

Emotionally, Healthy, Spirituality – notes

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We cannot be spiritually mature without being emotionally healthy

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NOTE: My additions are noted by the square bracket []

Introduction

- P6 – deeply changed people have a more powerful and more sustainable impact in the world.

Chapter 1 – the problem of emotionally unhealthy spirituality

Something is desperately wrong

- P9-12 faith and the pool. The need to present oneself as “kind, gracious, and patient,” over-rode the need to set boundaries and distracted attention from children. Scazzero story. Traces unhealthy emotionality to family of origin
- P12 Very few people emerge from their families of origin emotionally whole or mature.
- P14-15 for the first 17 years as a devoted follower of Christ, the emotional aspects of my humanity remained largely untouched.
- P15-17 trying to find “spiritual” solutions can overlook the emotional concerns. The spirituality of most current discipleship models often only adds an additional protective layer against people growing up emotionally. We are made up of deep layers that exist well beneath our day-to-day awareness ... we clean up our lives ... but the roots of who we are remain unchanged and unmoved.
- P18-20 Peter was exhausted ... lived out of reaction ... bitter and depressed ... Geri’s left church ... pain has an amazing ability to open us up to new truth and get us moving
- P20-21 components of who we are (social, intellectual, spiritual, physical, emotional) [this book only addresses 2 of 5] ... ignoring any aspect of who we are always results in destructive consequences ... emotional underdevelopment is not so obvious when we first meet people ... discovered link between emotional and spiritual maturity
- P22-37 Top ten symptoms of emotionally unhealthy spirituality [spiritualizing problems – not a comprehensive list]
- Using God to run from God [or justify bad behavior]
 - Ignoring anger, sadness, and fear [we are told to distrust our feelings as untrustworthy or “fleshly” – but we are emotional creatures - concordant vs discordant emotions. Cp. women’s intuition]
 - Dying to the wrong things [suffering, being miserable does not mean we are loved by God more, forgetting to nurture who we are made to be]
 - Denying the impact of past on the present [not acknowledging mental health problems]
 - Dividing life into secular and sacred compartments
 - Doing for God instead being with God
 - Spiritualizing away conflict [internal or external]
 - Covering over brokenness, weakness and failure [not admitting our shortcomings]
 - Living without limits
 - Judging other people’s spiritual journey
 - [Other symptoms: isolating self, low energy, eating/substance use disorder, irritability]

Chapter 2 - Know yourself that you may know God

Becoming your authentic self

- P39 Eph 4:22,24 put off your old self and put on the new self ... Augustine “how can you draw close to God when you are far from your own self?”
- P43 human beings feel a wide range of emotions ... it never entered my mind that *God might be speaking to me in the “feeling” realm* in a way that did not compromise his truth ... when we deny our pain, losses, and feelings, year after year, we become less and less human.
- Range of feelings:
 - Anger (fury, hostility, irritability, annoyance)
 - Sadness (grief, self-pity, despair, dejection, loneliness)
 - Fear (anxiety, edginess, nervousness, fright, terror, apprehension)
 - Enjoyment (joy, relief, contentment, delight, thrill, euphoria, ecstasy)
 - Love (acceptance, trust, devotion, adoration)
 - Surprise (shock, amazement, wonder)

