

Stress Points

**The Top 10 Hidden
Spiritual Misunderstandings
Preventing You From Living in Peace**

by

Arria Deepwater



**Visionary & Founder
www.lovetreshold.com
www.spiritualstressbusters.com**

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The Top 10 Hidden Spiritual Misunderstandings Preventing You From Living in Peace

Introduction

Spiritual Stress:

A state of pain, anxiety, or conflict experienced by those dedicated to their spiritual growth, but feeling disappointed about their own progress.

Spiritual stress comes in many forms. If you are feeling blocked or frustrated in your spiritual development, there is a reason. You can identify that reason and resolve it.

REALLY GOOD NEWS: Most spiritual stress is caused by misunderstanding the nature of spirituality, not by any mistake, failure, or breakdown in ourselves or with Source.

Think of your spiritual energy like water flowing through pipes. Your personality is the pipes and your spiritual practice or routine is the faucet.

In order to create sustained and resilient spiritual peace we need to maintain our pipes in top-notch condition *and* learn how to monitor and adjust the flow of energy through our practice.

Spiritual stress is the equivalent of having clogs, leaks, or limitations in our spiritual plumbing. These mix-ups are constrictions in our energy field that keep us from flowing freely, openly, and at full power.

This Stress Points exercise will help you to:

1. Verify where the gaps are in your spiritual understanding or perspective that are causing the spiritual stress.
2. Receive my best authoritative shorthand advice on what you can do immediately

I have identified what I consider to be the top ten most fundamental misunderstandings, you are probably facing in your spiritual development.

These aren't the *only* misunderstandings, but they are some of the most common.

Each one includes a basic description, a chance to rate yourself, and some solutions. When rating yourself, remember that the more you identify with the issue, the higher the number you will give yourself. 10 means you are feeling really restricted in this area and 1 means it's not a problem for you at all.

REMEMBER: Restriction in even one area can cause major spiritual stress. The entire system doesn't have to malfunction to stop your spiritual energy from flowing. Think about the pipes. One leak or a single clog can cause

extensive problems. If your pipes are great but your faucet is broken, all that water is completely inaccessible.

Ultimately, this isn't about your score it's about your awareness level.

IMPORTANT TIP: In some cases you will recognize yourself instantly. In others, you will realize that a particular misunderstanding does not apply to you (at least not at this time.) However, you may find that some of the ideas are not entirely easy to face. When looking at these mix-ups, you will often be touching places of denial or resistance. (This is perfectly natural, we all have elements of denial and resistance within us.) The key here is to pay attention to how you are feeling. If you:

1. Have a strong urge or desire to say, "No, that's not me. ... yes it is.
2. Feel defensive or defiant in your "No! ... mark yourself as at least a 7 – no arguments!
3. Experience awkwardness, confusion, or doubt when reading about the misunderstanding ... no need to worry, it's an automatic high score.

These are all typical symptoms of denial and resistance ... so I encourage you not to deny or resist them.

ONE LAST THING: Keep this document handy. We all cycle through periods of spiritual stress. What is blocking you from peace next time may be different. This Stress Points exercise can support you for years as you grow and develop.

Enjoy! And please let me know what you experience through this exercise. Send your feedback, revelations, and insight to info@lovethreshold.com or info@spiritualstressbusters.com

Blessings,
Arria Deepwater
Visionary & Founder
www.lovethreshold.com
www.spiritualstressbusters.com

Misunderstanding #1: You perceive spiritual growth as linear

Many people have a tendency to look at spiritual development as if it is linear. (Revelation A leads to understanding B, which stimulates transformation C and so on.) But spirituality, like life, is based on cycles of patterns.

In fact, it is *fractal*. A fractal is a pattern or shape that repeats over and over at various levels of magnification or intensity. In other words, the smaller versions of the pattern are the same as the larger versions. Spirituality grows in cycles of development that replicate themselves in a repeating series of patterns.

Regular linear thinking helps organize and track things on a mechanical level. A deeper kind of calculation is required to map the *natural development* of life. That's the key! The natural development of life requires fractal thinking.

Fractals aren't so easy to understand on a day-to-day level. (After all, they required the invention of the super-computer to be identified.) However, fractal development does govern nature. The way ice crystals form on a windowpane, the rhythm of our heartbeats, and the structure of our genetic code. It's all fractal. Time is a fractal force. So is the pattern of our spiritual development.

Misunderstanding this will cause people to get stuck in a linear approach to spirituality. This yields incredible frustration and disappointment because they end up feeling as if they are always stuck in the same loop, find it much more difficult to release past experience, and misinterpret the reappearance of a pattern as our failure to advance and evolve.

Symptoms of this Misunderstanding:

- No matter how much release work you do, you still find it intensely difficult to let go of your past.
- Despite all of your best efforts, you continually repeat the same patterns of behaviour or relationship – to a degree that truly frustrates, bewilders or upsets you.
- Even though you are committed to loving and accepting yourself fully, you are particularly self-critical and harsh when you notice yourself “doing it again.
- The joy is often gone from your spiritual work. It's as if you are doing it by rote and you aren't certain any of it is working.
- You feel as if you have been working on the same issue for way too long. You may even feel truly stuck.
- You often resist the help of others who offer to support you in getting “unstuck.
- Uncertainty, doubt, confusion, and melancholy are relatively common psychological experiences for you. (Especially in repeated patterns. You experience distinct peaks and valleys.)
- You often yearn specifically for the ability to sustain certainty, faith, clarity, and happiness. (You crave the ability to stay on the peaks and you dread the valleys, feeling as if they are inevitable.)

