

I am a Human Being!

an essay on
the four aspects of being human

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Introduction

“I am a human being.”

When I speak this statement, the first two words, “*I am*,” refer to an experience that is an utterly unique and individual one; one that is my own and not shared with any other human being on the planet. The second three words, ²² refer to an experience I DO share with every individual on the planet; past, present and future. What seems to be arising in our souls these days is a longing to know ourselves. But like the statement above, this is a two-part longing. To know myself I must know both my self (*I am*) and my humanity (a human being).

In this essay I will present an imagination that can help us to discern both our individual and collective humanity. I found this imagination of the human being when I discovered Waldorf Education 21 years ago. Rudolf Steiner based the curriculum and pedagogy of Waldorf on this imagination, or “picture.” Steiner’s image is the inspiration behind my writing, but the content that follows describes what I have come to know through my own inner work confirmed over and over again in my counselling practice. I can’t say I would have figured this out on my own without the teachings of Dr. Steiner but I do claim that what I write here is from my own experience. Rudolf Steiner put me on the path, told me what to look for and told me to make my own

observations. Please, do the same. Look into your own humanity, look into the humanity of those around you. See if you come to a similar imagination. Because being human is the most complex and profound experience in the Cosmos, you are truly beginning a magical mystery tour of infinite vistas and environments.

This essay is like a little compass that you would find in a box of candy. Use it, and see if it works for you, but don't believe what I say here on faith alone.

A compass points in four directions.

A human being has four bodies.

Each of us can say :

I am a physical being/body: *I have physical dimensions in space. I am 6' tall. I weigh 180 lbs. I have brown hair and brown eyes.*

I am a living being/body: *I have living biological rhythms and a biographical story in time. I am breathing. I am warm. I am my mother's daughter. I am 32 years old.*

I am a soul being/body: *I think, I feel, I will. I am hopeful. I am wondering what to do next. I am studying chemistry. I tell the truth.*

I am a spirit being: *I am un-nameable and forever. I am a miracle. I am fulfilling my destiny which is essential to world destiny.*

The physical and life realms are the two measurable realms of space and time making up our corporeal, material existence. The soul and spirit are the two immeasurable realms of relativity and eternity that make up our non-corporeal, nonmaterial existence. As substance, the human being moves from the density and opacity of our physical bones to the exquisitely rarefied and supersensible spiritual kernel of the Divine.

These four bodies relate to how individuality is experienced in the four kingdoms of Nature: mineral, plant, animal and human.

The human physical body correlates with the mineral kingdom. Rocks have their own individual material substance but no individual life, soul or spirit. The energy (a form of life force) found in minerals is a group energy that may intensify or diminish in various stones but it is not individualized.

The human life body correlates with the plant kingdom. A single plant has its own physical body and life forces but does not have its own soul or spirit. There is the group soul of all roses and the group spirit of all roses but neither are incarnated into an individual rose. The life energy of roses configures in unique ways in each flower which is why you can feel a difference between one rose and another.

The human soul body correlates with the animal kingdom. Animals, particularly in the “higher” animals, have a soul individuality. They have their own perceptions and reactions, make choices and take independent actions. But animals do not have an incarnated body of freedom, an individual “I.” Their thoughts, feelings and actions are ruled by the lawfulness of their life forces and their needs for survival. We are taught that human beings are part of the animal kingdom. This is not so. No animal bears its own “I” (not even your beloved, personality-filled, brilliant dog with its own complex and endearing

soul). The spirit body, the “I am” exists only in the human kingdom.

If we look solely at the corporeal body of physical form and life forces, as scientists do, ignoring the soul and spiritual forces, then we find only what is there, and can come to the conclusion, as they do, that human beings are merely highly developed animals. Our corporeal evidence indicates an evolutionary relationship to the physical and life bodies of animals. But if we also consider the non-corporeal realities of the soul and spirit, it becomes exquisitely evident that each human being has a selfhood and that selfhood has the power to act in freedom from instinct and the past, has the creative capacity to reshape its own body and soul, and has the power to redesign earthly substance through art and technology. It is only the human being that seeks metaphysical understanding. No animal says “who am I?” That question exists for humanity because, in the animal (or plant or mineral) there is no other “I” to identify with, no other “I” that refers to the same experience or being.