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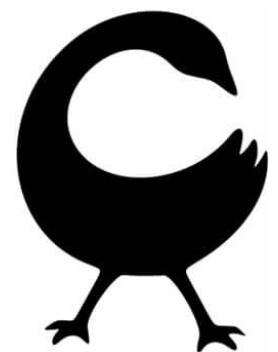
- Disgust (contempt, scorn, aversion, distaste, revulsion)
- Shame (guilt, remorse, humiliation, embarrassment, chagrin)
- P44-47 Our God feels (Gen 1:25, 31; 6:6; Ex 20:5; Isa 42:14; Jer 31:3; Hos 11:8; Matt 26:37-38; Mark 3:5; Luke 10:21 – delight, regret, jealous, cry, anger, love, compassion, sorrow, distress, joy) ... God designed our bodies to respond physiologically to those in the world around us ... God is able to handle our emotions
 - [We feel because God feels]
- P48 Ignatius of Loyola ... importance of maintaining a balance between our reason and feelings ... explore the difference between consolations and desolations ... test the spirits ... *the Cry of the Soul* Allender & Longman ... ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality ... reality is where we meet God
- P49-53 Jesus' temptations ... Performance, Possessions, Popularity
- P56 Living your God-given life involves remaining faithful to your true self. It entails distinguishing your true self from the demands and voices around you and discerning the unique vision, calling, and mission the Father has given to you
- P58-61 Bowne's scale of differentiation – ability to hold onto who we are. Affirm our distinct goals while remaining close to people around us
 - Ability to distinguish facts from feelings
 - Emotionally secure and independent
 - Ability to be self-directed
 - Ability to handle stress
 - Self-confident
 - Ability to positively acknowledge and respect others
 - Allows interdependence
- P61-68 Developing your Authentic self [Being authentic means that you act in ways that show your true self and how you feel. Rather than showing people only a particular side of yourself, you express your whole self genuinely.
 - Pay attention to our interior in silence and solitude – be alone so we can listen, slow down pace of life - Feel weight of feelings and examine them
 - [Do personality profiles produce results that resound with you. What traits have people identified in you]
 - Find trusted companions – mentors, spiritual directors, counselors, mature friends [spiritual friends]
 - Move out of your comfort zone – to pursue what gives you life
 - Pray for courage – when you make a change in yourself, people will resist.
- [see appendix B]

Chapter 3 - Going Back in order to go forward

[Sankofa – 3-day ECC program in which a white person and a black person ride together to experience places of civil rights activity. Goal is to “look back” in order to “go forward”]

Breaking the power of the past

- P71-73 True spirituality frees us to live joyfully in the present. It requires, however, going back in order to go forward ... breaking free from the destructive sinful patterns of our pasts to live the life of love God intends ... the blessings and sins of our families going back two to three generations profoundly impact who we are today ... discipleship requires putting off the sinful patterns of our family or origin and relearning how to do life God's way in God's family
- P74 Exodus 34:6-7
- [see “more than suffering” p27 – “This verse is sometimes misunderstood. People who focus on the perception that the God of the Old Testament as a violent God compared to the New Testament sometimes focus on the last part of the verse and point to a translation that says, “God *punishes (paqad)* the children to the third and fourth generation...”
 - “paqad” is best translated as “visiting” the children to further generations which typically experience the aftereffects of parental sins. In the meanwhile, Yahweh is merciful to the thousands who love him.
 - The verse, and the surrounding verses are mostly focused on love and mercy.



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- The last part of the verse is actually talking about the repercussions of sins that carry through from one generation to the next.
- In the meantime, the verse balances that with the mercy shown to thousands. And then elsewhere, God expresses the desire that all people will turn from their sinful ways and turn back to him because He desires to have a relationship with all people in which love is given and received.”]
- P76-77 Abraham, Isaac, Joseph (and brothers) pattern of lying, favoritism, being cut off, poor intimacy ... what are our family scripts regarding money, conflict, sex, grief, anger, family, relationships, different cultures, success, feelings
- P82-84 Apostle Paul used Roman adoption to communicate our adoption into the family of God. ... God becomes our Father, our sins are cancelled, we are given a new name, a new inheritance and new brothers and sisters ... discipleship then is the putting off of the sinful patterns and habits of our families of origin and being transformed to live as members of Christ's family ... In God's family success is defined as being faithful to God's purpose and plan for your life. We are called to seek first his kingdom and righteousness. Everything else, will be added to us. We are lovable and good enough in Christ ... discipleship then is working these truths into our practical everyday lives.
- P90-91 Beaver System Model – based on boundaries
 - 5 family in pain – chaos, turmoil, no rule
 - 4 borderline – polarized, rigid rules and ways of thinking
 - 3 rule-bound – unspoken rules, manipulation, intimidation, guilt
 - 2-1 adequate and optimal – ability to be flexible, delight
- P91-93 Joseph
 - Had a profound sense of bigness of God
 - Admitted honestly the sadness and loss of his family
 - Rewrote his life script according to scripture
 - partnered with God to be a blessing

