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# THE 7 ESSENTIAL KEYS FOR PEACE AND WELL BEING

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AN E-BOOK TO ACCELERATE YOUR PERSONAL  
AND PROFESSIONAL EVOLUTION

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## ***INTRODUCTION: The 7 ESSENTIAL KEYS OF PEACE AND WELL BEING***

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The purpose of this E-Book is to facilitate you on a journey up a spiral staircase that will lead you to a higher level of personal evolution. The E-Book contains exercises that are self-directed; that is, you may proceed at your own pace and participate in the exercises and reflections at your own comfort level. It is my desire and intent that this online study will act as a catalyst to your thinking and provide varied resources that will contribute to your personal peace and well being.

In the name of transparency, this writing is a compilation of my personal and professional experiences and belief systems which are rooted in psychology, Native American spirituality, and non-sectarian theology. Miskozikwe Niindiigo Ojibwaymong. I am the red woman from the Ojibway people, a licensed therapist, non-sectarian ordained minister and, most importantly, Ojichaagwan, a spirit within a body. I hope this E-book will help you discover that you are also Ojichaagwan. That is where peace resides.

The 7 ESSENTIAL KEYS TO PEACE AND WELL BEING describes and defines the human processes, or keys, that are necessary to facilitate conscious growth, development and evolution. These processes are often referred to in self-help and theoretical literature. In fact, most psychological and spiritual practices are dependent upon being able to practice the 7 Keys. Without knowing what these keys are, and how to apply them deliberately to unlock the barriers we experience when attempting to delve into our own consciousness, we are left to wrestle blindly with these issues on a hit and miss basis. Whatever spiritual or mental health practices you participate in, applying the 7 Essential Keys will assist you in reaching higher levels of health and wholeness. I teach all my clients the 7 Keys to empower them to unlock the answers they have within themselves. The 7 Keys are the tools of therapeutic and spiritual change and growth, as well as the guide to the human evolutionary process.

Key 1: **SELF-CONCEPT**: How we visualize and define the aspects that make up the Self.

Key 2: **SELF-REFLECTION**: Engaging in serious examination and contemplation of all aspects of the Self.

Key 3: **SELF-AWARENESS**: Intimate knowledge of and relationship with all the aspects of the Self.

Key 4: **SELF-RESPONSIBILITY**: Willingness to be accountable for every aspect and action of the Self. To be response-able.

Key 5: **SELF-ACCEPTANCE**: Willingness to suspend judgement and blame in order to facilitate Self-reflection.

Key 6: **SELF-VALIDATION**: Ability to know, make choices and act upon our personal truth.

Key 7: **SELF-ACTUALIZATION**: Ability to allow the fullest possible expression of all aspects of the Self.

In 45+ years of clinical practice, the two most common responses I get when asking clients what they hope to gain from therapy or personal coaching, and/or what they need more of in their lives, are PEACE AND WELL BEING. These are very desirable and sought after states that are usually experienced only as fleeting moments. Let us begin our journey by getting working definitions of what it is we desire so that we can recognize and seize them when they appear.

**PEACE**: Peace is much more than the absence of war. It can mean the absence of conflict with others or with our Self, but this is more of a benefit of peace, rather than essence of peace itself which is **oneness**. Having put back together the fractured pieces of our being that the trauma of life on earth has wrought.

The root meaning of peace is that of oneness, integration, and wholeness. It can also mean to set as one, to restore, reconcile. It is a core state of being that is reflected in our relationships with our Self, our Higher Power, others and the world. Peace is experienced on a daily basis as living contently in the present moment while being true to our deepest desires, hopes, thoughts, beliefs and needs.

**WELL-BEING**: Well-being is the state of being relatively free from dis-ease, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. If illness, anxiety, depression and despair are present, they are transient and of minimal long-term consequence. Very often they are in response to a specific stressor and will remit when the stressor is relieved. This is the normal adaptive process. If our responses are maladaptive or if our adaptive process is overloaded or chronically stressed or traumatized, we are likely to experience more problems with our health in some way. Well-being is experienced by having the energy, motivation and purpose to look forward to each day and traverse the day's journey with spring in our step. To carry on as a well being.

When peace and well-being are not present, it is a message to us that our Self is shattered, fractured or broken somewhere and that we need to pay careful attention to our processes in order to heal our Self. We may have other people, traditional and/or alternative medicine and/or faith assist us in our healing. Ultimately, however, the healing process takes place from and within the Self.

