reversing the ordinary outward flow of energy and consciousness so that the mind becomes a dynamic center of direct perception no longer dependent upon the fallible senses but capable of actually experiencing Truth.

By practicing the step-by-step methods of Yoga taking nothing for granted on emotional grounds or through blind faith we come to know our oneness with the Infinite Intelligence, Power, and Joy which gives life to all and which is the essence of our own Self.

Acknowledgement of above article is made on an “await claim” basis. The copyright holder has not been traced. Any information enabling us to contact the copyright holder would be appreciated.

Put it in practice

<https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithtim/featured>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tklllKHDkIE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SZ2xVnbcxY>

Suggestions:

Before start with practicing please learn more about basic principles of exercising Yoga (alone or in group). We recommend if you do not have previous experience to try first with certified teacher and follow their advice.

More details

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoga>

<http://www.internationalyogafederation.net/>

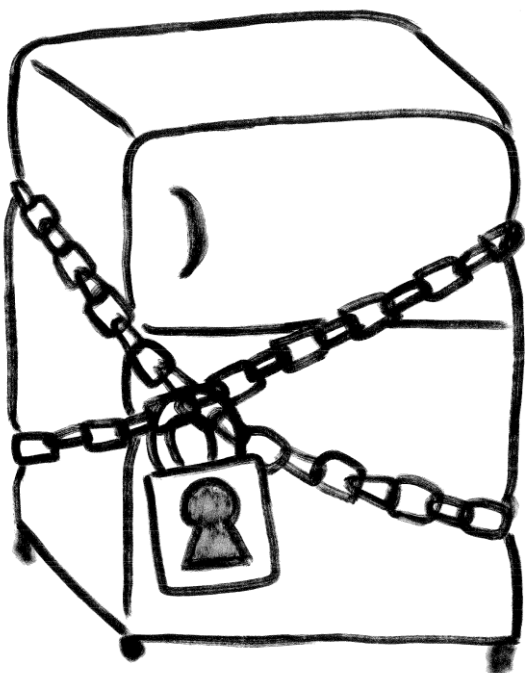
<https://www.yogaalliance.org/>

<https://www.artofliving.org/in-en/yoga>



FASTING

Description



Fasting is a willing abstinence or reduction from some or all food, drink, or both, for a period of time. An absolute fast or dry fasting is normally defined as abstinence from all food and liquid for a defined period, usually a period of 24 hours, or a number of days. Water fasting allows drinking water but nothing else. Other fasts may be partially restrictive, limiting only particular foods or substances. A fast may also be intermittent in nature. Fasting practices may preclude intercourse and other activities as well as food.

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fasting>

Put it in practice

Fasting is a practice that has been carried out since time immemorial in almost all cultures. At first it was done for sacred reasons. People fasted collectively at certain times in order to pay homage to God or to be granted some grace. Today, that spirit is maintained in practices such as Catholic Lent or Muslim Ramadan.

The truth is that, over time, it has been discovered that fasting can bring great benefits to both the body and the

mind. It is approached as an exercise that allows one to detoxify the body and contribute to the healing of different diseases. Likewise, fasting benefits the mind and spirit, in so far as it demands putting into play one's will and renunciation.

Fasting is an act of voluntary austerity. For this reason, it strengthens the mind and contributes to an increase in concentration. Somehow, it frees the mind so that it can focus on knowledge and self-recognition. It is a test of the will that, in any case, should not be taken to the point of violating the organism or the mind.

Fasting reminds us that we have the power to give up, even something as fundamental as food. Depriving ourselves voluntarily of food allows us to enter into a new perspective. It is a practice that forces us to turn our eyes on ourselves, to perceive with greater clarity the signals that our body sends and to identify the emotions that accompany us. Those who fast ensure that perception and sensitivity increase during periods of abstinence.

The result of such practices, when carried out correctly, is very beneficial to the emotional world. Greater self-control is experienced and this increases confidence and self-esteem. There is a sense of well-being and tolerance for frustration develops. Those who fast are usually quieter, self-controlled, and self-conscious.

Source: <https://exploringyourmind.com/fasting-spiritual-practice/>

Suggestions

It is important to decide the intentions behind fasting. You can do it for a physical reason, cleansing the body, or for an emotional/mental reason (connection to oneself, developing self-control), or rather spiritual (for transcendental intentions, inner guidance, life purpose). You can begin fasting in a progressive manner, slowly increasing the intensity and duration of fasting.

More details

<http://www.mindthesciencegap.org/2013/04/10/fasting-for-mental-health-does-it-work/>



EXTREME OUTDOOR SPORTS

Description:

Extreme sports are recreational activities perceived as involving a high degree of risk. These activities often involve speed, height, a high level of physical exertion, and highly specialized gear. More recently, the commonly used definition from research is "a competitive (comparison or self-evaluative) activity within which the participant is subjected to natural or unusual physical and mental challenges such as speed, height, depth or natural forces and where fast and accurate cognitive perceptual processing may be required for a successful outcome" by Dr. Rhonda Cohen (2012).

Put it in practice

Benefits of extreme sports:

Gain the Ability to Stay Centered

Extreme sports can push you to your physical and mental limits. When this happens, it's easy to lose your cool, but that can lead to potentially dangerous mistakes. Individuals who regularly perform feats such as jumping out of an airplane actually change the chemical makeup of their mind. When this happens, you become more capable of staying calm and centered during stressful situations.

Enhance Your Fear Management Skills

Those who participate in extreme sports are able to turn their fear into a positive experience. There probably aren't too many people in the world who won't feel fearful the first time they jump out of an airplane or go bungee jumping. But doing these things and seeing that you safely make it to the other side will help you reduce your fear response. You will also learn how to use coping mechanisms such as meditation to your advantage.

Gain a Sense of Humility

Having a sense of humility is actually extremely important. This makes us feel more relatable to others, and it can help avoid the development of a negative reputation. With extreme sports, you have to embrace the fact that you are not perfect or immortal. Instead, to survive the experience, you must look at your own mortality, learn how to use safety equipment properly and be willing to listen to your instructor's directions.

Boost Your Self-Confidence

Extreme sports task you with overcoming difficult physical challenges. After all, it's not easy to climb a mountain. But if you can complete these challenges, your rewards will be much more than merely physical. Studies have found a strong link between extreme sports and a higher level of self-confidence. This makes sense when you consider the fact that accomplishing a task so physically daunting is something that you should feel proud of.

Suggestions

Before attempting any risky activities, be sure to **use your smarts with this list of safety tips:**

- 🕒 Wear a helmet. Need I say more?
- 🕒 Wear appropriate protective padding. This could include knees pads, elbow pads, wrist pads, etc.
- 🕒 Warm-Up. As with any exercise, a proper warm-up is needed to keep muscles and joints.
- 🕒 Wear proper clothing.
- 🕒 No pain, no gain need not apply here. I know it seems as though the motto of extreme sports is *no pain, no gain* but if you do get injured, you should stop the activity and see a medical professional.
- 🕒 Take a lesson. Most people would profit tremendously by learning from someone who actually knows what they are doing.
- 🕒 Get a partner in crime. If a girl wipes out on her dirt bike in the forest, would anyone hear it? Yes, if she is smart because that means she did not go at it alone and will have someone to call 911 if need be.



More details

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extreme_sport

<https://www.livestrong.com/article/472872-advantages-disadvantages-of-extreme-sports/>

<https://extremefreestyle.wordpress.com/2008/05/24/list-of-extreme-sports/>



SLACKLINING

Description:

Slacklining refers to the act of walking or balancing along a suspended length of flat webbing that is tensioned between two anchors. Slacklining is similar to slack rope walking and tightrope walking. Slacklines differ from tightwires and tightropes in the type of material used and the amount of tension applied during use. Slacklines are tensioned significantly less than tightropes or tightwires in order to create a dynamic line which will stretch and bounce like a long and narrow trampoline. Tension can be adjusted to suit the user, and different webbing may be used in various circumstances. Slacklining is popular because of its simplicity and versatility; it can be used in various environments with few components.

Adapted from - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slacklining>

Put it in practice

The slacklining learning curve is very quick and after only a couple of sessions you will notice a lot of progress. Indeed, it looks more difficult than it really is! Here you will find a **few tips that will help you** progress quickly in the art of slacklining:

- ❶ Locate the slackline at about 30 – 50 cm from the ground or below your waist. As you progress you can set it at a higher level depending on the nature of your practice. Starting at a low level allows you to get on the line easily while you get the “feeling” of it as well as serving as a psychological aid.
- ❷ Once on the slackline, practice staying on the same spot and do not walk until you find your balance. Then, stand with one leg for a few seconds while the other leg helps you to find balance and then do the same with your other leg.
- ❸ Use your arms and play with them. Ideally, your arms level with your head. By moving and playing with them you relax and at the same time that allows you to find your balance easily. Don't forget to move one of the legs as well to help balance the whole body.
- ❹ Probably the most important thing in slacklining is to find one (and only one) spot in front of you to focus your sight, perhaps the tree in front of you, the other end of the slackline, a banner, flag, etc. It is not recommended to look at the slackline or your feet.
- ❺ Once you have some balance you are ready to start walking. Start with short steps and go slowly at first. Don't let yourself be overcome by emotions and the rush of getting to the other side. As in everything else, patience and perseverance will further you to your goals in a more effective way. Slacklining can be regarded as a meditation in movement.
- ❻ Don't forget to breathe! Breathing deeply while slacklining helps a lot. Make it a meditative practice and take a deep breath, walk a few steps, then exhale completely. It should feel natural and relaxed.



Suggestions

- ❶ Start by jumping and shaking your arms, legs and the whole body for a minute or so. You can also stretch your body or do some yoga before you start slacklining. That relaxes you and warms you up.
- ❷ Slacklining is easier with a partner who can provide you with her/his arm or shoulder so that you can relax and start walking and getting the feeling of slacklining. Your arms should have enough space to be extended widely so tell your partner not to approach you too much. After a few tries and as you get more comfortable on the slack line, continue on your own.
- ❸ Once you are able to walk a few steps in a steady manner, try using other muscles of your body. Move your trunk, bend your knees a bit, move as if you were going to jump, get the feeling of floating. The idea is to be relaxed on the slackline and walk like a feline would, in a graceful and relaxed way.
- ❹ Take breaks from time to time. Slacklining uses muscles that most people don't use. Once your legs and arms get tired, take a break and then start again. You may also feel some kind of mental exhaustion after you try slacklining for a couple of hours. That is due to exerting concentration for long periods.

More details

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slacklining>

<http://xtremesport4u.com/extreme-land-sports/what-exactly-is-slacklining/>



This cluster contains the following practices: Listening to music and singing, Authentic movement, Drum circle Improvisation theatre, Land art, Rock balancing, Soul poetry, Origami.

In order to develop a positive mind-set people need to express themselves, they need to create, to generate art in different forms. These practices combine movement of the body, music, speaking, words, spatial and mathematical skills. Through them someone can gain personal authenticity, can learn how to express ideas in a more creative way, can create and feel beauty, can develop inner harmony, mindfulness and strengthen the social connections.



DRUM CIRCLE

Description

Simply put a drum circle or rhythm circle is a group of people from a few to many sitting with chairs arranged in a circle experiencing the spontaneous creation of music on a variety of drums and percussion instruments. Drum circles are a popular form of music therapy.

In such a situation, each person is able to express themselves through their individual instrument while simultaneously participating as part of a larger whole. Such groups can range from just a few people to literally thousands of individuals.



Put it in practice

Drum circles have no beginning or end, no top or bottom. Such a construction places every participant on equal footing, another important component in a therapeutic situation. Drum circles may be facilitated, meaning that they are, to some degree, guided by a facilitator who encourages the participants. Much to the delight of drummers everywhere, some studies indeed show that drumming accelerates physical healing, boosts the immune system, produces feelings of well-being and even has a calming effect on people suffering from Autism, Alzheimer's and various traumatic experiences.

Suggestions

A drum circle is a fun, exciting and powerful way to bring individuals together through music.

A facilitated drum circle promotes a safe, stress free and entertaining environment to empower participants.

A drum circle will enhance your experience through visual, auditory and kinesthetic ways of learning.

As the participants relax, enjoy and explore the music, their natural creativity and curiosity emerges and the rhythms grow and change.

Source: <http://drumaticinnovation.com/what-is-drum-circle>

More details

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drum_circle

<https://www.thoughtco.com/drum-therapy-1729574>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/therapeutic-drumming-1729575>

LISTENING TO MUSIC AND SINGING

Description

Music is a big part of human nature. Whether it is signing, listening to music or playing an instrument, the engagement with music has tremendous benefits on our health. Check them out below.

Listening to music is an act very connected with the daily life. Whether it is at work, at home, when exercising or driving, our favourite music keeps us always a good company. But did you know that simply by listening to music you can improve your overall well being? In fact, there is strong evidence that listening to music **can help you in the following:**

- 🎧 Music Makes You Happier
- 🎧 Music Enhances Running Performance
- 🎧 Music Lowers Stress and Improves Health
- 🎧 Music Helps You Sleep Better
- 🎧 Music Reduces Depression
- 🎧 Music Helps You Eat Less
- 🎧 Music Elevates Your Mood While Driving
- 🎧 Music Strengthens Learning and Memory
- 🎧 Music Relaxes Patients Before/After Surgery
- 🎧 Music Reduces Pain
- 🎧 Music Helps Alzheimer's Patients Remember
- 🎧 Music Improves Recovery in Stroke Patients
- 🎧 Music Increases Verbal Intelligence
- 🎧 Music Raises IQ and Academic Performance
- 🎧 Music Keeps Your Brain Healthy in Old Age



Moreover, the act of singing or playing an instrument can enrich the above mentioned benefits by adding the following:

- 🕒 Singing can widen your circle of friends
- 🕒 Singing boosts your confidence
- 🕒 Singing broadens communication skills
- 🕒 Singing increases your ability to appreciate accomplished singers
- 🕒 Playing a musical instrument keeps the mind sharp
- 🕒 Playing a musical instrument enhances coordination
- 🕒 Playing a musical instrument promotes sense of achievement
- 🕒 Playing a musical instrument boosts concentration

Put it in practice

Immerse into music by following one, or more of the suggested practices! Remember! You do not need to be perfect about it to enjoy it and feel the benefits!

Suggestion 1: Indulge into music listening! Turn on the radio, use an online music channel or play your favorite song. Sit back, close your eyes and enjoy!

Think carefully about the tone, mood, and feel of the music. What are the intangible feelings the song gives? Start simply -- is it happy, or sad? Do the instruments sound bright and bouncy, or thoughtful and somber? What sort of scene do you imagine the song being played over -- rainy, sunny, joyous, thoughtful, heartbroken, etc. Some terms to keep in mind include.

Feel the vibes, let the melody travel you around and be open to hear the stories it has to share with you. Appreciate and honor the gift of music!

Suggestion 2: Start singing! Find a place you feel comfortable and sing a song. You can play some background song if you want. This will facilitate your song. Do not care if you sing correctly or not. Just sing from your heart! And it is important to choose a song you like!

Suggestion 3: Play an instrument! If you already know how to play an instrument, get to it and let your passion for music unveil. If you do not know how to play an instrument, get some simple percussion instruments and play with them! You will be surprised to find out how easy it is!

Suggestions

If you want **to explore more the topic of music:**

- 🕒 Go to a concert or a festival to listen to live music
- 🕒 Join a choir
- 🕒 Get lessons for musical instrument
- 🕒 And explore these links

<http://www.wikihow.com/Listen-to-Music>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Have-a-Good-Singing-Voice>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Learn-to-Play-an-Instrument>

More details

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singing>

<https://www.britannica.com/art/singing>

<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/music-singing/>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-137116/Why-listening-music-key-good-health.html>

<http://www.hungryforchange.tv/article/the-health-benefits-of-listening-to-music>

<http://www.lifehack.org/317747/scientists-find-15-amazing-benefits-listening-music>

<http://takelessons.com/blog/health-benefits-of-singing>

<http://www.healthfitnessrevolution.com/top-10-health-benefits-playing-instrument/>



IMPROVISATION THEATRE

Description

Improviseational theatre, often called improv or impro, is the form of theatre, often comedy, in which most or all of what is performed is unplanned or unscripted: created spontaneously by the performers. In its purest form, the dialogue, action, story, and characters are created collaboratively by the players as the improvisation unfolds in present time, without use of an already prepared, written script.

Improviseational theatre exists in performance as a range of styles of improviseational comedy as well as some non-comedic theatrical performances. It is sometimes used in film and television, both to develop characters and scripts and occasionally as part of the final product.

Improviseational theatre often allows an interactive relationship with the audience. Improv groups frequently solicit suggestions from the audience as a source of inspiration, a way of getting the audience involved, and as a means of proving that the performance is not scripted.

Put it in practice

In order for an improvised scene to be successful, the improvisers involved must work together responsively to define the parameters and action of the scene, in a process of co-creation. With each spoken word or action in the scene, an improviser makes an offer, meaning that he or she defines some element of the reality of the scene.

There are no absolute rules in improv but here are **some commonly suggested principles**:

- 🕒 Listen: easier said than done, and that's exactly the point.
- 🕒 Agreement: say yes and add something, don't reject ideas.
- 🕒 Team Work: have a group mind, think of others.
- 🕒 Don't Block: stealing jokes / not listening / changing topic.
- 🕒 Relationship: focus on connection between characters, not just subject of scene.
- 🕒 Initiation: who, what, when to set the scene.
- 🕒 Point of View, Opinion and Intention: have them, this help express and build your character.
- 🕒 Be in Character: maintain character throughout the scene.
- 🕒 Don't Ask Questions: too many questions can make your partner do all the work.
- 🕒 Make Active Choices: Do something. Don't be talking heads.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Improviseational_theatre#Some_principles_of_improv

Suggestions

Nowadays, improvisation is practiced in different corners of the world, for different purposes: entertainment, arts, education, therapy, business etc. The fact that a simple method is used in so many different fields resumes its power to create new skills and life attitudes.

Short improvisation activities can be used to energize the groups, develop group dynamics and have a great time together.

More details

<http://improvcyclopedia.org/>

<http://learnimprov.com/>



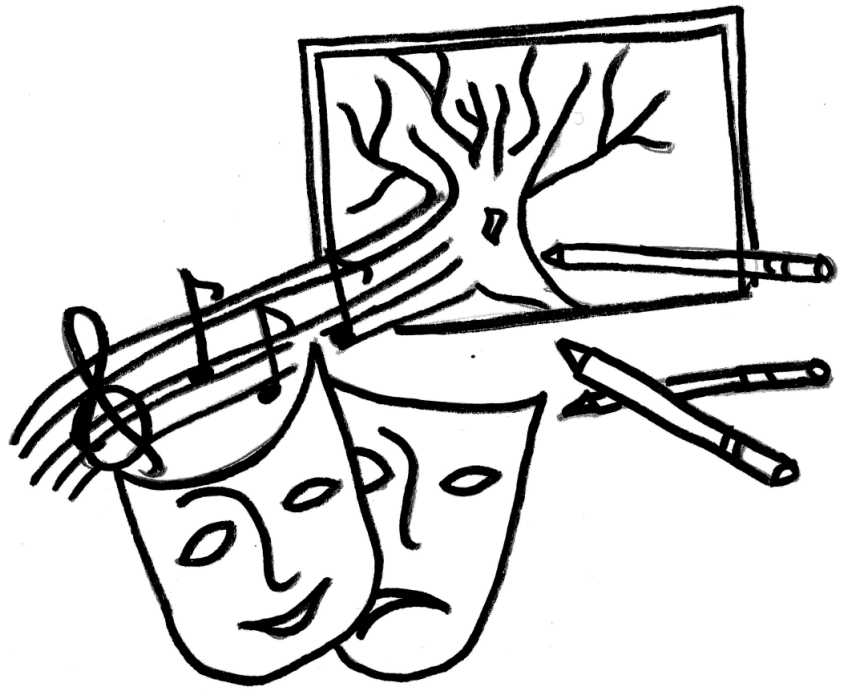
CREATIVE ARTS

Description

Art is a diverse range of human activities in creating visual, auditory or performing artifacts (artworks), expressing the author's imaginative or technical skill, intended to be appreciated for their beauty or emotional power. In their most general form these activities include the production of works of art, the criticism of art, the study of the history of art, and the aesthetic dissemination of art.

