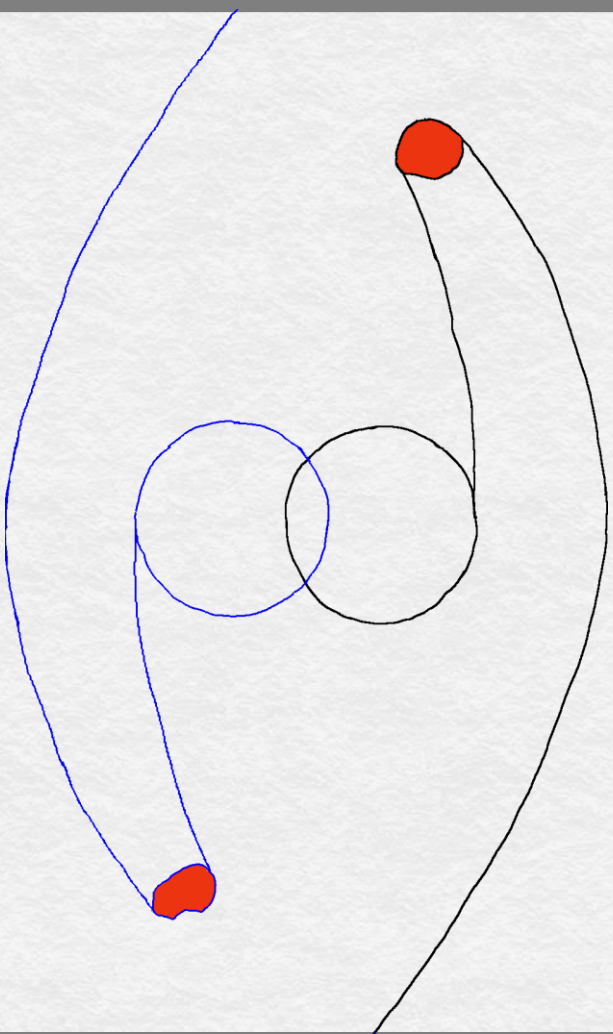


# The Inner Garden

*Your inner world is like a garden with fertile soil:  
it can create a heaven in harsh times if you wisely cultivate good seeds  
or  
it can create a hell in easy times if you neglect it and weeds take over*



# You have a rich inner world\*

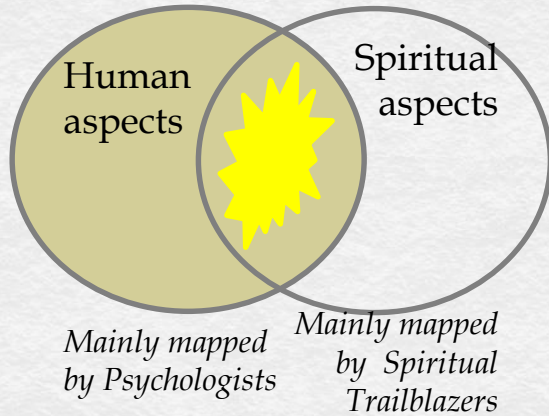
## *Three core ideas*

- 1) You have an inner world that powerfully shapes your life; it is like an inner garden whose plants can either be great nourishment or a terrible toxins for living a meaningful life.
- 2) Your inner garden needs your wise cultivation so that it helps you; a neglected inner garden allows the weeds of your inner world – the default tendencies of the brain – to proliferate and hinder you.
- 3) Your inner garden is home to both you and God, present within you as a Divine Companion, who wants to personally accompany you in your life; spiritual attitudes create an inner soil conducive for this relationship.

\*Caveat. Your inner world is potentially rich. Your inner world is like a parcel of good soil that only becomes a garden when it is well cultivated. Some other analogies... Your body has the potential to run a 5K race in less than 25 minutes but only if you cultivate this physical potential with regular and intelligent exercise. Your mind has the potential to read and write but only if you cultivate and practice these skills.

Like a garden with very fertile soil capable of supporting thriving plants, your inner world has the potential to support a vibrant and productive inner life that helps you cope with challenges and seize opportunities. But such a thriving inner life only happens if you recognize your inner capabilities and cultivate them. Cultivation requires exercising your inner core muscles: your insights, values and choices. Cultivation requires planting good seeds – accurate ideas and perspectives; valuable perspectives come from both psychologists and spiritual sages. When harmonized, these perspectives can help you with psychological issues and also create an inner environment conducive to a more intimate relationship with your Divine Companion.

# Two Maps of the Inner World



## *Psychological and spiritual perspectives complement each other*

Psychologists know a great deal about human nature: how you construct the narratives that guide your life; how some narratives are helpful and others are limiting or harmful; how emotions, especially fear, can dominate the inner world; how long-ago wounds can trigger anxiety or anger now; how early attachment influences your current relationships.

Spiritual sages – people who had a first-hand experience of the Divine Companion – see your inner world as having both human and spiritual parts: spiritual emotions, such as reverence, awe, humility and holy desire; receptivity for spiritual infusions that can uplift your mind with an inner poise greater than you can muster on your own; and the capacity for spiritual relationship with the tender and vibrant Divine Companion who lives within you, in your inner world.

Spirituality is seldom addressed by psychologists, but if you listen carefully, you will hear how insights of psychologists overlap with spiritual sages. The inner terrain mapped by psychology can lead you to the inner trailheads that lead to your inner spiritual terrain. In turn, the spiritual perspective complements the psychological perspective. Weaving together the psychological and spiritual maps of your inner world can help you understand all aspects of yourself so you can build a more meaningful life and forge more compassionate relationships.

# Noticing the One in your Inner Garden

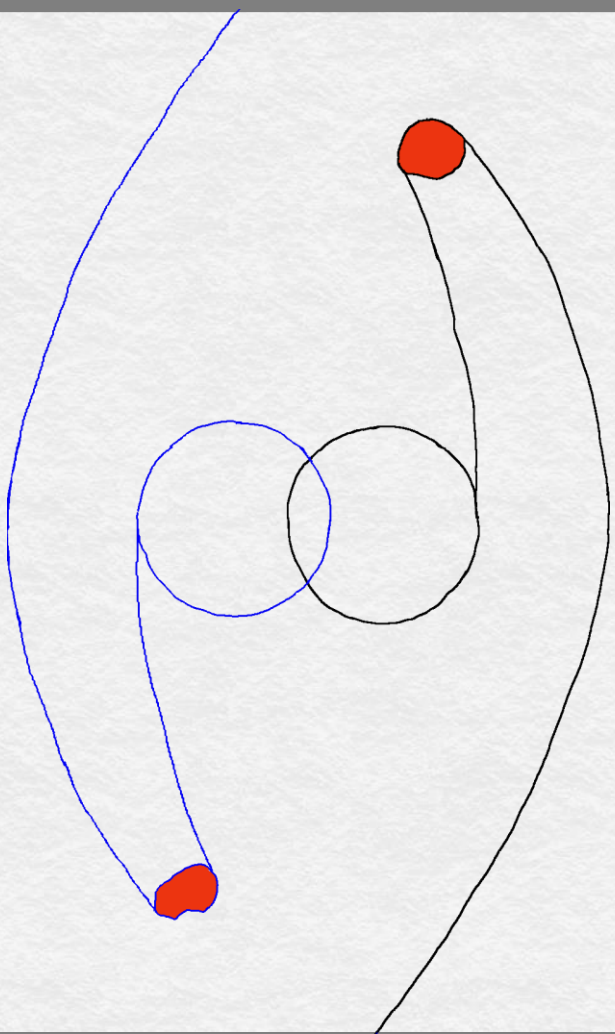
It takes effort to understand your inner world because much of it forms very early in life before you were aware of it. Perhaps as young child, you decided that others will value you and love you if you are good at fixing things (or pleasing others; being funny or quiet; or having another trait that others valued). You likely overdeveloped the part of you that seemed to bring acceptance and love early in life. Such early plans may work well enough in childhood but, later in life, the same plan seldom helps you get love as well as it originally did. Your ability to communicate feelings may have atrophied while you focused on fixing things; you may have lost yourself as you focused on pleasing others; wanting to be the smartest person in the room may have made you aloof. Your original plan that once worked so well may later become your biggest obstacle to a meaningful life and real intimacy with another person. The failure of your main *modus operandi* can be a good thing if it becomes the impetus to notice and develop other parts of your inner world.

Having experienced a frustration or dissatisfaction with their life, some turned inward; they found solace and assistance from a Divine Companion who was dwelling in their inner world all along, waiting to help. Their stories may help you appreciate that the same possibility also awaits you in your own inner world.

Spiritual sages found an inner Someone who was profoundly loving and understanding. As they cultivated this relationship, they drew closer their Divine Companion in their own experience; grasping the Divine Companion's beautiful character led them to whole-heartedly embrace this precious partnership. When embraced, this relationship bore great fruit: they easily dropped their original but limited narratives and saw life – themselves and others – in a broader way, with deeper insight and with warmer compassion.

A ego-driven mindset (“I’m the boss of my inner world”) comes naturally; the idea of sharing the inner reins often seems scary. But people who gladly allowed their Divine Companion to lead their inner world found infusions of love and clarity far richer than anything they had managed to create on their own. “Giving up” control didn’t impoverish them: instead, it enriched them and their lives became fuller and challenges less overwhelming.

If you don’t really pay attention, you may never notice the Divine Companion who dwells in your inner world. Knowing the various parts of your inner world can help you notice and appreciate the existence of your Divine Companion and then cultivate that inner relationship.



# Inner World, Inner Garden

*Your inner world, like a garden, can be vibrant or it can lay dormant; it can be well-cultivated or overrun with weeds. A vibrant and cultivated inner garden can sustain you and create beauty that enriches your life; a dormant or untended inner garden won't produce much helpful fruit.*

# The Inner World and the Outer World

Your outer life is probably quite clear to you: the family who raised you, your friends, work and perhaps an intimate partner. The details of the outer world are plain to see: what places are safe and comfortable and what places are dangerous; what you are good at and what you struggle with; how the personality or character of one friend differs from another. The outer world is concrete and easily described; another aspect of your life—your inner world—is not so readily described but understanding it better and getting to know it can make a huge difference in your life.

Your invisible inner world includes your thoughts, emotions, decisions, abilities, values, and narratives about yourself, others and life. Your inner world is unseen but powerful determines how you respond to others and how you act in the outer world. Despite all its influence, you might not know your inner world very well because it can operate just outside of your awareness.

Metaphors make a new idea more understandable by showing how it is analogous to something more familiar. Your inner world—your mind—is like a garden plot with soil that is more conducive to growing certain seeds than others. Your outer world is like the environment around garden: the amount of sun light and rain fall that it receives; the desired and undesired seeds from the surrounding area that blow into the garden and take root.

The following pages use a garden that you might have in your yard as a metaphor for the world that exists inside of you. The pages that describe the literal part of the metaphor (a garden in your yard that can be easily seen and described) have a green background; the pages that describe the other part of the metaphor (your inner world that can't be seen and can be harder to describe) have an off-white background like this page.

*Your inner world is always operating, sometimes in helpful ways and sometimes harmful ways*, yet you might not understand how it operates and affects you. Everyone's inner world shares common basic features, such as language, logic, emotions and human attachment. Each person creates a unique inner world from these basic features with the choices they make. Some people love using language to tell stories or express the subtle nuances of life; others mainly use language for taking care of the business of daily life or for creating fear in others. Some people form secure attachments with a partner and close friends; others struggle with to trust and form healthy relationships. Some people are spiritually receptive; others place no value on spirituality and dismiss the idea that the inner world even has a spiritual aspect. Your choices in your inner world create your unique personality and shape your relationships and the direction of you life.

# A Garden

## Garden Metaphor



Surrounding Environment

### *Soil: the heart of a garden which determines what grows*

A garden is a finite plot of land that is distinct from all the land around it just you are distinct from the people around you. Your garden has a boundary, perhaps a fence, that indicates where your garden ends and the surrounding landscape begins. Your garden is the land that is uniquely yours where you are responsible for what grows, or doesn't grow.

The general landscape outside the garden represents your circumstances in the world. Your surrounding landscape may have a very warm or rather cool climate; may be at a low or high altitude; may have little, average or very abundant rainfall. The general landscape affects your garden; you have little control over it but you must adjust your gardening techniques based on those factors outside your garden.

Other gardens outside your own garden represent the other people in your life, your social world. Nearby gardens represent people who play a prominent role in your life, the people who you interact a lot with. Farther away gardens represent people, such as acquaintances, with whom you have less contact.

The heart of a garden is the soil which determines which seeds can grow and how healthy a plant they become. The plants that grow in your garden will feed you: perhaps you will be well-fed or barely eke out a subsistence-level living. Some plants that grow in your garden may be toxic; others may add beauty to your world.

# Your Inner World

## *Your Inner World*



*Your outer world*

### *Mind: the heart of your inner world where choices are made*

Your inner world represents you, an individual person distinct from other people around you. Although you are connected with other people, you are clearly not them. No one can exercise or eat for another person; each person must exercise and eat for themselves. No one can make decisions for another person; each person must decide for themselves.

You don't form your thoughts in a vacuum: the general ideas of your time and place powerfully influence how you think. In very religious times, most people simply take the idea of God as a given; in more secular times, the idea of God may seem quaint and misguided to many. If you carefully cultivate your inner world, you can determine whether prevailing ideas or your own ideas are the most powerful influence on your thinking.

You don't select your values in isolation: the values that others hold powerfully influence what you value and consider important. If many people around you think that being attractive or rich are essential to being loved, you may take such ideas as true without much reflection. But if you carefully cultivate your inner world, you can select your own values. The ideas and values that you hold in your inner world will determine the kind of life that you have. Healthy ideas and values will support a meaningful life; harmful ideas and values can create a hot mess of your life.



# A Garden with Different Soils

## Garden Metaphor



### *A garden has different soils*

A garden has different areas with different soils and conditions: Some areas of a garden may have rich soil; other areas have weak soil. Some areas have well-drained soil; other areas have soggy soil. The starting characteristics of a garden soil determine what plants it is best suited for.

Poor soil, newly formed from rock recently broken down by lichens, can only support the hardiest of plants. Rich soil, like soil formed by many years of enrichment from decaying plants, can support plants much better and even plants requiring ideal conditions can thrive there.

Different types of soil are better suited to certain types of plants. Clay soils drain poorly and harden like concrete when dry, but some shrubs and fruit trees can thrive in clay. Sandy soils dry out quickly and have few plant nutrients, but carrots, parsnips and potatoes do well in sandy soils. Silty soil is rich in nutrients and holds water very well; many trees and vegetables do well in silty soil. You can put in a great deal of effort but get little produce if you plant your vegetables in soil that is poorly suited to their needs.

A wise gardener understands that different kinds of soil exist in different parts of the garden; a foolish gardener thinks that the soil in every piece of the garden is identical to the soil in other pieces of the garden.

# Inner World with Different Capacities

## Your Inner World



### *Your inner garden has different capacities*

Your inner garden has different soils: different mental capacities to deal with different aspects of life. Master inner gardeners describe two very different parts of your inner world: your psychological mind and your spiritual mind. Your psychological mind is well-suited for dealing with the material issues of life and for navigating relationships with other people; your spiritual mind is well-suited for discerning spiritual wisdom and forging a spiritual relationship with God.

Your psychological mind has many different capacities within it, such as analytical and poetic capabilities; musical and artistic capabilities; language and visual processing capabilities; social and somatic capabilities. Each capability is suited for doing specific things. Your analytical capabilities are good for filing your taxes and designing a strong building or a healthy diet; your poetical capabilities are good for expressing your love to your partner, parent or child. Imagine the disaster that would result if you used your poetic capabilities to file your taxes or your analytical capabilities to express your love and affection!

Your spiritual capabilities enable you to grasp the personality of God, a capabilities that are distinct from those that enable you to grasp the personality of another person. Imagine how much is lost if you use only your psychological capabilities, and not your spiritual capabilities, to understand God's lovely character!

# The Landscape around the Garden

## Garden Metaphor



### Surrounding Environment

*sun and heat*

*rain*

*seeds that blow in*

### *Outside the garden vs. inside the garden*

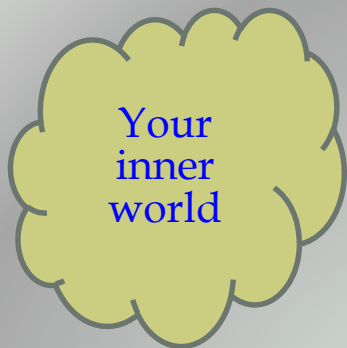
The environment outside your garden powerfully affects your garden: the sun that shines on it, the coolness or warmth of the climate, the rain that falls into the garden, the organisms and various seeds that come into your garden from the surrounding environment.

The outside influences on your garden are likely a mixed bag: perhaps your garden has much sun in the summer but receives very little rain then. Perhaps many weed seeds drift in and grow out of control like invasive plants. Some weeds may look very beautiful but are too domineering or toxic. Perhaps your garden needs continual protection against slugs or deer that abound in the surrounding landscape.

Your garden, in this metaphor is within hearing range of other gardens. You can hear what other gardeners are saying: perhaps they are talking about their gardens or just exchanging small talk and gossip. Their ideas will drift into your garden and possibly influence how you think about your own garden: perhaps if they don't think very deeply about their garden, you won't think very deeply about yours either; or perhaps if all of the gardeners within earshot share some misinformed ideas about gardening, you will consider these misinformed ideas to be quite true and they will shape how you take care of your own garden.

# The World around You

## *Your Inner World*



*Your outer world*  
*your family*  
*social and financial influences*  
*the general zeitgeist*

## *Your outer world is impossible to miss*

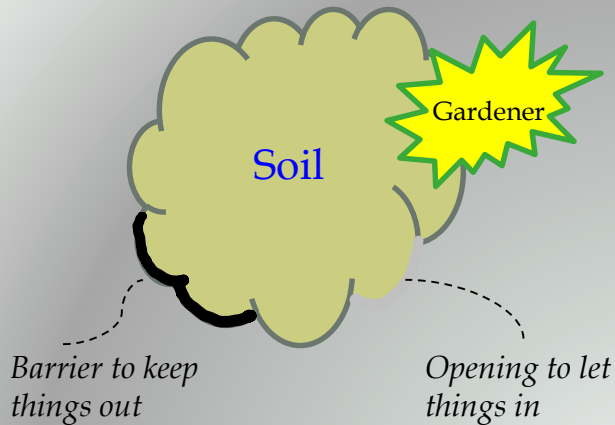
Your inner world doesn't exist in a vacuum; it is inextricably connected to the outer world: your material circumstances and social connections. Some aspects of your outer world help you, such as a prevailing peace or economic opportunities for all; other of your outer world hinder you, such as being unable to escape a war zone or access meaningful work.

Some aspects of the outer world are broad and affect many people: whether you have good educational opportunities or not; whether you are included or excluded because of your race, religion, or gender. Some aspects of the outer world are more personal and affect mainly you: the warmth or neglect of your family of origin; your connection – or lack of – with your friends; whether you are poor or financially secure; the quality of your friendships; the impact of bullies; the concern and skill of your teachers and coaches.

You have some, but usually very limited, influence over much of your outer world; your ability to influence your outer world can require extraordinary effort to bring about minor changes. Compared to the outer world, you have far more influence in shaping your inner world. If you use that influence wisely, you can create an inner world that helps you cope better with people and situations in your outer world.

# The Garden Fence

## Garden Metaphor



### *The gardener's role: keeping out, letting in*

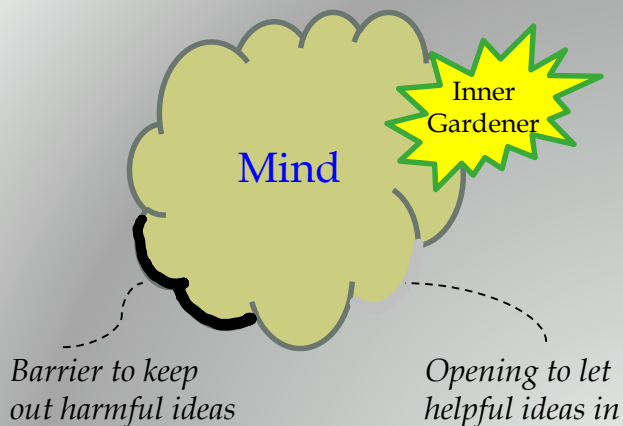
The gardener is not the garden itself nor the surrounding environment. The gardener owns the garden plot and will subsist on whatever the garden produces. The gardener plays a pivotal role in the garden. The gardener can be lazy (do nothing), foolish (work hard but achieve little) or wise (work hard and achieve much). The fruits of the garden will reflect the abilities of the gardener.

The gardener is responsible for keeping out undesired influences, such as weed seeds blow into the garden, slugs that destroy productive plants or birds that take away precious fruits. The gardener has options for keeping out undesired influences, each option with a mix of advantages and disadvantages. For example, herbicides take less effort to keep down weeds but will contaminate your crop; weeding takes more effort but is more selective and less contaminating.

The gardener is responsible for letting in and conserving desired influences. For example, a gardener might build a hoop house to retain heat and warm the soil so that plants that need warmer temperatures can be started earlier and grow better. Or a garden in a climate with dry summers may need to store winter moisture so that the stored water can be later allocated throughout the drier months. Or a gardener may accept some seeds from other gardeners to increase the variety of the garden.

# Permeability into your Inner World

## Your Inner World



### *The Inner Gardener's Role: keeping out, letting in*

Ideas from the outside world often seem to be clamoring for entrance into your inner world. Some ideas are harmful and can infect your thinking, much as a virus can infect your body; once established, it can be very hard to eradicate their negative influence. Some are helpful ideas that can elevate your thinking, much as essential vitamins help your body function optimally.

Ideas can easily enter your inner world without you even noticing. One of the Inner Gardener's chief roles is to avoid that by patrolling which ideas are let in or excluded. Ideally, the Inner Gardener maintains a permeable boundary around your mind that excludes or minimizes harmful ideas but also admits helpful ideas. But very often the loudest voices with the angriest ideas come quite easily into your mind and take root very strongly. Calmer voices with compassionate ideals may be drowned out by the louder voices and prevent the calmer voices from entering your inner world and taking root in your mind.

A good gardener wisely chooses which plants to grow. A good inner gardener wisely chooses what is most important in life, such as choosing growth over status, connection over dominance or submission. The gardener's values (what the gardener treasures the most) determines what ideas proliferate in the mind and what ideas wither away.

# Tending the soil

## Garden Metaphor



### *Gardener's Role: continually enriching the soil*

In addition to controlling what comes across the garden fence, the gardener is also responsible for what is within the fence: the quality of the soil. Your starting soil may need supplements if it has too little organic matter; it may need water if there's too little rain; the weeds that come from seeds that drifted uninvited into your garden will need weeding.

Loam is a nearly ideal garden soil with a well-balanced mix of sand, clay and silt that is optimal for many plants and vegetables. But even an ideal loamy soil requires continual care to replenish organic matter or it may need lime to prevent it from becoming too acidic over time.

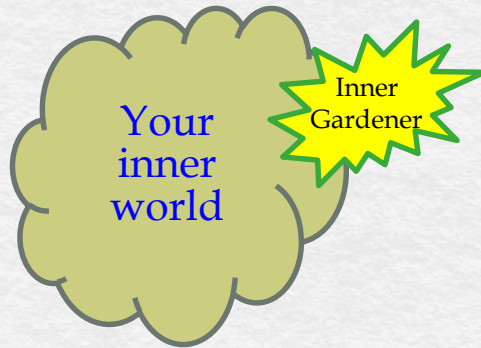
If you work to improve your garden soil each season, it will remain well suited for growing plants year after year. With continual enrichment over time, an originally poor soil that produced minimal crops may become rich enough to produce bumper crops.

If you do little to continually enrich your garden's soil, even initially good soil may become depleted over time, possibly producing less and less each year as the soil loses its fertility because it was not replenished.

The gardener has a great deal of influence – although may not use it – to correct deficiencies of the original state of a garden's soil and to preserve the good qualities of the soil over time.

# Cultivating your Inner World

## Your Inner World



### *Inner Gardener's Role: continually enriching your mind*

In addition to minding what comes in from the outer world, the Inner Gardener is also responsible for the condition of the mind. Your mind has multiple capacities but they are useless unless they are exercised regularly. Just as you may have great capacity for music or relationships, that capacity will be virtually nonexistent until you exercise it regularly.

Your mind has the capacity to see things in a shallow or a deeper way. For example, if you react angrily in some situations, you might simply dismiss that as the way you are without much thought; or you might recognize the reaction as coming from a victim mentality or an inflated sense of life's harshness; or you may see even deeper into the experiences that formed these views and decide that you want to revise them. The way that you see yourself is determined by your insight and depth of understanding.

Your mind can discern what is true and accurate from what is false and inaccurate; your capacity to discern grows when you use it. You might fool yourself into thinking that you are discerning, but your real level of discernment is revealed by the kind of life you are creating.

Like a garden, your inner world needs cultivation so that your innate capacities can flourish. Unlike a garden, where using the soil can exhaust it, using your inner capacities strengthens, not weakens, them.



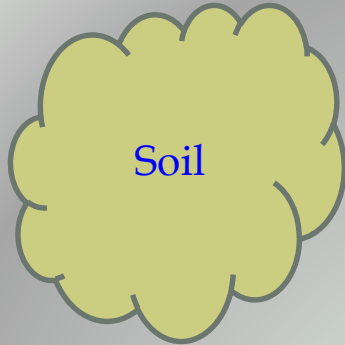
# The Master Gardeners

## Garden Metaphor

Master Gardener

Wise Advice

Good Seeds



Ordinary Gardeners

Mixed Advice

## *Gardening wisdom is available*

The world outside the garden provides ideas as well as sun and rain; these ideas come from other gardeners.

Some people, master gardeners who have gardened for a long time, have learned much about what works and what is unlikely to work in a garden: what types of soil are better for certain plants, what varieties of vegetables are best suited for a certain soil and climate, and when to plant and harvest. They have not only gardened for many years, they have gardened thoughtfully and have learned from both their mistakes and their successes. Their advice is well worth following.

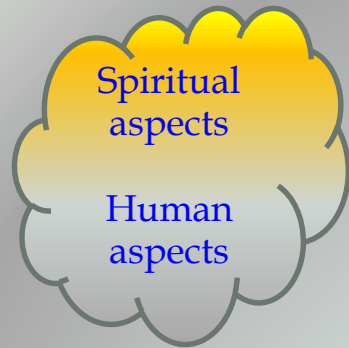
Other people, ordinary gardeners, may have muddled through their gardening and developed some half-baked ideas about how you should garden in your own garden. Their advice is usually quite mixed: some may be worth following and other parts of their advice may even be harmful. They may have such strong opinions and great confidence that their ideas have the aura of truth even when they are quite erroneous.

Your garden will thrive when you take the advice of master gardeners and disregard the unwise advice of lesser gardeners.

# Sages of the Inner World

*Your Inner World*

Sages  
*Accurate Inner Map*  
*Good advice*



Ordinary People  
*Mixed advice*

*Inner life wisdom is available*

Through experience and research, psychologists have come to understand much about your human nature: how you develop narratives; how your attachment style affects your relationships; how emotions like anxiety and anger affect you. This understanding helps you change your inner world if you want to.

Through first-hand experience, spiritual sages have come to understand that your inner world also contains spiritual aspects that are more than your human aspects. The spiritual aspects of your inner world are the capabilities that enable you to encounter a Divine Companion, an inner Someone who is profoundly loving and understanding. The more this relationship is cultivated, the closer you draw to your Divine Companion. Through your own first-hand experience, you can grasp your Divine Companion's beautiful character and then decide to whole-heartedly embrace this precious partnership. When embraced, this relationship bears great fruit: you may easily drop some original but limited narratives and see life – yourself and others – in a broader way, with deeper insight, with warmer compassion.

Without your intentional inner exploration, you could miss this spiritual terrain and your Divine Companion; and you might conclude that your inner world consists only of your human aspects.

# Garden Formation

## *Starting Conditions*

Each garden starts as an unformed plot with some basic features, such as the soil and the local climate. Plants from the surrounding environment predominate in the garden plot. The starting condition of the garden plot is unlikely to provide you with the variety of food that you need to be healthy. You will need to work to shape the garden to your needs and liking.

## *Garden Structures*

Your garden may need some structures to keep out certain things, such as birds or deer that would eat the food that you want to preserve for yourself. You will need a fence to ensure that you have enough food for yourself.

Your garden may need some structures to keep in other things. If the days are not warm enough for growing certain plants, you may need to build a cold frame or a hoop house to raise the temperature in one area of your garden.

## *Garden Maintenance*

Your garden (*The Garden Of Weedin'*) will certainly need regular weeding to remove the unwanted plants that invade and can so easily dominate your garden. Your garden may also need regular

watering. Some plants may need pruning to be most productive while other plants may need a trellis to support more expansive growth.

## *Garden Enrichment*

Sometimes your garden may get an infusion, perhaps some manure from a nearby farm or grass clippings from your yard. Or you may get heirloom seeds from a neighbor's garden.

## *Garden Planning*

Your balanced diet depends on what plants you grow in your garden. If you plant all of your garden plot in strawberries, you won't have the nutrients supplied by green vegetables and potatoes. If you plant only one kind of herb, the taste of your food will have no variety. If you plant only flowers, your home may look lovely but you may will starve yourself of the nutrition you need (or become very dependent on others).

The status of a garden depends very much on the gardener: whether the current garden is improved over the original plot or whether it has changed very little. A garden can be shaped by the gardener in wise ways or foolish ways; a neglected garden seldom produces enough to sustain the gardener.

# Your Formation

## *Starting Conditions*

Each person begins life with some basic tendencies. You were born with a thirst drive to motivate you to seek liquids and a hunger drive to seek nourishment. You were born with curiosity, a desire to learn, and sociability, a desire to connect. These drives may be well balanced or one may predominate.

## *Inner Structures: Your Narratives*

Just as a garden can produce helpful or harmful plants, your inner world can produce helpful or harmful narratives: your ideas about how you should navigate the challenges and opportunities of life. A well-cultivated garden produces food that strengthens you and flowers that beautify your life; a neglected garden can be overcome by noxious weeds and produce few helpful plants. Likewise, a well-cultivated inner world supports helpful ideas for navigating the outer world; a neglected inner world allows harmful ideas to proliferate that lead to personal disasters in the outer world.

Just as a gardener can change what plants grow in a garden, you can also change your narratives by letting go of harmful ideas and embracing helpful ideas. Just as a gardener creates the garden by selecting certain seeds, you can create the life that you want by carefully selecting the ideas and narratives that you nurture.

## *Inner Maintenance*

You accumulate many ideas over the years, some of them helpful and some of them quite harmful. Your inner world will certainly need weeding to remove the unhelpful beliefs and values that can easily invade and dominate your thinking. Helpful but less insistent ideas may need your attention and a regular practice to ensure that they grow stronger.

## *Inner Enrichment*

Sometimes your inner world may get an infusion, such as a new and useful idea. Perhaps a life master offers you some insight into your situation that helps you escape psychological gridlock. Perhaps a spiritual sage opens your eyes to the spiritual possibilities contained within yourself.

## *Discernment*

All of these elements of your inner growth require discernment, the ability to recognize that some ideas are better than others. Discernment is not always easy because some lesser ideas may be much fun in the short term but very harmful in the long run; examples are addictions and abusive relationships which can be very alluring initially before their real nature becomes apparent and then they are often very difficult to abandon.

# Your Formation

## *Inner Planning*

Perhaps you have muddled through life up to this point without much planning, subsisting on the narratives you acquired without much consideration or perhaps without any awareness at all. Perhaps you came to value monetary success or social status without really understanding the better values that you have excluded choosing by those lower values.

The quality and meaningfulness of your life depends on the values you adopt: which things you want most, which things you like if they come easily and which things you want to avoid at all costs. If you value material security more than relationships, you may have more than enough for your material needs but be very lonely. If you are very analytical, you may find your world lacking in beauty. Your highest value, what you treasure and desire more than anything else, strongly influences your life.

Much depends on the values that you, the inner gardener, have adopted. Focusing your attention on meaning and kindness enriches your inner world; you will be motivated to grow and be creative. Focusing your attention on often imaginary fears strangles your inner world; focusing on life's evils may motivate you to lash out at others, even innocent people.