Each human being is, in a very real way, its own unique species – it is not incorrect to think that today there are almost 7 billion species of human being on the planet Earth! And it is the presence of the Divine, in each of us as spirit body, that sources the drive to self-develop, to express our freedom from the givens and laws of our biology and biography and become new to ourselves.

Each human being bears within her own being the experience of all the other kingdoms. Through our four bodies, we have available to us the archetypes of the entire created world. What follows is a brief and simple description of these bodies. Wonder at each of them. Find your own bodily wisdom and you will know yourself and know the world.

THE PHYSICAL BODY

I EMBODY.

This is the “I that is reflected in a mirror, captured by a camera, and leaves footprints in wet sand. This is the body we see, touch, measure and weigh. It has height, width, depth and density. The physical body is the body of limited dimensions. We find skin and membranes defining the limits of boundary and containment of ourselves in space. It gives us our own space to inhabit. No one else can dwell inside the boundaries of our physical body and our heart can not live inside our pancreas. The physical body is what remains of the individual after all the other bodies have gone. It is the corpus, or corpse. The physical body is pure matter and bears no life of its own. By itself, it is dead.

INCARNATION and MASTERY of the PHYSICAL BODY

At birth, we have our own physical body. We exist in space within our own limits. For the next seven years, or until about the change of teeth, our primary task is to master the experience of the physical body, to become self as an incarnated being in space. The other three bodies are not yet fully present as self-aware, self-expressive elements. The baby cannot sustain its own life nor can it think and articulate meaning, judgment or intention. Its life forces are

dependent on the care of others while it undertakes the extraordinary task of learning to master its own physical form in space through movement, balance and uprightness.

It is the uprightness of our physical form that is uniquely human. Our pelvis is shaped so that our natural stance is at a 90° angle to the earth we dwell upon. With our two feet planted firmly on the ground and our head in the clouds and our hands free to grasp and shape the world around us, we human beings take our natural stance in the world. All other animals have a natural stance that places their heads and their spines parallel to the earth. Animals do not stand up connecting the earth and the firmament. Animals bend, each in their own way, back towards the earth. It is the incarnation of the human soul which gives the human being the capacity to stand upright.

When we have developed our physical humanity to the miracle of independent upright, balanced movement, we then begin to master the physical expression of language. Soon we speak that word that no one else can speak with the same meaning. We say "I". This event usually occurs between 2-3 years of age. It is at that moment that we begin ever so slowly and delicately to incarnate our own life body with our own rhythms and our own memories.

Speaking "I" is an indication of the quickening or stirring of selfhood. But most of our learning about being human during this period of mastering our physical body comes about through imitation. We see and hear the world around us, and mimic the behaviors that we perceive enhance our relationship with those we feel so connected to and dependent upon...our primary caretakers. Usually, these caretakers are few in number and primarily share the same genetic pool; our family. We are wrapped in the sustaining life forces of

the family. The key here is that those who share the most space and time with us are the same people who we (unconsciously) imitate. We imitate gestures, movements and speech and conform to their demands, attitudes and views.

The evidence of individual mastery of the physical body is the change of teeth which occurs around the age of seven. Baby teeth are basically identical from one human being to another. The loss of the baby teeth and the emergence of our permanent and very individuated teeth is the sign that our own life body has incarnated and that the task of mastery has moved from the terrain of the physical body and into the fascinating complexity of developing and knowing our own biology and our own biography.

THE LIFE BODY

I LIVE.

I HAVE A LIFE.

What quickens the physical body?

Life!