Does this sound like a tall order? A state of perfection perhaps? Only if you view it as an end result, a state of being you obtain once and for all. It is not. What it is, in reality, is a LIFE'S WORK.

Visualize the journey on spiral staircase on which we pass over the same base points again and again as we climb to higher levels of conscious awareness and development

of our Self. Hold on to this visual. It is essential that we see our Self as a work in progress in order to avoid the dis-ease producing traps of perfectionism, performance and comparison.

Like this web site and the freeways in Houston where I lived for many years, we are all endlessly under construction, each at varying stages of completion in our personal evolutionary process. That is all. Nothing more, but also, nothing less. It is my hope that by learning and practicing the 7 Keys, you will experience peace and well-being and evolve your life into the one you have always dreamed of.

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## **THE 1st KEY: SELF CONCEPT**

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Exercise: Before reading any further, get a sheet of paper and take one minute to write down a description of what a Self is. Ready? Set? Go!

If I was to ask you to write a description of a chair, you would likely be able to give me a quick, general description of its form and function and material make up and perhaps a few specifics from your awareness about a particular chair. When I ask people to describe their Self, as I do as part of every initial assessment, I usually get confused answers with little or no working content and/or, lots of blank stares.

How well did you do? We must have a working concept of the Self in order to be able to accurately assess where we are having problems and where to begin applying our efforts for healing and evolution. Our Self-concept provides the base points on the ground floor of our spiral staircase journey.

The **SELF** is the sum total of all the components of each unique human being, body, soul and spirit. The Self is the Ultimate "I", the 1st person singular. Used this way, I always capitalize the word to honor its meaning.

Looking deeper into the Self, we find that we are a SPIRIT, we have a SOUL and we reside in a BODY. Whether or not you believe in a Creator, God or a Higher Power in any form, the spiritual dimension of our existence must be accounted for. Without it, we are left to experience life like a chair with a missing leg...almost complete, but not quite fully functional.

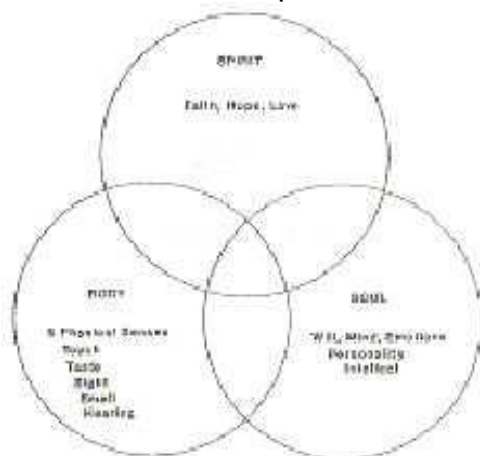
Our **SPIRIT** is our basic life force. The qualities it contains are the intangibles of human existence, the unmeasurable capacities of love, faith, hope, gifts and talents, imagination, intuition and inspiration. These last three qualities I call "THE ESSENTIAL "I's". It is through our imagination, intuition and inspiration that we connect with the rest of creation and participate in the world with our co-creative power. I use the word Creator to express our spiritual essences, regardless of our belief systems, which are often faulty when we begin this journey to our core Self.

Our **SOUL** is made up of more quantifiable aspects. Our mental, emotional and intellectual capacities reside here. From here we experience our thoughts, feelings, will and personality. It functions as our consciousness and as the intermediary of the whole Self.

Our **BODY** is the biochemical suit that clothes our Souls and Spirits. The Body gives us form and enables us to exist and interact on the physical plane. Our 5 physical senses, touch taste, smell sight and sound, ground us in our earthly existence and enable us to experience life's delightful, and sometimes painful, sensations.

We know from the science of Psychoneuroimmunology that the body, soul and spirit are in constant interaction and are totally interdependent. No one area can exist or function by itself and still have a viable human being. It is vital that our SELF-CONCEPT includes this picture of a totally interactive being. Otherwise, we are left to experience life as disconnected and out of balance. Once again, visualize the 3-legged chair.

Below is a more helpful visual, one that enables us to see the Self as whole and connected.



Picture the lines as constantly moving. Each element has its own boundaries but intersects the other elements in the center, or heart of the illustration.

