

Cultivating Spirituality in Children
101 Ways to Make Every Child's Spirit Soar

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Dedication:

To Andrew Jacob Fesyk, my grandson,
who inspired the writing of this book.

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*Cultivating
Spirituality
In Children:*

**101
Ways
To Make
Every
Child's
Spirit
Soar!**

Chapter 1

You Picked Up this Book - Terrific!

You are a grownup in search of ways to nurture children's spirituality. At the same time, you want to walk intentionally on your own spiritual path. I'm happy to say, this book is for you!

This book is written for grownups who are invested in introducing spiritual values to children - enough that they are willing to take a look at the words they, themselves speak, as well as the actions they take, and ask themselves: *Are my words and my actions in alignment with what I want for my children? Am I willing to take on practices that will to not only cultivate awareness in me, but also shift my thoughts, my words and my actions, so they are in alignment with my highest values and my highest contribution to my children's well-being?*

From the title of this book, you might expect to find specific lists of what our children need in order to develop spiritually. Instead, I offer you an opportunity to think bigger. I challenge you to be willing to look deeper for what children really need from you.

Until we grownups commit to cultivating spiritual competencies within ourselves, our children have no reason to believe a word we say. Our actions constantly speak louder than our words, either reflecting our fear-based thinking or mirroring our Divine knowing. And, as you already know, children take their lessons from who we are being, not from what we are saying.

We all pretend not to know when we act out of alignment with our principles, but we know immediately when we're not practicing our core truths. In order to step fully into helping children soar as Spirit beings, we have to first be willing to practice investigating, visiting and enlivening our own deeply held spiritual principles. Then we must be willing to take up the practice of living into these principles. If we do this, Children will inevitably follow our lead.

By opening to cultivating spirituality in ourselves, we bravely make ourselves available to practice whatever it takes to expand our own courage, faith and Self-trust. These practices are deeply humbling, and at the same time, nurture solid confidence within ourselves. By these practices, we develop a delightful sense of self-knowing and self-trust, which until now, have remained out of reach. We live into a life with less stress, greater ease, and a sweet ability to accept and live peacefully with what is.

Through these practices, we also become far more willing to be present in our children's lives, as the gift of their presence in our lives becomes very, very clear. If this is the kind of parent/stepparent/grandparent or guardian that you've dreamt of becoming- read on!

Chapter 2

The Rules Of Consensus Thinking

Conforming to the standards set out by culture, religion, government, education, society, and family, often requires that we deny and ignore our own internal reality, our soul or Spirit-self, if you will, for the sake of what we get, or hope to get, from blind allegiance to external power sources. In exchange for our loyalty and obedience, we expect to be rewarded with security, stability, status, and perhaps monetary gain. For those committed to serving God through religious practices, we expect to effortlessly pass through the gates of heaven.

However, few people actually experience the rewards of such service. Most of us inevitably realize that we've abdicated our souls - our Spirit-self, for the sake of allegiance to the promise-makers, not the promise-keepers. This is endemic in both Western and Eastern societies. We are in denial of that fact that, not only have we been willing participants in this process, but we are training our children to do the same.

From the moment we are born, we are immersed in a learning process, which, more often than not, teaches us to do what we are told to do. In childhood, most of us learn to think what we are taught to think and to ignore our own inner voice. We are taught to ignore our emotions, our bodies and their messages.

We also learn to deny our own personal needs and wants, for the sake of others' needs and desires - these *others* often include our schools, churches, governments, families, as well as friends. We train ourselves to follow fear-based thinking, which is at present, the consensus view of reality. When we have an original thought or creation, we usually do not follow it, as it would be dangerous to break with this consensus thinking.

We train ourselves to not only *ignore* our inner truth, but to buy into the lie that it isn't safe to trust it. In this way, we are banishing it for perhaps a lifetime, or, at least until it is safe to begin to question reality.

In essence, this is where each of us are today; vaguely aware of the existence of an inner ME (Miraculous Existence) that has thoughts, feelings, needs and wants, and at the same time, afraid to explore that inner-self, because we are convinced that the ramifications may be dire.

Chapter 3

Confused?

Most of us live with a nagging confusion, due to the fact that we are immersed in a reality where religion and spiritual traditions are touted as the bedrock of our society. As children, many of us were taught spiritual principles through religion. However, the majority of our religious institutions are systems governed by a hierarchy of authority that requires obedience to the rules and to those who enforce the rules. We train ourselves to be vigilant to “doing it right” and “not doing it wrong”. In so doing, we hope to avoid punishment, persecution, and damnation. And, the spiritual principles we were meant to live by were kicked to the curb.

We hear the words - “Think Differently,” “Be the Exception,” “Go for the Extraordinary,” “Be Your Self”. However, more often than not, the humiliation, ridicule and ostracizing that is rampant, even within our elementary schools, convinces us to play small, and keep our ideas to ourselves. It’s very confusing - especially to children.

Each of us grownups carries the wounding and trauma created through our own parents’ confusion and inconsistencies: not walking their talk, not saying what they mean and not meaning what they say. Most of us, now as grownups, pretend that we aren’t confused or challenged by these dilemmas. Rather than addressing our confusion, we, like our parents, ignore it, in hopes that sometime later in life, the questions will answer themselves.

In the meantime, we, perhaps unconsciously, are doing and saying just as our parents said and did. Though we sometimes catch ourselves in the act, rarely are we willing to make a change. And, like our parents, we hope that our children and grandchildren don’t notice. The sad fact is, they *do* notice, and are deeply affected by the contradictions of our words and actions - just like we were and are today.

Here’s the bottom line: as long as we continue to deny and avoid addressing our confusion and these obvious incongruities, we will continue to contribute to our own personal suffering, and to our children’s suffering. With that said...

Chapter 4

The End of Confusion

Few of us willingly choose to question reality unless we have some kind of a catalyst that sets us up for the inevitable instant when we find it untenable to live as we have been living. For some, it's a midlife crisis, where life is void of meaning and the questioning of reality cannot be circumvented any longer. For others, it may be a cataclysmic event- earthquake, hurricane, a diagnosis of a terminal illness, a loss of career, or a loss of a most important being- through death, divorce, or irresponsibility.

At some point, the angst and agony of clinging obediently to a life that has been void of the promised rewards will be abandoned. This is when one willingly chooses to question the belief systems of their family and culture, in search of the answer to questions, which have remained unanswerable within their current reality.

This search for personal truth and meaning usually leads one on a personal quest. It is a time of unraveling the confusion. It is a time to discern one's values and choose how to align one's actions with personal values and truths. It is a time to risk losing the safety and security of the known world, separating out the threads of stories, parables and rules set out by authority, in hopes of finding clear answers. It is a time of discernment and choice-making, empowering oneself to think, feel, and act upon one's own truth.

Generally, this journey requires the inclusion of a power greater than the authority found in religion, government or any other organization on Earth. It begins to crack the 3D reality to include that which is invisible. It allows for experimentation, to not only call upon the support of a Divine Wisdom, but to allow the receiving of this wisdom.

Carefully, incrementally, we take steps away from our fear-based decision-making. And just as incrementally, we begin taking steps based on our essential knowing and deep truths. We willingly begin to discern relative truths from absolute truths, then take actions based on our direct findings.

At some point in this process, we realize that we are on a spiritual quest, and are cultivating a relationship with our higher selves - our Spirit-selves. We are developing a quality relationship with our spirituality that will not match any earthly relationship we have experienced thus far.

This journey is wrought with dangerous choice points. As we navigate the thousands of belief systems and practices in the world, it is extremely challenging to stay true to our unique and individual design. While desiring to get it right, and at the same time get it safely and easily, we may immerse ourselves in a set of values and truths that are similar to ours, but still not ours.

It is not uncommon for individuals on such a journey to decide to join new spiritual or religious organizations, feeling the desire for safety within consensus and community. However, to do so often pulls us into similar patterns of our original relationship with authority and religion, leaving behind the desire for fulfillment within our own inner-authority, i.e., our unique spirit.

Cultivating authority from within is the quintessential practice for reaching the fulfillment of our human spirit.

These experimentations with other religious and spiritual traditions may just be weigh-stations to collect oneself and one's thoughts. Inevitably though, like Buddha, Krishna, Jesus, and other truly significant spiritual teachers, we will *all* have to take the road less traveled - the one intended and fashioned only by us, for us.

Chapter 5

Let's Talk About Spirituality

Theoretically, spirituality is the cultivation of a deep and authentic relationship with our Divinity – our creator and all of creation. Spirituality is also each individual's process of revealing the ever present, ever deeper, richer layers of unity, sometimes referred to as *Oneness With All That Is*. This Divinity is the life force within all beings, and can only be fully known through direct, personal experience. Through applied dedication, we can begin to curiously explore, experiment and discover the truest relationship with our Spiritual-self.

Religious and spiritual traditions provide us with principles and practices, which elevate awareness and support conscious living. Additionally, many require an adherence to rules that govern moral and ethical standards.

Spirituality, on the other hand, is a personal endeavor to develop the ability to self-govern, based on one's own truth and integrity. Cultivating spiritual competence is a journey towards intentionally finding and claiming one's own unique relationship with Spirit. Only through this personal and very intimate process can each of us actualize our fullest expression of our essential nature, as Divine Beings.

Cultivating spirituality in children requires that those of us committed to such a practice begin by first nurturing our own relationship with our Spirit-self. By doing so, we become spiritual pioneers, and our children will be inspired to walk in our footsteps.

Chapter 6

Welcome To Your Possibility

Every one of us is endowed with an innate quest for meaning and understanding of the unknown, invisible world within. We long to experience this “something” we know to be true, yet is beyond logical and rational reason. Our deepest desire is to be an expression of the *sacred*. We may not know what that *sacred* is until we have the direct experience of it, but our deep longing for it inevitably brings us onto a path of self-reflection, self-realization and self-actualization.

We listen to, we sit with, and we gain guidance from those who have had direct experience with this invisible world. As much as we’d like to believe that it is enough to trust *them* and their experience, it is only through our own direct experience with the unexplainable world that we can truly and fully engage in a spiritual relationship with the Divine.

Consciously experimenting, exploring and discovering who we are, as Spirit within the circumstances of our human being, is the greatest gift we can give our children; it is imperative to their survival and the survival of our Earth. It is essential that we build a safe haven for children, within which they can know themselves, and thrive within their own incredible innate wisdom. We are all children and we are all ready to experience the delight of our own being. Welcome to your possibility!

Chapter 7

My Own Spiritual Path

As a child, I was often confused watching my parents be grownups. They were good people, yet I noticed that they sometimes swore, lied, cheated, and acted in unloving ways. Their actions often contradicted what they preached to us, and what we were taught in the Catholic Church. It was obvious to me, through my youthful eyes that, based on their actions and words, they were most likely going to go to Hell!

It did not make sense that most of the grownups I knew, including priests and nuns, acted in ways that were contrary to what they preached. In my child mind, this tangled the threads of my absolute knowing with filaments of doubt regarding the rules for living on Earth. There must be something I didn't understand, something besides Confession and Penance, which allowed people to enter the gates of Heaven, even though they were sinners.

I knew, without a doubt, that there was Divinity everywhere, in everything, always. However, the outside world reflected something that caused me doubt and uncertainty. I decided it wasn't safe to trust my inner knowing. In order to be safe, in order to get along in the world, I chose to move my trust to the authority and power in the world outside of me.