Rate Yourself:

1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ... 6 ... 7 ... 8 ... 9 ... 10

Solutions:

1. Go on-line. Do a google image search for “fractal” and study the images. This is you and your spiritual development. Meditate and reflect on these images. Let your subconscious get to know them. (If you happen to see an image called, “Fractal Wrongness, this is a spoof. A really funny one that may help you laugh at your situation or may make you feel worse, so I will leave the decision to read it or not up to you.)
2. Replace “release” with “acceptance. Subconscious resistance to pain and the possibility that it might happen again is the cause of all of your symptoms. I'm not kidding. That's essentially your entire problem. Additionally, your subconscious is more than a little convinced that you somehow caused or deserved this pain in the first place (more resistance.) Your deep spiritual “release work” is actually more an enlightened attempt to push pain away from you. You can only let go of those things you first embrace. If you can't let them go, you haven't embraced them!
3. Realize that the fractal is in your *spiritual energy field*, not the details of your life. It *will* repeat and sometimes that will translate into pain and sorrow in your experience. There are valleys and peaks in every pattern. It's entirely within your power to determine your experience of the cycle. (That's why they repeat – so you can get better at it.)
4. Begin to deeply appreciate your growth. Write letters to yourself about your journey so far, all that you have learned, and the wisdom you have gained. Imagine yourself writing to your best friend as if you were on a trip and you want to tell them all about it.
5. Seek out therapy, but something more than just “talk therapy. Spiritual Psychotherapy, Bio-Energetics, Jungian, art, or EMDR therapy, dream, or shamanic work. You need an approach that helps you symbolically explore and resolve your past – it's the only way to communicate with yourself on a subconscious level.

Misunderstanding #2: You have unintentionally committed yourself to spiritual perfectionism

If you spend any time with me at all, you will probably hear me say one statement more than any other:

I teach spiritual practice, not spiritual perfectionism.

The moment you are “perfect” at this stuff is the moment you vibrate off the planet into another dimension. Seriously! There will always be something you suck at. Likewise, there will always be something that you are brilliant at

There are two things we need to look at:

1. We live in a society driven by competition, control, achievement, success, and status. It truly doesn't matter how much work you have done to personally remove yourself from this perspective, it has infected your subconscious. The result of which is a nagging feeling that you are not good enough.
2. Not enough spiritual leaders are making the distinction between *being* spiritually perfect and the *capacity to act* spiritually. Our true nature is one of spiritual perfection. We must learn about and accept this *beingness* in order to develop spiritually. We must also learn to embody our true nature in our thoughts, feelings, and actions. This is our *capacity to act* spiritually – and we spend our lives practicing how to do that. Too often spiritual seekers are not taught that our spiritual perfection does not translate perfectly into our life experience.

What do you get when you combine a subconscious attachment to accomplishment with confusion about spiritual being versus spiritual behaviour? A raging case of unrealistic spiritual expectations, that's what!

Symptoms of This Misunderstanding:

- You often cycle through feeling spiritually tired, worn out, or drained.
- Despite your desire for peace, you often feel as if you are pushing or fighting against something – as if there is a veil or membrane standing between you and where you want to be spiritually.
- You process your spiritual journey in terms of “breakthroughs”. This means two things. It means that you get incredibly pumped and inspired by major shifts. Additionally, when you look back on your growth you primarily see the big moments of transformation, blurring the long periods of development in between.
- You are particularly hard on yourself when you feel you don't measure up spiritually and often feel as if “I should be better at this by now!”
- People often tell you that you have very high standards and encourage you to be more caring and supportive of yourself. (This is not to be confused with other people saying your standards are too high for *them*. That is either their issue and/or a symptom of psychological/relational perfectionism. Spiritual

perfectionism expresses through people saying your standards cause you to be unreasonable and harsh with *yourself*.)

- You suffer from chronic physical tension and/or pain. (Please consider this a symptom even if the original “cause” was an identifiable injury or illness.)
- When you feel frustrated, disappointed, or upset spiritually you often dwell on a “check list” of spiritual insights, accomplishments, and wisdom, wondering why you can't just *be* the spiritual person you *know* you are.
- Other people often admire you on a spiritual level, but secretly you feel afraid that you are a fraud.

Rate Yourself:

1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ... 6 ... 7 ... 8 ... 9 ... 10

Solutions:

1. Read the “Te of Piglet” by Benjamin Hoff – you need to develop a better appreciation for the virtue of the small. Taoism in general would be an excellent study for you.
2. Incorporate more fun, laughter and play into your life. Not *adventure* ... **play**. And let me be clear: exercise, training, and home renovations don't count either. It doesn't matter if you enjoy them and they make you feel good. This needs to be leisure without purpose. Aimless, unproductive, extravagant time spent in the pursuit of pure pleasure. (For example, if you *love* wall climbing, roller-blading, playing the guitar and you can pull it off for pure pleasure, not practice, improvement, learning, or growth – go for it!) Immediately make a list of 10 things you can incorporate into your life to have more fun.
3. Stop the spiritual “shoulds”. Sit down right now and make a list of inspiring and challenging questions. What is the Loving thing to do? (My personal favourite.) Or my next favourite, I wonder where the next big _____ is coming from. * How can I feel more alive right now? What can I be more open to? What is there for me to celebrate or admire here? ... Make a list of at least 20 powerful questions. Make sure they can't be answered with a yes or no. Pick one every day to focus on and when you feel frustrated or blocked go through the list until you start to feel your energy flowing more freely – and then answer at least 3 more!

* From Alex Baisley at www.impactmeditation.com

Misunderstanding #3: You don't realize how practical spirituality really is

This one has three variations, two individual ones and one combined.

First, we have the notion that spirituality is about transcendence. This school of thought proposes that spiritual development is a journey away from the material and into the ethereal. The idea is to ascend into the higher levels of consciousness, explore the higher vibrations of reality, and live in the higher dimensions of truth.

People who ascribe to this approach often feel as if they want to transcend their emotional states as well – achieving an emotionally neutral posture. In this way they seek to completely eliminate the influence of emotional stress, but many also go further and want to eliminate their emotional experience of life altogether in favour of a transcendent spiritual experience.