## *Beginning, Middle and End*

Your mind had amazing, barely developed, capabilities when you were very young that enabled you to connect with your parents and form an attachment. In an ideal world, your social abilities would blossom in the loving and attentive environment of a healthy family. But in less ideal circumstances, you may have developed an insecure attachment style if your parents were not loving or if you had social-emotional limitations. Your attachment style may remain fixed for the rest of your life if you do nothing about the default style you developed when you were young and had very limited influence. Or you may reflect (see and recognize your tendencies for interacting with other people) and you may decide to revise your attachment style to serve you better in your current adult circumstances in which you have considerably more influence.

You will need several things to revise wisely: 1) a clear insight into who you are and how you came to be this way; 2) a wise set of values; 3) the courage to make a change; 4) the consistency to live in this new way day in and day out. This example of attachment style illustrates how one facet of your inner world can either grow or remain stagnant. You can also revise many other aspects of your inner world.

# Your Divine Companion

*Spirituality*



*The Material World  
and your Social Connections*

## *Spiritual wisdom and companionship is available*

Spiritual sages have found that, when they opened their hearts to God, a Divine Companion seemed to arrive in their inner world, a companion who was an affectionate and intimate friend, not an abstract notion about God. Their Divine Companion was a more-than-human part of their inner world, clearly not an alter ego who they conjured on their own.

Their Divine Companion was extremely loving and tender yet not stifling or controlling; was much wiser yet was not pushy or domineering. Quite the opposite, their Divine Companion seemed to follow the choices made by each person. Amazingly, their Divine Companion desired to partner with them as equals in terms of decision making even though their Divine Companion was clearly much more gifted.

It can make sense to keep your inner garden well guarded against the harshness of the outer world. But such guardedness is the opposite of what's needed with your Divine Companion; a strong boundary isn't needed to prevent intrusions because your Divine Companion never enters without your desire for such companionship. Unlike the outer world that warrants a strong boundary, a warm and appreciative welcome is more appropriate for your Divine Companion. Your spiritual hospitality – your willingness to trust and cooperate – allows your Divine Companion to more easily enter your inner world and enrich it.

# Key Question

Each person, each inner gardener, faces a key question:

***Who will determine your way of inner gardening?***

There are usually three answers:

- 1) Default (osmosis of prevailing ideas)
- 2) Deliberate choice (your personal values)
- 3) Divine Partner (inner cooperation)

Your response may be some combination of these answers. Your answer to this question is the central decision each Inner Gardener must make. Even if you haven't recognized or articulated this question, you are answering it every minute of your life with the values you hold and the choices you make.

The first and common answer means that you have simply accepted by default the ideas and guidance of whoever is nearby and influential. If you were told that children (or girls or boys; or women or men) must behave in a certain way in order to be accepted and not be shunned, you may have simply bought into that particular belief system without really considering whether it is the wisest way of living your life. If that is your situation, then your answer to the question "Who determines your way of life?" is: the random people who happened to be present and seed you with their ideas.

The second answer means that, after considering the prevailing ideas and beliefs, you thoughtfully evaluated them and deliberately choose your own values and formed your own narratives that fit with your discernment. If that is your situation, then your answer to the question "Who determines your way of life?" is: you, yourself, have selected what is valuable to you and revised your narratives of how life works.

The third answer means that, after considering the prevailing beliefs and your own thoughts, you welcomed your Divine Companion's infusions and reordered the values that motivate your life and formed a new hybrid narrative that encompasses your human and spiritual aspects. If that is your situation, then your answer to the question "Who determines your way of life?" is: both you and your Divine Companion have partnered to forge a human life which includes spiritual values and aspirations.

Often, you may not answer this question with finality and instead vacillate between several answers; you delay making a finalized answer, a consecrated choice. You may have chosen to cooperate with your Divine Companion at times but your cooperation falters when your ego wants recognition and adulation; you may waffle until you fully lay down your selfish wishes.

# Simple Practice

The inner garden metaphor fleshes out the inner world perspective that you have both very human characteristics and you are host to some wonderful spiritual possibilities. Any perspective needs a practice to implement its ideas in your life in concrete ways. The practice described here is meant to suggest a flexible framework, not a rigid format which can't be customized for each individual.

- 1) Notice your inner garden as deeply as possible: the atmosphere of your inner world, the values you hold and the meaningfulness of your life. Write down what you noticed about the core characteristics of your inner world; include what you consider to be true and helpful as well as what seems erroneous and harmful.
- 2) Consider the inner world as mapped by the spiritual sages: that you have a mixed bag of human aspects (strengths and weaknesses) and that a Divine Companion awaits within you. Decide that you are, at the very least, willing to really consider that this inner map is an accurate and true view of yourself which you can validate in your own experience.
- 3) Welcome your Divine Companion into your inner world by cultivating hospitable attitudes and a desire to know your Divine Companion; express appreciation for this wonderful

companionship (praise your Divine Companion's personality, not the blessings you might get from this relationship).

- 4) Deepen your inner dialogue with your Divine Companion (or start that dialogue if you haven't already). Share more: receive as well as speak; be intimate: be more attuned to your companion; trust that your Divine Companion will always treat you well; savor your experiences of deep dialogue with your Divine Companion.
- 5) Patiently look for any inner changes after you do this practice for a while. Has your inner world changed compared to what you noticed in step 1? Patience means allowing enough time for the practice to affect you; and dismissing the allure of magical shortcuts. Be honest about your sincerity in doing this practice: Were you all in? Did you do the practice unselfishly or egotistically?
- 6) Draw a clear conclusion from this practice, this experiment. Did this practice (if done with sincerity and an open heart) validate the core idea that a Divine Companion awaits you in your inner world? If so, solidify your conclusion as something you really trust as true. If not (and you have really considered the core idea and fully done the practice), you may conclude that this map of the inner world doesn't apply to you at this time.



# Beauty, Benefit and Benevolence

Spirit

Divine Companion

Spirit

Psyche

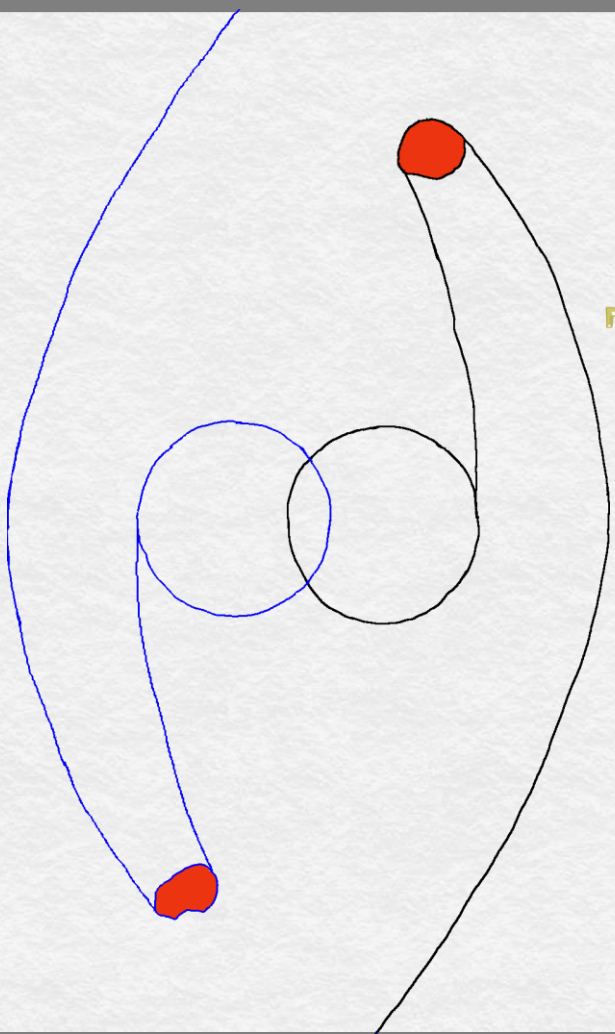
*The Material World  
and your Social Connections*

*Your inner world can be the source of your spiritual beauty*

Knowing all parts of your inner world may give you a sense that it is a place of great *beauty*: that you are a person of ever-increasing spiritual beauty; that God has created you with many beautiful attributes, such as the ability to choose your own values and the ability to live a good and meaningful life. Knowing the fullness of your inner world may help you appreciate that you are a beautiful person. Your Divine Companion's presence and desire for you is evidence of your beauty.

Knowing and using all parts of your inner world may *benefit* you by helping you resolve psychological issues that invariably arise living in an imperfect world. You can make some progress in resolving these issues by your own efforts; you may make amazing progress when you combine your efforts with your Divine Companion's infusions.

Cultivating your inner world deepens compassion and enhances your ability to serve others; a more vibrant inner world makes you a more *benevolent* person. Virtually everyone who experienced the inner embrace of their Divine Companion became much more compassionate and caring than they were before. This is the great circle of spiritual beauty: a most beautiful God reaches out and touches you, awakening you to your own beauty; then you reach out to another person and awaken them to how valuable and beautiful they are.



# The Inner Cultivator

*You are the cultivator of your inner world.  
The condition of your inner world depends on how  
well you understand it and cultivate it.*

# Synonyms for your Inner Cultivator



## *Naming the Inner Cultivator*

The “capability to cultivate your inner world” can sound a bit impersonal; naming it as if it were an inner person can make it come alive and easier to appreciate. Naming this core capability “the Inner Cultivator” personalizes it and hints at the central importance of actively using and continually developing your inner garden. Other personalized names for this capability are: the Inner Director of the play that is continually unfolding on your inner stage; the Inner Mayor of your Interior Castle; the Inner Steward who ensures that your inner house is in smooth working order; the Inner Social Director who strives to bring harmony to your inner tribe of personas.

Psychology uses several different names to describe these core capabilities which are the foundation for so much of what happens inside you: metacognition, executive functioning and ego. These names also hint at a core set of capabilities which supervises other secondary capabilities of the mind, such as musical, reading or building abilities.

Spiritual writers use the word *will* for the core inner ability to cultivate your inner world. The word *will* was introduced long ago to distinguish making a choice because it delighted you rather than doing something that that you were obligated to do and could not decline; the word *will* implies that you are free to choose one thing over another.

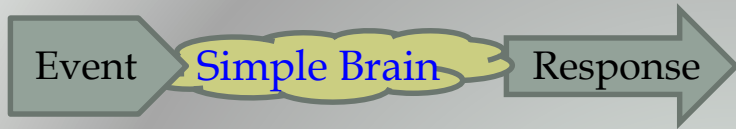
# Basic Animal Mind (No Inner Cultivator)

## *Imagine yourself with no Inner Cultivator*

Bugs have complex patterns of behavior but they don't possess an Inner Cultivator who could reprogram their own behavior. Crabs are robots pre-wired to approach food and avoid threats. This excellent inner program enables them to successfully adapt to many different circumstances; the program needed almost no revising over millions of years because it works amazingly well in so many different circumstances. But a crab, lacking an Inner Cultivator, can't decide to change this program that guides its behavior because it wants to lead a more artistic life; a robot can't reprogram itself.

Some animals can learn new behaviors, such as new ways to find food when their environment changes and their previous food supply is gone or less available; they can learn to use simple tools to get food that isn't accessible otherwise. Such learning usually involves only concrete changes behaviors. They can't reflect on their inner world and change their views.

Without the ability to reflect on the status of your inner world and to then revise it in ways that you prefer, you would essentially be a robot executing programs that were built into your brain or acquired from influential people in your life, ideas that took root in your mind like a virus can take over the operations of a computer without permission.



Outer World

# Small Life (Lazy Inner Cultivator)



*A barely used capacity for inner cultivation makes life smaller*

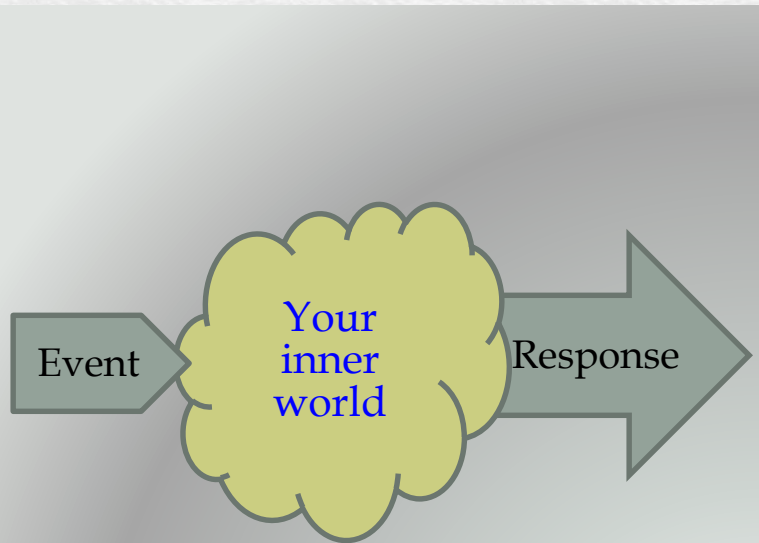
You might be able to do many things with great skill but still lack appreciation of the workings of your inner world. An insect can process information very rapidly: even a fly can easily evade a person with a fly swatter. But it has little or no awareness of itself and how its brain works. A person can be very skilled or talented but barely understand how much influence they have to modify their inner world.

You might use your capability for growth in small ways without seeing very deeply into your inner world; you may have learned new skills, such as playing an instrument or learning a new language. Yet you might not be very aware of your capability for growing and changing in deeper ways, such as being less egotistical and more compassionate.

Humans have an advanced capability: the ability to reflect on their inner world, to reevaluate what matters most to them and revise their narratives based on their reflections about themselves and their reordered values. But, you won't use this capability if you aren't aware of it; without using it, you will live a smaller life than you could be living if you make full use of the tools and skills at the disposal of the Inner Cultivator of your inner garden.

Reflecting and revising are radical upgrades to the inner world!

# Larger Life (Wise Inner Cultivator)



## *Revising your inner world creates a larger life*

Like all animals, your basic programming—hunger drive, sex drive, self-protection instincts—motivates you to do what is essential for continued living. These strong drives increase the odds of your survival but often need taming so that they don't dominate your inner world and your actions. Left untamed, these essential basic drives can easily diminish your life.

Unlike animals, you have capabilities for doing new and creative things with your life. Some people make little use of their creative possibilities and live a fairly repetitive life that closely resembles their earlier life; they may respond almost mechanically to the events and people they encounter. Other people make great use of their creative possibilities to revise their initial and immature narratives and develop new wiser and more adaptive narratives; they live a larger life than the one they created when they were children and had a limited understanding of themselves and life. They respond in new and wiser ways to the challenges and opportunities of life.

Just as a gardener's insight and skills determine whether a garden produces a little or a lot, your understanding and use of your inner capabilities (your inner garden) determine whether you live a small or larger life, whether you respond reflexively like an animal or respond reflectively like a person who is actively shaping their life in accordance with their inner values.



Your inner world  
has three roles in  
the outer world

# Role #1: The Material World

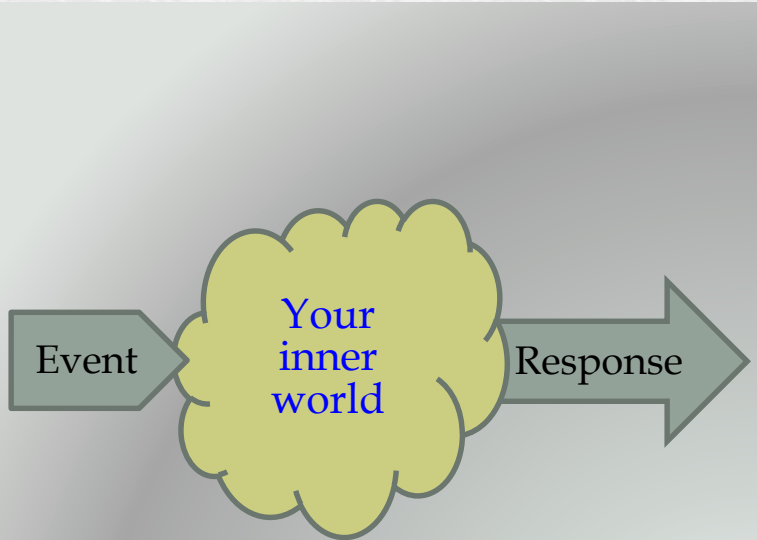
## *Your inner world's first job: responding to life's demands*

You are not merely a spectator in the outer world. Various events are always requiring a response from you: in the form of harsh and challenging circumstances; or in the form of wonderful opportunities.

How you respond to these outer events depends on the narratives in your inner world. When faced with a challenge, will you curl up into a ball or rise to the occasion? When faced with limited work opportunities, will you drop out and disengage or you can seek other ways to earn a living? When tempted by mindless diversions or addictive pleasures, will you succumb or choose activities that don't fritter away your time and energy?

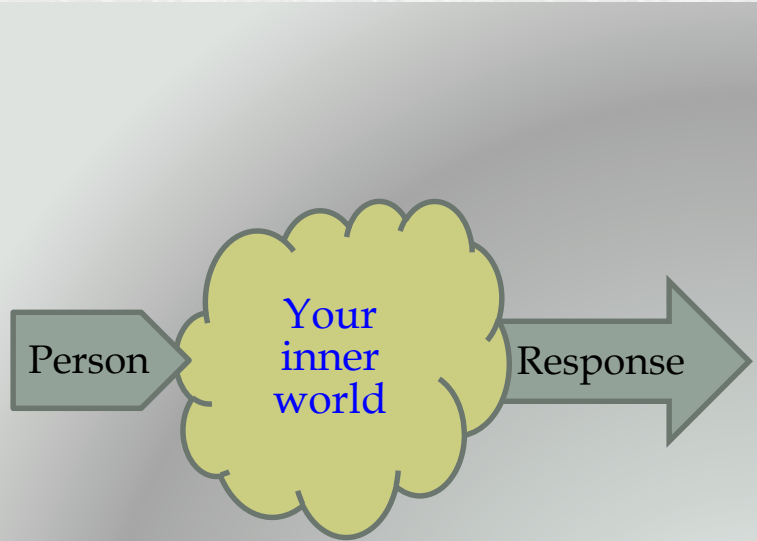
Other events in the outer world are rich opportunities and they also ask a response of you: Will you learn new ideas that broaden your understanding of life or will you opt for easier times and let them pass by? Will you have the courage to explore the new paths of growth or will you timidly let them pass because you think they require too much of you?

Life, events in the outer world, presents you with many different situations and each one poses a question and demands a response from you. The narratives and values of your inner world determine how you answer the questions inherent in the various situations that arise in the outer world and the rich variety of people that you encounter in life.





## Role #2: The Social World



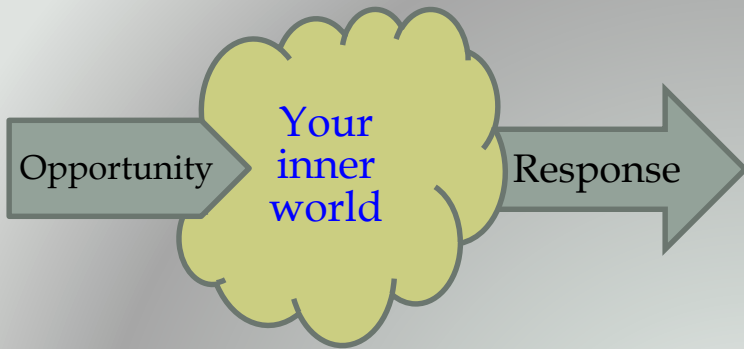
### *Your inner world's second job: responding to another person*

You need to respond differently to the many different people you encounter in the course of your life: some who are harsh and hurtful; others who are helpful and delightfully engaging; and many who are somewhere in between. Responding identically to each type of person is a recipe for disaster. Although everyone is worthy of your respect, you would be wise to engage appropriately with different people.

You can respond to harsh people by setting boundaries to limit the harmful effects of unhealthy relationships. You can respond differently to kind people by being receptive and forming healthy relationships. If your inner world has only a limited repertoire of responses, you might respond the same to everyone, possibly opening to harsh people or withdrawing from caring people. If your inner world is too limited, you can change, enrich your narratives, and form wiser relationships.

If you change your narratives (your level of self-respect, your ideals for connection), your responses to people will change so that you can seize opportunities for meaningful interactions with other people and protect yourself from harmful interactions. Changing your inner world – more wisely cultivating which ideas about healthy friendship you allow to grow in your inner garden – powerfully influences and shapes your life.

# Role #3: Enhancing Growth



## *Your inner world's third job: supporting (or hindering) growth*

The core attitudes of your inner world influence how you respond to people and situations that offer opportunities for growth.

You may have cultivated a growth mindset (Carol Dweck's concept) in your inner world that embraces chances to understand yourself better, broaden your perspective of life or learn new skills. A growth mindset is very curious and isn't derailed by challenges or having to be a beginner in a new activity (having to temporarily drop to a level of status).

The alternative, a fixed mindset, dislikes the vulnerability that is an inherent part of opportunities for growth, situations in which, by definition, you don't know what will happen. Avoiding that risk may feel safe in the short run but it creates a fossilized mindset that dislikes learning new things, exploring new ideas or revising your perspectives; a fixed mindset hinders growth and your ability to adapt to new circumstances.

Your mindset—fixed or growth—is formed by experiences that reinforced your dislike or enjoyment of exploration; it is active long before you encounter an opportunity for growth. This mindset isn't permanently etched into your brain. You can cultivate a new mindset if your current mindset is not serving you well so that you nourish your curiosity and embrace opportunities for growth.

# Your Narratives and the Three R's

Your response to the three commonly encountered events (material, social, growth) is not formed in the instant that you encounter that situation; your responses are shaped by the narratives and values that formed over the entire course of your life. Your narratives are the stories that encapsulate your understanding of how the world operates; your values determine whether you consider a thing or an idea to be good and valuable or whether you consider them to be threatening or of minimal interest to you.

Your longstanding narratives affect three core inner processes that determine how you respond to another person or a situation:

**receptivity:** the aspects of situations and people that you notice;

**reflection:** how you connect the dots (make sense of the world);

**response:** how you act in situations and interact in relationships.

For example, if you see someone who is different from you (receptive step) and you believe that such a person is a threat (reflective step that assigns a meaning to that person), then you are more likely to see them with suspicion and may be prepared to attack them (response). But if you see someone who is different from you (same receptive step) and you believe that such a person is intriguing (reflective step assigns a different meaning to that person), then you are more likely to see them with interest and be eager to get to know them (different response).

In the same way, your response to God is also not formed in the instant that you have a spiritual experience. You may have grown up with specific religious ideas which shape how you interpret your experiences; or you may have developed a more personal reverence for God; or you may have grown up in a secular environment and think of God as primitive relic of an idea only held by unsophisticated people.

Your longstanding narratives about God affect the three inner processes that determine how you respond spiritually:

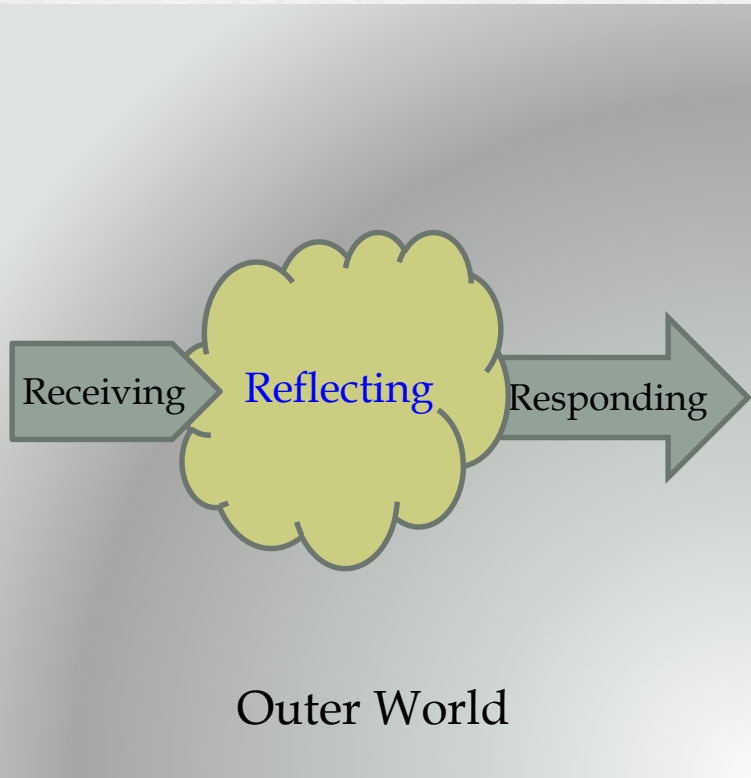
**receptivity:** whether you dismiss or value spiritual infusions;

**reflection:** whether you desire a relationship with God;

**response:** whether you respond cooperatively or dismissively.

For example, if you experience the loving divine embrace in your inner world (receptive step) and you hold fundamentalist views of God (the reflective step), you may feel emboldened to zealously attempt to convert nonbelievers (response step). If you don't believe in God, you may see your experience metaphysically (different reflection) and venerate certain physical things associated with it (different response). If you see God as personally present (different reflection), you may be moved to act more compassionately with others (different response). Your narratives condition how you receive, reflect and respond to your spiritual experiences.

# The Tools of Inner Cultivation: The Three R's



## *Your Inner Cultivator has three essential tools*

How you act in various situations in your outer world is determined by three inner processes: receiving, reflecting and responding. They often operate without you ever noticing or directing them.

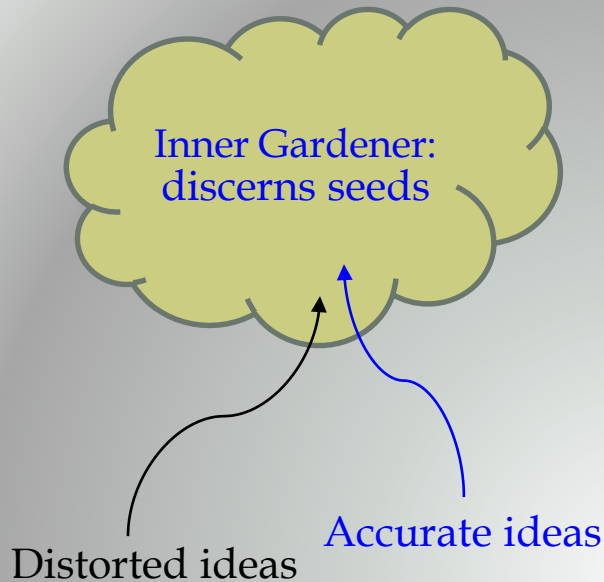
The receiving step is how accurately you understand the situations and people you encounter. If you have been hurt by being criticized early in life, you may be very sensitive to the slightest hint of criticism, perhaps even imagining criticism when no one thinks poorly of you.

The reflecting step is how deeply you discern the accuracy of different ideas. Some people relish and believe information from certain news outlets and despise information from others; some people believe certain ideas about God and automatically dismiss other ideas. Your reflections about what is true can be accurate or distorted.

The responding step is how you choose your response from several possibilities. An introvert may not even consider initiating a conversation with someone new while an extrovert might easily begin a conversation with a stranger.

Each process can be used with minimal skill or with great artistry.

# Discerning seeds from weeds



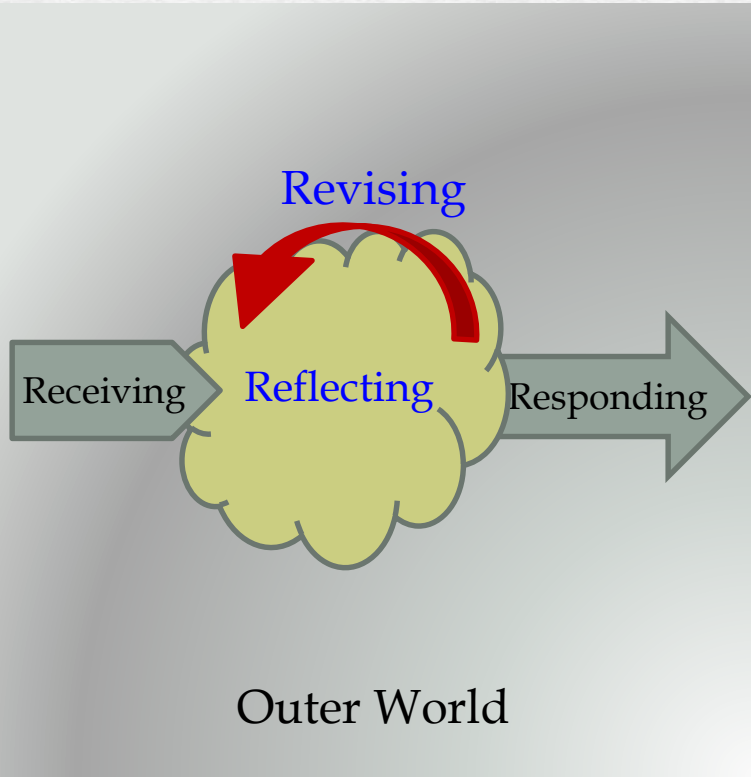
## *Your ability to discern matters a lot*

Noxious plants thrive in certain soils and climates so much that they overwhelm and dominate the ecosystem, forcing out other native plants. Plants, like Japanese knotweed and Scotch broom, are beautiful and may be planted as a prized addition to a garden. But they grow so aggressively that dominate and distort the harmony of the ecosystem. Likewise, you may have adopted some ideas (such as many addictions) which were initially very attractive but eventually wreaked havoc in your life. Carefully considering which ideas you adopt and cultivate is essential for a healthy inner garden.

The opposite could also happen: you might not recognize the value of a strange new plant and, considering it worthless, you might vigorously weed it out so that your inner garden is not “contaminated” by it. But, in some cases, you might actually be rooting out a plant that would enhance your garden. Discernment is the wisdom to recognize what seeds (ideas) are helpful in the long run and what seeds will be destructive if allowed to proliferate.

Many ideas come into your inner world; the ones that thrive determine what kind of person you become; they shape your core values and views. Your life can be shaped by the ideas (seeds) that you have thoughtfully nurtured and cultivated; or your life can be shaped by the random seeds (ideas) that you allowed to dominate your inner world without much thought. The plants from the dominant seeds determine how you respond to people and life.

# The Fourth R: Revising



## *Your Inner Cultivator can modify your narratives*

Your narratives may be so firmly set in place that they seem fixed and immutable but you actually have a great ability to revise them as you grow wiser through accumulated experience. Although you have this wonderful capability to revise your narratives, your old and immature narratives will still shape your life if you don't actively use it.

Your values will determine how you revise your narratives. Values are like a totem pole that places the more desired things above the less desired things. If you place security above connection, your narratives will lead you to live very cautiously and have little trust in others; if you place connection above security, your narratives will lead you to trust others and engage more readily. Reordering your values begins with noticing what you desire and what you dislike.

A gardener who enriches the soil will have a garden that can support a rich variety of plants; a person who wisely revises their narratives and values will have a richer inner life that enables them to live a more meaningful life. If you don't use this great creative endowment, it can weaken and atrophy to the point where your mind eventually becomes like a simple brain: crystallized without the capability to reflect on values and revise your own narratives.



# Specific Tools for Inner Cultivation



# Core Inner Gardening Tools: Values and Choices

**Values.** Gardeners select the plants they grow based on what they value, such as the food the plant produces or the beauty of certain flowers. Likewise, cultivating your inner garden begins with being very clear about what you value, such as growth or security, connection or control, competence or ease. These values will shape the thoughts and ideas that you cultivate in your inner garden.

Your selection of values for your inner garden may flow from thoughtfully reflecting on life from a big perspective view. Some people do this by imagining an end-of-life perspective, the thoughts a person has on their deathbed: what values enlarged their life and what ideals could have been devalued to make room for higher values.

Or your selection of values may have happened almost mindlessly without much thought or reflection. Perhaps you didn't really understand that you even have the amazing capability to select your own values; if so, you may have simply absorbed the values and perspective of the most persuasive voices in your orbit. A passive "selection" of values seldom helps you create a larger life.

*Values bring an order to your goals in life: what do you consider wonderful and more beautiful and what is less worthwhile.*

**Choices.** Your choices flow from your values. If you value the illusion of material security, you may choose extravagant accumulation over the adventurous pursuit of the truth. If you value religious security, you may choose second-hand religion over your own authentic spiritual growth. If you value the comfort of simple relationships, you may accept them rather than forge more meaningful relationships that enhance your mind and soul. You may make such core choices without noticing. Or, having noticed your superpower to be able to design your own inner garden, you may have swapped petty values for deeper values that lead to wiser choices which create a larger life.

