

Introduction – ‘The Tree of Life’

The need for personal growth is ongoing throughout life and often challenges the harmony of our lives, while at times creating confusion or confronting us with difficult choices. To help you make sense of your life, this book provides a clear and detailed holistic framework for the human journey. As the title of this book suggests, transforming who you are is the key to permanent change and the potential for a fulfilling life. Great comfort can be obtained from being able to make sense of current issues, while learning to discern what life is asking you to learn, and where you are heading. This approach develops a trust in life. Trust is the opposite of control, which is behind all the stress in our lives.

Personal growth through transformation allows us to accept our supposed flaws or weaknesses, rather than rejecting these important aspects of who we are. We judge these aspects of self negatively due to our past experiences, when in reality we need to accept and value them in order to transform them – to reveal our true self. This will allow you to transform your psychological shadow to light, which releases your full potential to love and embrace your life purpose – creating fulfilment. An important part of living this way is to learn to live harmoniously, flowing with the changes in your life, as opposed to resisting your life lessons, which generates stress.

This book is based on the perspective that we exist on multiple levels simultaneously: physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Happiness is achieved from balance and self-knowledge across of all these levels of being, and to that end, these areas will be explored to assist in expanding self-awareness.

The human psyche will be explored in detail using a model based on the ancient teachings of Kabbalah’s ‘Tree of Life’. Through developing five additional versions of the original tree, you will see how fear and anger strain the personality and produce our shadow side. We will examine the differences between masculine and feminine psychological energies and how these relate to some of the difficulties encountered in relationships. This will describe how guilt and shame (not being proud of who you are) are central to many relationships issues. We will also explore self-development from a spiritual perspective to learn that you are not your body, that you have a soul that is contained within the spirit that holds your divinity.

There are numerous themes contained within this book, which are further developed and integrated. The main themes include:

- ego-based consciousness is one of competitiveness and control power-plays
- only the heart can transcend the ego which requires the release of ego-based fears
- increasing self-awareness increases the capacity to flow with life
- opening the heart to love is a beautiful and sustaining state of being, creating loving and healthy relationships
- genuine love is an expansive energy which can further opens a person’s awareness to their spirituality and life purpose
- understanding that love is a fourth dimensional state of being, and our mind creates a fifth dimensional reality, is a basis to develop higher consciousness
- learning to trust your intuitive guidance and flow with the synchronicity of your life creates inner peace and life fulfilment.

The progression of concepts is centred around developing a more expansive self-awareness. Our resilience to stress is determined by our past and our personality. Unless we raise our self-awareness, we risk remaining relatively unaware of who we are and why we think, feel and behave as we do. Through exploring the human psyche, stress can be seen to strain our personality and create rigidities, which narrows our self-awareness and our perceptions of our world. Self-transformation allows us to release the hold of the past and transform our psychological shadow – that part of who we are that we judge negatively and disown. Through releasing long-held emotions and learning to flow with your life, you can expand your consciousness and release the narrow-mindedness that stress and fear create. By achieving this, you can become aware of your higher dimensional nature, which is defined in psychological terms.

Through increasing psychological balance you increase your capacity to love. Love is an expansive energy which opens a person to an understanding of unity consciousness – that we are all one. Unity consciousness is the concept that we are all one and the same. This 'oneness' refers to the belief that all life was created from the same source, and that we will eventually return to the source of all life. Any yearning for wholeness generates our desire for creating life purpose and fulfilment. The journey of our life is one of increasing consciousness and the development of our own wisdom. It is our life experiences and inner knowing that allows us to raise our consciousness into higher realms of existence.

Our own sense of self is defined through our relationships. We discover who we are by relating to others as we learn to identify the boundary of self versus other. This boundary is a powerful lesson in love. How do we care for another without losing our own sense of self? How can we see another suffer and not become self-neglectful or self-centred. How is this great lesson of the soul played out in our current relationships? These questions and more will be answered. The aim is to identify and accept back those aspects of self that we rejected as a child, by virtue of learning how we perceived that we were not 'good enough' to secure love and approval from our parents and significant others.

A holistic approach to personal growth allows a person to make more sense of their life journey by incorporating their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects. The yearnings for love and fulfilment are opportunities to be guided to feel whole – psychologically integrated and filled with love. Self-transformation is the key to achieving these states of being through the journey of life.

This book draws on my professional physiotherapy and counselling-psychotherapy experience, as well as on my own philosophies of the human journey. From my personal life learning and varied readings, I feel I am able to present a variety of perspectives from many sources and weave them into a framework to assist you to develop an understanding of your own personal journey. This results in a plain-speaking style which I hope presents as relevant and down-to-earth. The information and practical aspects are relevant to all degrees of personal pain, confusion and crisis, therefore I invite you to find your own level at which this information resonates with you.

At the end of each chapter you will find a Personal Learning Questionnaire (PLQ). These are a series of questions or points to contemplate to assist you to reflect on how the content covered in each chapter relates to you and your life. If you choose to complete the PLQ, I suggest you do it as you go while what you have read is fresh in your mind.

Completing the PLQ can also help you understand the content more clearly, freeing you to focus on the next chapter.