When I was 17, and I needed guidance the most, I couldn't get the attention of any adult to help me unravel my confusion. I couldn't get the support I needed to feel empowered, to think about what I needed to think about in order to live a spiritual life. Through angst and anguish, I came to the conclusion that I needed to rid myself of the hypocrisy, pretense and confusion of the life I was living as a Catholic. I threw religion out the window.

This choice to leave the Catholic Church, and everything related to religion, caused my parents to furiously reject me. I didn't care. My life laid in the balance. I was tormented and in such turmoil that for the first time in my life I seriously considered suicide.

Not knowing what or who to believe, I made the choice to become what I call an *atheistic agnostic*. And, for the next twenty years, I believed in love, the beauty of nature, and in kindness, but turned my back on all of what religion offered.

In my mid-thirties, all that changed.

As a therapist in Nova Scotia, working in the field of addiction, I was amazed to realize that people within the recovering community had something I didn't have. Through their AA and NA fellowships, individuals who were fully committed to recovering their lives were cultivating a deep, powerful, and authentic relationship with their higher power (as they defined him/her/it). They lived in faith, voluntarily suspending all beliefs that they could fix their problems by themselves. They surrendered their "stinking thinking" patterns and their old survival strategies to their higher power, as well. They learned how to accept what they could not change. They had serenity; I did not.

Through the witnessing of such dramatic results, I saw that I needed to reconsider my former decision regarding religion and spirituality. I came to decide that I wanted what they had, and I wanted it *enough* to cultivate the courage and faith to step onto the path to waking up.

I didn't quite know where to begin. All I knew was, that how I was being in my life wasn't working for me. I was miserable, dysfunctional in all my relationships and I had nowhere to turn for solace and peace. Yes, I was a therapist – as sick as they come. My recovering clients gave me a glimpse of a possibility of another way.

I began reading books on Co-dependency, Adult Children of Alcoholics, and read the book: *A Course in Miracles*. It was grueling and demanding work. And, by taking one arduous step at time, one day at a time, I found myself moving toward something I had excluded long ago. I realized that when I rejected religion, I rejected the very heart of my being, and is at the very heart of every religion: Experiencing and knowing the presence of the Divine.

I began the practice of surrendering my defenses, my resistance, my willfulness, for something I didn't understand. As I did so, I began to cultivate a Divine partnership – reuniting my smaller self with my Divine Self.

Today, I'm fascinated by the realization that my path over these past thirty years has returned me to the absolute knowing that I experienced in the innocence of my childhood. Miraculously, I reconnected with the wisdom of my child-self who had the absolute knowing of the Divine.

Nowadays there isn't a day that goes by that I'm not communicating with my Divine Wisdom, which is the most important companion in my life. I ongoingly engage in an unfolding relationship with this Universal Source of All That Is: Oneness. I now know that this relationship with the Divine will never end, and will never cease to bring phenomenally joyful, delight, and serenity into my life.

** If you are interested in the full story, my book: *The Unholy Path of a Reluctant Adventurer* (2011), reveals it all.

Chapter 8

Children Enter Our World Connected To Spirit

Children are spiritual beings who, just a short time ago, adventured into the world of humans. They enter our world already having a spiritual life. In their innocence, they have access to the wisdom and wonder of the world from which they came. They still enjoy relationships with the unseens: angels and guides, their devoted friends from the other side. Children have the innate ability to be connected with their Spirit-selves and the spiritual world, until they become more like the rest of us. When does that happen? When do they decide to forget their essential nature as Spirit-beings?

Chapter 9

A Personal Shattering

My spiritual breakdown began when I was six years old, and in the First Grade at Sacred Heart School. Sister Mary Denata began our religious instructions by telling us how God was all seeing, all knowing and all powerful. And, that this God was also an angry, punishing God, not the one I knew was lovingly there for me.

Shortly thereafter, came the teachings regarding sin and the punishment that comes along with sinning – inevitably it meant pretty much going to Hell. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, until I was six, I felt loved and cherished, protected and safe in my essential being. I feared very little.

After hearing Sister Mary Denata's version of truth about God and sin, everything changed. As this budding enthusiastic Catholic child, I realized with confusion and horror that I was probably committing sins and didn't even know it. And, because God was all seeing, all knowing, all powerful, *and* angry when disobeyed, he had certainly caught me in the act of my sinning, and Hell would be my punishment. This was the moment of my first shattering.

Through this version of truth, I grasped that I was guilty, and should be full of shame, just by virtue of being me. I could not protect the innocent-self from this religious reality I was now entering. I had to become vigilant for the rest of my life against any possible failings; God would know, and God would punish! In order to protect this pure-self, I had hid her away in the deepest, most inner recesses of my being, where she would never be harmed or broken.

This particular episode happened within a religious context. Your own shattering may have come about by a very different context, related to abuse, neglect, betrayal, or abandonment. What underlies the context is what creates the shattering: When grownups, in the place of authority, expose a truth that is so contrary to our innocent view of the world, our absolute trust in our view of reality is rocked. This shock to our system obliterates our inexperienced version of truth. We can no longer depend upon, or trust what we knew we could trust, just moments before. Suddenly, everything we know is wrong.

These shatterings occur throughout our lives. Sometimes we don't recall our first shatterings. The early ones are hidden the deepest and are shielded with armor, that those that follow are experienced as if they are the first.

Chapter 10

Coping with Our Shatterings

Like me, most children, before or around the age of six, experience a traumatic and life-shattering event. It is a moment when each of us come face-to-face with a devastating realization, as only a child's mind could create. Unexpectedly, something happens; something is said, something is done, and in the blink of an eye, we come to decide an inevitable truth about ourselves: that we are not the innocent, sweet beings, as we thought ourselves to be. This moment heralds the loss of fearlessness and of innocence. An amnesia sets in, and we forget ourselves as our essential-selves.

We cannot share this moment or what we decided based on this moment, because, first of all, we don't have a language that could explain this to those adults who are telling us, showing us, or modeling for us, the way that it is. It is an experience that is beyond language. This is just one of many ineffable moments in our lives.

This moment is one of the most isolating experiences in our young lives, as we decide that we are alone against the world. It is self-evident: that no one is trustable or worthy of our trust. Our fate is sealed.

In our innocence, we trusted ourselves to know who to trust and what to trust. After the shattering, the world is a very different place, one that is not navigable by young children who don't know how to navigate the reality now in front of them.

Because we are terrified of being found out, we decide we can no longer trust ourselves. We create a choice-maker who aligns with the reality that surrounds us - especially with grownups that hold our fate in their hands. This choice-maker is different than the one we relied on in our innocence. This is the beginning of the development of conscious ego-self. It is the start of a new relationship - one that we come to trust more than any other relationship in our sweet little lives.

This new choice-maker - or ego, is in service only to our survival. Where, initially our power was in the hands of Oneness - Universal source of all that is, of an external authority - parents and all other adults, we turn our power over to this ego-self, which promises to keep us safe - just like grownups promised, and God promised. The good news is that, inevitably, somewhere in our grownup lives, we will come to see how this choice-maker - the ego, betrays us, too.

Chapter 11

Keeping Secret Our Worst Fear

We are so young when this shattering occurs. In our young minds, life has suddenly become dangerous. It is vital that our deep, dark secret stay hidden for eternity. Our new six year-old choice-maker immediately sets about creating a set of strategies that will keep us from being found out. Our mission is to stop being spontaneous, curious and trusting, and start being sharply vigilant for possible danger and vulnerability. This is the end of what I call the naturally occurring happily ever after.

Each of us, at one time or another, have had to reorient ourselves from a world of innocence and unconditional love to getting “real” in the world. There are important shoulds and shouldn'ts, and there are people and things we need to be afraid of. We are taught wittingly or unwittingly, the rules of who to judge and how to hate.

Whether abused, neglected, abandoned or betrayed, children learn how to interpret situations in nano-seconds for potential danger. We learn to take on guilt and shame, humiliation and embarrassment. We learn to defend and to protect what is ours and what we want to be ours. We have given up our essential selves in order to survive within the consensus view of reality. We need to protect the little of what is left of our being.

Because we now see the world as unsafe, we work on finding ways to control our selves and our world, so that we can feel safe and worthy of protection. Researchers report that 70% of our thinking life is made up of negative thoughts. This habitually negative thinking constantly alerts us to the possibility of worst-case scenarios.

We relentlessly focus on developing survival strategies, which we think will protect us from being vulnerable. We focus exclusively on how to survive, suppressing our inborn innocence and our natural communion with the wonder-filled worlds beyond this world. We start to forget about playing and loving in innocence, and being happily present with our angels and guardian beings. Exuberance and delight are secreted away, with our deepest, purest, most sincere promise to return at such time that it is safe do so.

Every adult I've spoken with remembers how traumatic it was to choose, as a child, to hide away their innocent-self, for the sake of survival. They also remember that they made a promise to return. As grownups, they struggle now with making good on that promise, knowing their survival, once again, is at stake.

Chapter 12

We Are All Living With PTSD

Every one of us lives with some degree of PTSD, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Our experiences of trauma from early childhood, from life in the uterus, or previous incarnations, exact a toll on the lives of us all.

We would not wish our trauma, this anguish and isolation, on anyone—especially our children. Yet, all of us are carriers of trauma. And like a virus, we unwittingly spread the dis-ease. The memory of our shattering exists within our every cell.

If we want to bring healing to ourselves and to our children, we have to first acknowledge our own moments of trauma, and the degree to which it affected us. Then we can face the shocking degree to which we pass on *our* trauma to the next generation.

The good news is that this relationship with PTSD doesn't make us crazy, dysfunctional or misfits. It makes us human. All of this is just part and parcel to our human conditioning, up until now.

Now what?

Chapter 13

Enter Spiritual Evolution

In essence, spiritual evolution is the flip side of our initial trauma. It begins with flashes of awareness of the distinct voice of our made-up choice-maker, which previously felt like our own, and seemed as if it had been with us for eternity. We slowly recall our natural innocence, before all the shatterings and traumas we've endured; before handing over our power to the ruthless choice-maker, the ego.

Spiritual evolution can begin with an event as traumatic as our original trauma. It too creates a pathway, but this time, it opens us up to the possibility to fulfill our promise from long ago. We begin to realize that we are not what we decided when we were five or six -powerless, unworthy, insignificant. We begin to remember our essential Self.

Spiritual evolution is the process of opening to remember our innocence, our fearless grace, and the truth that we are an essential expression of the Divine.

The original trauma separated us from our Source and the knowing of our true nature; love, joy, innocence, fearlessness and more. As grownups, we are now consciously and intentionally able to choose to separate from the choice-maker we created at six years old- the one that convinced us that there was something terribly wrong with us- that we didn't deserve anything without first proving our worth. This is the beginning and the end.

Chapter 14

Life Is Different Now

Up until now, trauma has served as our best catalyst for waking up. Until our generation arrived, this was the best we humans could hope for. We had no other framework, so we lived from one breakdown (traumatic experience) to the next. But maybe, just maybe, we are ready to shift our perspective.

It is no secret that the level of consciousness now available to us actually empowers us to cease creating trauma in our children, in ourselves and in the world. We now understand that it is no longer necessary to breakdown in order to breakthrough. Each of us possesses the innate intelligence and power to design our everyday life as a reflection of what we desire. Simply knowing this isn't enough. Our insights and realizations aren't going to make it happen. What's required is that we walk our talk.