Second, is the idea that spirituality is simply separate from everyday practical reality. We have no examples of modern urban spiritual integration. Our culture has long separated the spiritual and the secular for centuries.

Our unbalanced focus on achievement and control combined with our disassociation from nature has left us adrift. It is subconsciously very difficult for many people who “wake up” to their spirituality to then incorporate this new experience into daily life.

In combination, these two approaches can create a person who is really into all-things-spiritual, full of beautiful and profound wisdom and intentions, and yet has a very difficult time connecting and functioning on a worldly level.

Symptoms of This Misunderstanding:

- There is a distinct feeling of push-and-pull between your spirituality and your practical life. Either you spend all your time in spirit, or you struggle to develop and maintain a dedicated space for spiritual reflection and growth (there are always a thousands other things to do.)
- You often feel like “this is my spiritual time” and “this is the rest of my life.”
- You are lucky if you have one spiritual friend OR all of your friends are “lightworkers” and you have difficulty relating to people who “don't get it.”
- When you find a spiritual community gathering or group experience you are flooded with emotion about having to return to your “normal life” when it is over.
- You are deeply dedicated to being non-judgmental and unconditionally loving. However, there are often dramatic eruptions of denser emotional energy (anger, hurt, abandonment, betrayal, mistrust) in yourself or towards you from others. (This is a tricky one ... the key here is the “eruptive” nature of the drama. There are two kinds of drama, cyclical crisis and invasive eruption. If you or people in your life often have outbursts of dense emotional energy, this is you.)

In Combination:

- You tend to experience deep and chronic pain surrounding the fact that you *have to* live on Earth and you feel confined to this existence.
- You are certain that this is your “last lifetime” here and you are determined to resolve and heal everything you need to so that you don't need to return.
- Day-to-day realities of life can sometimes genuinely feel like mountains that need to be climbed and you can become frustrated, even despondent, over why people continue to need these things from you.

Rate Yourself:

1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ... 6 ... 7 ... 8 ... 9 ... 10

Solutions:

Integrate! Integrate! Integrate! The only thing separating the spiritual from the material is your perception. You need to bring a sense of the spiritual into as much of your life as possible. Spiritual development is about *practicing being spiritual through our humanity.*

There is no point in tapping into those higher realms if you aren't going to use that energy to make life *here* more vibrant, peaceful, sweet and alive. And likewise, your to-do list is useless if you miss the magic. **Change is what is required for you.**

If you are too much into the practical, you need to sit, reflect, and ask yourself how important your spirituality really is to you. If it isn't that important, fine. However, if you genuinely feel the call of something greater, you need to take a deep look at the lifestyle you are leading and realize that you need to do it differently.

If you are too much into the spiritual, the same is true, but in your case you need to realize that spiritual enlightenment *requires* you to engage life, not transcend it. All of us are called to touch this world with the fullness of who we are. We can't do that if we are hiding, avoiding, or resisting.

Misunderstanding #4: You believe that spiritual progress should yield specific results

Okay! This is a BIG one for a lot of people. Here's the recipe:

1. Take a large helping of spiritual development and filter it through the lens of our achievement-driven culture.
2. Add equal dashes of:
 - The more enlightened side of the motivational/personal development movement
 - The experience of our collective religious history telling us generation after generation that divine love may be infinite, but divine approval and reward need to be earned
 - The programmed subconscious fear we all carry of scarcity, smallness, and failure
3. Stir together and hope for the best! (Oh no, wait! This doesn't involve "hope" does it? Not for you. This is about intention, feeling and action merging into perfect synergy so that the energy of your beliefs can flow forward into manifestation. Right?)

If you loved *The Secret*, or are a fan of the Law of Attraction, wealth consciousness or unlimited-abundance-through-spiritual-development teachings, please let me tell you: **if you bargain and negotiate with the creative power of the universe to get the life that you want you are setting yourself up for disappointment.**

Contrary to what other leaders will tell you, the universe is *NOT* an infinite catalogue that you can open up and order whatever you want from. It doesn't matter how good a manifestor you are! Spiritual consciousness isn't a guarantee of anything on a material level.

Symptoms of This Misunderstanding:

- You derive incredible depths of pleasure and energy from the visionary approach to living – you thrive on intuition, get a thrill out of sharing and receiving insights with others, feel enriched from your reading and exploring ... but ultimately you do all of this in order to create a life that you really want to live. (Be honest!)
- You have lived through many years of severe hardship, chronic illness, physical challenge, poverty, and/or addiction or abuse. (Before you say, "So have a lot of people Arria! ...") This was *years* of experience *and* you specifically identify your spiritual awakening with the healing of this pain. The years of pain were both the doorway into your spiritual development and in many ways your greatest spiritual teacher.
- When you don't get the results you want, you experience a sense of being abandoned or betrayed by the very principles you believe in. You respond by saying things like, "I'm doing everything right! Why isn't this working?"
- Vision boards are your best friends. – You have a strong focus on tools and techniques in general. There are "things you can do" to create the life you want, and you do them!
- You organize mastermind groups, dream team meetings, and visionary sessions if you've gone a number of

months without one. (Let's be clear: you *organize* them, not just participate. If you go too long without one, you feel compelled to bring people together to share the energy.)

Rate Yourself:

1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ... 6 ... 7 ... 8 ... 9 ... 10

Solutions:

1. Get over your sense of entitlement. Get honest about the fact that you feel you have "earned the life you deserve." Material manifestation is the result of a complex convergence of forces and fractal development. You are here to learn, not conquer. Living unconditionally means staying self-determined and directed in the face of all conditions, not being able to determine and direct the conditions themselves. You will *never* fully master directing material details until you have fully mastered your response to all details.
2. Sit down and take an inventory of your life. On a piece of paper, create several boxes for yourself. Label each box, in turn, as physical health, emotional well-being, career success, personal satisfaction, leisure and fun, relationships, life partnership (if you have one), parenting (if that is relevant), home, finances, and dreams. Now fill in the boxes with the steps you take to work on and/or manifest good in each area – that *aren't* spiritually related. A person who isn't using spirituality to bargain with the Universe for the life that they want will be able to *fill* those boxes with non-visionary steps, tools, decisions, actions, commitments and skills.

