

# FIFTEEN WAYS TO CULTIVATE YOUR INNER VOICE

Cultivating your inner voice is a decision to step towards your spirit. Spirit (in my definition) is the direct connection to collective consciousness. Spirit delivers messages **TO US** and the Soul helps those messages shine **THROUGH US**. Throughout life we pick up coping mechanisms as a means of survival, but we may continue the (unconscious) habitual behaviors once we are autonomous adults. These coping mechanisms suppress our connection to our inner voice and override it with survival logic.

The problem with survival logic is that it may trap you in your three, five, seven, ten, sixteen or twenty year old self. When we are young we do not have fully developed brains or the autonomy to make decisions for ourselves so we make choices that support the environment we are in.

Here's an example: when I was young, my father had a bad temper.

As a coping mechanism, I learned how to be very quiet so I didn't set him off. I learned to avoid conflict so I did not have to be on the receiving end of his anger. I started this around age three or four.

As an adult, I wanted to be liked. I would meet new people and befriend them, even if I didn't like them. I wouldn't speak up for my wants, needs or desires. I allowed people to take advantage of me - at work, in relationships, romantically - all because I suppressed my inner voice. I had a value issue where everyone else's needs were greater and more important than mine.

There was a large price to pay for remaining quiet. I never ever pushed for what I wanted. I compromised even when I didn't want to...even when I didn't agree!

In this guide there are many modalities to try that will help you cultivate your inner voice: some of these activities will resonate more than others so go with what works best for you. I hope you enjoy the process of discovering your inner voice and of consciously making new decisions for the future.

Love,  
Rikki

# CULTIVATING YOUR INNER VOICE

## 1. GUIDED MEDITATION:

Meditation is the practice of unplugging your mind and allowing yourself to observe how you are breathing, the sensations of your body and the frequent impulses of your mind. In my experience, meditation is the most significant tool that we have to cultivate the inner voice because it is an intentional space of quiet.

Prompt: Mastering meditation, like anything else, is about practice. Start small: try doing guided meditation for five minutes. Over time, gradually work up to twenty minutes. After that, explore different styles, such as seated meditation, until you find one that works best for you.

### Two apps that can help get you started:

- Meditation Studio
- Calm
- Insight Timer

## 2. CREATIVITY:

Creativity is everywhere and in everything, but most of us are so busy going from one task to the next that we do not have time to create for the sake of creation. The more we ignore or suppress the creative impulse, the less it shows up. The more we act on the creative impulse, the more creative we become.

Making time and space for this practice allows our soul to express itself. When the soul is given the time and space to express itself we find immense relief. Our parasympathetic nervous system is activated and we can attune to what is happening inside. Wood working, building, singing, painting, dancing, baking, cooking, sewing, gardening, *you name it...*

Prompts to find your way back to creativity:

1. When I was young, what were my favorite ways of expressing myself?
2. When did I give them up?
3. If I were to pick up a new mode of expression (that does not include an electronic device), what would I be interested in?
4. What are some of the ways I avoid being creative?
5. What excuses do I make to avoid making time for myself?

# CULTIVATING YOUR INNER VOICE

## **3. TIME IN NATURE:**

Time in nature helps us cultivate a relationship with the earth. It has been proven to decrease anxiety and depression by over 60%. Natural light gives us vitamin D and helps regulate our circadian rhythms. Paying attention to the leaves changing, the ocean washing up over your feet, or feeling cool, soft grass under foot helps shift your mind away from the day to day and toward its natural rhythm. When our bodies are de-stressed there is more opportunity to hear our inner voice.

### **Prompts:**

- Spend thirty minutes outside observing and experiencing nature
- Spend three minutes observing the change it made within

## **4. SLEEP:**

According to the ancient traditions of Chinese Medicine and Ayurveda, humans should be asleep by 10:30pm each night. Modern science tells us we need 7-9 hours of sleep yet the average adult is sleeping just six and a half hours. Evidence also shows a direct correlation between optimal brain function and sleep. When our brains are not functioning at optimal capacity we are less likely to tune in. An irritated mind will not make room for an inner voice, it will be hooked on survival.