The first step is to build up our courage so that it becomes the bridge from our fear-based resistance to the new experience of direct knowing. Step by daring step, we can move across this bridge to experience for ourselves the Divine process of developing spiritually. We practice re-remembering and re-embodiment of the original union, our non-dual state, as it was before we forgot who we were.

Chapter 15

Rebooting Our Intelligence

Until now, we have all willingly participated in the old paradigm. Our mind's usual, passive response "Well, that's just the way it is," doesn't work anymore. As we cultivate our awareness, we are all waking up and becoming conscious of the fact that we are not the roles we play. We are Spirit-beings within these human forms, which we have until now, identified as "me."

As we open to our new potential, we willingly reboot our innate intelligence. During breakdowns and traumatic events, rather than acting as if we are alone and powerless, we can practice allowing wisdom and intelligence to once again, emerge within us. We allow our whole self to be present. And, we can directly experience ourselves expanding toward the full expression of our potentiality. This is what we long for in ourselves and for our children.

Honoring Our Nemesis

Inevitably, as we re-engage our intelligence, we realize that, what we considered to be the ruthless choice-maker - the ego, was actually that part of our humanity that has endured lifetime after lifetime of horrific and traumatic experiences, which did not end in our favor. Our ego-self has lived and died from within the unbreakable mandate that survival is all there is. Its sole mission has been to keep us alive. When surviving is the best one can hope for, thriving is a ridiculous concept.

Now, with our newly discovered capacity to evolve consciously, we can be grateful that our ego has kept us alive long enough to move us towards a more expanded reality, one focused on thriving. We can forgive its ruthlessness, and experience compassion for its desire to protect us at all cost from any potential failing that will cost it, and us, our lives.

This moment reflects all the lifetimes we've encountered, all the courage we've mustered, all the trust possible to live one more day, the compassion for all that it took to choose to choose what we chose, and to honor ourselves for taking on this noble adventure as a human being. This aspect of ourselves, our ego, is responsible for bringing us here to this moment beyond survival, when we are ready for something more - something unfathomable, something worth living for - something worth dying for.

Chapter 16

How Do We Help Nurture And Sustain The Divine Knowing Of Our Children?

As a grandmother of a 4 year-old grandson, I ask the question: *How do I need to be, as parent of adult children, and as a grandparent, to nurture and sustain a spiritual orientation in my children and grandson?*

I admit that I did a poor job of providing spiritual sustenance for my children when they were young; therefore, I cannot draw on my own personal experience to answer that question. So, I sit here, wondering and discerning: How do I *be* in my own life, so that I cultivate an environment that is spiritually enriching for all children and for myself? How do I allow the original Divine knowing that is present within all children to be continually nurtured and nourished? How do any of us rekindle that presence of Divine knowing, which was once all we knew to exist?

Because of the enormous amount of information and wisdom humanity has accumulated and disseminated over the ages, from the East and from the West, in this current lifetime, we have a new capability to evolve consciously. This has never been true until now. We now realize that over centuries, we humans have been expanding our capacity to think and to choose intentionally. In this current moment, as a parent, step-parent, guardian, or grandparent, how do we choose to utilize this inconceivable gift - to think and to choose intentionally, opening to evolving ourselves and our children?

Chapter 17

Dive Into Wonder

Extraordinary metaphysical phenomena happen every day here on planet Earth. Most of us have already, or will experience one or more mystical and transformative occurrences in our life. These include experiences of unexplained immediate knowing; wild synchronicities; out of body events; whispers and visions of friends or relatives that have passed; and many, many more.

We often choose to ignore or justify these experiences in order to sidestep acknowledging that they are real or significant. We diligently train ourselves to pretend they never happened. But, over the course of a lifetime, the accumulated evidence builds and points to a new and expansive view of our world that calls out to be identified and recognized.

These unexplainable experiences act as our personal trail of breadcrumbs- indicators that something, or someone is calling- but who or what? And how? These flashes of Divine clues lead us to curiosity and to wonder. This is a good thing!

Everyday, hundreds of organizations related to spiritually transformative experiences, and other non-ordinary phenomena are birthing themselves on the internet. Data provided through personal interviews, as well as more "scientific" collection of data, strongly indicates a much greater reality than the one we believe to be living in.

With this ever-growing body of data available at our fingertips, when our children share experiences that seem beyond reason, we grownups have an opportunity to nurture their wonder and curiosity, rather than snuff it out by accusing them of fabrication and lying. If we choose to take their hand and step with them into the delightful presence of life that is beyond explanation, beyond the life-sucking norm of consensus reality, we offer our children a vast experience of life.

Chapter 18

Turning Inward

As I ponder how to bring spirituality into the lives of children, especially into my grandson's life, an inescapable question arises within me: *What must I learn and practice before I can teach spiritual principles and guidelines to the children in my life?*

I notice how I and many other grownups repeatedly turn to alcohol, drugs, medications, and other mind-numbing activities to drown out what consensus reality calls *nonsensical* thinking. I've become mindfully aware of the various methods available to corral chaotic thinking, irritability, pain and suffering. It's just so much easier to ignore, distract, avoid and deny challenges and confusions. Shopping, sex, gambling, complaining and worry and work are so much more valued, though they do not empower us in the midst of daunting circumstances. They do not support us in generating wisdom, acceptance, forgiveness or compassion. They don't help – they just give us a bit of space between us and our challenges.

What if there is another, simpler way to be with life, which would help us make sense of it, and be less afraid of the way things are? What if there exists a more compassionate, less painful and self-damaging way to be with life's everyday challenges?

Perhaps, like the philosopher said, "The answer lies within."

If we practice turning inward again and again, trusting ourselves and diving deep, we can access a rich reservoir of ever-present, internal support. When doing so, we may be repeatedly surprised at our own abilities to empower and support ourselves. It is actually easy to learn to be present to the deep sense of pain we've been carrying, for perhaps lifetimes. We can remember all the evidence and experiences that now disprove the belief that, "There is no one and nothing out there that can help me." Through our own direct experience, we can cultivate a resilience and return to trusting our own knowing. Through this process, we discover for ourselves how effortless it can be to eliminate the need for mind-numbing choices.

We teach children by example. Our new way of being demonstrates how they too can be present to their own internal support system, reminding them how to access a universe

of support that is always there for them. We can empower and support them in remembering they can rely on their own truths, and ensure they don't feel the need to turn to unhealthy ways of being, as we have before them.

Most children have few compassionate guides, to walk alongside them as they explore life, nature, and the myriad of extraordinary experiences that only make sense within a spiritual context. This absence of spiritual partnership for children is a big problem; one which I believe contributes to so many of our troubles in our world.

We can't protect our children from life, because they, like us, came here to experience life to its fullest, in human form. But we can choose to be a thinking partner for them, and to point them to tools that they can access while being with the good stuff *and* the not so good stuff, without scaring the bejeesus out of them. We can choose!

Chapter 19

Let's Put Simplicity Back into Spirituality

These days, my work in the world is to cultivate awareness in everyone – empowering them to awaken into greater consciousness and wisdom, in themselves and their children. My intention with this set of 101 practices is to put powerful simplicity back into spirituality.

I absolutely and unequivocally know that this is easier said than done, and that it requires all of us women and men to put on our adult undies, and be accountable, be responsible, and to truly take a stand for our personal truth. We need to do this for the sake of the fulfillment of our human spirit, and that of our children.

Each of us knows instinctively what is true and life-generating. We also know instinctively what is untrue, false and fear-based. We know how to choose to act in alignment with our truths, and how to choose in alignment with our fears. We can feel it deep within our bodies, physically and emotionally, when we act in alignment with our truths, or our fears. We assess the degree to which we want what we desire, and the degree to which we want to avoid what is undesirable. And, then we choose. Simple, right?

Though we make spirituality about right and wrong, good and bad, it really has nothing to do with that, really. It only has to do with knowing what your highest truth is and acting in alignment with that. Bottom line: It's only a matter of stopping every thought and action that is not in alignment with your highest truth! Just stop doing what doesn't work to bring a sense of well-being into your life.

Most of us ignore the whole subject of spirituality, hoping our children will get it from someone else: from Hebrew classes, Catechism, Sunday school, or other religious instruction. In this way, we can avoid dealing with the confusion and the angst of having to choose which principles and practices we wish to encourage in our children; we can avoid the discomfort of being confronted with what is *really* true for us, which

may not be true for others; and we can avoid the potential conflict of going against the grain of those who will disagree with us.

However, when we become parents and grandparents, we are given an opportunity to grow ourselves up into adults, into the kind of person we want our children to be. We can choose to either parent the same way our parents did (likely through guilt and shame), or we can choose to choose differently.

Ideally, we will all inevitably choose to practice what we preach and to walk our talk. We will inevitably use our intelligence to think about life, what's true for us, and what we want to share with the world, through our own lives, and through our children. In doing so, we can truly begin to teach our children the spiritual competencies that will put them on a path to playfulness, creativity, faith, and fulfillment.

For me, alongside playfulness, creativity, faith, and fulfillment, I want my grandson to never have to forget his innocence; and that his faithful angels and companions are always present – he is never alone. I want him to talk with these companions as easily as he talks with his stuffed animals, his cars, and his parents. I want him to continue to remember that sometimes, when life gets scary and makes no sense, there *is* a greater wisdom at work. That, though the circumstances that present themselves appear to reflect failure or incompetence on his part, he is so much more than what this moment is challenging him with.

I want all children to take the higher ground when they see the higher ground; to think differently, looking within; strengthening the ability to *expand their awareness and consciousness* to include something that hasn't yet revealed itself, yet is trustworthy.

I want children of all ages to have the opportunity to cultivate a personal relationship with the Divine, in the way that works best for them, and to know the value of such a relationship. This allows all sorts of practices, which allows the Spirit-Self to be accessible and relevant to their particular perspectives and desires.

To summarize:

In his book *The Secret Spiritual World of Children* (2003), Tobin Hart points to the fact that as adults, we often thwart our children's innate wisdom, through our actions, our talking, and through our rules and regulations – forgetting that our children most likely have a closer relationship to the Divine than we grown-ups remember of our own growing up years.

In choosing to be parents, we create opportunities to show our children what it might look like to live in our own truth – literally walk our talk. This is a very powerful practice.

Having the consciousness to courageously investigate and examine our beliefs and to practice ways of being that align with our highest desires – isn't this the crux of what we are wanting to generate in our children?

Parenting provides an opportunity to partake in the evolution of consciousness of our children and our children's children. As grownups, we have the opportunity to parent all children in a way that nourishes thriving. All grownup function as guides and supports, one way or another. We can choose!

We are always, always, always opening to our highest values and highest truths, as we know them to be. What follows are 101 everyday opportunities to consider what those highest truths are; then to practice opening to those values, before teaching or preaching. This is only in alignment with supporting our children's Spirit to soar.

Chapter 20

Preflight Checklist: Preparing for Takeoff

Before pilots and their planes are cleared for takeoff, they go through rigorous training and impeccable inspection of their plane to ensure safety, competence, and comfort. The pilot doesn't take flight until each item is checked off!