Your choices may shift around until you make a "final" decision, until you definitively choose what you value the most. Firmly settled values will be more robust, more immune to being unduly influenced by hard times and external circumstances. Once settled, you may need to make minor revisions to your values but the overall order of what you treasure is firmly set. Finalizing your choice of core values is a very high stakes decision that will have the biggest influence on your path in life.

*Your decisions flow from your values; they what you want to flourish in your inner garden and what you want to diminish.*



# Lower and Higher Drives

Plants have drives: a geotropic drive propels roots to grow downward; a heliotropic drive propels stems to grow upward. These innate drives shape a plant.

Your inner world has powerful lower drives that propel you to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. These innate drives enable you to adapt and survive; they are an innate part of you that doesn't require any effort or cultivation by you.

Your inner world also has higher drives: a hunger for meaning, beauty, adventure and intimacy. Uncultivated, the higher drives are weaker than the lower innate drives.

We are meaning seekers: we want to understand how the world and life works; it's satisfying to connect the dots of life in general and your own personal life story in particular. Your understanding of the meaning of life will always need to grow deeper. Just as your hunger drive motivates you to get food again and again, your meaning drive motivates you to seek ever deeper sense of meaning over and over. You get weak if your hunger for food or for meaning decreases and you stop feeding your body or mind. If you don't create your own sense of meaning, others will step in and fill in that vacuum; often with unfortunate results.

We are beauty seekers; we have an appetite and appreciation the positive quality of things, ideas and people. Your drive for beauty can become dulled if it is satiated with superficial prettiness; you may need to wean yourself off of lower beauty so that you can appreciate deeper beauty. Your drive to seek out beauty may move you to create your own and add to the beauty you see.

We are intimacy seekers: we desire meaningful connections where we will be appreciated when we share our core authentic self. This higher drive can be hindered by fear of sharing and being disliked; you may need to cultivate courage to fully enable this drive. Or this drive may be weakened if past relationships eroded your self-respect; you may need to rebuild your self-respect on a more solid foundation, such as your Divine Companion's treatment of you.

We are inspired by adventure, by the stories and myths of those who have reached for worthy goals that are difficult to attain. Most people love heroic stories of the feats of others but fewer people respond to the possibility that life is issuing a personal invitation to them to embark on their own Epic Journey. Fear, a lower drive that seeks security, may leave you a timid spectator watching others live courageously but never taking single adventurous step yourself.

# Taming Lower Drives, Nurturing Higher Drives

Your lower drives may pull in the opposite direction of your higher drives. Laziness (the strong preference for ease) may overpower your drive to create personal meaning in your life because it takes so much mental effort. Fear (the drive for safety) may short circuit your drive for adventure because taking the risk of an unknown path is too scary. An addiction (the desire for pleasure without effort) may prevent you from seeking spiritual beauty that requires more effort and discipline. But you need not be a passive spectator who simply watches your lower drives dominate your inner world and life.

*Taming your lower drives.* The lower drives to seek pleasure and avoid pain are innate and very powerful, but you are not a robot at the mercy of the built-in programs of your brain. You possess the capability to reprogram and override your automatic responses. Taming your lower drives to be less influential and cultivating your higher drives so that they are more influential are powerful ways to intentionally rebuild your inner world. Like developing emotion regulation in young children, naming a lower drive often helps to tame it because you become more aware of its presence and influence. Naming your higher drive may help you be more aware of the helpful strengths of these drives that are also part of your inner world.

*Nourishing Higher Drives.* Cultivating your higher drives (your desire for growth in meaning, intimacy, beauty and adventure) can energize your spiritual growth. For example, you might cultivate meaning by actively expanding your definition to include something larger than yourself and day-to-day concerns; by actively defining this meaning based on your first-hand experience of spirit in your inner world rather than simply accepting others' ideas about what should be most important in your life.

You can cultivate your drive for intimacy (a desire for a shared life) by clarifying that your highest value (your strongest desire) is to experience and feel the love of your Divine Companion rather than to have worldly success; by allowing the love of your Divine Companion flow into you rather than resisting out of fear that you will be changed (and you certainly will be changed!); by joyfully reciprocating the love that you have so generously been given.

You can cultivate your desire for spiritual adventure by collaborating more fully with your Divine Companion; by courageously following the lead of your much wiser partner rather than resisting because your ego wants to cling to inner power; by bravely embracing the adventure of spiritual growth and committing to the epic journey rather than timidly watching others.

# Tuning up your Inner Tools

Your mind has three core capabilities or tools:

- to receive (or eject) a thought or idea.

- to reflect (or not) evaluate a thought or idea;

- to choose a creative response (or simply drift along).

These core capabilities shape how you react to situations in life and how you interact with the people you encounter. These tools need your attention to ensure that they are in the best possible shape to help shape your inner world; they need your revision capability to ensure that they are operating well.

A thoughtless person not think that these capabilities need to be tuned up, blindly thinking that they are currently functioning optimally; handicapped by their neglected tools, they are limited in how well they understand themselves and how well they can act in difficult circumstances and interact meaningfully with others.

Your capacity for revising your inner world is a fourth tool that can oversee the other three tools (receiving, reflecting, responding). Revising always begins with recognizing how your three core tools are functioning. Then, using your values, you can improve how you receive, reflect and respond; most importantly, you can revise the soil of your inner world so that it is more receptive to the seeds (the love and insights) of your Divine Companion.

Revising is the master tool that allows you to improve and upgrade your three core tools (receiving, reflecting, responding) so that they function better and serve you better in your life, in both challenges and opportunities. Well-functioning inner tools will help you avoid reception errors (excluding truth or entertaining distortions), correct reflection errors (allowing the values of your lower urges to eclipse your higher and healthier values) and response errors (responding as if you have only a few tried-and-true options). You won't have the most meaningful life if your core tools are neglected; you are better prepared to create the kind of life you want when your receiving, reflecting and responding tools are in good shape.

Keeping the highest goal of your life in mind helps when you are tuning up your core tools. The ultimate goal of life is spiritual growth: to draw closer to your Divine Companion so that you are more appreciative of the personality of your Divine Companion; so that you are more collaborative with your Divine Companion's leadings. Of course, the sub-goals of taking care of your responsibilities for yourself and your family are also important; but they are not the highest goal of your life. As you tune up your three core tools, consider how well they are working to assist you in making progress on the ultimate goal of your life.

# Revising Tools

Revising your inner world begins with noticing how your three core tools are currently operating, often operating just out of your awareness. Once you really notice that, you can revise them so that they better serve what you value most.

## **Revising your Receiving Capabilities (what you let in)**

Perhaps you reflexively dismiss certain people or ideas out of hand so that you barely even notice them; and you automatically believe other people or ideas so that you easily pay attention to them. The ideas that you amplify and the ideas you attenuate will shape your views to be more or less accurate; just as importantly, they will affect how well attuned you are to another person.

## **Revising Reflective Capabilities (values, views and choices)**

Noticing how you spend your time gives a very concrete sense of how you value certain things more than others. Discernment is the wisdom to recognize that some of what you currently value really isn't that valuable when considered from a larger perspective; and to recognize that some views are more accurate and helpful than others. Your values are also made clear in your choices for how you respond in certain situations and how you relate to other people. Your choices are more than abstract decisions; they are the inner step that gives rise to your outer actions.

## **Revising Responding Capabilities (creativity)**

Noticing your typical way of responding may help you recognize if you only consider a few options for how you act and barely consider other possibilities; if you are working with a limited repertoire of responses. Perhaps you can respond more creatively.

Relationships, your usual response to other people, may keep you connected or isolated. If superficial interactions predominate and you don't really get to know people, you can try to be more attuned to others and more vulnerable in allowing yourself to be known. Inwardly, you can try to be more attuned to your Divine Companion, to share yourself more fully and be more receptive your Divine Companion's contributions.

Your three core capabilities often need to be revised in harmony: seeing another person as the beloved child of God helps you to value them and think of them compassionately; these values and perspective will foster your concern and caring actions. You create a larger and more beautiful life when you reorder your values to elevate worthy ideals that more wisely will guide your choices of how you live and connect with others. Your path in life will follow what you deem to be most beautiful, by what you treasure most; and you can revise these as you grow.

# Tending to your Inner Soil

You can expend much effort in your life with poor results if your guiding narratives (the soil of your inner garden) no longer fit your circumstances or if they are too small. If your guiding narrative is largely concerned with the material and aspects of life, it's hard to cultivate a vibrant relationship with your Divine Companion.

Often the initial focus of your narratives is too self-centered to be very hospitable to your Divine Companion. Several practical factors interfere with having a spiritually welcoming mindset.

**The allure of the *status quo*.** Your narratives have been extremely helpful at some points in your life; having a guiding narrative, even an immature one, is much more efficient than having to make every choice from scratch whenever you encounter certain situations. You may hold fast to these narratives because they have helped you make sense of life, but every narrative can be improved and deepened. Deviating from your cherished narratives and the *modus operandi* that it includes can seem foolish and scary. If such fear of change neutralizes your higher urges, you will be condemned to a life without growth or deepening.

**The allure of the ego.** You may feel some reluctance to fully welcome your Divine Companion because it means sharing control over your life. This reluctance may come from the (inaccurate)

feeling that no one other than you (your ego) is capable and wise enough to handle the issues that you face. Your ego may balk at the prospect of being “demoted” which fuels distrust of your Divine Companion.

**Ambivalence**—being torn between the known comforts of full control of your current life *versus* collaborating with your Divine Companion on new unknown path in life—can leave you vacillating suspended between a solo life and a collaborative life.

**Consecration**—decisively dedicating yourself to a higher choice—is the antidote to these allures and ambivalence. Strong ambivalence makes your inner soil almost inhospitable for germinating the seeds that your Divine Companion wishes to share with you. Consecration—making a finalized decision to fully welcome and cooperate with your Divine Companion—resolves this bottleneck and creates an opening for your Divine Companion to cross-fertilize your better ideas and values.

You need not make changes to your core narratives on your own: your Divine Companion, who waits for you at the edge of your inner garden, is far wiser and kinder than you, can help you revise how you see yourself and life.

# Same Inner Tools, Many Different Projects

## **Many different projects can be done with the same tool set**

A woodworker can build many different projects with the same set of tools: hammer, saws, screwdrivers, clamps, etc. The project could be a mansion, a gardening shed or a musical instrument. The woodworker chooses what project they will use their tools for.

You can create many different kinds of a life with the same set of inner tools: your abilities to comprehend different ideas and choose the most accurate; to forge connections with others. You could use these tools to build a financially successful life; one filled with adventures; or a loving family and a circle of friends. You can also use your inner tools to harmonize the parts of your mind which can often be at odds with each other; you can face down your anxiety or resolve your ambivalence; you can be the inner boss or cooperate with your Divine Companion. Each person chooses the life that they will build with their set of inner tools.

**The allure of primitive projects.** Using your tools for primitive projects—seeking pleasure, avoiding pain—is alluring. These projects are simple, giving a mirage of mastery. Larger projects may seem too daunting, require much more effort or learning new ideas and ways, so you stick with smaller and familiar projects and don't attempt larger projects.

**The great spiritual project of your life.** The great spiritual project of your life is deciding your collaboration with your Divine Companion. Using your inner tools for this spiritual project means allowing your Divine Companion to guide you in how you discern what narratives are true and what ones are erroneous; to guide you in selecting what high and meaningful values; to guide you in charting your path in life. Your Inner Cultivator decides how much you will cooperate with your Divine Companion in co-creating new views, attitudes and relationships.

The most wonderful project of your life, the most wonderful use of your inner tools, is fully partnering with your Divine Companion. You can begin this project by using your tools of receptivity, reflection and responding to make a small deposit of trust and to nurture a small flame of holy desire which indicate your willingness to open your inner world to your Divine Companion who only enters your inner world when you open yourself to Spirit. Opening yourself to your Divine Companion makes this great project much easier because you no longer need to work and struggle all on your own; if you allow it, your spiritual helper will assist you in this work. Few people seem to take advantage of the great spiritual resources in their inner world that then allow their Divine Companion to work alongside them.

# Skill in Using Inner Cultivation Tools

Your Inner Cultivator may be using these four core tools (receiving, reflecting, responding and revising) skillfully or with no skill at all.

Low skill in receptivity means you only can recognize and receive certain experiences. If you haven't been loved, your receiving may become so restricted that you only take in interactions that confirm that you really aren't worthy of love and you can't receive affection from someone who sees your goodness. As your receptivity grows, you are able to differentiate between loving and unloving messages.

Low skill in reflectivity means you simply believe what everyone else around you believes. Perhaps you may have accepted that others' view of you as bad and unlovable are true; that there is no other perspective to consider. As your reflectivity skill grows, you may understand that some, but not all, people see you that way; you may have some insights that allow you to understand why they saw you in such a distorted way.

Low skill in responding means you can only imagine one way to respond to people and situations. Perhaps you feel you can only be a doormat and accept that others minimize you and your ideas. As your responding skills grow, you become aware of many more possibilities for responding to being mistreated.

Low skill in revising means you can't imagine alternatives to your painful narratives of how you see yourself; as if their painful emotional intensity indicates they are undeniably true.

Your inner tools are used with both psychological and spiritual issues. Without using your core tools, you might simply accept the prevailing views about God: if you grew up in a secular environment, you simply accept that God isn't real. Or, if grew up in a religious environment, you might simply accept your particular teachings about God as true and feel no need for further enrichment.

If you use your inner tools spiritually, you consider what others believe and evaluate it in terms of your own experiences. If grew up in a religious environment, you might explore how people are changed by embracing that religion or how other teachings about God might enrich your spiritual devotion. Using your tools skillfully may enable you to more readily appreciate any gems in what others believe and graciously not focus on smaller differences. Using your skills enhances how you evaluate the spiritual fruits of your own religious beliefs: could you change your inner garden so that you produce a better crop of spiritual fruit such that you are more compassionate? Could you produce more fragrant spiritual blossoms that sweeten your interactions with others?

# Using Your Inner Tool Expands Them

## *Starting Inner Soil*

The quality of the soil in your inner garden is part inheritance, part accumulations from the surrounding environment and part your intentional additions stemming from your values and choices.

Your inner soil (your mind) is shaped by your genetic makeup: some people are innately more adept at understanding and doing certain things: math or music come more easily to some people; social connections or visual comprehension seem to come more easily to others. Although nearly everyone's genetic makeup endows them with these basic abilities, some people seem to be graced with special facility with certain abilities.

## *Leveling up*

Video games often have levels. At the lower levels, you have a limited repertoire of capabilities and tools. If you do well and prove yourself competent with a basic set of tools at lower levels, then you advance to the higher levels of the game where new capabilities are unlocked, giving you new and more useful tools.

The tools of your inner life are a bit like video games tools. Most people begin life with a decent set of basic tools, a sufficient repertoire of inner capabilities for handling much of life. If you use

the basic initial set of mental capabilities well deal with the challenges of life, new capabilities within you become available.

It's clear that your secondary capabilities, such as music and language, expand when you use them by taking on ever more challenging tasks. They don't grow much if you play the same music over and over; or if you don't read more challenging books. The same is true for your core capabilities (receiving, reflecting, responding and revising): they grow when you use them in ever more demanding ways. They don't grow if you use them at the same level over and over.

Enhancing your core capabilities enables you to undertake more difficult challenges in life. But if you only use your core inner tools in primitive and immature ways, your capabilities will barely increase. The capabilities that you don't use atrophy; you won't develop advanced tools if you don't use the basic tools you already have. The capabilities that you use consistently and wisely will get stronger and help develop even more enhanced capabilities. Your inner set of tools is not fixed but, at any point in your life, can grow depending on how well you are using the gift of the tools you currently have.



# Trust Fertilizes your Divine Companion Relationship

## *Small deposits of trust yield great spiritual dividends*

Your Divine Companion lives within you but doesn't forcibly participate in your life; instead, you determine how much your Divine Companion participates in your inner life by your level of trust. One of the main responsibilities of your Inner Cultivator is to decide how much to trust your Divine Companion. Even a small amount of trust initially can enlarge the opening for spirit to infuse your inner world with affection and understanding. Like your inner tool set that grows when used wisely, your relationship with your Divine Companion grows with each deposit of trust.

The results—the fruits—of trusting your Divine Companion illustrate the nature of the spiritual economy. Imagine that there is a spiritual exchange rate that is very favorable to you: a small deposit of your trust returns a great spiritual dividend. Your Divine Companion only asks for something small from you: just a small deposit of your trust, enough that you can experience the wonderful personality of your Divine Companion. Your trust—your openness—is essential because your Divine Companion always respects your wishes and would never barge into your inner world without your invitation to come in. Your trust can be either the bottleneck that hinders your relationship or the catalyst that deepens your relationship.

Your small initial deposit of trust can be refunded; you can withdraw your trust in your Divine Companion at any time. You are not being asked to make a permanent long-term commitment before you have a good idea of who your Divine Companion is. But you should pay close attention to what comes from your investment of trust.

Without reflection and an understanding of what happens in your inner world, you might (erroneously) think that the spiritual fruits that flow from trusting your Divine Companion are simply a coincidence unconnected to your Divine Companion. And then you would not value your relationship very much; you may very likely let that relationship wither from neglect.

But, with insightful reflection, you can see that spiritual fruits flow from trusting your Divine Companion; you then understand how much this relationship enriches your life and makes you a better person. Reflection helps you see clearly how beautiful and valuable your relationship with your Divine Companion is. And then you would be more motivated to do everything possible to nourish that relationship by investing even more trust in your Divine Companion and deepening your connection.

# Who Owns your Inner Garden?

Your inner soil (your mind) is shaped by ideas you learn from people around you: family, community, school and ideas spread by books. These influences may be helpful or harmful. Perhaps you were told that only other people can go to college (“you’re not smart enough”) or start their own business (“you’re not savvy enough”). Perhaps you’ve absorbed the idea that you can do many things if you really apply yourself; or that you aren’t pretty enough, rich enough, charming enough to get a worthy partner.

You may have absorbed the idea that God exists and has a certain character: perhaps aloof and distant or perhaps loving and concerned with you. Or, you may have absorbed the idea that God is a quaint notion from past times when the general understanding of the world was much less sophisticated. These ideas are the influences of people who entered your garden, often uninvited, and left both helpful and harmful ideas in your soil.

If you don’t sift through these influences, it’s as if your garden is virtually owned by others. The dominant plants in your garden are the ideas that grew from the seeds that they planted in your mind. But, if you have removed unwanted ideas and views and if you have watered and cultivated the ideas and views you want, then you have become the actual owner of your inner garden.

If you treasure the infusions of your Divine Companion, then you have another option: you can cede ownership of your inner garden to your Divine Companion. If you think that the contributions of your Divine Companion are wonderful and beautiful, you may welcome everything that your Divine Companion brings to you because it enhances your life so much. And the spiritual sages found that their Divine Companion doesn’t want to be the sole owner of your inner world but to share ownership with you.

Your inner garden might be actually owned by others if you haven’t revised it; or you might be the owner if you sifted through your beliefs; or your Divine Companion might be the co-owner if you have joyfully offered ownership to your Divine Companion.

What a waste of an extravagant gift from God: to not assume full ownership of your inner world with its wonderful capacities that endow you with chance to have a beautiful and meaningful life.

What a wonderful gift you can give to God in return: to share ownership of your inner garden with the wonderful Divine Companion; to be full partners with the one who created you with such an amazing endowment.



# Two Aspects of the Inner World and the Outer World

# Two Aspects of the Outer World

Spirit



World

## *Life has material aspects and spiritual aspects*

The material aspects of life are concerned with getting the necessities of life and negotiating relationships. Once you have secured these basics, you may continue pouring energy into accumulating much beyond the basics. Once you have forged a few close relationships, you may pour energy into gaining a higher social position. Material goods and relationships are essential for life. But these needs can also morph into outsized cravings for much more beyond what is necessary: into an excessive preoccupation with getting more and more material goodies and higher and higher social status.

The spiritual aspect of life is concerned with a meaning beyond the purely material and social aspects of life. Spirituality is the search for a personal experience of God that includes an intellectual understanding of God but goes further: spirituality involves a deeply personal relationship with God, one of ever increasing intimacy and collaboration. Spirituality often involves reordering your values so that your spiritual desires are elevated over your material preoccupations.

This image shows your inner world as positioned between the material aspects and spiritual aspects of life; and it suggests that a well-cultivated inner garden can help you navigate both aspects of life.

# Two Aspects of your Inner World

Spirit



World

## *Your inner world mirrors the two aspects of the outer world*

Just as the outer world has material and spiritual aspects, your inner world has psychological and spiritual aspects. The psychological aspects of your inner world are your thoughts, urges and feelings of human origin: your narratives that guide your approach to living, your dreams and your fears.

The spiritual aspects of your inner world include your ability to discern distorted ideas about God from more accurate ideas; your desire for a life more than getting material security and having social connectedness; your understanding of life from a more-than-material perspective.

Your inner world can be a hybrid of your psychological and spiritual aspects (show by the yellow merging with the gray in your inner world). You can build a bridge in your inner world that connects both your psychological and spiritual aspects. Your initial capability to perceive and process the spiritual aspects of life, like your initial capacity for language, requires cultivation to develop your spiritual receptivity. Imagine how handicapped your inner world would be by the lack (or the underdevelopment) of a capability such as language. In the same way, your inner world can be handicapped by the lack (or the underdevelopment) of your spiritual receptivity. Your inner world is enhanced when you continually become better at sensing and valuing the spiritual aspects of your inner life.

# A Mainly Psychological Inner World

Spirit

Your  
Inner  
World

Painful  
experiences

Positive Experiences

World

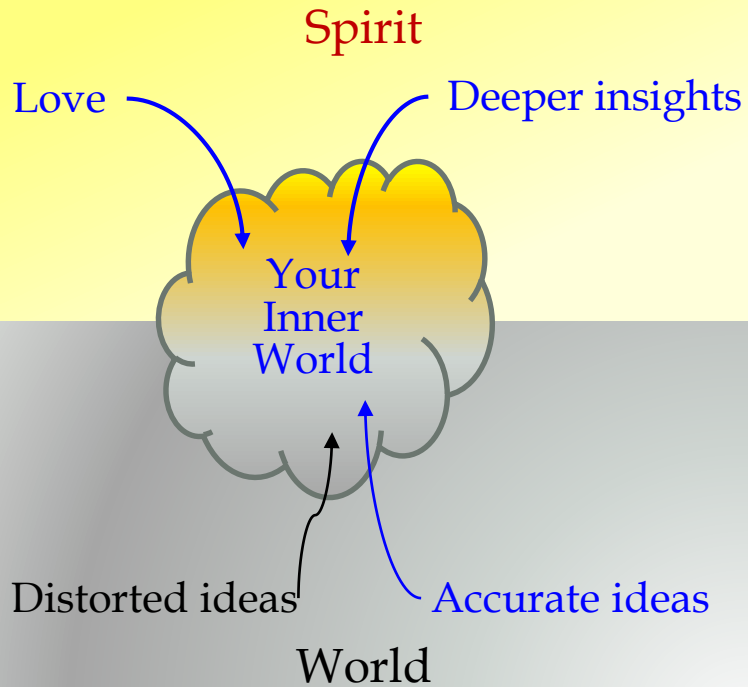
*Without active cultivation, negative experiences dominate*

The larger gray rectangle in this image represents when material circumstances have the most powerful impact your inner world. The larger proportion of gray in the inner world represents your default mindset in which the material ideas you absorbed from the outer world are the main influences on the narratives you hold in your inner world. Secular views shape how you see yourself and form the template for how you think you should interact with others.

Painful early experiences in the outer world, such as an unloving family, can easily come to dominate the your inner atmosphere. You may have absorbed the idea that you are unlovable unless you are a people pleaser (an erroneous idea that doesn't lead to healthy relationships). This idea may come to motivate much of how you interact with other people. This idea may be so deeply rooted that it seems impossible for you to even question its validity, let alone imagine that you could replace it with a better narrative.

Positive experiences in the outer world can also shape your narratives; unfortunately, positive influences are easily displaced by negative ones. But you can shift which ideas take root in your mind. You need not be a passive recipient of the various ideas (seeds) from the outer world. You can cultivate your inner garden by pulling out inaccurate narratives (weeds) and nurturing accurate and helpful narratives (desired plants).

# Integrating your Psychological and Spiritual Aspects



## *Spiritual influences balance worldly influences*

Your inner garden can receive both worldly and divine seeds. The divine seeds may become a spiritually inspired perspective if you choose to germinate and cultivate them in your inner soil. A spiritual perspective can grow into a helpful and inspiring view of yourself and life. Spiritual seeds are cultivated with a reverence for their spiritual beauty. Not everyone values spiritual seeds because their ego may (unnecessarily) feel demoted. You always have the choice to include or exclude these spiritual seeds, a choice to accept or ignore God's invitation to inner partnership. The fruit of spiritual seeds includes an enhanced inner poise and an outer increase in compassion.

Spiritual views affect your psychological views (represented by the yellow-orange color spreading throughout the inner world). Accepting the infusion of spiritual seeds (adopting an inner stance that honors God) affects the plants (narratives) that grew from material seeds. Your original narratives that once seemed so important may come to feel much less valuable; they may lose their prominence and almost naturally fade into the background in your inner garden. Better ideas—spiritually influenced ideas—may arise in the places that lesser ideas once occupied. Your relationships may be enriched. The spiritual and material aspects of both the inner world and the outer world are not at battle with each other; instead, they can be harmonized with your help.



Modes of cultivation:  
default, directed and dyad



# A Cultivated or Neglected Inner Garden

Inner cultivation requires awareness (noticing the features of your inner world) and intention (thoughtful choices about your desires for your life). Awareness and intention create an inner garden that produces what you want. Otherwise, your inner garden will consist mainly of whatever random ideas, many of them distorted, fell into your mind and took root but produce nothing nourishing for you.

Superficial awareness only notices the vague contours of your inner world and its workings. Deeper awareness grasps the nuances of your inner world and the processes that determine how your garden grows. Kind noticing is much more helpful than critically noticing what happens in your inner world.

Half-hearted inner intentions aren't strong enough to counter the powerful currents of the outer world; you will forget your good intentions when an alluring opportunity opens up; you will likely drift along with the prevailing views rather than forge your ideal course through the world. In contrast, full-hearted intentions can sustain your inner world even in very harsh circumstances so that your own choices, not other factors, create the life you want.

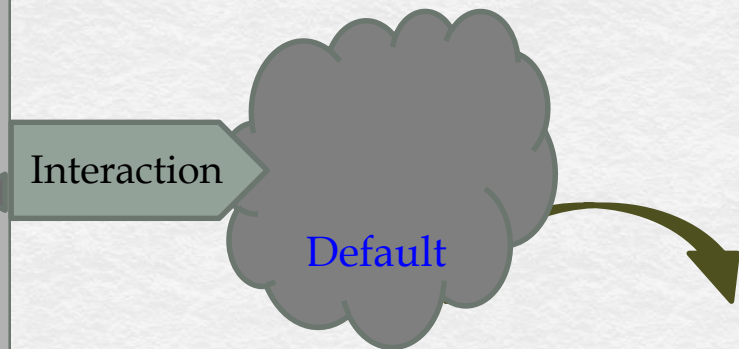
Some behaviors, like sitting on a sofa and eating chips while

watching TV, require no awareness or intention; you simply drift along with the currents of your environment. Your lower drives, laziness and hunger, are strong enough to sustain these behaviors.

Other behaviors, like getting up from the sofa and exercising during commercials, require your awareness and intention: you must be aware of the harmful effects of too much sedentary activity and unhealthy food. Once you decide that you don't want these harmful effects, then your intentions in your inner world enable you to make choices that counteract your lower drives and the currents in the outer world that can pull so strongly. Better-than-default behaviors won't happen without your awareness and intention, without your active noticing and choosing.

Cultivators of the inner world actively use the inner cultivation tools of awareness and intention, of noticing and choosing. Just as a garden needs care throughout the seasons, your inner garden needs continual tending (ongoing awareness and intention) to ensure that your inner world isn't distorted by outer forces. If you are a lazy inner cultivator, you forfeit the precious opportunity to lead the life you wanted because you let these essential capabilities atrophy. Others, not you, assume control of the direction and tone of your life.

# The Default Mindset in Relationships



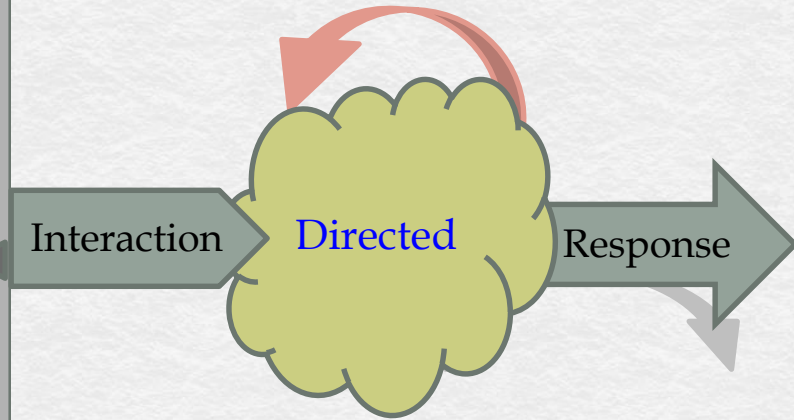
## *Minimal inner direction lets your defaults guide your life*

Perhaps your family dynamics imprinted you with a strong belief that you need to be a people pleaser (or a winner or quiet or beautiful or ...) to be loved. You quickly learned what behaviors seemed to get affection and what behaviors result in distance or anger. Unfortunately, patterns developed early in life are usually immature and often become harmful later in life (downward response arrow). Early views and patterns are usually deeply ingrained, often lasting many decades. You may (falsely) think that they are unchangeable inner programming.

The Gottmans found several default relationship responses that destroy love: contempt (you disgust me), critique (attack the other), withdrawal (a cold neutral stance), defensive (dig in, double down). These ways of engaging are often rooted in default mindsets formed very early in life.

You may respond in these default ways in relationships if you have not used the great endowment of the inner garden: your innate capability to revise your narratives. If so, you will navigate relationships using your default beliefs; like using an out-of-date map, your life will be dominated by old ideas rather than by ideas that reflect your current situation. Your relationships will be dominated by beliefs that apply more to people in your life from long ago than the person you are with now.

# A Self-Directed Mindset



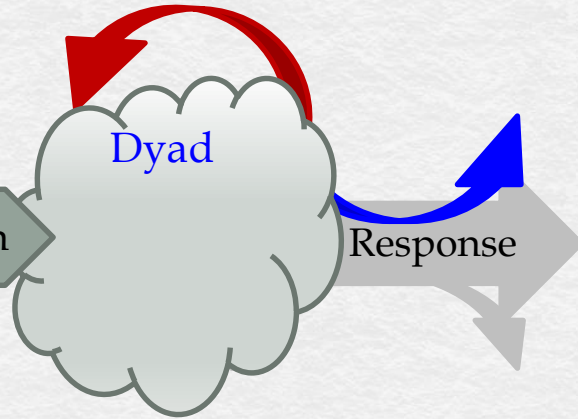
## *Self-led cultivation on your own counteracts your defaults*

A self-directed mindset (faint upper red arrow) creates a slightly cultivated inner garden (the inner world is beige rather than the dark gray of the default mindset) in which you direct your inner world using your own insights and strengths rather than passively accepting the narratives implanted by circumstances and other people from long ago. Your response (horizontal arrow represents) is shaped more by your own values than by others' values; the default response is muted (the grayed out downward arrow).

Compared to your default mindset that simply accepted that you must accommodate others if anyone is to love you, your self-directed mindset understands that there's something not quite true about that view of relationships. You examine your narratives and adopt another narrative of relationships in which you expect that your partner in an intimate relationship to be considerate and respectful of you. You catch yourself in situations when your original self-effacing mindset is activated and you stop yourself from responding in your old default of being accommodating. You have freed yourself somewhat from your original narrative about relationships and elevated your game but you can still grow even more.

# A Dyad-Directed Mindset

*Another Person*



## *Another person helps you be a better inner cultivator*

You can make some changes to your inner world on your own, but a wise person or a healthy partner can help you make even more profound changes. Partnered with such a person, you begin to see yourself more clearly and imagine new and different ways of connecting more deeply with another person. The top curved arrow, indicates the mind acting on itself (a darker red showing deeper insight and more active cultivation of your inner world; the change in the inner world is indicated by a shift to a light gray from the beige color of a mildly directed mind).