### **THE METAPHOR OF THE HEART**

Throughout the ages, philosophers, poets, theologians and balladeers have written about the praises and pains of the heart. We have an awareness on some level that there is something deep within us that soars or aches or hides or shines above and beyond our ordinary perceptions and experiences. It is something extra-ordinary. I call this the Heart. I conceptualize the Heart as the place in our being where all the aspects of our body, soul and spirit intersect and interact. It is our core and truest Self, the fulcrum of our being that provides the point of balance to all we are and do.

The Latin word for heart is **cor**, from which we derive the word COURAGE. It literally means 'from the heart'. The first definition in Webster's is, 'the attitude or response of facing and dealing with anything dangerous, difficult or painful, instead of withdrawing. It takes courage to peel away the layers of our Shadow self, masks and protective defenses to see the truth in our own hearts. But, that is exactly what we must do if we are to evolve and experience peace and well-being in our human form.

"Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakes". Carl Jung.

**PEACE AND WELL BEING** dwell and emanate from our heart when we are living consciously and in balance with all aspects of our Self. Being unaware of or cut off from or defended against the heart creates depression, anxiety, dis-ease, dysfunctional relationships, and many other types of illnesses.

**EVOLUTION** is a long-term process that produces change, and that change produces a more developed and usually more sophisticated form. It is an unfolding, opening out or working out to a more complete state of being. The spiral staircase is a human evolutionary journey on which we keep reaching beyond what we know and see in order to encounter our human, Creator given potential. The evolutionary process continues in our hearts and encompasses all of our Self...body, soul and spirit, in more ways than we have imagined.

The next 6 Keys are tools that will help you open the door to your heart and allow you to progress in your evolution. Moment to moment, each and every day, we are faced with circumstances and choices that will contribute to our evolution or dissolution. In order to comprehend which is which, we must be courageous and take the next step on the spiral staircase journey.

#### **KEY REFLECTION:**

Before you proceed, take the sheet of paper that you started with and reflect on your own Self-concept now and ponder some important questions. Ask Creator to reveal this to you and see what shows up! How much of your Self and all its aspects are you aware of? Are you out of balance in any area(s)? What area(s) do you need to pay more attention to and/or put more effort in? What would you add or change about this model of the Self? Are there other paradigms you can use to expand this?

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#### ***THE 2<sup>nd</sup> KEY: SELF REFLECTION***

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In his "Apology", Plato attributed Socrates for having said, "The unexamined life is not worth living to a human". The knowledge of the need for Self-reflection has been around for thousands of years. Unfortunately, its practice is often ignored in favor of projection of causality to sources outside of our Selves, which can leave us feeling confused and victimized.

The art of Self-reflection is to seriously engage in examination and contemplation of all aspects of the Self and our life. It is not to just look at ourselves as in a mirror, as the mirrored image reflects the same flaws as the original. The goal of Self-reflection is to determine what is truly transpiring within any aspect of our Self at any given moment. I like the image of the Star Trek android character, 'Data'. He does what he calls a "Self diagnostic" in which he momentarily shuts down and is able to instantly analyze all his systems for any malfunctions. Being human, of course, we are not that efficient, but we

can hold on to the visual as Self-reflection is a critical ingredient to experiencing peace and well-being.

We often hesitate to be Self-reflective because we may not want to know what or who we really are or are afraid of what we might find. It can be painful, scary, especially if we suspect that we are somehow flawed at the core. That is why the 1st Law of Self-Reflection is to SUSPEND JUDGMENT. Or, as Dominguez and Robin say in their book, "Your Money or Your Life", NO SHAME, NO BLAME. It is absolutely vital to approach one's Self as neutrally and as compassionately as possible when engaging in Self-reflection. It must be SAFE for you to reveal your deepest and darkest secrets and desires to your Self. When we are judgmental or critical of ourselves or others, it is not safe, and the very truths we need to know go back underground to hide. Once we are aware of the truths and a bit more Self-validating, we can then sort through them and choose to save or delete them as we deem appropriate to our values and needs. This comes later. First, we must make it safe to be Self-reflective.

Self-reflection is practiced by paying attention in various ways to what is going on within the Self, body, soul and spirit and what is going on around us. Self-reflection requires the use of quiet time, meditation, relaxation, stillness or the feedback from trusted family, friends or therapists. There are many tools available that will help facilitate Self-reflection. I like to use Motherpeace and Sacred Path cards, as the archetypal symbolism is particularly powerful and validating for me. Sometimes I will just sit quietly or use candles and music with a hypnotic rhythm to take me down in to my Self. Songs that I find are sacred to me also help to facilitate this process.