The life body is the body that exists in time. Each of the trillions of physical forms in the human body pulses with the activity, transitions, and events of the life body. Like unformed matter lost in spacelessness, life without the intimate interweaving with physical containers would be lost in timelessness. Life and matter seek each other out, create functional forms, and dance together through space for a lifetime.

Life finds expression in two ways: biology and biography. We are alive and we have a life.

The life body is the body of biological laws. Health is the degree to which our life body maintains its lawfulness. If we push these laws beyond their limits, resist their dictates, we sicken and we die. Each of our organs resonates to a particular rhythm in time. Each group of dedicated cells, such as heart, liver, blood, bone, neuron and skin cells, has its own life span measured in days, weeks, months and years. Each cell is a physical body that is formed by the life body and then inhabited by life forces with a particular rhythm for a particular length of time. When those forces die, the cell disintegrates and passes out of the body. Birth, life, and death is the existence of every cell. All this rhythm of

the life body sings with the music of the spheres and bears a particular tone. When we are ill, we lack tone, are out of rhythm, and experience disharmony. We need a “tune up.”

We know the life body through rhythms, flows and movement as made evident in growth, duration and decay. The life body seeks well-being in both biology and biography. It longs for a steady rhythm, a constant flow and graceful movement. Life responds to alterations between light and dark, between fullness and emptiness. Dark and light is the relationship of earth and sun. Emptiness and fullness is the relationship of a vessel to void and substance. This is how we measure and judge our biological lifetime; through waking and sleeping, eating and drinking, sexuality and procreation. Our biographical lifetime of memories is judged in the intensity and configuration of the emotional reactions of anger, fear, sadness and happiness to our inner life, our outer life, our work, and our relationships. We sense life with smell, taste, hearing and temperature. We measure life in increments of time, degrees of temperature, and levels and duration of wellness and illness, pleasure and pain.

Where the physical body is solid, the life body is fluid and liquid. Vitality is mobility. In death we lose our fluidity and mobility, dry up and crumble back to dust. Life establishes form and processes. It communicates and reacts and resonates through a flow of energy pulses. We see this in the flow of our blood and the constant messaging of our neural system.

The life body is a body of storage, recording the functioning of the soul at any given moment. It stores the memories of our sense perceptions, emotions, thoughts, feelings and the deeds of our will. Any significant grouping of these memories becomes identified with life itself and becomes part of our biographical laws. As life seeks only to survive and reproduce, these groups of

thoughts, feelings and deeds of will demand both ongoing survival and reproduction. They become personal habits and prejudices and may be judged by the soul as either good or bad. Rigid identification in the life body is the natural source of all egotism, fundamentalism and chauvinism in our souls. Those who are like us in their thoughts, feelings and behaviors, are those we tend to identify with and deem worthy of life. The life body is the body that craves likeness and similarity. It feels threatened by difference and variance.

The life body is the source of our emotional life as experienced in the four basic emotions: anger, happiness, fear, and sadness. Emotions are a response to an energetic activity in our life body triggered by an event or a memory. We experience either pleasure or pain in particular areas of our bodies with each of these four basic emotions. (Moral feelings such as love, joy, grief, offense, and suffering are felt in the region of the heart.) Emotions weave together our biology and our biography.

Unlike the isolation and impenetrability of our physical body, our life body interacts with the life bodies of others. Our life body is a vibrating energy field and moves beyond the boundaries of the physical. When our biological, biographical and emotional vibrational rhythms resonate with others we feel instant and lasting sympathy. When they are dissonate, we feel instant and lasting antipathy. This is the conditional basis of selfish and unconscious affinities. (It is only when the spirit body penetrates the soul do we become capable of loving freely, responsibly and unconditionally.)

In order to survive and reproduce, the life body will devour its resources without restraint. It cares only about the present and past. It experiences the future as an extended or recreated past. When love comes from the drives of the life body, the love object becomes absorbed into the identification of self.

