

Raise your energies

Edward Tropes

This is an excerpt from a forthcoming book, ***Raise your energies Book 2***, copyright 2015. The excerpt discusses the nature of wisdom, or spiritual growth and maturity, and how to achieve it.

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I am especially interested in what you don't like about these ideas. I use **special terms** in the book and some of them are defined at the end of this excerpt.

1. Who is spiritually mature, wise?

Some people are able to greatly raise their overall energies throughout their life. In energy terms, they've boosted themselves to the next "level." We call such persons spiritually mature, or wise, while the rest of us are just trying to take a small spiritual step. How are spiritually mature persons able to greatly increase their overall energies? What have they done, felt, and thought?

But first, some examples of spiritually mature, or wise, persons.

Abraham Lincoln [1809-1865] is a great example. As President [1861 to 1865], Lincoln believed that slavery was a blight on our nation, and that should slavery continue in the South, human rights would be set back in the US, and perhaps the world, for a long time. In his time, slavery was waning throughout the world, but not in the US. Allowing slavery in the South to continue might allow it to spread to other US states, and perhaps other nations. To prevent that, Lincoln believed that the terrible costs of a civil war would be necessary.

In energy terms, Lincoln's decision to eliminate slavery in the US was a great *We*-decision inspired by great *We*-spiritual strengths. It's also likely that eliminating slavery in the US was Lincoln's life purpose and part of his life plan. In eliminating slavery in the US, he saw a better nation, even at the cost of many lives lost in a civil war.

Lincoln saw the major challenges of his time, and responded to them in his presidency. As President, his actions could and did affect the entire nation in an extended civil war. In other words, many hold him to be a great example of a person acting in very difficult situations with great wisdom. Over at least the last two and a half thousand years, such persons, time and again, have often been called spiritually mature, or wise.

Here are other public persons often seen as spiritually mature, or wise,---

~ E.F. Schumacher [1911-1977], a British development economist and government worker who wrote the famous *Small is beautiful* [1973]

~ Nelson Mandela [1918-2013], a South African revolutionary who was imprisoned many years; when later released, he led the fight against apartheid, and was President of the South African government [1994-1999]

~ Eleanor Roosevelt [1884-1962], wife of Franklin Roosevelt and his aide in the New Deal

~ Mohandas Gandhi [1869-1948], leader of non-violent resistance to British occupation and control of India

~ Frederick Douglass [1818-1895], a former slave, abolitionist, and social activist

~ Marcus Aurelius [121-181], a respected Roman emperor [161-180] who practiced Stoicism

~ Socrates [469-399 BCE], a moral and spiritual gadfly of ancient Athens who strongly inspired Plato.

Still others may be Oprah Winfrey [b 1954]; Jimmy Carter [b 1924], president 1977-1981; Albert Schweitzer [1875-1965]; and the Dalai Lama [b 1935], office 1950-present. You may also personally know someone who is growing spiritually or is spiritually mature, and worth getting to know better.

Abraham Lincoln could both forgive and see beyond personal insult. In 1855 he was involved in a patent case heard in Cincinnati, Ohio. On the morning the case was to be heard, Lincoln proposed that the attorneys in the case all walk together from their boarding house to the courthouse. William Stanton, one of the party and an eminent attorney in the case, then turned and loudly whispered to his associate, "Why did you bring that d___d long armed Ape here ... he does not know anything and can do you no good." Stanton and his partner then turned from Lincoln and walked to the courthouse on their own.

Lincoln was not at first sight an imposing figure, even later as President. He was tall but skinny, his suits were ill-fitting, with one pant leg shorter than the other, and he often had food stains on his jacket. His voice was high but piercing and he had a robot-like walk. However, it was said that once you began talking with him, despite your immediate impression, you came to respect him.

Lincoln must have heard Stanton's slight but said nothing. However, as president six years later, Lincoln chose Stanton, then a failed candidate for the presidency, to be his Secretary of War. Stanton later came to think very highly of Lincoln. At Lincoln's death bed, Stanton said the immortal, "Now he belongs to the ages."¹

At this point, you may want to review what you wrote for the previous **Exercise**---*How can I nourish my spirit?*

2. What is spiritual growth and maturity?

To grow spiritually and become spiritually mature is to move to the next spiritual "level," take the next spiritual step while still living on Earth. The person who has become spiritually mature has made a big spiritual "jump."

From an energy perspective, since you are made entirely of energies and create them, you are spiritually mature if you use your energies well. The spiritually growing and mature person allows energies around them and from the universe, to flow freely through them, through their energy fields and especially their energy centers. They also create positive energies as they act, speak, and think, whatever their situation.

I explain and expand these ideas in the rest of this chapter.

3. How can I grow and mature spiritually? What can I do?

Throughout my life and in my own spiritual work, I've tried to see things in larger and larger "circles." That is, I've tried to take broader, more comprehensive views of things as I go along. I've come to see that there's more to my life than just me and what's immediate and apparent for me. As I've tried to grow spiritually, I see that there's more and more to think about and deal with.

What is this "more" that I've found? Here are a few of my growing understandings---

That the needs and interests of other people are sometimes as important as my own.

I believe that I have an unconscious and spirit which have their own, and sometimes different, needs and interests.

That my spirit has its own needs. I have a life purpose and life plan, and spiritual character and spiritual strengths that I seek to work on. Also, I think it's important to make sense and meaning of my life.

¹ Goodwin, DK (2005). *Team of rivals*. NY: Simon & Schuster, pp 173-5 and p 743.

That others also have an unconscious and spirit, as well as their own needs and interests, that should be considered.

I've also found that sometimes these various needs and interests conflict, so I've had to find ways to resolve them, that is, align and balance them. The promptings of a person's unconscious and spirit may also conflict with what they think and see with their workaday mind.