The most recent sense of the word art is as an abbreviation for creative art or fine art which emerged in the early 17th century. Creative or fine art refers to a skill used to express the artist's creativity, or to engage the audience's aesthetic sensibilities, or to draw the audience towards consideration of more refined or finer work of art.

Creative art is something that stimulates an individual's thoughts, emotions, beliefs, or ideas through the senses. Works of art can be explicitly made for this purpose or interpreted on the basis of **images** or **objects**.



Put it in practice

- 🕒 Decide the medium of art you want to try. Do you want to try drawing, painting, or sculpting?
- 🕒 Do your research and learn the basics. Learn as much as you can about the medium you have chosen to focus on —read books and articles, watch instructional videos, and research various methods and approaches other artists in your medium take.
- 🕒 Get the supplies you will need for the medium you have chosen.
- 🕒 Observe the world around you with the eye of an artist. A key part of being an artist is observing the world around you and reflecting it in your art work. Notice how the light changes during the day, how colors affect you, how an interaction makes you feel. As the saying goes, it is actually really important to stop and smell the roses. Take the time to become fully aware of your surroundings and let your observations seep into your work.
- 🕒 Make time for your art and start it!
- 🕒 Develop your own style. Don't be afraid to make art from your heart. Let it guide your hands so that shapes and colors are inspired by your authentic self!

Suggestions

If you have never spent much time creating art, it may feel daunting to try to do it now. The truth is, everyone is an artist; they just need to express their creative ideas in a great way. If there is a specific type of art you would like to learn more about, go for it, but don't be afraid to branch out and try other mediums as well.

More details

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Become-an-Artist>



LAND ART

Description

Land Art is creative and fun and can be done by anyone.

It involves making art and sculptures using materials you find in nature, such as leaves, fir cones, twigs, pebbles, rocks, sand and shells.

You can make animals, patterns, circles, spirals, even life size outlines of you and your friends.

Whether you are at school, on holiday or just getting out and about Land Art can be done anywhere.

By spending the time making Land Art you will use your imagination, be creative, get some fresh air and learn all about nature and natural places.

You can learn about trees and leaves; pebbles and sea creatures; the seasons, cycles of life and so much more!

There is no better activity that combines creativity and learning; fun and exercise and opportunities to play and explore. Our world is full of wonderful natural places and Land Art will help your children discover all about nature whilst expressing themselves and stimulating their minds in fantastic ways.

Put it in practice

Land Art is easy to do by kids and adults of any age. All you need is some time and imagination. All you need to do is find somewhere to explore: a park, the woods or perhaps a beach. Take a look at the things you find there: the pebbles, the shells; the leaves, fir cones; stones and rocks. Use them to make patterns, circles, spirals, collections; anything that takes your fancy. Let your imagination run wild! Land Art is easy and fun and can be done by anyone and anywhere too!

Land Art can be done any time of the year. In the Spring, there is lots of fresh green growth. In the Summer, the world is abundant with life. In Autumn nature is alive with color and finally in Winter Jack Frost brings snow and ice before the cycle of life begins once again.

Source: <http://landartforkids.com/>

Suggestions

One important element is not to hurt nature, by breaking the branches of the trees, the stones etc. Use the materials the way you find them. Before using them, you can ask permission from the natural materials and then thank them for their contribution in your art work.

More details

<http://landartforkids.com/section345249.html>

http://edutechwiki.unige.ch/en/Land_art



ROCK BALANCING

Description

Rock balancing or stone balancing (stone or rock stacking) is an art, discipline, or hobby in which rocks are naturally balanced on top of one another in various positions. Adhesives, wires, supports, or rings are not permitted.

Rock balancing can be a performance art, a spectacle, or a devotion, depending upon the interpretation by its audience. Essentially, it involves placing some combination of rock or stone in arrangements which require patience and sensitivity to generate, and which appear to be physically impossible while actually being only highly improbable. The rock balancer may work for free or for pay, as an individual or in a group, and their intents and the audiences' interpretations may vary given the situation or the venue.

Rock balancing has also been described as a type of problem solving, and some artists consider it as a skill in awareness. Some work has been described as a magic trick for the mind.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_balancing

Put it in practice

Michael Grab is an artist that has been 'rock balancing' since 2008. He says:

"The most fundamental element of balancing in a physical sense is finding some kind of 'tripod' for the rock to stand on. Every rock is covered in a variety of tiny to large indentations that can act as a tripod for the rock to stand upright, or in most orientations you can think of with other rocks. By paying close attention to the feeling of the rocks, you will start to feel even the smallest clicks as the notches of the rocks in contact are moving over one another.

Parallel to the physical element of finding tripods, the most fundamental non-physical element is harder to explain through words. In a nutshell, I am referring to meditation, or finding a zero point or silence within yourself. Some balances can apply significant pressure on your mind and your patience. The challenge is overcoming any doubt that may arise."

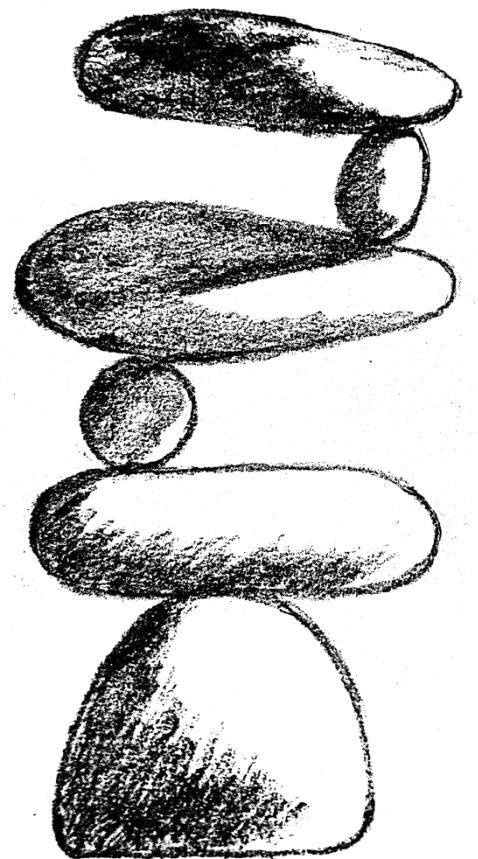
Suggestions

You can collect some stones from the nature and bring them with you in the house. You can practice at home rock balancing. Rock balancing is a great practice for cultivating patience and perseverance. Work and learn with others and share your experience.

More details

<https://sites.google.com/site/rockbalancingart/home/a-brief-rock-balancing-tutorial>

https://creators.vice.com/en_us/article/d749aj/stacking-rocks-balanced-art-master



SOUL POETRY

Description

Each person has within, an artistic part which can play with images, words, feelings, senses. Most of us are unaware of this inner resource which can create through words powerful symphonies of dreams, hopes, love, sorrow, grief, joy and mystery. The notes that compose the symphonies are pieces from our depths, which are called by some, our SOUL.

Soul poetry is a simple way of accessing our profound thoughts, deep feelings, powerful visions. It is a way of being vulnerable and honest, grounded and open, simple and wise. It is a way of letting ourselves overwhelmed by the revelations of life. Soul poetry shouldn't be perceived as the mastery of specialized poets, but rather as a playground through which we can experience the beautiful realms of life. Thus, Soul poetry is for each and every one of us.

Put it in practice

"Make a habit of reading the soul poets, alone or with friends. Read each poem loud, very slowly, at least twice at each sitting. Let your imagination and feeling meander. Memorize some of your favorite soul poems. Recite them aloud in wild settings. Compose your own soul poetry and record your dreams in verse. Wander with and in poems and let your awareness cross boundaries. Make notes, in verse or prose, on what you find beyond the frontier."

Source: the book "Soulcraft" (page 206-208) written by Bill Plokin.

Suggestions

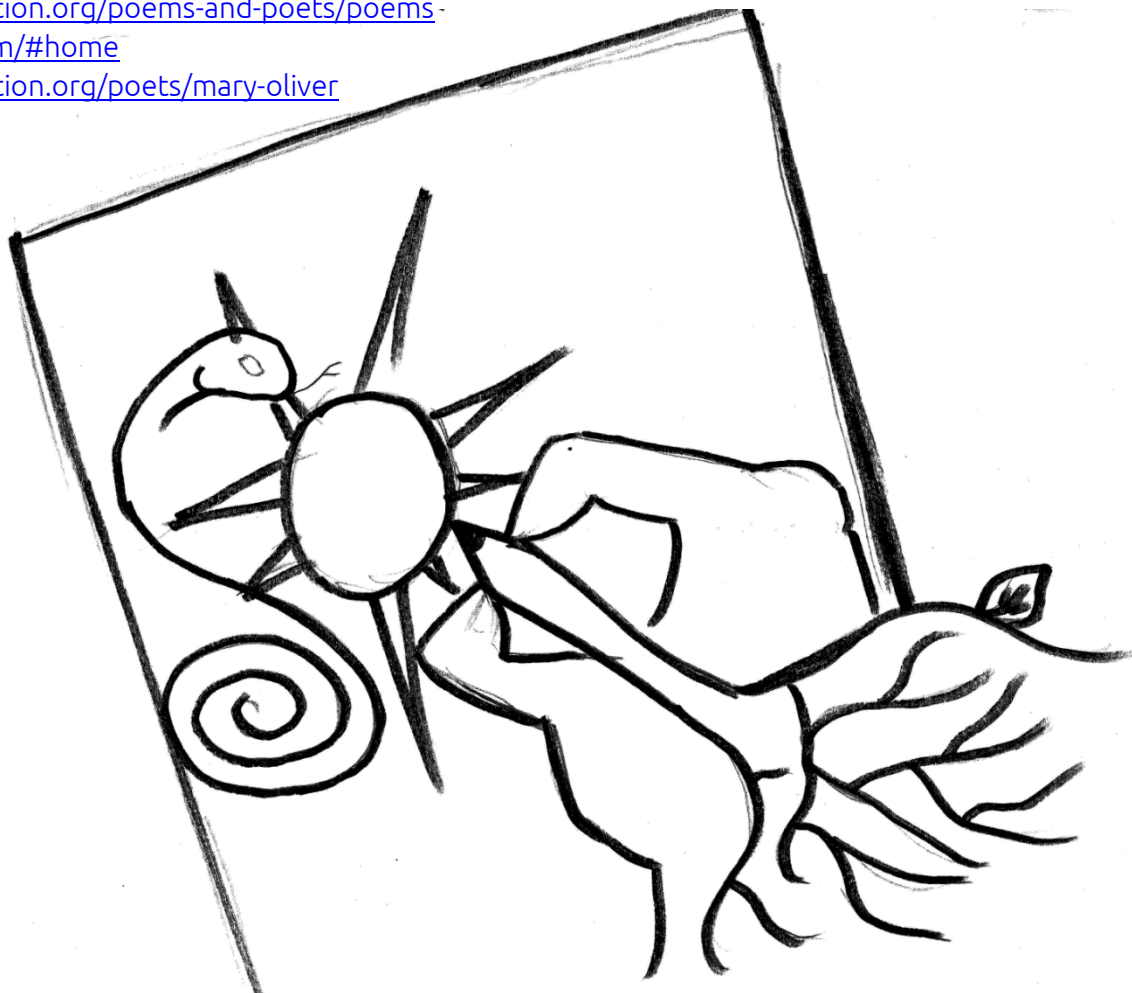
Soul poems are very diverse. It is not necessary to have rhyme or rhythm in your poems. Read soul poem, get used with the profound style of each author and then begin writing. Read your poems to other people and see how your poems land on them.

More details

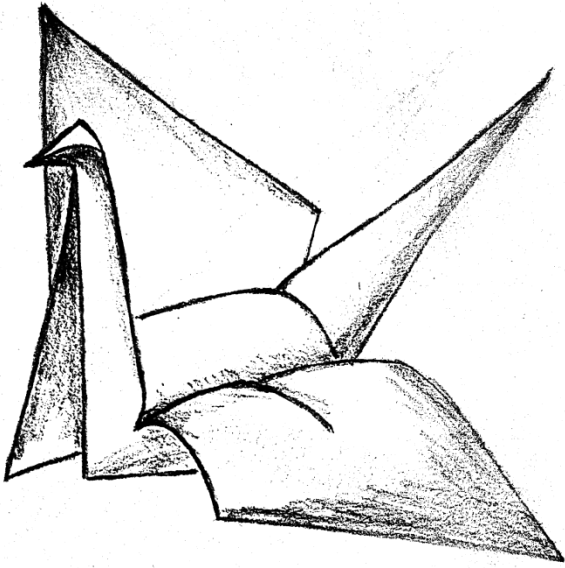
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems->

<http://www.davidwhyte.com/#home>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/mary-oliver>



ORIGAMI



Description

Origami (from *ori* meaning "folding", and *kami* meaning "paper" (*kami* changes to *gami* due to rendaku)) is the art of paper folding, which is often associated with Japanese culture. In modern usage, the word "origami" is used as an inclusive term for all folding practices, regardless of their culture of origin. The goal is to transform a flat sheet square of paper into a finished sculpture through folding and sculpting techniques. Modern origami practitioners generally discourage the use of cuts, glue, or markings on the paper. Origami folders often use the Japanese word *kirigami* to refer to designs which use cuts, although cutting is more characteristic of Chinese papercrafts.

The small number of basic origami folds can be combined in a variety of ways to make intricate designs. The best-known origami model is the Japanese paper crane. In general,

these designs begin with a square sheet of paper whose sides may be of different colors, prints, or patterns. Traditional Japanese origami, which has been practiced since the Edo period (1603–1867), has often been less strict about these conventions, sometimes cutting the paper or using nonsquare shapes to start with. The principles of origami are also used in stents, packaging and other engineering applications.

Adapted from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origami>

Put it in practice

Ten reasons to practice Origami:

- 🕒 **Origami is portable.** You can practice it anywhere.
- 🕒 **Origami relieves stress.** You can focus on the present moment and feel at peace. It is meditative.
- 🕒 **Origami is affordable.** You don't need expensive materials.
- 🕒 **Origami is artistic.** It's poetry with paper. You can play with colors, textures and shapes. You can even put out a performance!
- 🕒 **Origami is infinite.** You can discover endless symmetry and variations on the same themes.
- 🕒 **Origami keeps you young.** You can exercise your memory and play with action origami toys.
- 🕒 **Origami is gratifying** You can experience immediate satisfaction by folding someone else's model or your own creations.
- 🕒 **Origami is social.** You connect to other human beings by exploring the mind and the heart of the person who created a model, by sharing with other people who are passionate for origami, and by giving away folded models and getting a smile in return.
- 🕒 **Origami is multicultural.** It is a language in itself. You can travel and communicate with paperfolders around the planet through the activity of folding paper.
- 🕒 **Origami is eco-friendly.** You can recycle a piece of paper from last week's magazine or your bagel wrap. Just cut out a square and start folding it. Origami is 'Green'!

Suggestions

Learn how to read Origami diagram - <https://www.origami-resource-center.com/origami-symbols.html>

More Details

<https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Origami/Techniques/Practice>

<http://www.origami-instructions.com/>

<https://origami.me/diagrams/>



This cluster contains the following practices: Ceremonies, rituals and rites of passage, Synchronicities, signs and omens, Symbolic art work, Totem building, Prayer, Vision Quest.

These practices focus more on the spiritual dimension and stimulate the existential intelligence of the people. Through them someone can gain more insights on the personal mission, the unique place in the world one can occupy, the direction in life, the personal gifts and personal projects that can be offered to the world. By doing these practices someone can access deeper levels of consciousness and self-awareness, which can generate positive effects on mental and emotional level.

TOTEM BUILDING

Description

Totem poles are long pieces of wood carved with depictions of people and animals that appear to be stacked on top of one another. For many years Native Americans from the Pacific Northwest have made totem poles as a way to tell their family stories, commemorate events, or symbolically illustrate a pact. Making a totem pole is a unique way to tell your own story or celebrate a special time, like an important birthday, anniversary or graduation. You can also make one as an inventive way to tell a story for a school project.

Put it in practice

Decide what story you want to tell. Some people used to believe that totem poles were originally used in religious ceremonies, but the truth is, they're created as a way to preserve and illustrate history. Think of the totem pole you want to make as a sort of timeline, or an account of a certain family or one person's life. What story do you want to tell?

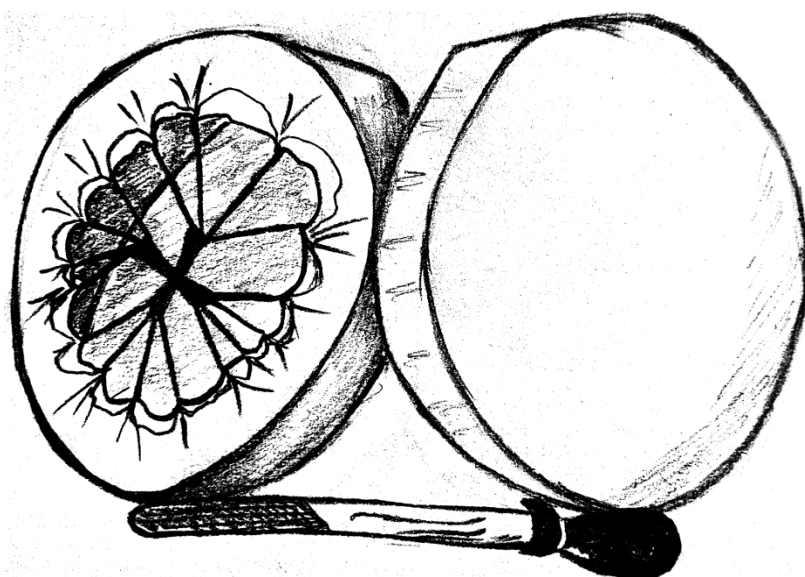
Source and continuation: <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Totem-Pole>

Suggestions

You can use this practice as an individual activity or something for a bigger group. By building a totem pole you can develop the community spirit, enhance the group values and reinforce the history of the group. For making the totem pole try to use as much as possible natural materials.

More details

http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Totem_pole



CEREMONIES, RITUALS AND RITES OF PASSAGE

Description

A ceremony is an event of ritual significance, performed on a special occasion.

A ritual "is a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and performed according to set sequence". Rituals may be prescribed by the traditions of a community, including a religious community. Rituals are characterized but not defined by formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance, sacral symbolism, and performance.

Rituals are a feature of all known human societies. They include not only the worship rites and sacraments of organized religions and cults, but also rites of passage, atonement and purification rites, oaths of allegiance, dedication ceremonies, coronations and presidential inaugurations, marriages and funerals, school "rush" traditions and graduations, club meetings, sporting events and more.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rite_of_passage

What is a rite of passage? Why is it Important?

A rite of passage is a ceremony and marks the transition from one phase of life to another. Although it is often used to describe the tumultuous transition from adolescence to adulthood, it does refer to any of life's transitions (Births and Beginnings, Initiations, Partnering, and Endings or Death). There are many passages in our lives if we choose to mark and celebrate them.

Journeys are most concerned with initiatory rites of passage. Initiation is defined in the dictionary as, "the rites, ceremonies, ordeals or instructions with which a youth is formally invested with adult status in a community, society or sect." We extend that definition to include rituals and ceremonies that help adults transition to new life roles along the path of adulthood – all the way into meaningful elderhood.

In this way both the community and the initiate benefit from a rite of passage. An intentional rite of passage experience provides the space for the community to transmit its core values and confer the role responsibilities appropriate to the initiate's stage of life, thus insuring cultural continuity, a sort of knitting together of the generations.

Source: <http://riteofpassagejourneys.org/about/faqs/what-is-a-rite-of-passage-why-is-it-important>

Put it in practice

The Fire Ceremony

During this ceremony, you sacrifice an object to fire. The object — there can be more than one — must be combustible without creating toxic fumes. More importantly, it is something that represents, symbolically and personally, the identity and way of belonging to the world that you are leaving behind. In sacrificing your item to the fire, you'll be relinquishing attachment to your old story. The intent is not at all to say "good riddance" to what you don't like about your life. Rather, you'll be honoring the chapter of your life that has miraculously ushered you to your current jumping-off place. Consider carefully what your sacrificial object(s) will be. Choose wisely and deeply. This choice is by far the most important part of the fire ceremony.

