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The journey

The only journey is the one within.

Rainer Maria Rilke¹

Georgianna still doesn't understand the concept of parallel lines. It seems all you do is ask her over and over again to see whether she comprehends what you are teaching. Most often she doesn't. You're both frustrated.

You close your eyes. You pause; quiet your mind and emotions. You ask yourself, your inner teacher, what you can do. You walk among your students, waiting for an answer. You take a deep breath and the frustration starts to melt away. You sit up straight. Your facial expression shifts from tension to anticipation. You approach Georgianna.

She wears a sad expression, assuming you'll ask her the same question again. Parallel lines. Instead you whisper, "You almost have it. Look at the top and bottom line of your paper." You ask her to take both of her index fingers and follow the lines from left to right. As she does, a smile appears. You taught with Spirit.

Challenge

Is this scenario idyllic? Can you find peace and satisfaction in a sea of teaching demands and responsibilities? According to a study on teacher efficacy, the job is stressful: "It is an established fact that the performance of a teacher mainly depends upon his psychological state of mind. As occupational stress affects the physical and psychological well-being of the teacher, it definitely influences teaching effectiveness and performance of the teacher.... In order to teach effectively, teachers must not only feel psychologically and emotionally comfortable, but they must also have some sense of belief that they can make a difference to the lives of the children they are teaching."²

Regarding teaching: answer *Yes* or *No*

Do you believe you make a difference? _____

Are you satisfied and rewarded with your teaching experience? _____

Is it as rewarding as you hoped it would be? _____

Are the sweet spots of teaching, when your students “get it” or love the lesson, too few and far between? _____

Do the paperwork, the duties and requirements inhibit your flow of creativity? _____

Are you focused more on negatives than positives? _____

Do you find the students irritating? _____

Do you teach with Spirit? _____

Things can change – more easily than you may think! It is challenging to transform your teaching experience from mundane to spiritual. The greater your commitment to the challenges, the greater is your transformation. Think about the greatest accomplishments in your life. Was it graduation, becoming a parent, running a marathon?

Name one of your accomplishments

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There are common elements in achieving our goals. The first is the challenge. You want to attain it so intensely that you step outside your comfort zone. You change your perspective, embrace new experiences and work hard – almost to the point of giving up. You challenge yourself, and you meet the challenge!

Meeting challenges takes courage. Richelle E. Goodrich explains, “Courage to me is doing something daring, no matter how afraid, insecure, intimidated, alone, unworthy, incapable, ridiculed or whatever other paralyzing emotion you might feel. Courage is taking action... no matter what. So you’re afraid? Be afraid. Be scared silly to the point you’re trembling and nauseous, but do it anyway!”³

You’ve already met challenges. Are you willing to meet the most important one of your teaching career? Why now? Why not now? I believe

the timing of everything is divine and the present moment is all we have. The rest is just a reflection or a dream.

Do you agree? _____

Why or why not?

The timing of our difficult challenges is often inconvenient. But we can use those inconveniences as opportunities rather than as excuses or obstacles. “Don’t wait until everything is right. It will never be perfect. There will always be challenges, obstacles and less than perfect conditions. So what. Get started now,” advises Mark Victor Hansen.⁴

Describe a challenge in the past that you tried to avoid:

All important work requires challenges. Some are uncomfortable or confrontational, while others seem impossible – but no individual or societal change happens without it. Martin Luther King said, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”⁵

In the journey to embrace Spirit, you will discover your true self. It’s exciting, beneficial and enlightening! *The Secret Spiritual World of Children* explains:

*“The task of spiritual development is often described as expanding our awareness in order to meet our true selves.”*⁶

Parker J. Palmer describes the importance of taking on this challenge: “We need to open a new frontier in our exploration of good teaching: the inner landscape of the teacher’s life. To chart that landscape fully, three

important paths must be taken – intellectual, emotional and spiritual – and none can be ignored.”⁷

Enthusiastically receiving the prompts and information in this guide is a step towards looking inward to embrace the spiritual.

The transformative result to teaching with Spirit is that grand! If you are ready and willing, read on.

