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### Loving Yourself

Means rejoicing in the fact that you are a special person with all your perceived faults or flaws. Do you accept and embrace your shadow side or "Nagi" as it is called in the Lakota language. Do you realize that you are special and that there is no one quite like you on the planet. Do you look in the mirror and say I love and accept you.

What reason would there be not to think that you are as much a child of the universe, God, Great Spirit or whatever you call the deity as the next person. I was telling a friend that I sometimes felt bad about the way some people might view me, or missed the point of my thoughts and writings, and if I was communicating in a way that could help others. His reply was "I haven't seen any perfect people walking the earth lately, and what about all the people that send you those heart warming letters."

I agree with the Zen viewpoint that we are all potential Buddha's or Christ's, but we all are colored by our social conditioning, and thoughts from outside sources implanted in us since childhood. This can cause fragmentation or not being in harmony with the self. Does this mean that we should reject ourselves? Maybe we don't feel as spiritual or successful as the next guy. Does that mean we are worthless? The answer is no.

Life's lessons are valuable and can teach us how to rely on the connection with our higher self. We all are miracles, and life itself is a miracle. Don't sell yourself short. There is an old movie with Jimmy Stewart called "It's a wonderful life." He is taken off the planet as if he never existed, and the effect on his family and the community was sad and devastating because of the loss of his presence. This just means that we may affect people in ways we never dreamed of. It means that we all have something to give. It means we have the ability to change the planet and other peoples lives for the better. Yes us! Little old me and you.

It is important to remember that when we do things that we don't like, it serves as a signpost to change course. Sometimes this can't be done overnight. After all it took us years to get to where we are. Life is a journey, change comes quicker when we don't force things, and acquire a healthy dose of acceptance. Just like the tide slowly erodes the cliff we need to be like water. Mind like water, letting bad thoughts flow away. Yes be like water, slowly wearing away your perceived bad character traits or habits, forgiving yourself when we don't instantly correct course.

Forgive yourself and others when you are disappointed. Don't carry the burden by yourself, love is all around you but sometimes you can't see it or feel it. Quiet the mind and still the thoughts and feel the power of it, knowing that you and it are one, and that you are always loved. Cast off the feelings of not being worthy, for when you were a child you knew that you were. Regain the innocence of a babe, and rejoice in your own foot or hand, or the reflection of yourself in the mirror.

Throw away the rule book, it's the spirit, not the law. When you begin to love yourself you find it easier to love others, and them you. When you do something good remember it. Its so easy to forget the good things we do. We are all that little boy, or girl of innocence. It's just that we have been hurt along the way. Throw the hurt away and live life for another day.

### Violence on our senses

The culture we live in, the governments, and the social structure as a whole are committing violence against our senses. It is perpetuated by greed. We live in a reality that has departed from right thinking and that is out balance.

Our sense of hearing is bombarded daily by alarming sounds. Loud machine noises abound everywhere in the sky and on earth. The sirens wail, the din of the freeway noise is continuous, and the media blares on and on about the sensational graphic situations on the planet. Loud boom boxes in cars cruise by while garbage dumpsters are smashed violently against the ground. It is hard to hear the birds singing, the water in the streams flowing, and the wind blowing through the trees. It is hard to hear the summer rains and thunder.

Our sense of smell is accosted by the noxious fumes and pollution produced by gas burning vehicles, power plants, and industry. It is difficult to stop and smell the roses or lilac and newly mown fields. Our sense of touch and feeling is being restricted by the concrete and asphalt poured over mother earth, so that we cannot feel the grass between our toes, and walk barefooted as nature intended. The heat rises from the concrete structures causing a rise in temperature and preventing the breeze from blowing on our skin.

Our sense of taste is being dulled by processed foods and that quick snack at the local fast food joint. Food doesn't taste like it used to. Our sense of sight is sickened at the rape of mother earth. Trees are hacked down, and bushes are trimmed to cubicle forms to fit in with the square mentality and the box like structures we live in. No more circles and circle of life. Parks are turned into parking lots. Animals are shot and taken down because of their confusion on the intrusion.

And finally our sense of responsibility, fairness and freedom are being dulled, by the patriarchal system of greed, false power and pride. The current mentality is grab all you can while you can. The nature of man is no nature at all.

So as a result we begin to shut down our senses. We narrow our view so as not to see. We dim our senses of smelling, feeling, and tasting because we don't like what we are being subjected to. We long for nature, and times past from our ancestral memory. We pray for a place of silence in nature where we can gather our thoughts and return to some kind of normalcy. We ache to get off the treadmill of forced labor and slavery just to exist, and get back to oneness with mother earth as hunters and gatherers.

What can we do, what is the way out? Start by taking responsibility for your actions. Think coherently. Its hard, because of the dulling of our sense of fairness to ourselves and others. Don't accept the status quo, and gently nudge yourself into another way of living. Start by turning off the TV and media brainwashing machine. If you can't find nature, start by having a small Zen fountain in your home with the running water. Or buy a CD with the sounds of running water and nature. Slow the heck down. Grow a garden in your house or on your balcony.

Listen to soft music like the soothing sounds of Native American flute! Buy a bicycle and take some rides to nature, or the closest thing to it you can find. Make your thoughts prayers, by envisioning what you want instead of what you don't want.

Alter your environment as much as you can and encourage others to do so. Start a community garden. Don't be an activist, but act-as-if! Heal your dulled senses slowly by treating them with love. Take relaxing showers and baths, do aroma therapy, and burn sage. Despite the forces around us, try to nurture your senses and bring them back. If you can get to a park, do some communing with nature. Nature heals, so become one with it. Follow animal tracks, notice the plants, shrubs and flowers around you. Learn which plants are edible and medicinal. Talk to nature, trees, animals, and every thing else that is real. Feel the spirit that flows in all things. Don't be a victim, be a spiritual warrior and survivor. Project good imagery in your thoughts. Hey folks this is beyond voting for you favorite guy or gal because you think they will do something for you. This is a spiritual thing so heal your senses, regain your power and project it. Thoughts are strong things, they create and form the world.