A REALLY IMPORTANT PS: Please know that I am not knocking manifestation or abundance teachings. I do believe many of them are too rooted in our cultural hunger for consumption and financial riches, but there are also some of them that I admire and trust.

Just remember that abundance and manifestation teachings are not *spiritual* development. They are personal and/or lifestyle development. And that's okay, as long as you get it.

My concern is the growing number of people who are developing their relationship with the creative power of this universe in order to get something out of it. Are you developing your spirituality in order to develop your spirituality, or are you doing it to gain certain rewards or create specific results?

You can develop your spirituality while learning to manifest at the same time. You can take abundance teachings from a leader who is deeply grounded in a spiritual perspective. But just know that they aren't synonymous. You are not necessarily growing spiritually just because you are learning to be a better manifestor.

And seeking to grow spiritually in order to become a better manifestor is an example of the utmost spiritual arrogance. Confusing these two disciplines breeds

an incredible sense of entitlement and subsequent frustration. It also closes you off to some of the deepest and most beautiful lessons of surrender and acceptance. Deep periods of spiritual stress are the inevitable result.

Misunderstanding #5: You aren't willing to take full responsibility for your doubt & judgment

This is a long one because it's the most important and because it fits all of us, so please read this carefully.

I like to recommend that everyone start with a minimum score of 4. Don't allow yourself the idea that you aren't carrying any of this around. Other misunderstandings are also common, but I will let you get away with choosing a low score for those if that's where you feel you are right now. As a teacher however, it is my responsibility to challenge you in this area.

In reality, to completely out-grow the influence of any of these misunderstanding requires a high degree of spiritual mastery. But because of our individual psychology, our current phase, our personal history, triggers, and unresolved issues we each have our own set of "heavy-weights" that we wrangle with during most of our spiritual development.

That being said, these misunderstandings are widespread amongst the modern western approach to spirituality. The way we are in society dictates the way we are with our spirituality. That breeds certain wounds and challenges into the process. (Hence the need for e-booklets like this one.)

Please remember that just because some of them aren't relevant now, that doesn't mean they won't cycle back at another time. This is the journey of our lifetimes and as I like to say, unless you are walking around with a halo over your head and sunshine coming out your butt ... you have work to do! We *all* have work to do. This quest never ends.

So, I can understand and accept it if some – or even most, misunderstandings don't seem relevant to you. However, this one is. This one haunts us relationally, psychologically, socially, as well as spiritually. Maybe there is another misunderstanding that needs more direct attention in your life right now. Maybe this one isn't striking a particular chord. That's okay.

But please, for your own sake, simply acknowledge that you (like every other human being) have a difficult time deeply and fully accepting the parts of yourself that you aren't proud of, that cause you pain, that you would prefer not to live with – or that you don't want to even acknowledge. Start with a basic level of acceptance and spend a little time here, no matter what other misunderstandings are asking for your attention.

Symptoms of This Mix-Up:

- When you see leaders pointing out the challenges, illustrating what may be difficult, or teaching about blocks and obstacles (especially if they are teaching that everyone has them) you respond with statements like, "You are focusing too much on the negative!" or "They shouldn't be teaching people to put their attention on what's wrong. I need to stay focused on my strengths not my weaknesses!"
- You have a strong urge to make the rough spots in relationship "communal." This happens especially when someone is expressing dissatisfaction or hurt and even if they are specifically asking you to look at your own individual contribution. For example you might say, "We created this together ..." "We seem to be having difficulty staying connected ..." or "I can't have this conversation if you aren't prepared to acknowledge that we have *both* done some hurtful or disrespectful things ..." (This is different than the psychological habit of deflection ... turning the conversation around or tit-for-tat one-upmanship. Although the psychological and spiritual patterns can express together, this spiritual habit has its roots in an attachment to oneness, cooperation, and co-creation. Using "we" to avoid pointing fingers is a good communication practice with strong spiritual lessons. Insisting on a "we" perspective when the other person is saying "I am dissatisfied. I need you to take a look at your behaviour here," is using spiritual principle to deny your responsibility.)
- You hold a belief that truly loving and conscious relationships ought to feel harmonious, rich, rewarding and connected pretty much all of the time. Disagreement, annoyance, and dissimilarity strike you as a loss of connection, warmth, compatibility and/or the falling away from, and undermining of, the relationship ideals.
- You believe that health, faith, self-love, and growth means experiencing little to no significant doubt, judgment or negativity.
- If you have been doing spiritual work for some time, you believe it's important to express a strong, happy, well-balanced version of yourself as much as possible. (Particularly because this sets a powerful example for others and ensures that you are making a positive contribution to the energy around you.)
- You are overly-aware of your "faults" and personal downfalls. You beat yourself up with your weaknesses and dwell on what you are not doing. Or vice versa, you are overly-aware of other people's "faults" and tend to be hyper-critical. (This can be a perpetual state or a cyclical pattern that peaks with certain circumstances.)
- You find it difficult to reach out and ask for help, support, and care during a tough time or alternately you may tell yourself that no-one is likely to be there for you, or understand what you are going through.
- You can't seem to shake the feeling that full, unconditional, boundless self-love and appreciation strike you as arrogant.
- You always seem to have at least one person in your life with whom you experience acute or chronic conflict, confrontation, and/or confusion. Often this person seems to need to have the same conversation over and over, changes their perspective routinely (you can't

count on which reality you will be facing), has a lot of rules for being in relationship, and/or seems to say one thing, but then behaves in another way.