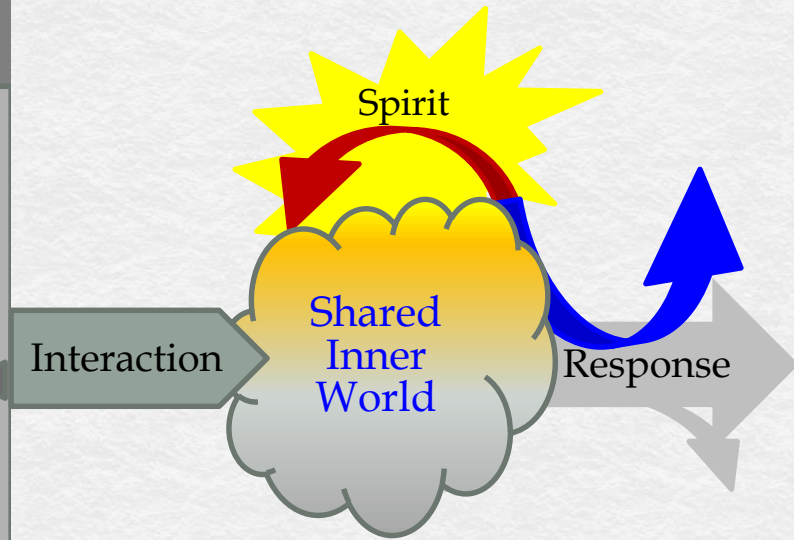
Your choice of your partner in making changes matters a great deal: a foolish companion may simply reinforce the original views that keep you stuck. A kind and understanding partner uplifts your narratives; empathizes with your original narratives but focuses on extending them rather than annihilating them. Together you develop a larger narrative emerges of what it means to love and be loved. Your default narrative loses much of its power in the light of the new narrative; a deeper assurance emerges that helps you blossom and nourishes an amazing growth spurt. What a relief that you don't have to cultivate your inner world all by yourself! And, together with a healthy partner, you can experience more joy in loving and being loved.

# The Big Exception

The previous page describes the benefit of welcoming and accepting the influence and assistance of another person in revising your narrative and elevating your relationships. Cooperating with a healthy partner often produces good fruit that would be difficult to produce all on your own; such collaboration enhances your inner world and helps you be more attuned and more affectionate. Healthy relationships help you see and experience your innate goodness; they enrich your inner world compared to how it was before the relationship.

But welcoming another person's views doesn't apply to partnering with an abusive person; partnering with a person who has extremely limited capability for forming healthy, supportive and loving relationships will hurt you, possibly for a very long time after the relationship ends. Cooperating with such a person and believing their distorted ideas will likely produce toxic fruit that poisons your inner world with the idea that you are a very bad person and leaves your inner world worse off than before the relationship.

# Dyad Mindset with your Divine Companion



## *Partnering with your Divine Companion in inner cultivation*

Just as you can partner with a wise person in the outer world, you can also partner with a wise spiritual person in your inner world, your Divine Companion (the yellow starburst). Sharing your inner world with your Divine Companion enhances your revising capability (the bright red curved arrow). If you are receptive to your Divine Companion, spiritual perspectives begin to color your mindset (the yellow color of the spirit enters your inner world). You become a better cultivator of your inner garden when you listen to your Divine Companion who is very wise about your inner world and how to enrich it. Your inner world, now enlightened and enlivened, is better able to respond lovingly (the blue arrow) even in difficult circumstances.

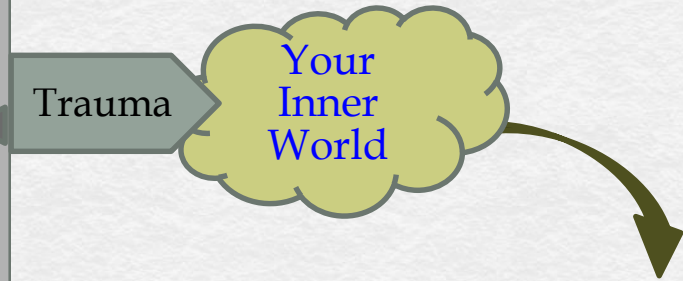
Your Divine Companion brings not just insight and understanding but a flood of affection; your inner spiritual partner is not a cold impersonal tutor but a warm and loving companion who has high hopes for who you can be. Spiritually enriched, you can now work with a full tank of love and be more able to have deeper compassion for your human partner and other people; you appreciate their strengths and see their limitations as scars from their experiences, not fatal flaws in their personality. You are moved to graciously help them grow so that they are living their largest and most meaningful life.

# A Trauma Example

## *Trauma and the uncultivated inner world*

Trauma, an extremely negative event in the outer world, takes many forms: neglect, violence, deprivation. The lingering aftermath of trauma can be very demoralizing and profoundly change how you see yourself and the world. A trauma can remain very much alive in your inner world long after the traumatic situation has passed; trauma often restricts your inner world to a fraction of what it was before the trauma (the smaller inner world in the image). After trauma, you might continue to be very fearful in relatively safe situations years later; you might shrink back from life or avoid meaningful relationships; you might readily become angry (the red downward arrow). These reactions are very understandable given the powerful impact of trauma.

Trauma in the outer world leaves very powerful seeds in the inner world; if these seeds (negative ideas and emotions) take deep root in your mind, they will crowd out other plants (more positive ideas and emotions). When fallout from trauma predominates your mindset, it is very hard to appreciate other positive experiences in life or enjoy even loving relationships. Without cultivating your inner garden, trauma can torture you for a very long time: tunnel-vision will focus your attention on (the very real) negative events and blind you to the equally real positive people in your life. Without inner cultivation, trauma constricts your inner world to a much smaller and darker place.



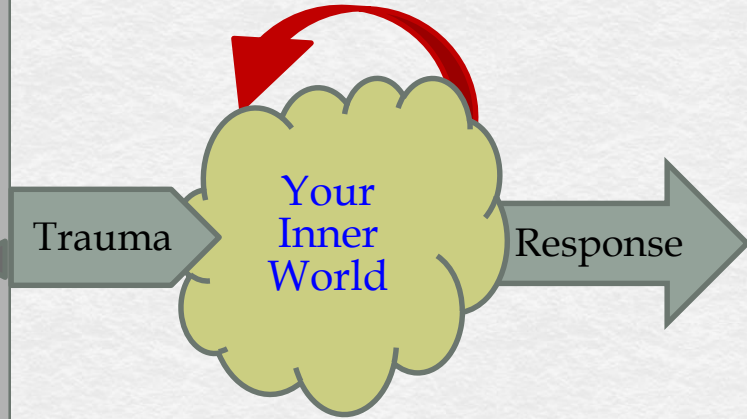
# Self-directed Mindset and Trauma

## *Trauma and the cultivated inner world*

Trauma powerfully impacts everyone, but each person's response to trauma can be quite different. After the initial impact of the trauma, some people are able to resume a life with less of the fallout from trauma, such as ongoing anxiety or aggression (horizontal gray arrow).

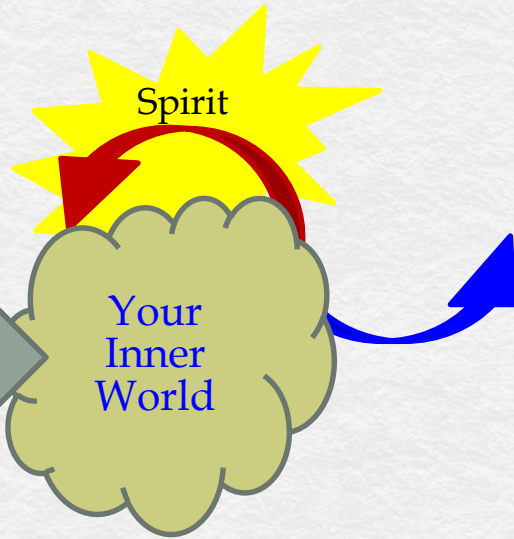
Their inner garden is less distorted by trauma because they have cultivated a more resilient inner world by actively revising their narratives (the red arrow at the top of the image). They are still able to maintain valuable ideals that give meaning to life even in the harshest conditions; having affectionate and supportive relationships often helps protect a person from the lingering effects of trauma. No one is immune to trauma but some people are less impacted by it. The fact that some people can weather trauma and harshness reflects the power of your inner world to help you in tough situations and difficult times.

You have likely experienced the lingering negative effects of hard times and difficult relationships. Cultivating your inner world involves validating what happened without letting it be the most powerful experience that shapes you. Strengthening your positive values and enlarging your narratives during smooth times helps prepare you to cope with trauma later in life.





# Dyad-Directed Mindset and Trauma

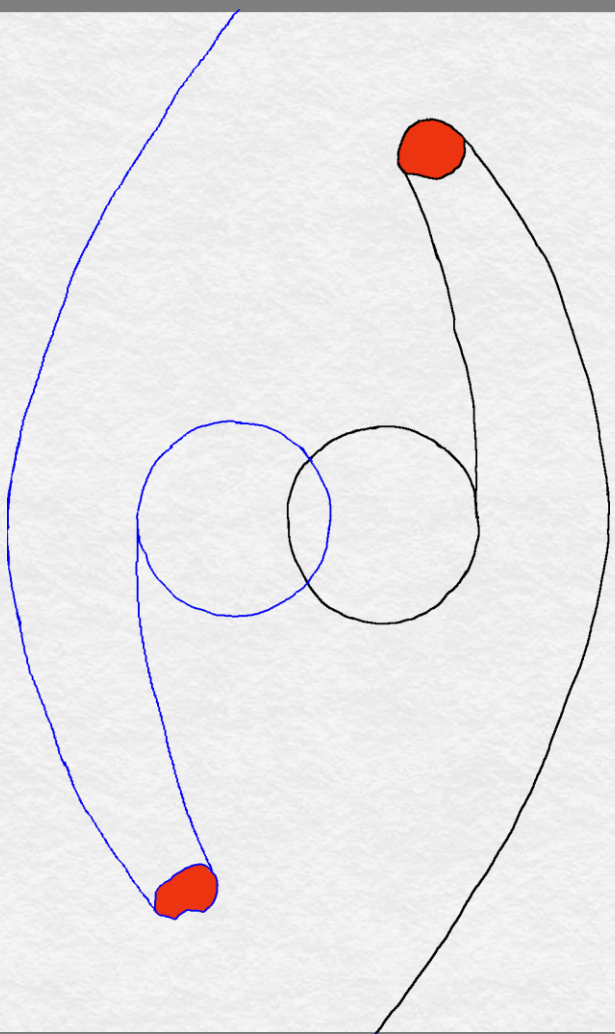


## *Partnering with your Divine Companion in inner cultivation*

A few people are even able to thrive after experiencing severe trauma: they become highly motivated and deeply compassionate even when they are horrifically treated. Some such people, like Viktor Frankl, attribute their ability to survive during and after trauma to a deeply held meaning to their lives. He had a deep conviction that his ideas would someday be heard and appreciated; he also hoped that he would be reunited with his family. Those who had something meaningful to live for had an anchor that stopped them from being washed away by the powerful currents of despair that trauma brings.

For others, their flourishing in terrible conditions seems to be related to a deeply felt experience of being personally loved by God even as they were despised and miserably treated by other people. The warmth of their Divine Companion's love more than cancelled out the coldness of their outer world; a few even had deep compassion for their sadistic prison guards.

Their experiences are an example of how your inner world can be rich and beautiful even when your outer world is full of cruelty and suffering. In partnership with your Divine Companion, the possibilities for your inner world need not be restricted by the limitations and imperfections of your outer world.



# Your Divine Companion Relationship

*A Divine Companion lives quietly in your inner garden  
and invites you into intimacy  
and offers you an infusion of clarity  
and loves you with a pure affection .*

# Inner Relationships

The idea of having an inner relationship with someone within you, someone you can't see, may seem strange at first. But, if you pay attention to your ongoing self-talk, you may notice that you already have at least one inner relationship (and possibly several relationships) with someone you can't see but who influences your inner world a great deal.

Perhaps you notice frequent and extremely critical comments in your self-talk, indicating the presence of someone often called an Inner Critic who is constantly throwing your limitations and failings in your face. Or you may notice intensely pessimistic comments in your self-talk, indicating the presence of someone who might be called an inner Eeyore who casts doubts on your fondest dreams. Or you may notice "the people who made the rules are idiots" comments in your self-talk, indicating the presence of an inner rebel who has no faith in authority figures. Often these voices have been part of your inner world for so long that you aren't really aware of them as a separate persona within you; they just seem like your voice. Just noticing a voice helps you get a sense of how an unseen other can be a very powerful presence in your inner world. Noticing such a presence within yourself may make the idea of having someone within you and cultivating that inner relationship more comprehensible.

Inner self-talk is often a monologue, the voice and views of an dominate persona who represents a certain narrative, often immature ideas from long ago repeated without much reflection or your conscious buy-in. Such self-talk often forms a rut; it seldom changes without effort on part to change its message and tone. Shifting your self-talk from monologue mode to dialogue mode is a powerful way to create change via an exchange that engages the inner persona and learn more about their beliefs and how they were formed; the goals that the persona is trying to achieve with these beliefs (often protecting you from a harsh world); how the persona feels (anxious, cocky, overwhelmed and overburdened, etc.); recognizing the past contributions and help of the persona as well as their current limitations. Worthwhile dialogue begins with respecting the persona and moves towards collaborating with them rather than repressing them.

In shifting your self-talk towards an inner dialogue rather than letting one persona dominate in a monologue, you become an active director of your inner conversation; you can create a new tone for the inner relationship with that persona. Just as a productive garden doesn't happen without significant effort, a productive inner conversation won't happen without your thoughtful choices and wise effort.

# Inner Spiritual Presence

The spiritual sages had the experience of sensing that a spiritual person dwelled within them, in their inner world. This spiritual person was different from their personas, not slightly different but radically different. Just as you can tell one friend from another based on their personality traits, the sages could tell that their Divine Companion was quite different from their own personas. It was as if their inner world was home to both themselves and their indwelling companion, a spiritual person who was inside them but also completely distinct from themselves, their human nature.

Just as you get to know a friend from spending time together and talking, you can get to know your Divine Companion by expanding your self-talk from a conversation among your human parts to a conversation that welcomes and includes your Divine Companion.

Spiritual sages described their Divine Companion as a person who was waiting all along in their inner garden, waiting to be noticed, waiting and hoping that the Inner Gardener would nourish inner an relationship. Their relationship with their Divine Companion began with noticing their inner world more closely. If you don't pay attention and notice, you might miss that such the wonderful companion who dwells within you.

In the outer world, after you have noticed and talked with a person, you then decide whether you value that person and want to develop that relationship further or whether you were unmoved and are content to let that relationship fade away. In the same way, after you have noticed and sensed the presence of your Divine Companion, you then decide whether you value your companion and want to develop that relationship further or whether you were unmoved and are content to let that relationship fade away.

A meaningful relationship requires spending time together: sharing your thoughts and feelings; your values; your frustrations and dreams; the more you share, the deeper you grow your understanding of your Divine Companion. Withholding your time and how much you share limits your sense of this inner companion. If you spend no time noticing and sharing with your Divine Companion, it will be as if you have no such companion.

Also like outer relationships, deepening this inner relationship requires you are receptive as well expressive, that you are listening well and really being attuned to your Divine Companion so that you can have a deeper appreciation of your Divine Companion's lovely character.

# Inner and Outer Infusions

Your narratives—your views of yourself and life—often begin as an infusion of an idea from another person: perhaps a critical comment from a parent became a persona within you who sees you in a very negative light; or perhaps the support of a friend became a persona who encourages you to trust yourself even when others doubt you and your thoughts. Such personas are examples of inner relationships that grew from the infusions of another person in the outer world. You may have unwittingly elevated them and their ideas so much that you never question whether their ideas are accurate or useful.

Your Divine Companion is not an outer person, but an inner personal presence who can infuse your inner world and uplift your thoughts and attitudes. Unlike personas who often influence you without your consent, your Divine Companion never influences you without your welcome and consent. The source of these infusions is recognized by wonderful spiritual fruit they bear.

Your core capabilities (the four R's: receiving, reflection, responding, revising) that help you navigate life also help you cultivate an inner world that is welcoming to your Divine Companion. Using your receptive capabilities means that you recognize and discern spiritual infusions as distinct from the

influences of the world. Using your reflective capabilities means that you appreciate the beauty of the character of your Divine Companion and value the truth and goodness of the seeds infused into your mind by your Divine Companion. You weave your Divine Companion's perspective into your own narratives. Using your responding capabilities means that you express your love for and devotion to your Divine Companion and praise your Divine Companion's loveliness; using your responding capabilities also involves offering the fruits (compassion and caring) that came from these spiritual infusions to others.

Using your revising capability means that you can apply these three capabilities to being spiritually welcoming if you are not already; or you can use your revising capability to become even more spiritually welcoming if you have already opened your heart to your Divine Companion. Loving and desiring your Divine Companion opens the channel where your Divine Companion can enrich your inner world with affection and clarity. This opening creates an upward spiral: the more you welcome your Divine Companion, the more your inner world is nourished and uplifted; and then you can be even more welcoming. As your collaboration with your Divine Companion deepens, you contribute much more to the world and the people in your life.

# Your Inner World is Home to You ...



World

## *Your psychological mind and experiences*

Your inner world is home to you, to your human self: all of your baggage and issues, all of your thoughts and emotions, your relationship history and your attachment style, all of the beliefs you have adopted or developed to make sense of your life. You are powerfully shaped by the defaults wired into your brains: it's easy to become anxious about specific things after a bad experience, like becoming afraid of driving on all interstates if you've had a very bad accident on an interstate. It's easy to adopt an angry and aggressive stance to life if you think that you have been shortchanged by how others have acted and mistreated you.

Your inner world is inescapably powerfully impacted by your external life circumstances ("World" in the illustration). But you can choose to be an even more powerful influence to reshape your inner world by actively revising and updating your narratives and values (an active "Inner Cultivator" in the illustration). The mainly tan color of the inner world shows a person whose mind is aware of their narratives and is capable of revising them to lead a larger life and have more compassionate relationships. An active Inner Cultivator can counteract the powerful influences of your negative experiences in the outer world. An active Inner Cultivator can cultivate a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere in your inner world.

# ... and your Divine Companion

Spirit



World

*Your Divine Companion can be present if you are welcoming*

Your inner world is also home to a divine person who dwells within you who wants to know you and accompany you through all that you face in life. Those who have experienced this inner person feel as if a dear friend, not an abstract ideal or impersonal presence, lives within them. By cultivating a welcoming inner attitude, their experience of their Divine Companion was an intimate friend, even an intimate lover. Their first-hand experiences (not second-hand accounts) helped them come to know the wonderful character of their inner friend.

Unlike inescapable and clear psychological experiences, you can easily miss the presence of your Divine Companion because your Divine Companion is not intrusive and only enters when you desire the divine inner companionship. If you don't seek a connection with your Divine Companion, then your Divine Companion respects that choice of yours and remains silently present just outside your inner world, remaining there in case you later become interested in developing a friendship. But if you seek and welcome your inner companion, even tentatively, you signal that you want a relationship with your Divine Companion who will then enter into your inner world. With a welcoming person Inner Cultivator, the Divine Companion can assist you in uplifting the inner world (represented by the more vibrant orange colors in the inner world).

# The Inner Relationship



*Your Divine Companion wants to share your inner world*

This image illustrates your Divine Companion reaching down to you as you are reaching up to your Divine Companion. You are represented by the lower beige figure; your Divine Companion is represented by the upper yellow figure. You are reaching up with reverence to touch the heart of your Divine Companion who is simultaneously reaching down to touch your heart, to know and experience what you are living through. This mutual reaching out to each other is the intimate embrace of sharing your inner life. As you reach for each other, your minds overlap forming a highly creative shared zone (the gold vase-shaped area between the two overlapping circles) which is where co-creations (the bright yellow light in the middle of the gold vase) are made with contributions from both of you. The core co-creations happen in your inner world, such as deeper insight and inner poise; the core co-creations enhance how you act in your outer world, such as having deeper compassion and willingness to serve others. The central parts of this image (the yellow and beige areas) are your inner world, what happens inside you; the blue upper left area represents the spiritual aspects of the outer world and gray lower right area represents the material and social aspects of the outer world

The symbol is explained in more detail in another PDF booklet, "The DC logo booklet" available at [divinecompanion.org/downloads](http://divinecompanion.org/downloads).



# Knowing Each Other



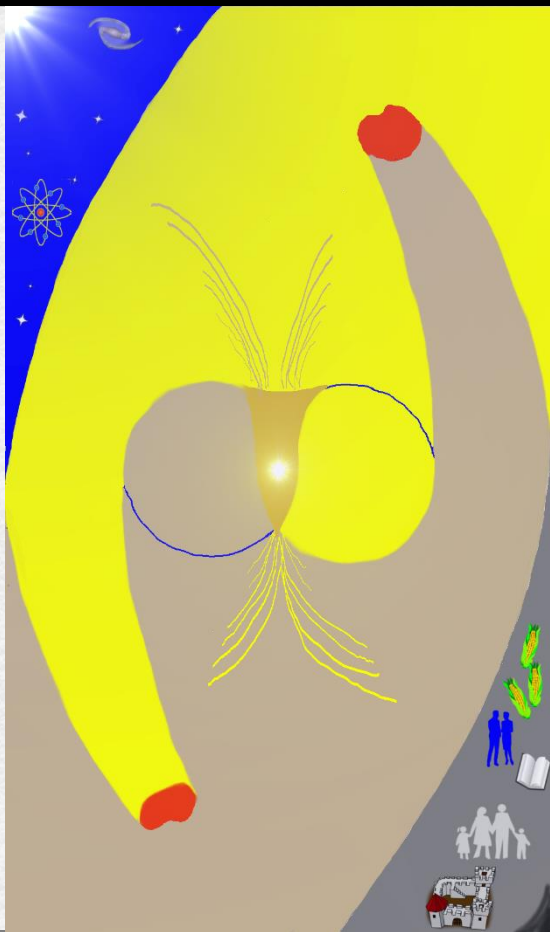
*Any relationship requires knowing the other person well*

Getting to know another person usually involves spending time together, often talking and doing things together. This requirement also applies to your inner world: you can't know your Divine Companion without spending some time together. Reading books about other people's experiences with their Divine Companion can never be a substitute for your own inner dialogue, a dialogue that leads to including your Divine Companion in your inner life, your struggles and your dreams. As you spend time with a friend, you come to know their character: Strong but aloof? Artistic but hard to grasp? Domineering or cooperative? Wise but too advanced for you to understand? Spending time with your Divine Companion, you will come to know the wonderful divine character: vibrant yet tender, wise yet understandable.

Inner intimacy lets you learn the character of your Divine Companion. People who have drawn close to their Divine Companion felt their Divine Companion as a lover, an intimate companion who knows you in depth, the good and the not-so-good, and loves you with great devotion; as a collaborator who wants to co-create with you as an equal contributor, not as a domineering senior partner.

Your Divine Companion's character distinguishes your Divine Companion from other inner presences, such as an Inner Critic or Inner Rebel. Your Divine Companion is far more loving and wiser than your own psychological parts.

# Creating Together



## *People in a relationship create and do things together*

In a healthy relationship, you do things together that you can't do alone. Like having stimulating conversation in which each person's ideas and perspective enrich the other's thinking. Like building something that requires two people to contribute ideas and do the work together. Like the swing move in dancing that involves leaning back and each dance partner supports the other; it's impossible for one person to do this move alone. Even if it were possible to do these things alone, they are much more enjoyable when done with a partner.

When your Divine Companion relationship is healthy and vibrant, you can create things that are virtually impossible to do alone. Like creating a different tone in your inner world, perhaps a shift from hopelessness to hope. Like understanding things better with two minds. Like being more genuinely interested in the lives of others. Like being more compassionate for people who are having hard times.

The Divine Companion sees all of your inner world, all of your strengths and all of your weaknesses, yet is very tender and loving even when weaknesses seem to outweigh strengths. Your Divine Companion is incredibly wise yet can teach a person who is not nearly as wise, like a teacher who knows advanced subjects can teach beginning students who know just a little. Your Divine Companion is an amazing collaborator who can enhance your own ideas so that your efforts in life, in the outer world, bear good fruit.

# Synonyms for the Divine Companion

## Divine Companion

Eternal Thou  
Beloved  
Divine Companion  
Inner Light  
Divine Indwelling  
Spirit Friend  
Sophia

Intimate but not stifling  
devoted to you  
Tender and Vibrant  
wise but approachable  
loves to collaborate and co-create

### *God personally present in your inner world*

The God of all creation is present everywhere from the smallest subatomic particles to great galaxies; this aspect of God can be so vast that it's hard to really grasp. God is also present in the inner world in a uniquely personal way: as a person who dwells in your mind alongside of you. If God were only an abstract idea in your inner world, you would have no possibility of forming a relationship (because you can't have a relationship with an abstraction, even the most wonderful idea).

Those who experiences God as a personal presence in your inner world used many names that suggest the character of the indwelling spirit:

Beloved (Teresa of Avila)

Divine Companion

Eternal Thou (Martin Buber)

Spirit Friend (Mennonite hymn)

Inner Guide

Their descriptions bring to life the lovely character of the Divine Companion:

tender yet vibrant

close but not stifling

wise but approachable

devoted to you

loves to collaborate and co-create



# Sages of Inner Cultivation

# Teresa of Avila: Inner Cultivator Extraordinaire

Teresa of Avila was a keen observer of the inner world which she articulated eloquently in her book, *The Interior Castle*, based on her own experiences. She was an extraordinary cultivator of her inner garden; she cultivated an inner spirituality that was much richer than the religion of her outer world at the tail end of the Spanish Inquisition.

In 1492, before Teresa was born, Spain forced Jews to either convert to Catholicism or leave Spain and forfeit everything they owned in the process. Even after converting, the Jews who remained were viewed with distrust and the depth of their Christianity beliefs were questioned. The Spanish Inquisition started in 1478 to find and interrogate possible superficial converts. Teresa's grandfather was a Jew who converted perhaps around 1490's but the stigma lingered. Her father was able to gain social acceptability by buying a knighthood. Teresa was born in 1515; the Spanish Inquisition remained active for the first 15 years of her life. Her father was a very wealthy merchant and Teresa had a very comfortable childhood.

When Teresa was 20 years old, she entered a nearby convent, a relatively pleasant place that often entertained well-connected locals who supported the convent financially. Teresa was a

socially vibrant person, perhaps a bit of a local celebrity compared to the other the nuns at the convent. She also immersed herself in the spiritual literature available to her, devoted herself to inner prayer and cultivated a vibrant relationship with her Beloved, God dwelling within her as an intimate partner.

Another Spanish Catholic, Tomas de Torquemada, lived near Avila and died 17 years before Teresa was born. Like Teresa, members of his family tree were Jewish and he also entered the religious life at a young age. But he was more interested in cultivating political ties with powerful people than cultivating an inner world that was conducive for bonding with the indwelling spirit. He devoted his life to torturing many people to extract confessions and killing many by burning them alive. His cruelty led to several papal investigations into his harsh ways (but not enough to stop him).

Torquemada died at the Monastery of Saint Thomas Aquinas outside of Avila, a 20 minute walk from the church built in Teresa's memory. How amazing that two people with similar backgrounds and geographical proximity in the outer world are so drastically different in their inner spirituality. During their lifetimes, the church didn't appreciate Teresa's inner world; decades passed before that changed.

# What Teresa Might Say to You

Teresa: My dear friend and kindred spirit, John (now known as John of the Cross), was detained and tortured by the brothers of his own religious order. His outer world in those long months was absolutely horrible, a time of humiliation, material deprivation and much pain. He was cruelly rejected by those he considered his brothers in spirit; he was completely isolated from those of us who treasured his insights. Yet during those intensely painful outer circumstances, his inner world was full of the sublime love that only God can infuse into us. In harsh circumstances, he wrote poetry that has moved people over the centuries.

In contrast, the outer world of his captors and tormentors was far more comfortable than his: they had plenty to eat and many material comforts. They were accepted by their brothers. But their inner worlds must have been barren and misshaped to be able to treat another human being with such meanness day after day.

John and the monks all inhabited the same outer world of that monastery but they lived in vastly different inner worlds. John's inner world made his life beautiful; the other monks inner worlds made their lives ugly. The stark difference between them illustrates the great power of the inner world to create either a beautiful life or a mean life.

Perhaps you live in trying circumstances; perhaps you are frustrated by material lack or social restrictions; perhaps you keenly feel the unjust ways that you are treated by others who are better socially situated; perhaps you are haunted by trauma when you were a child dependent on others who mistreated you or didn't provide what you needed as a child; perhaps you feel intensely alone with no kindred spirits to share your thoughts and feelings. These are the circumstances of your outer world. And they are very powerful shapers of your life.

But they are not the only shapers or the most powerful shapers of your life. You also have inner capabilities for shaping your life in new ways. These capabilities of your mind are like abilities of your muscles: they are only strong if you regularly use them.

I knew many people who never used their precious inner capacities; without a rich inner life, they were deformed by the pressures of their outer circumstances. Any of them could have used their inner life to counteract their hard circumstances, but they did not use the wonderful opportunity given them. It's as if their Inner Cultivator was lazy or lacking in curiosity or had no holy desire to live a meaningful life that would be pleasing to the One who created us and longs to live within us.

# The Inner Remedy for Loneliness

Teresa: Both John and I experienced a poignant loneliness: we had experienced an inner delight that nourished us even when our outer circumstances were harsh. We tried to share these wonderful experiences with others so that they too might enjoy the same inner delights and nourishment. Some people resonated with our experiences because it touched something similar within their own inner world.

But more often we were disappointed when we shared these experiences. We tried to guide others so that they could feel the same inner joy but many people were unreceptive or indifferent; some were quite resentful and actively attacked us for talking about our inner experiences. We often felt as if we were marooned on an island, unable to communicate with those living on the mainland.

The isolated feeling of being unable to share our experiences was hard. Our inner experiences saved us from being totally alone. We each found a precious companion in our inner world, as if God had created a backdoor into a person so God could be present to you as an intimate partner within your inner world. That wonderful experiences of being so loved is the main reason we wanted to help people really understand their inner world so that they too can find the most loyal and loving companion possible.

The richness of your inner world reflects how God performed the most wonderful miracle of all: that just as God could come from heaven to be personally present in the outer world as the human Jesus, God can also come to live with you in your inner world and be personally as a personal Divine Companion who loves you and will assist you as much as you permit.

I wrote the *Interior Castle* because I knew how many people feel deeply lonely. I also knew that your Divine Companion would love to embrace you and erase any illusions you might hold that you are forgotten and unloved; just one moment in the embrace of your Divine Companion will assure you beyond any doubt that you are treasured and your needs are known by God. The outer world is full of experiences that breed doubt and insecure attachments. But your inner world contains the antidote if you feel that it is impossible for anyone to really love you and treasure you. You only need to explore your inner world to experience the wonderful embrace of your Beloved.

It really lifts up a person to know their inner terrain, but inner map making is just the beginning; it is not the end goal. The map is valuable because it leads you to the source of healing and love, the Indwelling Spirit who helps you be more loving to others.

# Antidote for Harshness and Cruelty

Teresa: I was a woman; I had Jewish ancestry; I was more spunky than docile. None of these qualities endeared me to the Church hierarchy! The possibility of being shunned for being myself was always lurking in the background. Although I loved God dearly, I was often undermined, sometimes in very mean-spirited ways, by men who held higher positions in the church's chain of command and who claimed to have more knowledge of God.

John was a sweet person who loved taking care of people in need; he was exceptionally compassionate to those who were often forgotten and neglected. But his fellow monks, who on the surface were also dedicated to serving God, were exceedingly cruel to him.

One of life's great difficulties is to be treated cruelly by those you would reasonably expect to love you and support you. Intense cruelty happens today just as much as it did 500 years ago. The new weapons available today – military power, guns, social media – allow one individual to do huge amounts of damage to many people.