We love only what we desire to make our own when we love from our instincts. It is egotistical and possessive, and leads to domination and war.

The INCARNATION and MASTERY of the LIFE BODY

The life body incarnates and is mastered between the ages of seven and fourteen. The life body is fully present and mastered when a human being reaches puberty and has the ability to procreate itself.

As we begin to claim our own life body, we begin to want to go out into the world and learn what life is all about. It is time to get an education. We go to school and begin to interact for long periods of the day with the strange rhythms and forces beyond our biological and biographical families. We find identity, not through heredity and imitation, but through shared experiences. We begin to “choose” friends, which will simply be those whom we resonate with. During the first stages of mastering the life body, we are a bit like puppies, finding identity with groups. We want to play with others and explore the art of being social and harmonious with others. We are only slightly self-aware.

Halfway through this process we have a startling experience. We become aware of death and separateness. At around the age of nine and 1/3 years old, the human development of neural synapses reverses and instead of proliferating, begins to die back. At the same time the pineal gland begins to

shrink. The pineal gland is a small gland in the center of the brain and is the source of our circadian rhythms, the rhythms of the functions of our life body.. It produces melatonin which connects us to the rhythms of light and darkness. Melatonin also produces serotonin, the neurotransmitter that gives us the feeling of well-being and suppresses sexual development. When the pineal begins to shrink and produce less melatonin, the last great life rhythm process has come upon us – puberty, the rhythm of procreation, has begun. Life has met death in the synaptic shrinking and seeks to create new life in the shrinking of the pineal gland.

Needless to say, this event creates many changes both biologically and biographically. This is a sign that the life body has freed itself from dependence on the family and it is time to seek a deeper harmony with others in a selective and intimate way. This is when we begin to cultivate “best” friends and form cliques. And it is also when the opposite sex becomes at first strange and disgusting and then overpoweringly desirable. This change brings a new kind of laughter and a new kind of tears – they bear a self-consciousness that wasn’t really there before. (Laughter and tears have a special mirrored rhythm of their own. With laughter we have lots of short exhales with sudden large inhales of breath. Tears have the opposite rhythm – lots of short inhales and long sighing exhales.) Biographically, puberty begins a two-step dance of venturing out into the world and then retreating back into the hidden caves of our families. We likewise struggle to master all the similar ebbs and flows of our emotions.

More and more we are coming to realize that these life-shaping ebbs and flows are the ebbs and flows of our hormones and neurotransmitters. We don’t master these forces as much as we adapt to them with varying degrees of equanimity. What we can begin to master is our attention and our energies. It

helps, at this time, to be building a relationship to nature and to history – the world's biology and biography.

The life body has achieved its biological incarnating task when young girls reach menarche and voices of young men have deepened. Archetypally, this occurs by the age of fourteen.

Now the young soul body begins to take hold of us and shape us as thinkers, feelers and doers through growing independence and idealism.

THE SOUL BODY

I THINK.

I FEEL.

I WILL.

A unique life has no conscious experience of itself. It needs an independent, picture-forming observer to read the signals of life. This observer is the soul body. It is through the function of the soul that we get a sense of self. The sense of self related to physical life and related to the eternal and the divine dwells in the soul. The soul experiences itself and all else through the activities of thinking, feeling and willing. This is the body that consciously creates and knows (through thoughts, feelings and intention) codependence, interdependence, and independence with itself, with other bodies, and with the natural and spiritual worlds. The soul expresses relationship to all. It is the body of relativity.

The corporeal body is limited by the three spatial dimensions and the life body by the linear flow of time from birth to death. These bodies obey the laws of space and time, respectively. The soul is not bound by the laws of space and time. In the soul all things become relative. The soul can experience past, present and future in any order. The soul can experience itself in many places it has never been and alter any place in any way. Thoughts, feelings and will are independent of laws and limits until they become sense perceptible and interact with space and time. Then they must deal with the realities of the life and physical bodies. This creates an ongoing mind/body dance or struggle. It is very challenging to do things differently, see in a new way and recognize oneself

in a harmonious balance. It is much easier to remain on familiar territory.

