

# *Thrive – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*

## Creating a Thriving Life Week Four – May 17, 2021

### Integrity and Authenticity

The work we've been doing over the past three weeks, is settling in and some changes are being noticed and felt. This new sense of self is empowering and unsettling. This week, we will work on integrating our new self-awareness, our understanding of truly being a creative soul, and becoming more comfortable with who we are becoming.

This week we will also engage in a form of media deprivation!! The aim is to get at what we might be most addicted to.

#### **Sorting Out Our Feelings**

The work we are doing with Morning Pages and the others Tasks are helping us make distinctions between our *real* feelings and our *official* feelings, how we *really* feel and the feelings we show to the *public*. When I said to my college friend and to my seminary professor that I don't really get angry, it was a way of avoiding my true feelings, and a way to put me in a better light. I was more interested in how other people felt about me, than getting in touch with my real feelings. We do this by saying, "I'm alright, I'm okay," or "No, it didn't really bother me much."

Morning Pages are so revelatory because they allow us to be as honest as possible with our feelings. They help us stop denying what we truly feel. But when we get clearer about our feelings, we often neglect our Morning Pages, or do not tell the truth on the pages. Why? Because we are shocked to see how we really feel and think. We are that mad, that sad, that glad; in the wrong career, the wrong relationship. As Julia Cameron puts it: "In short, extreme emotions of any kind – the very thing that Morning Pages are superb for processing – are the usual triggers for avoiding the pages themselves."

If we are to set our creative soul free, we must see what's really in us and be honest about it. We must get to know that creative soul/self of ours as it really is in all its thoughts and feelings. "I feel this way...that way...and this way...No one else need agree with me, but this is what I *feel/think*."

Julia Cameron: "The process of identifying a *self*, a creative soul, inevitably involves loss as well as gain. We discover our boundaries, and those boundaries by definition separate us from our fellows. As we clarify our perceptions, we lose our misconceptions. As we eliminate ambiguity, we lose illusion as well. We arrive at clarity, and clarity creates change."

At first this is troubling, but then it becomes a call for action and change. We recognize the job, the relationship, the role we're playing with family and friends, doesn't really fit. But perhaps more deeply, we recognize that it's not so much a problem with the job, relationship, the role, but with us not living into who we are. This kind of clarity, often causes great sorrow and grief. Change always brings a sense of loss. Faced with the very changes the work we

are doing has set in motion, we often want to retreat, go back to the way things were, throw a tantrum. We are tempted to sabotage our creative soul recovery.

This is normal. Thanks to the Morning Pages we learn what *we* want, what *God* wants, and ultimately become willing to make the needed changes to live into who we are. But the temptation to drop the whole thing shows up. This is the moment the Sanskrit word *kriya* points to – a spiritual emergency or surrender. The Chinese word for “crisis” does the same thing. Two symbols are joined together, one means “danger,” the other means “opportunity.” The Morning Pages point the way to reality: this is how we’re feeling. What do we make of that? Well, what we make of that, is how our creative soul comes to life.

As we lose our vagueness about our self, our values, our life situation, we become available to the moment, to life. It is there, in the particular, that we contact our creative soul, and the Creator. Until we experience the freedom of solitude, of sustained listening to our souls, we cannot connect authentically. There, where we are not distracted or preoccupied, we meet our truth, we meet ourselves, we meet our soul. We become original because we become something specific: an original from which work, life, flows.

This sounds selfish. But when we are living according to external values, somebody else’s idea of who we are supposed to be, we cannot bring the fullness of ourselves to any career, relationship, or role. Uncovering our souls leads to a fuller, more authentic engagement with work, relationships, and the roles we take on.

### **The Loss of the False Self, Recognition of the Incomplete Self**

As we find our creative soul, we let go of the false self we were sustaining. This is no small thing. It can feel traumatic. “I don’t know who I am anymore. I don’t recognize me.” That “me” might be too small, not in alignment, with our creative souls. We were taught to become who we were *supposed* to be; now we are exploring who we were *made* to be. We are our own promised land, our own new frontier. The story of Abraham and Sarah offers an insight. The text is translated this way: “Leave your family and your people and go to the land I will show you.” But an alternative translation is, “Go to yourself.” By taking on what others wanted us to become, we created a false self. But by taking off the masks we’ve worn to fit in, we discover the way we’ve been living is incomplete. There is so much more to discover in our soul.