As parents, grandparents, and guardians, we are the ground crew for our young fledgling pilots, preparing them for the ride of their lives. We provide them with experiences and training that either support the development of intelligence, wisdom, and courage to fly solo, or keeps them grounded in fear and self-doubt. We encourage them to trust themselves, to know their fullest potential, and to respect themselves and their bodies. Or, we limit their ability to fly, through our own self-limiting beliefs.

We give our children both roots and wings: roots, so that they know their ground of being, and we give them wings to soar above limiting thinking. This allows them to freely explore the unlimited potentiality of the Universe. They need both, and you and I are the ground crew that makes it all possible.

Use this Preflight Checklist of practices for yourself and for all children. This offers you a way to center yourself and to bring your actions into alignment with your core values. You can practice sitting comfortably, becoming grounded, allowing your actions to come solely from your convictions. In this way, both you and the children of the world are cleared for takeoff!

- ✓ Make the choice to be your children's Ground Crew. With your convictions and dedication, you are preparing them with everything required to get them off the ground. As their thinking partner, they will soar beyond the clouds.
- ✓ Do the work to get clear on your own convictions: What do you know to be true, *enough* that you align your actions with your words?
- ✓ Begin to question consensus reality, and consider rejecting what doesn't align with your values and convictions.

- ✓ Notice any judgments and beliefs that come from fear, and which limit the potentiality of takeoff and soaring.
- ✓ Be mindful of your thoughts, beliefs, assumptions, and expectations, and let go of any blocks to living in your highest truth. This will effortlessly allow your children to soar in their highest truth, for their highest good.
- ✓ Live as if you lack nothing in this moment. Let go of “Not Enough.” Release the need for more time, more space, more power, more control – more anything. In doing so, your children will begin to grow into their natural capacity to thrive, free of anxiety and worry.
- ✓ When lost, unsure, or in doubt, request guidance from above – the flight tower – for there are those who have a much more expansive view of reality than you do, working as the ground crew. Many of these wise beings are unseen, but nevertheless available for support and guidance.
- ✓ Defer your wisdom, your knowing, your truth and your values to no one.

Ready for Takeoff?

101 Ways to Make Every Child's Spirit Soar

1. **Opening to This Spiritual Journey...** Wrapping our heads around the concept of spirituality is challenging enough, let alone how to explain it to children. The possibilities are overwhelming: Heaven, hell; God, no God; Life after death; East, West; Angels and Demons. I want to ignore the whole subject!

At the same time, I know I would be remiss as a responsible grownup if I ignore the spiritual life of my children. I am willing to take a chance because I have a sense that something wonderful might come of this!

Perhaps, just through the practice of observing how I *be* me, I'll see aspects of a spiritual life that has gone unrecognized and unlived, but is still within me - somewhere. Perhaps this will be a new beginning of something beautiful!

2. **Opening to Trusting Myself...** Before I can truly trust others, I have to trust that I can trust myself.

As I practice noticing when I trust others over myself, I gain opportunities to trust myself instead. I practice deferring to no one outside of me and honoring my innate knowing.

3. **Opening to Developing a Relationship with the Inner ME (Miraculous Existence)...** My sense of Self is founded on how I experience myself, not on how others experience me. Developing a relationship with the inner ME requires the practice of making time to be with my Self; it cannot happen any other way. By engaging in this practice, not only am I getting to know myself, but I am also cultivating self-appreciation and self-respect.

4. **Opening to Respecting ME & My Voice...** To trust my own experience requires that I practice having the courage to stand up for my thoughts and my truths, speak them clearly, and be with the consequences no matter what. In so doing, I realize a degree of self-respect I've never thought possible.

5. **Opening to Experiencing My Humanity to the Fullest...** Being human takes a willingness to dive into that which wants to be experienced and expressed through me. When I practice surrendering my resistance, the art of life effortlessly

manifests from within. My unique Divine Design blossoms into its own natural expression.

2. **Opening to Clarifying My Intentions and Convictions...**

For much of my life I've lived according to the views and the beliefs of the people around me. I've handed my authority over to this consensus reality and abdicated my power. Hypnotized, I've lost all real connection to my own thoughts and feelings, and to my own needs and wants. As I sit with this reality, I am appalled at the degree to which I do not know myself.

As I am coming out of the trance, I see that, until now, my highest intentions have been in service to survival. This ensured that I was accepted and approved of, and not rejected, humiliated or shunned. I see now how focusing on survival was an act of self-betrayal. Without a real sense of me, I've allowed myself to become just a part of the ebb and flow of consensus reality.

Do I know who I am? Do I know what I want? Am I enough? Are my convictions strong enough and clear enough to keep me from falling back into the trance?

Discipline, commitment and devotion come only through conviction. Convictions are strong beliefs wrapped up with a passionate presence. These convictions can be ignored but not denied. Without strong convictions, I will never be courageous enough to be committed enough to be devoted enough to truly know myself and live into what I stand for. When I am unshakeable in my convictions, discipline takes on the nature of child's play.

I practice noticing what I think and what I feel about my life. I practice being curious about what I want. I question to what degree I'm fulfilled in the life I'm giving myself. I sense deeper into myself for my truest convictions. Then, and only then, can I begin to make strides towards a more fulfilling and joyous life for me and for my children.

6. **Opening to Cultivating Peace...** I notice how I use irritation as a way to push others away in order to get "peace." It's not working.

I practice seeing when my irritation is based on a desire to avoid connection. I practice stretching my ability to be present in a way that allows me to enjoy the way that it is. When I need solitude and peace, I practice asking for it in a way that preserves and sustains respectful acceptance of myself and others.

7. **Opening to Truth and Humility...** When I make a mistake and then I tell a lie about it, I dishonor myself and the people I am lying to.

When I practice telling the truth about my mistakes, I discover and begin to experience who I am in my humanness. I can then humbly acknowledge that I am not beyond failing to be perfect.

8. **Opening to Being Patience...** Sometimes I push to move things forward, thinking it's time to see results, but nothing moves. I feel stuck and frustrated. I don't know or understand what is stopping me. By practicing patience, and allowing Divine Timing to unfold, I realize something is incubating, and that the time for action has yet to arrive. In doing so, I waste less time and energy judging myself as incompetent and unworthy of the task. I relax, take a breath and patiently allow Divine Guidance to share with me what is mine to do now.
9. **Opening to Intimacy...** Too often, for the sake of pride and the desire to appear invulnerable, I avoid opportunities to share with others some of the challenges I face in my life. When sharing myself with others, I can choose to feel humiliated or I can choose to feel humbled. I practice being open and courageously share myself with others, whom I trust, for the sake of revealing more of me to me. Into Me See.
10. **Opening to Surrender...** What I believed to be true in the past is different today. It's crazy-making sometimes to be living in the moment and to live in the unfolding mystery. I practice giving up ways of being that worked for me in the past but don't work for me in this moment. I practice surrendering to my Divine unfolding, letting go of any interpretation that is no longer aligning with this moment, in this moment.
11. **Opening to Persistence and Resilience...** It's unbearable and unendurable sometimes to suffer the anguish and pain of the internal archeological excavation of the authentic expression of my life. Then, Eureka! The mother lode is revealed and the thrill of the exploration has been renewed. Persisting with calm patience, I willingly allow the process to move at its Divine Pace. Unwearyingly sitting in the midst of the remnants and relics of my life, I practice trusting that the treasure of such an expedition will be revealed to me in the right time and space.
12. **Opening to My Higher Values...** My principles, values, and perspective are sometimes different from those of my friends and family. Now and again, Opening to a greater good, I have to choose based on what others want. This requires that I choose to look inside for values that serve a higher ME, which include others. Perhaps, there is a value that can be served without feeling as though I am sacrificing, suffering or settling. While sitting in deep listening with myself, I practice discerning what that value is, then shift my perceptions and

actions Opening to that. I practice noticing how I choose what I choose, and I use my choice-making muscles, to choose differently.

3. **Opening to Defying My Defiance...** My child often acts out in defiant ways. No matter what I do or say, she continues to resist my authority. I feel like I'm the child and she think she's the boss of me!

However, when I quiet myself and my thoughts, I practice allowing a greater wisdom to be present with me. I ask myself: what part of me invites in the defiance; what part of me is defiant, perhaps even a defiant parent, and how is my defiant child a teacher for me? What can I possibly learn from such behavior?

By allowing myself to sit with these uncomfortable questions, I see an aspect of me that doesn't want to be a parent; that doesn't want to be grown up at all. This part doesn't want to be responsible for another human being 24/7. I see how my child is just reflecting my obstinate, resistant child, unwilling to do what I don't want to do.

I practice accepting my humanness, my desire to do what I want, when I want. I practice accepting who I am in my role as parent. In the best interest of my child, I practice conscious presence with my child. I experience gratitude for their persistence to wake me up from my sleeping grownup.

13. **Opening to Cultivating Intelligence...** True intelligence is utilizing my ability to think and act in alignment with my highest wisdom. Thinking about what I think what I think, and feeling what I feel about my feelings, helps me to grow my intelligence and know myself better. Recognizing what has me think and feel the way I do, empowers me to think differently and feel differently, if I want. Through this practice of being mindful of what I think and feel, I expand my abilities to think and feel beyond what I thought was possible.
14. **Opening to Accepting and Allowing...** Human beings are so much more than what I assume, expect, or what I think I perceive. When I practice seeing people as their essential selves, clearing them of the projections I cast upon them, I witness them as being the best they can be. I discover a newfound ability to feel compassion for them, and for myself, as we all face the challenge of revealing ourselves to ourselves.
4. **Opening to Allowing Children to Flourish...** Though I dearly love my children, I don't always like them. It never occurred to me that I would feel this way. I thought that my parenting would influence them to think and be more like me. I thought my loving presence would override any and every challenge we faced

together. Now I see that they are unique individuals with personalities and beliefs that may not match my own. It sometimes feels like they are strangers!

I see that my assumptions and expectations of parenting have been misleading. Now, in the midst of the inevitable truth of my circumstances, I'm invited to think differently. I see that my current hopes, dreams, truths, and values prevent me from experiencing my children as the gift that they are.

I practice noticing when I'm judging my children for being different from my expectations. I practice surrendering expectations of who they should be, and begin to accept who they are. I allow myself to be with the sadness that comes when I grieve the loss of my dream-child and our relationship as I imagined it. In so doing, I can begin to accept and appreciate this amazing and beautiful human being, my child.

15. **Opening to Testing My Reality...** Personal and spiritual growth requires me to test myself: my thoughts, my beliefs, my actions, and my truths. I won't know my fullest potential unless I nudge myself out beyond those specific thoughts and beliefs that have limited me thus far. Through this practice I realize there is more to me than meets my eye.
16. **Opening to Cultivating Self-Awareness...** At any given time in my evolution, I am doing the very best I know how to do. I can only change what I'm aware of. If I'm not aware of it, I can't do anything about it. I practice being curious, staying open to seeing things differently and suspending self-judgment. And, I allow myself to change my mind when it makes sense to do so.
5. **Opening to Forgiving Myself with Compassion...** As a parent, I have made mistakes - some that are unforgivable. I'm crushed by the burden of guilt I carry for being a bad parent. I think I'm an unforgivable human being and am unworthy of love.

I watch myself parent out of guilt and realize that this isn't providing good parenting for my children, either. It seems like nothing I do works, and I'm afraid of making even worse mistakes and wrecking my children's lives.