Source: http://natureandthehumansoul.com/newbook/exp_4.htm

Suggestions

Ceremonies and rituals can be a way to add depth to life experiences. For example, you can begin a dinner with a short ceremony of celebrating the food and expressing gratitude for the presence of the guests. Or, you can begin a training or a youth camp with a ceremonial circle, expressing loudly the intentions of the group and connecting with the space around. Choose a proper space that can stimulate the ceremonial atmosphere. Use your imagination and intuition. By organizing a ceremony or a ritual you can transform a simple moment or activity in a very meaningful experience with great impact on those who take part of.

More details

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/rite-of-passage>

<http://schooloflostborders.org/>



SYNCHRONICITIES, SIGNS AND OMENS

Description

Amazing coincidences happen all the time — but are they simply the product of random chance, or do they convey some hidden meaning? The answer may depend on whether you believe in synchronicity, signs and omens.

Synchronicity is a concept, first introduced by analytical psychologist Carl Jung, which holds that events are "meaningful coincidences" if they occur with no causal relationship yet seem to be meaningfully related. During his career, Jung furnished several slightly different definitions of it. Jung variously defined synchronicity as an "acausal connecting (togetherness) principle," "meaningful coincidence", and "acausal parallelism."

A **sign** is an object, quality, event, or entity whose presence or occurrence indicates the probable presence or occurrence of something else.

An **omen** is a phenomenon that is believed to foretell the future, often signifying the advent of change. People in the ancient times believed that omens lie with a divine message from their gods.

*Sources: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synchronicity>; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sign>;
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omen>*

Put it in practice

How do you go about understanding a sign, or even knowing you've received one? First, if the sign is going to be valid, you will have asked about something deeply meaningful to you, a question both significant and difficult for you to answer. A big question. Asking for a sign to a trivial or mundane question is a sign of disrespect toward the sacred.

You recognize a sign by the fact that your request is followed by an event that has power for you; it strongly attracts your attention, generates a significant emotional response, gets your imagination rolling. It ratchets up your aliveness.

If you receive a sign, begin by giving thanks in a meaningful way and then by remembering what inspired you to ask for a sign in the first place. Sit with the sign you received with the same emotions and reverence with which you requested it. Take a deep breath and fully take in the sign with your body, senses, emotions, and imagination. Spend a good deal of time with the sign in this way before you begin.

Suggestions

The sign shows us how to proceed, like a consultation with an oracle. The key to something being a sign is that help is first requested or at least we recognize we have a question. An omen, in contrast, is not requested. It is an event both rare and out of keeping with the typical ways of nature. Omens are weird, outlandish, even bizarre. Often, they are also wondrous, conspicuous, and astounding. Sometimes they are subtle, shadowy, or vague. Always they are mysterious.

Source: Written by Bill Plotkin in the book Soulcraft <http://natureandthehumansoul.com/newbook/soulcraft.htm>

More details

<http://personaltao.com/teachings/shamanic/synchronicity-signs/>

<https://www.livescience.com/43105-synchronicity-definition-meaning.html>

<https://lonerwolf.com/signs-and-omens/>

<https://modernagespirituality.com/2014/05/22/observe-the-signs-omens-in-life/>



SYMBOLIC ART WORK (PAINTING, CLAY WORK ETC.)

Description:

A symbol is a mark, sign, or word that indicates, signifies, or is understood as representing an idea, object, or relationship. Symbols allow people to go beyond what is known or seen by creating linkages between otherwise very different concepts and experiences. Symbols take the form of words, sounds, gestures, ideas or visual images and are used to convey other ideas and beliefs.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbol#Psychoanalysis.2C_rhetoric_and_archetypes

By expressing your story through art, movement, poetry, and other non-verbal or metaphorical ways, you engage both the rational (left) and intuitive/non rational (right) hemispheres of your brain. The rational hemisphere is more involved than the non rational one is when it comes to processing language and thinking logically. The non rational hemisphere of the brain thinks in pictures and symbols, the primal language of Source and the universe.

Source: <https://www.yourultimateresource.com/working-with-symbols-and-imagery/>

"The creative process, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image and elaborating and shaping the image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life." - Carl Jung

Every individual can, as Jung did, use art to bring forward messages from his or her own personal unconscious.

Put it in practice

- 🌀 *Draw or paint your emotions.* In this exercise, you'll focus entirely on painting what you're feeling.
- 🌀 *Create an emotion wheel.* Using color, this activity will have you thinking critically about your emotions.
- 🌀 *Make a meditative painting.* Looking for a creative way to relax? Have trouble sitting still to meditate? Meditative painting might be just the thing you're looking for. No painting skill or experience necessary - only a desire to relax and become more creative.
- 🌀 *Collage your vision of a perfect day.* Think about what constitutes a perfect day to you and collage it. What about this collage can you make happen today?
- 🌀 *Make a mandala.* Whether you use the traditional sand or draw one on your own, this meditative symbol can easily help you to loosen up.

Source: 100 Art Therapy Exercises <http://intuitivecreativity.typepad.com/expressiveartinspirations/100-art-therapy-exercises.html>

Suggestions

Be careful not to analyze the symbolic messages received too quickly, however, because the rational mind is used to perceiving in a limited way and may distort the message. Take your time and don't rush to verbalize and interpret what has come to you in the form of symbols, energies, and sensations.

More details

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_therapy#Incarceration

<https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/art-therapy>

<http://www.arttherapyblog.com/art-therapy-ideas/healing-with-mandala-art-a-multi-cultural-idea-worth-exploring/#.WZWsh1EjFPY>



SACRED GEOMETRY

Description

The strands of our DNA, the cornea of our eye, snow flakes, pine cones, flower petals, diamond crystals, the branching of trees, a nautilus shell, the star we spin around, the galaxy we spiral within, the air we breathe, and all life forms as we know them emerge out of timeless geometric codes.

The designs of exalted holy places from the prehistoric monuments at Stonehenge and the Pyramid of Khufu at Giza, to the world's great cathedrals, mosques, and temples are based on these same principles of sacred geometry.

In nature, we find patterns, designs and structures from the most minuscule particles, to expressions of life discernible by human eyes, to the greater cosmos. These inevitably follow geometrical archetypes, which reveal to us the nature of each form and its vibrational resonances. They are also symbolic of the underlying metaphysical principle of the inseparable relationship of the part to the whole.

Sacred geometry involves sacred universal patterns used in the design of everything in our reality, most often seen in sacred architecture and sacred art. The basic belief is that geometry and mathematical ratios, harmonics and proportion are also found in music, light, cosmology. This value system is seen as widespread even in prehistory, a cultural universal of the human condition.

It is considered foundational to building sacred structures such as temples, mosques, megaliths, monuments and churches; sacred spaces such as altars, temenoi and tabernacles; meeting places such as sacred groves, village greens and holy wells and the creation of religious art, iconography and using "divine" proportions. Alternatively, sacred geometry based arts may be ephemeral, such as visualization, sand painting and medicine wheels.

Put it in practice

The circle can be considered as a sacred geometry. We are asking you here to draw a mandala. A mandala is a Sanskrit term for a geometric pattern that represents the cosmos, a microcosm of the universe. The origin of a sacred geometry mandala is the center, the "seed". The center is visualized as the essence and the circumference as grasping, thus mandala means grasping the essence.

So, find a piece of paper and your colored pencils and prepare yourself for making your own unique mandala:

- 🕒 First, draw a circle. A compass or something round (like a bowl) will help you to do it.
- 🕒 Find the centre of your mandala.
- 🕒 Get the motifs you want to use (the patterns)
- 🕒 Keep your mandala symmetrical
- 🕒 Start drawing inside the circle and if you want on the periphery of the circle
- 🕒 When finishing with the lines, fill in with colour your mandala
- 🕒 Enjoy the process!

Suggestions

If you want, you may get a mandala template. It will help you to get started if you feel it is more challenging to do it on your own.

Drawing a mandala, apart from art, can be a meditative, spiritual and sacred process. Thus, make sure you get the right conditions for drawing it!

More details

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred_geometry

<https://www.geometrycode.com/sacred-geometry/>

<http://www.crystalinks.com/sq.html>

<http://www.sacred-geometry.com/>

<http://www.mandalasacredgeometry.com/>



PRAYING

Description

Prayer (from the Latin *precari* "to ask earnestly, beg, entreat") is an invocation or act that seeks to activate a rapport with an object of worship through deliberate communication.

Prayer can be a form of religious practice, may be either individual or communal and take place in public or in private. It may involve the use of words, song or complete silence. When language is used, prayer may take the form of a hymn, incantation, formal creedal statement, or a spontaneous utterance in the praying person. There are different forms of prayer such as petitionary prayer, prayers of supplication, thanksgiving, and praise. Prayer may be directed towards a deity, spirit, deceased person, or lofty idea, for the purpose of worshipping, requesting guidance, requesting assistance, confessing transgressions (sins) or to express one's thoughts and emotions. Thus, people pray for many reasons such as personal benefit or for the sake of others (called intercession).

Some anthropologists believe that the earliest intelligent modern humans practiced a form of prayer. Today, most major religions involve prayer in one way or another; some ritualize the act, requiring a strict sequence of actions or placing a restriction on who is permitted to pray, while others teach that prayer may be practiced spontaneously by anyone at any time.

Source - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer>

Put it in practice

Approaches to prayer

Direct petitions to God

The most common form of prayer is to directly appeal to God to grant one's requests. This in many ways is the simplest form of prayer.

Educational approach

In this view, prayer is not a conversation. Rather, it is meant to inculcate certain attitudes in the one who prays, but not to influence.

Rationalist approach

In this view, the ultimate goal of prayer is to help train a person to focus on divinity through philosophy and intellectual contemplation (meditation).

Experiential approach

In this approach, the purpose of prayer is to enable the person praying to gain a direct experience of the recipient of the prayer (or as close to direct as a specific theology permits).

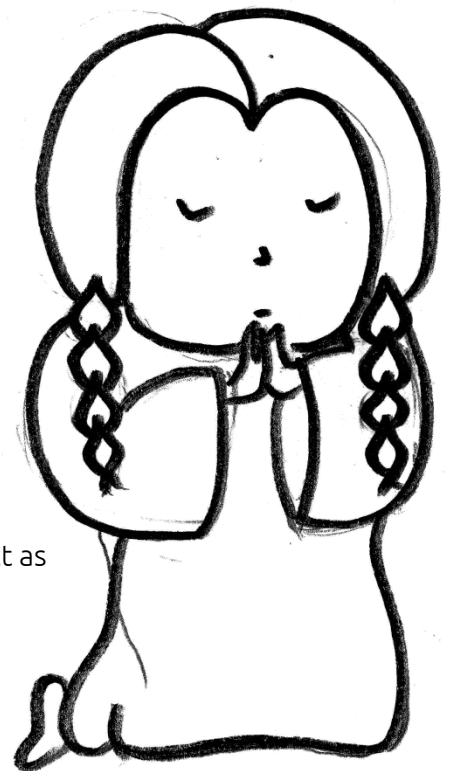
Suggestions

- ☉ Choose a specific place to pray away from distractions so you can concentrate.
- ☉ Pray at the same time every day, if at all possible. Make it part of your regular routine and it will become habit.
- ☉ Pray out loud.
- ☉ Change the pace during your prayer time. Include praise, thanksgiving and singing as well as petition. Spend some of your time reflecting on the Scripture, meditating on it and digesting its meaning.
- ☉ Pray one-sentence prayers. If the thought of laboring over a topic wears you out, pray short, sincere prayers instead.

More details

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer>

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/prayer/prayers/10-morning-prayers-to-use-daily.html>



VISION QUEST

Description

A vision quest is a rite of passage, similar to an initiation, in some Native American cultures. It is a turning point in life taken before puberty to find oneself and the intended spiritual and life direction. When an older child is ready, he or she will go on a personal, spiritual quest alone in the wilderness, often in conjunction with a period of fasting. This usually lasts for a number of days while the child is tuned into the spirit world. Usually, a Guardian animal will come in a vision or dream, and the child's life direction will appear at some point. The child returns to the tribe, and once the child has grown, will pursue that direction in life. After a vision quest, the child may apprentice an adult in the tribe of the shown direction (Medicine Man, boatmaker, etc).

The vision quest may be a part of shamanism, more exactly, the learning and initiation process of the apprentice for achieving the ability for shamanism, mostly under the guidance of an older shaman.

The **benefits** of a vision quest:

- 🕒 Curing emotional, physical, spiritual illnesses
- 🕒 Discover your mission here
- 🕒 Commune with nature, spirit, your spirit guides or deceased ancestors
- 🕒 Move beyond outmoded paradigms
- 🕒 Find truth, balance and peace

Source - <http://www.crystalinks.com/visionquest.html>

Put it in practice

We don't recommend practicing Vision Quest without proper preparation and certified guidance.

Suggestions

If you are interested of practicing Vision Quest find out trustful organization that offers this service under professional guidance.

More details

<http://www.schooloflostborders.org/content/huffington-post-what-vision-quest-and-why-do-one>



INTRAPERSONAL PRACTICES

This cluster contains the following practices: Journaling, Learn a new language, just for fun, Do something new, Go to a children's museum.

These practices can be done individually and they emphasize the personal responsibility and contribution in the process of development. Through these activities one could focus especially on the developmental tasks of the second stage of the Ecocentric Wheel, thus developing the sense of wonder, curiosity and innocence. The practices contribute especially to the mental and emotional dimensions, and can generate positive states in those that are making them.

LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE, JUST FOR FUN

Description

Dealing with another culture enables people to gain a more profound understanding of their own culture. Creativity is increased with the study of foreign languages. Graduates often cite foreign language courses as some of the most valuable courses in college because of the communication skills developed in the process.

Put it in practice

- 🕒 Know why you're doing it
- 🕒 Find a partner
- 🕒 Talk to yourself
- 🕒 Keep it relevant
- 🕒 Have fun with it
- 🕒 Act like a child
- 🕒 Leave your comfort zone
- 🕒 Listen
- 🕒 Watch people talk
- 🕒 Dive in



Source:

<https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/10-tips-from-an-expert>

Suggestions

You should try to learn a very different language than your own.
Use subtitles when you watch movies.

More details

<http://blog.ted.com/how-to-learn-a-new-language-7-secrets-from-ted-translators/>



JOURNALING

Description

What does journaling entail? It's an amalgamation of personal, rational fact-based reporting along with an exploration of your sometimes-irrational, always-important inner feelings. There are some weeks where I'll journal every day and then there will be some stretches where I go a month without writing a single word. The thing about expressive writing and other types of journaling is that it's not just the act of processing your thoughts—something you could simply do by thinking about them—that brings about these massive benefits. It's the act of writing itself that seems to produce these results.

Journaling can profoundly improve your well-being. The practice has very real physical health benefits for the people who do it. According to Dr. James Pennebaker, journaling strengthens immune cells called T-lymphocytes and has been shown to be associated with drops in depression, anxiety, and increases in positive mood, social engagement, and quality of close relationships.

Begin journaling and experience also these **benefits**:

- 🕒 Clarify your thoughts and feelings
- 🕒 Know yourself better
- 🕒 Reduce stress
- 🕒 Solve problems more effectively
- 🕒 Resolve disagreements with others
- 🕒 Enjoy Mental health benefits
- 🕒 Harness your creativity
- 🕒 Stretch your IQ
- 🕒 Evoke mindfulness
- 🕒 Boost memory and comprehension
- 🕒 Strengthen self-discipline
- 🕒 Build self-confidence



Put it in practice

Start journaling by making the decision to journal for at least 21 days in a row! We suggest you take one or more of the following options:

3 things you are grateful for: Each day write down three things you are grateful for. It is important to create a physical record of your items by writing them down; it is not enough simply to do this exercise in your head. The items can be repeated over the days, but it is important to do the exercise with honesty and from your heart. To make this exercise part of your daily routine, some find that writing before bed is helpful.

It is possible that you will find it difficult to identify 3 things you are grateful for every day. This is because our brain needs to re-wind the way it processes the world. The key is to keep searching and appreciate the details!

1 meaningful experience: Each day write down one meaningful experience you had during the last 24 hours. The experience should have some positive meaning for you, and it doesn't always have to be a huge thing (for example becoming a parent). Finding positive meaning in small things and details is the essence. Gazing at the sunset, a smile from a stranger, or message from a friend can be some daily positive and meaningful experiences for you! Here it is important to write at least a paragraph explaining the reasons why this experience had a positive meaning for you. You may also want to go deeper such as reflecting on the emotions it awakened in you, your values that are connected with it, etc.

Expressive Writing: Expressive writing is a fancy term for something very simple: expressing yourself through writing. It is the process of putting your thoughts, feelings and experiences into words. Expressive Writing is what you are doing when you write in a journal or a diary, although don't let that limit you. Here you can write down and elaborate on anything you wish on a daily basis!



Free writing early in the morning: This is the first thing to do after opening your eyes from your night's sleep! Before going to bed get next to your bed a pen and a notebook. Once you wake up, grab them and start writing without purpose for the next 20-30 minutes! Follow your hands, not your thoughts! You do not need to capture a topic or have any sense in what you put down. Just let the words be written by your hand! It probably sounds challenging but it is also surprisingly amazing when you do it for 21 days in a row!

Suggestions

Your journaling will be most effective if you do it daily for about 20 minutes. Begin anywhere, and forget spelling and punctuation. Privacy is key if you are to write without censor. Write quickly, as this frees your brain from "shoulds" and other blocks to successful journaling. Try writing with a pen on a special notebook (instead of using any electronic device!) The most important rule of all is that there are no rules and no editing is required!

Here you can find more tips about how to journal

<http://www.wikihow.com/Keep-a-Journal>

More details

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/the-health-benefits-of-journaling/>

<http://lifelifehacker.com/why-you-should-keep-a-journal-and-how-to-start-yours-1547057185>

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3041487/8-tips-to-more-effective-journaling-for-health>

DO SOMETHING NEW

Description

You don't always need to partake in massive life altering experiences, around the world adventures or make drastic lifestyle changes to your routine to make a significant difference to your life. Although I'll never say no to an adventure, I'd like to think that long term change comes from your outlook on life. It's not necessarily where you are, but what you do with your time there. Change yourself from the inside first. What I like about the whole 30 day challenge project is that you can make a massive difference to your life without having to spend loads of money, relocate or wait until the time is right. The majority of the 30 day challenge ideas I've listed here can be done anywhere — some of them for as little as five minutes a day.

Source: <http://thoughtbrick.com/lifestyle/hundred-30-day-challenge-ideas/>

Put it in practice

These are few sites with suggestions for new activities.

<http://www.mazzastick.com/feeling-out-of-sorts-lately-try-doing-something-new-for-30-days/>

http://www.allankarl.com/try-something-new-35-ideas-for-doing-something-new-different-in-your-life/?doing_wp_cron=1502987215.6721560955047607421875

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/30-new-things-today.html>

Suggestions

Look for other persons who would like to join you in your new adventure. You can set up a group of people and do together something new for 30 days in a row.

Besides doing something new every day you can also learn something new every day.

Here are few sites with recommendations.:

<http://www.businessinsider.com/40-great-websites-where-you-can-learn-something-new-every-day-2016-3>

<http://www.developgoodhabits.com/new-skills-to-learn/>

More details

<https://www.consumerhealthdigest.com/general-health/12-reasons-try-something-new-every-day.html>

POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS TO YOURSELF



Description

Do you get down on yourself easily, sometimes feel like you're not good enough, and just generally have a negative self image? Most of us tend to be really hard on ourselves and blow things out of proportion, unfortunately this negative thinking becomes habitual and will cause you to automatically block out everything positive.

Positive affirmations help you learn to love yourself. They train your mind to stop over-focusing on the negative and instead start seeing all the wonderful things that make you a beautiful and valuable human being.

Put it in practice

The first thing to do is to get your affirmation. You can use more than one if you want, but it is encouraged to use a limited number of them for a stronger result. Just get the one that is more appropriate, inclusive and has a deeper meaning for you.

You can make your own affirmation or you can get inspired by others. A quick look on the web will really provide you a lot of insights!