Let me re-state and summarize these ideas, which I'll be discussing in more detail below---

1. Throughout my life, I've kept asking "What's most real, true, and important for me?" That is, what's "deeper" for me?
2. I live by what's "deeper" for me.
3. I keep balancing the "deeper," non-worldly side of my life against the worldly side. The two are sometimes opposed.
4. I make sure to not neglect the worldly part of my life.
5. I think it's very important for me to keep building my We-character, along with my We-spiritual habits.
6. I've worked, especially lately, to make more and more sense and meaning of my life. Also, to get some idea of my life purpose and plan.
7. I strongly believe that growing and maturing spiritually is the most important thing I can do in my life, what anyone can do.

You may find that these ideas may also make sense for you.

By the way, just because I'm writing about seeking spiritual growth and maturity, doesn't mean that I've made it, that I'm spiritually mature or wise, or close to it. For the greatest number of us, growing spiritually is a life-long task, since you and the situations you're in keep changing. It's like walking a tight rope between buildings---each next step is different from the previous, as the rope moves and tightens, and the winds change.

3. 1. Throughout my life, I've kept asking "What's most real, true, and important for me?" That is, what's "deeper" for me?

I ask this more often as I get older.

The question of what's most real, true, and important, or "deeper" for me, has kept coming back and has nagged me most of my life. The answer I've come up with has changed over my life---at one point, the real and true thing was to become free to have different experiences; then at another, career success; later, learning about the world; then raising a family; finding a religion, and so on. But mostly, I was too busy with my job and family and taking care of the house to give this question much thought. It was only after I stopped working that I could look at it more closely. Then I made looking for my answer a serious hobby.

I think most people who seek to grow and mature spiritually find their most real and true things to be, not what's "worldly," but something other, usually what I call the non-worldly, the non-physical, that is, the "deeper," usually something you've found in the last four energy centers. It will also be related to your life plan and purpose. Your answer will often help you achieve them.

So on one side I'm putting what's most real and true for me, the "deeper," and the non-worldly and non-physical. And on the other, what's less, or not, "deeper" and so on, on the other. See the **Box**---What's deeper for me? And what's not?

How and where might you get the idea that seeking spiritual growth and maturity is important, perhaps the most important thing you can do in your life? After all, many aren't even aware of the question, "What should be deeper for me?", much less start looking for an answer. What might start, boost, or jolt your own search?

What if you don't have a "deeper," or can't find one? You'll likely run into some problems at some point in your life. Without a "deeper," you risk not having anything to come back to, or hang on to, when life gets tough. A crisis may be crushing. Or you may find that at some point your answers just don't work. So life doesn't make much sense, and you'll feel ungrounded and empty. You may also fear death.

What can ignite your search for what's deeper? You may start your search for what's deeper because of the example of a wise mother or uncle, a wise boss in your first job, or a wise teacher. Or at some point in your life, you may have had a sudden insight, inspiration, epiphany, or moment of enlightenment, that turned the direction of your life.

Others may have had trauma in their life, such as losing a baby, serious illness or disease, bankruptcy, a bad accident, or been in a natural disaster, and the event and the experience changed their life, giving them "new eyes."

Still others may have been deeply discouraged by what they see as ugly, brutal, and darker in life. They search for something to lift them and give them hope.

A few may have had a near death experience that wakes them up. The near-death may have given you "new eyes" to see that there's a deeper side to life, one that's even more important, and one you've been missing. Nanci Danison's story illustrates this well and I summarize it in the **Box**---The near death experience in Ch 3 *More about you* in Book 1.

A near-death may forcefully point you to what's really important in your life---such as, becoming more tolerant, loving, and compassionate; and being less concerned with money, status, or wealth, as it did for Danison.

Or you may just have felt a deep, strong desire from an early age to find what's "deeper," more real, and true for you, as I have.

So, this book is my answer to what's "deeper," that is, most real, true, and important for me. My answer may also work for you. But there are many other good answers.

Box---What's "deeper" for me? And what's not?

I use the terms "deeper," worldly, and non-physical throughout this book to reflect the idea that there's something else for us than just what's apparent, evident, or immediately available to the senses. I often just use "deeper" to suggest these differences and various associations. This table and the discussion above may help you decide what's deeper for you.

the "deeper," non-physical , "worldly"	the physical, the non-"worldly"
what's not apparent, tangible, evident, or immediately available to your senses	what's apparent, tangible, evident, or immediately available to your senses
what's most real and true for you, what's transcendent for you	what's apparent, tangible, evident, and immediately available to your senses
your spiritual side and the promptings of your unconscious	your workaday world, that you deal with your workaday mind
"there"	"here"
concerned with developing your spiritual character, spiritual strengths, life purpose and plan, and connection to your Higher Self	concerned with you thriving and succeeding in the world
relates to your highest hopes, experiences, and potentials	concerned with you thriving and succeeding in the world; often includes the dark, ugly side of life
relates mostly to your spirit, with your highest vibrations , and its relation to your mind	relates mostly to the body, with your lowest vibrations, and includes your brain
relates to your last three energy centers---throat, brow, and crown centers	relates to your first four energy centers---root, second, solar plexus, and heart centers
concerned with your feelings of love of truth and beauty, and feelings of connection to the universe and of awe and wonder	concerned with your desires to survive in the physical world, desire for sex, relations with other people and groups, feelings of care and compassion

By the way, to simplify my explanation in this section, I've described you as being made up of roughly two big parts---physical and non-physical energies, or the apparent and the "deeper." Elsewhere I've said that you're a mixture of spirit, mind, and body, with the mind as a mixture of both energies. So I've simplified things a little.

Isn't there only one "deeper"? It would be nice if there were only one "deeper" thing to find and live by. The one key to everything, the bedrock. That's the claim of most religions. But it's not that easy. Whatever answers you come up with must be your own. What really works for you may not be found in a pre-packaged answer in one religion or philosophy.

There is no single "deeper" in life because each of us looks at things differently and with a different spiritual perspective. Each of us begins life from a different level of spiritual maturity. Also, each is at a different place in our spiritual growth. What's deeper for a Baby Buddha will be different than for someone who is growing spiritually.

ATI [All That Is] is many sided, perhaps infinitely sided, and can be described from many perspectives. Some see All That Is as a loving being. Others see it as an energy that pervades everything. Still others see it as something else.

So there are many things from which you can choose that can be deeper for you.