The soul is the canvas on which we find ever changing pictures or images. But who is the artist? Often our thoughts, feelings and intentions are confused, distorted or automatic. Something dark and demanding seems to take hold of our souls. These darker pictures are usually caused by the disturbances, imbalances and traumas imbedded in our life bodies as disease in our biology or as disturbing memories in our biography. But the artist can also be our Spirit body, painting pictures with truth, beauty, harmony and goodness.

With the presence of the “I Am” we experience the new. We create and not just recreate. We imagine, inspire and intuit. The soul can move beyond identification towards independence and freedom. The soul can begin to love without possessing or dominating as it finds new resources and wholeness in the spirit body. Through scientific investigation we have come to know the limits and laws of space and time, the laws of all physical living bodies. But the soul we barely grasp with any understanding whatsoever. We call our knowledge of the soul “psychology” but modern psychology is a jumble of competing theories, all of which “grasp” at the soul’s changeable qualities like so much smoke. The soul is indeed difficult to grasp as it cannot be observed nor measured with a standard that is known and shared by many. It is not sense perceptible in any lasting or consistent way. We may gaze at another in such a way that we sense their soul or we may hear something in their voice, but we can not describe our perception to another in the way we describe the shape of a nose or the process of digestion or the events of a lifetime. As the soul engages the life body in order to receive impressions and give expressions, the life body mirrors its activity in many processes, primarily the neurological. But these are merely mirrorings or imprints of the soul, just like our footprint in the sand is

not our foot, just the evidence of our presence.

The soul receives impressions, forms mental images or thoughts, places value through feeling, and activates the giving of expression to an individual's humanity through word and deed. The impressions come from the outer life, all that exists outside our bodies in space and time; all that is within our bodies as weight, biology, biography, emotion, thought thoughts, felt feelings, willed willings and all that permeates us from the spirit. Our soul self-measures in its relationship to personal truth, personal harmony and personal morality or goodness. The soul battles with evil every moment of life. It struggles with the instinctual desires of the life body to seek only personal survival and personal pleasure determined by personal dogma or beliefs and personal laws. It struggles with the needs to be selfish and be unselfish, anti-social and social. The soul longs to receive and give freedom and love from and to all humankind. The soul has unlimited capacity to grow and develop through its relationship with the spirit body. Yet it can decay and rot like the physical-life body if it neglects or denies the spirit.

The INCARNATION and MASTERY of the SOUL BODY

The soul body incarnates and becomes evident in the development of independence of thinking, feeling and willing. We acknowledge this as the "coming of age." This independence evolves between the years of 14 and 21.

In the middle of the 19th year, the moon is again at the same point in the

starry sky as it was at the moment of birth. Just as the small child says “I” for the first time, and the pre-teen meets a new sense of isolation in her self-awareness as puberty begins, the youth of 18 experiences the drive to enter into the world through deed. “What am I going to do in the world?” is the question. “How am I going to be?” They then begin to take on the world through leaving home and going to college or getting a job leading to complete independence from family and childhood. This anticipates the incarnation of the “I AM” into the soul that occurs at 21.

Mastery of the soul is a threefold accomplishment and requires focus, attention and practice. Most of us are all too familiar with the frustration of not being able to control our thoughts, feelings or intentions. We often find our soul life mysterious and unpredictable over the course of our lives. The mastery of the soul is the formation of ideals and the sense that ideals are only achieved by striving and struggling every day of the rest of our lives.

Ideally, by 21, we come to distinguish and take responsibility for our own thoughts, our own feelings and our own actions. We come to comprehend and evaluate the thoughts, feelings and actions of others. We commit to the lifelong process and challenge of personal and moral development. We relate with objectivity and interest to nature, art, science, religion. We are able to persevere in the face of threat, distraction or boredom. We can be open to and tolerant of that which differs from or denies our own experience. We give and receive help and solace. We can converse. We can create, sustain, destroy and grieve. We can question and puzzle. We can lust, love and revere and know the difference.