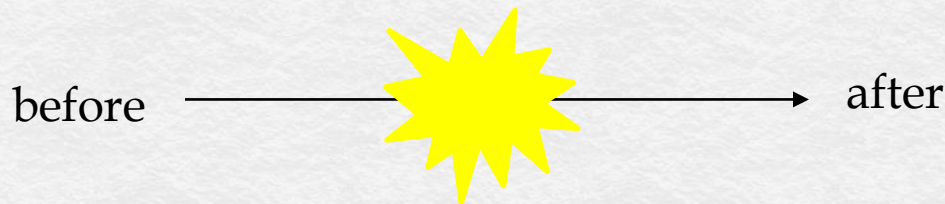
The harshness of the outer world can take root in your inner world in the form of intense hopelessness or self-loathing. An inner world brimming with these narratives can make it nearly impossible to form healthy relationships in the outer world.

If inescapable cruelty in the outer world was the complete story, you would be stuck: condemned to a life of self-loathing and unloving relationships. But your inner world can rescue you from the fallout of being treated cruelly by others close to you. You can find tenderness in your inner world when none is available in your outer world. This possibility of inner nurture motivates me to teach people about the richness of their inner world so that they can find relief from the harshness and limitations of the outer world. My interest in the inner world is not at all abstract and removed from the difficulties of life; my interest is intensely practical. I want people to be able to experience being loved when there is precious little love in their outer world.

If you grew up in a family incapable of love, you may (erroneously) think that you can never experience real and lasting love. If you have been belittled in school or socially, you may (erroneously) think that you don't have anything worthwhile to contribute. Your Divine Companion, who loves you dearly and cherishes your potential, can help correct these disabling errors in your thinking. And then you can experience the thrill of really knowing that you are wonderfully created and dearly loved; then you can be nurtured so that you can love others; the you can appreciate your strengths and use them to serve others.



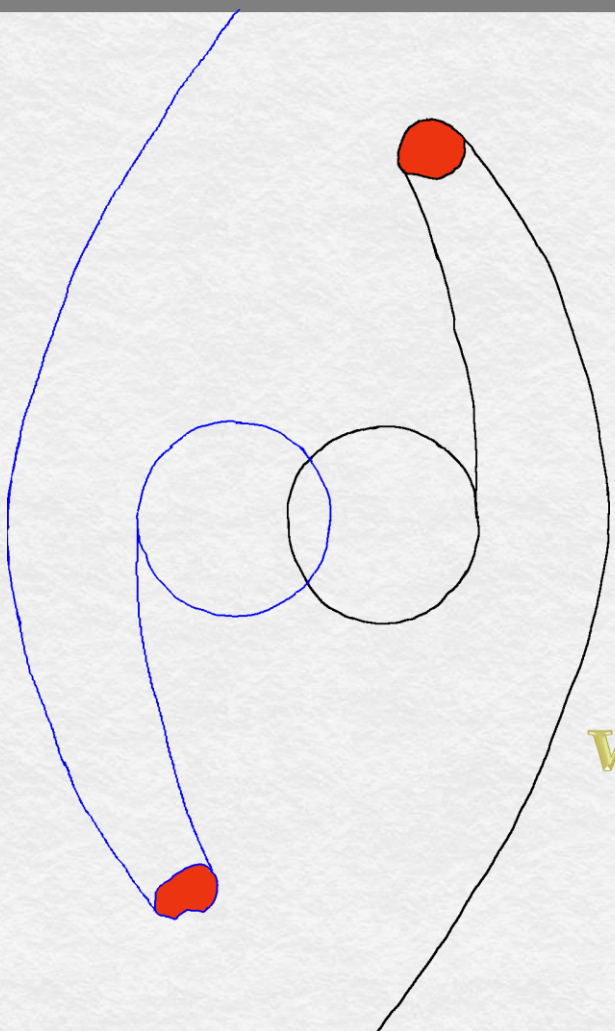
# Timeline of Increased Spiritual Cooperation



## **A pivotal spiritual experience changes your inner world**

Spiritual intimacy with the Divine Companion changes a person, especially their inner world. Having a spiritual experience won't miraculously dissolve the problems of the outer world, but you may find that the same problems are no longer as vexing as before; or you may find it easier to be gracious in situations that previously infuriated you; or you may understand concepts that were previously very confusing; or an attitude of trust may flow more easily and displace previous doubts and suspicions.

A pivotal spiritual experience may be a major turning point that divides line your life into "Before" and "After" times. Even if you aren't conscious of being more cooperative with your Divine Companion, a sharp uptick in your compassion and devotion to serving may be a sign of increased inner cooperation.



# Inner Cultivation for your relationship with your Divine Companion

# Why Inner Cultivation Is Needed

## **The urge for connection**

It's often said that humans are social animals who are wired for connection with others. This urge for connection motivates you to seek out others, to get to know them, to share with them, to help them and to be helped by them. That statement ("you are wired for connection") is true but it can make healthy relationships seem as simple and natural as falling off a log, something that happens quite easily without much effort. But your experiences are evidence that forming healthy and meaningful relationships is far from simple or easy. You are wired for connection but need new programming to make best use of that innate desire to be connected.

## **The urge for protection**

Forging healthy relationships is hard because humans are also wired for survival on a planet that can often be a very inhospitable place with limited food and other resources; our survival wiring prepares us to selfishly get as enough resources for yourself. Your survival instincts can motivate you to compete against other people, to be suspicious of other people (after all, some people can be very cruel) and, in extremes, to attack other people to prevent them from taking resources that you need or to intimidate them so that they don't hurt you.

## **When one urge is much stronger**

These two very strong innate human urges—your desire for connection and your desire for protection—are both necessary, but can easily get out of balance. Your desire for connection may be so strong that you have little protection against unhealthy people. Or negative emotions, such as fear, can be so strong that the urge for protection overwhelms the urge for connection like a tsunami. If you've had enough harsh experiences, your desire for protection may become strong enough to nearly snuff out your desire for connection.

## **The worst loss of becoming withdrawn**

Withdrawing is understandable: who wants to get hurt again? But when withdrawal becomes your main response to others, you will be starved of the healthy bonds that you need. Even worse, an unchecked need for protection against mean people (both those who are really mean and those you only imagine will be mean) can lead you to mistrust even the goodness of God who made a way to live within you as your personal Divine Companion. When distrust of humans spreads to distrust of God, you lose the one relationship that can satisfy your urge for connection without the risk of being hurt; you lose the remedy for forging healthy relationships on a harsh planet.

# WISH

## Your deepest wish Your highest value

*Couples Therapy will be shaped by what you wish for:*

*selfish wishes seldom increase love;*

*wishes for connection likely increase love.*

It's easy to wish for superficial answers to what you desire; they seem easy and seem to offer a quick fix. But superficial wishes are like mirages that seldom deliver on their implied promises.

Having the wisdom to pursue higher values helps you choose wishes that will bear fruit.

Sometimes you may have several wishes that conflict with each other; this often leads to ambivalence, to being unable to decide which wish you will pursue. Resolving ambivalence about your hopes and wishes helps you escape from the paralysis of ambivalence.

# Your Wishes for Couples Therapy

Sometimes a person begins couples therapy hoping to make their relationship produce more of what they desire and less of what they dislike. Perhaps they want their partner to communicate more (or less), to have more (or less) sex, or to spend more (or less) money. They come to therapy hoping to reshape their relationship to satisfy what they want to get rather than what they want to share. Entering couples therapy with the goal of changing the other person to your liking has low odds of success.

Another person may seek couples therapy because they want to become more attuned and loving to their partner. They don't like that their relationship has drifted into indifference or antagonisms; they very much want to develop or reclaim a loving connection. Entering couples therapy with such a goal is more likely to strengthen a relationship and, paradoxically, may also help each partner get what they aren't getting now.

The same principle applies to spiritual inner couples therapy: it works best when you are interested in deepening your Divine Companion relationship rather than wanting your Divine Companion to grant your wishes as if you had an Inner Genie. Your primary motive for seeking inner spiritual couples therapy matters a great deal.

The accounts of the spiritual sages suggest that a primary goal of getting what you want from your Divine Companion isn't likely to help you deepen that a relationship; an exclusive focus on maximizing the blessings that you want to get from your Divine Companion contaminates your desire of getting to know your Divine Companion. Your relationship with your Divine Companion is more likely to improve when you desire that your Divine Companion influence and shape you rather than trying to impress your Divine Companion with the value of your wishes.

An essential starting point for inner couples therapy is deepening your wish to have an in-your-bones sense of your Divine Companion's lovely character. If you've already had inner contact with your Divine Companion, you may not be sure of what that experience meant because they are rare and so unique. Knowing about others' similar experiences may help you appreciate your own and trust its validity. If you haven't yet had an inner experience of your Divine Companion, you may have struggle to even believe that such a wonderful inner lover exists. Knowing the wonderful quality of others' experiences may whet your appetite to have your own first-hand experience. Then you may have a stronger desire to know the wonderful divine one who lives within you.

# Organization

You can better grasp the nature of your Divine Companion with:

- accurately seeing** your inner world as home to you and your Divine Companion;
- fully trusting** that your Companion is loving and wise;
- sharing:** dialoguing, collaborating and co-creating;
- cultivating a welcoming attitude** for your Divine Companion.

The following sections describe each concept and suggest some specific practices that flow from the underlying concept. **The specific practices (on yellow pages) may help you and the soil of your mind become a fertile place for your Divine Companion's love to blossom and ideas to germinate. Each practice involves recognizing aspects of your inner world and wisely revising them.**

The specific practices are meant to be a flexible framework that you can modify or customize to suit your personality and needs. These practices aren't meant to be robotically followed with extreme precision; flexible practices are more likely to be more fruitful. Your personalized adaptation of a practice will likely be more helpful to you and becomes, for a time, a practice useful for your spiritual growth; even then, you may benefit from changing a practice or adopting a different practice for a few days or weeks. Considering these practices as sacrosanct and written in stone may backfire because that may elevate the practice over your precious

relationship. The practices are simply the soil preparation and the relationship is the desired fruit of gardening.

A feeling of mastery of certain techniques or practices can be very attractive and make you feel as if you are doing everything essential for deepening a relationship. Techniques such as better listening, being responsive to bids, and learning new things together, can definitely strengthen relationships. But precise execution of a good technique without really understanding and appreciating your partner will likely ring hollow; techniques alone may simply become manipulative attempts to get what you want. Your inner attitude and desires are always an essential ingredient.

Spiritual inner couples therapy is not a quick shortcut to getting relief from your issues or becoming more prosperous (getting more material security or higher social status). Spiritual inner couples therapy is about increasing intimacy: being more attuned to your Divine Companion; experiencing and appreciating the beauty of the character of God more than you do now; cooperating with the leadings of your Divine Companion to the best of your abilities. The heart of relationships is the person you are with; the benefits are secondary. Relationships take time to ripen; patience is needed to see the fruit of these practices.

## Inner Parts

both psychological and spiritual

## Inner Inhabitants

both human and divine

*You can't form a relationship if you don't even know that the other person exists and where to find that person.*

You may not be aware of all that lies within you  
You may not see your inner terrain accurately

A Divine Companion dwells within you  
God who comes intimately close to you

See!

See your inner world more clearly:

You are a wonderful person  
and you can grow into so much more.

You have a wonderful loving partner within you  
with whom you can collaborate and co-create.

What a great opportunity lies before you!

You are part of a couple  
but without a good inner map  
you may not even know that.  
Your partner is an exquisite loving partner.  
But you may not even know that.

You have great value and great dignity.  
you may not even know that.

# Knowing the Companion who Lives within You

Your inner map matters a great deal. A psychological example of a too-limited map of the inner world is a person with an overwhelming self-loathing who often feels that there's nothing or no one else in their inner world except for their Inner Critic. With no counterpart to that persona, they can easily get stuck in a perpetual loop of self-doubt and self-hate. Knowing that their inner world contains more than that critic creates a path out of the corrosiveness of continually despising themselves.

A spiritual example of a too-limited map of the inner world is a person who finds it too hard to believe that a Divine Companion, as yet unknown to them, might live within. If you feel that way, you might counterbalance your doubts by borrowing hope from the experiences of the spiritual sages who found that a Divine Companion is a part of the human inner world, just as surely as the quite obvious human inhabitants of the inner world.

Paraphrasing "You cannot win if you do not play." becomes "You cannot connect if you do not know a person exists." You cannot form a relationship with your Divine Companion if you don't even know that your Divine Companion lives with you in your inner world waiting to make that first connection with you and hoping that you then want to form a lasting partnership.

The first step in cultivating a relationship with your Divine Companion is to consider that the spiritual sages' map of the inner world—your inner world—is true: that a divine partner lives within you and wants very much to draw close to you. Even before this relationship begins, your Divine Companion is present: watching you with a loving gaze, hoping that you will return eye contact, hoping that you will cast your inner eyes in the direction of the Divine Companion. Like using a topo map created by others helps you in your first hike of a new area, using an inner map created by others helps you seek your Divine Companion.

It makes sense to seek your Divine Companion if you trust that this map is true and applies to you. Once you begin seeking your Divine Companion, then you can move from relying on the map of others, the second-hand ideas of even the great spiritual sages; then you can then rely on your own first-hand experiences. You can notice the character and personality of your Divine Companion for yourself; you can see what changes happen in your inner world when you draw close to your Divine Companion. And then you can begin to create your own map based on what you have felt within yourself. Likely, you will find many ways that your map agrees with the maps of others; you may also find some details of your inner world that are unique to you.



# Noticing your Two Minds

Mindfulness is a sophisticated word for noticing: noticing aspects of self, others and life that you may have missed, dismissed, become numb to or glossed over. If you don't notice an aspect of yourself or others, it's almost as if that aspect doesn't exist for you.

A gardener's yard often contains several gardens: one for vegetables, another for fruit, and perhaps another for flowers; within each garden there are rows for specific plants. Your mind has two different aspects, like different soils of a garden that are optimized to grow certain kinds of plants. Your psychological mind is your capabilities for navigating the material world and relationships with people; your spiritual mind is your capabilities to grasp spiritual wisdom and forge a relationship with your Divine Companion. Each part of your mind contains unique and distinct capabilities for producing different fruits.

You could imagine your two minds as an inner garden with your spiritual garden immediately adjacent to your psychological garden separated by a fence and a gate. You open that gate to your spiritual garden with your holy desire: your longing to know and experience the lovely personality of your indwelling Divine Companion. That gate won't open if you have no desire to know and experience God intimately in your inner world.

Your mind contains everything necessary to support a connection with another person: the capabilities to know another and be known, to care for another and to be cared for by another, to collaborate and create with another. To form a relationship with your Divine Companion, you must open the gate to your spiritual garden and allow your spiritual mind and your psychological mind to work together.

Your psychological mind is usually quite noticeable: just listen for the ramblings of your Inner Critic (or your particular dominant persona). But your spiritual mind can be easily missed in the din of the psychological mind that clamors for all of your attention. Noticing your spiritual mind takes more effort and a clear decision to seek it and explore it.

You can recognize your spiritual garden by its fragrance: by its gentle tone and kind regard. It feels more gracious and welcoming than your psychological garden; less prone to angst and worry; it fosters a deep sense of poise unperturbed by the chaos or uncertainty in your life. The soil of spiritual mind is well-suited for connecting with your Divine Companion and harmonizing different parts of you. Accessing your spiritual mind often enriches the soil of your psychological mind.

# How can you...

*How can you love a person if you didn't even know they exist?*

It's almost impossible to deeply love a person, even an amazing and wonderful person, if you've never met that person. Or if you don't really grasp their personality, their essential nature.

In the same way, it's almost impossible to love your Divine Companion if you have no idea, no first-hand experience that a divine person lives within you.

*How can you deeply love a person if you don't really know who they are?*

You could only have an abstract kind of positive regard for a person you barely know – and that's not much of a love. But as you come to know a person and develop a real sense of the burdens they have carried, of how they have struggled, of how they have maintained a pilot light of hope in times of great darkness, then you could love a person in a deeper and meaningful way.

In the same way, you can't love your Divine Companion in a deep and meaningful way if you have no real sense of the wonderful personality of your Divine Companion.

Imagine that you want to take a hike in a new area, a vast national park. You could skip looking at maps and just start off hiking in random areas and hope to see some of the grandeur of the park. You will certainly see some wonderful things but you will likely miss many amazing parts of the park. Or, if you consulted maps made by experienced hikers, you are much more likely to see the grandeur of the park.

Trail guides made by experienced hikers include both maps of the trails as well as descriptions of what you will find along the trails; they warn you about obstacles along the way and the wonderful sites you will find. Spiritual sages are experienced travelers of the inner world; they can describe the spiritual beauty and companionship you can find within yourself and the distractions and obstacles that may sidetrack you from seeing the most wonderful areas within yourself.

This booklet describes the common core of the guidance of spiritual sages: that an amazing partner, your very own Divine Companion, can be found within yourself; that your inner world is rich with everything you need to know and experience your Divine Companion; that you can form a vibrant relationship with your Divine Companion if you want that.

# Notice Kindly and Discern Inner Parts

*See yourself with kindness.* If you notice your inner world even briefly, if you eavesdrop on your self-talk, you will quickly notice you human parts: your pet-peeves, a relationship that dominates your thoughts, your dearest wishes, the reverberation of a long ago trauma, etc. Some parts may be bothersome. Seeing them more deeply means understanding the original motivation that developed these parts; usually the initial motivation was quite noble but the behavior has become crystallized and is no longer relevant or helpful. It can be easy to see these parts of yourself in a harsh light. But kindly seeing your limitations, without excessively judging your personal weaknesses and times when you failed, will help you see and appreciate each part of your inner world.

*See your inner world with much appreciation.* Your inner world is a marvel of creation: you have a range of capabilities that can grow and expand as you develop them. Seeing and really appreciating these capabilities may help you to see how wonderfully your inner garden is constructed with amazing attention to detail, providing you with everything you need to adapt to the material world and grow spiritually. You could easily take your inner world for granted and, as a result, not make full use of your capacities; seeing with the eye of appreciation may prevent you from becoming jaded and help you to make the most of your inner world.

*Personas.* You recognize people by their personality: your boss might be aloof and lacking any sense of humor; a friend might be lively and adventurous; a co-worker might be kind and readily lend a listening ear; a neighbor might be suspicious and callous. Each person has a personality, their core identity, that helps you recognize them; if they seem quite different on one occasion, you clearly recognize that as a deviation from their usual personality, perhaps as the result of a particularly good or bad day.

Personas, your human parts, can be recognized by their personality. They are often immature but unaware of that; they are often petty and bicker among themselves. They have good motives but usually lack insight and perspective. Like children, they need assistance to help them develop wiser ways of coping with challenges and cooperating with each other.

*Your Inner Director.* Your Chief Gardener or Inner Director, another human part of your inner world, is often unaware of their pivotal responsibilities and so may be a lazy director who simply lets your inner garden simply drift along in its current condition. Noticing that you have such an Inner Director is the first step to strengthening that capability and using it to enhance your inner world.

# Noticing your Divine Companion

Your Divine Companion is a divine, not human, inhabitant of your inner world who is recognizable by the Divine Companion's personality and character. Spiritual sages who experienced their Divine Companion described an inner partner who is recognizable by a kinder and wiser personality than your human parts.

Noticing your Divine Companion involves not only your mind – intellectually recognizing the presence of a divine indwelling – but also your heart which brings an attitude of awe and reverence.

*See your Divine Companion with awe.* Your Divine Companion is an amazing person who lives within you: a perfect lover who can easily heal the wounds of being raised by imperfect parents, even grossly inappropriate parents; a uniquely attuned tutor who can present new ideas customized at just the right level so that you can understand and assimilate them and never presents new ideas at such a high level that they just go right over your head. Seeing your Divine Companion with an attitude of awe means really appreciating what an amazing gift you have right inside of you rather than seeing your Divine Companion with a blasé attitude of bland observation or academic distance. Noticing with awe helps you appreciate how very different your Divine Companion is from your human parts.

*See your Divine Companion with reverence.* You may see your friends and family with different levels of respect: you may have little respect for a friend who hasn't developed much insight and has little to offer you; and you may feel little motivation to get to know this person better. You may have more respect for another friend who has learned much and has much to offer you; and you may be more motivated to get to know this person better.

Seeing your Divine Companion with an attitude of reverence means acknowledging that the One who is so close to you also has a far lovelier character and far more advanced capacities. Seeing your Divine Companion with reverence – with extremely high respect – may motivate you to get to know your Divine Companion better, to really grasping that a wonderful person lives within you and desires to intimately share your life and create a vibrant new life together.

*The tone of seeing.* Knowing that your inner garden is so well constructed can be simply another idea unless you see with the tone of kindness and appreciation. Noticing that you have a Divine Companion can be simply another idea unless you see your Divine Companion with the attitudes of awe and reverence. These attitudes may help you more fully appreciate the miracle of your inner garden.

# Imago of Self and Partner

Harville Hendrix began his career doing psychotherapy for individuals. He noticed that, after resolving their individual issues, his clients often came back with a lingering concern: they wanted better relationships. He shifted to working with couples and developed Imago Therapy to help people have more loving and productive relationships. A core Imago principle is to see both your partner and yourself more clearly.

You form relationships based on how you see your partner – your *other-imago* – and how you see yourself – your *self-imago*. These two *imagos* (your views of your partner and yourself) can easily be distorted by previous relationships and unrelated factors.

**Your Image of your partner.** Harville used the word *imago* to denote your idea of the person who will make you whole, your ideal partner. Your ideas about an ideal partner may be distorted by your experiences with previous far-from-ideal partners. Your view of your actual partner, your *other-imago*, may be distorted by your image of an ideal lover and by wounds from earlier relationships. These distortions may feed unrealistic expectations about what qualities your partner should have, how they should act in your relationships, and possibly how they should be responsible for your own psychological tasks.

Perhaps, if you grew up in a fearful family and developed a timid personality, you may crave a brave partner who will add spice to your life. Your view of your actual partner (*other-imago*) may be distorted by your wishes and expectations and may keep you from seeing your partner more clearly; hoping your partner will compensate for your weaker parts may stop you from growing stronger yourself. Such distortions may make a potential partner initially attractive but eventually lead to frustration.

The same pattern can have different details: growing up in a distant family may form an *imago* of a talkative partner; growing up in an unstable family may form an *imago* of a rock-solid partner. Imago therapy helps you recognize and revise your *other-imago*.

**Your Image of Yourself.** Harville found that some people with loving partners couldn't feel the real love that their partners offered because they were hamstrung by severely low self-respect; they couldn't receive love because they saw themselves as unworthy and unlovable. Unresolved emotional wounds can contaminate your *self-imago* when ideas about your own value and worthiness are influenced by your experiences with far-from-ideal partners. Feeling unworthy of love, you may not receive love when it is finally offered to you in a healthy relationship.

# Imago and your Divine Companion

Harville Hendrix developed the *imago* concept based on the relationship between two people. The *imago* concept may also be a fruitful starting point for understanding your relationship with your Divine Companion in your inner world. A vibrant relationship requires seeing your Divine Companion and yourself as clearly and accurately as you can.

**Your God-*imago* and your Divine Companion.** Your image of God bears the imprint of ideas absorbed from others, such as God who is aloof or even cruel, or a God who is distant and cannot be approached. None of the spiritual sages found these ideas to be true based on their first-hand experiences in their inner world, in their personal experiences of getting to know their Divine Companion. Just as an inaccurate *other-imago* can hinder a person-to-person relationship in the outer world, an inaccurate *God-imago* can hinder a human-to-divine relationship in the inner world.

No one knows God or the Divine Companion completely; we all have much to learn about the divine character. Still a consensus emerges from the pooled experiences of spiritual sages: your Divine Companion is infinitely loving, faithful to you even when you are not; your Divine Companion desires to create, with your contributions, a life that makes you a better person and a life that

contributes to others. This common view of God that emerges from all of their individual experiences may be useful for revising your ideas about your Divine Companion's personality.

**Your *self-imago* and your Divine Companion.** Harsh experiences in the outer world often result in a very negative *self-imago* that you might bring into your relationship with your Divine Companion: you may feel that you are far too disgusting to be worthy of being loved by God or such a wonderful Divine Companion. Self-loathing can be so firmly entrenched that it's nearly impossible for you to excavate it out of your inner garden on your own.

But imagine that you could revise your *self-imago*, based not on your own perspective, but on your Divine Companion's perspective. Your Divine Companion sees you in high-fidelity, sees you without the distortions of the outer world. You might get a sense of your Divine Companion's view of you by contemplating your Divine Companion's love for you: how could you be unworthy of love if such a perfect and divine lover has chosen you as a partner worthy of great affection? A first-hand experience of how much your Divine Companion treasures you is a powerful antidote to self-rejection; it helps you see a more accurate view of yourself as being worthy of love and respect.

# Clear or Distorted *Imago*?

**Clear *self-imago*.** How do you know if you are creating a more accurate or a more distorted *self-imago*? Spiritual sages would say that a solid sense of self-respect is a sign of clearly seeing yourself.

If you see yourself as totally awful and completely unredeemable, then your sense of yourself is likely distorted. Like all people, you have likely made mistakes in life. Perhaps some of your mistakes were very serious and hurt other people. Self-respect doesn't mean that you give yourself a free pass for those mistakes; self-respect means that your future spiritual possibilities need not be limited by your past mistakes.

If you see yourself as totally wonderful and superior to nearly everyone else, then your sense of yourself is likely distorted. You likely have strengths and accomplishments, as every person has. Self-respect doesn't mean that you selectively see only your assets and only others' shortcomings. Such an inflated view of yourself (extreme your hubris and conceit) severely limits your spiritual growth because it inhibits growth.

Self-respect doesn't mean self-absorption. Self-respect is not an all-consuming preoccupation with your inner world but rather noticing and appreciating the great gifts within you. And then also

seeing others in the same light: as also having great richness and possibilities within them as well as issues and concerns that impede them in growing. Healthy self-respect leads to being as interested in others as you are intrigued by yourself (or perhaps even a bit more interested in others).

In summary, signs a more accurate *self-imago* are respecting yourself more (owning your mistakes but not being chained down by them); appreciating your strengths and accomplishments more (without becoming overly enamored by yourself); balancing noticing yourself with noticing and valuing others as well.

**Clear *God-imago*.** How do you know how clear your *God-imago* is? Spiritual sages would say a clear *God-imago* is accompanied by feeling deeply loved; a more solid sense of self-respect as a result of being so loved; an inner poise robust to even hard situations; an ability to see matters more deeply; and an enhanced love for the people in your life and being willing to serve where you can. Having a first-hand experience of your Divine Companion never leaves a person unchanged or their relationships unchanged. Virtually everyone who experienced an inner bonding with their Divine Companion became much more compassionate and caring than they were before.

# Imago Clearness and Attunement

Sometimes a person in a relationship may say to their partner: "I've known you for years yet I am still discovering things about you!" An attitude of not knowing everything about a person creates the possibility of knowing a person more fully; an attitude that you already know everything inhibits you from knowing a person any better than you already do.

**Open Mind.** If you think you understand God completely (such hubris!), it's much harder to know God any better. Knowing your Divine Companion more deeply begins with acknowledging that, although you know God somewhat, you have much to learn and you expect to be surprised again and again by new discoveries.

**Open Heart.** You get to know another person by being attuned to them: by receiving them in your heart and allowing them to be present in your mind. When you see another person make facial expressions, mirror neurons in your brain corresponding to their face light up in your brain. Being attuned is experiencing another's mind and heart. You can form a more accurate *God-imago* by being more attuned to your Divine Companion: what traits is your Divine Companion displaying? What feelings arise in you when you sense your Divine Companion? What wishes might your Divine Companion have for your relationship?

**Deeper Attunement:** You can be attuned to another person deeply or superficially or somewhere in between. Deeper attunement happens when you supplement the basic perception of the other person with your own additional insights:

- more deeply grasping what the other person is experiencing;
- recognizing and naming what they are experiencing;
- connecting their experiences to your own experiences;
- understanding their life story that gave rise to the expressions and actions you observed in the other person.

Attunement is deepened when you perceive the other person's motivation; in this case, what moves your Divine Companion to reach out to you? Why does God seem so eager to personally share your inner life? Why does God love to share all of God's attributes and to co-create with a partner (that's you!) rather than to create as a solo artist.

As you become more attuned to your Divine Companion (as you develop a clearer *God-imago*), you can form a more accurate of yourself (a fuller *self-imago*). Why would God desire your partnership so much if God didn't see you as so worthy of affection? How could you be anything other than a worthwhile partner if God values your contribution so much?



# TRUST

*trust is essential for an intimate relationship*

Trust is a close equivalent to faith.

## YOUR RQ SENSOR

Who is trustworthy?

Who might be a satisfying partner?

Levels of trust: all-in, half-way, a bit, miserly

## ATTACHMENT STYLE

Your template for how to choose a partner

- how you act with a partner

- distortions hinder your relationships

- clarity helps your relationships

How receptive are you to infusions, bids, leadings?

## YOUR INVESTMENT OF TRUST

Your finite reservoir of trust can be depleted

Balance protecting yourself and enriching yourself

# Trust is Essential for Intimacy

A vibrant relationship with your Divine Companion requires trust. Trust is having faith that the other person will love you and appreciate you, will enhance your understanding of yourself and life, and will elevate you to live a better and larger life.

Trusting another person involves:

discerning the other person's trustworthiness

*Can I trust this person with my heart?*

an in-your-bones assurance of being loved

*Will I be known, appreciated and enjoyed?*

a two-way flow of affection, ideas and contributions;

*Will this person be receptive or domineering or clingy?*

*Will I be heard when I express myself?*

*Will following their lead be good?*

a mutuality of deeply valuing of each person;

*Will I be valued and treasured?*

*Will my contributions be woven into our shared life?*

fully giving yourself to this person

*Do I need to hold back in order to protect myself?*

Trust is your investment in a person and in your relationship. The more you trust a person, the more you are willing to receive their love for you, assimilate their ideas and work together as you face

the challenges and opportunities of life. Little trust makes for a ho-hum relationship; much trust makes for a rich relationship; full trust makes for a vibrant and creative relationship. If you invest only a little trust (or if you invest your trust unwisely), then your investment will not create a strong relationship; but if you wisely and fully invest your trust, then your investment will create a solid relationship that makes your life much richer.

Trust is the core ingredient which is absolutely essential for any meaningful relationship. You can try all kinds of couples techniques until you have exhausted yourself but even the best techniques won't strengthen a relationship if the two people don't trust each other. You can try all kinds of religious practices until you have exhausted yourself but even the best practices won't create intimacy with your Divine Companion if you don't trust your Divine Companion with all your heart.

Perhaps it's hard to trust your Divine Companion if you've encountered many untrustworthy people. Perhaps you decided that not trusting others protects yourself from being hurt again. What a shame to allow such negative experiences to prevent you from trusting your Divine Companion, the inner partner who can provide the loving relationship you've always desired!

# Trusting Is Predicting

Trust is your prediction of how the other person will treat you: whether they will be kind and caring; whether they will treat you well; whether they will not be manipulative or collaborative; whether they will be concerned that the relationship is good for both you as well as good for themselves; whether they will see you and life clearly and without too much distortion.

Trust is your prediction about how a person will treat you in a relationship. If you predict that a certain person will treat you well, then you would invest much trust in that relationship; if you predict that another person won't treat you well, then you wouldn't invest much trust. Ideally, your level of trust varies from person to person based on wise discernment of each person.

Discerning or predicting how each person will act in a relationship requires much effort. In contrast, adopting simplistic all-or-none views, such as always trusting or never trusting, don't require the same degree of mental effort. Simple views can be very appealing but you will likely pay a steep price for such simplicity.

One extreme--trusting everyone -- is foolish because not everyone will be a good partner. Some people can be very callous and cruel; others can be quite indifferent to you. Trusting them will hurt you.

The other extreme -- distrusting everyone -- is equally foolish because life without meaningful connections is a hard way to live. Extreme distrust leads to a very dark view of life; moderate distrust may lead to settling for very superficial relationships that take away your motivation for more meaningful connections.

Trusting wisely is giving your trust to a healthy person and withholding deep trust from an unhealthy person. If only trusting were that simple! If you have never been deeply loved, you might attempt to avoid another fiasco and resist trusting even the wonderful inner person who reaches out to you. Your attitude towards your Divine Companion may be the same as for most people: "I don't think that you are very good or worthwhile. Time with you won't lead to anything good. I have no desire to spend time together." Then you would miss one of the most beautiful parts of life: a loving and vibrant supportive relationship.