Chapter 4 – Journey through the Wall

Letting go of power and control

- p97 dark night of the soul ... gift of the God in the Wall ... growth into maturity in Christ requires going through the wall
- p98-100 stages of faith
 - 1 life changing awareness of God
 - 2 discipleship (learning)
 - 3 active life (serving)
 - The wall – event that causes a re-evaluation of our relation to God and His church
 - 4 journey inward
 - 5 journey outward (from my inner life)
 - 6 transformed into love
- P101 stages or seasons, we don't control the seasons, they happen to us
- P102 Dark night of the soul
 - P103 healthy admission – bewildered, hurt, angry, mystery, sad, forsaken ... to move through the wall requires receiving the gift of the Wall ... our good feelings evaporate, darkness, helplessness, weariness, failure, barrenness, emptiness, dryness, the disciplines that have served us up to this time no longer work ... this is needed to **purge our affections** so that we can delight in his love
 - P104 7 spiritual imperfections:
 - pride, avarice, luxury, wrath, spiritual gluttony, spiritual envy, sloth
 - P108-114 4 dynamics of progress in breaking through the wall
 - Greater level of brokenness
 - Greater appreciation for the Holy (Mystery)
 - Deeper ability to wait for God
 - Greater detachment

Chapter 5 - Enlarge your soul through grief and loss

Surrendering to your limits

- P117 True spiritual life is a commitment to reality ... loss marks the place where self-knowledge and powerful transformation happens ... limits are behind all the loss ... humility *of the earth* ...
- P118 we all experience loss, most of the time it's gradual (youth, dreams, routines, stability, friends and family) ... we grieve the many things we can't do, our limits ... finally we lose wrong ideas about God and the church ... betrayed by a church tradition or a leader ... illusions about the family of Jesus
- P121 what our families of origin consider acceptable ways of expressing emotions related to loss shape us ... addiction has become the most common way to deal with pain (tv, busy with activity, demanding that someone or something take the pain away ...) and we become less human
- P122 much of contemporary Christian culture has added to this inhuman unbiblical avoidance of pain and loss for not "rejoicing in the Lord always"
- P123 turning to our pain is counterintuitive ... the heart of Christianity is that the way to life is through death, the pathway to resurrection is through crucifixion
- P124 defenses against feeling pain: denial, minimizing, blaming others, blaming ourselves, rationalizing, intellectualizing, distracting, become hostile
- P125-136 Biblical grieving:
- pay attention: weep, lament, shout at God, admit anger
 - wait in the confusing in-between: be still before God, resist earthly categories and quick solutions
 - embrace the gift of limits: (of our physical body, family of origin, marital status, intellectual capacity, talents and gifts, material wealth, raw material, time, work and relationship realities, spiritual understanding
 - p134 climb the ladder of humility:
 - fear of God and mindfulness of him
 - doing God's will (not our own or other people's)
 - willing to subject ourselves to the direction of others
 - patient to accept the difficulties of others
 - radical honesty to others about our weakness/faults
 - deeply aware of being "chief of all sinners"
 - purposeful to speak less (with more restraint)
 - transformed into the love of God

Chapter 6 - Discover the rhythms of the Daily Office and Sabbath

Stopping to breath the air of eternity

- p139-141 many of us have lost our way in the blizzard of: demands from work and family, overscheduling, multitasking and we are tense, hurried, preoccupied, fatigued ... over productivity becomes counter productive
- p141-143 Daily office and Sabbath are ropes that lead us back to God ... Inadequacies of our present ropes ... quiet time dissipates during the business of our day ... there are a great many spiritual disciplines (prayer, retreats, spiritual direction, worship, giving, Bible study, devotional reading scripture memory, lectio divina, confession, journaling, intercession ...), they are wonderful tools to help follow Jesus, The Daily Office and Sabbath offer a rhythm to anchor us.
 - [Daily office – regular recentering during the day may help alleviate a morning's quiet time which gets forgotten during the day
 - Formal daily office follows church calendar which helps set our calendar in God's time
 - Informal "daily office" – brief pauses, recentering by breath prayers or remembering scripture – may stretch to "daily sabbath" – stop what we are doing, rest (pause from work), delight (remember God sightings during the day, contemplate (refocus on God's activity))]
- P145-150 [tries to distinguish what a quiet time is in his mind from the daily office: getting filled or interceding vs being *with* Someone] *office* from *opus* – work of God – setting apart small amounts of time throughout the day ...