Everyday, once you wake up, go to the mirror, look at yourself deep in the eyes and with kindness and acceptance tell yourself the affirmation.

Repeat your affirmation everyday for at least 21 days! The repetition is essential for changing how you speak to yourself!

Be patient and observe the significant changes in your daily life!

Suggestions

You might find it extremely challenging to give positive affirmations to yourself. However remember! You are your own best friend and the one most important person in your life! Therefore it is so crucial to consider the way you talk and treat yourself daily. Self-judge, guilt and stress can disappear if you are patient enough to complete the exercise! Just think what a huge difference it will make once you start talking to yourself in a more positive way- with more awareness and kindness!

More details

<http://www.freeaffirmations.org/love-yourself-positive-affirmations>

<http://www.lifehack.org/363049/7-positive-affirmations-tell-yourself-every-day>



GO TO A CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OR AN AMUSEMENT PARK

Description

Children's museums are institutions that provide exhibits and programs to stimulate informal learning experiences for children. In contrast with traditional museums that typically have a hands-off policy regarding exhibits, children's museums feature interactive exhibits that are designed to be manipulated by children. The theory behind such exhibits is that activity can be as educational as instruction, especially in early childhood. Most children's museums are nonprofit organizations, and many are run by volunteers or by very small professional staffs.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children%27s_museum

An amusement park is a park that features various attractions, such as rides and games, as well as other events for entertainment purposes. A theme park is a type of amusement park that bases its structures and attractions around a central theme, often featuring multiple areas with different themes. Unlike temporary and mobile funfairs and carnivals, amusement parks are stationary and built for long-lasting operation.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amusement_park

Put it in practice

Find the children's museums and the amusement parks around you and visit them.

Suggestions

If you are an adult and you visit a children's museum act as if you are a child. Be curious, innocent and explore it with the eyes of a child. Ask and follow your own rhythm and needs.

More details

<http://museums.eu/highlight/details/105472/best-childrens-museums-in-europe>

<https://www.europeanbestdestinations.com/top/best-amusement-parks-in-europe/>



CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES

This cluster contains the following practices: Centering, Meditation, Silence, Labyrinth walking. These practices have the intention to develop communion, connection and awareness in those who practice them. They focus on calming the body, quieting the mind and grounding the emotions and at the same time opening the spiritual dimension. They can be made in various contexts, guided or individually. An important aspect for making these practices is having intentions that aim at cultivating awareness and wisdom. They can be made for addressing tasks from any of the 4 ecocentric stages and for developing a positive mind-set and wellbeing.



CENTERING

Description

Centering is one of the simplest and most common forms of contemplative practice. The “center” refers to a relaxed yet focused state of mind. Centering practice is especially helpful in the midst of strong emotional states such as excitement or anxiety, and is often used by athletes, public speakers, actors, and anyone who wants to feel stable and prepared before a potentially stressful event. Anything that helps you feel tranquil and aware can become your centering practice.

Put it in practice

Common Centering Methods:

- 🕒 Count numbers, such as counting down from 10 to dissipate anger
- 🕒 Repeat a word or phrase, such as a prayer or affirmation
- 🕒 Smile and relaxing your body
- 🕒 Go for a walk; get out into a different environment
- 🕒 Stretch
- 🕒 Close your eyes and breathe deeply
- 🕒 Concentrate on breathing, such as breathing out for a count of 8 and in for a count of 4
- 🕒 Count your breaths
- 🕒 Doodle or write
- 🕒 Carry or place near yourself a visual reminder to stay centered, such as a quote or image
- 🕒 Use sound to bring yourself back to your center. Periodically ring a bell, chime, or other gentle reminder.

Suggestions

Persistence is an important aspect of centering practice. Purposefully centering yourself many times throughout the day, even when you are not feeling particularly emotional or in need of centering, will help to deepen your practice.

Source: <http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree/centering>

More details

<http://www.unlimitedboundaries.ca/2010/08/31/what-is-grounding-and-centering-yourself/>
<https://wisdomwayofknowing.org/resource-directory/centering-prayer/>



MEDITATION

Description

Meditation is a practice where an individual operates or trains the mind or induces a mode of consciousness, either to realize some benefit or for the mind to simply acknowledge its content without becoming identified with that content, or as an end in itself.

The term meditation refers to a broad variety of practices that includes techniques designed to promote relaxation, build internal energy or life force (qi, ki, prana, etc.) and develop compassion, love, patience, generosity, and forgiveness. A particularly ambitious form of meditation aims at effortlessly sustained single-pointed concentration meant to enable its practitioner to enjoy an indestructible sense of well-being while engaging in any life activity.

Meditation often involves an internal effort to self-regulate the mind in some way. Meditation is often used to clear the mind and ease many health concerns, such as high blood pressure, depression, and anxiety. It may be done sitting, or in an active way—for instance, Buddhist monks involve awareness in their day-to-day activities as a form of mind-training. Prayer beads or other ritual objects are commonly used during meditation in order to keep track of or remind the practitioner about some aspect of that training.

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meditation>

Put it in practice

- 🕒 *Get comfortable.* Open the timer on your phone, and get into an upright and comfortable posture. Dim the lights a bit, or shut them off completely to help you focus better.
- 🕒 *Start your timer.*
- 🕒 *Bring your attention/focus to your breath.* This is what meditation is all about, and this is what makes meditation both difficult and worthwhile. In this third step, close your mouth and focus entirely on your breath as it enters and leaves your nose. You can focus on any element of your breath that you want – from how the air feels as it enters and exists your nose, to how the air feels as you inflate and deflate your lungs, to the sensation under your nose as you breathe in and out, to the sound you make as you breathe. Don't force your breathing here – just breathe naturally and observe your breath without thinking too much about it.
- 🕒 *Don't think.* This is the hard part. Don't analyze your breath; just bring your attention and focus to your breath, without thinking about it or analyzing it.
- 🕒 *Bring your attention back to your mind when it wanders.* And it will. I've been meditating for 3-4 years for 30 minutes a day, and my mind still wanders sometimes. When your mind wanders, and it will, gently bring your attention back to your breath once you realize that your mind has wandered. You may not clue in at first that your mind has started thinking again, but when you do, gently bring your attention back. Don't be hard on yourself during this stage. Just gently bring your attention back.
- 🕒 *Again, bring your mind back when it wanders.* When your mind begins to think, gently bring your attention back to only your breath. When your mind begins to think about how boring meditation is, gently bring your attention back to your breath. When your mind becomes restless, bring in your attention again. Keep doing this until your meditation timer sounds.

Suggestions

- 🕒 Meditating for 10 minutes a day is infinitely better than meditating for 70 minutes once a week. ...
- 🕒 Start small. ...
- 🕒 Pick a gentle alarm. ...
- 🕒 Meditate in a quiet place. ...
- 🕒 It's easiest to lose your attention during your out-breath. ...
- 🕒 Be easy on yourself when your mind wanders.

Source: <http://alifeofproductivity.com/meditation-guide/>

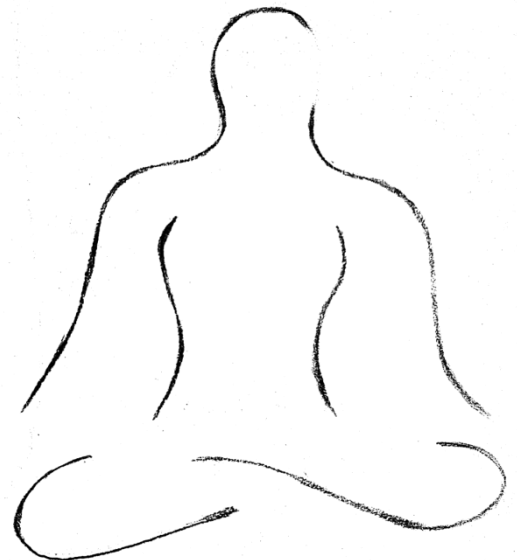
More details

<http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree/meditation>

<https://www.yogajournal.com/meditation>

<http://how-to-meditate.org/>

<https://www.calm.com/meditate>



SILENCE

Description

When we refer to “silence,” we’re not referring to a totally quiet environment. Rarely is it possible to create the conditions for “perfect” silence. There are always cars driving by, birds chirping in the trees, or old pipes clanking away in the office building. Rather, we think of silence as something that we are engaged in. Silence is a quality of mind, a way of being, and a powerful type of presence in the world.

When we practice silence, there is a self-consciousness that we often ignore in daily life, when we are compelled to express every thought, emotion, or idea that floats into our heads, without fully understanding the intention behind them or their repercussions. Embracing silence allows us to be with ourselves in a way that is simply observant—not judgmental or mindless. This quality of observation can make our appreciation for life more subtle and profound and can transform group experience into a richer and more nuanced experience.

As we share silence with each other, it is important to be careful that we are not “silencing” others or ourselves. For some people, this may seem like an unnecessary distinction. But for people who have been silenced in their lives due to racial, sexual, or political oppression, this distinction can be deeply important. The silent dynamic we are trying to embody here is not one of “power over,” where we are not permitted to speak, but rather of “power with” coworkers and friends, with whom we have made a commitment to understanding the value of sharing space and time in a way that is supportive, meaningful, and infused with respect.

Source: <http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree/silence>

Put it in practice

Following are a list of silences you can practice entering that space in your heart, your body, your mind, the world and the universe. When you practice silence, you experience tranquility, balance, sameness and heightened awareness that has its source in your intelligence. In the silence of your heart, with your thoughts, feelings and emotions resting in that silence, you will see the truth regarding yourself and the world around you very differently. With the knowledge arising from that profound experience, you will cultivate discernment, patience and understanding in resolving your problems and dealing with people and situations.

Silencing your speech: Speech is where we create most noise. With speech we not only create noise but also attract noise. The first step in practicing silence is to know when to speak and when to remain silent. Then learning to speak only when necessary. Further on the path, begin to silence your negative speech or avoid using words and expressions that are abusive, immoral, or hurtful. Then learn to practice total silence for a specific time. You may do it for a few hours or a few days, depending upon your convenience.

Silencing your feelings and emotions: As a first step, focus on specific feelings and emotions, such as anger, greed, fear, or envy that you find particularly troubling and learn to remain calm and observant with they hit you with full force.

Silencing your desires: To gain control over your mind and body, you may begin to control or cope with simple desires such as your desire for a particular food or entertainment and gradually extend it to other desires which may be interfering with your material or spiritual progress.

Silencing your ego: This can be done in many ways, such as, for example, silencing your urge to speak about yourself or defend yourself, silencing your urge to belittle someone, control others or be the center of attention.

Source and more details: <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/divinelife/essays/silence.asp>

Suggestions

From the above it is clear that practicing silence is not as easy or simple as it appears on the surface. You can practice it in many different ways. Each of the methods requires sustained effort and prolonged practice, before you attain a satisfactory level of progress. If you are serious about this idea, you should plan your silent retreats well in advance and maintain a journal. You can also invite other people and practice in groups.

More details

<http://omswami.com/2012/01/mauna-the-practice-of-observing-silence.html>
<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/alphabet/view/30/silence>



LABYRINTH WALKING

Description

A labyrinth is a meandering path, often unicursal, with a singular path leading to a center. Labyrinths are an ancient archetype dating back 4,000 years or more, used symbolically, as a walking meditation, choreographed dance, or site of rituals and ceremony, among other things. Labyrinths are tools for personal, psychological and spiritual transformation, also thought to enhance right-brain activity. Labyrinths evoke metaphor, sacred geometry, spiritual pilgrimage, religious practice, mindfulness, environmental art, and community building.

Many labyrinths exist today in churches and parks to provide people with a meditative way to relieve stress. Labyrinths can now also be found in retreat centers, hospitals, prisons, parks, airports and community centers.

Labyrinths may be created with stone, tape, fabric, sticks, chalk, plants, and many other materials. "Finger labyrinths" are also rising in popularity, as small wooden or metal plaques on which the labyrinth pattern is traced with a finger or a stylus.

The labyrinth, a path for walking meditation, has been introduced as a way to deal with life stressors. For a majority of walkers (66% - 82%) labyrinth walking increased levels of relaxation, clarity, peace, centeredness, openness, quiet, and reflectiveness, and reduced levels of anxiety, stress, and agitation. The experience of labyrinth walking supports recovery, renewal, integration of the whole person, and facilitating a sense of harmony.

Sources: <https://labyrinthsociety.org/home>; <http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree/labyrinth>

Put it in practice

If you have a problem, you can use the labyrinth to help solve it. If you have a need to discover spiritual meaning or find inspiration, a labyrinth can be put to service for you.

As a meditation tool consisting of a walkable single line path, a labyrinth can be a source of solace and can quiet a distracted or overactive mind. When troubled by disturbing emotions or unfortunate events in your life, walking a labyrinth can help resolve your inner discomfort and still your mind enough for you to get clarity of what is going on. As a spiritual tool, both the calming and quieting effect and the metaphorical symbolism of the labyrinth as a pathway on a journey or a spiritual track can help you to ponder life's greater mysteries:

- 🕒 Stand in front of the entrance to the labyrinth. State your intention as clearly as possible.
- 🕒 Center yourself by taking a couple of deep breaths.
- 🕒 Acknowledge your coming meditative or spiritual journey within the labyrinth. You may also say a short prayer or smudge yourself. Closing your eyes and reflecting or taking a simple bow are other nice ways to begin the process.
- 🕒 Begin your walk. The first step sets the pace for your walk. Are you being spiritual, reflective, mindful, playful, creative or something else?
- 🕒 Continue to walk. Keep your mind quiet, and still pestering thoughts each time they arise. Concentrate on the placement of one foot before the other and rhythmic, gentle and regular breathing.
- 🕒 Pause on reaching the center. You may stop here for a while, sit or lay down if you feel like it and meditate or reflect. The main thing is to let yourself surrender totally to your inner process.
- 🕒 Walk out. When you are ready, just walk out. Accept the insights and gifts you may have received. Adopting a sense of gratitude will always facilitate resolutions. Offer your thanks for what you have learned.

Suggestions

Find a labyrinth. If you live near or can visit a suitable labyrinth, this will be an ideal place to meditate or take your spiritual walk.

Make a labyrinth. If you're not able to find a labyrinth, it is possible to create your own. Indeed, doing so can serve as part of the creative process and will help you to unwind literally, as the labyrinth unfolds before you.



While creating the labyrinth, begin the feelings of calm and reflection.

Source: <http://www.wikihow.com/Meditate-in-a-Labyrinth>

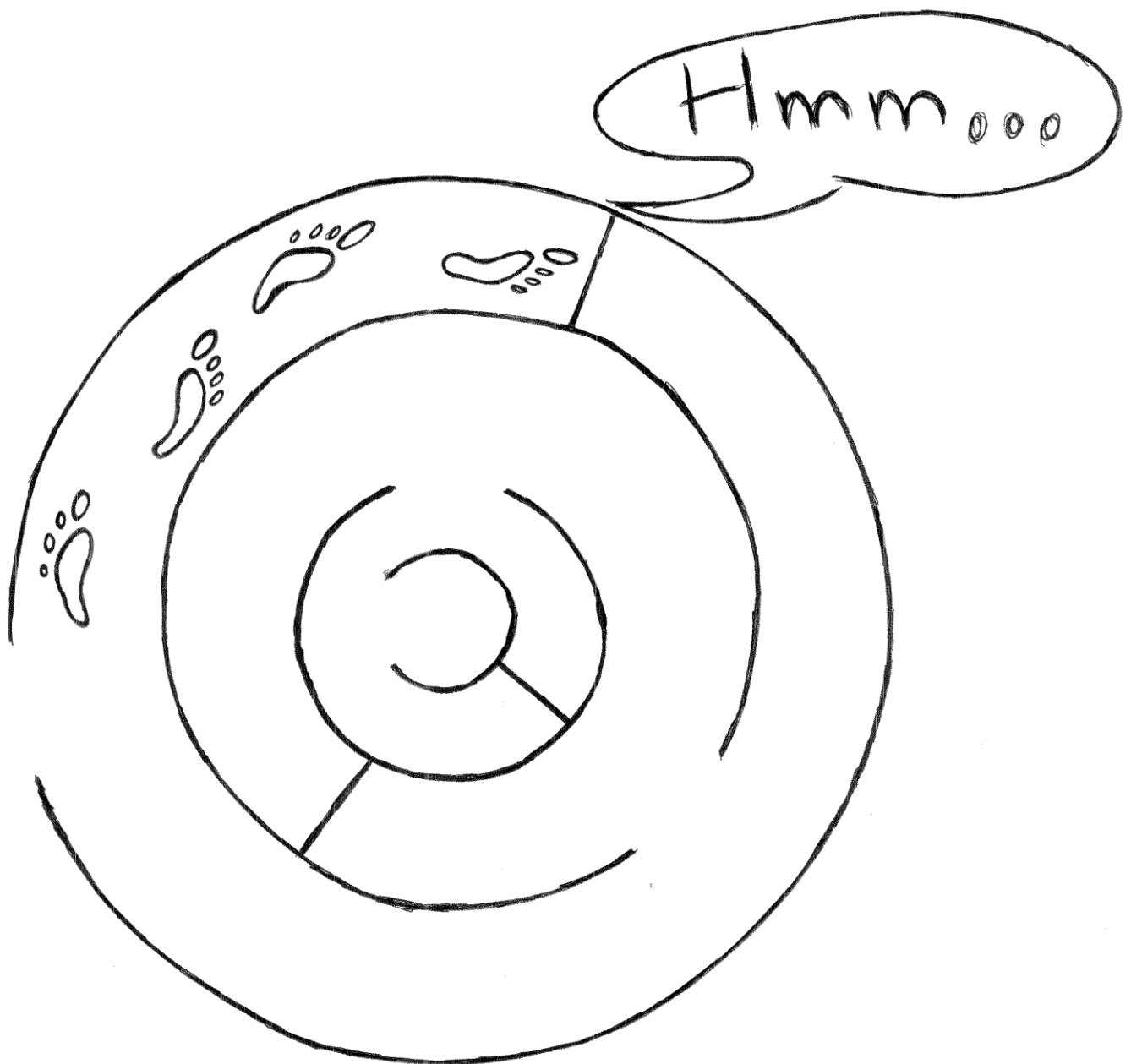
Download a Finger Labyrinth:

<http://www.contemplativemind.org/admin/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Labyrinth.pdf>

This labyrinth follows a medieval pattern. You can print it on heavyweight paper to use as a finger labyrinth.

More details

<https://labyrinthlocator.com/>



Remember

*I walk this Earth
And slowly, I remember who I am.
The more I listen,
The more I'm silent,
The space within me speaks.
It gives me hints
That there's connectedness.
In trees, in skies,
In pairs of dark green eyes.
Alone in this world
We seem to play a song.
Yet we don't hear
All the other chords.
We will remember though
That we are strings
That play a song
On one celestial guitar.
Remembering comes soon
Glimpses of truth are already here.
In your head, in my eyes.
In your thoughts, on my lips.
Go to the trees,
Go to the skies,
Smell with your eyes,
Touch with your nose,
Kiss with your hands.
Let your mind rest.
Then... in the last moment,
Close your eyes.
And when you open them
Look at Mother Earth
As if it's for the first time.
You are home. You are, now.
Remember who you are.*

*Sabina Pop
(Romania)*



TOOLS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

The following section offers a number of tools which aim to support, guide and deepen the process of personal and professional development of Youth workers and young people. They offer ideas for session outlines which can grow into 0.5 -1 day workshops. All of the tools can also be used as elements of longer programs or added as elements in learning processes.

To be easy to use, each tool is presented in the following structure:

- 🕒 Title: The name of the tool;
- 🕒 Timing: How long the implementation of this session is expected to take;
- 🕒 Task/element addressed: This part indicates what developmental task from the ECD and what elements of PP this tool corresponds to. This gives the opportunity to decide on the right tool to use with the right people or the right motif;
- 🕒 General description/overview: This part offers a glance of the process, without getting into details;
- 🕒 Setting and environment: This part explains the area the activity should take place in;
- 🕒 Methodology step by step: A detailed description of the activity;
- 🕒 Debriefing questions: Following the cycle of experiential learning, a list of debriefing questions is offered;
- 🕒 Materials: What resources you will need to use during the implementation of the activity;
- 🕒 Hand-outs: Additional hand-outs with explanations;
- 🕒 Additional information (web links, videos): Any other useful and relevant information about the tool.