But if you can trust wisely, your heart may open to your Divine Companion: "I think that you are a good person and we can do great things together. I am excited to spend time with you, to share affection and see what we can create together." And then you could begin the most beautiful adventure of life: forging a loving and vibrant supportive relationship with God.

# Your RQ Meter: Discerning Who's Trustworthy

Imagine that each person has a Relationship Quotient (RQ), a number that accurately reflects their ability to be a good partner, to make a meaningful connection and sustain a healthy relationship. Imagine that you had a RQ sensor that lets you discern a person's trustworthiness much like your eyes can detect light and patterns.

Your RQ meter's main purpose is discerning a person's capacity for a meaningful relationship; it isn't meant to be a toy for casually making judgments about people with whom you have only a passing interaction.

Your RQ meter would guide how much trust you invest in a person. Investing trust in a high-RQ person will bear great fruit: it helps you both grow into better people. Investing more than a token of trust in a low-RQ person may create a poison that remains in your inner world long after that relationship has ended: you may lose faith in yourself; you may be much less willing to then trust anyone else, even a trustworthy person.

People worthy of your trust have certain characteristics; they may have a certain presence or warmth of interacting. People unworthy of your trust may have a superficial charm, but not a deeper capability for caring for another person.

*Who deserves your trust? Who is a trustworthy person?*

A trustworthy, or high RQ, partner:

- has enough wisdom to know what is accurate and what is distorted (what is right and what is rubbish) so that you can trust what they tell you about life and about yourself;
- has reasonably accurate *self-imago* and *other-imago*;
- appreciates who you are, your strengths and weaknesses;
- loves and respects you;
- will work with you towards your shared goals;
- is loyal to your relationship in hard times and when tempted by possible crushes.

An untrustworthy, or low RQ, partner:

- has little wisdom, discernment (misleads you, possibly unaware);
- doesn't appreciate you or actually devalues you;
- won't collaborate with you and may undermine your own efforts;
- isn't loyal when times are hard or someone else is alluring;
- has ulterior motives (they want to get something from you);
- has very distorted *self-imago* and *other-imago*.

Your Divine Companion distinguished from your human parts by qualities of great trustworthiness which are your assurance of being able to participate in a very healthy relationship.

# Your Default Level of Trust

*Your initial trust setpoint.* You may interact with a new person as if you have a predetermined trust setpoint, a default level of trust in a new connection. Perhaps you trust virtually not at all even when you get to know another person, no matter how they seem; or perhaps you trust with only a very few people who seem like you and distrust virtually everyone else; or perhaps you trust quite freely, extending your trusting even to unhealthy people.

If you are not already aware of your default tendency to trust, you may benefit from noticing whether you trust freely or with great reluctance. If you find it universally hard to trust another person, you likely adopted that stance for very understandable reasons. You recoiled from being mistreated by an untrustworthy person; being reluctant to trust protects you from more mistreatment but also isolates you from the good fruits of a healthy relationship.

Notice the ways your inner world operates. You might imagine that, in your inner world, you have adopted one of three trust “temperaments” or default set point levels of trust:

Distrustful of nearly everyone;

Slow to trust even a trustworthy person;

Flexibly and wisely trusting each person appropriately.

Trusting with insight allows you to open your heart wisely.

*The flexibility of your trust setpoint.* Your willingness to trust may have little flexibility: you may not easily adapt the amount of trust that you are willing to extend to a new person you meet. Having a rigid way of trusting—either too much or too little—is seldom healthy because it leads to isolation or becoming entangled with people who will hurt you. Flexibly extending your trust to each person based on their trustworthiness is healthier because it fosters wise choices: investing little or none of your precious trust in untrustworthy people but freely and gladly investing your trust in the trustworthy people that you encounter and who will enrich your life and who may be great partners in doing good things together.

You always have the option to revise your trust setpoint to be more flexible. You can start the process of correcting a rigid and too-miserly trust set point by understanding how you came to be reflexively distrusting. Be kind to yourself as you explore your less-than-flattering ways because they almost always reflect how humans respond to difficult experiences. Understandable but distorted tendencies arise from inaccurate views that focus excessively on your bad relationships with a tunnel vision that excludes your good relationships. Understanding such origins can help you see better ways of opening to others.

# Recalibrating Your RQ Meter

## *Your RQ meter may need adjusting*

Recalibration begins with honestly assessing whether your RQ meter gives false and biased signals: inaccurately assessing another's trustworthiness. A biased RQ meter will distort the actual trustworthiness of another person and give false RQ readings. Your bias (your initial predictions and expectations) come from your experiences in previous relationships, both good ones and harmful ones. Your RQ meter may have been quite accurate earlier in your life but is now quite inaccurate in your current situation.

Understanding the experiences that led to your reflexive mistrust can help you move beyond that. If your mistrust developed when you were very young, you may not yet fully understand the impact of these early experiences. Begin by trusting that your experiences of being hurt are real; it's very understandable that you are reluctant to trust again for fear of being hurt again. And consider that you may have developed tunnel vision that focuses exclusively on the relationships that hurt you and barely considered the good relationships. Be kind to yourself: you once understandably pulled back your trust to protect yourself but, now instead of protecting yourself, your distrustful tendencies may be hurting yourself even more.

Often in toxic or extremely unhealthy relationships, no one validates your feelings; it may help for you yourself to validate that your experience were quite real and quite hurtful. Your inner gardener (the Decider-in-Chief) can help by stepping in and moderating your self-talk, the inner dialogue that reveals your core beliefs about you, others and relationships. Without an intervening moderator, your mistrustful attitude can become solidified by repetitive self-talk that reinforces such beliefs. But a wise moderator can shift the inner conversation.

Noticing how you were hurt (what you want to avoid happening again) may help you notice and articulate the kind of relationship that you crave. Becoming clear about what you really desire may help you shift from focusing on the kind of relationships that you don't want to the kind of relationships that you want.

Being hurt in a relationship, especially early relationships within a family, can lead to a myopic focus on the many ways another person may hurt you. All relationships have some risks but you may become blind to what they can offer you. Zooming out (not constantly zooming in on only the negative possibilities) may help you recognize that, although some of your relationships were painful, relationships with others can be quite wonderful.

# Limited Reservoir of Trust

Your willingness to trust is a bit like a precious and limited resource: you only have so much to use and then, if it isn't replenished, it may be exhausted and depleted. You have a limited reservoir of trust: it can be depleted if you have unwisely trusted some people; it can also be replenished if you have wisely trusted other people.

If your reservoir of trust is severely depleted, you may find it hard to trust even the most trustworthy person of all, your Divine Companion. That situation creates a real dilemma: based on your experiences in the outer world, you may struggle to trust in your inner world and then be deprived of the relationship that is most worthy of your full trust.

The spiritual sages' experiences suggest a possible way to resolve this dilemma. They would assure you that your Divine Companion always has great trust in you, trust that you are a worthwhile companion; trust that together the two of you can do great things; a profound certainty that you are a treasure who can will grow to become even more valuable; trust that you are worth every bit of your Divine Companion's faith in you needed to nurture this budding relationship. Relying on the sages' wisdom may help you reciprocate the sublime trust invested in you.

Even if your reservoir of trust is almost completely exhausted, you can make a very small deposit of remaining trust, the smallest investment of your time and energy, a cautious first step in trusting another. Even the smallest investment of your trust may yield a great return that begins to replenish your reservoir of trust. And you may be rewarded by experiencing your Divine Companion's wonderful view of you which may kindle a desire to nurture this inner relationship.

After your own first-hand experience of what happens after you invested a small bit of your trust, you can then decide whether to make another deposit of trust. After initially relying on the insights of the spiritual sages, you can then rely on your own experiences to decide what you will do about this budding relationship with your Divine Companion.

You need not let one of your inner personas (like an Inner Critic on steroids) set the tone of your inner world to a state of misery and isolation; you need not allow such a persona to hinder your relationship with your Divine Companion. Instead, your Divine Companion can grow increasingly influential is setting the tone of your inner world and, in the process, replenish your depleted reservoir of trust.

# Soft Signs of Trustworthiness

The spiritual sages described how being embraced by their Divine Companion catalyzed amazing growth spurts: they were able to naturally bear more fruits of the spirit, such as:

Kindness

Reaching out (not leaving connection to fortuitous circumstances)

Poise when in difficult circumstances

Deeper understanding of others and themselves

Desire to of service that motivated their lives

Unconcerned with recognition or repayment

Growth-oriented (not complacent with themselves)

Spiritual growth despite significant deficits or other burdens

Courage to do what is challenging

A collaborative spirit that loves cross-fertilization with others

Harmonizing discrepant ideas with ease

Expressing devotion to God without being affected

Respectful of other's right to disregard what they say

Joyful in hard times as well as easy times

As you explore your inner world, this list of characteristics will help you notice when you are drawing closer to your Divine Companion. Your human-only parts may have some of these traits but your Divine Companion has these traits in abundance; you will enhance your own traits as you spend more time together.

Mr. Roger advised kids to “Look for the helpers” when they were in a difficult situation and needed to find good people to help them. Paraphrasing his advice for spiritual seekers who are looking to find kindred spirits:

Look for the kind ones. Avoid the callous and uninvolved.

Look for those who reach out. Avoid the indifferent ones.

Look for the poised ones. Avoid those upset by trifles.

Look for those who make life clearer. Avoid the confusers.

Look for gracious servers. Avoid obligated servers.

Look for the humble ones. Avoid arrogant ones.

Look for growing ones. Avoid the already-know-it-alls.

Look for courageous ones who risk. Avoid the timid ones.

Look for growing ones. Avoid the already-know-it-alls.

Look for collaborators. Avoid the overly independent.

Look for harmonizers. Avoid those who foster division.

Look for authentic lovers of God. Avoid the pompous ones.

Look for respectful ones. Avoid those who love to criticize.

Look for the joyous ones who can also comfort you in sad times.

These traits of trustworthiness are not carved in stone; rather they are soft signs that may help you notice a trustworthy person more readily when you encounter someone in either the outer world or the inner world.



# Trust a Little and then Notice What Happens

You may be understandably reluctant to extend your trust to an unseen partner if you have been hurt by people. Spiritual sages found that their Divine Companion was extremely trustworthy, far more trustworthy than any person, even the most wonderful person they had ever known. They suggest that you consider that, at the beginning stages of spiritual growth, your trustworthiness meter may be distorting your view of your Divine Companion, may obscure the wonderful and trustworthy character of your Divine Companion, and may prevent you from trusting even such a wonderful partner. You may miss the intimacy you long for if you cannot offer even a small deposit of trust to the perfect partner, your Divine Companion, who is reaching out to you.

The underlying theme of the spiritual sages is to trust your own experiences. If you struggle with vulnerability and are reluctant to fully trust and let go of the inner reins, try sharing just a little bit of your inner world with your Divine Companion. And then see what happens when you trust your Divine Companion more:

- Do you feel more poised (less anxious)?
- Do you feel more courageous (less timid)?
- Do you feel more assured in this uncertain world?
- Are you kinder (less selfish) with others?
- Are you more cooperative (less controlling) with others?

These questions are criteria for evaluating this view of the inner world as home to you and your Divine Companion: Does this perspective and the practices that flow from it bear good spiritual and social fruit in **your** life? The spiritual sages don't promise an easy life or an abundance of material goodies. Questions such as "Did you get richer?" are not appropriate criteria for evaluating these views and practices. The sages didn't seek an easy life but they found a greater poise in rising to the difficult occasions that they often faced. The sages didn't seek doctrinal certainty but they often found a deep and subtle assurance of being personally loved by God in the form of Divine Companion.

The spiritual sages never commanded a person to believe what they said. Rather, they simply shares what they learned and invited others to taste and see for themselves whether their views and practices were helpful.

Their invitation may inspire you to experiment and trust God a bit more intimately but your results (not their results) are the standard for evaluating whether trusting your Divine Companion lifts you up and improves your life. The results may not be immediately obvious so you may need to be patient and continue to observe any changes for a while after you tried being more trusting.

# Attachment Template

You have an attachment template that answers two questions: who is likely to love you and how you must treat them to keep their love. You may fear that deviating from these roles may endanger your relationship and you may be abandoned and left alone. These beliefs form your attachment style, your *modus operandi* in a relationship. Your attachment style is your general tendency for how you act in a relationship with either a person you don't know yet or a person you know well and are in a relationship with.

Perhaps you usually take the role of the helper or the listener; then the other person may become the center of attention and assume a leadership role. Perhaps you take the role of the fixer; then your relationship may focus on the other person's perceived weaknesses and problems. You may seek out relationships with needy people and be less interested in people who don't need fixing.

Perhaps you take on the role of naysayer and you take delight in pointing out even the most minor flaws in another person; or you take on the smartest-person-in-the-room role hoping other person becomes a adoring audience for you. You may seek out people who tolerate being put down and be less interested in people who can stand up for themselves and question your ideas and tactics.

Your attachment template is shaped by your attachment history: the security of your earliest attachments. Secure early attachments make it easier to trust your partner deeply, to develop intimate bonds and create a life together; a secure attachment style is born of the belief that you are worthy of love and the other person is trustworthy. Insecure early attachments breed doubt that a partner will be loving and caring; insecure attachment style is born of the belief that you are unworthy of love and/or that the other person will be untrustworthy, unkind or unreliable. Yet you still have reasons for hoping that your life contains the possibilities for secure attachments with other people in the outer world and your Divine Companion in your inner world.

Perhaps most importantly, your attachment template affects your willingness to trust that your Divine Companion will be kind and loving to you. Intimately bonding with your Divine Companion is a secure attachment that surpasses even the best human attachment. This wonderful attachment did not lead spiritual sages to abandon friends and family but instead greatly enriched their human attachments. You may have many understandable reasons for not trusting if you have mainly known insecure attachments throughout your life but what a tragedy to miss the great opportunity for secure attachment that lies within you.

# Attachment Template Practice

Harmful relationships are often more powerful in shaping your trust than positive relationships. Reflect and recognize the impact of harmful relationships in your life: have they made you overly guarded in trusting again? Do you see others with suspicions that they may hurt you just as you were hurt before? Do you think that you must be meek and accommodating, or flashy and stimulating, in order to be loved?

Reflect and recognize the blessings of positive relationships in your life: have you allowed them to enrich you as much as possible? Do you see others as possible partners who may enrich each other? Do you think that you can be your authentic self and still be loved?

Your ideas about attachment with another person (what a loving partner looks like and how to act in a loving relationship) shape your ideas about forming a relationship with God. If you think that God is aloof and indifferent, you may have little desire to pursue a partnership based on these ideas. Reflect on your assumptions about God's personality: Does your image of God pull you towards intimacy with your Divine Companion feeling sure that you will have a wonderful relationship? Or does your image of God make you fear that closeness with your Divine Companion will be a miserable experience?

Your attachment template has likely worked well for you in some situations: it helped you form the best bond possible early in life. Your attachment template also likely contains some errors about who is a good partner and how you should act in an intimate relationship. Like all personal growth, improving your attachment template hinges on recognizing what you are doing now and revising what you will do in the future. First, you recognize how your template (your view of self and other; your narratives for how to engage with another) guides you in your relationships. Then you revise your views so that they are more accurate and you revise your narratives so that they sustain more loving relationships.

Perhaps you might revise your attachment template about the traits of an ideal partner. You might recognize that a healthy partner will have harmonized their strength with tenderness; their desire to connect with a respect for your wishes and autonomy. Perhaps you might revise your attachment template about how you should interact with such an ideal partner: that you can accept their love without being required to distort yourself; that you can welcome their infusions without squelching your own contributions. These revisions may pave the way to experiencing a far better love than what you have known so far in your life.

# Your Own RQ: Your Capacity for Relationship

Nearly everyone is created with the ability to run; some run much better than others. Great runners develop their innate capability through exercising it; lesser runners don't develop whatever capabilities they have. In the same way, some people are better at relationships because they have exercised and developed their innate relationship capabilities; others have much less ability to connect because they have not used their innate capabilities.

John and Julie Gottman studied couples and found individuals have a wide range of relationship quotient (RQ), the ability to have a healthy relationship; it vary from time to time, from situation to situation but hovers around a certain level. At one extreme, some people are **relationship masters**; they are understanding, trustworthy, loyal and collaborative partners. At the other extreme, some people are **relationship mutilators**; they are so abusive, aggressive, angry, absent or anxious that they could ruin even a relationship with a relationship master. Many people are somewhere in the middle, **relationship muddlers**, who randomly navigate their way through relationships. Your RQ places you somewhere in this range. But your RQ is not set in stone. The Gottmans found that you can improve your outer RQ (your relationship ability with people) and your relationships if you are open to learning from relationship masters of the outer world.

The spiritual sages are the relationship masters of the inner world who can help you raise your inner RQ so that you are better able to cultivate intimacy and cooperation with your Divine Companion. You can learn views and attitudes that help you foster your own inner relationship. Once that is started, they teach that your inner partner is the ultimate relationship master (a much more gifted teacher than even the sages) who individually tailors relationship guidance to your specific needs so that the two of you can form a deeper and more cooperative relationship.

The sages describe the Divine Companion as a perfect partner who can upstep your own inner RQ if you are open to the assistance and guidance of your Divine Companion. But that cannot happen if you consider that you, not your Divine Companion, are the one who knows more.

Your inner RQ may currently be low because of the fallout of painful relationships in the outer world but your Divine Companion can help you increase your inner RQ by allowing you to actually experience a healthy loving relationship in your inner world. Having your won experience of a rich and loving inner relationship prepares you to be more loving and caring in your outer relationships with other people.

# Your own Trustworthiness

Honestly assessing your own trustworthiness in a relationship may help you become a better and more loyal partner by more clearly understanding yourself so that you can elevate your RQ. Several questions may help you assess your own trustworthiness:

- Do you respect the wisdom of your Divine Companion?
- Do you trust their ideas even when you can't understand it all?
- Do you actively try to know your Divine Companion better?
- Are you actively growing in this relationship?
- Do you really appreciate your partner's exquisite character?
- Are you excited about your joint adventures?
- Have you laid down any allegiance to other competing loves?

Based on your self-assessment, you can cultivate appropriate changes so that you are continually becoming an ever more trustworthy partner to your Divine Companion and strengthen your commitment to your Divine Companion.

A trustworthy partner is loyal in the face of temptation. If you are a trustworthy partner, you will sustain the connection with your partner when you are tempted to seek protection or other pleasures or when you have some doubts and are unsure about your relationship. If you are an untrustworthy partner, you likely have some ambivalent feelings about your Divine Companion, you

are more likely to be tempted in situations where more attractive options (usually short-sighted and short-term options) pull you away from your Divine Companion.

Owning your ambivalence involves recognizing the source of your ambivalence: what things you are very reluctant to let go of; what treasured things you think are necessary to keep you feeling alive and happy. Ambivalence is being on the fence, considering several different partners or paths as equally good options. Ambivalence is wanting to keep all of your options open. Ambivalence can keep you paralyzed by indecision, by your inability to make a final choice that reflects your higher values.

Most people find ambivalence very hard to tolerate. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, the human mind seems to abhor ambivalence and may rush to a fast choice in order to alleviate the discomfort of ambivalence. In contrast, intentionally resolving ambivalence involves a slower and more deliberate evaluation of what you will let go of and what you will pursue with all your heart. Resolving ambivalence frees you to more wholeheartedly embrace your Divine Companion; to consecrate your life to one relationship; to direct all of your energies on one set of values and ideals; to be more passionate in your devotion to your Divine Companion.

# Resolving Ambivalence Increases your Trustworthiness

## **Opposing yearnings**

Your yearning for connection may be in a tug-of-war with your yearning to avoid being hurt by another person. If you resolve this ambivalence by distrusting most people, you can protect yourself from pain but you will also frustrate your yearning to be connected with another. Such opposing yearnings can be balanced by having a deeper insight into relationships, such as by recognizing that trust is appropriate with some people and that distrust is quite warranted with others. Being able to distinguish when to trust and when not to trust protects you from being hurt and keeps open possibilities for healthy relationships; without the insight to distinguish healthy and unhealthy relationships, it can be very hard to resolve your ambivalent feelings.

## **Your inner situation is not the same as your outer situation**

Distrust of other people in the outer world can bleed into your inner world so that you distrust even your Divine Companion who is never harmful. The distrust that protects you in the outer world will starve you of the benefits of forging a bond with your Divine Companion in your inner world. Insight, real understanding, can help you correct your views and resolve such inner ambivalence. You can deepen your insight by absorbing the wisdom of the spiritual sages and applying it in your inner world.

## **Distrust short-circuits your wiring for connection**

Your capabilities for connection are inactivated by distrust and activated by trust. If you distrust a person, you won't want to form a relationship with them: to know them, to care for them, or to collaborate with them. Because many human relationships are far from perfect; you may have been hurt by others and your distrust has grown to such outsize proportions that you may only trust very few people, or in extremes, you might trust no one at all.

Quite likely, some of your psychological issues still tug at you and some material pleasures still capture your desire diminishing the desire you have for your Divine Companion. Resolving such ambivalences, coming to a final decision about what you value most, is one of the most powerful ways to fertilize your relationship with your Divine Companion.

You can reduce the tension between two opposing yearnings within yourself—between trust and distrust—by courageously making a small deposit of trust in your Divine Companion, by just putting your toe in the water of your spiritual mind where you can meet your Divine Companion. Then you can see for yourself what happens when you trust your Divine Companion and decide more wisely how you will resolve your personal ambivalence.

## Dialogue Deeply

Dialogue: the exchange that changes you because you have absorbed idea, feelings or values from another person.

Dialogue: opening yourself to be cross-fertilized.

Dialogue requires respecting and valuing the other person.

Inner dialogue with your Divine Companion enriches your mind with spiritual infusions of love and insights.

# Dialogue: The Mother Tongue of Connection

The communication between loving partners usually have a certain tone to their exchanges that conveys their mutual respect. People who have experienced a close connection with their Divine Companion describe the tone of that inner language as:

Silence (Thomas Keating)

Humility (Teresa of Avila)

Desire (Gerald May)

Settled Communion (Quakers)

Tenderness

Reverence

Reaching out (desire to overcome disconnection)

Devoted Loyalty

Creative itch to make a new co-creation

The language of love shares some core features but each person's language of love is unique. The language of love is always a two-way dialogue, never a self-centered monologue. Cultivating an intimate dialogue is cultivating love.

*The heart of a vibrant relationship is ongoing dialogue (sharing minds: perspectives and values), collaborating (jointly charting a course for life together) and co-creating (making a unique creation together).*

## Inner Dialogue and your Divine Companion relationship

An essential practice of Imago Therapy is shifting how people talk with each other. A core part of individual therapy is shifting a person's inner self-talk. A core part of spirituality is enhancing the inner dialogue between you and your Divine Companion.

Good inner dialogue requires good reception: being attuned to the heart of the other's thoughts and feelings in a deep way; it values your Divine Companion's infusions as very sacred.

Good inner dialogue reflects back what you have received. Reflection can be simple, like mirroring back what the other person said verbatim. Or, if you nurtured the seeds of the other in your inner soil, you might reflect back both what they said as well as how the seeds of what they said blossomed within you. Good inner dialogue with your Divine Companion will reflect back your joy in receiving wonderful love from your Divine Companion.

Good inner dialogue involves affirming the significance and beauty of what is being shared; intimate partners value their connection as central to their lives. Good dialogue is a communion, intimately entering your inner world with your Divine Companion, a communion that enhances each person.



# The three dialogues of the inner relationship

## THREE DIALOGUES

Secure spiritual attachment involves three dialogues, three exchanges, three flows between the human and divine partners:

*the dialogue of love:* sharing your love for each other; a two-way flow of affection and devotion that bonds both together.

*the dialogue of wisdom:* integrating what you know with what the your Divine Companion knows; a two-way flow of ideas, values and plans.

*the dialogue of creating:* combining our contributions with your Divine Companion's contributions; making a co-creation that is only possible with each partner's contributing to and living from a shared vision and plan.

The three dialogues are each collaborations, an interaction that weaves together the contributions of each partner: your unique and essential human contributions and your Divine Companion's unique and essential divine contributions. The three dialogues are like two previously parallel streams converging into a larger and more powerful stream.

But often self-talk can become almost all monologue rather than a dialogue, a monologue that resists collaboration, a monologue in which the ego selfishly hogs most of the air time. Perhaps you are reluctant to dialogue for fear that the other person will simply talk over you and ignore your thoughts and feelings. That certainly happens in many conversations between people. But the spiritual sages describe the inner dialogue with their Divine Companion as being very inclusive and welcoming of you; any inner self-talk that is domineering (such as the monologue of an Inner Critic) is not an inner dialogue with your Divine Companion but the voice of one of your human parts.

If you were having a conversation with someone you didn't respect and trust, you would likely be very reluctant to dialogue, to receive and to share. If you were having a conversation with someone you respected and trusted, you would likely be eager to dialogue, to receive and to share. If your many previous conversations have closed you off to all meaningful dialogue then you will miss the very real opportunity to share a wonderful dialogue with your Divine Companion. Being aware of such a global predisposition is the first step in participating in a wonderful conversation with your Divine Companion.

# Deepening your Dialogue

## **Making time for connection**

It's impossible to have a dialogue when you don't spend time with a person. Dialogue with your Divine Companion requires your time; you might set aside time for:

- regular short prayers (every hour);
- longer prayer (twice a day);
- Sabbath (once a week);
- retreats (several times a year).

During these times, you set aside any distracting devices and attitudes (grudges, lingering worries) so that you may experience God more directly.

## **Praise**

Praise for your wonderful partner is an important part of a dialogue that sustains a relationship. You might be sure that your inner dialogue includes:

- expressing your appreciation for DC's beautiful character;
- being thankful for all you have received from your DC.

You will learn your Divine Companion's personality in a deep dialogue; it's important to then express your admiration for specific traits of your Divine Companion's character, such as patience, generosity, cooperation, devotion, etc. (rather than saying nothing as if these traits were unremarkable).

## **Responding to Bids for your Attention**

Dialogue usually includes bids for your attention, such as your Divine Companion saying "look at this gem!" You deepen your dialogue by being alert for bids and responding with full attention to the direction your Divine Companion is pointing you towards.

## **Turning Dialogue into Action**

Dialogue usually goes beyond talking and leads two people to do things together, to co-create something together. You can cultivate a deeper dialogue with your Divine Companion by

- being a cooperative partner (not a naysaying partner);
- discovering and learning new things (growth mindset);
- seeing life through your Divine Companion's eyes.

## **Respect for your Partner's Experience**

Dialogue is like sharing one home or table with another person. Both people will experience whatever happens in that shared space. You can enhance your dialogue by respecting the fact that your Divine Companion must experience all the thoughts and dreams (baser ones and higher ones) that you entertain in your mind. Being respectful of this fact may motivate you to keep a clean house (mind) because your Divine Companion can't escape whatever you bring into and keep in your inner house.

# Imago Dialogue

Being able to have a deeper dialogue with your partner is a main goal of Imago Therapy for couples. Deep dialogue produces a change in each person: perhaps they feel understood and it brings relief; perhaps they see another with more appreciation and their love for them deepens. In contrast, shallow or impoverished dialogue leaves people feeling unheard and unseen; it doesn't nourish a relationship.

Imago dialogue aims to correct common dialogue deficiencies between partners, such as: not being attuned to what your partner is experiencing; not appreciating what your partner says and values; not demonstrating that you have heard your partner by reflecting back what they shared with you; not expressing yourself with your partner. Imago Dialogue techniques are meant to deepen the reception and expression between partners.

These principles of imago dialogue may help begin your inner dialogue with your Divine Companion. If you haven't had your own first-hand experience of your Divine Companion, you could begin by simply trusting the spiritual sages. In current your self-talk, you could say to your Divine Companion: "The sages say you are warm and tender but I have never experienced you. Would you help me experience you please?" And see what happens.

Again, trusting the sages, you might imagine that your Divine Companion responds, sayings "I, your Divine Companion, see [your name] as wonderful; you are very precious to me." Be clear that you are using your mind to imagine what your Divine Companion might say to you while you are waiting on your actual experience; the purpose of this exercise is not to put words into your Divine Companion's mouth but to use your imagination to create a seed to jumpstart an inner dialogue when none exists.

The motivation for a deep dialogue is to know another person more clearly and appreciate them more deeply. You might add to your self-talk a request to your Divine Companion such as: "Please help me correct my errors in seeing myself, you and others."

The tone of your self-talk matters a great deal. Respect and reverence for your Divine Companion improve dialogue; indifference and lack of appreciation and caring for your Divine Companion diminish dialogue. An authentic motivation to know your Divine Companion better improves dialogue; apathy and disinterest about your Divine Companion diminish dialogue. Dialogue is also diminished by self absorbed self-talk that is basically a monologue; and by a dulled mind incapable of awe and unmoved by beauty.

# Balancing Reception and Expression

A CB radio is wired for both sending and receiving, but you must stop sending in order to receive. You need to pause your speaking if you want to hear what another person is saying; you need to create openings in your inner conversation if you want to hear what God wants to say to you. Your listening acuity may be small if you have not exercised it much in other relationships. Weak listening may cause some incoming messages to seem faint and hard to hear. Or your hearing may be so attuned to other incoming messages that reverberate within you endlessly and prevent new and different messages from being received.

It can be helpful to recognize whether your receptive and expressive abilities are well balanced. As you reflect on how well you communicate, you may recognize your default patterns limit you in forming relationships with others if your listening and attuning is not well developed. Being the one who usually speaks the most in a conversation is like keeping your finger on the send button of a CB radio: it allows you to broadcast your thoughts but also prevents you from receiving the thoughts of the other person. If so, you may unwittingly be keeping yourself impoverished due to lack of incoming messages of love and wisdom. You can begin improving your dialogue by strengthening your receptivity.

The opposite might happen if you are almost always in listening mode and seldom express your thoughts. Then the dialogue may become starved because it lacks your contributions. The contributions of both people are essential to a vibrant dialogue. Giving yourself permission to express your thoughts and feelings may deepen your connections with others and your Divine Companion. Expressing admiration for your partner's traits (praise) and appreciation for your partner's gifts (gratitude) can enhance a relationship and open the way for even more sharing.

Good dialogue requires a good balance that creates space for each person like a beautiful duet that brings two complementary voices together in the same song. And, in some wonderful moments, both voices may speak at the same time joining together to make the exquisite harmony that only two well-attuned souls can create.

## Inner Attitudes

Your attitudes reflect what you value. Think of how your attitude differs when you meet someone you value *versus* when you meet someone you consider to be mainly a nuisance. Those attitudes will determine the quality of your dialogue.

The spiritual sages recommend certain attitudes that may strengthen your relationship with your Divine Companion:

**Reverence:** recognition of Divine Companion's greatness

**Holy desire:** devotion to seeking the divine

**Hospitality:** a welcoming inner atmosphere for God

**Openness:** trusting that you can learn more and be larger

**Hope:** the idea that you can always grow closer to God

**Growth Mindset:** valuing growth over dogma

**Consistency:** concertation to God even in challenging times

**Humbleness:** knowing that God is greater than you

**Dignity:** true self-respect because you are created by God

**Gratefulness:** acknowledging God's great gifts to you

**Praising:** articulating the greatness of God's character

# Attitudes

Some elements of a spiritual practice can be precisely listed and defined. Your inner attitudes, the heart of inner spiritual activity, are less amenable to such precise definition. Pound for pound, cultivating inner attitudes may promote inner spiritual growth more than precisely following a specific set of steps. Attitudes that served you well in the outer world (such as assuming control and being fiercely competitive) may be of almost no use on the inner path to spiritual intimacy; attitudes that are quite beneficial in material or intellectual pursuits may actually impede you in seeking inner spiritual intimacy.

Without a relationship-first (rather than a my-needs-first) attitude, inner spiritual techniques can be cold and robotic and unlikely to create intimacy and collaboration with your Divine Companion.

Spiritual sages suggest that certain attitudes are essential for cultivating your relationship with your Divine Companion:

--a curiosity to know God more deeply

    a spiritual growth mindset; not a calcified mind

--a desire to grow into a fuller person

    the courage to pursue the adventure of a meaningful life

--receptivity: a love of listening to another with respect

--reverence: seeing your DC as more wonderful than yourself

--comporting yourself with some dignity because you recognize the great potential of your life and each life

--being hospitable to your Divine Companion;

--being kind-hearted in how you see life, yourself and others

--being willing to take the deep dive seeking deeper insights.