When I stop trying so hard, when I give myself some quiet time, I begin to practice humility, not humiliation; self-compassion - not self-abuse; and I begin to practice forgiving myself for being me. Though I desperately desire my children to forgive me, it makes sense that I practice doing whatever it takes to

forgive myself first. The very act of forgiving myself demonstrates to my children that they can learn to be forgiving of their mistakes too.

17. **Opening to Being Daring...** There is a bit of an art to pushing limits and boundaries – I might get in trouble! When to push and how much to push is something I practice, experimenting with what is; expanding into what isn't yet. As part of this practice, I ask myself the questions: *What is it I'm wanting, enough that I'm willing to push limits? How much trouble am I willing to get myself into? By the way, what is trouble?*
18. **Opening to the Guidance of Universal Wisdom...** The practice of believing in myself allows me to open to Universal Guidance in every moment, from everywhere, always. Through this practice, I realize that I am never without support, and I am never left alone. Like inhaling a breath of life, I open to the ever-present Universal Wisdom and receive the guidance I need. I trust it will be given when I am open to receive.
19. **Opening to Self-Balance...** Sometimes, for the sake of productivity and meeting the demands of other people, I ignore signals of my own human needs. Sleepless nights, stress related dis-ease, and a lack of functioning of normal human desires are consequences of putting my own needs second, third or fourth to others'. Instead of automatically fulfilling other people's needs, I practice acknowledging and honoring the needs of my own body, mind, and soul.
20. **Opening to Courage, Conviction and Self-Trust...** Playing small keeps me safe. Playing safe keeps me small. What is safe, anyway? When I practice pushing against my self-imposed limitations, I cultivate courage, conviction, and self-trust. I know, without a doubt, that as I expand into my fullest potential, I will be okay, no matter what.
21. **Opening to Humility and Tolerance for Disappointment...** Losing doesn't mean that I've failed, that I'm incompetent, or that I'm inadequate in any way. Losing only shows me the level at which I've achieved success. It lets me know I have a new challenge ahead of me! When I'm willing to lose, I challenge myself to practice building self-trust, humility, and an ability to be with disappointment, without self-attack or despair. Personal development takes stamina and courage, indeed.
22. **Opening to Gratitude, Courage and Strength...** I'm always at choice to either be upset about my circumstances and predicaments, or to be grateful and appreciate them. Each is an opportunity to gather all my daringness and to bring the

culmination of all I have to give to this one moment. I practice seeing life and all the circumstances that are heaped on me, as all good, even when it sucks. I practice being grateful for the way that it is, living in faith, that even the most challenging situations provide a necessary learning, which often is experienced as an incredible gift.

6. **Opening to Accepting the Way It Is...** I sometime make decisions for my children that they vehemently reject, and yet I know it is in their best interest to choose as I choose. Sometimes, they don't like me much, and withhold their affections. I wonder whether I chose correctly, given the current state of affairs.

By considering my choices and how they aligned with what I truly believed to be in the highest good for my children, I feel incredibly hopeless that any decision could be a right decision. I'm left alone with myself, wishing things could be different.

I practice acknowledging myself for having the courage to make the choices I made, and honor myself for acting in the highest good of my children. I respect myself for having taken the high road, even though others perceive that I've done the opposite. I practice surrendering my will for things to be different. I accept my children's reactions as theirs. I accept mine as mine. And, when I doubt myself, I practice allowing Divine Wisdom to hold the space when I don't know what to do.

23. **Opening to Self-Appreciation, Self-Honor and Self-Acceptance...** Defeat means I've pushed myself to my limits, exhausting my means to fulfill my desired results, in this moment. I'm willing to practice pushing the edge of my comfort zone, perhaps meeting defeat every step of the way; all the while experiencing the expansion of who I am within the experience of defeat. In doing so, I daringly face my humanness, and practice self-acceptance, self-honor, and self-appreciation.
24. **Opening to Forgiveness and Self-Compassion...** I'm given plenty of opportunities to feel deep disappointment and loss, as well as the heights of joy, and deep love. It's part of being human - experiencing the fullness of all my emotions. It's why I've come to Earth, into this human form. Emotional moments allow me to know the human side of myself. They allow the fullest expression of ME - my highest of my highs and the parts that I've judged as shadowy, dark, bad or negative. It's all ME, in all my glory, as Miraculous Existence (ME). In so practicing, I touch into a level of self-acceptance, self-compassion, and forgiveness I never considered to be of any real importance. Now I know different.

25. **Opening to Risk, Courage and Imagination...** Dreaming and imagining the most favorable outcome – even those that seem inconceivable, brings me closer to my fullest potentiality. I practice thinking differently, dreaming bigger, and I allow my imagination to run wild. When I believe in myself enough to take on this practice, I have access to everything I need to manifest my dreams.
26. **Opening to Living Boldly...** The World is full of surprises, splendor and awe. How I choose to see the world either limits me or allows me the fullest experience of LIFE. When I practice training my mind to look at what is true, enlarging my interpretations of my world to include a more expanded reality, I give myself the gift of a greater capacity to enjoy the exquisite wonder and magic that always surrounds me. I reveal a greater reality within which to live boldly and daringly - as myself.
7. **Opening to Choosing Well-Being...** I often feel torn between giving my children quality time and giving myself quality time. Sometimes I'm overwhelmed with so many responsibilities.
- When I take a moment to pause and be still, I experience a desire to just be. I practice taking time out for me. I practice turning off all my distractions - phones, electronics, music, TV, and just sit. In so doing, I feel refreshed and available to my child in a way that allows both of us to enjoy our time together.
27. **Opening to Being Curious...** Wondering about who I am, what I am, and why I am is essential to being all that I am. I see how I limit my potentiality and the potentiality of others when I won't allow myself to see things differently. When I explore, and practice curiosity - questioning reality, I savor and delight in the outrageous answers that come in this openness.
28. **Opening to Surrendering the Past and the Future Realities...** Looking at the world with fresh eyes & ears, and a beginner's mind, allows me to continually be present to the truth of *this* moment. Building what-ifs, based on my fears of what was and my hope of what will be, slows me down, or, more often than not, brings me to a full and complete stop. I practice letting go of how I think my world should look, and I open to being in the reality of today. I suspend my need for this moment to be different.
29. **Opening to Seeing Things Another Way...** The world is often incongruous with what I want to believe to be true and real. By practicing acceptance for the way that it is - the diverse people, cultures, beliefs and behaviors, I grow my ability to see that there are countless ways to be in the world. When I practice sitting and

being with conflicting views, openly seeing things another way, another way always shows up.

30. **Opening to Being in the Big Fat Be-With...** There is an incredible amount of insanity in this world. When nothing makes any sense, whatsoever, sometimes it's just a big-fat-be-with, aka, nothing to do and nowhere to go. I do know, however, that there is sanity beyond what appears to be insane. There is some way to thrive and flourish, regardless of my big-fat-be-with circumstances. I practice expanding my capacity to just be-with, I allow the highest truth and the highest goodness to be revealed. Only through this practice will I be able to accept and make sense out of the most exasperating, insane situations. Then, and only then will I experience peace and serenity.
8. **Opening to Being the Change I Wish to See ...** I keep telling my children how important they are to me, even though I have to answer phones, texts, and emails while I'm with them. I don't think they believe me. In fact I notice that they are now answering their phones, emails, and texts when they are with me. I feel more and more insignificant in their lives - and they aren't even adolescent yet.
- I see how my children are a reflection of me, in all the ways that I cannot see directly. If I don't like what I see in my children's behavior, perhaps I need to shift or consider shifting something in myself?
- I practice bringing my actions in alignment with my words. I turn off my phone and other electronics to be present to my children - actually meaning what I say and saying what I mean. In doing so I'm demonstrating what being present to another person really looks like and feels like inside.
31. **Opening to Going Insane (but not today)...** What is it like to feel insane? I don't know. I won't let myself feel insane, because I'm afraid that if I feel insane, I'll never feel sane again. I'd rather distract myself from feeling what I feel, especially insane. However, when I practice allowing myself to at least admit that I'm feeling what I'm terrified to feel, I'm on the road to knowing and accepting me and my feelings for what they are. This thought allows me to see the sanity in admitting the insanity.
32. **Opening to Surrendering...** Sometimes I don't know what to think or how to be with what is. When it's just a big fat be-with, again, when nothing but the unknown is present, all there is to do is practice letting go, surrendering my need to understand, my need to control, and my need to manage my circumstance. Sometimes, nothing is all there is to do.

33. **Opening to the Shining Truth...** Sometimes I don't know what to decide, because, as often happens, my desires conflict with one another. When I practice patience and acceptance of how it is, in this moment, decisions often make themselves. Patience, allowing, and openness to the unfolding of what is, is good. Inevitably my highest knowing and my highest truth will shine forth, and the choice will be self-evident. Don't just do something – Stand there!
34. **Opening to Suspending Control...** Rarely can I figure out how the Universe is thinking. That's because the Universe has infinite intelligence – we humans do not. Sometimes the best I can do is to voluntarily suspend control, worry, fear, and frustration. When I practice letting go of my attachments to how I want it to be, what inevitably shows up is often far more amazing than I could ever imagine on my own.
35. **Opening to Being My Art...** I've been told I cannot make a living as an artist, a writer, an athlete, or a musician. What choices are open to me when it looks like there are none? When I practice "Be the Exception," and "Go for the Extraordinary," I stop limiting my potentiality. My practice is to allow myself to live into the greatest possible outcome, being the fullest expression of myself, as my art. This thought excites my spirit. I aspire to be my art everywhere in my life!
36. **Opening to Remembering ME...** When being ignored by people, I feel invisible and perhaps alien in my surroundings. I practice knowing that, no matter what, I cannot *not* exist. I remember that although they may not see me, I see myself. I can't ever disappear out of sight of the Universe, for I am ME (Miraculous Existence).
9. **Opening to Engaging With Failure...** I didn't think parenting would be such a huge, life altering, humbling challenge. Day after day, I feel immersed in a barrage of breakdowns and failures. I sometimes feel dreadfully uncertain of the path in front of me. My desire is to ignore and avoid this discomfort at all cost. However, this avoidance does not seem to bring me closer to a true experience of competence when I'm face with failure.

I practice noticing the part of me that lies beneath my past successes, and my expectations of future happily-ever-afters. This practice uncovers the me that is so fearful and powerless in the face of failure. It requires being with exhausting angst, worry and hopeless resignation. Underlying these emotions is an unignorable and undeniable belief that I will fail to get this right and I will fail to get this done. And, I'm still required to show up to the task of parenting, even with this assuredness that at some point, I will meet failure.

I'm inspired to keep meeting myself in failure, as a practice, until I realize that it isn't me that is failing. I'm provided with the insight that failing is only an interpretation of what is actually an incubation period. Within this knowing, I cultivate capacities I haven't yet developed, such as courage, resilience, humility, self-compassion and faith. I practice resisting the belief that I should have had these capabilities already.

In the midst of standing in failure, I realize that this is where life is lived to its fullest. Success is what is learned within what seems to be the vacuous abyss.