- You are hyper vigilant about integrity. Authenticity in others isn't just an important value, it's actually closer to a point of security for you – you become uncomfortable or insecure if you sense that someone is being inauthentic. It is an integrated part of your processing through life, daily interactions, and relationships. You regularly find yourself thinking, “Well, that’s out of integrity” or “It just doesn’t feel authentic to me.”

Here are some signs of solidly good development in this area:

- You are able to listen to someone else express dissatisfaction or hurt about your actions without contradiction or resistance.
- You can listen for genuine feedback about potentially change-worthy behaviour, despite the fact that you may be feeling very vulnerable and uncomfortable. You ask for examples and specifics, refrain from offering counter-examples and specifics, and express a sincere desire to learn.
- When you perceive that the person talking isn't giving genuine feedback, but is projecting blame and telling themselves stories about unintended slights, you are able to separate their behaviour from who they are. You do not take it personally, despite the fact that it may be upsetting. You can listen for the opportunity to affirm them, present another point of view, and confidently stand for yourself without fighting or negotiating.
- You work through your own disappointment, hurt etc first before bringing it to the person who is directly involved. You express yourself clearly and maintain strong boundaries without adopting a “fight” posture.
- You can honestly, healthfully and clearly express when you are feeling defensive, vulnerable, uncomfortable, angry, and/or resistant. And you can hear and honour that from others without taking it personally.
- You freely call for help when needed – relying on a support system that has a proven track record of moving through the same kind of thing you are dealing with. However, if you cannot get a hold of anyone, you feel strong and skilled enough to keep moving through it yourself.
- You are aware of your own strengths and weaknesses, you nurture the first and honour the second. You practice transparency with others – freely expressing in a grounded and responsible way when you are dancing with your weakness.
- You know that true spiritual consciousness and psychological health leaves plenty of room for doubt and judgment. You embrace this fully and willingly, being honest with yourself and others about it.
- You train at higher and higher levels of skill and vibration in order to Love your way through them as elegantly as possible. Acceptance always comes before transformation and release, both in process and in priority.

To rate yourself below a 4 in this misunderstanding, you must have been demonstrating the above signs plus be able to add at least three of your own to the list; you must be

able to say you demonstrate none of the symptoms, never dwelling on or resisting anything “negative” or “dark” within yourself or others; you must also be able to demonstrate an elegant, resilient, creative, empowered, dignified, and peaceful (not necessarily calm) response to life circumstance of the most challenging kind; and you must have been able to do all of this for a minimum of 2 years. *That* will get you a 3.

And just in case anyone catches it – this is not an example of unreasonable spiritual expectations, I promise. It's just that I take this one very seriously. This is one of the deepest points of learning in spiritual development. I have seen countless seekers suffer unnecessarily in spiritual stress because of it. I encourage you to consider this thoughtfully.

Taking full responsibility for ourselves involves three specific skill sets:

1. The capacity to fully Love and accept ourselves
2. The ability to demonstrate masterful direction over the energy of our personality – placing it in absolute service as a vessel of expression for the energy of our soul
3. The strength to absorb and respond to all conditions with elegance and grace

This is pretty much the epitome of spiritual expression in human form. You could spend an entire lifetime of growth in this one area. In fact, it would be a very worthy spiritual practice. It is the key to everything else.

Rate Yourself:

1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... 5 ... 6 ... 7 ... 8 ... 9 ... 10

Solutions:

1. Use both the “You are Here: The Four Stages of Spiritual Development and What You Need to Know About Them” and the “Living From the Inside Out: Surprising Ways Your Natural Spiritual Personality Can Block or Support Your Path to Peace” self-assessment tools. This will provide you with a great deal of clarity about your strengths and weaknesses and how to support yourself more fully. (Both are available in the FREE Tools and Resources section of the Spiritual Stress Busters site and at the Discovery Level of the Love Threshold website.)
2. Meditate and/or reflect on the phrase, “I am complete, but not yet finished.”
3. Look to your patterns of relating and communication for lessons in this area. Our relationships teach us poise (a stable and unforced posture of spiritual power) and dignity (the strength to live that posture fully through our actions.)
4. Keep a journal of your inner-scripts and reactions versus what you actually communicate. As regularly as you can, mark down your strongest inner-reactions, how (or if) you communicate them, and what kind of

communications you receive from others. If you are already aware of your patterns, identify one key stress point and set out to teach yourself it's opposite through Love and acceptance, not resistance. Write a strong affirmative statement that you can recite throughout your day, use your journal to re-write your inner-scripts (revealing alternatives,) practice deep listening, and ask for objective feedback from people you trust.

5. Our society is based on the pursuit of external power and the quest for domination. When people think they are small, weak, wrong, or less-than they are easier to control. This misunderstanding is part of a social game that is millennia old. Make friends with your vulnerability and discomfort and reflect on the difference between it and being less-than.
6. Look for teachings and tools that specifically support you in learning how to make these important shifts:
 - not taking things personally
 - keeping yourself from weaving drama and control stories around interactions that shake you
 - living gracefully with your vulnerability and discomfort, learning to listen even when you don't want to and learning to discern when it's truly healthier not to listen
 - using breathing techniques that keep you mindful and present
 - reshaping your language to be affirmative and truly communal (versus combative or co-dependent)

Misunderstanding #6: You have no regular spiritual practice or skill-building routine

This is a truly weird phenomenon in modern, urban spiritual development. If this is you, please don't think I am making fun of you – you are not alone! I am simply boggled by the commonality of this one. Year after year, I have been asked for advice on finding spiritual peace and confidence from people who don't actually *do* anything to support their spiritual development.