These attitudes come naturally when you place a higher value on cultivating cooperation with your Divine Companion than boosting your own agenda; feeling deeply fortunate that you have such an exquisite partner living within you and craving a vibrant relationship with you!

With these wholehearted attitudes and a relationship-first perspective, many different spiritual techniques may produce good spiritual fruit. Some activities, like making a PB&J sandwich, require following certain steps: getting out the bread, PB and jelly; getting out plate, knife and spoon; etc. But much variation is possible within that framework: creamy or smooth PB; cut off the crusts or leave them on, etc. You may be helped to think of spiritual practices in the same way: that the core elements can be adapted so they are best suited to your needs and growth. Your attitudes are some core elements that can become the framework for your specific spiritual practice rather than the opposite: when practice details dominate the attitudes of your heart.

# An Hospitable Attitude

You may have visited someone who had a very indifferent attitude about you, as if it made no difference to them whether you visited or not; perhaps they undermined your self-respect. Or they had a very dismissive attitude and discounted almost all of your thoughts and feelings; perhaps they undermined your confidence in your own thoughts. Or they may have talked nonstop and only wanted you as a captive audience not as a participating person in a conversation. Such attitudes are inhospitable and will not help form or nourish a relationship.

Or you may have been fortunate to have visited someone who was delighted to see you and eager to engage in a real dialogue: hearing what you have to say with great interest and contributing their own piece. Such attitudes are hospitable and will help form or nourish a relationship.

You yourself may hold hospitable attitudes towards certain people but not for others. The same attitudes that affect a person-person relationship also affect the person-Divine Companion relationship.

A hospitable attitude towards your Divine Companion includes:

**Curiosity:** being every interested in what the other person feels and thinks;

**Receptivity:** being open to absorbing some of the thoughts and even traits of the other person

**Responsiveness:** responding to the other person's requests of you; showing up

**Esteem:** considering the other person to be very good

**Reverence:** sensing your Divine Companion's wonderful character

**Kindness:** seeing and treating others with sympathy, not judgment

**Grateful:** thankful that you have the opportunity to bond with such a lovely person; extremely thankful that God has made a way to personally accompany you through life on a tough planet.

**Eagerness:** a strong desire to know your Divine Companion more thoroughly and to cooperate together in how you live your one precious life.

**Growth:** wanting to grow and strengthen your relationships which often happens by doing new things together.

Cultivating hospitable attitudes will strengthen your relationship with your Divine Companion; they create a warm and welcoming inner atmosphere appropriate for such an exquisite inner partner. These attitudes may naturally form and strengthen on their own when you really see and taste the wonderful and good character of your Divine Companion.

# Dignity

The attitudes described in the previous pages are your attitudes towards the other person in a relationship, specifically your attitudes towards your Divine Companion. You may strengthen your relationship with your Divine Companion by also considering and nurturing certain attitudes towards yourself.

Bringing an appropriate attitude of dignity (a solid sense of your own value and worth) can catalyze your inner relationship with your Divine Companion. Appropriate dignity is a recognition that you are created by God with the capabilities to recognize God and respond to God; that you were created with all every capability needed to start and grow an intimate relationship with God.

Dignity is not an attitude of self-absorption, an obsession with your self-worth that eclipses your opinion of others, a preoccupation that leaves little room for concern about others. Dignity is not about where you stand in the pecking order of your tribe or society but rather an acknowledgement of the scaredness of your life. Dignity is simply the attitude that your life is precious and how you live your life matters a great deal. Dignity is an antidote to thinking that you and your life have little meaning or purpose; it can help you appreciate the magnitude of your values and choices; it can help you not fritter your precious life away.

A casual attitude towards yourself (the opposite of dignity) indicates that you don't consider your life to be precious, that you place a low value on your life and the possibility of a relationship with your Divine Companion. If you have a low opinion of yourself (minimal dignity), you likely have little hope that you can have a meaningful relationship with your Divine Companion.

Like all people, you are a mixed bag of strengths and weaknesses. You have personal deficits and blind spots; you have made small and catastrophic mistakes in your life choices. You may be tempted to focus excessively on them. But you are also created with amazing abilities; to make your own choices and revise your values and narratives; to craft a life that reflects your values rather than simply mirrors social pulls or material needs; to cooperate with another person and co-create beautiful ideas and things together. Having a balanced view of your strengths and weaknesses may help you appreciate your dignity more.

Knowing that you possess these amazing abilities (perhaps not yet fully utilized) may help you live accordingly and walk with a dignity appropriate for a child of God, a person who, although earth-bound, can resonate with high spiritual values and bond with God who lives within you as your Divine Companion.



# A Warm and Open Heart

Your Divine Companion always respects your choice to be receptive (or not). Your Divine Companion extends an invitation to collaborate but never forces you to accept, never forces you to be hospitable. Your Divine Companion says to you: "I stand at the door of your heart and knock." A small inner opening of that inner door in your mind to God allows great fruits to form that cannot form without that open door, without your willing consent.

Some psychologists, who are not religious or spiritual, found that clients made far more progress than expected when they opened themselves to the possibility that they contained an powerful source of healing within themselves. Clients who struggled with a longstanding psychological issue and who had made some progress using their own resources, suddenly found that they made really amazing progress when they embraced the idea that they were not alone and they could connect with an Inner Healer who wanted to collaborate with them in addressing their issues.

Some people felt a snowball effect after opening themselves to the real possibility of an Inner Healer. After they were receptive to this possibility in a small way and enjoyed the positive changes that followed, they became even more receptive. When they experienced even greater growth, they continued to open their

hearts and mind to this wonderful inner person who was so gracious and helpful. Opening the door of their heart just a little helped them really experience and appreciate the wonderful character of their Divine Companion. This experience snowballed and made it easier to be even more receptive. But you won't have such an experience if you never open that inner door just a bit and really pay attention to what happens in your inner world.

# Helpful and Harmful Attitudes

People often talk about dating in terms of missing red flags and green flags. Sometimes a person can miss blatant red flags that a potential partner is a very bad choice, such as an attraction for dating exciting but “bad” men. Sometimes a person can miss obvious green flags that a potential partner is very promising, such as hastily overlooking a possible partner for superficial reasons. Often friends can see your blind spots far more readily than you can. Wise dating involves understanding yourself and your distortions of these flags: more readily recognizing both red flags indicating relationship hazards and green flags indicating wonderful relationship possibilities.

In the outer world of dating potential partners, flags are how you see your date’s character which is always a mixed bag. But, in your inner world where your potential partner is a perfect lover exquisitely adapted to you, red flags refer to your own attitudes that might sabotage your ability to connect with this partner. You may miss some of the red flags that indicate some of your attitudes and ideas are causing your Divine Companion relationship to flounder; and you may overlook some green flags that indicate paths not yet taken which may nourish your inner relationship.

The experiences of spiritual sages can help you read the flags of the inner world better.

Green Flags (signs of inner paths that lead you closer to your DC) are having a deeper trust that a Divine Companion lives within you; distinguishing the character of your Divine Companion from your human parts. Your Divine Companion will be unfailingly kind and tender; if you encounter a harsh inner presence, you haven’t found your Divine Companion.

Green flags (signs that you have indeed found your Divine Companion) are bearing spiritual fruits: poise and calm where anxiety dominated before; having a more assured self-respect balanced with an equal gain in other-respect; being more understanding of others; becoming capable of deeper intimacy; a happy desire, not obligation, to assist others as much as you can.

Red flags (signs that you have not found your Divine Companion): if you think you have found your Divine Companion but your life is unchanged (no spiritual fruits in your inner life and your behavior in the outer world): your anxiety is as strong and destructive as ever (no inner poise); your self-respect has not deepened; your compassion has not increased; your desire and delight to serve others has not been kindled.

# Inner Relationship Inhibitors

## *Inhibitors relating to yourself*

### Not enough self-respect

Disrespecting yourself

Relationships require a modicum of self-respect, of valuing yourself. Without self-respect, you can't contribute your unique piece that good relationships need to flourish.

Harville Hendrix: *"Self-rejection is a nearly universal problem. It hinders us in giving and receiving love."*

## *Inhibitors relating to the partnership*

### Minimal investment

Ambivalence about whether the other person is good

maybe the grass really is greener elsewhere)

keeping your options open

Get too caught up in the day to day (minimal time together)

focus on details rather than the heart of the relationship

Withdrawing much of the time

Being closed off in general

Not interested in the other (extremes: autism, schizotypal)

Valuing the other person only for what they do for you

Paraphrase of Harville Hendrix: *"Half-hearted trusting is a nearly universal problem. It hinders you in receiving the love that your Divine Companion really wants to give you."*

## *Inhibitors relating to the partnership*

### No co-creation

Not learning something new together

Not co-creating (each contributing an essential piece)

Not serving others (not reaching out and sharing your love)

### No connection

Not making or responding to bids (requests)

Not listening deeply

Not sharing all parts of yourself fully

Not making time, head space, for your partner

### No giving yourself fully to the relationship

Excessive desire for sole control (pride)

Blaming the other for problems

Lack of appreciation (contempt) for your partner

A healthy partnership values each partner—yourself and the other person—as essential to the well-being of the pair. Healthy partners value the partnership as much as or more than each individual.

Without too many inhibitors, a relationship can become very healthy and very creative, making each person better and contributing to the well-being of others.

# Love Fertilizers

The Gottmans recommended certain relationships ingredients that make it flourish:

Build a loving map

- see your partner with kind eyes
- understand life from their perspective
- know and appreciate your partner's character

Spend time together

- emphasis on spending time out of joy, not obligation

Be attuned to the other

- build a culture of appreciation

Learn something together

- expand your perspective

Do things (activities) together

- be co-creative, make things together
- ask for help, for your partner's essential contributions

Consistently turn toward, not away from, your partner

- Respond to your partner's bids
- Send out your bid to your partner

To help positive interactions predominate

20:1 positive to negative interactions (or I-Thou to I-It connection)

20:1 praise to requests, complaints (I-Divine Companion)

Be able to handle the conflicts which are inherent in relationships

- Start hard conversations gently vs. harshly lighting into other  
Usually "I" statements (what you want) vs. "You" accusations
- Accept influence from your partner  
must respect your partner's thinking
- make repairs earlier rather than later
- de-escalate conflicts  
the inner conflict of interest: ego vs. God
- self-soothe before getting in the red zone  
stay connected before drifting too far from God
- learn from a really bad fight so you don't repeat that pattern  
recognize your self-sabotaging patterns
- Patience (no need to over-talk things NOW!)  
don't stray into too much whining and complaining

Handling conflict when partners don't see eye to eye

- own your part in the conflict (your Shadow)
- witness and validate your partner's trauma
- internally, get clear whether you want to control or cooperate

# Love Toxins and Antidotes

People can dishonor and break the sacred bond in many ways. Psychologists and spiritual sages describe common ways of relationship sabotage and their antidotes.

**Gottmans** (John and Julie)

## Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

*Common ways people undermine trust*

Contempt/disgust for the other

Criticism/control of the other

Defensiveness/Double down on one's righteousness

Stonewalling/shutdown/withdrawal

## Antidotes for the Four Horsemen

*Ways to counteract our lower tendencies*

Counteract criticism with a gentle tone

Counteract contempt by building a culture of appreciation

Counteract defensiveness by owning your limitations

Counteract stonewalling by doing self-soothing

There's no known antidote when people consider the Four Horsemen as good traits worth cultivating, such as: "Greed is good." "My anger is righteous." "Lusts are part of my wiring; therefore, they must be a good thing."

**Desert Fathers** (Evagrius Ponticus and John Cassian)

## Seven Deadly Sins

*Common ways we undermine our Divine Companion*

Pride (I >> you)

Greed (you only exist to give me goodies)

wrath is warranted because you are so bad

(you responds violently to the smallest transgression)

envy (bean counting: someone else got more than me)

lust (primitive urges usurp holy desire)

gluttony (consume much with no real appreciation)

sloth (don't put effort into cultivating the relationship)

## Seven Antidotes (seven virtues)

*Ways to counteract our undermining of our Divine Companion*

Humility (God >> me)

Sharing (concern that your partner is fully satisfied)

Collaboration (valuing what you can create together)

Patience (can surf the disappointments; not get sucked under)

compassion and kindness when gravely mistreated

joyous gratitude (appreciative of all that DC gives)

elevate holy desires primitive urges

balance receiving from God with serving others

enthusiasm for God (willing to put effort into God's plans)

# Practices to Nourish Attitudes

## Seven Foci; one attitude for each day of the week

*Do them as a focus of your inner dialogue throughout each day*

Reverence (praise your Divine Companion's wonderful traits)

Desire and devotion (are they attached to what is really holy?)

Hospitality (create a conducive inner atmosphere; welcome)

Openness (foster a growth mindset, open to infusions)

Consistency (loyalty, consecration, immune to the Sirens of life)

Humble, dignity, self-respect (own your God-given endowments)

Thankful: for endowments and infusions that fueled your growth

## Viscerally imagining the many ways in which God surrounds you:

--God within you

as the Divine Companion who partners with you

--God around you

as the natural world that supports (and challenges) you

as spiritual beings who nurture you

as kindred spirits who work alongside of you

--God in the person beside you

respect them as a beloved child created by God

respect their dignity to make their own choices, life path

--God in the relationship between two people

trust that God will accompany two sincere children of God

trust that God can transform a relationship tremendously

Taking moments throughout the day to put your material and psychological concerns into the background of your mind to create room in the foreground of your mind for:

--holding thoughts and values that are pleasing to your partner

--resonating more fully with your partner's view of life

Using your naturally occurring self-talk as a springboard for initiating or stimulating a deeper dialogue with your Divine Companion; you might imagine that your Divine Companion calls you by name and expresses divine affection for you. Imagining such a dialogue, guided by the wisdom of the spiritual sages, may foster an attitude of more profound gratitude for the great gift of having such a wonderful Divine Companion.

Reflecting on the partner within you and fostering an eagerness for what you and your Divine Companion might do together: how you might serve another person (happy and willing to do the humble grunt work of serving one individual); fostering a thrill that a humble human being such as you are invited to participate in such lovely and divine plans of your inner partner.

Having a sense of awe, not a sense of being jaded about all that your one precious life entails.

## Metaphors

Spiritual Sages often used metaphors to give a sense of the nature of the inner relationship with your Divine Companion:

A dance for two in your inner world

A duet sung by two in your inner world

A meal at a shared table

    you supply the empty plate

    you and your Divine Companion prepare the meal

Two people linked by sharing one canoe

    both must go where one partner's paddling leads

Dating and discerning

    should I commit or should I keep looking?

    ambivalence reigns until you wholeheartedly commit

Phoenix Garden

    great things appear in what appear to be dead remains

# The Dance of Trust

Trust is like a dance: both happen between two people; one person alone cannot set the tone of a dance or a relationship. Imagine going to a dance and dancing with several partners in the course of an evening. You may dance a certain way with one dance partner, perhaps a bit more restrained if this partner has a hurt back. You may dance a very different way with another dance partner, perhaps a more lively style if both you and this partner are energized by the music. Dancing well requires that both partners are adept at dancing and attuned to each other. Your style of dancing with a certain person involves

- one part: your sense of the music;
- one part: your partner's sense of the music;
- one part: physical abilities (health and skill);
- one part: time spent together dancing with that partner.

A good dance requires two people who both share a sense of the music, who have the physical ability to perform the dance moves that they envision in their mind, and who have spent enough time dancing together to be in sync with each other.

In the same way, a trusting relationship is like a dance that reflect how each person engages and interacts; one person alone cannot set the style and tone of their relationship. Imagine several people you know: you may have a high level of trust with some people

and less trust with other people. You may share a great deal with some people who you have come to trust over time and share less with other people who you either don't know well yet or you consider them to be untrustworthy. Your level of trust with a certain person involves

- one part: your sense of what a good relationship is;
- one part: your partner's sense of what a good relationship is;
- one part: your social skills and attunement;
- one part: your partner's social skills and attunement;
- one part: time spent together engaging with that person.

A good relationship requires two people who both share a common sense of what a loving and supportive relationship is, who have the social ability to actually treat each other in the way that they envision in their mind, and who have spent enough time together engaging and interacting to be in sync with each other.

The elements of a trusting relationship another person also apply to relationship with your Divine Companion, except that your Divine Companion has far better ability to connect than you do. The bottleneck in this relationship is often your willingness to trust and your capability for being fully intimate, for fully sharing your inner life. You have the ultimate spiritual dance partner within you; the level of your dance is only limited by you.



# The Dance of Trust

Imagine that you are beginning a relationship (or dance) with a new partner and you have no idea what kind of relationship (or dance) they are capable of. Imagine that, unknown to you, this person is extremely capable, a far more wonderful partner than you have ever known. If you don't recognize how wonderful this person is, this relationship won't be all that it can be.

## Part 1: your RQ sensor

Imagine that you are beginning to talk with a new person and you are still forming an idea of their character and so you hold back on trusting. If your RQ sensor is poorly calibrated (biased to be quite suspicious of nearly everyone), you will be slow to appreciate this new person's trustworthiness, perhaps for a long time and prevent you from seeing their wonderful personality. Imagine the loss if that person is a great partner who could enrich your life.

## Part 2: Your willingness to allow the other to lead

You may be very reluctant to allow your partner to lead, to set the tone for your relationship. You may want to stay on familiar seemingly safe ground, to continue living and interacting largely as you did before you met this person. Imagine how much enrichment you will miss by not recognizing their contribution and welcoming their leadings.

In the case of encountering a wonderful person, your suspicions and unwillingness to allow the other person to lead will make your relationship less vibrant and loving than it could be. You could improve your relationship by revising your sense of the other person's trustworthiness and by graciously allowing the other person to lead in your relationship.

In the case of your Divine Companion, you could revise your evaluation of your Divine Companion by really noticing what happens in your interactions: Does your Divine Companion overpower you or respect your wishes? Is your Divine Companion extremely clingy and preventing you from doing what you want? The spiritual sages say that your Divine Companion is extremely respectful of your choices and only invites you to intimacy but never forces it on you if you are not comfortable sharing your inner life.

But what a shame, what a loss of love, if you don't take a leap of faith and really trust your perfect inner partner who offers you a warm and vibrant love, who has brings great wisdom into your mind. If you trust and share with this partner, together you can build a life that you could never build on your own; you could dance better than you could ever possibly dance on your own.

# The Duet of Dialogue

You can also imagine your relationship with your Divine Companion to be like a duet song that you sing together, a song that requires two voices (one human voice and one divine voice) to be as rich and meaningful as possible, a song that requires each singer to really grasp the meaning of the melody created by the original composer, the God who created everything and everyone.

Your Divine Companion wants to sing an intimate duet of love with you, a song of great and dazzling beauty. The song begins with your Divine Companion singing alone, singing a verse expressing the great love that your Divine Companion has for you. Then hearing the love and devotion in your Divine Companion's verse of the song and being deeply moved, you sing your own verse expressing how much you treasure the great gift of divine affection that you have received and how much you want to reciprocate that love as fully as you can. Then the song moves to the chorus (the part jointly sung by both of you in contrast to the individually sung verses) in which your voice harmonizes with your Divine Companion's voice and together you create the extremely beautiful music that can only be created by the combination of two unique voices, the human and the divine each contributing an essential piece.

## Heart of the Dance/Duet Metaphor

Partners who dance amazingly well or partners who sing moving duets together have practiced together a great deal and developed a rapport by spending much time together and perfecting their co-creations. Over time, they develop a deep sense of each other so that they seem to share a common mind when they dance or sing; they know what their partner is feeling and what each will do next in the dance or duet; they are so well coordinated because they know each other so intimately.

Spending time together with your Divine Companion in reverence brings your mind more in harmony with your Divine Companion's mindset; being more attuned to such a divine person enables you to create a more meaningful and useful life. Inner intimacy is lowering the barriers between you and your Divine Companion so that, sensing the divine presence in your heart, you can be more caring and loving; so that you can better grasp higher spiritual views ideas which upstep how you think. Intimacy builds as you spend more time fully trusting your Divine Companion. A shallow and fleeting relationship leaves you unchanged but an intimate relationship changes you; intimacy with your Divine Companion enriches you and changes you for the better.

# Shared Kitchen; Shared Canoe

## Shared kitchen and table

Your relationship with your Divine Companion is like sharing one kitchen between the two of you for preparing the meals that you will both eat at a shared table. You will both eat whatever meal is prepared with your input; at the common table, you will both experience the same atmosphere created and shaped with your input. If you bring inferior ingredients into the kitchen or foster a coarse attitude at the table (the thoughts and feelings that you harbor and nurture in your mind), your Divine Companion cannot escape them; your Divine Companion cannot bring spiritual insights into the inner conversation if you are intent on talking about only purely material and psychological concerns. But if you bring good ingredients into the kitchen or foster a reverent attitude at the table, your Divine Companion can enjoy them, enhance them and you will benefit from better food and conversation.

Imagine two cooks in the kitchen and the less accomplished cook has little or no appreciation that the other cook has much more wisdom about preparing delicious and nutritious meals; so the first cook continues to dominate what recipes are used, sometimes even preparing very dangerous and toxic foods. What wonderful meals you will miss if you ignore the great wisdom that is right next to you in your inner kitchen!

## Shared Canoe

Your relationship with your Divine Companion is like being together in one canoe: you will both take the same course down the river, a course that is determined by your paddle strokes and insight in reading the water. Both you and your Divine Companion share this one precious life; your Divine Companion cannot take path different than yours. You sit in the rear of the canoe and play the major in steering the boat; your Divine Companion sits in the front of the boat and can help you choose the best course in the river but only if you listen to your Divine Companion's input.

Paddling a canoe well with another person involves having a common language to quickly communicate ideas when danger approaches rapidly; listening to each other and trusting the other person when they call out a danger and say which way to go (left of the rock or right of the rock). But often a person has little or no appreciation of their Divine Companion's great wisdom in navigating the river of life; so they ignore their Divine Companion and choose many unwise courses through the river of life, even excitedly choosing sometimes very dangerous and destructive rapids, all the while ignoring the extremely talented river guide who sits with them in their canoe.

# Shared Shop

## The “relationship”

A sniglet is an imagined word that conveys a certain idea. The sniglet, *relationship*, conveys that your relationship with your Divine Companion is a very creative place like a shop that has everything needed to make unique and wonderful creations. You are the shop in this metaphor; the tools are the capabilities of your mind; your Divine Companion waits just outside the door into your shop, hoping that you will invite your Divine Companion in. You have the option to use the shop as the soul proprietor or to share your shop, your inner world, with a master craftsman.

Imagine that you are a carpenter with your very own shop (your mind). God has outfitted your shop with everything needed for your craft:

- The shop itself (your mind);
- The tools (the various capabilities you have);
- The materials that you work with (the necessities of life);
- Designs: suggestions for what you might make in your shop.

And then God turns the shop over to you to make all the decisions about what you will do with your shop, what you will create.

There are two doors into your shop. The first one is an outer door into your shop where people wander in:

- Friends, lookers, fellow crafts folk stopping by
- People selling things and buying things.

Some visitors you are happy to see,  
friends who are happy to chat and share a treat.  
Some visitors you dread their arrival,  
those who are just trying to get something from you unfairly.

The second door to your shop is an inner door:  
A Divine Designer awaits just on the other side of this door.  
One who would gladly assist you in all your projects.  
An extremely talented one who has built many amazing things,  
things far beyond your imagination.  
A wise one who can assist you as you struggle on a project.  
A loving one who sees you as a person,  
not a piece of machinery,  
not one who only wants you for what you can produce.  
A respectful one who sees your latent talent.  
A patient one who waits until you invite the Designer in.

The Divine Designer only enters your shop  
when you open this inner door,  
when you give a sign of welcome and interest.  
The Designer will never barge in on you uninvited.  
If you deeply desire to see the Designer,  
Then the Designer will gracefully enter your shop.  
The Designer is always ready whenever you open the door.  
You open this door with your humility  
that recognizes the Designer’s great worth  
You open this door with your eagerness to learn and grow.

# Shared Shop

If you would partner with the Divine Designer  
Whatever your current level of craftsmanship, together you will build something better than what you create alone.  
However you are feeling, together your two minds will see more clearly, and further kindle the spark of your enthusiasm.  
However caring you are, serving together the Designer will deepen your compassion and improve your serve.

The decision to consult with the Designer is all yours.  
Perhaps unsatisfactory interactions with people who entered through the outer door have made you also reluctant to trust the One who would enter through the inner door.

Perhaps you detest the idea of giving up your independence by partnering with another person; it may be too hard to open the inner door if you believe that having another person in your shop will squelch your personality and creativity.

Perhaps you are fearful because some from the outer door have mocked your previous work; and so you bolt the inner door because you feel that it will only bring more mocking.

Perhaps you have been "fortunate" and have been praised much for your solo creations by people who entered from through the outer door. And so you ignore the inner door, thinking that you don't need any assistance because you are already so wonderful.

Perhaps you are truly fortunate and have been inspired by teachers and fellow carpenters who came through your outer door. So it's easy for you to open the inner door with a trusting heart.

No matter what your predisposition, it matters a great deal how you approach the inner door. Will you approach the inner door with trust or distrust? Approaching with distrust will greatly diminish your relationship with the inner Designer; you be stuck in your current mindset and be deprived of divine infusions. Approaching the inner door with trust will open great possibilities for healing human relationships and growing a divine relationship.



# Teresa's Dating Metaphor

Teresa used dating as a metaphor for spiritual growth: how your relationship with your Divine Companion may grow from a dalliance into a complete and joyful betrothal; your pattern of this spiritual dating can take several forms.

Drifting Dating In the beginning of your spiritual journey, you may have no sense of the nature of your inner spiritual partner. Lacking any spiritual experience, you may seek out other worldly partners, oblivious to the wonderful partner who dwells within you and desires to partner with you.

Poorly Directed Dating Continuing on your spiritual journey and having a slight appreciation of the presence of your Divine Companion, you still remain vulnerable to committing to lesser relationships because you have barely tasted inner spiritual intimacy; trivial paths devoid of deep spirituality still attract you.

Wisely Directed Dating When you have more fully tasted an inner spiritual intimacy, you value spiritual companionship much more and value purely material relationships much less. Your sense of what you desire becomes much clearer. Recognizing the great beauty and integrity of your Divine Companion, you become devoted to enriching the relationship and co-creating together.

If you've had some dating disasters, you can appreciate how you might think that truly great relationships aren't possible. In that frame of mind, you might not recognize a wonderful potential partner and completely dismissed the possibility of such a relationship. Spiritual sages describe the initial inner situation as one where people completely overlook the amazing partner within them and instead pursue lesser relationships in life.

The foolishness of pursuing inappropriate partners when an amazing partner is close at hand may only become obvious when enough time passes and you understand your inner world better. Only then may you wish that you didn't waste so much time on relationships that were never going to work out. Through their own experiences, the spiritual sages had a deeper understanding of our inner world: how easily we can foolishly overlook the wonderful partner who waits patiently while you invest your hopes and energy in relationships that are far less satisfying than the one with your Divine Companion.

Like cheerleaders, spiritual sages are rooting for you to enjoy being loved and supported by your Divine Companion; prolonged loneliness is so unnecessary when a wonderful partner is so readily available if you would only turn towards your Divine Companion.

# The Phoenix Garden

You can easily think that the way things are right now in your inner garden is the way that they always will be. If you are feeling sad and disconnected now, then you will always be feeling that way. Some people found that their inner world was shifted for the better by harsh events (or a similar shift can be cultivated less painfully by intentional reflecting and revising).

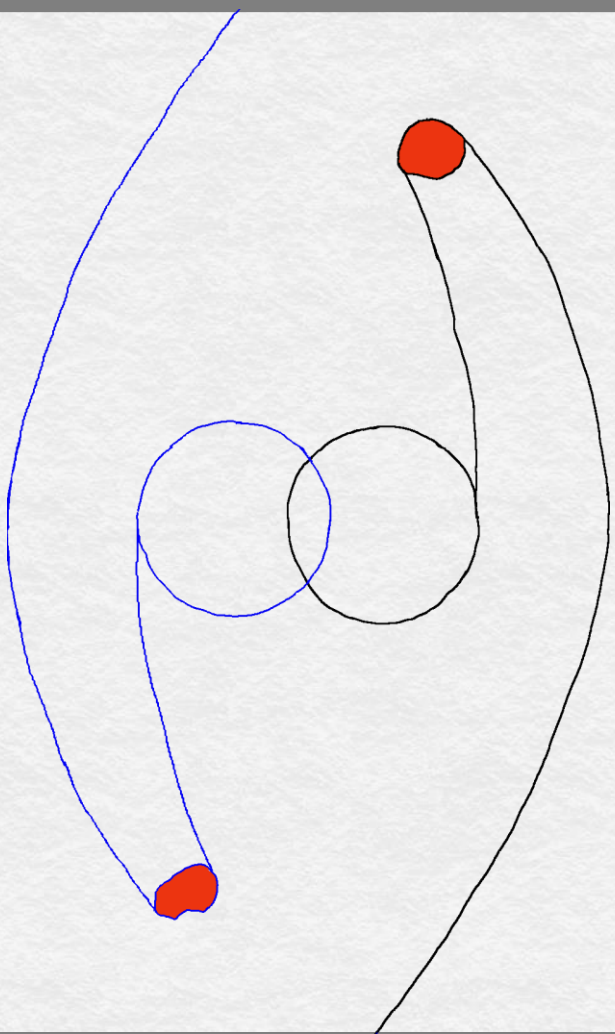
Your inner world is like a Phoenix Garden: your carefully cultivated garden (your treasured human accomplishments) might ignite and be consumed by flames; all of your dreams may come crashing down; the fruits of all of your hard work may be lost due to circumstances beyond your control or due to your foolish decisions. Such destructive inner infernos are incredibly painful, something that you would never want to happen; such infernos seem like an unmitigated tragedy.

But you might also be surprised by what comes next after such devastating losses: a new garden may germinate in the ashes of your old garden. The old garden represents your solo human accomplishments; the new garden represents the results of weaving together your human parts together with the spiritual contributions of your Divine Companion. Sometimes the old garden must be razed to make room for the new garden.

You may be surprised by how the new garden is far more wonderful than the old garden, even if you thought the old garden was near perfect. As if the soil beneath your old garden, unbeknownst to you, was all along harboring amazing seeds that couldn't emerge until the old plants were removed by fire and created space for new plants to emerge. People who have experienced a Phoenix-like inner change are amazed, even stunned, that they had lived their entire lives in what they thought was an adequate garden, oblivious to the fact that they could have been cultivating a magnificent garden instead. In the end, they wished that the consuming fire had happened earlier in their lives.

Other people have experienced the loss of their dreams but remain in mourning for what they have lost for so long that they miss the opportunity of discovering the greater possibilities for cultivating an even better garden.

The metaphor of the Phoenix Garden suggests that being too attached to maintaining the status quo of your current garden may deprive you of the opportunity to see a miraculous rebirth of yourself, of your inner garden, replete with new and more nourishing plants. Being less attached to your current inner garden opens the possibility of new reborn garden.



# A Little Experiment



# Does This View Bear Good Fruit?



## *Applying this Psyche+Spirit perspective to your life*

The idea that your inner world is home to both you and your Divine Companion isn't an abstract idea. Embracing this view can transform you as it has transformed many very different individuals. You can evaluate this view, this understanding yourself with a little inner experiment.

A spiritually accurate view of yourself will bear good fruit. You test the value of a view (or a medicine) by observing what happens after it is absorbed. What happens when you embrace this view that you can cooperate with God, right here, right now? One of three outcomes will result when you embrace this view of yourself; the results will help you draw a conclusion about what you tried (the conclusion from each result is in parentheses):

- the view produced no change (this view is off-the-mark);
- the view produced a negative change (this view is spiritually unsound); or
- the view produced a positive change (this view is spiritually accurate).

A worthwhile view will enhance your life: it brings more poise and lessens conflict and turmoil in your inner world; your interactions with others in the outer world will be more compassionate. You can test the value of this perspective (that your inner world is home to both you and your Divine Companion) by observing what happens when you reach out for your Divine Companion. Of course, the results of this experiment are limited by how fully you absorb this view and how whole-heartedly you reach out.

# Begin with a Baseline



*Identify something about yourself that you want to change:  
decrease a weakness or increase a strength*

Pick something that you want to decrease in your inner life. Perhaps an immature belief about what you must do to “earn” love or acceptance; or negative ideas about yourself that torment you; or a deep feeling that you are totally alone and no one really cares about you. Or pick something that you want to increase in your inner life. Perhaps being more optimistic; or having a healthier degree of self-respect; or seeing people more kindly and responding with more compassion.