### Reverence

The dictionary defines reverence as a feeling or attitude of deep respect tinged with awe or veneration. Where is the reverence today? Reverence is like a prayer, but it's more, it's having respect and honor for whatever you are contemplating or coming into contact with. Lets look at several examples. First lets take food. The food we eat everyday. Do we just cook it, or order it from a restaurant and then proceed to cram it in our mouths without thinking about or having reverence for it? Now you might say a prayer like "Thank you Creator for this food you provide" and that's a good start, but many people don't even do that. Reverence is different. Reverence is thinking, or contemplation of where this food came from and how it got to you. It's not like it just appeared, it came from Grandmother Earth. You might look at the rice on your plate, and not think to much about it. Lets think about the word humility in regards to the rice. It wouldn't be in front of you if there wasn't humility involved. How is humility involved? Planting, cultivation, and harvest. Do you think this is easy? The growing of rice again involves many things before it gets to our plate. It involves care, planning, and working with the elements to grow it. It involves one of our relations getting down in the mud on their hands and knees to plant a seed or sprout, and space it carefully apart. It means looking at the seasons and the best time to plant, and working with the elements of Mother Earth. It means acceptance of accidents and storms.

The point is that it that it takes humility and hard work to do all this. We should have reverence for all things concerned. That again would start with our Grandmother Earth, and all the natural forces that come into play. What made that seed sprout in the first place? The spirit of nature, the spirit that moves in all things, Grandfather Sky, the Sun, Grandmother, the Earth. Then there is the person that planted and harvested that seed who is also a part of Grandmother earth as we all are. Lets take this a step further. Lets say we lived in a community where every time a seed was planted, a prayer, reverence, or thought was directed that it be beneficial and medicinal for our fellow man. Barring that, how about this? As we eat our food bring the realization of it being like medicine, good medicine for our well being. This should give us pause to think about all our food and where it comes from, and how it gets to us. Naturally the less processed or mass produced food might be better, but what if our thoughts concerning the food changed it and made it better in an instant because of our realization that all food comes from our mother, and so we have reverence for it.

Lets take other areas of our life. What about the clothes we wear, and the house around us or our dwelling, including the products and items sitting in the house. Furniture, decorations, dishes, glassware, everything that surrounds us. When you think about it everything that we are exposed to originally came from Grandmother Earth. Even the plastic is petroleum or ancient fossils. So when we look around us do we have reverence?

How do you think this might change your life? Well lets look at it. The more we are mindful of the energy that surrounds us is from Great Spirit, the more appreciation we have for it, and the more love we will have for it, in fact more love for the earth in general. As we type on the keyboards of our computer, do we realize that everything that we have, even that keyboard, comes from the universal source? Reverence for all things. Being thankful on a higher level means more then just saying a repetitive prayer of words or sounds without feeling them. Reverence comes from the heart not the head. Reverence is a feeling. Feelings from the heart empower us. Some say that when you feel things from the heart and visualize them, it empowers you to create within the divine web of the universe, or the source of all things.

Now lets address reverence for our fellow man, our fellow beings on the planet. Do we look at one race as inferior to the next? Do we look at a persons skin color and see it as beautiful? Do we look at the shape of a persons eyes, and the eyes themselves as something deep, beautiful, and part of the great mystery? How about the way we treat our fellow man? Is it with reverence, and the understanding that no one person is above another? We are all equal in the natural order. Having a lot of money, or prestige, or being famous (well Known) doesn't change this fact. The more we look at people and how they function the more we see spirit at work in all of us. We can do wonderful things for our relations or we can do un-reverential things. We can be bigoted and hateful. We can think of another race as being savage or backward. Is a race savage because it lives next to nature or closer to the earth? No! The ones that are savage are the ones that have no reverence for things of nature, and want to possess or control things as objects. They look at land and our natural resources with greed and as something to own. No one owns the earth, it is for all our relations, and should be shared not hoarded. Some even justify the taking of a human life for this greed. When they do that they Quote: " Take all that person ever could have been" They can never take what he was, because their spirit and memory lives on in the hearts of people. How about killing animals for food, or plants for that matter. Is it ok? I would say yes, because it is meant that we live. But we must thank the animal or plant for giving its spirit so that it may live on in us. Do we do that? Do the mass killings at slaughter houses do that? No! But if we eat any meat we can still have reverence and thank the animal right then and there for giving it's spirit so that it may live on in us.

So how will this attitude of reverence affect you? It will affect not only you but the whole planet, for every reverential thought will help all. It is healing, for yourself and others to do this, because then life becomes "Good Medicine" or something that is healing for all, and the planet. Plants can feel and think, they are intelligent. Plants and herbs and food can bring a healing balanced quality to your life if viewed in the right manor. Think of how the world would change if we all were reverential to everything. This is true love, for reverence must come from the heart. Try this in your life. Don't expect it to take hold right away, because we are all conditioned in this fast paced society. Don't be hard on yourself for not remembering all the time, but give love to yourself when you do remember. Pretty soon it feels good getting all that love, and giving it too. This is what will change you, and the planet. This is what will change your heart and make it open instead of closed. Other people will pick up on it and be naturally attracted to your energy and it will rub off. They will think or feel, that here is a real person of the earth, someone who cares and loves. Blessings and reverence to you all.