Rudolf Steiner offered six basic exercises for the mastery and development of our souls. I have attached my understanding of these exercises at the end of this essay.

THE SPIRIT BODY

“I AM”

The Spirit is the holy of holies. It is the eternal and absolute, it knows not life or death, only that it is. It does not relate to all things because it is all things and no thing. It is the breath of God that breathes into the incarnated human being the experience of individuality, the “I Am.”

This “I Am” is the experience of freedom. The independence of the soul is not freedom because the independence of the soul is always in relation to something else. Freedom has no relationship. In this freedom from the physical, the life of biology and biography, the struggles with evil, and the strivings for truth, beauty and goodness, the “I Am” is present in the human being. Through this presence, the individual becomes universal and the universal becomes individual. But the Spirit Body needs the other bodies to be fully human. Otherwise it would be neither human nor angel.

The Spirit body incarnates beginning at 21 and incarnates more deeply as we mature. We find this “I Am” in moments of destiny and transcendence. In moments when “time stands still” and biology and biography resonate with the universe, the “I Am” is the author. The “I Am” provides moral Imaginations, Inspirations and Intuitions to guide and liberate our souls’ impressions and expressions. When I am doing that which only I can do, “I Am.” When I face my own suffering and recognize the meaning and necessity of it as a fulfillment of my destiny, “I Am.” When I think a thought that rings true, that echoes deep universal wisdom, “I Am.” When I overcome fear, doubt and hatred, “I Am.” When I experience my selfhood dwelling in my heart and not my head, “I Am.”

Often these “I Am” awarenesses are only brief moments. The more we begin to know ourselves beyond our ordinary lives with objective compassion, and the more we work to harmonize our life and soul bodies, then the more we come to experience inner freedom and a lasting sense of “I Am.” This is a lifelong journey. There are many wisdom paths to seek and travel. There are many questions to ask and very few answers. Often the journey takes us into long stretches of complete darkness. The “I Am” is the guide, telling you to take small steps and listen silently.

The Spirit comes upon us and does not incarnate, but illuminates. It is not mastered, but masters.

If you want to know your Spirit, your I Am, look for and know the I Am in your fellow human beings. Our Spirit is what gives us the capacity to see the divinity in the heart of another.

THE FOUR-FOLD HUMAN BEING

BODY A gathering and holding of substance into unique functional form	SUBSTANCE The components and evidence of each body	INCARNATION AND MASTERY The process of human development	RESPONSE Relationship to environment and inner reality	REALM OF EXPERIENCE
PHYSICAL <i>I embody.</i>	Matter. The corpse, or earthly remains after death	Birth to 7 years old	Imitation of caregivers. Inherited physical and energetic patterns	Space, as purely demonstrated by minerals.
LIFE <i>I live.</i> <i>I have a life.</i>	Biology Biography Emotions	7 to 14 years old	Identification with self and others – best friends and cliques. Inherited energy patterns and ethnic environment	Time, as purely demonstrated by the cycle of living and dying in plants.
SOUL <i>I think.</i> <i>I feel.</i> <i>I will.</i>	Instinct influenced by Life body and Ideals influenced by Spirit as expressed in Thinking, Feeling, and Willing	14 to 21 years old	Independence from identity group. A growing sense of personal thoughts and needs as source of perspective and behavior, evolving energy patterns	Relativity, as demonstrated by the complexity and independence of animals
SPIRIT <i>I Am.</i>	Kernel of the Divine experienced in Freedom & Love	21 years old to death	Individuality and Selfhood consciousness beyond all influences and patterns.	Eternal. Absolute. The purely human experience that neither space, time nor complex relativity is the actual reality of self existence.