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can be done differently for everyone ... structured vs unstructured, written vs spontaneous, etc. ... key is regularity not length ... four elements (stopping, centering, silence, scripture) use whatever tools are useful

- P150-163 Sabbath is a gift (**Stop, Rest, Delight, contemplate**) that we are invited to receive [shabbat vs nuach]
 - [Our motivation should not come from trying to obey the external law “written in stone” but rather from the internal desires “written in our hearts”⁴⁰ to love – love God and to love one another. We should be
 - Not driven to obey the Commandment to keep the Sabbath but rather encouraged to live every day to God (**Stop, Rest, Delight, contemplate**)
 - Not driven to obey the command to tithe but rather encouraged to be generous
 - Not driven to obey the command to not covet but rather encouraged to promote the welfare of others
 - Not driven to obey commandments but rather encouraged to express the fruits of the Spirit
 - Not driven to obey externally given commands but rather encouraged to grow in our internal desire to love
 - Not driven to avoid doing wrong but rather encouraged to delight in finding the best way to do what is right]
- Understanding how the Sabbath celebration was only pointing to an eternity of daily enjoying the presence of God in all that we do can help us see how all the other “laws” are designed to do the same. Just as the tabernacle was a symbol of God being with us in space, the Sabbath was a reminder of God being with us in time and together they remind us that God owns all of space and time and desires to share it all with us.
- Four principles of Biblical Sabbath: **Stop, Rest, Delight, contemplate**
- **Delight**: may include music, sex, art, gardening, sensory experiences, travel, hobbies

Chapter 7 - Grow into an emotionally mature adult

Learning new skills to love well

- P167 to be emotionally mature we need to practice
 - Quick to hear, slow to speak
 - By angry and sin not
 - Watch my heart above all else
 - Speak the truth in love
 - Be a true peacemaker
 - Mourn
 - Not bear false witness
 - Get rid of all bitterness, rage and envy
 - -----
 - [Strategies for resilience: recognize good deeds, gratefulness, forgive self for mistakes, spend time with positive people, focus on beliefs and values that feel important and let those guide life decisions, take care of mental and physical health through balanced diet, regular exercise and good sleep habits
 - [Negative emotions may signal need to change but in excess may interfere with reasoning and logic
 - [Stay connected
 - [Avoid negative self-talk
 - [Set and celebrate goals and achievements
 - [Know when to reach for help
 - [Identify personal strengths, build on them and learn from them
 - [Learn optimism, realistically seeing positive even in bad situations
 - [See the good in yourself and develop a healthy self-concept
 - [Eat mindfully: take time to smell and taste food thoroughly and notice the textures and flavors with each mouthful. Pay attention to when the body feels hungry or full.
 - [Aim to become more aware of feelings by labeling them, such as “I am feeling nervous.”
 - [[Avoid judging any feelings as right or wrong and accept them for what they are.
 - [Try to notice how feelings relate to thoughts, such as “I am thinking about what I said to that person, and I’m feeling angry.”
 - [Think before acting and make decisions according to goals.
 - Be aware of choosing thoughts and what to focus on.