Reading and applying reflective Self-help books and material is good too. (Check out the Reading List in the Resource Library on my web page)

One of the simplest and most effective tools for Self-reflection is journaling. I require my clients to learn and practice this tool. As you have noticed, at the end of every session there is a Key Reflection exercise to assist you in processing and integrating the concepts in this workshop. Journaling is just writing down your immediate thoughts, feelings and experiences...UNCENSORED. Do not worry if it comes out angry or sad or ugly or mean. What is important is that it be free flowing from your heart and not your head. Journaling provides a projective catharsis that can be very revealing and healing. Research has shown that journaling 15-20 minutes a day for at least 3 days in a row will significantly aid in problem resolution and add to a sense of well-being. It is a powerful way to find your own answers from within your Self.

Find what works for you and practice, practice, practice. Explore resources and methods. It takes time to learn, so be patient, but persistent, with your Self.

I was asked recently if all this "Self" stuff wasn't just being 'self absorbed' (asked judgmentally!) Well, it can be, if we get stuck in our own Self importance like the mythological Narcissus. He looked into a pool of water and was so smitten by himself that



he fell in love with himself and was forever doomed to a lonely, isolated existence. That is what we call unhealthy narcissism. There is healthy narcissism, which is not the same as being selfish or unable/unwilling to consider others. Healthy narcissism is the ability to consider the well-being of our Self as well as the well-being of others. Of having empathy. This is not the same as being selfish. The key here is acting out of choice. The Bible very distinctly says that we are to "Love the Lord our God and our neighbor, **as** we love ourselves". There is a spiritual flow that includes all of Creation, of which our own Self is part.

It is essential then, that we take time out of our busy lives to engage in Self-reflection. It is not selfish, but the source of strength that allows us to be fully present for others as well as for our Self. Not taking time out to re-create and refuel often leads to burnout, depression, dis-ease. We can't keep giving away what we don't have. What is it that we have or need to have? That is the topic of the 3rd Key.

### **KEY REFLECTION:**

Take 10 minutes now to journal your thoughts, feelings etc. about the art of Self-reflection, or any other topic that seems important to you at this point. (Sometimes when you start to journal and can't come up with anything to write about, write about not having anything to write about...it'll start the process).

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### ***THE 3rd KEY: SELF AWARENESS***

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Exercise: Before beginning this chapter, get your paper and pen. Give your Self 2 minutes. Write down 10 adjectives in response to the statement "I am"... Go!

It has been my experience with both myself and my clients that a major obstacle we face when attempting to move forward is the problem of 'recognition'. That is, we often don't know enough about who or what we truly are or what our wants, needs, desires, talents, gifts, idiosyncrasies and goals are to make informed choices for our Selves.

At the beginning of every therapy and coaching session, the first thing I say after "Hello" is, "How are you"? I get various answers ranging from good, fine, terrific, horrible, depressed, angry, to suicidal and beyond. No matter what the answer is, my next question is always "Why"? The answer I usually get is "I don't know", followed up with incredulous looks. "I don't know" is NEVER an acceptable answer. It must be followed up with "I'll find out" and the required effort of Self-reflection.

It is very important to know WHAT you are thinking, feeling, believing, and experiencing, but it is not enough. The next step up the spiral staircase is to know WHY we are thinking, feeling, believing, and experiencing what we are. It is a truism that 'perception is reality'.

This is the point where we can actively create a world for ourselves where peace and well-being abide. Are we living the life that is optimum for our Self, or are we living the life we were taught that we should? In order to evolve, we must answer that question and make the choice. We then can employ our "Essential I's", imagination, intuition and inspiration to create the life we were meant to live.

When we are aware of the whys and wherefores, we can deliberately maximize the presence and effect of the positives for our Selves and minimize the presence and effect of the negatives. What thoughts, feelings, behaviors, beliefs, and experiences strengthen you, give you joy, make you smile, feel content? Conversely, which are the ones that make you weak, sad, anxious, depressed, hurt? Take time to reflect on this often, at least once a day. Physical and mental dis-ease will manifest more readily when we have not been mindful of these things, and we've allowed negative influences to accumulate so that our adaptive processes and immune system become overwhelmed.