A great deal of spiritual stress comes from internal pressure that we put on ourselves, misunderstandings about what spiritual development is, or societal perspectives based in control and achievement. These are the spiritual equivalent of an athlete over-training and suffering from stress-related injuries or fatigue.

This misunderstanding however, is the complete opposite: spiritually *under*-training and then experiencing pain and discomfort when you try to perform at top levels. With the deepest respect, I suggest you need to ask yourself what kind of development you can expect to see when you are essentially a spiritual couch potato.

Reading or attending a spiritual group regularly is not enough. True spiritual development flat-out requires reflection and contemplation, meditation, prayer, the

development of relationships that are supportive and enriching to your journey, daily finding ways to integrate your spiritual values into your life, staying away from those behaviours that weaken your spiritual expression and connection, doing the work necessary to clear your personality from psychological garbage and unresolved emotional energy, and regularly exposing yourself to the teachings of people further along the path than you are.

Symptoms of This Mix-Up:

- You feel like most teachers and leaders don't have much to offer you and therefore you hesitate to attend classes, read books, and/or participate in spiritual education events.
- When you do, you feel somewhat bored. You can often list the ways it doesn't apply to you and even imagine what you would do differently if you were teaching the class.
- Alternately, you attend classes, read books, and devour spiritual material but continually experience a baffling confusion about how to apply it – as if you cannot absorb it or you simply don't understand what to *do*.
- You habitually establish time for your "spiritual routine and probably maintain it well for a little while, but it is the first thing that gets sacrificed to your schedule and responsibilities.
- There is a gap between your spiritual understanding and your behaviour – you don't back up your intentions with your actions. (For example, you believe in communicating with compassion and non-judgment, but indulge in gossip and pessimistic conversation at work; you read and talk about peace, but nag your partner and hold resentments against friends or family members; you know the importance of not taking things personally, but you often interpret other people's behaviour as if it is a direct statement about you, how they feel about you, and/or the quality of their character.)
- You don't meditate, pray, or reflect (ex. journal write) regularly
- You make little or no attempt to establish yourself in spiritual community or find yourself easily turned off once there. Alternately, you attend meetings regularly, but feel as if it is your lone pocket of spiritual good in an otherwise crazy world.
- There is a pattern of stagnation in your life: clutter, weight issues, chronic lateness, or pervasive disorganization (not happily messy, but in a way that interferes with your life and happiness.)
- You have an emotional tendency towards depression and/or victimization, often feeling weighed-down or held down, non-functional, unsuccessful, frustrated and mistreated by others. (This can be chronic or it can cycle and peak in response to specific circumstances.)
- Either you rely too heavily on everyday activity for your spiritual practice (For example, you may practice driving in a meditative and mindful way, but not actually take the time to specifically meditate.) or you don't yet understand this approach at all. (In other words, the idea that driving could be a spiritual activity is surprising to you.)

Rate Yourself:

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Solutions:

1. Read and reflect on Misunderstanding #9 in this e-booklet and the “Why Should I Listen to You Anyway? What You Need to Know About the Spiritual Development Industry & Your Place In It” report available in the FREE Tools & Resources section of the Spiritual Stress Busters website or the Discovery Level of the Love Threshold website. This will help you get clear on how to choose the best teacher or material for you and which values lead to the most sustainable transformations.
2. Understand that this is about a shift in lifestyle. Spirituality is not an abstract philosophy. Enlightenment is meant to be lived fully and spiritual development encourages us to look at our values very differently from mainstream culture. Are there any changes you can make to integrate your spirituality more deeply into your daily experience?

Misunderstanding #7: You have no clear sense of direction

In business or personal development, this would be the section where we talk about goals. However, on a spiritual level, goals aren’t overly useful. In fact they breed spiritual stress. So here is where we talk about direction instead.

If you know you are a goal oriented person, this might be a particularly important one. If you are trying to deepen your spirituality through your normal approach of goals you will completely miss the magic and power of having a clear spiritual direction.

Setting a clear spiritual direction requires two things:

1. An honest, caring, and in-depth self-inventory. What are your strengths and weaknesses? What are your primary relationship patterns? Where are you in the spiritual development journey? What are your innate challenges?
2. A dynamic and accepting awareness of what you would deeply like to nurture within yourself.

In other words, where are you now and where do you want to be? Or perhaps more appropriately, *who* are you now and *who* do you want to be? How is this different from goals, you might ask. Simple! Goals are essentially an external to-do list while direction is an inner-guidance system.

Goals are accomplishment-based, but direction is growth-based. Having a healthy and clear sense of direction will help you discern which choices to make, learn the “feeling” of what will support you most, and to express yourself authentically.

Symptoms of This Misunderstanding:

- You wander from spiritual teaching to spiritual teaching – you don’t feel anchored or grounded and you don’t really stick with any one path, tool, or technique for very long.

- You have the distinct feeling that you are not living from your soul or your authentic truth. (This may be particularly difficult or painful if you have been exploring your spirituality for some time. You may be deeply hungry for the feeling of being “real.”)
- If someone were to ask you why you are pursuing your spiritual development, you can’t articulate it in a way that they understand.
- You experience a nagging feeling of emptiness or loneliness. You often feel isolated in your spiritual journey.
- You have a difficult time expressing the feelings and qualities you want to experience. You tend to lapse into talking about the details of the experience itself, what you want to do, have, or attract, or how other people would respond to you.
- You would be challenged to articulate who you are now spiritually and who you are growing into.
- You can’t really talk about your passions, purpose, or mission. On the other hand, your visions of what you want for your life are often very clear.