### **Prompt:**

- For one week commit to being in bed by 10pm
- Consciously examine the shifts that you feel

# CULTIVATING YOUR INNER VOICE

## 5. SACRED TIME:

Last Summer a large storm hit our area. For about thirty six hours the power was out because several large trees had fallen. In that time I finished reading a book I had started two months before, I tinkered around the house, I painted a bit. On the other hand, some of my friends were obsessing over the loss in productivity.

When our identity is wrapped around a valued output we betray our innate self. The innate self shrinks away from the over-active mind, and feelings of anxiety and depression creep in. These feelings are not due to not meeting the expectations of our to-do list, rather the depression is because we are not giving attention to, acknowledging or valuing the larger purpose that lives within us.

### Prompt:

- Block three hours of alone time. Commit to not running errands, watching television, using technology or doing chores.
- What did you discover during this time?

## 6. CREATE BOUNDARIES AROUND YOUR ENERGY

I learned this exercise in a book called “Deep Creativity” by Quibell, Selig and Slattery. This practice is called Code of Yes, Code of No or Thou Shall. It is simple and very effective at defining boundaries.

Many of us are living on autopilot, unconsciously aware of how we spend our energy. This exercise intends to put hard and fixed boundaries on our activities.

Left to my own devices I would do house chores for two to three hours per day and only sit down to enjoy myself when I’m physically wiped out.

### Here are a few *Thou Shall* examples to limit time devoted to house vs. creativity and time committed to the outer world vs. inner:

- *Thou shall only do one hour of house chores during weekdays*
- *Thou shall only do four hours of house chores on one weekend day*
- *Thou shall turn the phone on vibrate when at home and turn the phone off at 9pm each night.*

# CULTIVATING YOUR INNER VOICE

## CODE OF YES:

- I will meditate everyday
- I will take pottery class on Tuesday nights
- I will read the New Yorker on Saturday mornings

These things bring me incredible joy. They enrich my life. They are hard YES' that are scheduled

## CODE OF NO:

- I will not have friendships out of obligation
- I will not allow people to waste my time and energy with ranting and gossip
- I will not watch more than one hour of TV per day

Truthfully, it's much easier to come up with your YES. Once that is clear, the NO's become apparent! When these boundaries are put into practice there is less noise to navigate and more space for our inner voice.

## 7. CULTIVATE A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

It is not necessary to cling to one religion or teacher but it is necessary to have a deeper understanding of the universal principles of kindness, compassion, love, benevolence and understanding, especially towards ourselves. These practices create space for our inner knowing to enter.

For me I have always resonated with Buddhist teachings. One of the most clear and articulate teachers I have found for the Western world are written by Pema Chodron.

These three Pema Chodron books are my favorite:

- *Start Where You Are*
- *Uncomfortable with Uncertainty*
- *When Things Fall Apart*

*\*When engaging a spiritual teacher I would make sure to look for integrity:*

- *Are they impeccable with their word?*
- *Do they hold you to standards they don't hold themselves?*
- *What happens if you disagree?*
- *How much work have they done for themselves and who are their main influences.*

# CULTIVATING YOUR INNER VOICE

## **8. STEP TOWARD THE COLLECTIVE:**

Awareness of the interconnection between all of us brings you closer to the connection with yourself. Instead of focusing on the differences between you and others, shift your attention to the spaces that you share/agree. We all want to be loved, accepted, acknowledged. Compassion for the collective is the deep desire of soul and spirit and it is communicated through your inner voice.

## **9. PRACTICE BEING OPEN:**

New experiences can be anxiety producing but like anything, practice makes them easier. In our private lives we do not *HAVE* to do anything we don't need to but being closed to new opportunities makes us feel isolated and alone. When we practice being open to new experiences we give our inner voice a chance to override the resistance in our mind and give us valuable feedback for a better future.

