

12 Principle to Guide Your Life: From Divorce to Love *by Dr. Illana Berger*

Life continually provides opportunities for amazing and extraordinary experiences in your lifetime. Sometimes, however, some of life's experiences can be overwhelming and take us into what might feel like a dark pit or an endless tunnel of darkness. The natural impulse is to reject, deny or attempt to distance oneself from these "troubled waters," but what if these "waters" were exactly what was required for you to actually live the extraordinary life you are seeking?

The experience of being "taken down" is what Ram Das (a spiritual teacher and author) calls "God's grace." We are given these experiences because they are what we "need" in order to awaken to our true work or our destiny. This descent experience seems to be especially prevalent for women who are between 40 and 60 years old. In the indigenous or tribal spiritual teachings these years (40 to 60) are considered the transition years, the deep seeded transformational years. Often we are given challenges throughout our lives or at different moments or periods of our life, but the years of 40 to 60 are major transitional years for most women.

When I was about 35 years old I began to realize that there was more to life than I had been led to believe. I thought that if what I was experiencing and living was what life was ALL about, then life was pretty shallow. I wanted to know what the meaning of life was. Why had my life taken the path it had? Who were these people (children, partner, parents, friends, etc,) who were in my life and why were they here, with me, now?

Many people ask these questions, but few sincerely seek to discover the answers. The poet, Rainer Marie Rilke said;

"Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answers."

I read this quote when I was about 35 years old. I have tried to live my life from this place of awe and curiosity and I have counseled others who work with me to do the same. When you are willing to live the questions, really live the questions,

then life takes on a sacred and holy quality. The hurry in life eases, and you become softer, more curious, more gracious, generous and much more kind.

I work with women who are in the midst of divorce or separation, women who are living with cancer, women whose children are leaving their home for colleges, and women who have endured the loss of beloved people in their lives. I have worked with women who have been abused sexually, emotionally and physically. I work with women who have been abandoned by their fathers, their mothers and their lovers. I also work with women whose partners think they are wicked and witchy, helpless and feeble, controlling and domineering.

All these experiences these women are having are transformational experiences that John of the Cross, called the "*Dark Night of the Soul.*" It is a transition time, what tribal cultures call "*initiation.*"

Most of us do not know how to navigate this territory, which is why anti-depressants are so frequently prescribed to women at this juncture of life. 11.5% of the women in the US (not institutionalized) are prescribed anti-depressants! That is about 31.7 million women!

As a culture we have intolerance for sadness, for darkness, for confusion and uncertainty. We want happiness, contentment, safety and delight. Yet all the spiritual teachings tell us that this search for happiness and fulfilling our desire is the root of all suffering. The joke is on us because that which we are seeking is who and what we already are.

How do we come to know this? How do we find this truth? No matter what the circumstances of your life, you are already and always the embodiment of joy, contentment safety and delight. The journey of your life is to make this discovery for yourself.

I teach 12 spiritual principles to facilitate the discovery of this truth.

The twelve principles are:

1. The Principle of Design Beneath Chaos

There are no accidents in life. All things are as they should be. Everything that happens in your life happens for the evolution of your consciousness - or for your personal transformation and growth.

2. The Principle of Release & Faith

Faith means, “believing in things not yet seen.” Out of a willingness to step into the river of life and let it carry you to the shore of your destiny - surrendering to the way things are - life delivers you opportunities to change for the better. You can begin to trust that there is a greater plan that you are not fully aware of.

3. The Principle of Humility

Your upsets are your emotional baggage. When you are willing to get out of your own way and let go of your defenses, you become humble. Humility is the doorway through which the Divine can enter your life and co-create a life with heart and meaning.

4. The Principle of Meditation

Finding spaces and silences allows the truth of who you are to emerge. Meditation provides an opportunity to enter into a deep relationship with your Divine nature and find the peace that exists in-between your being and your doing. You can begin to dis-identify with your feelings and see your experiences with some objectivity.

5. The Principle of Awareness

According to awareness practices, what you focus on determines your experiences and the level of your suffering. Becoming aware of what inspires your actions begins the profound process of self-knowing. Who is acting? Who is watching? Who is thinking? This is awareness.

6. The Principle of Self-Empowerment

Self-Empowerment is the ability to respond from a place of personal power. You begin to see how you have chosen the perfect partner and/or events in your life to teach you the perfect lessons. You could not have learned them on your own. You begin to sense that there is a reason for all of it and you have the ability now to inquire.

7. The Principle of Choice

Once you understand the design in your life, you can see that you have choices and have always had choices **and** that there are no wrong choices in life – only the consequences.

8. The Principle of Forgiveness

You now understand what your self-defeating behaviors have been and are beginning to learn how to **act** instead of **react** in difficult situations and

encounters. You are now able to ask the Universe to forgive yourself and others.

9. The Principle of Presence

The awakening to Presence is the conscious experience of the process of living itself. Life is a flow, a stream, of aliveness of awareness. There are no judgments, no opinions, just awe. And the magic begins when you can step outside of the mind and just be.

10. The Principle of Generosity

Once present, you become aware that there is a wellspring that lives inside you. Generosity grows and inspires you to do actions consistent with your true nature, which originate from the core of your being. The Principle of Generosity implies a willingness to be unselfish and serve something greater than yourself.

11. The Principle of Gratitude

You begin to see the gifts all around you and in every situation and every person who has ever been, or will ever be in your life. Gratitude wants to give, wants to make a difference. It wants to serve.

12. The Principle of Possibilities

From this place of knowing yourself and loving yourself, the whole world becomes the ground of potential – the ground of possibilities. The past is irrelevant, the future does not exist – there is only now and from this place of now, you can respond to the world from the highest expression of who you really are!

Living these spiritual principles is what Rainer Marie Rile meant when he suggested living into the answers. To live and practice these twelve spiritual principles means stepping onto a path with heart. It is a journey whose rewards are without measure. You have the ability to heal not only your own life, but, the lives of your children and grandchildren as well as the generations that came before you. I always tell my clients, “your ancestors dreamed you into this lifetime. Find out why, find out what dream they hoped you would fulfill.” This is the great mystery of life.

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