Rate Yourself:

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Solutions:

1. Use both the “You are Here: The Four Stages of Spiritual Development and What You Need to Know About Them” and the “Living From the Inside Out: Surprising Ways Your Natural Spiritual Personality Can Block or Support Your Path to Peace” self-assessment tools. This will provide you with a great deal of clarity about your strengths and weaknesses and how to support yourself more fully. (Both are available in either FREE Tools and Resources section of the Spiritual Stress Busters website or the Discovery Level of the Love Threshold site.)
2. Seek out spiritual and psychological materials that support self-reflection and deep self-knowing.
3. Keep a journal of your emotional and relational experiences.
4. Answer the questions “Who am I now, spiritually?” and “Who do I want to become, spiritually?” Use *only* words that describe feelings and human qualities. (No actions, material details, relationships or descriptions of these and nothing that can only be described in relation to someone else. Only you. Only feelings and qualities.) Hint: you may need the help of someone you trust for this exercise. It’s amazing how easy it can be to fool ourselves in thinking that we are talking in feelings and qualities.
5. Take a good look at the ***Love Threshold Living On Purpose Home Study Course*** and consider participating. (Available at the Growth Level of the Love Threshold website.)

Misunderstanding #8: You are actually focused on personality

I have previously mentioned that there is a difference between spiritual development and other forms of development. (For example, personal, lifestyle, or psychological.) Not understanding this difference causes a great deal of internal pressure to develop and spiritual stress is the inevitable result.

Before you can even attempt to integrate your spirituality, you have to understand how it functions.

Here's how it works

1. Source: the fundamental creative power of this universe, infinite, whole, all-present, eternal etc. Some call this God. Others call it Light, Energy, Life, The Field, The Zero Point Field etc.
2. Soul: Source expressing as a distinct impulse. This impulse contains all of the eternal and infinite qualities of the original energy field, but individualized. This is your divine, eternal, perfect soul self. This is the Love you are here to live.
3. Human Self: Your personal identity - mind, body, heart, and spirit. Finite and inherently limited, your relationships, psychology, identity, choices, beliefs, and perceptions are all a part of your human self. This is your personality.

Your spirituality is *part* of your personality. It is the mechanism, built into your personality, through which your soul self and your human self can merge to become one. This takes a lot of hard work and focus.

Spiritual development requires that you heal and clean up your personality. This is why lifestyle, personal, psychological, etc development can come in handy. But real spiritual development will always be focused on one thing: connecting yourself to the energy of your soul and Source.

Essentially when you are working on spirituality, you are learning to listen for the voice of your soul above all things, to see the magic and grace of Source regardless of appearances, and to live it fully without reservation or exception.

How can you respond to Love in a trustworthy way if you can't hear it calling or understand what it is calling for? It never ceases to amaze me how hard people can be on themselves for not living in a more spiritual way when they haven't yet learned how to be reliably open to their soul or to Source. If you are not feeling spiritual peace, ask yourself: are you actually focused on your spirituality?

Symptoms of This Misunderstanding:

- You have a very well developed foundation of spiritual values (compassion, peace, non-judgment etc.) However, despite your best intentions, you find yourself being reactionary, overly-critical, pessimistic, or

judgmental. Far more than you feel is reasonable given your commitment.

- You are very aware of those moments when you step off of your spiritual values and behave in a way that you are not proud of. You are often struck by a sense of sadness or disappointment with yourself as a result. This feeling can spike into one of frustration, anger, or shame and can build to resentment or depression over time.
- You often begin the day with a deep commitment to be more present and mindful but end up saying, "I did it again! I let myself get distracted!"
- You have a strong psychological awareness of your unresolved issues, emotional triggers, and relational challenges and can talk about them at length. You are confused as to why this awareness doesn't seem to give you the strength to choose differently in the moment.
- You feel you need to be stronger. You read material or seek out teachers that inspire you with their strength and capacity to "hold a Loving presence."
- When reflecting you often say things like, "If only I could be more _____!" or "I just need to _____ more!"

Rate Yourself:

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Solutions:

Realize that you are putting the cart (personality) before the horse (spirituality). This isn't the time to think about integration. Your *only* problem at this point is that you are not able to hear, see, feel, and be present with Love in a way that would allow you to make the changes you want to make.

You are worried about putting Love into action. I am telling you, that you need to learn how to be more receptive to Love first.

You think you know what Loving behaviour is and what your spiritual values are. You do, but you haven't yet learned to allow yourself to be inspired into those behaviours and values from your soul. It's all just philosophical theory until then.

When you are truly and deeply connected you just start acting differently.

In my work, Love Threshold, there is a three-step process of spiritual development. In the first, we ask, "What is the Loving thing to do?" In the second, we receive our answer from our soul. In the third step, we put the guidance we receive into action. My suggestion would be to practice the first two steps of the Love Threshold process and ignore the third one entirely for now. Practice asking the question, "What is the Loving thing to do?" and then receiving the answer. Don't practice doing what you are told, this is about learning to listen and build a sustained connection.

Misunderstanding #9: You are on the wrong path or with the wrong teacher

It used to be that we followed the same spiritual or religious path as our family. Historically we have developed and explored spiritually based on a very narrow band of options. There weren't any individual *options* at all were there? You did what your cultural group did.

In this modern, urban spiritual world there are almost too many options. There are literally thousands of teachers, all unique unto ourselves, and most of us are trying to be entrepreneurs to boot.

Most people put far more time into buying a car or shopping around for the right baby-sitter, housing contractor, or hairdresser than they will into their spiritual development options.

Think about that! Didn't you pretty much just "go where you were guided to go" when it came to your spirituality? Didn't you read that book because your friends liked it (or Oprah recommended it). Or maybe you followed-up with a specific teacher because you liked them in that really inspiring film? Sometimes we make decisions for our spiritual path based solely on intuition. Intuition works when it works, but if you are unsatisfied or stress than some research, is what's needed.

Spiritual development has become a part of the mass consumption of our culture. You may be experiencing spiritual stress because you:

- a) Haven't yet invested enough time, energy, and attention to discerning which path or teacher is best for you
- b) The work you have done (or the teacher you are with) has taken you as far as you can go and it is time to expand your studies. Which means you need to invest the appropriate time, attention and energy to discern which path or teacher is best for you

Some people who read the following symptoms will think that they are too obvious to consider, but it is amazing how long people will stay in a situation that is spiritually unsatisfying.