37. **Opening to Giving Myself a Break...** Sometimes I don't want to be wise. I want to be self-absorbed and selfish. I don't always have to get it right or practice being spiritual. I can give myself a break, if I want. I can be selfish, demanding and entitled to a day off.
38. **Opening to Losing My Baggage...** Carrying guilt for regrets, mistakes and failures in no way contributes to the evolution of my spiritual consciousness. It just doesn't! I practice learning from my mistakes; then, with humility and with courage, I let the baggage go.
39. **Opening to Giving Up Sacrifice and Suffering...** I never have to sacrifice anything. I can choose to give up one thing for something else, only because I want to, not because I have to. I feel empowered when I take full responsibility for my choosing. I practice reminding myself that my choices require no suffering and no sacrifice. I'm not a victim to life's dilemmas, only to my thinking that it is so.
40. **Opening to Serenity and the Grace of Self-Acceptance...** Suffering, like guilt and shame, does no good. It is a greater contribution to the world to practice emancipating myself from the belief that suffering is noble and spiritual. It is not.
 Rather than carrying the burden of suffering for eternity, I practice questioning the self-imposed certainty that I must suffer for any sin I've committed and all mistakes I have made. I give myself permission to dismantle my self-created cage of suffering. I choose to live in serenity and the grace of self-acceptance.
41. **Opening to Seeing the World without Judgment...** Just because I believe that I am right doesn't make it so. When I suspend judgment, I practice seeing the world beyond right, wrong, good, and bad. I expand my ability to communicate with others respectfully honoring them and their point of view. Peace becomes not only a possibility, but an inevitable conclusion to my efforts. I have no doubt about this!

42. **Opening to Being Generous With Myself...** Getting and taking is not the end-all and be-all of human existence. This is often realized when love expresses itself through me as generosity. In these moments I know for a fact that there is nothing to lose, for in true generosity, there is no loss.

I practice noticing when my only intention is to get something. In doing so, I face the inevitable dilemma: Do I act from my fear of loss? Do I act from my fear of having no power to get what I believe I need? Or, do I choose to trust in the abundance of who I am?

Through this practice of noticing my desire to get, I choose to face the unavoidable discomfort of stretching my capacity to give.

43. **Opening to Presence and Deep Listening...** I often forget to put my listening ears on, especially when I'm alone with myself. This may be when I need my listening ears more than ever. I practice bringing my presence – my full attention to what is in this moment. The practice of deep listening opens me more fully to receive the gifts of this moment. I can let my desire to be distracted wait for a later opportunity.

44. **Opening to Being with the Spiritual ME...** Spiritual isn't something I do. Spiritual is what I am. I am never *not* Spiritual. Being in conversation with ME allows an awareness that there is something ineffable that is calling. I find myself wanting to peer into a knowing I can't yet know. I practice stretching and strengthening my courage to see beyond what has been safe for me to see. I willingly sit in the big hairy, scary question that can only be answered by me: Who Am I?

10. **Opening to Being Authentic with My Children...** I see that my desire to look like a perfect parent is different than my desire to be a perfect parent. One way strokes my ego and the other nurtures both my children and my heart. I practice noticing when I act out of obligation to look like a good parent and use my children for my own motives. I begin to create quality time and presence with them, because that is what I truly desire to experience with them.

45. **Opening to Standing Strong and Loving Strong...** The only way I can set strong boundaries with others is to first set a strong *inner* boundary within me, which declares: Here is My Truth!

I can set strong boundaries and limits while still being loving and kind. Sometimes, practicing love through boundary setting is the most loving way to be me.

46. **Opening to Being Content Within My Own Skin...** When I'm restless, irritable and discontent (RID), it is important for me to sit quietly with myself. I practice feeling deeply into the root source of my restlessness, my irritability, and my discontent. This way, I come to uncover choices I've made in the past that generates emotional and physical discomfort. I open to choosing differently. In doing so, I breathe a sigh of relief and invite in experiences of contentment, humor, joy and peace.

11. **Opening to Trust and Surrender...** I see my children making the same mistakes I made when I was young. I want to protect them and keep them from having to be with the consequences of their own choice-making. They seem to resent me when I intervene, telling me that I'm being controlling. I know I am being controlling yet, when I stand back and say nothing, I feel defenseless and powerless. I don't want them to have to be with consequences of making mistakes: loss, humiliation, or feeling like a failure and an idiot.

I practice holding my desire to rescue in check. I practice trusting, respecting and believing that, no matter what, my children are growing themselves up in the way that supports their highest good and highest truth.

47. **Opening to Cultivating Awareness of How I Choose...** I can choose to empower myself to do my best, and I can choose to empower myself to do less than my best. I can empower myself to choose to choose whatever I want to choose.

I practice noticing – just noticing, how I choose what I choose. In doing so, I empower myself to choose, opening to my highest good, my highest knowing, and my greatest contribution to the world.

48. **Opening to Peace, Love and Connection...** People who act badly are asking for love. They are afraid to ask in a clearer, more direct way. When I practice being open to listening and hearing their request for love and answering them with love, I experience much less stress and much less strife. I effortlessly enter into peace, love and connection.

49. **Opening to The Truth in ME ...** I can't know what truth is for me without the direct experience of it. Reading about it, talking about it, or thinking about it perhaps points me in the direction, but without direct experience of my truth, I remain disconnected; feeling lost, empty and without direction.

When I practice diving deep, immersing myself in the experience of my truth, I emerge with a knowing that I've never had before. I feel grounded, content and whole. I am embraced by my truth.

50. **Opening to Discovering the Life Within...** Sometimes the noise in my head is so loud I cannot hear a word I am saying. The channel to my inner wisdom is buried beneath mounds of resistance to change. I feel helplessly hopeless. It seems impossible that I will ever get to the essence of ME. My practice is to purposely engage my listening, and breathe into my desire to know my deepest truth. I then begin to listen for signs of life within, which so desires to be heard.

51. **Opening to Laughing at My Self-Importance...** I find it funny that I take myself so seriously, and I laugh out loud when I realize all the silly ways I pretend to be important.

I practice noticing how I can empower myself to separate me from my foolishness, my insincerity, my pretentious, and my righteousness. I laugh out loud when I look at myself perhaps as God looks at me: with tender love for the innocence that is and forever will be. I delight in my silliness.

12. **Opening to Serenity and Gratitude...** Sometime, I am powerless over my circumstances, and I'm powerless to feel anything but powerless. Attempting to manage, deny, avoid and distract myself from experiencing this most fundamental experience of human existence is futile. I can be angry, I can medicate myself, I can blame and shame myself and others for the circumstances at hand, but none of these practices will remove the source of my turmoil.

I can, instead, consider the practice of acknowledging when I feel powerless. I can consider the practice of allowing the reality of my powerlessness to just be, only because I'm human and cannot know how to be competent in all areas of human existence. And, I can begin to allow myself to feel more deeply into my humanness, which is within this moment of powerlessness.

I accept that because I am, I will on occasion have no control over me, others, or my circumstance. I can begin to honor myself and all beings for the undeniable existence of powerlessness. As I engage in this practice and I surrender resistance, compassion and serenity somehow mystically appear in its place. And, I find myself grateful for the way that it is.

13. **Opening to Letting Go of Everything That Isn't Me...** I used to want to be just like my parents. Then, I wanted to be nothing like them. Today I am open to allowing me to be who I am, similar to my parents in some ways, and very different in others. I practice letting go of who I'm afraid I may become and I practice accepting myself as I am. At the same time, I practice choosing to become more of who I always wanted to be, no matter who that may be like.

52. **Opening to Me Without Pride and Prejudice...** Each blow to my pride, each disappointment I endure, provides an opportunity to experience the ME beyond the prideful, entitled, fearful person that I thought was me.
- I practice distinguishing those thoughts and interpretations, which have me think myself to be wounded and suffering, from those thoughts that I *willingly* nourish; that I'm willing to disappoint others Opening to discovering my greatest potential. I want to model this for my children. These practices nurture humbleness, self-acceptance, and an increasing contentment within me.
53. **Opening to My Paradigm Shift...** The dismantling of my personal paradigm, which has always focused on fear, can be profoundly challenging and uncomfortable - physically, emotionally and energetically. With ongoing life experiences, I see that I am bombarded by contradicting sensations and thoughts, which I used to accept since "that's just the way life is." Now, I see that these sensations are only indications that it is time to practice mindful consideration of what is true and what is in alignment with my highest good. As challenging and uncomfortable as it is to sit in the midst of a paradigm shift, I practice allowing myself to feel more empowered to truly be in control of my own evolution. I can go as fast or as slow as is right for me.
54. **Opening to Honoring My Children and Myself...** Initially, I wanted children so I'd never feel alone or lonely. They would be my companions for a lifetime. They would become what I always wanted to be, doing what I wanted to do, having what I always wanted to have. The truth is, they are traveling a different road than mine, with different life lessons and life purposes. This brings me to that which I've attempted to avoid - my aloneness. Over time, my fears of aloneness are shifting. I practice turning aloneness into solitude. Enjoying the company of my children is now a privilege and not a right.
14. **Opening to Being a Positive Impact...** My actions impact my children far greater than my words. How I *be* is a reflection of what I believe to be true. I practice noticing that my actions are coming from beliefs I didn't even know I had. I practice questioning the truth and relevance of those beliefs, and then begin to create beliefs that now make sense, in regard to what I see as absolute truth and well-being for myself.
55. **Opening to Being The Real Deal...** Pretending to be something that I am not lessens my capacity to be who I truly am. The truth is, I believe I have to pretend to be who I am already.

I practice noticing when my body is telling me that I'm being something other than centered, grounded, and wholly me. In so doing, I notice when I'm pretending to feel what I want to feel – not necessarily what I truly feel. I notice when I don't want to do what I believe I'm having to do. I begin to wake up to how much I choose, unaware that I've been choosing all along. Now I can choose more consciously to pretend or to be the real deal – ME!

15. **Opening to Clarity and Ease...** Problems arise from conflicting desires, beliefs and interpretations. The clearer I am about what I want and what I don't want, the more likely I am to act in alignment with what I most want. I practice looking at my problems and what is causing my problems. I notice my conflicting desires and train myself to discern my highest desires from what is either undesirable or just less desired. I discover through this practice that I experience fewer problems and dilemmas, and more effortless outcomes – most of the time. No Problem!
16. **Opening to Consciously Shaping My Destiny...** My assumptions shape my perceptions. My perceptions shape my actions. My actions shape my destiny. I practice discerning the truth of my assumptions, in relation to what I want. I choose actions that will either bring fulfillment to my heart's desire, or frustration, disappointment, and inevitable sabotage to my plans. I practice catching my assumptions and train myself to assess their truth and their value in relation to what I want to create. I attend to what follows my assumptions and bring my consciousness to the choices I make. Through this process, I experience more self-confidence, and my choices are taking me in the direction I really want to go! Wha-hoo!
56. **Opening to Honoring My Children In Their Own Evolution...** By remembering the experiences of my life as a child, my hopes and fears, and experiences of awe and wisdom, I recollect the knowingness I had about life in all of its wonder. I practice remembering the importance of allowing my children and grandchildren the space to experience their own hopes and fears, their own truths, and the rapture of their own exploration. I practice saying to them "*Tell me more!*"
17. **Opening to Adulthood...** Adulthood is far more challenging than I imagined. Not only the responsibility to right-livelihood and to my family, but tending to the complexities of a challenging and ever-changing world. If it is true that the earth is perhaps beyond repair, how do I be present to my children's fears and questions? I feel powerless to give them answers that will allow them to feel safe and secure even when life looks so scary.