What we’ve been doing is wiping the mirror. Each day’s Morning Pages takes a swipe at the fog we’ve kept between us and our real self. As our image becomes clearer, it may surprise us. We may discover very particular likes and dislikes that we hadn’t acknowledged. Conditioned as we were to accept other people’s definitions of us, this emerging creative soul can seem to us like self-will run riot. There’s always that chance. But that will show up in your Morning Pages, too, and we’ll recognize it. But usually, it’s our soul coming to life, becoming more complete.

### **The Gain of Your Creative Soul**

The snowflake pattern of our creative soul is emerging. Each of us is a unique, creative individual. But we often dilute that uniqueness with sugar, alcohol, drugs, overwork, underplay, bad relationships, underexercise, over-Netflix, undersleep – many and varied forms of junk food for the soul. The Morning Pages and the Tasks help us to see these smears on our consciousness that cover over our creative soul.

In time, we will find an increase in personal energy, bursts of anger, and flash points of clarity. People and things may take on a different sense of meaning and value. Life will have a different sense of flow. We’ll no longer feel stuck, but not sure where we’re going yet. We may

long for the time when there was little sense of possibility, when we felt more victimized, when we didn't realize how many small things we could do to improve our own lives.

The Morning Pages symbolize our willingness to connect with soul, with Spirit, with the Source of all life. We'll find ourselves more deeply connected with purpose, with good energy. We'll feel more aligned with ourselves, and with Spirit.

On Friday morning I awoke, like I had the previous two days, with some anxiety about a couple stressful things in my family, with some self-doubt about myself, with some judgments and dispositions about some situations I'm in, and I started writing my Morning Pages. And I wrote, "It's a brand new day..." and suddenly I realized that what I felt, thought, did yesterday, has some force to it, but it does not predetermine today. And I suddenly saw those anxieties, doubts, and judgments as chosen, and I could re-choose, right now – to think and feel differently. Instead of remaining in the old judgments and feelings, I started imagining new outcomes, and found deep compassion for people I, moments before, had been judging. My prayers, intentions shifted, and I could feel the false, incomplete self fade, and the true, complete self come to the fore.

### **Dig Yourself Out**

Much of the work we do in Thrive comes through the Morning Pages and doing the tasks that mostly ask us to think about ways we're stuck, and get in touch with and honor our true feelings. These things take effort, but mostly mental and emotional effort. But more is needed. We are also asked to give effort to making changes in our life, to actually go in the direction we wish to go. So come with a list of five things your creative soul really wants to do. Emphasis on do. This will stretch you, and if it doesn't feel like it will stretch you, it's probably not something your creative soul wants to do. Choose one of these things, and do it. Give your effort, make the phone calls, contact the right people, dig out this dream of your soul and act towards it's manifestation in your life.

It's not so much accomplishing this dream that matters, but what we learn by giving this kind of effort and action toward our dream. Our culture is marked by entertainment, and for the most part, we are the ones who are sitting in our couch being entertained. We observe more than participate. One of the Ten Values of Burning Man is "Radical Participation." It's not about watching, being entertained. It's about doing, entertaining, collaborating, dancing, singing, building, creating. Only when we put our full effort into it will we learn more about our creative soul's purpose.

### **Media Deprivation**

What is your go-to media preference? Which form of media is your most habitual, the closest to an "addiction" for you? Whatever it is, this is the one I will ask you to let go of for this week. But it's not only a letting go; it is an invitation to add, to do, something different. And that something is solitude, listening, waiting, opening up to Spirit, to Life, to Source, to your soul. Let me put it another way – it is a chance to look in the mirror and love who you see. Take that time to listen to our own inner voice, our creative soul's desires, the still small voice of God. Underneath the clatter and the noise, we will find our real thoughts and feelings, our own creativity, our own life emerging, and cherish it.

### **Weekly Tasks:**

1. Media Deprivation and Time Alone with You. The time you would spend engaging in your most addictive media habit, spend it with yourself. Yes, even looking in the mirror. Really get to know you and your creative soul.

2. Dig Yourself Out: Actively pursue a soul-goal. Give it as much effort as you can. What do you learn?
3. Look at one situation in your life that you feel you should change but haven't yet. What is the payoff for you in staying stuck?