



INTEGRAL LIFEWORK OVERVIEW

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At its heart, *Integral Lifework* aims for complete, balanced and self-reliant nourishment in every aspect of our lives. This holistic nourishment then stimulates personal healing, growth and transformation within and without. By evaluating attitudes and habits in each area, and then exploring the best ways to encourage and sustain our potential, we engage in a journey towards being joyful, peaceful and whole. As a result, all that we are expands and harmonizes on many levels at once. With compassionate affection as our inspiration and governing intention, we refine our directedness and skillfulness in every moment. All of this comes through practice – a personally tailored integral practice – called a *Lifework Plan*. And because the best strategies and disciplines differ from person to person, developing a *Lifework Plan* is by its nature a highly individualized and collaborative effort. The goal of such a plan is to create a clear, manageable path to holistic well-being, the kind of completeness that energizes evolution in ourselves and in the world around us. But what does this multifaceted nourishment look like? What are some of the techniques and approaches of *Integral Lifework*? And what role does the *Integral Lifework Practitioner* have in this process?

ESSENTIAL NOURISHMENT

Integral Lifework evaluates how we regularly care for ourselves in twelve dimensions of essential nourishment. When any one of these areas is undernourished, we can inadvertently limit our well-being and potential. By fully engaging all twelve dimensions in ways uniquely suited to our current mode of being, we not only experience healing and renewed vitality, but also transform our lives and our immediate environment. Using the list below as a guide, consider making an inventory of how you have tended to your own nurturing over the past three or four days. Did you nourish yourself fully, in a balanced way? Are there one or more areas that may have been neglected? Have you overindulged in one dimension or other? With a little compassionate, non-judgmental attention, we can quickly identify those areas we would like to improve.

- **Healthy Body.** Sustaining and strengthening our physical being through conscious patterns of diet, exercise, sleep and other key factors uniquely suited to who we are.
- **Playful Heart.** Maintaining healthy emotional expression and connection with our inner life, and engaging in regular playfulness and creative self-expression from day to day.
- **Supportive Community.** Inviting love and acceptance into our lives, both in what we receive from others, how loving and accepting we are of others, and how actively we participate in our community.
- **Expanding Mind.** Building, broadening and routinely stimulating our knowledge, understanding and mental capacities and abilities.

- **Fulfilling Purpose.** Discovering and actuating a satisfying life-purpose that is perfectly matched to our authentic self, and which supports the focus, strength and healthy expression of our personal will.
- **Authentic Spirit.** Establishing and increasing our connection and interaction with the ground of being – described in different traditions as the fundamental essence, spiritual energy or divine nature of reality – and translating that deepening connection into a spiritually authentic life.
- **Restorative History.** Acknowledging, honoring and, when necessary, reprocessing all the experiences of our lives – whether remembered or forgotten, integrated or rejected – that have contributed to our current state of being; every significant relationship, trauma, milestone, accomplishment, perception or influence that has led us to the present moment.
- **Pleasurable Legacy.** Creating and sustaining new life, pleasurable experiences that are shared, and an enduring and positive impression on our world, while at the same time maintaining a sense of safety and stability for ourselves and those we love.
- **Flexible Processing Space.** Being able to regularly and effortlessly transition through different modes of processing, with each centered in different facets of our being -- the heart, mind, body, spirit and soul – so that we fully nourish those facets and create transparent access to the insights, wisdom and discernment each has to offer.
- **Empowered Self-Concept.** Tuning our self-awareness, self-worth and self-efficacy the most realistic, compassionate and supportive range of function, so that we both strengthen our nurturing capacity in all other nourishment centers, and continually address any barriers that arise.
- **Satisfying Sexuality.** Exploring the nature of our own sexuality – through the dynamics of our sexual relationships and our expectations of intimacy – in order to clarify and communicate our needs and desires and arrive at fulfilling nourishment for ourselves and those we sexually engage.
- **Affirming Integrity.** Consciously aligning the unfolding essence of our being with our thoughts, feelings, words and actions, so that *how* we are from moment to moment authentically reflects *who* we are in our innermost depths.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

In *Integral Lifework*, almost all undesirable conditions we identify in our lives are the result of interrupted nourishment. When we are deprived of liquids long enough, we get thirsty. When we are deprived of genuine relationship and communication, we become lonely or frustrated. If we are deprived of understanding in some situation, we become confused or unhappy. And yet barriers to self-nourishment are not always easy to identify or remedy, and can exist for many different reasons. Consider these possibilities:

1. We have not yet fully come to know our innermost Self.

2. We have yet to discover our unique purpose, or are living in denial of that knowledge.
3. We have become strongly attached to a way of being that contradicts who we are, why we are here, or what the next lesson in our journey must of necessity be.
4. Over time we have learned to substitute one area of nourishment for another.
5. We are allowing external factors – our environment, past experiences, the demands or desires of others, some kind of dependency, etc. – to override the promptings of our internal compass.
6. There are structural reasons – patterns of behavior learned in childhood, or tendencies influenced by our physiology – that are interfering with complete nourishment.
7. Some deep-seated grief has not yet advanced through its natural process of resolution.

Integral Lifework helps us lovingly examine and adjust old patterns so that undesirable, painful and avoidable conditions can be transformed. Sometimes this process happens incrementally, and sometimes it is the natural consequence of a sudden shift in consciousness or behavior brought about by integral practice. As we delve deeply into the substance of who we are, we achieve clarity of purpose and a directedness of mind, heart and spirit. Through maturing this way of being, we are liberated from modes of thought, emotion and action that confuse our intentions and hinder us from fulfilling our potential. As we cultivate compassion for ourselves, we begin to relax our barriers enough to be fully nourishment. And once all twelve dimensions receive regular, high-quality exchanges, we not only begin to flourish, but our whole being is transformed with loving kindness.

THE INTEGRAL LIFEWORK PRACTITIONER'S ROLE

Integral Lifework Practitioners use a wide range of techniques to assist individuals, couples and groups in a self-exploration and nourishment process. Anything from therapeutic dialogue to guided meditation to therapeutic touch might occur in each session. What techniques are most appropriate will be determined by the goals you define with your practitioner, the mutual trust and explicit permission made available to the therapeutic relationship, the practitioner's intuitive training, and occasionally some formalized assessments. Clients are also encouraged to try targeted self-nourishment and barrier-resolution techniques between sessions, which might include altering specific habits, receiving specialized treatment (such as bodywork), or practicing mental, emotional and spiritual disciplines. The techniques of other specialists or holistic practitioners may be recommended as well. But regardless of approach, a fundamental principle of *Integral Lifework* is that as a client you are empowered by the process, and all healing and growth comes from within you. The practitioner does not control or manipulate outcomes, but facilitates as gently and compassionately as possible what naturally wants to spring forth from each person. Like all integral practice, an *Integral Lifework Plan* is designed to increase knowledge of our innermost Self and expand our opportunities for compassionate action; the practitioner's primary role is therefore to offer tools to help you make that journey as safe, meaningful and nourishing as possible.