If we are not aware of these things, we experience life as a crapshoot, dependent on luck, random chance. If we want peace and well-being, then we must be willing to be in control of these processes as much as possible. This means we must also become discriminating about the people, places and events we permit in our lives. To this end, I have 3 primary rules: 1. Whoever or whatever I spend time with must ENHANCE my sense of peace and well-being, more often than not. 2. Whoever or whatever is DISRUPTIVE to my sense of peace and well being cannot be present in my life long. 3. I am in control of what I ALLOW in my life. (Persons, places, things, thoughts, feelings, behaviors, beliefs, etc).

These rules are often contrary to all the shoulds and oughts and rules we've been taught, especially the codependent ones. (Codependence is the antithesis of peace and well-being). So, we need some new rules to practice. (On to the next section, Self-Responsibility.)

**KEY REFLECTION:** Go back to your list of '10 I Ams'. How far did you get? Are there's others you have thought of to write down now? Are the adjectives mostly positive, negative or both? Does your list contain personal attributes (e.g. competent, intelligent) as well as roles (eg. wife, father, professional)? Any you want to change or aspire to? (Remember, you will live and make choices based on how you perceive yourself, so the more positives, the better).

Next, write a 1 page scenario of your perfect life. Let yourself dream. Where would you live? What would you be doing? Who would be with you? How would you feel? What would you have? What do you want to be your personal legacy? Don't forget to also include WHY those things are important for you! This will provide a beginning blueprint towards your evolution and realizing your dreams. The life that I am living now is living proof that this effort at co-creation works!

## **THE 4th KEY: SELF RESPONSIBILITY**

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There are many, and sometimes opposing, schools of thought about the issue of Self-responsibility. At one extreme, you will find those who don't believe they are responsible for anything that happens to them. They perceive themselves as victims of circumstance or the actions of others and often experience their lives as a series of negatives out of their control or influence. At the other extreme, you find those that believe they control everything that happens to them, good, bad or indifferent. Their mantra is 'you create all the experiences of your life'. The truth is somewhere in the middle. We are neither omnipotent nor impotent, but rather, co-creators of our life.

It is true that our thoughts and actions, however conscious or unconscious we are of them, will influence the outcome of events in our lives. It is also true, however, that the thoughts and actions of others will impact these outcomes as well, wanted or not. Rather than get caught up in a mind game with our Selves about this, it is more helpful to think of Self-responsibility as **RESPONSE-ABILITY**.

Self response-ability means we have the will, awareness, and skill to respond to a given situation in a way that promotes resolution and well-being for all concerned. (Keeping in mind the model of loving God, Self and neighbor, we will usually be on track.) The opposite is response-disabled. Response-disabled choices keep us locked into old patterns and problems and prevent progress and change. The following is a table that helps us to discern and choose Self response-able actions over response-disabled actions.

### **RESPONSE-ABLE**

- Focuses on options and solutions
- Willing to acknowledge own participation/contribution
- Willing to acknowledge participation/contribution of others
- Willing to act in the best interests of others as well as oneself
- Willing to explore oneself and adapt, change and develop personal capacities
- Willing to be flexible, open to new and different ideas, options, ways of being and doing
- Willing to RESPECT one's own thoughts, feelings, beliefs, needs, wants desires, gifts, talents, etc. as well as those of others

### **RESPONSE-DISABLED**

- Focuses on problems, negatives
- Projects blame and fault on others

- Focuses blame and/or guilt on Self
- Primarily focused on fulfilling own interests and needs
- Is defensive about Self and repeats patterns and behaviors regardless of outcomes
- Rigid, closed-minded, fearful of differences and changes
- CRITICAL of Self and/or others

By careful monitoring of our responses to events in our life, we can begin to winnow out the response-disabled behaviors and chose the response-abled ones more often. This is challenging work and progress is often slow. This requires you to change some basic ways you learned to relate to the world. Once again, be patient, but persistent with your Self.

We might also begin to recognize when other people and situations are problematic by applying these guidelines. Too often I see people willing to accept response-disabled behavior from them Selves or others for the sake of 'keeping the peace' which it never does. It just prolongs the misery. Response-disabled behavior only creates chaos and con-fusion.

In being Self response-able, we need to be mindful of two principles. **1.** Actions speak louder than words. **2.** There are at least three viable solutions for every problem. The energy put forth in any given moment contributes to our sense of peace and well-being. By following through with our behavior and being open to possibilities, the more response-abled we become. We begin to experience better results, feel more empowered and move to a higher level of evolution on the spiral staircase. This moves us closer to the next step, Self-Acceptance.

### **KEY REFLECTION:**

Using the table above, what are your predominate responses from both categories? Learn the differences between the response-abled choices and the response-disabled choice. Practice the response-abled choices more frequently and monitor your results.