Also, don't be surprised if what's "deeper" for you changes over your life. As you keep looking for what's deeper through the years, you'll come to different answers that work better than the previous. At one point in your life, a religion may work for you, but much later in life you may go to a more individual, self-crafted spirituality, for example.

3. 2. I live by what's "deeper" for me.

I see everything as being made up of collections of various energies, and people as having energy centers. So one big question for me is, Which of these energies should I focus on? Which are the more important?

So my goal is to raise these energies in myself and others, and thereby strengthen my spiritual character. This is my answer, but there are others. What other answers are out there about what's deeper? What might be the ground or foundation for your life?

A man I've known works on developing his virtues, what I call spiritual habits. Each week he chooses one to practice, such as being grateful [crown energy center], being kind, helpful, and generous [heart or fourth energy center], seeking and telling the truth [throat or fifth center], appreciating and loving beauty [crown or seventh energy center], or seeking social justice [heart and throat centers].

If you are a non-theist, your deeper may be what inspires awe and wonder in you, and gives you a feeling of elevation, perhaps a mystical feeling [brow or crown center]. Some non-theists and agnostics use the word "spiritual" to mean such elevated feelings. For other non-theists, their

“deeper” is what’s very basic and grounds their world, transcends it. So they may pursue social justice for their community, work to improve their city, or seek to protect the environment.

For other spiritual seekers, the deeper may what’s within their mind or spirit, that is, the creative. They may see their life work as drawing out and describing what’s in their unconscious, as Carl Jung [1875-1961], therapist and writer, did. Or they may write plays or poetry, write or perform music, dance, carve sculptures, or make some other creative products from their work with their unconscious. Ingmar Bergman [1918-2007], a movie director, for example, developed ideas for his movies from his dreams.

Still other spiritual seekers may go to a religion or philosophy to find the deeper in their life. For example, they may see each person as a small splinter or spark of God and therefore worthy of great respect. Some seekers may follow Krsna [also Krishna], or live as the Buddha, Mohammed, or Jesus did. Those who are religious may see the sacred, divine, or infinite and eternal as the deeper.

Some seekers may go to a philosophy such as Existentialism or Stoicism.

My “deeper” relates to my spirit and Higher Self, which I see as energy, and includes my life plan and purpose, spiritual character and spiritual habits, and connection to my Higher Self. I also see myself as a theist of sorts.

Notice that the “deeper” is more than seeking ordinary pleasure [root energy center], acquiring things and wealth [root center], gaining fame or influence [solar plexus center], and even more than just concerns about family or friendships [second center]. The “deeper” is what’s transcendent, non-worldly, or non-physical for you.

A few more examples of what can be deeper for you---

You may believe that it’s important that all people should be seen and treated as equals and free in body, mind, and spirit [heart and brow energy center]. They work to achieve that, as Lincoln did.

Or you may seek to improve the overall welfare of your nation. You may believe that it should have an economy that allows its citizens to live without worrying about essentials [heart, solar plexus, and brow centers]. So you may work for, or promote, government programs such as the New Deal, as did Eleanor Roosevelt and Frances Perkins [1880-1965].

A spiritual seeker may believe that a group of people, ie, their ethnic group or nation, should be free to choose its own course, without being discriminated against or dominated by another [solar plexus and brow centers], as did Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr [1929-1968].

Or they may love animals and nature, as did Francis of Assisi [1181-1226] [heart and crown centers].

If you see everything as energies, your life work may be to remove peoples’ energy blocks by healing them, for example. Or you may work as a psychic by suggesting more complete ways a

person can see themselves and their life. If you work in politics, you may work to remove public policies that lower peoples' energies, such as harsh legislation or unfair government actions, or create programs to raise peoples' energies, such as national health care or a guaranteed annual income to reduce fears about money. Or they can write a book.

It's best, generally, to pick any idea or thing in your last four energy centers to be the "deeper" for you. The last four energy centers take you beyond the worldly and are your door to greater spiritual growth and maturity.

Baby Buddhas. But what about the person who is after only more possessions, money, and wealth [root or first energy center], fame or popularity [solar plexus or third center], physical pleasures [root center], power and influence [solar plexus center], or even just family or friendships [second center]? In other words, not all seek the deeper in the last three energy centers. Many are still working with the first four centers.

I call such persons Baby Buddhas. They still have a way to go on their road to spiritual growth and maturity. They may be working with very basic life problems. But whether spiritually growing or not, every person deserves your respect---each Baby Buddha eventually becomes a Buddha, that is, awakens to what's "deeper."

Box---Addictions and the "deeper"

Some Baby Buddhas choose an unhelpful answer to what's deeper for them. They may see things around them as unpleasant, dark, or ugly---and they desperately seek the opposite. They are uncomfortable with their world or can't bear it. They may see nothing around them to relieve or lift their mind or spirit, even a little. They're stuck in the first three energy centers and ignore or can't reach the last four.

As they look for something in which to ground their life, some may go to drugs or alcohol, or some other addiction. Drugs or alcohol become easily available answers to, what's to them, a hard, very unpleasant, or ugly world. Or they are stuck at the worldly because they can't or won't see beyond the worldly. But as an answer, addiction doesn't work well over time and creates big problems for the addict and those around them.

Things aren't always clear. There are few rules. Why am I doing what I'm doing, that is, what's my real motivation in a situation? What are my hunches telling me? What are my deep desires telling me? As you seek to grow spiritually, you'll increasingly ask such questions about yourself, others, or the situation---but they may not always have clear or definite answers.

With regard to people, including yourself, you'll have ideas and feelings that may not be easy to pin down or put into words, much less deal with. Some feelings and ideas may blend into each other. It can be very hard to really know yourself and other persons.

That's because as you work on your spiritual growth you're also working with your unconscious and spirit and they communicate to you with hunches, urges, images, and stories rather than words or ideas. And there'll be few set ideas or rules for dealing with them. You'll have to give them your own labels and develop your own rules.

The situation itself may also not be entirely clear. You may not have all the important facts about the situation. Or the facts themselves may be vague. Some facts may be withheld. Or you may not understand the situation as a whole. What's the right thing to do in this situation, you'll ask.