SIX BASIC EXERCISES for INNER STRENGTH

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There are six very simple, but not easy, exercises you can practice to strengthen your ability to feel, think and will under any circumstances. These exercises work! They are a path to overcoming reactive, instinctual and chaotic response to both ordinary and extraordinary perceptions.

Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925, founder of Waldorf Education and spiritual scientist) offered these exercises to his students and followers who wished “to know higher worlds.” Though he gave them as a path to spiritual development, they are also invaluable in strengthening our soul’s ability to maintain objectivity, interest and observation regarding the difficulties of everyday living and the sudden chaos of natural, accidental and intentional tragedy and violence.

With this workout of your inner soul functions of thinking, feeling and willing, your capacity for maintaining your inner organization will be very strong. Though circumstances may occur that alter the world around you, the world within you will remain familiar and effective. Like a kaleidoscope being twisted and turned, your sense of self will always maintain blessed organization.

It is best to do one exercise every day for a month. The exercise takes only five minutes. Choose a time of day and a place that offers little distraction or interference. When you have completed all six exercises you can continue to practice them either in alternation or all six everyday.

Control of Thoughts – Find a simple man-made object – a paperclip, a key, a spoon, a pencil, a toothbrush, etc. Begin to think about this object – its components, its history, its manufacture, its purpose, etc. Be very direct with your thoughts. You will be surprised by all the thoughts you can experience regarding a simple everyday object. Breakdown each distinction until you have considered all aspects in great detail. Work with the same object for at least one week ... or you can work with the same object for an entire month if you wish.

Avoid memory. On each new day do not go into memory for the thoughts you had the day before. Think each thought anew. (This may sound impossible but it is important and not so difficult. This is not a memory exercise. It is a thinking exercise.) Pencils are not very exciting objects for thought, just like a treadmill is not a very engaging walk. When you have practiced this exercise successfully you will have tremendous strength in your thinking. Your cognitive organization will be stable and you will be able to attend to a thought process of serious complexity without losing your direction.

Control of Will – Will is the soul force that takes the intention to act into action. Pick an absolutely meaningless activity – e.g. Remove your glasses and place them across the room, walk back to where you originally were, again cross the room, put your glasses back on and return to your original activity; or line up all your pens vertically, now make a star with all your pens, put them back in a line; or open the refrigerator, take out all the foodstuffs that are in jars, unscrew the tops, screw them back on, put them back in the refrigerator; or take your watch off one arm and put it on the other, then put it back on the first arm. The activity you select must have no significance and seem like a ridiculous waste of effort. Moreover, it must be done at the same time every

day – an odd time like 7:28AM. Try to accomplish your activity on time without checking a watch or clock until after the activity.. After a week or ten days, you can change your activity. Performing this activity daily gives you the strength of will to carry out any deed in spite of all difficulties and challenges.

Control of Feeling – Pick a time and for five minutes observe your emotions. Consider the four basic emotions – anger, fear, sadness and happiness. Note that you have emotions about your emotions. You may be angry that you are afraid, or afraid of being sad or even sad that you are happy. Ideally pick a significant event that occurred during the day and reflect on your fear, anger, sadness and happiness associated with the event. We all feel all four emotions at all times – it is just that one or two will dominate your feeling life and suppress the others. Feel each emotion with clarity. Another exercise, which may take more time, is to recall a favorite fairytale or childhood story and use your imagination to write a description of the central character’s four emotions at the climactic moment of the story.

When you can observe the flow of all our emotions in every moment, you will no longer get emotionally lost in chaotic and imbalanced feelings. Nor will you suffer with a flat emotionless feeling life. Your thoughts and your deeds will no longer be colored by your emotions in unconscious ways. You will feel a more active centering in your feelings. You will develop an inner equanimity of emotions. You will have a richly composed emotional life.