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### ***THE 5th KEY: SELF ACCEPTANCE***

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Exercise: Take a minute now and make 2 lists. One is a list of your talents; the other is a list of your flaws. Ready? Set. Go!

Self-acceptance is both the most difficult as well as the most vital challenge we face on the spiral staircase. It will be necessary to revisit this key time and time again on our

journey. Learning the art of Self-acceptance will, to a large degree, determine our progress towards peace.

Self-acceptance is not the wholesale belief of 'I'm OK, You're OK'. Self-acceptance is an honest appraisal of and coming to terms with our own truth, good, bad and indifferent. The 4th Step in the Alcoholics Anonymous program is to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. This is the practice and essence of Self-acceptance. (12 step workbooks make good tools for this section).

In the 2nd Key of Self Reflection, I mentioned the need to suspend judgment and adopt a working attitude of 'no shame, no blame'. This is true. If we persist in Self-criticism or denigration, we will not be able to reach Self-acceptance and peace and well-being will escape our grasps. Self-condemnation is, without a doubt, the biggest hurdle we must overcome in order to evolve beyond our current patterns and pain. We talk negatively to and about ourselves way more than we would dare to talk aloud to another person. Monitor your self-talk very closely and replace the negativity with an affirmation about your Self. Which would you rather hear when you look into a mirror...Gee, you're ugly or Hey, you...Irish eyes are smiling!

However, we must also be willing to meet what psychologist Carl Jung called our Shadow. The shadow is the part of our psyche that consists of all our undesirable and repressed aspects of the Self and character traits. We try to deny or hide these traits, but they can be easily found in the judgments and criticisms we make of others. The human tendency is to project our shadow traits onto others when we engage in shaming or blaming. If we want to meet our shadow, we can do so by careful Self-observation of what we say about others. It is a truism that when we point a finger at others, there are 3 fingers pointing back at our Self.

It is essential that we learn to approach our Self honestly, yet gently. There are four operative concepts that we must put into practice in order to become Self-accepting. They are respect, esteem, honor and grace. Let's take them one at a time.

**RESPECT:** To respect something means that we show consideration for and avoid intruding or trampling on aspects of the Self. If we are respectful, we will give place to something without labeling it as wrong or bad. Respect does not mean agreement. It just allows for the reality of a thing existence without having to suppress it. We must respect our thoughts, feelings beliefs, etc., and especially our right to have them, or another persons right to have them, regardless of whether or not we agree with them.

**ESTEEM:** To esteem something means to hold in it high regard. It is here that we make value judgments about what traits we want to keep or add to our Self because they enhance our sense of peace and well-being. Conversely, we must also determine what traits we do not esteem and choose to change, modify or discard them. To talk of Self-esteem is a misnomer unless we are engaged in this winnowing process. You cannot

hold your Self in high regard if you overlook or hide your negative traits. As I've stated before, peace comes from the courage to look honestly at our Self.

**HONOR:** To honor means to treat with deference and courtesy. I honor my Self by making choices and behaving in a way that matches up with the true wants, needs, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that I esteem from my heart. This is the point of integrity. I honor you by giving you the same privilege. In honoring my Self or someone else, I am conferring homage and sanctity on each being's right to exist. It is an attitude of reverence and holiness towards all of creation. This includes animals, earth, sky and all that dwells therein.

**GRACE:** Grace is the essence of peace. Here is the point at which our spiritual aspects play a pivotal role. When we practice grace, we are able to forgive our Self or some else for wrongdoing, whether we think forgiveness is deserved or not. The truth is, we all make mistakes and commit transgressions. Unless we have a means by which to get past the error of our ways and start fresh, we will forever be mired in guilt, anger and/or depression and often suicide. Holding grudges against our Self or someone else is the antithesis of peace as our fight or flight response will be chronically engaged. It is very important to have a spiritual ritual of forgiveness of some kind to move forward. Grace does not mean we approve of the wrong or hold our Self less accountable for it. It just gives us the opportunity to learn from our mistakes, perhaps make amends if appropriate, release it and go on.

Many of us are much better being gracious towards others than we are of our Self. Others will forgive themselves much quicker than they will another. It is important to have a balanced outlook here. No one is all bad or all good. How did you do with your lists of talents and flaws? Which list was easier to come up with? How would you feel if someone else was as readily able to list your flaws as you were?