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- If thinking about something repetitively is causing emotional discomfort, try to recognize the thought and release it.
 - Realize that feeling uncomfortable emotions during times of challenge or uncertainty is expected.
 - If feeling emotional discomfort, try talking it through with someone, take a walk, exercise, or listen to music.
 - Try communicating thoughts or feelings face-to-face with a person who is a good listener.
 - Work on becoming the person you wish to be.
 - Practice mindfulness:
 - Focus on the present moment, noticing your breath, thoughts, and feelings without judgment. This helps you become more aware of your emotions and manage them effectively.
 - [Prioritize balance:
 - Set realistic goals and boundaries between work, school, social life, and personal time to help prevent burnout. Focus on the positive things in your life rather than ruminating on your challenges.
 - [When To See a Healthcare Provider - Everyone faces occasional challenges and emotional hardships, but some signs suggest that you might benefit from professional support. Consider talking to a healthcare provider or mental health professional if you experience any of the following:
 - Persistent feelings of sadness, anxiety, or hopelessness that interfere with daily life
 - Changes in your appetite or sleeping patterns
 - Loss of interest in activities you previously enjoyed
 - Difficulty concentrating, remembering things, or making decisions
 - Feeling overwhelmed or unable to cope with everyday stress
 - Withdrawal from family, friends, or social activities
 - Unusual irritability, anger, or mood swings
 - [Surround yourself with support: Spend time with people who care about you and lift you. Good relationships give you emotional support, encourage understanding, and help you feel a sense of belonging.
 - [Know your limits: It's okay to say "no" when you need to and to set clear boundaries with others. This protects your emotional health and helps to lower stress.
 - [Take care of yourself: Make sure to look after your body, mind, and feelings by doing things that recharge you—whether that's enjoying nature, engaging in hobbies, or getting enough sleep.
 - [Don't be afraid to ask for help: If you're struggling, reach out for support. Speaking with a therapist or counsellor can offer you guidance and help you deal with tough emotions.
 - [Focus on the good: Taking time to notice the positive things in your life can change the way you feel. Consider keeping a gratitude journal or just taking a moment each day to think about what you appreciate.]
- P168-170 distinguish between emotional infants, children, adolescents, adults
 - P170-177 loving well is the essence of true spirituality ... experience connection with God, ourselves and other people ... religious leaders of Jesus' day did not link loving God with the need to be diligent, zealous, and absolutely committed to grow in their ability to love and delight in people ... do not treat other people as a means to an end, as an object to be used, but rather as a person made in the image of God ... resolve conflicts by considering other people's perspectives ... embrace conflict
 - P178-180 skills to be true peacemakers
 - As the speaker
 - Talk about your own thoughts and feelings
 - Be brief, use short sentences or phrases
 - Correct the other person if you believe they have missed something
 - Continue speaking until you feel you've been understood
 - When you don't have anything else to say, say "that's all for now."
 - As the listener
 - Put your own agenda on hold. Be quiet and still as you would before God
 - Allow the other person to speak until they complete a thought
 - Reflect accurately the other person's words back at them using paraphrases or their own words
 - When it appears that the speaker is done, ask, "is there more?"

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- When they are done ask them: “of everything you have shared, what is the most important thing you want me to remember”
- P185 – don’t give false testimony, don’t mind read (assume things) ... expectations are only valid when they have been mutually agreed upon ... emotional allergies – intense reaction to something in the present that remind us of an event from our past

Chapter 8 - Go the next step to develop a “rule of life”

Loving Christ above all else

- P190 rule – a trellis –
- rule of life helps us abide in Christ, provides guidelines
- rule is a plan to achieve a Christ-like life
- P194 elements for a rule of life
 - Prayer – scripture, silence and solitude, daily office, study (*spiritual*)
 - [Examen [journal, mentally naming and describing feelings, solitude, gratitude]
 - Rest – sabbath, simplicity, play and recreation
 - Work/activity – service and mission, care for the (*physical*) body
 - [Sleep, exercise, deep breathing]
 - Relationships – *emotional* health, family, community (*social*)
 - [Volunteer]
 - [Join a group that focuses on an enjoyable hobby or activity]
 - [Try a new class to learn something new]
 - [intellectual]
 - Get organized, watch mental health
- P195 document may constantly change, constantly re-evaluate
- P203 broader applications: define/discover rule of life
- Rule of life is easier to implement when others in your community share in it [seek professional health when needed, spiritual friends, mentors, support groups]
 - Local church
 - Task/small group
 - family

Appendix A

YOUR HEALTHIEST SELF Emotional Wellness Checklist

<https://www.nih.gov/health-information/your-healthiest-self-wellness-toolkits/emotional-wellness-toolkit>

Emotional wellness is the ability to successfully handle life’s stresses and adapt to change and difficult times. Here are tips for improving your emotional health:

BUILD RESILIENCE	
People who are emotionally well, experts say, have fewer negative emotions and are able to bounce back from difficulties faster. This quality is called resilience. Learning healthy ways to cope and how to draw from resources in your community can help you build resilience.	<p>To build resilience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop healthy physical habits. • Take time for yourself each day. • Look at problems from different angles. Learn from your mistakes. • Practice gratitude. • Explore your beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life. • Tap into social connections and community.
REDUCE STRESS	
Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Stress can give you a rush of energy when it’s needed most. But if stress lasts a long time—a condition known as chronic stress—those “high alert” changes become harmful rather than helpful. Learning healthy ways to cope with stress can also boost your resilience.	<p>To help manage your stress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get enough sleep. • Exercise regularly. • Build a social support network. • Set priorities. • Show compassion for yourself. • Try relaxation methods. • Seek help.
GET QUALITY SLEEP	
To fit in everything we want to do in our day, we often sacrifice sleep. But sleep affects both mental and physical health. It’s vital to your well-being. When you’re tired, you can’t function at your best. Sleep helps you think more clearly, have quicker reflexes and focus better. Take steps to make sure you regularly get a good night’s sleep.	<p>To get better quality sleep:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to bed and get up each day at the same time. • Sleep in a dark, quiet place. • Exercise daily. • Limit the use of electronics. • Relax before bedtime. • Avoid alcohol before bedtime and stimulants like caffeine or nicotine. • Consult a health care professional if you have ongoing sleep problems.

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BE MINDFUL

The concept of mindfulness is simple. This ancient practice is about being completely aware of what's happening in the present—of all that's going on inside and all that's happening around you. It means not living your life on “autopilot.” Becoming a more mindful person requires commitment and practice. Here are some tips to help you get started.

To be more mindful:

- Take some deep breaths in through your nose to a count of 4, hold for 1 second and then exhale through the mouth to a count of 5. Repeat often.
- Enjoy a stroll, notice the sights around you.
- Practice mindful eating. Be aware of each bite and when you're full.
- Be aware of your body. Do a mental scan, bring your attention to how each part feels.
- Find mindfulness resources, including online programs.

COPE WITH LOSS

When someone you love dies, your world changes. There is no right or wrong way to mourn. Although the death of a loved one can feel overwhelming, most people can make it through the grieving process with the support of family and friends. Learn healthy ways to help you through difficult times.

To help cope with loss:

- Take care of yourself.
- Talk to a caring friend.
- Try not to make any major changes right away.
- Join a grief support group.
- Consider professional support.
- Talk to your doctor if you're having trouble with everyday activities.
- Be patient. Mourning takes time.

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Social connections might help protect health and lengthen life. Scientists are finding that our links to others can have powerful effects on our health—both emotionally and physically. Whether with romantic partners, family, friends, neighbors, or others, social connections can influence our biology and well-being.

To build healthy support systems:

- Build strong relationships with your kids.
- Get active and share good habits with family and friends.
- If you're a family caregiver, ask for help from others.
- Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as reading, hiking, or painting.
- Take a class to learn something new.
- Volunteer for things you care about in your community, like a community garden, school, library, or place of worship.
- Travel to different places and meet new people.

Appendix B

How to Rekindle Authenticity

<https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/how-to-be-authentic.html>

1. Observe yourself objectively to rekindle authenticity
2. Examine family belief systems to rekindle authenticity
3. Open a dialogue between the "Adaptive Self" and the "Authentic Self"
4. Choose to be the adult to rekindle authenticity
5. Examine your doubts to rekindle authenticity
6. Develop the courage to face your fears to rekindle authenticity
7. Explore your relationship with money to rekindle authenticity
8. Love yourself and have compassion for others to rekindle authenticity
9. Recognize that developing authenticity takes time
10. Release patterns and beliefs that no longer serve you to rekindle authenticity
11. Ask yourself what you truly believe
12. Take it slow to rekindle your authenticity
13. Tell the truth and make it a habit
14. Make statements and decisions consciously
15. Be accountable
16. Develop your personal power in authentic ways
17. Continue to monitor yourself
18. Develop soul stewardship
19. Answer the "call of the authentic self"