Development of Tolerance – It is the role of the heart in our feeling life to keep us free of the rejection, disinterest and neglect of all that offends us. Instead of living in the isolation and narrowness of intolerance, we will always be seeking the good, the beautiful and the true or the positive element in all

that comes to us. In people and in circumstances there is always a mix of the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the true and the false to which we respond with our own variations of judgment. In spiritual realms, researchers will find many disturbing perceptions that require great presence of self. It is vital to inner development to attend to the positive (and the negative) in all things before we react.

One easy activity that strengthens tolerance is to read a magazine, listen to a popular song or watch a television program that you prejudge as meaningless, beneath you, dreadful or corrupt. Look through and beyond your negative perceptions to find even the tiniest reflection of goodness, beauty or truth. Then do this exercise with a person who has offended you to some degree. Look into the person's soul or biography and find the core and worthy value living in their thinking, behavior or sense of style.

In fulfilling this exercise you will find yourself waking up your heart forces in your feeling life – the forces of real love. The cold intellect of our heads is quickly one-sided, prejudiced and intolerant; never, the wise heart.

Development of Perseverance – It is the role of the heart forces in our will to keep us persevering in spite of difficulties, obstacles and resistance. It is not simply will power or an over-developed sense of duty; it is the freely given devotion of the loving heart. The challenges to perseverance may come from within your body or soul, or they may come from external circumstances or demands. This is not about gritting your teeth (although you may do that too.). It is about fiercely loving the deed you have taken up. It is overcoming all challenges to the completion or resolution of your intention.

. The value of the exercise is enhanced if you choose a deed that is not

profoundly compelling to you. What is important here is the perseverance, not the completed result. You might decide to write and illustrate a 30-day journal or memorize a poem a day or perhaps knit a square everyday for an afghan to give away.

Perseverance is about committed rhythm - steady, consistent effort regardless of any change in your life. This is the drumbeat of your heart living in your life of actions.

Development of Openness – If you open your heart/mind, you will find wonder and innovation in your thinking. Imagine thinking just one new thought based on a new perception everyday day. How many thoughts have you thought today that are mere repetitions (perhaps, with a slight variation) of thoughts you have been thinking your entire adult life? How many thoughts are original to you? If you see the value of new thoughts to your life, you must begin with seeing your everyday world in new ways. You will seek out the subtle discoveries of the rare in the commonplace. Always be deepening and expanding your perceptions of all that surrounds you. When you make your morning coffee, attend to the nuances of aroma. Study the way the milk changes the coffee's color. Study the shadows your desk lamp creates. Just listen to the percussion rhythms in a piece of music. Look at and consider the differences of the ears of everyone you talk to during the course of the day. Don't laugh. You are growing your capacity for receiving all there is.

Opening your perceptions of your world will enliven your thoughts. The more you receive the more you will give in your thoughts. You are taking more in. You have observed your world in a far more nuanced way. This opening of your perceptions nurtures an active innocence in your thinking that reading new

ideas in books cannot do. You want to be like a little child meeting the material world – loving the vast possibilities of creation. Your thinking will open to a growing cognitive freedom and ability.

With the practice of these six exercises, every aspect of your outer and inner lives becomes richly alive. You will find your ability to be responsive and responsible to yourself and all you interact with greatly enhanced in a calm and balanced way. Also, your spiritual life will grow. Actively working with developing your thinking, feeling and willing – your soul functions – awakens your soul to spiritual realities and spiritual capacities. Integrating spirit and matter within your sense of self is profoundly challenging. These exercises, in their difficult simplicity, will give you new strength and new confidence for this individual task.

You can find many books based on spiritual research at www.Steinerbooks.org

I recommend

STAIRWAY OF SURPRISE by Michael Lipson

HOW TO KNOW HIGHER WORLDS by Rudolf Steiner

ESOTERIC SCIENCE: AN OUTLINE by Rudolf Steiner

START NOW! A book of soul and spiritual exercises by Rudolf Steiner

THE SEER'S HANDBOOK by Dennis Klocek

FROM NORMAL TO HEALTHY by Georg Kuhlewind