Self-acceptance is love in action. (Love, after all, is also a verb!) It is the means by which we give peace a place in our hearts through the reconciliation and atonement (at-one-ment) process of all the aspects of our Self. Remember the root meaning of peace given in the introduction? It includes oneness, wholeness, restoration. As a house divided against itself cannot stand, according to the Bible, a Self divided against itself cannot stand either. Peace comes from honoring all aspects of the Self... body, soul and spirit. 1 is the Highest Number!

### **KEY REFLECTION:**

Get 2 sheets of paper and draw a large square on each sheet. On one sheet, put the names and/or actions of all the people who come to your mind that have hurt you or committed an offense against you in some way. On the other sheet, put the names of those you have hurt and mistakes you have made. Spend a little time with each sheet remembering your thoughts and feelings associated with these events. Then, forgive both your Self and the others by whatever practice you find meaningful. A forgiveness practice

I do with my clients is to place each sheet, one at a time, in the fireplace or B-B-Q pit and light the paper and watch it burn. As the smoke rises and the paper turns to ashes, we mentally release all that was on the list. It is a powerful exercise for many.

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### ***THE 6th KEY: SELF VALIDATION***

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The theme of the previous 5 keys was about how to become conscious about our Self. The next 2 keys, Self-Validation and Self-Actualization, are about acting on our consciousness in order to allow our Self to manifest in the world with authenticity and integrity. To be Self validating simply means that are willing and able to live life from our inside out. We allow our personal truths to guide and determine our choices and behavior to the largest extent possible. Much easier to say than to do, of course!

Hopefully by now, you are well on your way in the process of examining, experiencing and sorting out you Self and your values. Sometimes we discover that some of these aspects have been taught or imposed on us by our culture, family, religion, profession etc. What is crucial is not so much where they came from, but whether or not they match who and what the Self is. The Self must be the ultimate authority in our lives. Even if you choose to follow the teachings and authority of a Higher Power, religion or government, it is because you choose to do so as you have determined it to be best and believe it is the right thing to do. Not because someone else said you had to or should or from some other compulsion. This is the practice of Self-validation.

One of the most difficult things to do in life is to become and remain steadfast in our Self in the face of opposition or difference of opinion. It is a very common occurrence to abandon our Self in favor of what some one or some thing else prescribes for us. We learn to do this out fear of rejection, or to gain approval, acceptance, or what we misinterpret as love. Children that are abused learn to do this for survival. However, this is huge problem for many that I see in my practice, abused or not, and creates deep despair as it never brings what is sought or promised.

We abandon our Self at our own peril, for the cost is great. Every time we abandon our Self, we lose a piece of our Self and our sense of competency and trust of the most basic anchor we have in the world, our own validity. It is one thing when others abandon us in some way, it is quite another when we persist in doing to our Self. Becoming self-validating is a major issue for all of us on our journey.

Another way a lot of misery and pain is caused is by expecting or waiting for others to validate our Self before we act. When others validate us, it is wonderful, and it is very necessary and encouraging to surround our Self with those who validate what and who we are. However, if we are not in an environment that is validating, it will slowly, but surely

erode our sense of Self, and sometimes we must be willing to take action regardless. This is very difficult. The world we live in invalidates the Self all the time. We are told over and over in various ways from all kinds of sources that we are not young enough, smart enough, good looking enough, rich enough, thin enough, successful enough, etc. So, as well as Self-validation, the more social and/or professional support we can muster, the faster and smoother our journey will progress.

A big part of what I do in consulting or in therapy is to validate people while at the same time facilitating change and growth. As therapists, we get a lot of good-natured (usually) flak about asking our clients "what do you think, or feel" rather than giving direct answers. This is simply a way to teach clients how to live from the inside out...to become self-validating.

As you become more and more Self-validating, your behavior and life on the outside will become a more authentic expression of who you are on the inside in a deliberate and positive way. You will stretch your imagination and limits in order to grow and come to accept your limitations as well. Your sense of mental well-being and physical health can improve dramatically as you accomplish this task.

Remember the lesson from the mind/body connection that the body will express is disease what our minds repress in dis-ease. One of my best assessment and healing tools is to understand the reflection of mental thought patterns involved in the physical illness. (I am referring to contributing factors, not cause and effect). (Visit the Resource Library and the Reading List for more information on this).