In other words, you must have a pretty large tolerance for uncertainty or ambiguity, as psychologists call it, when you deal with what's deeper for you, and work on your spiritual growth. This work, and the work of dealing with the conflicts and the balancing that go along with that, has few rules or even guidelines. You must "feel" your way along, see what's feels right for you. You must trust your own thoughts and hunches and finally go back to your own judgement about the people and the situation.

Last thing. You must be passionate about your "deeper." You must also work hard at it. Your "deeper" should help you see above the daily and the immediate, especially when life gets challenging or tough. It should also help lift your overall energies.

At minimum, whatever you choose to make "deeper" should help you feel more connected with others, help you jump out of the bed most mornings, that is, motivate you, and should strongly discourage you from hurting yourself and others.

Summary. There are many things from which you can choose to be deeper for you, to be your bedrock beliefs. There is no single, big, or deeper thing you have to pursue---you can choose whatever strikes you as important. What's important is that you look for it. Also, your essential beliefs need not include God or even a theist principle. They just have to feel right.

Each of us begins life at a different starting point on our road to spiritual growth and maturity. Some are Baby Buddhas and begin at the beginning. A very few others are close to being fully mature spiritually, close to becoming awake, a Buddha. Our world is a mixture of Baby Buddhas, very few Buddhas, and the rest are in-between, that is, Becoming Buddhas.

3. 3. I keep balancing and aligning the "deeper," non-worldly side of me against what's not.

Sometimes you come to a situation where what's deeper for you and what's not may be at odds. Because they're different, don't be surprised if questions or conflicts between them arise.

In my life, such questions came up as---

~ How can I deal with my own needs, especially the needs to allow my mind and spirit to grow, when they sometimes conflict with the needs of my job?

~ My family needs me to go shopping with them, but I need time to myself. How can I deal with their needs as well as my own deeper ones?

~ Some people are out for themselves and don't care if they hurt me. What should I think and feel about the dark and ugly sides of life? How do these affect my desire to grow and mature spiritually?

~ What should I do when a friend asks me to intervene with our boss on his behalf? I believe he should stand on his own.

I'm sure I had more questions. For you, they can show up as---

~ Should I give up a steady job that supports my family well, so I can do a craft I love or write the novel I've been thinking about for years?

~ My job is really boring. How can I make my job more relevant to, maybe nourish, my own deeper needs?

~ Should I stand up for something I strongly believe in, even though it may hurt me at work, and perhaps affect my family?

~ My boss has asked me to do something I think is questionable, or maybe even wrong. What do I do?

~ My friend or partner has completely lost my trust. How can I keep being a friend or partner with him or her?

~ How much help should I give a relative without making them too dependent on me? How can I help her become strong enough to solve her own problems?

When you come to such questions or dilemmas, you face the task of aligning and balancing conflicting thought-feelings. I say more about this in the next question, *5. In energy terms, what really is spiritual growth?*

Box---How to balance your "double vision"?

As I've said above, there's always another side to things, an apparent side and one that's less apparent but important. How can you live with both?

~ Don't neglect what your deeper side is telling you.

What's deeper for you will come from your unconscious, and perhaps your spirit. Your unconscious will talk to you in hunches and intuitions, daydreams and dreams, and in your creative work. So pay attention to what your unconscious tells you. And follow up.

~ Don't neglect your spirit.

Pay attention to what it tells you. That is, seek and work on your life purpose and plan, as you understand it, work on your We-spiritual habits and We-character, and maybe connect with your Higher Self.

~ Follow your unconscious and spirit when their promptings appear to contradict your worldly inclinations, that is, the first four energy centers.

Draw or color, meditate, study your dreams, etc.

~ Strive to see events and experiences from wider and wider perspectives.

What's good for you or someone else long-term versus short term? What's best for your and someone else's spirit? What's best when you deal with others or a group? What's best when you see events from a reincarnational perspective?

Sometimes what you see conflicts with your double vision. They you have the work of aligning and balancing them.

3. 4. The worldly part of my life presents its own, different challenges than the non-worldly. I try to not neglect the worldly side.

Focusing too heavily on what's deeper while neglecting the worldly can lead to bad results, such as bankruptcy, poverty, illness, or divorce. You live in the world, and its demands must be met if you are to continue living in it as a healthy and whole person. And often you need to balance your worldly demands against each other.

My worldly challenges have been the common ones---raising a family and taking care of them, doing my job well, and taking care of the house and cars. Sometimes doing one interfered with doing another, so I've had to keep balancing them.

Even if you've found what's deeper for you, and are passionate about it, you must still deal with the worldly. The worldly doesn't go away. And it presents its own challenges---

How do I deal with what my friends or volunteer work demands, as compared to what my family needs?

How can I pay the bills and still have money to sweeten my family's lives?

How can I deal with my fear of death?

I really like having hot sex with my partner. But I'd also like to show my love for her or him when we're intimate. How can I do that?

Other similar questions can come up for you as you live your daily life. And these questions will involve balancing one worldly demand against another. Your spouse or partner, children, boss, and the rent or mortgage, and keeping up your house or apartment each makes demands on you. And each should be balanced against another.

Some who've found what's deeper for them and become passionate about it, may go to an extreme. Finding at long last what's true and real for you may be so exciting that you ignore anything else. You may fail to take care of yourself, neglect your family and friends, and neglect your job. Working for social justice may seem so much more important than eating right and exercising. The worldly may seem so inferior by comparison that it doesn't seem worth bothering about.

When you pay attention to, and work with, the worldly part of your life, you are working mostly with your first four energy centers---the root, second, solar plexus, and heart centers---your "worldly" energy centers. They are concerned with having you survive and thrive, your relations with individuals, your relations with and within larger groups of people, and your feelings of compassion and love for others. These worldly energy centers make very different demands on you than do the last four---your heart, throat, brow, and crown centers---which relate heavily to your mind and spirit, the other worldly.

So the thing is to take care of the worldly part of your life, including yourself, yet keep in mind and truly care about the deeper. You need to develop a balanced "double vision." This calls for developing a particular type of balance, one that keeps your attention on the deeper side while balancing that with your view of the other.

