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## Spiritual Growth and Self Awareness

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In *Divine Principle*, the outcome of becoming "fruitful" is to experience joy. This is not a stage to be completed, I believe, but a continual process of discovery and elevation. We can experience at different levels or depths more profound joy as we challenge our current state of spiritual health. To "Multiply and have Dominion" are also gifts to allow for greater experiences of growth and deeper Joy.

The 25 years, I have taught many workshops, started many camps and programs and studied under some excellent teachers. Everything is made of energy and everything is either growing or dying. At the core of God and the Universe is the heart, the reason and purpose for all things to relate and grow. For us to be whole and grow, we must open and fully experience our heart. The reason we have a physical body is to give our spirit the experience of life. If our physical life is so short compared to the eternal, spiritual one, then every experience in this finite life must be cherished.

*We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience. -- Teilhard de Chardin*

The level of transformation (or spiritual movement) that can take place in our life is also correlative to the level of emotion experienced and expressed. Our emotions are the expression of our vulnerability and authenticity and are the indicator of a shift in our lives. E-motion is energy in motion. To truly "let go" and be real, is a scary place to go.

*No one can tell what goes on in between the person you were and the person you become. There are no maps of the change. You just come out the other side. Or you don't. -Stephen King*

Too often, we are trained that we should suppress our emotions, hold back the tears, don't make a scene, don't be weak. Don Miguel Ruiz calls this our "Domestication". We become accustomed to the rewards or punishment of good or bad behavior and eventually no longer need outside sources to train us. We begin to hear a voice of admonishment, judgment or comparison within our own subconscious and in a Pavlovian reaction, begin to react instinctually without knowledge of the source.

Imagine entering an outhouse. You recoil at the odor, and you ponder whether your need outweighs your sensitivity. You sit, holding your nose. Eventually you need to breathe and after a few short breaths, start to relax a little and soon get comfortable. After a couple of minutes, it doesn't smell so bad anymore. In fact, you check out the graffiti, maybe even pull out a book, imagining that you're back at home, now having completely forgotten your

initial horror. Metaphorically, we've been sitting in our outhouse for many years many centuries, in fact. So used to the smell are we that we can't even imagine anything else. It's not even in our realm of possibility that there could be any other scent or feel. To open the door would shock our system so dramatically that we recoil back into the "known," our comfort zone where we are soothed by the graffiti and the ever-present scent of our precious outhouse.

Shock and pain (emotional distress) are often the necessary elements to break out of our domestication. Thus, we often hear of the value of breaking out of our comfort zone in order to grow. This is a necessary process for our continual growth.

*Surveys show that the #1 fear of Americans is public speaking. #2 is death. Death is #2! That means that at a funeral, the average American would rather be in the casket than doing the eulogy. -Jerry Seinfeld*

There are many types of fear that hold us back from experiencing real life. Courage is not the absence of fear but of feeling fear and having the willingness to step into it. In our workshops and camps, we create an environment in which participants can, in a supportive environment, step into their fear, let go of their limiting beliefs and expand their comfort zone to encompass greater and greater feats of accomplishment in their life.

It's not about the "thing," the event, the activity, even the people that come into your life. Develop your internal compass to guide you through all 'things' and to see them as a gift and an opportunity.

Our comfort zone doesn't grow a lump as we add a particular activity or "thing" to it (i.e. skydiving or bungee jumping). As we experience the emotions around the activity, it grows in concentric circles to encompass all "things" that would cause that emotion. Thus, as we deepen each experience in life, we become aware that everything that comes into our life is an opportunity for growth, for learning, for deepening.

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