Commitment

Your challenge is: Teach with Spirit.

Do whatever it takes to listen within and act on the wisdom you receive. Fully embrace what you define as Spirit. Consciously allow each thought, word and action to be led by Spirit. Reject mediocrity in your teaching and demand that you experience miraculous synchronistic moments every precious moment. Make positive changes in your life. It will automatically change all those around you as you teach with Spirit.

Read the challenge again. Let the words sink into your head and heart. Does the challenge promise you the shift you want? Feel the words; pause on each word’s meaning. This is a serious challenge. When we respond to a spiritual challenge, something unexpected is achieved. Profound changes may result.

Warning! Acceptance of this challenge may push you outside your comfort zone, illuminate your spiritual beliefs, and cause inward reflection. Your life experience will change. Do not accept this challenge if you wish to stay the same.

It’s commitment time. After much reflection, what is your decision? If you wish to teach with Spirit, sign below:

I, _____, accept the challenge to **teach with Spirit**. I seek Spirit to guide me in each thought, word and action. I listen to my inner teacher with humility and gratefulness, knowing truth is revealed. I follow that truth. I am the embodiment of Spirit. My calling to teach is sacred. Thank you for calling me.

Write out this commitment in your own words:

Yay! You have achieved the first step to teaching with Spirit – that of accepting the challenge. The preparation process has begun. Maria Montessori explains:

“The real preparation for education is the study of one’s self. The training of the teacher is something more than learning ideas. It includes the training of character; it is a preparation of the spirit.” ⁸

Transformation

Accepting the challenge to teach with Spirit will transform you. Transformation is a dramatic, positive change in appearance or form. Your physical appearance won’t necessarily change because the transformation will happen within you, though some may recognize a difference in how you look, and especially in how you respond – your whole attitude toward life. They may observe a stillness around you; a peacefulness and serenity.

Your willingness to allow Spirit to guide every thought, word and action will allow you to feel the consistent presence of Spirit. You’ll be connected to Spirit and guided in your actions. When your anxiety and stress levels diminish, joy and fulfillment will increase. Instead of having your efforts change one student, one class, one school, you’ll begin to realize that there’s something much larger at work here: you are changing the world one student at a time!

Marianne Williamson tells us, “Personal transformation can and does have global effects. As we go, so goes the world, for the world is us. The revolution that will save the world is ultimately a personal one.”⁹

Some examples of personal transformation are:

A committed single...falls in love and gets married

A successful corporate executive...quits and enters a service role

An overweight person...begins eating healthily and loses weight

List three examples of your own personal transformation:

_____ transformed to:

_____ transformed to:

_____ transformed to:

Professional Certified Coach Amara Rose challenges us to follow the quest to discover and live our truth – a sacred pilgrimage home to ourselves. Her transformational roadmap includes ten steps, expanded here with a personal illustration.

Step One - Give yourself permission to be passionate

Change whispers in our ear.

I was managing a fitness salon and kept thinking about becoming a teacher, but I didn't like the pay, the disciplining of students or the paperwork. However, I found myself listening to teachers' stories as I guided their exercises. I sought out information from teachers rather than overhearing it. My passion was ignited.

Step Two - Say the first farewell

The familiar starts to seem strange.

I declined the district management position and shifted to part-time and went back to school.

Step Three - Enter the void

It's okay to not know what happens next.

I was insecure, alone and lost as I entered back into the college world. It was foreign to me.

Step Four - Enlarge the lens

Marcel Proust said, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

One of my first classes, Education Philosophy, opened my eyes to the bigger purpose of education. I was consumed by the works of Bloom, Piaget and Maslow.

Step Five - Bless the fear

Fear is normal. It's even valuable.

My recent high school experience left me insecure about my academic ability. I feared I would fail. I moved forward into the fear. I graduated Summa Cum Laude.

Step Six - Do the work

Goethe said, "Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."

I didn't know how to write papers. Frustrated and struggling, I had my boyfriend help me. Once I succeeded, I was rolling.

Step Seven - Take the tests

To own your power, you must be willing to scrape your psyche on the rocky road inland.

