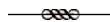


STAGE TEN
PEACE WITH MYSELF



**Now I can inspire others to find personal peace
because my life is unified.**

How We Think

*“We can love being women because it includes what we love most about ourselves.
Finally, we are the brides of whatever we love.”*

We have been developing spirituality at every stage of our **resocialization**. As we regain our sense of self, we also regain inclusion in the world, and indeed the universe. We take our place in the circle of life. Spirituality walks with peace. Once we make peace with the conflicts of our personal history, we gain a new sense of respect for our lives. Spirituality is developing a relationship with ourselves primarily, and with the world in which we live. We can never truly separate these two components of spirituality because to do so would invalidate the “oneness” it implies.

Spirituality is living life from the inside out. It is our strengthened disposition that helps us focus on our beliefs, our feelings, and our needs; the things which comprise our inner truth. It gives us the courage to respect our emotions and fantasies, however objectionable they may seem to others. We grow to trust the constant unfolding of our ultimate truth. Spirituality awakens our “sleeping” Self by giving us the ability to visualize what our life could become and the courage to go for it. Spirituality is not a way of being released from the troubles and pain of our lives; it invites us to embrace them. It is not concerned with being perfect or living perfectly, it is an invitation to enjoy our humanness. Spirituality gives us depth to be grounded in our own reality, even when we’re uncertain.

How do we know when we have developed a spiritual life? We have a spiritual life when love becomes more important than winning. We know we are spiritually in tune when we feel attached to the world, and the people around us, and when matters of the heart are truly an expression of our core. We know we have developed spirituality when we feel pleasures passionately and experience our pain patiently; when we can free ourselves from the complexities and confusions that once paralyzed us. We know we are spiritual when we are

empathic, when compassion takes the place of ignorance, distrust, and fear. We know we are spiritual when we appreciate the richness of culture and utilize the diversity it offers to expand our consciousness. Differences become opportunities for learning, not excuses to separate. We know that we are spiritual when the peace we hold inside of us is undaunted by conflict, transition, or death. When we are spiritual, we acknowledge aspects of our lives that we don't fully understand, without offering apology. We become a healer of others when we are spiritual because we are "free." We know we are spiritual when we have taken back the parts of ourselves that were lost or disowned. Most importantly, we help and heal others not by what we do or say but by who we are. A whole, complete, spiritual, person, at peace with herself, does more to inspire growth than any amount of proselytizing ever will.

While we are changed forever we must remember that change is not a state of completion. It is an evolutionary process. We still may suffer with the uncertainty change brings into our lives. We know, however, that stagnation results from too much certainty. Spirituality makes change less threatening because we've become more comfortable with our 'becoming.' Spirituality makes our life an "I'm evolving" experience rather than "I've arrived experience." We, therefore accept uncertainty, and manage it with grace because we are now **resocialized** women.

Our spirituality connects our lives with the global movement of humanity toward new and higher levels of maturity. This connection makes it easier to endure our struggles because we see ourselves as world citizens. We bring new wisdom to the world. This unifying vision helps protect our inner peace from unhealthy intrusive social discrimination. We can join men who are feminists and encourage those who are not. In this way, we bring our recently created "new life" into the community of nations devoted to equality.

We now bring the message of **resocialization** to others because we understand how dangerous social conditioning is. We are examples in instructional ways and in unintentional ways through the quality of our lives. At the beginning of our **resocialization**, we needed separation to learn to refocus on our lives. The exclusion of others was symbolic of shedding the myths of femininity that paralyzed us. We may never before believed that we could stand on our own and thrive on our own. Separation uncomplicated our lives so we could grasp the fact that there was a "self" separate from "them." Now we know that we can share

with others without abandoning ourselves. We are strong enough to be separate and confident enough to be united. We can give without losing our identity. This is a wonderful place to be.

Resocialization has peeled away the destructive layers of sexism that numbed our souls. As re-claimed women, it is easier to speak about our truth because we know what our truth is. We have woven the pure, creative energy of our childhood with the strength of our mature and world-wise adulthood. Now we can ask questions without embarrassment. We can play without guilt. We can feel without shame. We can “be” without being perfect. We can seek education as a means of empowerment. We can change without being defensive. We can be creative and believe in the uniqueness of our contribution. We will challenge without fear, any power that attempts to entrap us, because we have confidence in our true selves. We can passionately make our lives our own. We have become the bride of our destiny.

We blend the best of ourselves with the best of society. Our personal revolution has joined the universal revolution toward spirituality, equality, justice, and human dignity. Based on our new understanding of personal relationships, we will create a different world by being different. We will infiltrate political systems with a spiritual vision of the correct use of power.

Now we can love being women because it includes what we love most about ourselves. Most importantly, and finally, we are the brides of whatever we love.

How We Feel

“We feel the certainty of a ‘new bride’ because our psychology and our spirituality have become one.”