Title Darplay		Timing 30 – 40 min
Aim and objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 Develop active listening; 🕒 Helps for fulfilling communication; 🕒 Foster teamwork; 🕒 Increase tolerance, acceptance and mutual understanding; 🕒 Develop intellectual skills; 		Task/element addressed <i>Stages of ECD</i> – 1, 2, 3 <i>PP elements</i> – Mindfulness; Gratitude; Interest; Inspiration; Trust; Pride
General description/overview Darplay is a game for developing communication skills, encouraging creative talking and listening. Each participant has the opportunity to give 3-minute speeches. During this time they are not interrupted or discussed afterwards. During the speeches the participants practice communication skills such as skilfully allocating attention to the listeners, tempo when speaking - slower, faster, loudness of voice, intonation, dramatic pause. The speaker thinks aloud. The role of the listener is to demonstrate active listening and attention by nonverbal gestures.		
Setting and environment The game can be played in every environment. Arrange tables and/or spaces equal to the number of groups playing. You can use nice music, candles etc. that creates cosy and safe environment.		
Methodology step by step Group size: Darplay is played in groups of two, three or four participants. Playing Darplay: The first participant draws a question, turns the hourglass and has 3 minutes for their speech. The others listen without interrupting. Then it's the turn of the next participant to draw a question, turn the hourglass and speak for 3 minutes. The game consists of four rounds. If the groups are two or more after each round the participants can be regrouped in a manner of their choice.		
Debriefing questions The questions/topics used can be created in advance (related to the learning outcomes, subject, situation or specific objectives) or can be gathered on the spot by participants. Examples of questions/topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 <i>Love is ...</i> 🕒 <i>What kind of person would I like to be?</i> 🕒 <i>I dream to learn to ...</i> 		
Materials Hourglass (measuring 3 min.) or chronometer, set of questions (enough for all groups), space		
Hand outs:		Additional information (web links, videos): NO



Title The way of council	Timing 2 - 3 hours
Aim and objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus of intention and energy on the common values, fears and aspirations that make us human; Reminds people that they are more alike than different and capable of finding common ground; Allows for all sides to be heard in a context of mutual respect and trust; Fosters a sense of contentment that leads to an atmosphere of safety and confidentiality; 	Task/element addressed <i>Stages of ECD – 3, 4</i> <i>PP elements – Mindfulness; Gratitude; Inspiration; Love; Trust;</i>
General description/overview It is a modern practice derived from many ancient forms of coming together and communicating in a circle. The practice of deep listening without judgment fosters an atmosphere of respect for one's self and for others and promotes empathy, dissolving barriers to cooperation, understanding, and community. Using a set of simple intentions, or ground rules, Council can lead to common ground, beyond opinions, prejudices or preconceived ideas.	
Setting and environment Council is a powerful practice and can bring strong experiences to some participants. It is important to choose proper questions/topics that challenge the participants, but at the same time keep them comfortable and trustful. Arrange the council space in a ceremonial manner, put candles, use a special talking object and believe that something special is happening.	
Methodology step by step The basic practice of Council is simple: a group of people sit in a circle. Drawing on indigenous traditions of using a talking piece, an object is passed from person to person in a group sitting in a circle which grants the holder solid permission to speak. Each one has a voice, speaks from their heart and all the others listen. The Way of Council invites active participation in the process. The Councils draw on the life experience and wisdom of all participants to generate new understandings of the problem and new possibilities for solutions. It brings together the ancient wisdom of community and the contemporary value of respect for individual gifts, needs, and differences. The Council keeper- Each Council is facilitated by a person, who is leading the process. This person presents the principles and elements of the Council to the participants. This person opens and closes the Council and will be the only one allowed to speak, besides the speaker holding the talking object. The intentions of Council are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When listening, to listen from the heart, without the need to analyze, agree or disagree – “Listening from the heart”; When speaking, to speak from the heart, naming what is alive right now – “Speaking from the heart”; To be lean of expression, going to the essence of what needs to be spoken – “Speaking the essence”; To be spontaneous, trusting what comes, rather than what one has rehearsed or what one thinks should be said – “Spontaneity”; To keep and not to share outside of the Council what is shared during the process – “Confidentiality”. While rotating the Talking object people are not forced to speak. Each one can pass the object without speaking. After making full circle and coming back to “The Host”, the object can be given back to the ones that didn't speak first round but now want to speak. The Talking object is circling the Council until the last person shares and no one has more to speak.	
Debriefing questions The Council is a great way for developing group relations, trust, openness and deep self-discovery. Each Council can have a certain question or topic to be discussed. Some of them can be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are your intentions from this meeting/group/training? Share a story that changed you in a way? Where are you in this moment of your life? What is in your heart? 	
Materials Talking object, candles, ceremonial objects, mats and blankets for sitting	
Hand outs:	Additional information (web links, videos): http://regenerationeducation.org/educational-philosophy/social-technologies/way-of-council https://www.ancienthealingways.co.uk/vision-quest



Title Five Rhythms (Ecstatic Dance)		Timing 30 – 40 min
Aim and objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☯ To creatively express aggressiveness and vulnerability, emotions and anxieties, edges and ecstasies; ☯ To reconnect one to cycles of birth & death and hook person to humanity and the spirit of all living things; ☯ To create connection and community within the group context; ☯ To facilitate deep and unending exploration, moving the dancer beyond self-imposed limitations and isolation into new depths of creativity and connection. 		Task/element addressed <i>Stages of ECD – 2, 3</i> <i>PP elements – Mindfulness; Joy; Trust;</i>
General description/overview <p>Five Rhythms is a dynamic movement practice—a practice of being in your body—that ignites creativity, connection, and community.</p> <p>It is a movement meditation practice devised by Gabrielle Roth in the late 1970s. It draws from indigenous and world traditions using tenets of shamanistic, ecstatic, mystical and eastern philosophy. It also draws from Gestalt therapy, the human potential movement and transpersonal psychology. Fundamental to the practice is the idea that everything is energy, and moves in waves, patterns and rhythms.</p> <p>Roth describes the practice as a soul journey, and says that by moving the body, releasing the heart, and freeing the mind, one can connect to the essence of the soul, the source of inspiration in which an individual has unlimited possibility and potential.</p>		
Setting and environment <p>Create a room with enough space for all the participants. You can use mats (in order to allocate personal space for each dancer). The floor should be comfortable for dancing barefoot or lying down (wooden floor, carpet etc.). Use suitable audio system.</p>		
Methodology step by step <p>Invite people to where comfortable cloths; to dance barefoot and to relax. Give instruction about the practice. Use one of the audio files in the section Materials bellow.</p> <p>You may introduce following guidelines:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Move however you wish 2. No talking on the dance floor 3. Respect yourself and one another 4. Ecstatic Dance is a Drug & Alcohol Free Space 5. Refrain from photos, video, shoes & scents. 		
Debriefing questions <p>Use regular debriefing of an experiential activity</p> <p>(http://experience.jumpfoundation.org/what-is-debriefing-and-why-should-we-debrief/)</p>		
Materials <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CA_RlOzHlSI</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpX5JHYnT1M</p>		
Hand outs:	Additional information (web links, videos): <p>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5Rhythms</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qApDyOZKNbk</p>	



Title SOLO	Timing Total ~ 3 hours
Aim and objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Calming and thought-provoking activity which brings people closer to nature; ☉ Provoking constant awareness opened to what is present here and now, without attachment to past or future; ☉ Creating joyful mindfulness to the wild world. 	Task/element addressed <i>Stages of ECD – 2, 3, 4</i> <i>PP elements – Mindfulness; Interest; Inspiration; Awe; Trust; Pride</i>
General description/overview We are rarely "still" in nature. Visit a natural place that is conveniently available. Spend one hour in silence. Simply observe and be. Relaxing and opening. In today's society, just being in nature is a surprisingly rare event and most people will be relieved to experience it.	
Setting and environment Reconnaissance of location needed beforehand. Don't underestimate time to location. Include 5-10 minutes to brief and set scene for group, then solo time of ~60 minutes in nature, plus ~30 minutes discussion, and time back to origin.	
Methodology step by step <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Arrange a visit to a local natural place (such as the coast) or natural event (such as sunset/sunrise/new moon). Scout the area first and find an accessible but secluded area with enough room for people to spread out and not be disturbed. ☉ Explain that participants are to spend an hour alone in nature. ☉ As long as the group is on-side, avoid giving much up front information about the experience, so that it is more "raw" and "natural". ☉ Allow each person to find a place on their own. ☉ After approx. 1 hour, walk around and indicate for the group to come back together. ☉ Form a circle and facilitate the group in sharing their experiences and thoughts about spending time in nature. Variations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Play new age music. This may sound "tacky", but well chosen music can significantly deepen the experience, helping alter people's brain waves into achieving a more meditative state. ("Music for Rejuvenation" by Dr. Joseph Nagler and Janetta Petkus' "Moving in Time") ☉ Allow participants to write or draw. ☉ Besides different natural locations, try other places for an hour of silence (e.g. a graveyard, church or meditation room, a rubbish dump, top floor of a building or mountain, looking over a city, etc.) ☉ Try different times, e.g., nighttime, moonrise, sunrise, sunset ☉ Provide verbal or written "meditations", e.g., quotes, anecdotes, philosophy, etc. For example: How comfortable are you with silence? Can you listen to yourself? To your source of spirit? Do you recognize respectful silence? Do you experience a silent time at home? What would it be like if you asked for some silence in your workplace during a meeting? Silence is an unused tool that is very effective in all kinds of ways 	
Debriefing questions Use regular debriefing of an experiential activity (http://experience.jumpfoundation.org/what-is-debriefing-and-why-should-we-debrief/)	
Materials A patch of nature. Can use night-time on hill, sunrise, sunset, or most natural handy location, esp. river, pond, the ocean. Can add "new age" music to help alter brain-waves into meditative state.	
Hand outs:	Additional information (web links, videos):



Title Personal challenge (stretching one's comfort zone)		Timing Few days
Aim and objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ To stretch boundaries of one's comfort zone; ☛ To perform a developmental task that includes overcoming personal barriers; ☛ To fight fears; 		Task/element addressed <i>Stages of ECD – 2, 3</i> <i>PP elements – Joy; Interest; Inspiration; Trust; Pride</i>
General description/overview <p>Comfort zone is a behavioural space where your activities and behaviours fit a routine and pattern that minimizes stress and risk. It provides a state of mental security. You benefit in obvious ways: regular happiness, low anxiety, and reduced stress. A state of relative comfort created a steady level of performance. In order to maximize performance, however, we need a state of relative anxiety — a space where our stress levels are slightly higher than normal. This space is called "Optimal Anxiety," and it's just outside our comfort zone. Too much anxiety and we're too stressed to be productive, and our performance drops off sharply.</p>		
Setting and environment <p>No specific settings needed. It can be combined with Outdoor adventure sports, Slacklining, Ecstatic dancing etc. After each personal achievement perform a ritual of group celebration of success (at the end whole group can have final party celebrating achievements).</p>		
Methodology step by step <p>Anyone who's ever pushed themselves to get to the next level or accomplish something knows that when you really challenge yourself, you can turn up amazing results. Optimal anxiety is that place where your mental productivity and performance reach their peak. Once you start stepping out of your comfort zone, it gets easier over time.</p> <p>Get out and do something strange—something you wouldn't normally do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Choose an activity/task to be performed in next days (till the end of the training, end of the camp etc.); ☛ Choose an activity that you want to do before but something stops you (fear, obstacle etc.); ☛ Choose an activity that will be developmental to you personally and achieving it will give you a feeling of success; ☛ Choose an activity that is realistic to perform at the given time; <p>Variation: Participants can work in pairs (or groups) in order for each one of them to be empowered and supported by a buddy or a group of friends. Partners can also help in creating (and following) the action plan for the activity/task.</p>		
Debriefing questions <p>Use regular debriefing of an experiential activity (http://experience.jumpfoundation.org/what-is-debriefing-and-why-should-we-debrief/)</p>		
Materials <p>No specific materials needed.</p>		
Hand outs:	Additional information (web links, videos):	



Title Letter to yourself	Timing 30 – 60 min
Aim and objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ To cultivate gratitude; ☉ To increase self-awareness; ☉ To create one's future; ☉ To give oneself a memory. 	Task/element addressed <i>Stages of ECD – 3, 4</i> <i>PP elements – Gratitude;</i> Love; Trust; Pride
General description/overview This is a self-discovery exercise of writing a letter FROM yourself TO your Future-self. This exercise helps you get your thoughts out of the present and keeps you focused on what is yet to come. You can choose a date after 3, 6 months, 1 year or more and open the letter at that moment. It is also possible to arrange another person to take your letter and send it to you at specific moment.	
Setting and environment No specific settings needed. It can be combined with Solo in nature or Personal reflection questions or Journaling.	
Methodology step by step <p>If you're going to write a letter to yourself, an expression of gratitude is one of the wisest things you can include. Fill it with positive affirmations and appreciation for the person you are. When it's time to open it up, your future self will thank you.</p> <p>Let your mind run wild. Think big and give yourself permission to be wildly ambitious. What principles will guide your life? What do you hope to accomplish? How are you going to do it? If you vividly imagine your future in concrete terms, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.</p> <p>What To Write About</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Give advice. ☉ What are your professional goals? Your romantic ones? Intellectual? Financial? Spiritual? Personal? The more specific you are, the more likely you are to see improvements. ☉ What causes you the most anxiety about your future? What keeps you up at night? ☉ What have you done wrong? What is your biggest regret? ☉ What are you excited about? What does your ideal life look like? ☉ What was your favourite book this year? How did it affect you? ☉ Who are the 5 most important people in your life, and why? <p>Variation:</p> <p>Write letter to yourself after 15 years to celebrate your personal achievements. Read it earlier (6 months, 1 year) and keep doing it often in order to help yourself in your personal path towards your best-self. Start and finish the letter like that:</p> <p>"Dear</p> <p>Congratulations!</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Well done, once again,</p> <p>(Name)!"</p>	
Debriefing questions After implementing the activity with participants (and closing the envelopes with letters) you can use standard debriefing model http://experience.jumpfoundation.org/what-is-debriefing-and-why-should-we-debrief/	
Materials Paper, pens, envelopes	
Hand outs:	Additional information (web links, videos):



Title Authentic movement		Timing 60 - 120 min
Aim and objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ To promote self-exploration and improve mental health; ☉ To focus attention on the present and act out inner emotions; ☉ To allow people to connect with their body and mind and let their inner experiences move them; ☉ To express feelings and emotions through improvised dance movement. 		Task/element addressed <i>Stages of ECD – 3, 4</i> <i>PP elements – Mindfulness; Joy; Serenity;</i>
General description/overview Authentic Movement is an expressive improvisational movement practice that allows a group of participants a type of free association of the body. It was started by Mary Starks Whitehouse in the 1950s as "movement in depth". Intrigued by Jung's principles of 'active imagination' Whitehouse integrated her knowledge of dance and Jungian psychology into an experimental psychotherapy done through a group process where participants engage in spontaneous expressive movement exploration. This process later became known as Authentic Movement (AM). Authentic Movement can be a discipline itself and can be used as a part of many different practices and teachings. Teachers and trainers adapt the practice in their own ways. Practices such as Movement Meditation, Contemplative Dance, Creative Movement Method, or Somatic Psychology use Authentic Movement as part of their training.		
Setting and environment Often the experience of AM feels like a meaningful game and is great fun. At other times movers and witnesses experience intense feelings and deep insights provoked by the wisdom of their own bodies. Create safe and welcoming environment for the participants. Prepare them emotionally and mentally for the practice. Use a warm and well ventilated space with suitable audio system and comfortable for moving floor.		
Methodology step by step When starting a basic AM session, participants start in a comfortable position, eyes closed to feel their inner body-mind processes. After that, they wait for stimuli to arise within them, and follow each impulse expressing a movement or a sound. Individuals move through the space entirely free from any direction or expectation. This allows people to explore psychological processes as they turn into kinaesthetic responses to movement or sound. The movement becomes 'authentic' when the individual is able to allow their intuitive impulses to freely express themselves without intellectual directive, as opposed to movement initiated by conscious decision making – a distinction which may appear clear, but practically a challenge. Individuals simply pay attention to what they feel at a sensory level, since "the core of the movement experience is the sensation of moving and being moved." In the Authentic Movement aspect of Whitehouse's approach, the moving participants (movers) are passively observed by a witness, who 'contains' the experience of the mover by witnessing their movements without judgement, projection or interpretation. In this way the witness is also an active participant, as witnessing is a practice in observing one's own sensations and impulses while observing the mover's.		
Debriefing questions Use standard debriefing model (http://experience.jumpfoundation.org/what-is-debriefing-and-why-should-we-debrief/)		
Materials No materials needed		
Hand outs:	Additional information (web links, videos): https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/authentic-movement https://adta.org/2015/08/18/what-is-authentic-movement/	



Title Mindful walk in nature		Timing 5 – 20 min (or longer)
Aim and objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ To replace still meditation with a dynamic one; ☉ To bring a person closer to nature and her/his body; ☉ To strengthen concentration, increase awareness, and connect to the present moment. 		Task/element addressed <i>Stages of ECD – 1, 2</i> <i>PP elements – Mindfulness; Joy; Serenity; Interest; Awe; Trust;</i>
General description/overview After a long day sitting in an office, seated meditation might seem unappealing. On days when you want to get out into nature, try walking meditation instead. Walking meditation, also known as mindful walking, is an active practice that requires you to be consciously aware and moving in the environment rather than sitting down with your eyes closed.		
Setting and environment Make sure you have comfortable clothes and shoes on you. Try this activity in the nature, in the wild or even in a park.		
Methodology step by step Begin by standing still and becoming aware of your body and how it feels. Allow your knees to bend very slightly and feel your hips as your center of gravity. Take a few deep belly breaths and bring your awareness into the present moment. Now begin to walk slightly more slowly than your normal pace, maintaining an almost imperceptible bend in the knees. With each step, be aware of the gentle heel-to-toe rhythm as each foot makes contact with the ground. Breathe naturally and fully, deeply filling your lungs with every inhale, but being careful not to strain or struggle in any way. Allow your eyes to focus softly ahead of you, taking in as much of the periphery as comfortable. Try to maintain a soft body and breathing awareness as you walk naturally and easily. When your attention drifts away from the sensations of walking and breathing, take notice of those thoughts, moods, or emotions without judgment and gently guide your awareness back to the present moment, back to the walking. Continue this mindful walking for anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes or longer if comfortable. When it's time to end the meditation, allow yourself to come to a gentle halt. Pause—once again experiencing yourself standing still—as you feel the earth beneath your feet. Take a few deep breaths as this session comes to close. Slowly return to your regular activity.		
Debriefing questions Use a standard debriefing model (http://experience.jumpfoundation.org/what-is-debriefing-and-why-should-we-debrief/)		
Materials No materials needed		
Hand outs:	Additional information (web links, videos): http://www.chopra.com/articles/mindful-walking-practice-how-to-get-started#sm.00000935isc91dknxjt23oimmbbfl	