Box---Ethics, morals, and energy centers

Your boss tells you to take a short cut with a customer but you think it won't be good for the customer long-term. Sometimes you may face a situation that poses conflicting energies for you. How will you resolve it?

In energy terms, this is the task of balancing energies in the first four centers. Such balancing questions are also a matter of ethics and morals.

Morals, for me, deals with social norms and customs, mores, and religious beliefs, and how to resolve conflicts between them. For example, your culture may tell you that a woman should be subordinate to men in all things. But as a woman you find it hard to agree with this. As you live in a group, culture, or society, and as demands within the group, etc, or between them, fall on you, questions and conflicts may come up for you. These are largely questions that relate to the first four energy centers---root, second, solar plexus, and heart centers.

Ethics, for me, deals with questions that arise within wider perspectives. Such conflicts can involve laws and governmental regulations, common sense, your organization's code of ethics, your personal interests, or your personal beliefs and deep inclinations, such as intuitions---as well as social norms, mores, and customs, and religious beliefs---, and how they may be opposed. You may be caught in opposing demands from another person, group, organization, or nation, and so may face ethical conflicts.

Thankfully, there are many suggestions you can use to help you with a personal, ethical, or moral questions. Pick one or more to help you with a tough question---

~ Do your proposed actions feel “comfortable”?

Would you feel “comfortable” if you carry them out? What does your gut tell you? What does your intuition tell you about them?

~ Can you sleep well on the proposed action?

~ If they knew, would your family approve, especially a more spiritually mature relative?

Would your mother approve, assuming you respect her judgement?

~ How would you feel if your actions were widely known, say on the internet or tv?

~ Will your actions harm or make someone’s life more difficult? If so, have you tried to minimize the harm or discomfort to any involved, especially those most vulnerable? Another way to ask this is, “Will my actions be fair to those involved?”

~ Does the good coming from your actions outweigh the negative, as far as you can tell?

~ Will your actions violate someone’s rights?

Some rights may implied, such as the right to be fully informed about a situation that may affect you, or the right to receive help to change where someone decides that change is necessary.

~ Will any laws or governmental regulations apply to your proposed actions?

~ Do your proposed actions go against any of your spiritual, philosophical, or religious beliefs?

~ Will your proposed actions go along with your organization’s code of ethics? Your organization’s social norms and customs?

~ Does your proposed action make common sense?

~ Talk about your question with a person you respect and trust. What do they think?

You may have a spiritual advisor, who need not be a religious or a therapist. Although they should be a person you can trust and respect, make sure they won’t push their answer on you, or try to make your mind up for you. Hopefully they’ll serve you best if they help you see your ethical or moral question in a better light, and then let you go on from there by yourself.

3. 5. I think it’s important for me to keep working on my We-character and We-spiritual habits.

I’ve worked on various spiritual habits, such as compassion [heart energy center], being open and seeking the truth [throat center], and having an appreciation and love for the majestic and

sublime [brow and crown centers]. I can't say that I've completely mastered them. I have a way to go.

I make a point of catching myself when I fail to display a spiritual habit in a situation, such as disliking a person because they speak poorly, or disliking a certain group because I disapprove of their activities. I try to be very honest with myself, especially when I have less than positive thoughts and intents towards a person. I also note when I display a certain spiritual habit, such as gratitude for what I've received, or awe about some aspect of people or the world.

Building spiritual habits and spiritual character are the work of the last four energy centers. The spiritually growing We-person becomes more and more open to universe energies. Their work with the last four energy centers helps energies pass freely through them and to use these energies productively. They also create new positive energies that go out into the universe as they think, speak, and act.

By the way, it's important to know and keep in mind that there are We- and Me-characters, that they are different, and that it's vitally important to decide which you prefer. The We-person works to grow and mature spiritually by seeking to raise the energies and welfare of all, including their own. They see everything as related and as one thing.

The Me-character, on the other hand, works to promote their own interests, rather than others.' They see the world as composed of individuals who compete. And they ignore their heart energy center.

Can a Me-person grow and mature spiritually? Yes, they can, but they grow into a Me-character. I call such persons shrewd rather than wise, or as having negative rather than positive spiritual maturity.

3. 6. I've worked, especially lately, to make more and more sense of my life, that is, to create experiences and to find my life purpose and plan.

I've become more attentive to reading and talking about others' experiences. I listen closely to what they tell me about their life. Later, I often spend some time thinking about what I've heard. I want to imagine how they felt and what they've thought, why they did the things they've told me about, how they faced a problem or question, what kind of character they may have, and maybe what their life plan and purpose might be.

I also look forward to talking with a good listener. A good listener asks good questions that can give me an insight on some part of my life. Also, telling your story to more than one person, with each re-telling, can give you a new slant on it. A good listener can be your partner or spouse, a close friend, therapist, spiritual advisor, or even someone you've just met. They give me the chance to know myself a little better.

I read a memoir, autobiography, or biography with more interest and more closely than I have in the past to see what experience someone has made of their life events. I watch movies for the same reason. Before, movies for me were just relaxation. Now, they often show me things about peoples' lives. I ask the same questions of movies I've watched as I do after I talk to someone.

For example, the movie *The Wolf of Wall Street* shows the life of a Baby Buddha, a man who indulges in excess, mostly of the root energy center, that is, he is mostly concerned with money, drugs, and sex.

I also keep a diary in which I record the events of my life and review it to find some sense and meaning in them.

Once in a long while I get a big insight into myself and my life. For example, I've long thought that my childhood has had little if any lasting influence on the rest of my life. I've believed that what happened to me years ago doesn't influence my actions and thoughts today. That the child need not be the adult. It took one epiphany to turn me around on that.

Overall, I don't want to see my life as a random bunch of events that I've just lived through and just happened to me. A big part of growing and maturing spiritually is coming to see that there's an overall picture to your life. This involves making sense of your life and finding meaning in it. Along with that, I've also gotten more serious about accepting and being grateful for the things that have happened to me throughout my life. I see now that they had a purpose and were part of a plan.