### **Prompts:**

Observe the frequency in which you automatically reply to invitations.

- Are you typically responding one way?
- Do you feel pressured to answer right away?
- Have you written off the experience before every trying it?
- Have you tried things more than once?

## **10. EXAMINE YOUR PAST:**

The past is where we develop coping mechanisms that suppress our inner voice:

- Domineering
- Disruptive
- Co-dependency
- Enmeshment
- Lack of Boundaries
- Inappropriate Sexual Behavior

### **Prompt:**

- What behaviors of the adults around you made you feel unsafe?
- How did you avoid feeling that way?
- What did you have to tell yourself in order to survive?

# CULTIVATING YOUR INNER VOICE

## 11. MAKE ACQUAINTANCE WITH YOUR EGO

The stories we tell ourselves are often rooted in the coping mechanisms of our childhood. The ego will do everything in its power to remain in control. When we can see our stories and coping mechanisms separate from the present moment we have ego awareness. The more we practice ego awareness the more space we create for our inner voice to speak.

### **Prompt:**

When you feel a lack of peace, ask yourself, what from my past does this remind me of? Am I reacting to that experience or am I living in the present?

## 12. EXAMINE CONFORMITY

Conformity is also a coping mechanism for survival. As children we had to conform to the culture of our home in order to receive love and affection. As adults we often seek the same type of culture because it is what we **know**, that doesn't necessarily mean it is what is good for us. Our inner voice will rebel against the self righteous conformities...it's our job to listen.

### **Prompts:**

- What is your relationship to conformity?
- Do you agree with the standards in your household growing up?
- How are your standards different now?
- If you could make changes, what would you do?

## 13. SET INTENTIONS

This is different than asking for what you want. Setting intentions allows you to consciously choose your path every single day. Some people like to journal every morning. I personally like to have one dominant intention and carry it with me. The key is to not allow the intention to become a stale fixture day after day, rather a precious promise to yourself. This exercise helps you hold the messages of your inner voice with integrity.

*(Continued on next page)*

# CULTIVATING YOUR INNER VOICE

## **Examples:**

“Today I intend to walk through the world with compassion and kindness. I will not allow my mind to go dark, even when I start to feel anxious.”

“Today I will stand firmly in my power. If people start to ask for too much I will show compassion for myself and for them.”

## **14. PRACTICE SELF TRUST**

Self trust is about living in your personal power and being guided by love over fear. We lose self trust when we believe negative judgements and beliefs about ourselves.

To regain self-trust we must realize that failure is our way of practicing life. We do this by keeping promises to ourselves. Promises kept build upon one another and soon we start to feel more secure in our decisions and the inner voice gains strength.

### **List three promises you would like to make to yourself:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## **15. CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES BY ASKING FOR THEM**

That little nagging voice in your head that tells you to do something that doesn't make sense...that's your inner voice. It is always there, even if we do not want to give the voice power. The next time there is an innate feeling of “YES” I encourage you to listen.

### **Prompt:**

Work through the **Big Picture, Small Victories** exercise on the next page to help you take small steps towards a larger purpose.

# CULTIVATING YOUR INNER VOICE

## BIG PICTURE, SMALL VICTORIES

WRITE THE "INNER VOICE" DESIRE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH

*Example: I would like to put my needs first in adult relationships*

\_\_\_\_\_

List the first three things you need to do to get started and the amount of time you will need to complete these tasks:

*Example: For four hours a week I am going to work on finally writing a book...*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

List the second set of things you need to do to get started and the amount of time you will need to complete these tasks:

*Example: I am going to minimize the time spent on...*

4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

List the last three things you need to do to get started and the amount of time you will need to complete these tasks:

*Example: I also need to redistribute some of the workload (in this area)...*

7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_

The date by which you will complete these tasks \_\_\_\_\_