Title A philosophical talk about offering		Timing 90 min
Aim and objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 Discuss the key elements of offering and receiving 🕒 Learn about the benefits of offering 🕒 Share examples of offering and receiving 🕒 Develop motivation on successful offering 		Task/element addressed <i>Stages of ECD – 1, 2</i> <i>PP elements – Mindfulness, Gratitude, Interest, Inspiration, Love</i>
General description/overview Participants take a walk and discuss different questions. Then, a group sharing takes place.		
Setting and environment This activity is better to happen outside and preferably in the nature. Let the participants know in advance that they are going to be outside so that they can dress accordingly.		
Methodology step by step <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inform participants that they are going to take a philosophical walk in the outdoor environment. A philosophical walk is when people walk and talk about important philosophical concepts. All participants will walk together but conversations will happen only in pairs. The pairs will be changed regularly. 2. Invite them to form pairs and give the first question. Allow enough time for discussion, at least 4 minutes, and then give the next question. You can also change the pairs. 3. List of questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What does offering/giving mean to you? ○ Share a personal example of offering/giving ○ Share a personal example of receiving ○ What are the benefits of offering/giving? ○ What are the benefits of receiving? ○ How do you choose the target of your gifts? ○ What are the pitfalls of offering/giving? ○ How is offering/giving connected with happiness? ○ What positive emotions are involved when offering/giving or receiving? ○ What is the story you tell yourself when you offer/give something? 4. Come back together as a group and make a group discussion on offering following the debriefing questions below. You may also want to provide a short theoretical input about offering, compassion and/or the reciprocity styles (givers, takers and matchers) <p>(As a follow up- you can invite participants to individually reflect on what they have offered to the world by drawing on a piece of paper their footprints and then to debrief on it)</p>		
Debriefing questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 How was the philosophical walk for you? 🕒 What impressed you the most? 🕒 What are the key elements of offering/giving in your opinion? 🕒 How does offering/giving or receiving influence people's lives? 🕒 What conclusions are you drawing on the topic of offering? 🕒 What are your take-aways from this activity? 		
Materials		
Hand outs:	Additional information (web links, videos): Information about the reciprocity styles https://www.brainpickings.org/2013/04/10/adam-grant-give-and-take/ Information on the benefits of giving https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/5_ways_giving_is_good_for_you	



Title Love and connection	Timing 90 min
Aim and objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 Share an example of a meaningful relationship they have 🕒 Discuss the elements of love and connection 🕒 Reflect on how to make their relationships more meaningful 	Task/element addressed <i>Stages of ECD – 1, 2</i> <i>PP elements – Mindfulness, Joy, Gratitude, Love</i>
General description/overview Participants bring a photo of themselves and a close person. They talk about it in groups and then a discussion happens in plenary. In the end, participants reflect on how to make one of their relationships better	
Setting and environment Cozy setting/environment	
Methodology step by step In advance, ask the participants to bring to this session a photo (preferably a printed one) of them and another person with whom they share a strong and meaningful relationship. (This person can be a family member, a life partner, a friend, a colleague, etc) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask participants to present their photo and talk about their relationship with the person in the photo in small groups of 3 people. Allow enough time for a deep sharing, at least 20 minutes. 2. Follow the debriefing questions illustrated below 3. Provide a theoretical input on the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Secure attachment (how to stimulate and reinforce secure attachment, why it is important, oxytocin hormon) ○ Need for belonging, social connections ○ Love and characteristics of love Ask the participants to work on their own. Invite them to choose 1 of their relationships and to write down 5 interventions to make their attachment more secure and their relationship deeper and more meaningful.	
Debriefing questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 What emotions have you experienced during this activity? 🕒 What thoughts have come to mind? 🕒 What topics were tackled by this activity? 🕒 Why is love and connection important in our lives? What needs do they address? 🕒 How does the existence of love and connection influence a person's life? 🕒 How does the absence of love and connection influence a person's life? 🕒 What are the characteristics of a meaningful relationship? 🕒 How can you stimulate and reinforce secure attachment in your relationships? 	
Materials Notebooks, pens	
Hand outs:	Additional information (web links, videos):



Title The black dot	Timing 45 min
Aim and objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 Trigger conversation about mindfulness 🕒 Discuss the characteristics of mindfulness 🕒 Reflect on how mindful we are on a daily basis 🕒 Think of ways to bring more mindfulness in our lives 	Task/element addressed <i>Stages of ECD – 1, 2, 3, 4</i> <i>PP elements – Mindfulness, Interest</i>
General description/overview Participants are divided into groups and they need to give as many as possible different answers to a certain question. Then, they reveal their answers and a discussion is triggered after this.	
Setting and environment There is no specific setting or environment	
Methodology step by step In advance, draw a thick black dot on an A4 white paper. You may want to prepare 4-6 of these, depending on the number of participants. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide the participants in groups (of 4-6 people). Each group should have a notebook and a pen for taking notes. 2. Hand to each group a paper with the black dot. Ask them to answer the question “What do you see here?” as many times as possible, always referring to what they see on the paper. Give them 2 minutes to do it. Encourage their imagination. Usually most of the answers focus on the black dot and very rarely they refer to the white part of the paper. 3. Once the time is over, invite the groups to share their answers. 4. Ask them “What criteria did you use to answer the question?” Remind them the first question you asked them “What do you see here?” underlining that you did not tell them to focus on the black dot. 5. Connect this activity with mindfulness and follow the debriefing questions below 	
Debriefing questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 How is this activity connected with mindfulness? 🕒 What elements of mindfulness were pinpointed in this activity? 🕒 How mindful are you on a daily basis? 🕒 How mindful are you on your daily activities? 🕒 How can we become more mindful? 	
Materials Notepads/paper for taking notes, pens, A4 papers with black dot	
Hand outs:	Additional information (web links, videos):



SAMPLE TRAINING PROGRAMS

These sample training programs offer sequences of activities and sessions for 3, 5, and 7 day long programs aiming at personal, social and professional development. The programs incorporate practices and tools illustrated in previous sections of the manual. They are suitable both for Youth workers and for young people. They are organized in 4 sessions per day, each one of them having its own theme. The sessions follow a progressive sequence with each of them building on what was done before.

TRAINING AGENDA AND ACTIVITIES – 3 DAYS

Day 0

- 🕒 Arrival of the group
- 🕒 Welcoming the participants and settling down.
- 🕒 Evening activity: Welcoming words from the trainers' team, Group sharing, Practical information
- 🕒 Personal practice: Making a list of things that make one happy

Day 1

Session 1 - Morning rituals – repeat every day

- 🕒 Physical activity (choose one suitable for the group level)
- 🕒 Meditation (e.g. Relaxation, Guided meditation, Visualization connected with the theme of the day)
- 🕒 Connection circle (expressing gratitude, sharing thoughts and emotions)

Session 2 – Connecting activities and group building

- 🕒 Personal practice: welcome message for oneself in the personal notebook.
- 🕒 Icebreaker (e.g. rope skipping)
- 🕒 Trust building activity (e.g. falling and flying)
- 🕒 Debriefing
- 🕒 Icebreaker (e.g. Brownian movement)
- 🕒 Connecting activity (e.g. telepathy game - communicating images without speaking)
- 🕒 Debriefing/Sharing/Discussion

Session 3 – The pitfalls of happiness, the things that limit happiness

- 🕒 Small groups work: What are the habits, own limitations and beliefs that minimize happiness?
- 🕒 Presentation of conclusions (e.g. idea for method - through theater plays)
- 🕒 Input: factors that limit happiness
- 🕒 Group discussion

Session 4 - Happiness fundamentals and trust

- 🕒 Presenting homework: sharing quotes about happiness
- 🕒 Presenting Homework: sharing definitions of happiness
- 🕒 Input: three types of happiness
- 🕒 Group work: dividing definitions in 3 clusters based on the 3 types of happiness
- 🕒 Trust activity (e.g. reed in the wind)
- 🕒 Group discussion about trust and how trust is connected with happiness
- 🕒 Closing the session (e.g. group music/dancing)

Evening activity

- 🕒 Connecting and Fun activity (e.g. Guess my secret)

Day 2

Session 1 - Morning rituals – same as day 1

Session 2 – Mindfulness



- 🕒 Psychological test: Black dot activity
- 🕒 Debriefing and summarizing the black dot results
- 🕒 Input about mindfulness: definition and other aspects
- 🕒 Personal practice: Mindful walk in nature - exploring nature in a mindful way
- 🕒 Debriefing/Sharing/Discussion
- 🕒 Brainstorming: extracting the benefits of mindfulness at mental, emotional, physical and spiritual level

Session 3 – Connection and relationships

- 🕒 Connecting activity: An eye contact exercise – a progressive activity
- 🕒 Debriefing the experience, with focus on connections and relationships
- 🕒 Sharing in pairs: about a personal connection the participants have with a certain person from their lives. Sharing the photos of the persons
- 🕒 Debriefing and group discussion about connection

Session 4 - Love

- 🕒 Introduction: expressing love to each other through pantomime
- 🕒 Drawing in pairs - role play
- 🕒 Debriefing/Sharing/Discussion
- 🕒 Input: theory about Love and Control
- 🕒 Group discussion
- 🕒 Closing the session (e.g. shouting energizer)

Evening activity

- 🕒 Laughter Yoga activities

Day 3

Session 1 - Morning rituals – same as day 1

Session 2 – Self-compassion

- 🕒 Personal work: identifying Loyal Soldiers and self-compassion.
 - Drawing the shape of the body and writing on the paper the inner critical thoughts
 - Offering compassion to these voices
- 🕒 Debriefing/Sharing/Discussion

Session 3 – Mastery

- 🕒 Personal work: The Wheel of strengths
 - The participants write what they are good at on pieces of papers
 - In small groups the participants write to each other strengths and qualities on pieces of paper
 - Comparing the two sets of qualities, their own with those received from the others
- 🕒 Presentation of the Wheel of strengths
 - Individual work: choose 5 qualities and put them on the Wheel, to see the actual level of development and how they can be developed (To what extent I use it and to what extent I want to use it in the future) in specific contexts.
- 🕒 Debriefing/Sharing/Discussion

Session 4 - Closing the processes and follow-up actions

- 🕒 Individual reflection on the achievement of the personal learning goals, needs, intentions
- 🕒 Making a personal transformation plan, through which the participants will implement/use the tools and concepts learned during the training
- 🕒 Personal work: A Letter to myself, which will be sent 6 months later
- 🕒 Reading a soul poem
- 🕒 Writing a soul poem – individual task
- 🕒 Group sharing – sharing poems
- 🕒 Laughter Yoga activity: lying on the bellies of the people, listening to the story of the training told in a funny way

Evening activity

- 🕒 Fun and Joy: party



TRAINING AGENDA AND ACTIVITIES – 5 DAYS

Day 0

- 🕒 Arrival of the group
- 🕒 Welcoming the participants and settling down
- 🕒 Evening activity: Introduction of the trainers, sharing circle (the participants share their names and a few details about themselves).

Day 1

Session 1 - Morning rituals – repeat every day

- 🕒 Physical activity: (choose one suitable for the group level)
- 🕒 Meditation (e.g. Relaxation, Guided meditation, Visualization connected with the theme of the day)
- 🕒 Connection circle (expressing gratitude, sharing thoughts and emotions)
- 🕒 Community service (e.g. helping in the kitchen, tidying up, collecting wood etc.)

Session 2 – Get to know the location and the training

- 🕒 Tour of the location and facilities
- 🕒 Information about the training (e.g. learning objectives, daily schedule etc.)
- 🕒 Participant's expectations (e.g. Journaling expectations/needs/motivations/Intentions)
- 🕒 Discussion about the meaning of expectations
- 🕒 Group-connecting activity (e.g. Group drumming and rhythm)

Session 3 – Get to know each other and building the group

- 🕒 Get to know each-other activity (e.g. Walk and talk in nature)
- 🕒 Group building activities (e.g. Streets and alleys; Shouting contest; Carrying a statues)
- 🕒 Debriefing

Session 4 – Get to know each other and reflection

- 🕒 Sharing activity (e.g. Group sharing - My path until now; What transformation do I want to achieve?)
- 🕒 Reflection (repeat every day):
 - Personal: (Solo reflection for 30 min.)
 - Group: (Group sharing)for 30 min

Evening activity

- 🕒 Sharing and connecting activity

Day 2

Session 1 - Morning rituals – same as day 1

Session 2 – Trust building

- 🕒 Introduction activity (e.g. look into each other's eyes; Brownian walk etc.)
- 🕒 Group trust activity (e.g. Star balance or other)
- 🕒 Group trust activity (e.g. Rope circle balance or other)
- 🕒 Individual trust activity (e.g. Trust fall)
- 🕒 Debriefing/Sharing/Discussion

Session 3 – Introduction in Ecocentric development

- 🕒 Introduction to the Medicine Wheel.
- 🕒 Nature walk for identifying the four stages of the Wheel in the Nature
- 🕒 Sharing and a group discussion
- 🕒 Presentation of the Ecocentric and Egocentric Wheel

Session 4 – Deepening the understanding and reflection

- 🕒 Deepening the presentation of the Ecocentric developmental Wheel
- 🕒 Analysis of the day
- 🕒 Reflection (repeat every day):

Evening activity

- 🕒 Practices demonstration (choose from the list in the Manual)



Day 3

Session 1 - Morning rituals – same as day 1

Session 2 – Exploring Stage 1

- 🕒 Introduction in the stage (e.g. theatre play by the trainers)
- 🕒 Presentation of the list of activities
 - Spend time alone in nature
 - Practice mindfulness in nature
 - Do some art form: poetry, origami etc.
 - Reviews your days here and find 1-2 situations when you could have been more innocent. Write in your Journal about it and think of how you can be more innocent today
 - Talk to a tree
 - Do some land art
 - Do some art: sculpture, drawing, music, dance etc.
 - Play childhood games
- 🕒 Independent time for making the activities
- 🕒 Debriefing and group discussion

Session 3 – Exploring stage 2

- 🕒 Introduction in the stage (e.g. short guided visualization)
- 🕒 Presentation of the list of activities
 - Wander in nature
 - Collect natural objects
 - Go to nature and make up an imaginative story
 - Find myths and stories about the place/location
 - Explore and use all senses while being in nature
 - Use the story cubes & Dixit cards
 - Discuss about your family, cultural, species ancestors
 - Discuss the following emotions (love, hope, inspiration, joy) and how you can manifest them
- 🕒 Independent time for making the activities
- 🕒 Debriefing and group discussion

Session 4 – Preparation for fasting and solo; Reflection

- 🕒 Introduction to fasting and explanation of solo in the nature
- 🕒 Reflection (repeat every day)

Evening activity

- 🕒 Ceremony for starting the fasting and solo process (e.g. Trans drumming and dancing; authentic movement etc.)
- 🕒 Start of fasting (optional levels according to a participants own decision – no fasting; less food; only fruits; no food; no food and water)

Day 4

A whole day process without session division – Exploring Stage 3 and 4

Morning rituals – same as day 1

Solo in the nature process:

- 🕒 Fasting (optional levels according participants own decision – no fasting; less food; only fruits; no food; no food and water)
- 🕒 Looking for a place in nature for solo
- 🕒 Mapping the places
- 🕒 Self-discovery – writing a personal letter - about the resources one has (e.g. what are your gifts, talents, passions, resources, people you have?)
- 🕒 Personal practice - writing a letter of intention (e.g. what changes do you want to make, what are your longings, dreams, cravings, deep wishes?)
- 🕒 Practical preparations for the solo – clothes, mat etc.



- ☉ “Leaving home” ceremony (e.g. cleansing with sage, reading a soul-poem, centering, drumming)
- ☉ Returning with drumming
- ☉ Debriefing and sharing in small groups (groups are facilitated by the trainers)
- ☉ Welcoming ceremony (e.g. burning the letters of intention, singing to the Moon, drinking water)
- ☉ Special dinner – a feast

Free evening

Day 5

Session 1 - Morning rituals – same as day 1

Session 2 – Integration of the experiences

- ☉ Group discussion about stage 3 and 4 and clarification of the specific sub-tasks for each stage
- ☉ Recapitulation of the activities from the previous day
- ☉ Self-reflection: Participants answers two questions - Which of the sub-tasks did I address through these activities? What did I get by addressing these tasks? (Insights, skills, ideas, ways of being etc.)
- ☉ Sharing in pairs about the previous questions
- ☉ A group discussion for making the conclusions for stage 3 and 4

Session 3 – Hike in nature

- ☉ Hiking to the nearest nature sight – peak, lake, waterfall

Session 4 – Follow-Up and final evaluation

- ☉ Personal action plan (Actions for addressing 3 sub-tasks from the Wheel, What, When, Where, How, Who)
- ☉ Sharing in groups the action plans and building the support groups (with specific support actions)
- ☉ Making the training evaluation and writing feedback

Evening activity

- ☉ Closing ceremony



TRAINING AGENDA AND ACTIVITIES – 7 DAYS

Day 1

Session 1 - Morning rituals – repeat every day

- ☉ Physical activity: (choose one suitable for the group level)
- ☉ Meditation/mindfulness practice: (choose suitable for the group level)
- ☉ Morning circle: sharing
- ☉ Practice demonstration: (choose from the list in the Manual)

Session 2 - Get to know

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☉ Name game | ☉ Programme and daily timetable |
| ☉ Sharing and connection activity | ☉ Defining Personal learning goals |
| ☉ Icebreaker | ☉ Training rules/group rules |
| ☉ Sharing and connection activity | ☉ Presenting community service roles (e.g. helping in the kitchen, tidying up, collecting wood etc.) |
| ☉ Presentation of the team | |
| ☉ General introduction of the training | |
| ☉ Training objectives/aims/goals | |

Session 3 - Teambuilding

- ☉ Energizer
- ☉ Icebreaker
- ☉ Teambuilding activity
- ☉ Debriefing

Session 4 – Topic introduction

- ☉ Short intro of the topic (e.g. medicine wheel, positive psychology, Ecocentric development)
- ☉ Focus on human dimensions: physical, spiritual, mental, emotional
- ☉ Question for discussion:
 - What daily activities you do towards each dimension?
 - What dimension do you use more on a daily basis?
 - What in your opinion is the situation in the society nowadays?
 - What can be done?
- ☉ Reflection (repeat every day):
 - Personal: (Solo reflection for 30 min.)
 - Group: (Group sharing)for 30 min

Evening activity

- Sharing and connection activity

Day 2

Session 1 - Morning rituals – same as day 1

Session 2 – Connecting with nature

- ☉ Introduction + reading a poem
- ☉ Nature observation/Wondering in nature etc. (choose one suitable for the group level)
- ☉ Sharing + discussion

Session 3 – Trust building

- ☉ Introduction activity (e.g. look into each other's eyes; Brownian walk etc.)
- ☉ Group trust activity (e.g. Star balance or other)
- ☉ Group trust activity (e.g. Rope circle balance or other)
- ☉ Individual trust activity (e.g. Trust fall)
- ☉ Debriefing/Sharing/Discussion

Session 4 – Reflection

- ☉ Reflection (repeat every day):
 - Personal: (Solo reflection for 30 min.)
 - Group: (Group sharing)for 30 min

Evening activity

- ☉ Practices demonstration (e.g. The Way of Council)



Day 3

Session 1 - Morning rituals – same as day 1

Session 2 – Ecocentric developmental wheel part 1

- ☉ Introductory activity (e.g. facilitated discussion about the Wheel)
- ☉ Nature walk for identifying the four stages of the Wheel in the Nature
- ☉ Sharing and group discussion
- ☉ Presentation of the Ecocentric and Egocentric Wheel

Session 3 - Ecocentric developmental wheel part 2

- ☉ Discussion and Q&A about the previous session
- ☉ Work in small groups (brainstorming activities for accomplishing the developmental tasks for stages 1,2,3,4)
- ☉ Presentation of results
- ☉ Debriefing/Sharing/Discussion

Session 4 – Reflection – same like day 2

Evening activity

- ☉ Practice demonstration (e.g. Star gazing, Storytelling, Fire making etc.)

Day 4

Session 1 - Morning rituals – same as day 1

Session 2 – Experiencing practices for tasks from Stage 1 of the Wheel

- ☉ Play ground: giving the participants the opportunity to do (choose freely) the following:
 - Gardening
 - Spending time alone in nature
 - Practicing mindfulness in nature
 - Doing some art forms: sculpting, drawing, music, poetry, short stories, dance, origami
 - Playing with infants
 - Talking to a tree
 - Collecting nature objects
 - Playing childhood games
 - Doing some land art
 - Reviewing last days and identifying situations when one could be more innocent (infant). Journaling it
- ☉ Sharing results of the Playground
- ☉ Debriefing/Sharing/Discussion

Session 3 - Experiencing practices for tasks from Stage 2 of the Wheel

- ☉ Bread making (can be some other practice suitable for stage 2)
- ☉ Debriefing/Sharing/Discussion

Session 4 – Reflection – same like day 2

Evening activity

- ☉ Free evening

Day 5

Session 1 - Morning rituals – same as day 1

Session 2 - Experiencing practices for tasks from Stage 3 of the Wheel

- ☉ Four stations – self-discovery:
 - Personal Talents self-evaluation (e.g. possible method - Multiple intelligences)
 - Personal Passions self-evaluation: (e.g. possible method - Coaching questions)
 - Personal Values self-evaluation: (e.g. possible method – Value elicitation by analyzing personal topics)
 - Personal Irritations (e.g. possible method – List of things that make one's angry)
 - Presentation of Daniel Sa Nogueira's model of Life purpose
- ☉ Debriefing/Sharing/Discussion

Session 3 – Free time

- ☉ Free afternoon



Session 4 - Free time

- ☯ Free afternoon

Evening activity

- ☯ Practice demonstration – Rite of passage symbolizing crossing from Stage 3 to Stage 4 (early adolescence to late adolescence – entering mysteries) (e.g. Trans drumming and dancing, Five rhythms, Authentic movement etc.)