I stepped into my first teacher prep classroom. It reminded me of the first time I babysat and the parents left. I was alone and responsible for these children. Eek! I moved through the fear, and I made it.

Step Eight - Humor yourself

Let yourself feel the joy, the light, the love inside your being.

I began laughing with and at the children and myself. It was fun!

Step Nine - Be grateful

We're always looking in the mirror. If we don't like what we see, we can blame the mirror, or look within.

The classroom became familiar. Interactions with students became second nature. My heart filled. I was at home. I was thankful.

Step Ten - Be the change

Gandhi said, "You must be the change you wish to see." It's a lifelong process of self-actualization.¹⁰

I left the fitness salon and began teaching full time.

Although many originating points and end points of a personal transformation are the same, the experience is always different. Your experience will be personal and unique. Steps may blend together or differ. The steps are guideposts. The journey is what matters.

The Teach with Spirit journey

We've heard of IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and perhaps EQ (Emotional Quotient). Now let's look at SQ (Spiritual Quotient). Spiritual Capital can generate profit that both draws on and adds to the wealth of our human spirit and general human well-being. The book *Spiritual Capital* explains there are twelve qualities associated with a person who has spiritual intelligence.

Rate the level of quality within yourself, 1–4

4 = very strong (36-48);

3 = strong (25-35)

2 = weak (13-24)

1 = very weak (1-12)

Self-awareness: To know what I believe in and value and what motivates me.

Awareness of my deepest life's purpose. _____

Spontaneity: To live in and be responsive in the moment. _____

Being led by vision and value: Living a life based on my principles and beliefs. _____

Holism (a sense of the system of connectivity): Ability to see larger patterns, relationships, connections; a strong sense of belonging. _____

Compassion: Quality of “feeling with” and deep empathy. _____

Celebration of diversity: Valuing other people and unfamiliar situations for their differences. _____

Field independence: To be able to stand against the crowd and maintain my own convictions. _____

Tendency to ask fundamental questions: Need to understand things, to get to the bottom of them, to understand why something happens. _____

Ability to reframe: Stand back from the problem or situation and take in the bigger picture. _____

Resilience: Ability to own and learn from mistakes, to see problems as opportunities. Positive use of diversity. _____

Humility: Sense of being a player in a larger drama, sense of my place in the world in relationship to others; basis for self-criticism and critical judgment. _____

Sense of vocation: Being “called” to serve something larger than myself. Gratitude toward those who have helped me and a wish to give something back. Basis for servant leader. _____ ¹¹

What is your overall rating or SQ?

_____ very strong

_____ strong

_____ weak

_____ very weak

Seek to raise your level of SQ as you embrace the teachings in this guide. How do we do this? By going down the list, increasing our self-awareness, noting when we exhibit these qualities or fall short. Listen and work within yourself using gentle prompts to become a better human being.

During your **Teach with Spirit** personal journey, you can share notes on the steps of your transformation here. Come back and visit these steps to reflect on and record your changes.

Step One - Give yourself permission to be passionate:

Step Two - Say the first farewell:

S t e p T h r e e - E n t e r t h e v o i d :

S t e p F o u r - E n l a r g e t h e l e n s :

S t e p F i v e - B l e s s t h e f e a r :

S t e p S i x - D o t h e w o r k :

S t e p S e v e n - T a k e t h e t e s t :

S t e p E i g h t - H u m o r y o u r s e l f :

Step Nine - Be grateful:

Step Ten - Be the change:

You've accepted the challenge, you are aware of the guideposts along the way. When the transformation is complete, you will meet yourself and "Know Thyself," as Socrates said. "The task of spiritual development is regularly described as expanding our awareness in order to meet more of who we really are," Tobin Hart tells us.¹²

Let the magic, fun and wonder of infusing Spirit into your teaching continue...

The Journey

There is a life force within your soul.

Seek that life.

There is a gem in the mountain of your body.

Seek that mine.

O traveler, if you are in search of that,

don't look outside,

seek inside yourself

and seek that.

Rumi¹³

Aha! s [[[[[[[[[[
