

Principles of Integral Spiritual Practice: Being and Becoming a Practitioner

Taking Full Responsibility

I choose to presume:

- That I, like almost everyone, tend to contract and identify with my separate sense of self, and that this chronic perspective, more fundamentally than anything else, is the root of my suffering.
- That this occurs on an extremely subtle level, so it takes sustained practice to become sensitive to this habitual activity and allow it to relax.
- That feeling like a victim is usually based on distorted perceptions, and, in any case, presumes that I'm powerless.
- That even though there are victims who deserve compassion, I almost always have better options than the attitude of victimhood.
- That I renounce blame and victimhood, and take 100% responsibility for my experience.

Connection with Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Freedom & Love

I will live based on the intuition:

- That in the big picture, no matter how difficult my life might be, the universe is essentially and ultimately friendly, good and beautiful, and that it is always appropriate to be in touch with that, and to deeply appreciate and enjoy it.
- That I am connected to and nurtured by the mysterious nature and source of life and evolution, which is essentially loving and graceful.
- That I can choose to serve this mysterious goodness, and that what I choose and how I act really do matter.
- That although despair is understandable and deserves compassion, hope, or at least a positive orientation, is not only healthier and more realistic, it is, for me, a moral imperative.

Commitment to Transformation

I will fully engage:

- The school of life, as a lifelong learner, growing in awareness, in compassion, and in the ability to be fully present and alive.
- My daily practice—my chosen “form” during this course.
- A whole life of practice, with new opportunities every morning and every moment.
- This community of practice, and all my practice communities, knowing that what I receive will be strongly influenced by what I give.

Intention to Live with Integrity

I choose to:

- Align my life with truth, goodness, and beauty.
- Be truthful with myself and others as much as possible.
- Face and observe the gaps where I don’t “walk my talk,” and work, with sincerity and a healthy dose of humor, to close those gaps.
- Continually refine my ethical sensibilities, thus “raising the bar”, so that I’m always living in the gap, experiencing the creative tension of not-fully fulfilled aspirations.
- Honor the ordeal of living in this gap as a transformative riddle, or koan, that will change me profoundly whenever and to whatever degree I take it seriously.

A Willingness to Go Deep

I will keep developing the ability to:

- Practice and participate in this course sincerely, at the deepest level I can.

- Listen intelligently and profoundly to myself, others, and life itself.
- Attune to my highest intuitions, and bring those courageously into my communications and actions.
- Face my feelings, including so called “negative” ones, with courage and wholehearted self-compassion.
- Resonate with and respond to the depth expressed by others, thus amplifying and enriching our interpersonal space.

Stretching Beyond Perceived Limits

I am willing to:

- Presume that I have higher potentials I haven't yet actualized.
- Go beyond habitual patterns of avoidance and self-consolation and that dull my aliveness.
- Step out of my comfort zone and relate to my discomfort with both firm resolve and compassion.
- Take intelligent risks and creatively experiment, using life's feedback, to become a more creative, wise and vibrant practitioner.

Making Realistic Commitments

I understand that:

- A life of integral spiritual practice is essentially happy and enjoyable, so I'll tune into how my practice can ease and brighten my heart and my world.
- Making ambitious, but ultimately unsustainable, commitments often invites an energetic “backlash,” exhausting me and reducing my energy for future and long-term practice.
- The life of practice is a marathon, not a sprint, so I intend to pace myself for the long haul.

- I can strive to make significant and courageous, but realistic and sustainable changes, stabilize them, and then go further.
- An integral spiritual practice is not fixed, but evolves, so I'm willing to continually adjust and refine my practice over time, as appropriate.

Gracefully Accepting and Working with Karma

I appreciate that in each moment:

- Comparing myself to others leads to unhealthy confusion, separation, envy, pride, or resentment.
- To play my hand well, I must simply forgive and accept the cards I hold, instead of obsessing or fixating on the ones I simply don't have or have let get away.
- Sometimes the most beautiful and profound works of art, and the most celebrated accomplishments, are created with minimal resources and maximal restrictions—so I will use the limitations of my circumstances as an inspiration and creative opportunity.
- I have control only over my choices and actions, so I will cherish my opportunities and strive to make good choices.
- Life's gifts and blessings might arrive in deep disguise, and can even remain hidden for a long time.
- The "good cards in my hand" are a precious gift and opportunity, and my best expression of gratitude is to "use them well"—and generously.

Protecting and Honoring the "We-Space"

I agree to:

- Relate to my participation in our Course, including our online forums, **as** opportunities for practice.

- Do my best to uplift others, to affect them positively by being a source of sincerity, authenticity, compassion, intelligence, awareness, and joy.
- If I ever feel hurt, offended, or misunderstood, to resolve it quickly by “speaking my truth” sensitively, yet directly, so that I am clearing the air instead of holding or enacting resentments.
- Accept and use constructive feedback, striving to genuinely listen to it and take it to heart, and work to resolve any issues that arise relating to my speech or behavior.
- Intend to live as a source of strength, clarity and love in the way I relate to others, including other practitioners in this community.

Embracing One’s Humanity *and* Divinity.

I intend to compassionately accept and embrace:

- My whole self and my whole experience, even and especially the imperfect parts I tend to dislike and reject.
- My unwanted aspects (even while I continue to work to grow beyond those I can outgrow), knowing that my self-division only binds my energy and that “what I resist persists.”
- My own goodness, excellence, beauty, greatness, genius, and even heroism—appreciating that it is just as important to accept my highest potentials as my lower ones.
- The wondrous, amazing spiritual nature of all existence, as it shows itself in everything, everyone, and in myself.

Enjoying Oneself—Profoundly

I intend to open always and experience joy:

- In my breath—in the opportunity to feel and enjoy every breath and every perception
- In my body—in the full spectrum of my whole physical, subtle, and causal bodies.

- In nature, in art, and in other human beings and life forms, all of which are beautiful gifts to be cherished.
- In education, understanding and the whole multidimensional “life of the mind”.
- In all my relations—to whoever is in front of me in the next moment, to the people and animals dearest to me, to those who inspire or delight or educate or amuse me.
- In the Mystery of Existence, in ever-present Consciousness, and in the very Energy of Life itself.
- In my capacity to love others, to be creative, and to serve other people and creatures, institutions, life, the world, and the evolution of consciousness and culture.