Day 6

Session 1 - Morning rituals – same as day 1

Session 2 - Experiencing practices for tasks from Stage 4 of the Wheel

- ☯ Instructions and preparation for solo time in nature
- ☯ Hike to a suitable natural place

Session 3 - Experiencing practices for tasks from Stage 4 of the Wheel

- ☯ Letter of intention (e.g. what changes you want to make, what are your longings, dreams, cravings, deep wishes?)
- ☯ Solo time – 3 h
- ☯ Sharing circle + food feast
- ☯ Debriefing/Sharing/Discussion

Session 4 – Celebration of successful completion of solo

- ☯ Sun gazing at Sunset from a high place in the nature
- ☯ Reflection (optional)

Evening activity

- ☯ Optional – Open space (Delivering activities by participants for the rest of the group. This is a symbolic representation of growing in adulthood and delivering for others.)

Day 7

Session 1 - Morning rituals – same as day 1

Session 2 – Application/Action planning

- ☯ Working on the application plan (professional action plan) - Optional
 - Think of the profile of your target group (age, place, the stage they are in, their needs)
 - What can I provide to them? (based on your values, talents, passions, things that make you angry) make a list of activities
 - Write the activities on a paper and share them with other participants
 - Make an action plan: what-how-when
- ☯ Personal transformation plan
 - What are the results I want to achieve?
 - What are the practices/types of behavior that will help?
 - How am I going to implement them in my life?
 - Reflection groups: to continue supporting each other later on.

Session 3 – Final evaluation

- ☯ Evaluation of achieving the training objectives
- ☯ Evaluation of achieving Personal learning goals
- ☯ Non-formal evaluation activity (e.g. Free writing on posters)
- ☯ Final group walk in nature

Session 4 – Closing ceremony

- ☯ Final sharing (e.g. Council “What do you leave behind and what do you open?”)
- ☯ Meditation (choose a type suitable for the group level)



APPENDIX

DETERMINING ONE'S ECD STAGE

The identifying signs of your stage (more or less from the most definitive to the least) are:

- Your current **psychospiritual center of gravity** (see p. 64 of *Nature and the human soul*, and then the introductory sections of the chapters on the stages you are wondering about)
- The **primary developmental tasks** you find yourself working on (see p. 69)
- The developmental **archetypes** with which you and your behavior most fully resonate (see p. 67)
- The **primary psychosocial gift** to community that you manifest without trying (simply through your presence) (see p. 68)
- Your **circle of identity** (see p. 70)

Please remember these things:

1. *If you get different answers using the above identifying signs, then the first (center of gravity) is most definitive,*
2. *Not only is it possible to be working on the tasks of earlier stages (as well as your own), but everybody has unfinished work in all previous stages, and consequently everyone can always be working on those earlier tasks as well as those of their present stage.*

Page references are from Bill Plotkin, "Nature and the human soul" - <http://www.natureandthehumansoul.com/newbook/>

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

In this section you will find questions that can help in the process for self-discovery and personal/professional transformation. They can be supportive in creating personal developmental plans, self-assessment and self-exploration. The questions are related to Ecocentric developmental stages and Positive psychology elements and are relevant to both concepts.

The questions are divided in two subsections – ECD stage based and Self-discovery. The questions from the Self-discovery section are part of an online Self-discovery process that you can find at -

<https://learningforchange.net/courses/>.

The questions can be used by facilitators (trainers, Youth workers, counsellors, guides) in activities provided for young people but can also be used personally for one's own work.

More details of how to use the questions you can find at the beginning of the manual in the section "Methodology for personal and professional development."

ECOCENTRIC DEVELOPMENT STAGE BASED QUESTIONS

Source: Bill Plotkin, "Nature and the human soul" - <http://www.natureandthehumansoul.com/newbook/>

Questions for general evaluation of one's ECD stage

- ☯ Which aspects of earlier stages do you believe you lived fully, not lived, lived partially?
- ☯ What is one quality from an earlier stage that you want to deepen into? How exactly will you do this? When will you do it? For how long will you keep it up?
- ☯ Write about your personal role models, your personal heroes, beings you have learned from (human and non-human, imaginal and perceptible). What are the qualities they exhibit from the different stages (as far as you can tell)?
- ☯ What are your current, primary responsibilities in life? Challenges?
- ☯ What is calling you to a larger story, a greater life?
- ☯ What is missing in your life today? What is fully lived in your life today?



Questions for stage 1 – developing innocence

- ☯ What have you discovered about your relationship with innocence? Is innocence present in your daily life? In what way(s)?
- ☯ What is innocence for you, and what is your relationship to innocence? How does innocence live in you (or not)?
- ☯ Explore how friends and family members understand and experience innocence in their own lives. What does it mean to them? What images does it evoke? How do their responses broaden or sharpen your own understanding and experience of innocence?

Questions for stage 2 - developing the explorer within

- ☯ What is your experience of life from this 7-year old perspective? What is important to you as a 7-year old? What attracts you? What is fascinating, alluring, interesting?
- ☯ Reflect back on your childhood.
What was your life like then? What was hard for you? Easy? In what ways were you encouraged or blocked in being a healthy Explorer in a wholesome Garden? What is clearly alive in you now from a soulcentric Garden? What not? Applying your experience to everyday life: What additional Explorer qualities would serve you now in your daily life? In what ways would they serve you? Choose one Explorer quality and make a commitment to live it more fully every day for the next two weeks.

Questions for stage 3 - developing authenticity

Reflect on your life since puberty, and reflect in your journal about the ways you have succeeded (or not) in living in a way that's authentic and socially successful. Include your ways of living at home, at work, with friends, on a date, in wild or semi-wild places, when alone, with your sexuality, in conflict situations, in relating to the complementary sex, in romance, with other beloveds (whether human, pet, untamed creatures, a higher power, etc.).

- ☯ How/where/when do you choose authenticity over acceptance? What enables you to do this? Do you ever over do it? In what way?
- ☯ How/where/when do you choose acceptance over authenticity? Why? What are your fears? If these fears were realized, would they destroy you? Do you have the skills and resources to address things differently now?
- ☯ How polished are your skills with emotions, conflict resolution, status assigning, romance, sex, and communication?
- ☯ Have you adequately studied and understood human-nature reciprocity and ecological responsibility?
- ☯ Are you living your inner fire? In what ways? What enables you to do this?
- ☯ What stands do you take on the big topics and concerns in our society? Do you need to learn more about local and world events? Are you afraid to learn more? If so, why? Is your life adequately aligned with your positions on the big issues? In what ways? In what ways not?
- ☯ Who are your friends? What roles do you take with them? Are the relationships satisfying? Do they stretch and grow you? Or do they keep you stuck in old, unsatisfying patterns?
- ☯ In which circumstances are you self-confident? Which not? Why?
- ☯ What have your addictions been (then and now)? Why?

Questions for stage 4 - leaving home (leaving behind the old identity)

Make a list of the times you've lost your sense of identity. Some might have been consciously chosen (like career change or retirement when you lose your identity within the work world), others may have been forced upon you (like aging or loss of mobility resulting in the loss of your identity as an athlete). Each of these losses can be a way of leaving the home we had previously built for ourselves. For each loss of identity, consider how it changed you, what new resources were developed, and the possibility you have unfinished grieving to do (especially if you looked forward to the change and never truly explored what you lost).

Describe or portray your first home of belonging. What did you (not) love about it? How and when did you leave it? Which aspects of you have not yet left? How well are you doing today striding into the unknown?



SELF DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

☯ How is your ordinary day?

Describe a typical day of your life, from the moment you wake up to the moment you fall asleep. Write down what your daily habits, routines, rituals, activities are and how much time you allocate in each one of them. If on the weekends you experience different activities, write that down as well. Once you finish the task, take a final look at what you have written. Notice any insights you might have had.

☯ How would you describe an extra-ordinary, wonderful and innocent world?

In your notebook, explain how an innocent world would look like. In an extra-ordinary, wonderful world, how would the people behave? How would the Earth be? How would you be?

☯ How much joy do you have in your life?

How often do you smile? How often do you laugh? What are the elements that add joy to your life? What are the elements that add excitement to your day? Take some time and reflect on them.

☯ What do you want to explore further?

What is the next thing you want to learn about? What are the places you still want to visit? What topics would you like to explore? What is still there for you to try?

☯ Who are you?

Really, who are you? What is your authentic self? Take a pencil and answer this question at least 30 times! Be honest with yourself, patient and open to embrace every aspect of you!

☯ What is your relation with your close ones?

Who are your closest people? What kind of relation do you have with them? How do you treat them and how do they treat you? Why?

☯ What are your strengths?

What are the strongest assets of your personality? These may include aspects from your physical, emotional, mental or spiritual dimension. Make a list of at least 20 of them! Keep going even if it is challenging!

☯ What is the change you want to have but haven't dared to make yet?

Once upon a time, there was a tiny thought that got into your head! A thought of a change you want to pursue. This thought has been growing over time, it became strong and powerful and requests action from you! What is this change you want to make but have not dared to make yet? What keeps you delaying it?

☯ How much do you trust life?

Do you think that life is malign (harmful to you), benign (helpful to you) or indifferent? What makes you think so?

☯ How grateful are you?

Bring to your attention everything you have, everything you can do and everything that you are? How thankful are you for these gifts? How do you express your gratitude and how frequently?

☯ What is your purpose?

Why are you here now? What are you here to serve? What is your purpose in life?

While you answer these questions please keep in mind the 3 following aspects:

Be gentle to yourself when answering the question! Many people struggle for years to get to this answer or even worse neglect its importance for humanity. Working with the purpose requires a special soul awakening and it is definitely a long and challenging process! If you are thinking about it, you are on the right track!

There is not always a definitive one-line sentence to answer this question. You may feel the direction of your purpose (let's say working with people) or the key elements it includes (for example nature and finance). If you get to this, it is fantastic!

The purpose in life can change throughout time! Every day you wake up as a different person! Even your cells die and regenerate! Time makes you stronger and wiser and it would be inappropriate to believe that we will all have the same purpose throughout time! It is normal if we make shifts or get deeper into our commitments.



- ☯ **What inspires you?**
Who inspires you? What phenomenon inspires you? Why? What does inspiration give to you?
- ☯ **What is your reality?**
Describe all the things that form your reality right now- where you live, what you currently work on, who surrounds you, etc.
- ☯ **What brings happiness and fulfilment to your life?**
Elaborate on your level of happiness. Write down how you enjoy your life. Where do you find fulfilment in life? What are the elements that contribute the most to your happiness? Is there anything missing that will make you happier or your life more fulfilling?
- ☯ **What are your current, primary responsibilities in life?**
Describe the things that you are responsible for. What concerns you and what are you obligated to perform? What is included in your "to do list"? How satisfied are you with these?
- ☯ **What is your mastery?**
What are the things that make time fly for you and put you in the flow? Which are your most developed competencies that help you immerse completely into the activity? What in your professional activities makes you proud? What gives you the biggest sense of achievement?
- ☯ **How much do you seek attention from others?**
Describe if and how you seek the attention of others. In what situations does this attention seeking appear? Why?
- ☯ **How do you speak to yourself?**
Notice how you speak to yourself in different situations. What changes occur depending on the situation?
- ☯ **How much do you trust yourself?**
Do you feel you can trust your abilities (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual)? How confident are you that you can take care of yourself and cover all your needs on time? How confident do you feel about taking care of others using your abilities (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual)?
- ☯ **How much do you trust others?**
Are you a trustful person? Do you believe that people are true, able and caring? Can you rely on others about your food, clothes, work or even life?

You can find whole self-discovery tool „Pocket book” or enroll for online course „Self-discovery – individual reflection and practical process” based on this questions and practices on www.learningforchange.net



ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ECOCENTRIC DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

Based on: Bill Plotkin, "Nature and the human soul", (New World Library, Novato, California 2008);
<http://www.natureandthehumansoul.com/newbook/default.htm> ; <https://animas.org/>

In the table you will find:

- 🕒 the characteristics of every stage
- 🕒 tools and practices for accomplishing the tasks of your current stage
- 🕒 how to work on unfinished tasks from previous stages later on in life

EAST Stages 1 & 8	Archetype of the direction: The Fool
Stage 1:	The Nest - early childhood
Characteristics of this stage <i>Passage into this stage:</i> Birth <i>Archetype of the stage:</i> The Innocent <i>Gift:</i> Innocence, joy and luminous presence <i>Tasks</i> (managed by parents or caregivers): The preservation of innocence and the formation of a healthy, intact, culturally viable ego.	
How to accomplish the developmental task for those in this stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 By living a soulcentric life. 🕒 The developmental tasks are your focus. 🕒 Do not force learning. 🕒 Set aside technology until school years. 🕒 NO TV 🕒 Create a life style which allows you to stay with your children. 🕒 Grow your children close to nature. 	
How to work on this stage task later in life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🕒 Focusing on the developmental tasks 🕒 Meditation 🕒 Contemplative arts for present –centeredness 🕒 Contemplative prayer 🕒 Tai chi 🕒 Yoga 🕒 Quigong 🕒 Buddhist vipassana 🕒 Zen practices. 🕒 Solitude in nature (full-bodied, multisensory, openhearted time in the wild, in which you offer your attention fully to the land, water, sky, animals etc.) 🕒 Mindfulness in nature 🕒 Art: sculpting, collage, music, poetry, short stories, dance. 🕒 Following your intuition 🕒 Psychotherapy, therapeutic practices (Gestalt: feeling and behaviors here and now) 🕒 Enter social occasions with no expectations, curious; say whatever comes to your mind 🕒 Practice innocent presence 🕒 Review your day to find 1-2 situations when you could have been more innocent, infant-like 🕒 Spend time with infants, the teachers of innocence 🕒 Reconnect with the child you were in the past and spend some time as a child 	



SOUTH Stages 2 & 3	Archetype of the direction: The Orphan
Stage 2:	The Garden - middle childhood
<p>Characteristics of this stage</p> <p><i>Passage:</i> Naming (celebrating the emergence of conscious self-awareness)</p> <p><i>Archetype of the stage:</i> The Explorer</p> <p><i>Gift:</i> Wonder</p> <p><i>Task:</i> Learning the givens of the world and our place in it</p> <p><i>Sub-tasks:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discovering the enchantment of the natural world. Four realms of nature = <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Wild nature (the other-than-human-world) b. The human body (including the five senses) c. Imagination (especially dreams and spontaneous imaginings) d. Emotions 2. Learning cultural ways: the social practices, values, knowledge, history, mythology, and cosmology of one's family and culture 	
<p>How to accomplish the developmental tasks for those in this stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Long walks in nature with parents. ☉ Free play in nature forests. ☉ See, hear, and touch natural things. ☉ Contact with wild animals in their natural habitat (NOT in the ZOO). ☉ Making forts, creating small imaginary worlds, hunting, gathering, follow streams exploring the landscape, searching for treasures, taking care of animals, gardening, shaping the earth. ☉ Study of botany, zoology and ecology. ☉ Intellectual activities connected with nature. ☉ Support the children use their body, mind, heart, hands. ☉ Encourage the dream life of the children, invite children to tell their dreams. <div> <div> <p>Creating a Shelter from Egocentrism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Minimize or eliminate children's exposure to TV ☉ Limit video games and movies watched at home, because the child needs to exercise their imagination with other children, family, nature, books and arts ☉ Be selective with the movies, games, music, books, stories ☉ Have a few nights a week when computers are off, and the activities that are made rely on imagination, emotion, senses and independent critical thinking ☉ Limit the time spent in competitive activities/sports ☉ Avoid gifting your children with commercial toys and products </div> <div> <p>Creating a Soulcentric and Ecocentric Family Lifestyle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Focus on the developmental tasks ☉ Hold regular meetings to discuss important family issues. ☉ Spend time in nature with your children: learn the leaves, seeds, fruits, trees, barks etc. and nature museums, gardens, history museums etc. ☉ Nature stories told by elders ☉ Let your children explore the outdoors with other children ☉ Develop and active life in nature ☉ Volunteer for different causes and work with the animals ☉ Develop relationships with sacred places and visit them with your family ☉ Cultivate a true community in which to live in </div> </div>	
<p>How to work on this stage tasks later in life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Spend time with a pre-pubertal child in wild places. ☉ Become a naturalist, visit nature, learn about the nature elements. ☉ Talk to a tree, climb a tree. ☉ Return to your childhood and behave for a while like a child. ☉ Surrender your adult agenda. ☉ Collect nature objects. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Immerse yourself in expressive arts. ☉ Try Authentic Movement or 5 rhythms. ☉ Become a gardener with emphasis on wonder and play. ☉ Read a book on Universe Story. ☉ Gaze at the stars. ☉ Watch for synchronicities. ☉ Learn a new language. ☉ Lose yourself in poetry. 	



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Take courses on dreamwork, imagery journeys, art, dance, music or creative writing. ☉ Play childhood games. ☉ Ride a mountain bike. ☉ Do something new. ☉ Go to a children's museum, or amusement park. 	
Stage 3: The Oasis (Social Individuation) - early adolescence	
Characteristics of this stage <i>Passage:</i> Puberty (when we begin to experience ourselves primarily as members of a peer group and community beyond our membership in family and nature) <i>Archetype of the stage:</i> The Thespian <i>Gift:</i> Fire <i>Task:</i> Creating a secure and authentic social self (one that generates adequate amounts of both social acceptance and self-approval) <i>Sub-tasks:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Value exploration and learning the skills of social authenticity 2. Emotional skills: emotional access, insight, action, and illumination 3. Art of conflict resolution (with both outer and inner conflicts) 4. Status-assigning skills 5. Skills with sex and sexual relationships 6. Sustenance skills 7. Studying human-nature reciprocity and ecological responsibility 8. Welcoming home the Loyal Soldier 	
How to accomplish the developmental tasks for those in this stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Exploring and finding your passions/talents and manifesting them ☉ Exploring your emotions and develop emotional intelligence ☉ Make positive affirmations for others ☉ Joining a musical band, theatre group, sports team etc ☉ Doing street art ☉ Making social campaigns, flash mobs ☉ Learning primitive skills and survival strategies ☉ Visiting a counsellor, psychologist, coach, mentor etc ☉ Doing common activities with the family ☉ Reconnecting with your family ☉ Joining a youth club ☉ Going to youth camps ☉ Doing voluntary work ☉ Joining an organization - Scouts, local charity etc ☉ Finding a job, initiating a business ☉ Learning about sexuality ☉ Exploring relationships, having a partner ☉ Keeping a personal journal ☉ Writing a blog/ making a vlog ☉ Initiating and developing a personal project ☉ Going in nature: camping, animal tracking, hiking, canoeing, fire making, foraging, learning the medicinal plants etc ☉ Learning professional skills: developing the 8 key competences for becoming self-sustainable ☉ Mastering a foreign language ☉ Attending workshops on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improvisation theatre ○ Multiple intelligences ○ Non-violent communication/Conflict resolution ○ Communication ○ Socio-educational animation ○ Self-discovery ○ Public speaking ○ Storytelling ○ Time management, personal planning, goals setting ○ Career guidance and planning 	
How to work on this stage tasks later in life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Consider where you sit with the tasks of the first two life stages (the Nest and the Garden), especially the reclamation of your original innocence and your familiarity and comfort with the enchantments of wild nature. Working on these aspects would be a good place to start. ☉ Work on the Oasis tasks. ☉ Healing the emotional wounds and developing trust and intimacy with the help of therapeutic methods which are authenticity oriented, emotion and body based, imagination-valuing, such as depth or existential psychotherapy, Gestalt, psychosynthesis, Hakomi, expressive arts, psychodrama, or Internal Family Systems. 	