I practice growing courage in the face of fearful circumstances. I practice being present one day at a time, showing up not in ignorance (ignoring my thoughts and feelings), but being fully present in our current circumstances. This requires that I experience deep, human moments of powerlessness, hopelessness and despair. This, in actuality, honors the truth of my humanity. For my children's sake, I'm committed to authentic presence, no matter what!

18. **Opening to Good Grief...** Death and Dying are topics that are so challenging for me to talk about with my children. Whether the family dog or it's me, I want to protect my children from the truth - that they are losing me as a parent, so I've not shared this information with them yet.

Perhaps I'm wanting to ignore the truth, so that I put off saying the words out loud - "I am dying".

I feel powerless. I don't know how I'll get myself through this, much less get them through this? In this moment, I can practice telling the truth to myself and being present to my own response to my losses. I practice openly feeling my feelings - my anger, my sadness, my powerlessness, and hopefully acceptance. Being with the grief and powerlessness with the vulnerable.

19. **Opening to End Self-Extinction...** All my life, I've hidden my truths below layers of pretentious role-playing. In doing that for decades, I feel the insanity of it, as if I had something to lose by exposing my true identity. I realize how much I've lost by hiding my greatest assets - my thoughts, desires and imagination. I want something more for my children.

Mustering courage and strength to practice revealing my truth is a strenuous task. Engaging with myself and the world I live in, grounded in that truth is another thing altogether. By continuing to pretend to be who I am not, I not only lose out on experiencing an optimal life, but I also set my children up for the inevitable extinction of their own human spirit.

I humbly reveal my lack of self-understanding, and acknowledge my fears of weakness and vulnerability. As I face myself in the mirror, I practice accepting myself as I am. As I embrace myself in this moment, I open to a deep, abiding self-compassion I had yet to know.

20. **Opening to Giving My Children a Ground of Being ...**

Life can be scary. I see the worry on my children's faces as they see me worry about money, work, and more. When I act as if I feel unsafe, I'm teaching them

that there is no solid ground upon which to stand. I live as if there is nothing and no one to trust when the going gets tough.

Although I say that there is a higher wisdom, I don't practice *living* as if I trust that higher wisdom. Opening to giving myself and my children a ground of being, I practice summoning up courage to expose the source of my fear, and I decide to turn toward the support of a higher wisdom and a stable ground of being.

When I practice living as if support is always there, I feel safe to distinguish the underlying *source* of my fear from the *source* of my higher wisdom. I practice creating incremental shifts, not to pretend to be strong, but to actually live strong within my highest knowing, even when I'm scared beyond my wits.

I practice sharing fierce conversations with my children about how they view their world and how they choose to be with their worldly view. Just by talking with them about this stuff will encourage strength within us all. I have no doubt about that!

21. **Opening to Welcoming Failure Again and Again...** I've been trained to see mistakes as failures, and failures deserve punishment. This makes me very afraid, and prevents me from taking unknown risks. I've become constantly vigilant to avoid being exposed as a failure; though, to my knowledge I've done nothing wrong. This fearful cautiousness is not what I want to model for my children. How can I teach them to be fearless in the face of failure?

What if failure is just an indicator that something is missing?

When failure occurs, I practice asking myself these questions: What is to be learned here; what am I not attending to; what is calling me; what am I afraid to face; what am I pretending not to know; what part of me feels safe in failing and unsafe in succeeding; how can I forgive myself, and provide compassion for myself in the midst of all of this? I have some blind spots in this part of my life, and I want to practice bring it into the light of knowing.

I clearly see that failing isn't the end of anything; it is only the beginning of a cleaner, healthier relationship with me.

22. **Opening to Cultivating Freedom...** At times I feel absolutely imprisoned by my own fear to freely express myself. My thoughts often turn to what others think about me. Sometimes, I listen to what they say and agree with them, even when I

don't agree. I'm afraid to share my own truths and opinions. I'm ready to liberate myself from this lifelong pattern of denying my self-truth.

I can teach my children to think their own thoughts, to know what they desire, and to freely express their opinions to me and to the world, only by modeling that for them, with them.

I practice expressing my beliefs and opinions in an honest and neutral way. I also practice listening to my children without criticism or corrections – honoring, respecting and being inspired by their free expression. I practice saying: *“I really want to hear what you think.”*

57. **Opening to Speaking Truth to My Family and Myself...** I don't like the way my family members treat each other. Sometimes it feels hurtful and abusive. But it's important to love family.

When I practice speaking my truth to my family, I may feel vulnerable to attack, and they may not like me for what I have to say. However, if I'm sharing because I love them and I love myself, then I know it's the right thing to do.

58. **Opening to Cultivating Self-Reliance...** I have a belief that in order to feel safe, I need specific things and people in my life. This makes me rely on what's outside of me for my safety and security.

I practice living my life as if I am complete, knowing that I need nothing outside myself in order to thrive. I practice feeling into and enjoying the experience of trusting that I am my own safety-net.

59. **Opening to Living on Purpose...** I've always been told that it's important to make lots of money, but I notice that I'm not happy no matter how much money I make. Living my life with purpose and meaning feels more fulfilling and enriching than focusing on money.

Just as a practice, I allow myself to fully embrace my passions and desires, letting go of those fear-based beliefs that limit the flow of abundance. I practice doing what I love, while cultivating the courage to trust that I am supported completely when living a purposeful life.

60. **Opening to Allowing Solitude...** After spending so much time on computers, cell phones and tablets, being alone and quiet sometimes feels really uncomfortable. I forget how to be with myself, without distractions.

Giving myself time to be alone, even living alone, provides a spaciousness that I may never know when I'm too afraid to experience that aloneness. Taking on the

practice of giving myself quiet time every day, allows me to cultivate the capacity to be alone, fully present with myself. I may find that in such solitude, I actually enjoy my own company.

61. **Opening to Discovering the Source of My Irritation...** When I feel restless, there is a thought that is tickling me, wanting to get my attention. Rather than ignoring the irritation of the restlessness, I practice curiously excavating this tickling thought, and ask it what it wants. I can then stay present to what is possible to alleviate my irritation.
62. **Opening to Doing Nothing When there is Nothing to Do...** Humanness sometimes feels good and sometimes feels bad. Allowing for that, I sometimes feel powerless to make me feel better than I do.

In this moment, I can practice empowering myself to accept what I cannot do; not because I'm incompetent or a failure, but because there's nothing to be done by me, now. Doing nothing is something to practice. This is *something* that I can do.

63. **Opening to Knowing Myself to Be Divine Worth...** I know I'm a good person, but sometimes I doubt that I'm a *worthy* person. So I do things to prove I am worthy, even when I'm afraid that I'm not.

As I cultivate awareness, I realize more and more that I don't need to prove myself to anyone, especially to myself. To live a life that fulfills my human spirit, I practice remembering that because I am a spark of the Divine – Divine Worth is my birthright. It is innate, and unquestionably in every one of us.

23. **Opening to Friendships...** I know true friendship: it's when I give and receive freely, not looking to get or take anything from my friends, and they aren't attempting to get or take anything from me. There is no keeping score.

I practice opening myself up to engaging with all beings as if they are my friends, freely giving and freely receiving.

24. **Opening to Self-Honor...** Sometimes I question what is mine to do. I wonder how I came to be committed to doing what seems to be so unfulfilling. I notice that I may be under-valuing who I am.

Fulfilling my commitment to doing what is mine to do, and doing it to the best of my ability is the highest form of self-honor. I practice remembering that self-honor takes courage to stretch into my commitments; fulfilling them because it is what is mine to do. I build strength by leaning into this practice, regardless of the angst and discomfort I may experience.

64. **Opening to Acting in Alignment with the Inconceivable...** Expanding into my fullest self can only happen when I truly know that I have far more wisdom, strength, courage, and creativity than I could ever conceive. Acting in alignment with the inconceivable means that I practice living in faith, expanding beyond my perceived limits, trusting my intelligence, my inner wisdom, my imagination, and my inspiration. This practice cultivates deep, deep trust in myself and in the unknown.

25. **Opening to Respecting the Views My Children...** I sometimes look to friends, business associates and others for validation. I see *my need* to be significant in the eyes of my peers. I forget that my children are important people too, who reflect respect and trust, or reflect the opposite of that.

When I notice that I'm treating my children with less respect than grownups, I practice asking myself "What are my priorities?"

I practice being the kind of person that would be respected by my children. I remember my conviction to do whatever it takes to helping my children soar, then practice being the individual who will make that happen.

26. **Opening to Generosity of Spirit...**

When I withhold forgiving, I contract and I attack. I blame others for my woes, and distrust that anyone genuinely cares.

I'm afraid that by opening myself up to being generous I will lose something that is important to me. Truthfully? I'm afraid I will lose everything. Living in this state of fear keeps me from being the fullest expression of me in the world.

Giving freely - extending myself openly to the world, is for me, the highest and greatest act of self-expression.

For giving sake, I practice noticing when my resistance to being generous arises. I practice releasing those beliefs that limit me from extending myself into the world. I mindfully attend to that part of me that is afraid of loss and lack, and therefore withholds. When I'm generous in spirit, I experience no lack in my capacity to share myself with the world.

27. **Opening to Choosing Consciously...** More than ever before, I trust that Being ME in my fullest potential is my life purpose. This makes me happy, because I now have the capacity to create a life that I'm proud to call mine.

I become more intentional in how I choose what I choose. I practice choosing consciously Opening to my highest knowing. By doing so I experience more of my core strength, courage and power. This inevitably leads me to being the fullest expression of my potentiality.

65. **Opening to Allowing a Wonderful Life...** Most mornings, I wake up anticipating the flow of the day, as it has been every other day before. This leaves me with the results of my expectations, and therefore the results of my past. And, I wonder why the “same old, same old” keeps showing up the way it does. I want a wonderful life!

The practice of allowing today to be different pulls my mind back out of expecting and assuming. I stop myself from jumping ahead – thinking about all of the items on my agenda. I practice doing it differently.

Just for today, I *allow* myself to experience life as an unfolding of wonder and delight. I allow myself to be in the moment, practicing presence to life itself. I allow myself to be full of wonder as life unfolds before me. I see there is very little I need to do to allow my life to be wonderful. It just is!

66. **Opening to Discovering Myself in Silence...** I find myself afraid of silence. It's uncomfortable. Generally, I locate myself in relation to the noise and stimulation around me. I intentionally bounce from one to another, distracting and avoiding ME. If I stop creating noise, I'm afraid I will disappear into an abyss of silence.

As I explore the qualities of silence, leaning into it, I practice listening beyond my limited perception of silence. I actively engage in a process that up until now I feared was a huge vacuum, which sucked me out into the ethers. Through this practice, I discover a richness in the sounds beyond the sounds. Unless I make the leap, I won't know what I may be missing. Who knows, I may even liking it!

67. **Opening to Returning to Source...**What exists within stillness? Is it the creation of the trees and stars, the ocean and mountains? Is it the source of beauty, love, compassion, and sweetness of a moment of innocence? It takes courage for me to step into stillness – I am afraid that there is something I will lose there. Death-defying? Yes. And perhaps life-giving at the same time.

I practice returning to source by creating moments of stillness for myself.