This happens because of self-doubt, habitual patterns of disappointment; lack of appreciation for the other options out there; lack of understanding of the feelings and experiences that are possible; and an attachment to "where it started."

Symptoms of This Misunderstanding:

- You feel that you have "learned everything you can learn" from a specific teacher or set of materials.
- You frequently find yourself hearing the same stories, listening to the same points, sorting through the same information.
- You continuously crave *more* – you want to go deeper and sense that you are being held at the surface of things.
- You now doubt the efficacy or validity of the teachings. (Either because you have out-grown them and therefore you are craving more, or because through on-going

exposure you are discovering that they are not a good fit. This is a sneaky one! Watch for a change in your loyalty and pay attention to whether or not you need the teachings to be "wrong" in order to validate your choice to let go. There are lots of good options out there and plenty of them are perfect only for a short period of time. *Incompatible with you* does not necessarily equal *invalid in general*.)

- You fear moving on because you are worried you won't find anything better.
- Your initial rush of spiritual fulfillment and that feeling of "coming home" has long-since worn off, but you feel loyal to the teacher or material and hope that those feelings will return.
- Spirituality is more "interesting" than it is "transformational" for you. You have a high volume of consumption but a low rate of application.
- When asked, you have a difficult time telling someone what you have personally learned (versus what the book says), the difference it made in your life (versus what the teacher promises), or how you have healed, transformed, or released (versus the major revelations others seem to have).

Rate Yourself:

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Solutions::

1. Read and reflect on the "Why Should I Listen to You Anyway? What You Need to Know About the Spiritual Development Industry & Your Place In It" report available in the FREE Tools and Resources section of the Spiritual Stress Busters website and the Discovery Level of the Love Threshold site. This document is designed to make you a stronger and much better informed consumer of spiritual development. That combined with the "You are Here: The Four Stages of Spiritual Development and What You Need to Know About Them" will provide you with a solid understanding of the materials and teachers you need right now.
2. Do some research. Decide what you want first, then go looking for it. Try the free samples most spiritual leaders will have available on their websites. Don't be afraid to ask them questions based on your identified needs.
3. Subscribe to the Love Threshold blog feed. I regularly review, critique, and feature other spiritual leaders. It's part of my job to help you be as informed and empowered as possible, even if you never take one of my classes or buy a single product. www.lovetheresholdblog.com
4. Look to a lot of different teachers instead of just one. You can then translate these teachings into your own wisdom and create an independent spiritual approach.

Misunderstanding #10: You are looking outside of yourself for answers and wisdom

This one doesn't need a great deal of explaining. It can be very easy (with the multitude of options available, personal history, and cultural programming) to discount the gentle whisper of our own truth in favour of the strong authoritative voice of a teacher.

This becomes particularly difficult for those who are wrestling with low self-esteem and a lack of personal empowerment. Many people get stuck in looking somewhere other than within for the truth and often prove resistant to trusting themselves.

Symptoms of This Misunderstanding:

- You often experience flashes of insight and intuition but discount them, telling yourself that you can't be right.
- When meeting new people, you frequently have strong initial instincts and impressions, which often prove to be correct, but you only give yourself credit in hindsight. (You may notice this especially if your instincts differed from what others thought at the time.)
- You have a difficult time making decisions and tend to "awefullize" potential results (go to the worst case scenario) in your mind.
- You often cycle between periods of spiritual faith and "spiritual insecurity" – deep belief followed by a great deal of painful doubt, questioning, and uncertainty and so on.
- You seek out and identify spiritual "gurus," ascribing each new teacher with profound qualities. Your friends may have suggested that you are too enamored with these teachers. You do the same with books, organizations, or movements.
- You have experienced painful disillusionment or disappointment in your spiritual quest more than once.
- You have done a lot of reading and exploration but still feel plagued by a lack of trust for yourself and the ground you have gained.

Rate Yourself:

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Solutions:

1. Stop going to classes or reading books for at least six months (If you are currently enrolled in an on-going program that's ok, but don't start anything new.) Feel free to keep your one or two favourite books on hand and re-read them instead.
2. Commit yourself to a program of **daily** prayer, meditation, and journal writing, in that order. Prayer is when you talk to Source. Meditation is when Source talks to you. And journal writing is when you talk to yourself. All three of these are essential for you and you need to devote yourself to it completely. This is your only significant spiritual learning for the next six months. Here is what you do:

- Prayer: short and sweet. Keep it affirmative, present tense, and feeling-based. Start with an acknowledgment of Source, throw in lots of gratitude (as if you are already living your prayers fully) and end it with a statement of release followed by "And so it is. Take a moment to consider your prayer first. Ask yourself "What do I want?" and "How will I feel when I am living it fully?"
 - Meditation: 15 minutes tends to be ideal for this process, but feel free to extend it if you can. It can be guided, but it must contain at least 5 minutes of silence. Sit up, don't fall asleep, and keep your journal handy.
 - Journal Writing: Immediately following the meditation write yourself a minimum one-page letter. Write to yourself as if you are your own best friend following yourself through your day, watching you and your experience during meditation, and you are just overflowing with insights, reflections, observations, and support for this person you love so much. This may feel awkward at first, but I promise you it gets easier and more fun the longer you do it.
3. After one month, review your letters and make a note of patterns that rise to the surface. Insights into your process, what you need to focus on, and the wisdom you carry will leap off the page. Keep going. After the second or third month, you can drop the letter format if it feels more natural to do so, but keep going. As close to every day for six months as you can humanly manage it. This is guaranteed to shift your focus to an internal power center and reveal incredible depths of self-trust.