

Spiritual Stepping Stones

Gary Vollbracht and Pat Peterson – 4/24/2015

Introduction

We were introduced to Spiritual Steppingstones at a five-day Journaling workshop five years ago (and repeated many times thereafter). For full effect this exercise is done in the context of a journaling workshop, but we believe there is some benefit trying it on its own.

Typically one's life cycles through times of peace, safety, and joy, times **when one feels life has meaning and knows what that meaning is – one feels spiritually strong**, and, conversely, times of anxiety, fear, and even hopelessness, times **when one feels life has no meaning, or at least none that one could relate to – one feels spiritually awash**.

For example, a child could feel safe and secure in his/her surroundings, perhaps finding that peace and security in the warmth of the home, religious beliefs, school life, etc. Then perhaps as a teenager these conditions change and one becomes anxious, fearful, and then nervously or even desperately seeks other lifestyles or religious beliefs or groups where one can belong. Then there is again a time of peace and meaning. Typically this goes on all through one's life – times feeling spiritually strong and times of feeling spiritually awash.

The purpose of finding spiritual steppingstones is to identify those times of spiritual strength and times of spiritual lostness in order to discover the nature of your spiritual life.

The process of creating spiritual steppingstones

Take a clean page in your journal, or a clean piece of paper, to write out your spiritual steppingstones. Find a time when you can be quiet and alone, perhaps at your altar. It is suggested that you each do this ahead of time on your own and then come together later to share.

Write "Spiritual Steppingstones" at the top of the page **and the date**.

Write the first steppingstone as, "1. I was born..." and then close your eyes and see what arises to describe the circumstances of your birth – what stands out as most significant in the sense of life's meaning and purpose – that is, what was the first steppingstone of your spiritual life? Write this out. See the Example on the next page.

In the silence, continue the process, bringing the total number of spiritual steppingstones to 10-12 for your life to date. For each spiritual steppingstone let the words arise out of the silence.

When you are done, spend some moments in silence, then read your spiritual steppingstones to yourself. On a clean page in your journal write out how this process was for you (made you nervous, the results surprised you, or whatever)

At a later time once again come to your altar together, and, if you are comfortable, share your spiritual steppingstones with each other. Again, in your journal, describe the feelings you had in listening to your partner and in sharing with your partner.

Spiritual Steppingstones

Example from

At a Journal Workshop by Ira Progoff

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Example: Growing up in Christian Home (RA)

1. **Birth.** I was born into an old-fashioned Christian home, and I believed that everything was just exactly as I was told.
2. **Early Farm Life.** Being on the farm as a little girl, I became very close to the animals. I noticed what was natural in them, and I felt there was something spiritual about it.
3. **Teen Religion.** In my teen years I felt very strong natural urges, and these came up against very rigid prohibitions. I identified religion with rules of moral conduct, mostly with restrictions on things I was not allowed to do. At that point I associated religion with rigidity.
4. **Rejection.** I reject religion. I don't go as far as being an atheist, but I end my religious affiliation.
5. **The time of shopping.** I feel that something is missing in my life so I go shopping for another religion. At that time I didn't know that Eastern religions existed, or that they were anything more than paganism, so I just shopped all the Christian religions I could find.
6. **Conversion.** I decide to become a Catholic because it has a religious quality that appeals to me and I feel deeply at home in it.
7. **Disappointment.** I become disappointed in Catholicism and become non-practicing.
8. **Alcohol.** I become involved with alcoholism and various drugs. Somehow this seems to be connected with my religious desires, but it is not satisfying.
9. **Depression.** A terrible period of depression. At this time life seems to be a barren desert. All I can think of is that I want to get out of it.
10. **A new discovery.** I have an inner experience in which I discover the reality of my life beyond all the suffering I have and and all the joy. I realize that I have had more than my share of both, and that my spiritual life is the reality beyond them [*i.e., beyond the suffering and joy I have experienced*].
11. **Prayer.** I learn to pray as a *thankful* connection to life. It seems strange not to be asking God for favors all the time. But blessings seem to come when I don't ask. This is a time of peace.
12. **Christianity.** My various inner experiences of Jesus as the Christ. Sometimes these have been too intimate and intense to bear, but it enables me to know how fundamentally I am a Christian. That seems strange to me as I write it. But it is a very warm as well as surprising feeling. I realize also that these feelings of Jesus give me a special love toward all the non-Christians in the world. I feel freed from the prejudice I was taught as a child. Perhaps that is the love my whole journey has been for. I feel peace.