28. **Opening to the Divine Embrace...** With wisdom and maturity, I've come to see that, who I thought I was, as a person, is actually a spark of the Universal Divine. As I surrender my identity and need for my control, the more I experience the

effortless flow with life as it exists in this moment. I practice sensing into the limitless acceptance of the One that embraces me, as the presence that I am.

68. **Opening to Being Out of My Mind...** I notice that I often I jump to conclusions about a situation, even before I actually know what it's about. I'm only reacting to my interpretation and my assumption, not to the circumstance which triggered it. "I know what this is about," are the words which keep me from actually knowing anything.

My involuntary judgments and preconceived expectations prevent me from being present to the actual experience of myself in relation to people, places, and things. I'm only experiencing a reaction to my own thinking - nothing more. In this place, there's no room for learning, for wonder, curiosity, or awe. There is no room for direct-engagement with life itself. I miss so much of life by living only in my Mind!

I practice noticing when I jump to conclusions. I practice slowing down my responses, empowering myself to be with the real event in real time. In this way, I remain grounded in this moment, where I can truly be with what is.

69. **Opening to Making Room for Me, Now...**

Though I know theoretically *that there is nowhere to go and nothing to do*, my mind continually races ahead. It believes there is something more important to be doing than what I'm doing now. From one "important" detail of my life to the next, and then to the next, and then to the next. No matter which one I attend to, I anticipate the next to be better than the last. I notice restlessness when I'm not leaping forward toward the next best thing.

I'm leaving no space for this moment. I'm leaving no room for me to be engaged and present to what I am with, in this moment. My creations, which only occur in the present moment, cannot come to fruition unless I trust that this is what I am to be with now. I have to believe that the fulfillment of this moment can only contribute to fulfillment of my larger vision.

While anticipating the voice that says "Let's move on," I practice getting to know myself as I expand my ability to attending fully to the details of now. As I watch my mind attempt to pull me towards something else, I invite my mind to stay present. In so doing, I experience a rapture and delight that exists only in the now, only within the fullest expression of myself, which can only happen in the present moment. That's just the way it is!

70. **Opening to Engaging with the Adventures of My Life...** Vicariously accepting the world through other people's experiences is like reading the menu without actually tasting the food. Only through direct experience and personal engagement will I know *my* true experience of adventures available to me in this lifetime: the smell of a rose, my child being born, my first kiss, getting behind the wheel of a car for the first time – no one can live those experiences for me. In these inexplicable moments, I experience oneness with life and a yearning to know *me*, more fully than before.

I practice embracing all that my life offers me. I practice building my courage to step daringly into my life – no matter how frightening it seems. I want to know me through my own experience of me.

71. **Opening to Big Love...** There is personal love, which makes me feel special, safe and secure. Then there is BIG LOVE, which goes beyond life itself, as an expansive, all present, universal, unconditional state of being. Yeowee!

In BIG LOVE we are all the same. There is no prejudice, bias, bigotry, sexism, or racism; BIG LOVE excludes no one. I want all of us to return to this innate state of being – for it is our Divine Birthright. What if we embraced that which is all embracing? The absolute experience of this embrace is here right now.

If nothing more, I want to experience just a touch of this BIG LOVE. I want to know what it is like to truly be in the embrace of BIG LOVE. I want to find out how much JOY I can stand. I want to discover all the ways to sustain BIG LOVE through my days.

Today, I practice noticing how I limit my capacity to be love and be loving. I see that every moment is an opportunity to be BIG LOVE. I notice when I miss and dismiss these BIG moments. I practice sustaining these moments when I am the spontaneous expression of BIG LOVE. Over and over again, I practice remembering this quality of BIG LOVE in my being. My actions will effortlessly be an extension of BIG LOVE, which I am being.

72. **Opening to Knowing Through Discerning...**

All we do all day long, is think about how we are going to handle life's situations.

I see when:

- I choose to do what I'm told to do without questioning.
- I choose to resist doing what I'm told to do.
- I choose to consider other people's points of view, for their potential value and contributions.

Am I open or resistant? Am I engaging or withdrawing? Am I curious or shut down? It is up to me to pay attention to how I choose what I choose, so that I can choose in service to my highest knowing. It's up to me to discern what I fearlessly believe to be true, so much so that I am willing to act in alignment with what I believe, and not what I am told to believe.

I practice noticing my bodily responses when other people are sharing their opinions and thoughts. I practice tuning in to the quality of these bodily signals, being curious about their message. I practice listening to my inner voice, realizing with delight that I am always receiving trustworthy signals, messaging, and direct, clear guidance.

I practice listening to myself with greater respect and honor, for my way of seeing the world is respectable and honorable.

Opening to Living a Blessed Life... Blessings are the bestowing, sharing and gifting of love and light. These emanate through us as wisdom and intelligence of Divine proportion.

Through prayers, blessings, and good wishes, I practice living a life of expansive abundance, within which the more I share, the more abundance is in-turn shared with me.

29. **Opening to Self-Discovery...**

It takes a hell of a lot of courage to practice Self-discovery. It requires me to engage the muscles of allowing, accepting, exploring and experimenting, which inevitably lead me to leaps of faith that I couldn't otherwise take. It requires that I tune in and trust my Divine guidance.

This practice is an ongoing integration of the absolute truth that that we are Spirit, living this human experience. As I practice living in fulfillment of this truth, my children automatically receive the benefits of the wisdom I gain.

30. **Opening to Realizing the Source of My Suffering...** Initially, I believed that my pain and suffering was the consequence of other people's words and actions. I was only the victim.

As I've matured, I've learned to take full responsibility for all my suffering, for I've come to understand that it is only my beliefs and perceptions that cause me to see myself as a victim and to experience my pain and suffering as real. This doesn't support me in being with the cellular memory of all that has transpired.

My practice is to sit with my full capacity to experience all that has been, which, in this moment has my whole being in anguish, despondency, and hopelessness. I practice feeling my feelings. I practice relinquishing resistance to being fully open to my humanness. I practice remembering my truth – that I have nowhere to turn for healing but to my own heart. Love is the way.

31. **Opening to Being Consistent...** The most challenging part of parenting for me is being consistent with my words and actions. I see how my mood, fatigue and hunger effects the degree to which I hold my children to their agreements. I feel worn out when they keep pushing against the rules and boundaries we set up together. Too often I give in and let them do what they want when they want.

3 Offerings

A Daily Practice/Prayer/Mediation

I slide effortlessly into my essential truth, that I have nothing that doesn't come from Oneness/Universal Source/God. I surrender my will, my very existence and all its expressions to Oneness. I release any angst and worry that plagues me in this moment. I release my judgment, beliefs, assumptions and interpretation that are not in alignment with my Truth: that which is beyond all right and wrong, good and bad, for I now know that this is where the true nature of life exists. I request support and assistance, not only from wise ones on the planet, but also from the unseens, who are always available. I trust, that when I release all thoughts that have me feel angst and worry, my need to control the future and the now will crumble. I know now, through years of experience, that I will be directed very specifically through intuition, inspiration, and perhaps words of the unseen support. I am guided and supported every step of the way.

CHECK LIST of Competencies You Want to Cultivate in Your Children

- Compassion
- Strength
- Openness
- Expansion
- Forgiveness
- Empathy
- Tolerance
- Patience
- Humor
- Playfulness
- Love
- Innocence
- Wisdom
- Self-Honor
- Self-Respect

- Self-Appreciation
- Self-Acknowledgment
- Humility
- Unlimited Possibilities,
- Allowing Support and Guidance from my Higher Power,
- Surrender,
- Serenity,
- Stillness,
- Solitude,
- Introspection,
- Discernment,
- Trust and Belief in Oneself,
- Speaking the Truth
- Gratitude,
- Generosity
- No Sacrificing of Self
- Guiltlessness
- Shamelessness
- Fearlessness
- Self-Love,
- Love of Others,
- Service,
- Kindness
- Spiritual Intelligence
- Emotional Intelligence
- Defer to No One Outside of Me

Reading List:

Dr. Seuss: Oh, The Places You'll Go! (1990).

Robin Skynner, and John Cleese. Families and How To Survive Them (1984).

Peggy Joy Jenkins, Ph.D.: Nurturing Spirituality in Children: Simple Hands-On Activities (2008).

Rasha: Oneness (2006).

Rosie Kuhn, Ph.D.: You Know You are Transforming When... 101 Everyday Indications that You are Creating a Life Happily Ever After (2013).

Rosie Kuhn, Ph.D.: ME... 101 Indispensable Insights I Didn't Get in Therapy (2014).

Rosie Kuhn, Ph.D.: If Only My Mother Told Me: 101 Pearls of Wisdom I Had to Get By Myself (2014).

Rosie Kuhn, Ph.D.: Self-Empowerment 101 (2008).

Tobin Hart, Ph.D., and Joseph Chilton Pearce: The Secret Spiritual World of Children: The Breakthrough Discovery that Profoundly Alters Our Conventional View... (2003).

Acknowledgments

This book has been the most challenging work thus far for me. It's taken more use of my brain and my will to bring this book into its fulfillment than anything else I've written. Writing is not only about word-smithing thoughts and imagery into readable and hopefully appreciated sentences; it is also about listening to and transcribing the wisdom of the Universe.

Previous books – such as *You Know You Are Transforming When...* flew onto the pages in a matter of hours – literally. That was pure fun. Conversely, this piece of Divine Presence that you're holding in your hand was birthed through arduous labor. Immersed in a constant barrage of failing, uncertain of the path or articulation of what was forming here, I was present with a spiritual practice that engaged the part of my being which lay hidden beneath previous ease and success. Angst and despondency, hopeless abdication that I will never get this right and I will never get this done, required that I show up at my desk with the assuredness that once again I will fail. I learned through my friend and fabulous photographer, Peter Fisher, that whether it is our spiritual fulfillment or an artistic one – which includes the way life is lived, only through a succession of failings will one penetrate the veils of defeat. Thank you Peter. You inspired me to keep meeting myself in failure, until I realized that it wasn't me that was failing. You provided me with the insight that failing is only an interpretation of what is actually an incubation period; one in which each of us cultivates capacities we haven't yet developed, but believed we had, or should have.

It has taken the presence of many artists to bring this book to life. As always, Jessica Ruby Hernandez did an amazing job editing the text of this book. I'm so grateful that I can relax and feel confident with her polishing off the final drafts. Maureen O'Neill, friend and graphic artist extraordinaire transforms texts into poetry. She brings beauty and form to mere words.

Deep heart-connecting conversations with Dr. Virginia Erhardt, Carol Anderson, Patrice McAuliffe, David Logan, Marj and Fred Franke, Anusha Solayea, Andrea Shoemaker, and Theresa Bowes, brought further clarity to the process of parenting, grand-parenting, step-parenting, and raising all children of the planet. Thank you all for being my friends and confidants.

I am indebted to all beings who have come before me. With the Divine Order of existence, their journeys have brought me to mine. Their fulfillments and unfinished works led me to mine. The interweaving of the past with the present and with the multiverses within which we Earthling swim, brings me to this moment of realizing – I couldn't do this without all of it! I am grateful to all!

Because of our reliance on an authority outside ourselves, as we've had no personal authority until this moment, it isn't difficult to shift our listening to this ego-self. Under its direction, we begin developing survival strategies. How we perceive ourselves will decide the strategies we develop to be good bad happy sad, hero, victim, etc.