If you're young, finding your life purpose and plan will motivate you to live your life with more gusto and help you deal with big crises when they hit you. If you're older, finding sense and meaning in your life, and fully accepting that meaning, will make death less frightening and make you grateful for the events of your life.

Last, don't be surprised if in your search for greater spiritual growth and maturity, you'll come to see things more broadly, especially people and their lives. For example, you may see each person as going through the challenges of a certain stage of their life. So you'll see the spiritually growing person as having very different spiritual and worldly needs than one who's younger. You may see some as growing toward greater maturity and many others who pause or are blocked along the way. So you'll deal with, and understand, each differently.

Or you may see each person as becoming more of themselves throughout their life, that is, as developing a spiritual character. Or you may see people's lives as one of facing challenges that spiritually test and change them. And last, you may look at people from a reincarnational viewpoint, that is, as coming to Earth to fulfill a life purpose and plan. So your role becomes one of helping those around you fulfill their reason for being here.

Seeing the people you know and meet from a broader and broader viewpoint will help you better understand them, their life, as well as yours. Adopting a broader perspective will help you interact better with them. You can thereby decide if and how you will be involved with them, and thereby become a better "player" in their life.

So spend some time thinking about what's happened to you, and about your conversations and interactions with people, especially those close to you. If you've had a major illness or accident, spend time considering what it means for you and your life---these events can be life changing. Spiritually growing people are better than the rest of us in creating meaning, or sense, from what happens to them, even if it's living through serious illness, bankruptcy, a bad accident, or a natural disaster.

I say more about life purpose and plan, and creating experiences in Ch 9 *More about your spirit*.

Exercise---Benefiting from another's experience

The intent of this exercise is to learn a little about dealing with a difficult or traumatic life situation from another's experience.

You probably know someone who's going through, or has gone through, a tough situation. You may have even listened at length to them or given them advice.

Pick a person who seems to have reacted **positively** to their situation. You can also look at your own life.

1. What did the person do to cope with the situation? What things in their situation helped them cope?
2. What strains did the situation pose for them?
3. What knowings, or deep knowledge, did they get from the difficult situation? What spiritual habits did they develop in the experience?
4. What did you get from their knowing? What did you learn?

Not all persons become wiser from having experienced a difficult situation. Some react **negatively**---that is, they become discouraged, pessimistic, feel defeated, etc. About half of the World War Two veterans in one study, for example, were worse off in life after the War, but the others got stronger.²

² Keen, Kathy (2010, October 9) Emotional effects of heavy combat can be lifelong for veterans, Retrieved May 6, 2015 from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/10/101006120138.htm>. This article summarizes one of Monika Ardel's research papers.

Think of one such person you know something about. Why did they react negatively to their experience? You can also look at yourself.

1. Are there any personal characteristics that led the person to react that way, ie, negatively? Things in their background?
2. What did the person gain from the difficult events? Were their views about life greatly changed?
3. How do you interpret the person's experience? What do you get from their knowing?

Exercise---Making sense of a difficult or traumatic experience

The intent of this exercise is to better understand, and come to terms with, a terrible experience you've had.

Take a current or past situation in your life that was difficult or even traumatic. Spend some time reflecting on it. That is, ask yourself---

1. What happened in the situation and what were your feelings and thoughts as you went through the experience?
2. What are your thoughts and feelings now about the experience?
3. How has your view of life been formed from this experience? How have you lived your life differently as a result of the experience?

For example, if you believe in reincarnation, why did the events happen in this life rather than in another? How have the events and experience shaped your life.

What does this difficult situation say about your life plan---after all, you agreed to have these events happen to you in this life rather than another.

4. Pretend you are advising another person in the same situation as yours.

Pretend that you are advising yourself. What would you tell them so as to help them cope and accept? What would you have them do? What could you do to help them?

5. What else can the events mean to you? What other sense can you make of them?

In other words, consider that there may be more than one meaning to what happened to you. What might your spirit, which chose these events for you, have intended?

6. Have you come to terms with the events? That is, do you understand them better? Have you come to accept it as a meaningful part of your life, in some way?

Box---Making routine more meaningful

Sometimes you may see your daily life as a string of tasks that need to be done and that don't have much pattern or meaning to them. Since you see no meaning in doing them for you, you've become distanced from your daily life.

So every now and then it's good to turn away from getting things done to asking question about the routine of your life. That is, at times you may instead want to see your life as a set of moment-to-moment questions. You can do that if you see yourself as striving to make meaning and sense of your routine instants.

How can you de-routinize your daily life?

1. Begin by assuming that the world is more wonderful and subtly intricate than you now see it. Assume that you live amidst many hidden patterns. And assume that there is always more to discover about yourself and the world.
2. Look for puzzles, questions, anomalies, etc as you go about your daily life.
3. Be alert to changes, subtleties, and differences in you, people around you, and situations.
4. Now and then, slow down your world by being mindful. What do you notice about yourself and the people you interact with?
5. Every so often, make an effort to see your world in a very different way. For example, if you're mostly concerned about getting things done efficiently, change your focus to making them more attractive. Or, ride a public bus to see your world as if you were poor or infirm or both.
6. Lastly, what sense do you make of your different ways of seeing things? What meanings do you draw from your routine?

Doing some of the above will turn you from a doer into an observer and student of your life, and turn the moments of your life into questions.

3. 7. I believe that growing and maturing spiritually is the most important thing I can do in my life. I'm committed to it.

It has taken me a lot of living to see that this is what I seek in life. I don't think you can really grow and mature spiritually if you don't truly believe that this is the most important thing you can do in your life. You must passionately believe that seeking and living by what's deeper for you is the most important thing you can do.

And beyond that, you must also commit to that belief. If you seek to grow and mature spiritually, you must do both, strongly believe and commit.

Where and how might you get this idea? A variety of experiences can show you this---the example of a person close to you; living through difficult events or a crisis; a sudden insight, epiphany, or an enlightenment; and, for a few, a near death experience; or a deep longing throughout your life, as for me.