WEST Stages 4 & 5	Archetype of the direction: The Visionary
Stage 4:	The Cocoon - late adolescence
<p>Characteristics of this stage</p> <p><i>Passage:</i> Confirmation (of adequate completion of the adolescent personality and hence preparedness for the descent to soul)</p> <p><i>Archetype of the stage:</i> The Wanderer</p> <p><i>Gift:</i> Mystery and Darkness</p> <p><i>Task #1:</i> Leaving Home (i.e., relinquishing the adolescent identity)</p> <p>A. Honing the skills of physical, psychological, and social self-reliance</p> <p>B. Relinquishing attachment to the adolescent personality</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p>1. Addressing developmental deficits from earlier stages</p> <p>2. Giving up addictions</p> <p>3. Exploration of the Sacred Wound</p> </div> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p>4. Learning to choose authenticity over acceptance</p> <p>5. Making peace with the past (the Death Lodge)</p> <p>6. Learning the art of disidentification through the practice of meditation</p> </div> </div> <p><i>Task #2:</i> Exploring the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche</p> <p>A. Acquiring and using soulcraft skills (examples: dreamwork, the way of council, self-designed ceremony, nature dialogues, deep imagery, trance drumming and dancing, signs and omens, soul poetry, symbolic artwork, plant allies, fasting, tracking)</p> <p>B. Cultivating a soulful relationship to life</p> <p>Practices and disciplines that support Task #2B:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p>1. The art of solitude</p> <p>2. Discovering nature as mirror</p> <p>3. Wandering in nature</p> <p>4. Living the questions of soul</p> <p>5. Confronting one's own death</p> <p>6. The art of Shadow work</p> <p>7. The art of romance</p> </div> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p>8. Mindfulness practice</p> <p>9. Volunteering</p> <p>10. Advanced Loyal Soldier work</p> <p>11. Developing the four dimensions of the Self</p> <p>12. Praising the world</p> <p>13. Developing a personal relationship with spirit</p> </div> </div>	
<p>How to accomplish the developmental tasks for those in this stage</p> <div style="display: flex;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☯ Working on the previous developmental tasks and activities ☯ Making movement/sport a habit ☯ Choosing the friends and social groups where you can develop your authenticity ☯ Learning new professional skills, that are based on your authentic gifts, talents, passions ☯ Working with a specialist (therapist, mentor, guide, counselor) on your personal wounds, difficulties from your past ☯ Forgiving your care givers and those that gave you difficult times in your previous life stages ☯ Attending psychological/emotional healing activities ☯ Reading soulcentric and spiritual books ☯ Spending time alone in nature ☯ Developing your own spirituality and spiritual practices ☯ Make your own altar ☯ Make a pilgrimage ☯ Find a sacred space and visit it regularly ☯ Make authentic movement, 5 rhythms. </div> <div style="flex: 1;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☯ Write in a journal ☯ Follow ecstatic dance workshops ☯ Do contemporary dance and embodiment ☯ Attend soulcentric/ecocentric workshops and retreats ☯ Visit spiritual temples ☯ Engage in sacred conversations with other people (deep conversations about topics connect with this stage: e.g. meaning in life, what is love and a relationship, your longings etc. ☯ Get involved in civic actions to protect the Earth and society (find your cause) ☯ Fasting ☯ Praying ☯ Working with intentions ☯ Include ceremonies and rituals in your regular activities ☯ The Way of Council ☯ Attend rites of passages ☯ Solo time in nature ☯ Attend a vision quest ☯ Attend a sweat lodge </div> </div>	



FOR STAGES 5 and 6, THE APPRENTICE AT THE WELLSRING and THE ARTISAN IN THE WILD ORCHARD

If you're in stage 5 or 6 and have no doubt about it, then for the most part you know what you need to do. Go for it! (Reading chapters 8 & 9 from "Nature and the Human Soul" (Bill Plotkin) will clarify what we mean by "go for it!") In addition, further engaging the two tasks of stage 4 will result in additional stage 5 and 6 opportunities. Great benefit can also be experienced by working on the stage 1-3 tasks that are most incomplete. This enriches and strengthens what you can bring to stage 5 and later tasks.

FOR STAGE 7, THE MASTER IN THE GROVE OF ELDERS and FOR STAGE 8, THE SAGE IN THE MOUNTIAN CAVE

If you're in stage 7 and 8, it's time for you to at least begin the process of giving up doing.

NATURE AS A SOURCE FOR SUSTAINABLE LIFE

"There is mounting evidence that contact with nature has significant positive impacts on mental health. It is associated with reduced levels of stress — which also has huge ramifications for physical health, reduced levels of depression and anxiety, increased resilience, increased engagement with learning for children and adolescents otherwise disengaged from the education system, improved self-esteem and increased capacity to engage socially."

Mardie Townsend, PhD, professor at the School of Health and Social Development at Deakin University in Australia.

Nature offers one of the most reliable boosts to your mental and physical well-being. Here are just a few potential benefits:

Improved short-term memory

Study on depressed individuals found that walks in nature boosted working memory much more than walks in urban environments.

Sources: Psychological Science, 2008; Journal of Affective Disorders, 2013

Restored mental energy

One study found that people's mental energy bounced back even when they just looked at pictures of nature. (Pictures of city scenes had no such effect.) Studies have also found that natural beauty can elicit feelings of awe, which is one of the surest ways to experience a mental boost.

Sources: Journal of Environmental Psychology, 1995; Journal of Environmental Psychology, 2005; Psychological Science, 2012

Stress relief

In study, researchers found a decrease in both heart rate and levels of cortisol in subjects in the forest when compared to those in the city. Among office workers, even the view of nature out a window is associated with lower stress and higher job satisfaction.

Sources: Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research, 2007; Environmental Health and Preventative Medicine, 2010; Japanese Journal of Hygiene, 2011; Biomedical and Environmental Sciences, 2012

Improved concentration

We know the natural environment is "restorative," and one thing that a walk outside can restore is your waning attention. The attentional effect of nature is so strong it might help kids with ADHD, who have been found to concentrate better after just 20 minutes in a park.



Sources: Environment & Behavior, 1991; Journal of Environmental Psychology, 1995 (2); Journal of Attention Disorders, 2008

Sharper thinking and creativity

Another study found that people immersed in nature for four days — significantly more time than a lunchtime walk in the park — boosted their performance on a creative problem-solving test by 50%.

Sources: Psychological Science, 2008; PLOS ONE, 2012

Improved mental health

Anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues may all be eased by some time in the great outdoors — especially when that's combined with exercise. (This is to be expected, to some extent, as both greenery and exercise are known to reduce stress.)

Sources: Environmental Science and Technology, 2010; Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine, 2012; Journal of Affective Disorders, 2013

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- 🕒 Plotkin, B. (2013), Wild Mind: A Field Guide to the Human Psyche, New World Library, Novato, California, ISBN: 978-1608681785 (<http://www.wildmindbook.com/>)

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- 🕒 Seligman, M., Parks, A., & Steen T. (2004). A balanced psychology and a full life. *The Royal Society*. Retrieved from <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/psych/seligman/balancedpsychologyarticle.pdf>



RECOMMENDATIONS

In the recommendations section we provide you with more articles and books, videos and web pages related to the topics of this manual – Ecocentric development, Positive psychology and Youth work:

Suggested articles

Youth work

- ① Council of Europe and European Commission, (2002): T-Kit on Training Essentials - <http://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-6-training-essentials?inheritRedirect=true>
- ① Helmut Fennes and Hendrik Otten (2008): Quality in non-formal education and training in the field of European Youth work - <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-1615/TrainingQualityandCompetenceStudy.pdf?>
- ① Developing Facilitation Skills - A Handbook for Group Facilitators - Patricia Prendiville; Updated December 2002; New Edition 2008; ISBN 978-1-905485-67-3
- ① Compass Manual for human rights education with young people - http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/eycb/Source/Compass_2012_FINAL.pdf
- ① Experiential Learning: A Best Practice Handbook for Educators and Trainers - <http://www.amazon.com/Experiential-Learning-Practice-Handbook-Educators/dp/0749444894>
- ① Quality Youth Work - A common framework for the further development of Youth work. Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States - http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/quality-youth-work_en.pdf

Suggested books

Youth work, personal development and education

- ① The Element – Ken Robinson - <http://www.amazon.com/The-Element-Finding-Passion-Everything/dp/0143116738>
- ① Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step - Edward de Bono - <http://www.amazon.com/Lateral-Thinking-Creativity-Perennial-Library/dp/0060903252>
- ① The 7 habits of highly effective people - Stephen R. Covey - <https://www.stephencovey.com/7habits/7habits.php>
- ① Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life - Marshall B Rosenberg - <http://www.amazon.com/Nonviolent-Communication-A-Language-Life/dp/1892005034>
- ① The Way of Council - Jack Zimmerman - <http://www.amazon.com/The-Way-Council-Jack-Zimmerman/dp/1883647053>
- ① Emotional Intelligence - Daniel Goleman - <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Emotional-Intelligence-Matter-More-Than/dp/0747528306>
- ① Start with why - Simon Sinek - <http://www.amazon.com/Start-Why-Leaders-Inspire-Everyone/dp/1591846447>
- ① Experience and education - John Dewey - <http://www.amazon.com/Experience-And-Education-John-Dewey/dp/0684838281>
- ① Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons in Theory and Practice - http://www.amazon.com/Multiple-Intelligences-Horizons-Theory-Practice/dp/0465047688/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8

Ecocentric development

- ① Plotkin, B. (2008), Nature and the human soul, New World Library, Novato, California, ISBN: 9781577315513
- ① Plotkin, B. (2003), Soulcraft: Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche, New World Library, Novato, California, ISBN: 1-57731-422-0
- ① Plotkin, B. (2013), Wild Mind: A Field Guide to the Human Psyche, New World Library, Novato, California, ISBN: 978-1608681785



Suggested video

Youth work, personal development and education

- 🕒 Top documentaries - <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/>
- 🕒 The school of life – YouTube channel - <https://www.youtube.com/user/schooloflifechannel>
- 🕒 Ultimate camp resource – YouTube channel with lots of videos - <https://www.youtube.com/user/ultimatecampresource>
- 🕒 How We Learn - Synapses and Neural Pathways - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEwg8TeipfQ>
- 🕒 Character Education with Outward Bound (Outdoor education) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFoW-rbXeqU>
- 🕒 Democratic schools: Imagine a School...Summerhill - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE20ylESsY4>
- 🕒 The Forbidden Education – documentary - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RBBVL1Sah0>
- 🕒 Billions in Change Official Film - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YY7f1t9y9a0>
- 🕒 Ken Robinson on Passion - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-M8Hl5MUr8w>
- 🕒 TED-ED – Lessons worth sharing - <http://ed.ted.com/>

Ecocentric developmental, Medicine wheel, Rites of passage

- 🕒 Medicine wheel 1,2,3 - <https://youtu.be/fiGrFHy463q> ; <https://youtu.be/tK-RdmQwlvI> ; <https://youtu.be/3HF1UBY2vjQ>
- 🕒 Heroes journey - <https://youtu.be/OAE8fPbXr58?list=PLMm-0ccB-CYoCd78b3HuFXgAgAp7Q> Urs ; <https://youtu.be/YqIJUJmnc-Y> ;
- 🕒 Ecocentric development – <https://youtu.be/ITWJ3aUJ4jA> ;
- 🕒 Shamanism - <https://youtu.be/BmRhBdNIh1A> ;
- 🕒 John Trudell - <https://youtu.be/q2WEVdNQAxE>
- 🕒 Nature - <https://youtu.be/HTdIMC6NZU4> ; <https://youtu.be/Ji6q2HSUNKU>
- 🕒 Rites of passage - <https://youtu.be/FKp2Hq7GYHc> ; <https://youtu.be/z6y6AtWycAo> ; <https://youtu.be/b97HcFYy7AM>
- 🕒 Few presentations of Bill Plotkin:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mF0dR1XCNYQ&t=267s>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITWJ3aUJ4jA&t=2108s>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqT2AQ3Yvfs&t=258s>

Suggested web pages

Youth work, personal development and education

- 🕒 Take free online classes from 120+ top universities and educational organizations - <https://www.coursera.org/>
- 🕒 Resources, tools, and solutions for teachers, administrators, and parents. - <http://www.edutopia.org/>
- 🕒 The *Heroic Imagination Project (HIP)* is a non-profit organization that teaches people how to take effective action in challenging situations.- <http://heroicimagination.org/>
- 🕒 Ultimate camp resource (collection of games and outdoor activities) - <http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/>
- 🕒 Salto Tool Box Hundreds of useful tools for learning - for Youth work and training activities - <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/>
- 🕒 Solution Focused Therapy - http://www.sfbta.org/about_sfbt.html
- 🕒 SALTO Educational Tools Portal - <http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/platform/>

Ecocentric development, Practices, Courses and programs

- 🕒 Animas Valley Institute (Bill Plotkin's organization) - <https://animas.org/>
- 🕒 Animas Valley Institute programs - <https://animas.org/programs/>
- 🕒 Schumacher College - <https://www.schumachercollege.org.uk/>
- 🕒 The Way of council instructions - <http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/en/tools/way-council>



- 🕒 Wilderness awareness school – resources and courses - <https://wildernessawareness.org/>
- 🕒 The list of activities for each stage of the Wheel - <http://natureandthehumansoul.com/newbook/experiential.htm>
- 🕒 The book Nature and the Human Soul - <http://natureandthehumansoul.com/newbook/>
The book Wild Mind - <http://www.wildmindbook.com/>
- 🕒 These are **two great soul poets**:
 - David Whyte <http://www.davidwhyte.com/#home>
 - Mary Oliver <http://peacefulrivers.homestead.com/maryliver.html>
- 🕒 Joanna Macy:
 - <http://www.joannamacy.net/>
 - <http://www.joannamacy.net/thegreatturning.html>

Positive psychology, Mindfulness, Happiness

- 🕒 The Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania - <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/>
- 🕒 Positive Psychology Program Blog - <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/blog/>
- 🕒 Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley - <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>
- 🕒 PP by University of Pennsylvania - <https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/>
- 🕒 Mindfulness - <https://www.mindful.org/>
- 🕒 Mindfulness - <https://www.pocketmindfulness.com/>
- 🕒 Contemplative practices - <http://www.contemplativemind.org/>
- 🕒 Mindfulness Therapy - <http://mindfulnesstherapy.org/home/lori-schwanbeck/>
- 🕒 The biology of emotion <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/magazine/happiness-stress-heart-disease/>
- 🕒 Audio meditations - <http://www.awakeinthewild.com/audio/>
- 🕒 Meditation videos for outdoor athletes - <http://www.awakeinthewild.com/video/>
- 🕒 Meditation - <http://www.lotusvinejourneys.com/new-page-5/>
- 🕒 Daily Science-Backed News for a Happier Life - <http://www.fulfillmentdaily.com/>
- 🕒 Happiness meditation challenge - <https://www.sharonsalzberg.com/28-day-meditation-challenge-2017/>
- 🕒 Flow - <http://www.flowgenomeproject.com/>
- 🕒 Online courses PP - <https://www.positiveacorn.com/>
- 🕒 Free Guided Meditations - <http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>
- 🕒 Guided Mindfulness Exercises - <http://www.freemindfulness.org/download>
- 🕒 Guided Meditations - <https://www.tarabrach.com/guided-meditations/>
- 🕒 Guided Meditation Audio - <http://www.fragrantheart.com/cms/free-audio-meditations>
- 🕒 Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction - <https://palousemindfulness.com/>
- 🕒 Free Mindfulness Audios - <http://www.padraigomorain.com/audio.html>

Positive education

- 🕒 International positive education network - <http://ipen-network.com/>

Spirituality

- 🕒 Spiritual Humour - http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/Spiritual_Humor.html
- 🕒 Meditation and Spirituality - <http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/meditation.html>
- 🕒 Articles about shamanism - <http://www.shamanism.dk/library.htm>
- 🕒 Diagram of Heroes Journey - <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/1b/Heroesjourney.svg/2000px-Heroesjourney.svg.png>
- 🕒 Articles by Stan Grof - <http://www.stanislavgrof.com/page-7/>



Suggested TED talks

Youth work, personal development and education

- 🎧 Sugata Mitra: Kids can teach themselves – 2007 - http://www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_shows_how_kids_teach_themselves
- 🎧 Sugata Mitra: The child-driven education – 2010 - http://www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_the_child_driven_education
- 🎧 Sugata Mitra - Build a School in the Cloud – 2013 - http://www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_build_a_school_in_the_cloud
- 🎧 Ken Robinson - Do schools kill creativity? – 2006 - http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity
- 🎧 Ken Robinson - Bring on the learning revolution! – 2010 - http://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_bring_on_the_revolution
- 🎧 Ken Robinson - How to escape education's Death Valley – 2013 - http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_how_to_escape_education_s_death_valley
- 🎧 Kiran Sethi - Kids, take charge – 2009 - http://www.ted.com/talks/kiran_bir_sethi_teaches_kids_to_take_charge
- 🎧 Jullien Gordon: How to graduate college with a job you love & less debt - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29tJAgc54RA>

Positive psychology, Mindfulness, Happiness

- 🎧 The new era of positive psychology - http://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology#t-1190263
- 🎧 The happy secret to better work - http://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work#t-96586
- 🎧 Want to be happy? Be grateful - http://www.ted.com/talks/david_steindl_rast_want_to_be_happy_be_grateful
- 🎧 What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness - http://www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness
- 🎧 Want to be happier? Stay in the moment - https://www.ted.com/talks/matt_killingsworth_want_to_be_happier_stay_in_the_moment?language=en
- 🎧 Mindfulness, meditation and the brain - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AqgMo1P05E>
- 🎧 All it takes is 10 mindful minutes - http://www.ted.com/talks/andy_puddicombe_all_it_takes_is_10_mindful_minutes
- 🎧 Nature, beauty, gratitude - http://www.ted.com/talks/louie_schwartzberg_nature_beauty_gratitude
- 🎧 Life is easy. Why do we make it so hard? - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21j_OCnLuYg
- 🎧 James Doty speaking at TEDxGoldenGateED - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYfQqbL6Zr0>
- 🎧 Your happiest days are behind you: Robert Biswas-Diener at TEDxUNLV - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QTVv9tAlIE>

Suggested Online courses and Resources by Learning for Change

- 🎧 Online courses – <https://learningforchange.net/courses/>
- 🎧 Resources library - <https://learningforchange.net/knowledge-base/>

Suggested Mobile apps

- 🎧 Bliss - Gratitude Journal - <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.bliss.phonegap>
- 🎧 Meditation & Relaxation - <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.fitness22.meditation>
- 🎧 Calm - Meditate, Sleep, Relax - <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.calm.android>
- 🎧 Meditation Music - <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.metapps.meditationsounds>



FINAL WORDS

Working with youth is not an easy task. The development of young people nowadays is imbalanced in various directions and the rapid changes in the world make this imbalance even more severe.

This manual researched and presented the areas that could utmost benefit the young people and the youth workers themselves. We believe that the innovative approaches illustrated above can support the youth workers to better address the needs of young people today.

We hope that this manual has helped you to build your capacities on the topics of Ecocentric development and Positive Psychology when working with young people and that it will function as a useful tool in your work.

We encourage you to use and disseminate it freely. Young people need youth workers who believe in their potential and inspire them to reach their full potential!



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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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Rumi's answer to questions asked by a disciple

What is Poison?

He replied with a beautiful answer - Anything which is more than our necessity is Poison. It may be Power, Wealth, Hunger, Ego, Greed, Laziness, Love, Ambition, Hate or anything

What is fear.....?

Non acceptance of uncertainty.

If we accept that uncertainty, it becomes adventure...!

What is envy ?

Non acceptance of good in others

If we accept that good, it becomes inspiration...!

What is Anger?

Non acceptance of things which are beyond our control.

If we accept, it becomes tolerance...!

What is hatred?

Non acceptance of person as he is.

If we accept person unconditionally, it becomes love...!