Our search for a “new reality” in our lives has moved in countless directions. It encompasses our fears and hopes, our joys and sorrows. We have begun an endless quest, not merely with our minds, but with our whole being. Our spirituality has connected us with what we love and made us proud of what we have survived. Because we are feeling more whole, we can celebrate what we have learned and where we are going. We have the certainty of a “New Bride” because the “stuff” of our life is finally known and embraced. Our psychology and our spirituality have become one. We are now freer from myths of femininity and masculinity and this has cleared the path to internalized equality. Our

unified self has laid the foundation of our spirituality because we now know who we are; we are in touch with our worth. We've claimed the tremendous gifts of creativity we hold inside of us. This sacred journey has led us to our sacred Self.

This is an endless journey because, as long as we live, we will learn the wonder of being who we are: women, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, sisters, friends, lovers, managers, artists, and employees.... on and on. We won't want it to end because the excitement of discovery generates a longing for more life. It is the "Yellow Brick Road" with more adventures and discoveries at every turn.

The creation of our Self and the discovery of our Self run parallel paths that are blended into our spirituality. Spirituality is not a resting place or a hiding place; it is the ongoing challenge to connect with our life emotionally. It means we appreciate the process and possibilities that are available to us in every challenge we face. We face life with optimism.

We may have begun this journey of self-discovery with a very vague idea about spirituality. Confusing it with religion may have kept us angry, especially if we've had negative religious experiences. All religions are both human and mystical at the same time. Human because the mystical message is organized and managed by individuals that have all the same limitations each of us struggles with on a daily basis. This anger toward organized religion can thwart our spiritual progress because it cuts us off from the possible contribution of religion in our lives. Religion can serve as a path to developing our spirituality. However, the patriarchal nature of most religions makes them a foreign land to women. Religion should always be viewed as the servant of spirituality. It could offer us gifts that are difficult for many of us to duplicate on our own. It could put us in touch with a community of people who may have similar goals. It ritualizes in celebration and rites, transitions in our lives, and instructs us about spiritual matters on a consistent basis. It can challenge our spiritual complacency and can remind us of our transcendent nature.

In the formation of your new spirituality, religion may or may not have a place. Those of us who have personal conflicts about religion could find someone who can help us identify the source of those conflicts. Creating your own spirituality may include resolving "religious anger" that goes as far back as your childhood. Most of us were taught that religion would make us and keep us good. Remind yourself over and over again that you are innately "good." We may have been taught that these rituals contained, in themselves, the power to

make us good. We were vulnerable to this kind of literal, simplistic thinking during our childhood, but as adult women, we are challenged to define our own spirituality, and to internalize rather than externalize the meaning and style of our beliefs. Your adult spirituality must have everything to do with the journey of your life. As you have journeyed back into your past, through the dark moments, the empty spots, the jungle of oppression, you'll name your spirituality by realizing how you survived and what you learned. Your wisdom is the story of your survival and youthful insight.

How We Are With Others

“When we hear our own voice in the voices of other women, we will feel a deep peace.”

When we began this journey, our spirituality was centered in “others”. “Others” means other people and other institutions which chartered the course of our personal identity. Now, we have created our own spirituality because we love, respect, and cherish our own lives. Spirituality calls us to another level of consciousness that is based on loving who we are rather than who we are supposed to be. Our spirituality is connected with our continual evolvement. It honors how we think. It honors how we feel. It protects our sense of self in all our relationships. It does not mean we are so self-centered that the concerns of others and institutions don't matter to us. It means they don't have ultimate authority over us. It means that self-loyalty is a part of all loyalty. The spirituality of the “New Bride” makes her less likely to waste her energy worrying about the opinions or judgments of others because she is at peace with herself. Her own journey has helped her develop a broad empathic understanding of others; even when she is being challenged.

Our inner voice has been released from the bondage of socialization. We are free to be heard and we must be heard if true equality will ever be realized. Though we have liberated our inner world, we must acknowledge that world cultures still thrive on inequality. Desiring equality, defining it, and envisioning its implications is our difficult task because many problems unique to women remain unsolved. Our spirituality challenges us to identify those problems and join others who work toward a solution. Our spirituality leads us toward taking an active role in righting the wrongs that still remain because of socialization and protect the gains we've already achieved.

Bonding with women will provide a surge of positive feminine identification. As our lives unfold, we will feel the splendor of owning our own life. When we connect our passage with the lives of other women, we are more content and comforted. As women, we are connected to each other in all phases of our lives. Unity empowers us. When we hear our own voices in the voices of other women we will feel a very deep peace. To be truly free is to remain in the state of becoming and never again be willing to be an accomplice in our own oppression.

Feminist men and feminist women will come together for change when they share on a spiritual level. This one-world ideal is an essential component of peace and intimacy between men and women. We need to belong to the same world so that the world we live in will be a better reflection of our infinite possibilities. When men and women stand side by side, supporting each other because they both know how destructive gendering has been, they will create a profound intimacy and a new level of respect in their relationships.

Spirituality is about choosing rather than being chosen. It is about achieving success through initiative rather than through enduring discomfort. It is about defining ourselves for ourselves, not to exclude others, but to integrate a genuine reconciliation in which all women accept their inner Self and recognize that self to be an integral part of an expanding universe.