3. 8. Summary. You may not seek to become spiritually mature, but you probably prefer to be around, or work for, people who are. How can you tell if your spouse or boss is spiritually growing? Or your teacher, physician, or a politician?

Generally, a person is seeking to grow and mature spiritually if they seek to raise and balance their energies, and are working on all or most of their energy centers to do so. They---

~ believe growing spiritually is the most important thing they can do in their life

~ try to make more and more sense of their life, including their life purpose and plan

~ are working on their We-character and We-spiritual strengths

~ don't neglect the worldly part of their life

~ keep balancing the "deeper" against what's not

~ have looked for and found what's "deeper" for themselves.

So the person who is spiritually mature lives on Earth as a god would, a god clothed in a body.

4. What really is spiritual growth?

Let's say you need to give some bad news to someone you care a lot about. Should I tell her the bad news or should I not upset her? If I tell her, how should I phrase the bad news so as to soften the blow?

Or, my spouse badly wants to take an offered promotion. With both of us working, it'll be very difficult to have the baby we both want. Should I put aside my strong desire to have a baby?

In such energy conflicts, and in how you deal with them, is your spiritual growth. You can't grow spiritually if you don't deal with such conflicts. What's going on with your energies and energy centers when you face such questions?

Spiritual growth is seeing and working with more and more energy centers and with broader and broader energies. You are a pebble surrounded by wider and wider wave-circles. The person growing spiritually can take in and embrace these larger and larger “circles.”

Also, spiritual growth is aligning and balancing different or conflicting thought-feeling energies you may have or take in. Your energies are a stream with currents of thought-feelings, events, experiences, discussions, and actions. Some currents run into each other in cross-currents, rapids, upswells and downswells, eddies, and rip currents. When you align and balance such opposing currents, you smooth their flow to a freely-flowing stream.

By the way, *The Ra material, Book 1* [1984: 87-90] and *The law of one, Book 4* [1984: 93] by Don Elkins et al discuss aligning and balancing conflicting energies as the major way we grow spiritually. Also, *A handbook of wisdom* [2005: 275] by Robert Sternberg sees becoming wiser as balancing forces within yourself, forces in your interactions with others, and perhaps forces in the situation, such as with or within a group or organization. So the wise person has successfully balanced these various forces.

I'll next explain the ideas of taking in broader and broader energies and aligning and balancing them. Although I discuss them separately, they are part of the same task of growing and maturing spiritually, that is, taking in and dealing with new and different energies.

Balancing your energy centers. As you grow and mature spiritually, you fulfill the potential of your energy centers, that is, you activate the various centers and balance them. I've discussed this in the previous section.

Seeing wider circles. Many of us are most concerned with only me. We work with energies within a very small circle, what relates to me and my needs and interests, and don't give much thought to others' thoughts and feelings. We also see the world only from the perspective of our workaday mind and aren't aware of or ignore other messages our unconscious or spirit is sending us. However, you won't grow much spiritually if your major perspective on life is only yourself and your workaday mind. There's a lot more to life.

For some, the jump from seeing only “me” to also seeing “you,” much less “we,” is the major one of their life. It may take years for some to move to this larger circle, even a lifetime, and they have many frustrations and mistakes along the way.

As you further grow spiritually, you may see a bit wider circle as you look at situations as a whole. You see that others have their own interests and needs that you should consider, and then may go on to see that, where a number of people and parties are involved, it's best to also to protect them. You'll seek to make sure that each is better off, or at least no worse off, from your actions. That is, you'll seek to balance the interests and needs of others in the situation.

Still more broadly, you can see your world with “double vision,” that is, what's “deeper” as opposed to the daily world with its own demands. What's deeper for you will relate to your throat, brow, and crown centers---the last three energy centers. Your worldly concerns relate

mostly to your first energy centers---the root, second, solar plexus, and heart centers. Double vision allows you to live with both views, and align and balance the energies when they conflict.

Beyond that, you can take a long-term, generational perspective on life. Will this action will be good for my children when they're grown? Their children's children? This is a good way to see actions that may affect the Earth. A Native American tribe, for example, may ask, Will this action be good for us and the Earth for the next seven generations, that is, the next two hundred years or more? This is the work of balancing what's good for today against the longer tomorrow.

You can also see things from a historical perspective. You can see yourself and others as living in a time where differences are heightened and exaggerated, like ours. We live in a time of increasing social frictions, changes, and troubles. Hopefully this will lead us to find ways to resolve our differences, and come to live together in the deeper things that unite us. You can see the conflicts as leading us to raise questions so as to help us eventually reconcile our differences and live together peacefully. We live in a time of great transition, spiritual and otherwise.

Or, you may see all lives from a reincarnational viewpoint. You see people as coming to Earth with their own particular purpose/s. They took on certain abilities, characteristics, and background to help them achieve their purpose. So I look at the people I know or meet, and ask what kind of role they'll have in my life. Have they come into my life to give me something? Or to receive something from me?

A reincarnational view allows you to see a spouse, friend, or co-worker as living one of many lives they'll have. So you can consider how you figure in, and may affect, their life purpose and plan, and how you can help them develop their spiritual strengths and spiritual character.

So if you seek to grow and mature spiritually, you'll also strive to see the world in broader and broader circles, that is, you'll deal with finer and finer energies. For example, you may feel creative or spiritual inclinations that push you away from your job and daily life to something that connects with the deeper in you. Here your unconscious stands against your workaday mind. The bigger the questions you pose to yourself, the broader the energy circles you'll be working with.

There is always more life to take account of. The truly spiritually mature person can freely take in all universe energies, that is, face all events, whatever they are, and deal with them without creating energy negative thought-feelings, energy kinks, blocks, or distortions. Their energy "circle" began small and, as they grew spiritually, embraced wider and wider ones. The spiritually mature person embraces all energies they're subject to. They come to see that all is one.

Exercise---Widening circles and balancing currents

The intent of this exercise is to see how others have widened their spiritual "circles" and dealt with spiritual conflicts.

Luckily, you have at least two ways to vicariously widen your circles and perspectives, and to align and balance conflicting energies within them, besides doing this in your own life. We love to watch and read about people facing big life questions. Many of us also like to hear gossip, which may be a story about someone in a sharp dilemma.