Each of these unseen inner thoughts and feelings shapes your observable behaviors in the outer world: how you engage with a partner, child or friend; how resilient you are when you feel overwhelmed by the many imperfections of life; how courageously you approach challenges. What happens in your inner world determines whether you live a larger life or a smaller life.

Observe what you want to change; really get to know it intimately. How often do these thoughts, feelings or behaviors happen now? How intense are they? Do certain situations provoke them? Are these feelings accompanied by bodily sensations? How do you behave and interact when these thoughts and feelings become intense? Articulate these inner experiences in as much detail as possible so that you can later evaluate whether they changed.

# Dialoguing with your Divine Companion



## *Create an intimate dialogue with your Divine Companion*

This spiritual experiment evaluates what happens when you try to be more welcoming to your Divine Companion, when you share your thoughts and feelings more intimately. The idea is to share your human burdens and dreams with the divine one within you, to approach your selected issue as a collaborator with the divine rather than as a solo operator.

This inner sharing isn't shirking your responsibility, your role in these issues; it isn't simply dumping your issues in the lap of your Divine Companion and expecting a miraculous resolution (a solution that involves no contribution from you). Instead, inner sharing means that you willing relax your grip on trying to control everything and, for a time, become more receptive, more willing to collaborate with your Divine Companion.

Being receptive to your Divine Companion (or anyone) requires that you really treasure who your Divine Companion is. Reverence is really valuing your Divine Companion and seeing your Divine Companion as someone who is both close to you and far more than you. Receptivity is being moved by the other person and desiring to assimilate their way of thinking and doing things.

The opposite of reverence, pride (considering yourself as better than your partner) sabotages intimacy and collaboration with your Divine Companion.

# Dancing with your Divine Companion



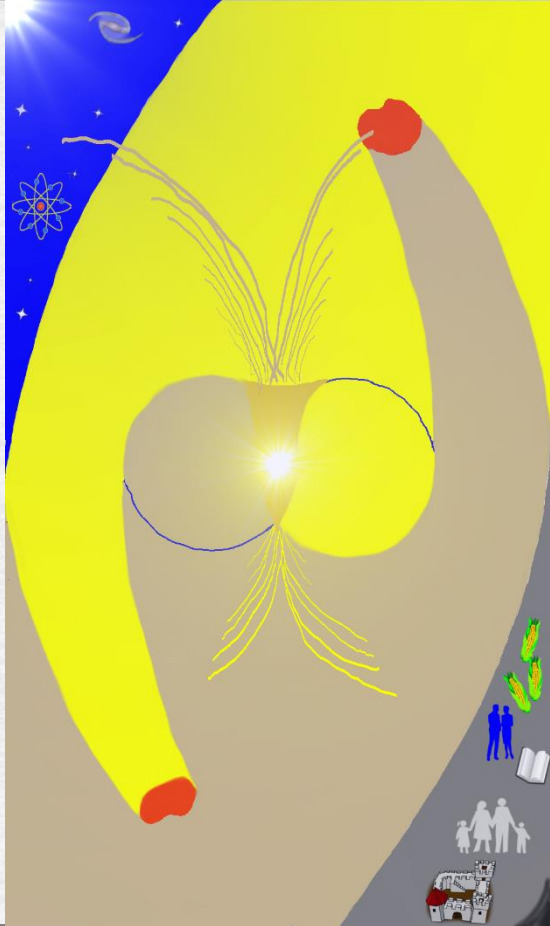
## *Dialogue leads to dancing: moving in harmony with your Divine Companion*

Spiritual dialogue is an inward mingling of your human thoughts and feelings with the infusions of your Divine Companion; sharing your inner life with your Divine Companion; fertilizing the soil of your inner garden, your mind.

Dancing is a metaphor for collaborating with your Divine Companion in how you act in the outer world, in how you interact with other people. Just as dancer partners move together in ways that they cannot do alone, you can collaborate your Divine Companion to create interactions with others that you could not do on your own. Your inner spiritual dialogue improves your inner world which leads to a more gracious way of dancing, of interacting and dialoguing with others.

Dancing involves harmonizing your movements with your partner's movements in response to the music (spiritual principles). If you don't really get the music, your dancing will be disconnected from the music (your actions won't have a spiritual basis). If you aren't attuned to your partner, you might as well be dancing alone. Great dancing combines a solid sense of the music, your own response to that music and being responsive to your partner's movement. A great life combines a solid grasp of spirituality, your own unique contribution based on that and being responsive to your divine partner's contributions to your shared life.

# Watch for Changes



*Observe the thoughts, feelings or behaviors that you selected*

This experiment is designed to see if cultivating a deeper inner dialogue with your Divine Companion changes the thoughts, feelings or behaviors you initially selected and wanted to change. See whether what you first observed changes as you attempt more inner intimacy. Be alert to other changes, such as a change in your inner atmosphere, in case the experiment yields unexpected fruits. Based on your observations, you can make a conclusion about the helpfulness of inner intimacy with your Divine Companion.

You will need to be very honest about how deeply you are sharing your inner life and how receptive you really are to your Divine Companion. If you only go through the motions of this experiment, you should expect little or no changes. But if you sincerely try to foster more cross-fertilization in your inner world, you may find that even a modest bit of trust and collaboration is surprisingly fruitful.

Your efforts to share more with your Divine Companion may take some time before it produces a meaningful change. Impatience – disliking your partner if you don't get immediate results – may be a sign that you only appreciate your partner for what your partner gives rather than for the person your partner is. If so, you may want to restart this experiment again but with a genuinely appreciative mindset before concluding that cooperation with your Divine Companion doesn't help you.

# Maintenance Required

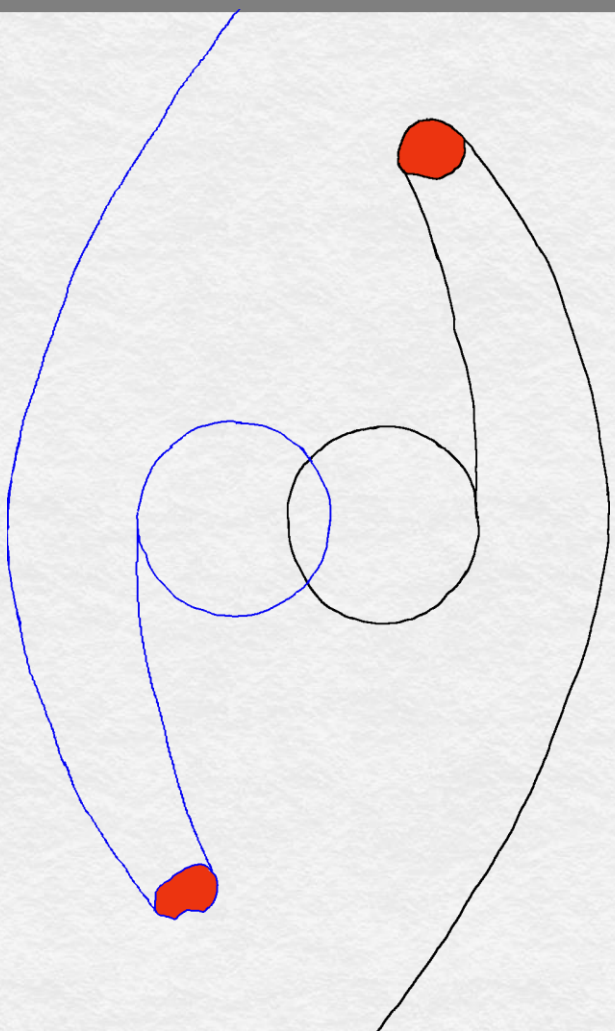


*Your inner garden needs continued cultivating to keep producing fruits*

The initial uplift – more inner poise, more outer compassion – from deeper Divine Companion intimacy is often very striking and impossible to miss. The new changes have significant staying power; they may last for several months. But spiritual fruit, like actual fruit, is best when it's fresh. The positive changes that flow from intimacy with your Divine Companion need continuing nourishment. You may want to make this one-shot experiment into a new way of living by continuing fostering this inner relationship.

Regularly cultivating intimacy with your Divine Companion may involve overarching perspective as well as specific spiritual practices. The overarching perspective refers to cultivating an inner attitude of reverence for the spiritual dimensions of life and receptivity to your Divine Companion's leadings. Regular cultivation may also involve one or more specific spiritual practices, such as contemplative prayer, *lectio divina*, or generous and unselfish service to others.

Like flourishing human partnerships, a vibrant relationship with your Divine Companion requires continual cultivation: investments of your time and energy, appreciation of your wonderful partner, more deposits of your trust and caring about your partner's desires.



# Take-aways

# Your Creative Inner Garden



## *Your inner world can be vibrant and creative place*

Your inner world shapes your life more than anything else. Your inner world can create a life of meaning and beauty, of authenticity and connection. But this creativity is only unleashed if you cultivate your inner world by:

fully using all your psychological and spiritual capacities,  
intentionally and wisely directing your inner life,  
welcoming and embracing your Divine Companion.

Spiritual sages found such cultivation of the inner garden produce good fruits: inner poise; joy; meaning and purpose; gracious and loving relationships with others

The opposite is also true: your circumstances in the outer world can shape your life more than anything else if you don't cultivate your inner world. Fortunate worldly circumstances may bring you leisure and pleasure, but they won't create a life of meaning and beauty. Real and meaningful growth requires not being satisfied with the material comforts of life; a vibrant inner garden requires wanting something more of life, something more of yourself, something more for others.

Your desires – what you really want to achieve – determines whether the happening of the outer world or the values of your inner world shape your life.



# Tenants in Common

Spirit



World

## *Your Inner world is home to you and your Divine Companion*

Your inner world is home to you, to your human self: your thoughts and emotions, your fears and dreams, your values and narratives that you adopted or developed to make sense of your life. Your inner world guides you in coping with relationships and the material demands of the outer world; your inner world also allows you to grasp the spiritual aspects of life. Your Inner Cultivator plays the crucial role of revising and updating your narratives and values.

Your inner world is also home to a Divine Companion who wants to know you and accompany you through all that you face in life. If your Inner Cultivator is welcoming and receptive, your relationship with your Divine Companion can deepen and help you blossom.

Your inner world sits at the crossroads of the material world and the spiritual world: you have the opportunity to embark on the great adventure of harmonizing both aspects of your life; to forge an intimate relationship with a perfect lover and partner. An active Inner Cultivator can counteract the powerful outer influences and lesser urges and can cultivate a vibrant relationship with your Divine Companion. A person with a spiritually indifferent Inner Cultivator disregards the Divine Companion and never attempts to build that relationship.

# Inner Cultivation



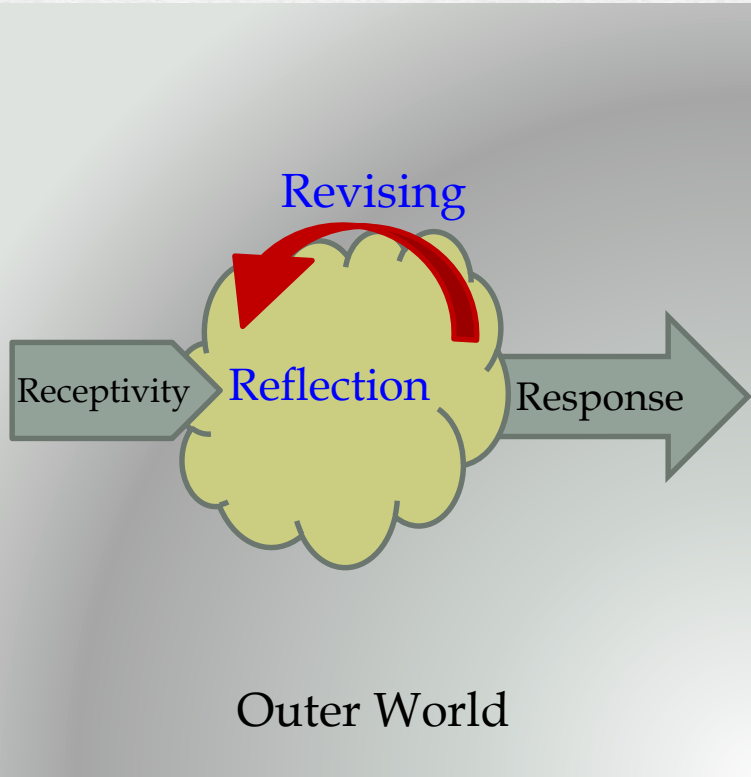
## *Material and spiritual infusions into your inner world*

Ideas from the outer world, some accurate and some quite distorted, can enter into your inner world. A wise Inner Cultivator discerns which influences accurate and helpful from the ones that are distorted and harmful. Your Inner Cultivator cares for your inner ecosystem (manages your inner resources, the three R's, of receiving, reflecting and responding).

Insights and affection from your Divine Companion can also enter into your inner world but only if you desire them and welcome them. A wise Inner Cultivator creates a hospitable atmosphere for the divine one who waits just outside of your inner garden, right at the gate to your garden. Your Divine Companion awaits close by, hoping to lovingly connect with you and courageously collaborate with you as you make plans for cultivating your inner world and as you chart your path in life.

Your Inner Cultivator determines the balance of material and spiritual ideals in your inner world: the center of gravity of your values can be wholly secular or markedly spiritual. As you cooperate more with your Divine Companion, the center of gravity of your values shifts more and more to the spiritual values while at the same time becoming better and more gracious in handling the practical matters of life.

# Summary of the Four R's



*Your Inner Cultivator has four main tools at their disposal*

**Receptivity.** You face many different situations: you hear conflicting ideas and encounter many unique people, each requiring you to discern the truth of what they say. Life presents you with a flood of such things and you have a predetermined default way to rapidly sort the messages of the overflowing inbox of life into spam and relevant messages.

**Reflection** is considering the ideas from the outer world through the lens of your values (some things seem good to you, others seem bad); reflection often involves resolving conflicting pulls (I should do chores but I feel like having a lazy afternoon on the couch); reflection involves choosing among the many options for how you will respond, what you will do (whether you take the easy low road or the harder high road).

**Responding.** Your responses can be reflexive when you don't think about them much at all; or they can be reflective if you have deeply thought about them and let deeper values guide your choice of action.

**Revising.** You can also revise the first three capabilities: see your inner world more clearly, evaluate it in terms of your values and revise it to reflect those values. Your revisions of your inner world will reshape your receptivity, reflection and responding in the future.



# Harmonizing Psyche and Spirit

## Spirituality



*The Material World  
and Social Connections*

*The inner world has both psychological and spiritual capacities*

Your inner world rests on the biological foundation of your genes and physiology: some brains have better capabilities in certain areas, such as music or math; some brains have more difficulty in specific areas, such as emotions and relationships. Your initial capabilities will grow or shrink depending on your efforts. With effort, even initially weak abilities can grow strong; with little applied effort, even strong capabilities can atrophy.

Your inner world also contains an embryonic capacity for sensing and connecting with spirit. This capability enables spiritual sages over many centuries to experience the presence of a benevolent divine person in their own mind, in their own inner life. Their experiences may help you trust that you too can have your own relationship to the Divine Companion.

Before the sages deepened their relationship with their Divine Companion, they often experienced ambivalence, a sense that their psychological mind and their spiritual mind were at odds with each other. But as they drew closer to their Divine Companion, the psychological and spiritual parts of their inner world became harmonized; they didn't lose their personality but their psychological issues seemed to resolve without a huge effort on their part; and their better traits, especially their compassion, became richer. Spiritual growth didn't annihilate them; instead it enhanced them and they really blossomed.

# Three Modes of Inner Gardening



*How you share your inner world with your Divine Companion*

**Drifting Mode** You may have never paid much attention to your inner world and so you drift through life and outer forces are more influential than your own choices and values. You may be barely aware of the creative power that exists in your inner world.

**Self-directed Mode** You may have started life with the sense that you alone must take control of your inner world or else disaster will ensue. You are strongly directing your path in life based solely on your own decisions and the values you have adopted.

**Dyad-directed mode** Perhaps when times were hard or when you had moments of deep reverence for spiritual beauty, you discovered another presence in your inner world. Moved by the beauty of your Divine Companion, you welcomed the infusions and inspirations of your Divine Companion to upstep what you valued; your choices and actions then flowed from the shared inner leadership of both you and your Divine Companion.

You may shift from self-directed mode to dyad-directed mode until you make a final consecrated decision to live from one particular mode. You may experience significant ambivalence and struggle before making your final choice.

# The Embrace of your Divine Companion



*Your inner garden can be a place of great love*

This image illustrates your Divine Companion (upper yellow figure) reaching down to you (lower beige figure) as you are reaching up to your Divine Companion. You are reaching up with reverence to touch the heart of your Divine Companion who is simultaneously reaching down to touch your heart, to experience what you are living through. This mutual reaching out to the other is the intimate embrace of sharing your inner life.

As you reach for each other, your minds (the two overlapping circles) overlap forming a highly creative shared zone (the gold vase shaped area) which is where co-creations (the bright yellow light in the middle of the gold vase) are made with contributions from both of you. The co-creations begin in your inner world (the yellow lines in the beige person), such as deeper insight and inner poise; the core co-creations enhance how you act in your outer world, such as having deeper compassion and willingness to serve others (the yellow lines that extend beyond the beige person).

Your Divine Companion is rooted in the highest divinity (the blue upper left corner); you are anchored firmly to the material and social world (the gray lower right corner). As your embrace with your Divine Companion deepens, the two of you can form a small bridge that brings the sweet and powerful divine love to the spiritually hungry people on earth that need it so much.

# Inner Cultivation: Inner Spiritual Couples Therapy

## Couples therapy applied your I-DC relationship

Couples therapy helps two people deepen their person-to-person relationships in the outer world. Some of the same principles can help you deepen the person-to-divine relationship in your inner world. Couples therapy helps people satisfy the human longing to connect with another, to intimately know and be known, to together forge a path through life.

A vibrant partnership—either with a person in the outer world or your Divine Companion in your inner world—is the highlight of life. This section uses ideas from couples therapy to imagine a spiritual couples therapy for your Divine Companion relationship.

Couples therapy seeks this lofty goal while also being very clear-eyed about the ways that people often sabotage their desire for connection. Each person as a mixed bag of amazing strengths and sometimes mind-boggling mental glitches. Good therapy has one eye on your great potential for loving relationships and one eye on your blind spots and limitations. Good therapy seeks fertilizers for your innate potential and antidotes to your sabotaging tendencies. Good therapy compassionately sees how some your experiences may interfere with your higher longings.

## Two prerequisites for making a specific practice fruitful

Two prerequisites are extremely helpful in making couples techniques fruitful: knowing your inner landscape in depth and cultivating inner attitudes (carefully curating your values).

Inner couples therapy makes no sense without *understanding your inner landscape*: that it is home to you and a Divine Companion. As the owner of this home, you decide how hospitable or indifferent you will be to your Divine Companion.

Certain *inner attitudes* are essential if techniques from couples therapy have any chance of working. Desiring a good connection (intimate sharing and cooperation vs. desiring to get your needs met); wanting to growth (vs. wanting to maintain the current status quo); really respecting and honoring your inner partner.

Different couples techniques (*individual spiritual practices*) work for different people. The most important thing is your desire to spend time leaning in towards your Divine Companion; the exact spiritual practice is secondary to the value you place on your relationship with your Divine Companion. And you may need to vary your practice from time to time as your situation changes.

# Caveats

Caveat #1: A relationship has almost no chance of improving when only one partner values the other; the desire of both partners is needed to make a good relationship. In your inner world, your Divine Companion is always interested in deeper intimacy with you; your desire for intimacy is always the limiting ingredient. If you are completely uninterested in becoming closer with your Divine Companion, then spiritual couples therapy can't do much. Your Divine Companion is available but not pushy or intrusive and would not do anything that violates the sacredness of your choices, even if your choice is for a wholly secular inner life.

Caveat #2: Couples therapy has little chance of improving a relationship when one partner's main agenda is making the other partner change to suit the first partner's wishes. Spiritual couples therapy is unlikely to help if your main agenda is to change your Divine Companion to suit your preferences; this is especially dangerous because your Divine Companion is far more wonderful than you and whatever human wishes you may hold. Spiritual couples therapy may help you change your character to more closely match your Divine Companion's, but such a change is only offered and never demanded by your Divine Companion. Your Divine Companion's main agenda is intimacy, not control.



# The Very First Step: Your Inner Map

Many lonely people long for a true love, a person who understands and appreciates them and who will treasure their connection. A lonely person may hold onto hope that a soul mate exists for them. Such hope may sustain their searching for good love. Or a lonely person may think that the idea of a perfect partner “out there somewhere” is just a fairy tale. Thinking that such a partner doesn’t exist, they will stop looking for that person. Your view of the world, whether pessimistic or optimistic, determines whether you pursue love or give up on love.

Imagine a person who is dating and thinks about many people in terms of how good a partner or friend they might be. She may consider some people at length and completely dismiss other people without a thought. Imagine that she completely dismisses someone who is right there in her life but, unbeknownst to her, would be a perfect lover. She won’t be able to explore that relationship until she notices that such a person exists and acknowledges that person may be a wonderful partner.

No potential relationship with another human being can even start until you notice and appreciate the existence of the other person and consider them as a potential friend or partner.

The same situation exists with your Divine Companion: you won’t seek in your inner world unless you trust what the spiritual sages taught: that your Divine Companion lives within. They encourage you to seek this perfect inner lover and to cultivate that relationship. But if you think that the idea of a divine indwelling is just wishful thinking or wild imagining, if you completely dismiss the notion of that a Divine Companion even exists within you, then you will never even seek for the One who lives within you.

You can’t really start a relationship with your Divine Companion until you notice and appreciate that such a divine indwelling exists in your inner world. Noticing is helped by understanding that your inner world is home to your human parts and also home to a Divine Companion few people seem to notice. A basic map of your inner world includes: your psychological mind (your psyche with all of your human aspects) and your spiritual mind (which facilitates grasping spiritual matters); your spiritual ability to discern and experience your Divine Companion; how well developed each part of your mind is; your Divine Companion who can be distinguished by a unique personality that is quite distinct from your human traits and abilities.

# The Inner World Shapes the Outer World

The outer world—circumstances such as poverty or prejudice—powerfully influences your life. Yet your inner world, if cultivated, can be a stronger influence on your life than even more than the harshest circumstances. Your inner world—the stories you believe, the values you choose, the decisions you make—needs to be wisely cultivated to be a strong counterbalance to the often difficult circumstances of the outer world.

## **Your inner world can be like a rich and productive garden plot.**

Your mind is like soil that can germinate many kinds of seeds. Ideas are like seeds—some helpful and some harmful—that fall into the soil of your mind: accurate ideas help you and distorted ones will hinder you in life. Ideas, both wise and foolish, can take root in your mind and determine how you see yourself and others. A discerning inner gardener will remove the plants that impede you and cultivate the plants that nourish you. You will reap the fruits of whatever seeds you allow to take root in your mind.

**Your inner world can be extremely creative.** It has rich resources although you may not use all of them. Inner resources that aren't used will atrophy and eventually become useless; resources that you use and develop will become strong and help you navigate life and the outer world.

**You can shape your inner world a great deal.** Your inner world is not a fixed thing like a mountain; your inner world is more flexible like a garden that reflects the gardener who cares for it. A well-tended inner garden has narratives, ideas and values that enrich your life. A poorly tended garden is overrun by early narratives and shallow values that often make a mess of life. Replacing old narratives with more accurate ones supports a larger life; holding onto your immature narratives can limit you. The process of choosing better narratives and values radically transforms life.

## **Your inner world is the trailhead to a great spiritual adventure.**

But you'll never pursue this adventure if you don't know that a path to spiritual intimacy lies within you. The path is the adventure of a lifetime: forming a personal and intimate connection with the Divine Companion who lives within you.

If you don't understand gardening, you will struggle to make the simplest plants grow. Likewise, if you don't understand your inner world, you will struggle to cultivate a healthy inner life. Understanding your inner world is the first step in cultivating it so that it helps you navigate life and allows you to deepen your spiritual intimacy. Wise inner gardeners, both psychological and spiritual, can guide you in cultivating a vibrant inner garden.

# The Inner World and the Outer World

**Different soils.** Like a large garden with different soils, your inner world has different areas, like different soils suited to certain plants with each area requiring different cultivation. Narratives are the major feature of the psychological regions of your inner world: the stories you have developed to make sense of yourself and others, stories that guide your behavior in different situations and with different people, stories about what you think is true and what you think is false. Many of these stories began with seeds that came from your experiences in the outer world, such as your earliest relationships. [GOES ELSEWHERE]

**Bad seeds/good seeds.** You may have unknowingly allowed the seeds of inaccurate stories to overrun your inner garden and they haven't help you understand yourself or guide your responses to life. It can be difficult to know what kind of plant a seed will produce before it sprouts and grows. Likewise, it was difficult for you to know whether a narrative would be helpful when it first developed.

Inner cultivation involves both weeding out harmful narratives and encouraging the growth of more helpful ones.

MISC Cultivating a helpful inner world begins with simply

knowing that it exists and understanding how it shapes your life: whether you are growing or stagnating; whether you see the big view of life or a myopic view that sees only the most in-your-face aspects of life; whether you have healthy relationships or harmful ones; whether you have a sense of the larger meaning of life or you struggle to find even a shred of purpose in your life.



# How your inner world formed

# Seeds in the Inner Garden

## Seeds from the outer world become your inner narratives

Your inner world contains narratives: key ideas about yourself and the world, the lens through which you see yourself and others.

The ideas you hold about yourself grew from seeds that came from others. Perhaps you were born into a loving family who treasured you as a child; the seeds from these experiences grew into a sense of self that helped you form healthy friendships and partnerships beyond your family. Or you may have been born into a family that wasn't capable of providing you with even the bare minimum of affection; the seeds from these experiences grew into a sense that you weren't good enough to be loved that handicapped you as you tried to form healthy friendships and partnerships.

Perhaps you were a good enough student and you came to trust that your mind was good and capable; or your early struggles in school may have led you to believe that your mind is weak and a liability rather than an asset. Perhaps you learned that you are only worthy of love only because you are good-looking, funny, a pleaser, athletic, smart, or have a certain talent that elevates you above the crowd.

These seeds grow into the shrubs and trees that dominate your inner garden and guide your response to life for better or worse.

## Inner narratives shape your responses in the outer world

Your inner world determines how you respond to life's demands for competence and connection. Long before a challenge or an opportunity happens, your narrative powerfully shape your response to life and people in certain ways.

Some people are discouraged by life's challenges; others are optimistic and intrigued. A courageous person becomes enthused when a wonderful, though difficult, opportunity arises. A person with timid and pessimistic narratives will shrink from opportunities for growth that holds the possibility of crafting a more meaningful life.

Some ignore the chance to engage with other people; others delight in seeking meaningful I-Thou engagements with another person. A trusting person sees personal interactions as a wonderful occasion. A person with suspicious narratives about others avoids any more than superficial interactions at all costs.

Your responses to life flow from the seeds you have nourished in your inner world. Harmful seeds (narratives) can flourish when you neglect your inner world; the most helpful seeds (narratives) usually require your wise efforts and effortful cultivation.

# Intertwined Worlds

**Seeds (ideas)** Your inner world is intertwined with your outer world; they are different but inseparable worlds. Just as a garden is shaped by the seeds that drifted in from the world outside the garden, your inner world is shaped by the ideas that you have absorbed from your experiences in the outer world. The fruit of the plants that grow from these seeds may be nutritious or toxic. Likewise, some ideas that you absorbed are accurate and guide you to act in helpful ways; but other ideas may be quite inaccurate and guide you to act in harmful ways. The seeds you allow to grow in your inner garden make all the difference in your life.

For example, your childhood experiences (the outer world of your family) shape your attachment pattern (the inner world of your sense of belonging) which then shapes your relationships with people later in life (the outer world). Growing up in a neglectful or unloving family (outer world) creates an insecure attachment pattern (inner world) which makes it hard to really trust people in general (outer world).

Just as you can change the plants growing in your garden, you can change the ideas that guide your life. If you have an insecure attachment style that prevents you from having satisfying relationships, you can intentionally change that.

**Other gardeners (other people)** Your garden is adjacent to other gardeners, each with its own gardener. You interact with the gardeners near you and absorb different ideas about how you should garden, about what plants are useful and which ones are not. Different gardeners differ on the best that you should garden. You may absorb some wise ideas and some foolish ideas from the gardeners around you. Listening to master gardeners can be very helpful; believing what foolish gardeners say can be very harmful.

Likewise, you don't live all on your own in a social vacuum; other people, especially the ones you spend a lot of time with, influence you a great deal; other people, the ones you don't know or discount, influence you very little. The people in your life are like other gardeners around you; some people are wise about the inner garden and others have very understanding of life (although they may still talk as if they really know a lot). Listening to masters of the inner world can be very helpful; believing what foolish people say about your inner garden can harm you very much.

You decide who you believe. Perhaps, without much thought, you simply believe the closest person, the most charismatic person or the person with the loudest voice; that is a default choice. A wiser choice almost always involves more careful thought and selection.

# A Cultivated Inner World

Spirit

Your  
Inner  
World

Painful  
experiences

Positive  
Experiences

World

## *Active cultivation elevates positive experiences*

Actively cultivating your inner garden requires noticing your inner world and having a sense of the important activities happening there: that you may have absorbed certain unwanted ideas from your experiences in the outer world and you want to reduce the impact of those ideas so that better ideas can flourish instead. Many unwanted ideas create distorted narratives that don't help you respond to life.

Actively cultivating your inner garden requires discernment to decide what ideas (seeds) will help you and what ones will hinder you. Once you can recognize cognitive errors and distortions (harmful seeds), then you can revise the harmful narratives that hinder you and limit you; you can replace unhelpful ideas with ones that nourish you and support living a larger life.

These two capabilities – noticing and discerning are innate to your inner cultivator, just like muscles are innate to your physical body. These inner capabilities, like muscles, are strengthened each time you use them; they are also weakened when you don't use them. If you almost never use your discernment, it can atrophy to the point where it's virtually useless. Your inner garden will be unhealthy if you don't notice what ideas you have absorbed and decide which ones are worth cultivating and which ones aren't; your inner garden will thrive if you notice your narratives and make wise choices about what to keep nurturing and what to weed out.

# Influences that Shape Your Inner World



## **Wiring** (Biological Influences)

innate capabilities (language, attachment, music, math, etc.)  
primitive reflexes: minimize pain, maximize pleasure

## **World** (Material and Social )

early experiences: nurturing or disconnected  
environment: rich or impoverished  
prevailing conditions: secular or sacred

## **Will** (Choices in your Inner World)

your values that shape your choices  
long-term commitments (loyally repeated choices)

## **Worship** (inner spiritual infusions)

opening to your Divine Companion  
cross-fertilization between human psyche and divine spirit



# Final Takeaways



## What/who will shape your mind: the world, you, spirit?

Your mind has a field of vision like a microscope  
you can zoom out to see your inner world more broadly  
you can focus to see yourself more accurately

Your mind has narratives (views about self, world, relationships)  
you can curate them to maximize their accuracy  
you can edit them to explain more

You have patterns for how you will respond to situations and people  
you can revise your core narratives  
you update your inner “apps” (programs for how you respond)

The world exerts a powerful pull on the human mind  
spirit exerts an even more powerful pull but only if you allow it  
you are the pivot point who decides whether world or spirit predominate

# The Embrace of your Divine Companion

## *Being held and loved in your inner world*

This image illustrates your Divine Companion (upper yellow figure) reaching down to you (lower beige figure) as you are reaching up to your Divine Companion. You are reaching up with reverence to touch the heart of your Divine Companion who is simultaneously reaching down to touch your heart, to experience what you are living through. This mutual reaching out to the other is the intimate embrace of sharing your inner life. As you reach for each other, your minds overlap forming a highly creative shared zone (the gold vase shaped area between the two overlapping circles) which is where co-creations (the bright yellow light in the middle of the gold vase) are made with contributions from both of you. The core co-creations happen in your inner world, such as deeper insight and inner poise; the core co-creations enhance how you act in your outer world, such as having deeper compassion and willingness to serve others. The central parts of this image (bracketed by the yellow and beige) illustrate what happens in your inner world; the upper left and lower right represent the outer world.