In practicing Self-validation, we become more secure in our personal truth and more able to take a stand. We will remain steadfast about those essential elements of our lives that enable us to function at our optimum capacity. This does not mean we become obstinate or close minded. It means we abide in our own preferences, first and foremost. It means being also willing to consider new information as well as the preferences of others without force. It may mean we can choose to defer to others or change our view, but only after real reflection and consideration, not from feeling threatened or pressured. Peace and well-being require true freedom of choice in this way. We must carefully weave out personal truth into our daily existence to keep our Self vital.

This is especially true for women as we have been defined in negative and pejorative ways by the culture, educational, governmental religious and financial systems we live in. For example, I couldn't even have credit in my own name until 1974 with the Equal Credit Opportunity Act! I was totally dependent on my husband at the time as a 24-year-old woman with a 5-year-old child! It was a nightmare struggle to gain my independence from an abusive marriage. As part of my professional journey, I developed and implemented shelters and programs for women and children needing to escape from abusive relationships as well as rape crisis and services for crime victims. To obtain peace and well-being, we must recognize the misogynistic aspects of society. This is a story for another time that's being created for future distribution!



For another example, I will give you a list of some of my more elemental personal truths that I integrate into both my personal and professional life: I am at my best when surrounded by nature and my animals. I require a lot of solitude and reflective meditation to stay balanced, healthy and productive. (Hence the location and style of my practice in the country). But, I also need the company of kindred spirits who respect and honor me. I am most creative in the cool morning of summer or the warm afternoon sunshine in winter. I am stressed by crowds and traffic jams, so I stay away from both as much as possible! I am a true introvert and empath! My favorite colors are variations of red, burgundy and dusty rose and music brings me a lot of joy. What brings me the most joy is seeing others learn and heal and grow and what brings me the most satisfaction is being used as one of the vessels in that process. Knowing this about myself helps me make choices that increase my peace and well-being.

#### KEY REFLECTION:

Make a list of your personal truths. How can you begin to integrate them into your daily life, even in small ways? Post this list somewhere you will see it frequently to enable you to imprint it in your mind as you make choices, etc. also, go back to your list of the 10 I Am's. Make all 10 positive characteristics and post that alongside your personal truths.

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### ***THE 7<sup>TH</sup> KEY: SELF ACTUALIZATION***

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Webster's defines actualization as making something real, putting into motion. Self-actualization is therefore the manifestation of the truth from our hearts in a tangible way. When we are Self actualizing, our personal truth will be evident in our behaviors, choices and lifestyle. Conflict between what we say and what we do will be at a minimum. We will be authentic in our presentation and expression of Self.

Self-actualization is an ongoing, evolutionary process. It requires that we employ the principles of the first 6 Keys continuously. In other words, to be Self actualizing means that we have a working model of a Self concept that we take time to reflect on so that we are aware of what's going on in order to respond to life from our hearts!

Self-actualizing people participate as co-creators in life. They have a sense of competency and efficacy that empowers them. They can act independently as well as interdependently with others when required. When in the presence of a Self-actualized

person, you feel validated energized, even relaxed. Self-actualized people will make mistakes, but will learn and go on. They participate in the never-ending cycle of learning, growing, falling, learning, growing, and falling. They have mastered the Chinese proverb of "Fall down 7 times, but pick your Self up 8." And, very importantly, they will stand with you as you do the same.

It is not perfection that is sought, but rather progression. John Lyons, a premier teacher of horses, says that movement is essential for learning to take place. Even to teach a horse to stop, there must be movement in the first place. That is true of humans as well. It is inertia that is debilitating. Not that we are to go on doing in a compulsive, driven way, but to find our Selves a rhythm of doing and changing, resting and integrating. There are many paths available to do this. What is essential is that you find one that works for you and travel on it.

There is not a promise of a panacea in any of this. What you can expect, however, is that your journey on the spiral staircase will be less traumatic. You will not be a war with your Self. When you are at peace with your Self, you will have more resilience to the invalidation of the world around you. You will be more able to right your Self when knocked about by life's inevitable punches. You will experience more health and wholeness as all aspects of the Self are honored and balanced. Peace and well being will flow from the inside out and you will live your life's purpose with integrity.

It is my prayer that this E Book has strengthened you in some way. I also pray that you take this strength and continue to nurture it and expand it. The college where I did my Master's degree has as its motto; "I AM BECOMING." This is a very powerful statement. It illustrates both the positive Self-affirmation of the present moment...I AM...as well as the promise of the process...BECOMING. We are enough in who we are, and yet, there is more. ***Peace be with you.***

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