Novels and dramas often show people facing life conflicts. For example, the single mother-soldier in the movie *Fort Bliss*, is torn between being a medic in Afghanistan, a job she loves, and taking care of her son at home. The movie *21 grams* shows a widow dealing with the loss of her whole family, and a man who can't forgive himself for the car crash that caused their deaths. The mother and the man each have very difficult energies to come to terms with.

Such dramas spotlight ordinary people as quiet heroes, martyrs, or saints, as the characters work to become brave, self-sacrificing, or wiser.

Take a look at one or two of your favorite movies or novels. Or recall a major piece of gossip you've heard.

1. What moral or spiritual conflicts does the character or person face?

The wife and mother in the movie *The upside of anger* becomes extremely angry at her life and her husband after he goes missing and isn't heard from again.

2. How does the character or person view themselves and their situation? What conflicts arise for them from the situation?

The woman in the movie sees herself as abandoned, perhaps for another woman, without warning or explanation. The suddenness of the disappearance and not having an explanation grieves her greatly. She copes by drinking and taking up with a neighbor. Neither helps.

3. How do they align and balance their conflicting energies?

The movie ends with a resolution that I won't spoil for you. The resolution is also a nice life lesson.

Exercise---Your energy circles and currents

The intent of this exercise is to see how throughout your life you've widened your perceptual and spiritual "circles".

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Think back over your life and consider if and how your views of life may have broadened.

1. Do you see some things in life from a different perspective, perhaps broader, now than when you were younger?

For example, you may see marriage or friendship differently than when you were younger. Earlier, you saw your spouse or friends mostly as your helpers. Now you may see marriage or friendship as a chance to see the other develop their life, to watch them grow, especially in mind and spirit, for example.

Or, maybe your views on raising children or work have changed?

You may also see yourself differently, such as having a life purpose and spiritual character.

2. What situations, questions, or problems did you come up against that pushed you to see things more broadly?

Maybe serious illness, or some other crisis, led you to see your and other's life more broadly. Or an affair may have revealed discontents or problems that you were overlooking in your marriage. A serious mistake at work, yours or someone else's, may have caused you to re-think work and working.

Box---Circles of conflicts

Your big questions in life involve conflicting energies. You can have conflicts---

Within yourself. You may see yourself as flawed, failed, or unworthy. Or you may see yourself as much better than others. Yet your spirit knows its true worth and connection to All That Is.

The energies of different energy centers may also be opposed. Should I be hard-headed or soft-hearted toward others?

Between yourself and others. You want a family, preferably a large one, but your spouse seeks to do better in their job. Or your friend is going in a life direction you are increasingly uncomfortable with.

Between you unconscious and workaday minds. You daydream of piloting a boat or doing a craft, yet your boss wants that job done by tomorrow. Or you seek to become your own person despite a family that tells you what you must be. You feel the tug of your unconscious against the demands of your daily life.

Between your spiritual and your worldly. You love nature and feel its sacredness but your employer tells you that your job is to use nature for its resources. You may fear death because you aren't sure what will happen to you after you die. Should I buy a lot of things or should I take care of my mind and spirit?

Art and literature look at such persisting questions. Your spiritual growth is in such conflicts, and in how you deal with them.

Aligning and balancing energies. As you meet new challenges or meet again old ones, you'll feel the opposing, conflicting energies. So conflicts will arise all your life. Me versus others? Be

hard-headed or soft-hearted? Be this-worldly or other-worldly? Buy things or taking care of your inner self? And so on.

How can you balance such conflicting thoughts and feelings? I'll repeat some ideas I discussed in the previous section that have helped me when I need to align or balance things---

1. Throughout my life, I've kept asking "What's most real, true, and important for me?" That is, what's "deeper" for me? And I live by the answer.
2. I keep balancing the "deeper," non-worldly side of my life against the worldly side. The two may be sometimes opposed.
3. I make sure to not neglect the worldly part of my life.
4. I think it's very important for me to keep building my We-character, along with my We-spiritual habits.
5. I've worked, especially lately, to make more and more sense and meaning of my life. Also to get some idea of my life purpose and plan, and follow them.
6. I strongly believe that growing and maturing spiritually is the most important thing I can do in my life, what anyone can do.

Can you fail to find a balance? Yes, this often happens. You try and try again, maybe over years, to deal with the same conflicting thoughts-feelings. You hate a certain type of personality, which likely represents something about yourself that you dislike. Yet up to now you've found it impossible to accept and smooth out these negative thought-feelings.

You can't forgive a relative for what they've done to you years earlier. The hurt and angry feelings are still there, and you can't let them go, even though you've tried. You may face, and keep working on, the same conflict or problem, disguised differently, all your life.

Balancing energies is a life-long job. It's continual homework we each have.

Summary. Coming to spiritual maturity, including your life purpose and plan, and developing your spiritual habits and spiritual character, involves seeing your life more and more broadly, and in aligning and balancing the different energies that arise as you do so. Spiritual work is also energy work. To be spiritually mature is to freely take in the energies that surround you and send out your own. Your energy stream flows smoothly through and from you.

The spiritually mature person lives on Earth as a god would. She or he sees what a god would, acts as a god would. A few hope and work to climb to their next spiritual step, while the wise person already has become a god clothed in human form.

5. Special terms used here

All That Is [ATI], the sum of all energies everywhere, both non-physical and physical

energy centers, the seven major energy centers in you; the first is at the base spine and the last is at the top of your head; these energies are non-physical

character, also spiritual character, our essential orientation in life, either toward ourselves [Me-character] or toward others [We-character]

energy, the basic “stuff” of the seen and unseen universes; what everything is made of; energy can be physical, as our body; or non-physical as our mind and spirit

life plan, the major events you’ve planned for yourself before you were born

life purpose, what you came to Earth to accomplish; usually these are to strengthen your spiritual strengths

spiritual strengths, or virtues, you strengthen one or more energy centers when you say, think, or do certain things

unconscious, the part of your mind you are not ordinarily aware of; the part of your mind that connects you more closely to your spirit