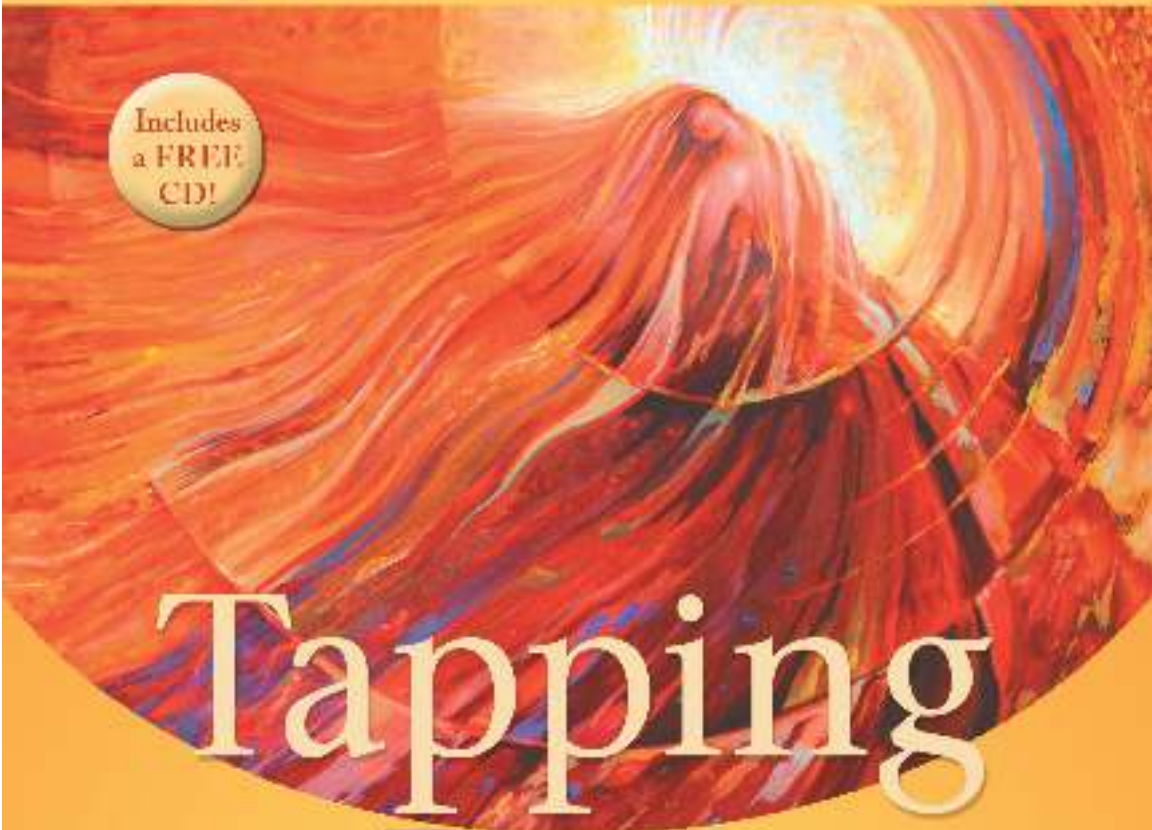


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Tapping
the Power
Within

A Path to Self-Empowerment for Women

REVISED AND EXPANDED
20TH-ANNIVERSARY EDITION



SPIRITUAL CODE OF CONDUCT

When I first heard the phrase *Talk the talk and walk the walk*, I really thought I knew what it meant. Of course, I didn't! I had built my spiritual foundation on self-deception. I was doing all the right things, praying the right prayers, putting forth the right image. However, inside, I was still avoiding myself, blaming others for my shortcomings, and using my spiritual knowledge as an escape. I still had fears. I still hated my father. I was not living up to my full potential, and I told lies. Everything was going great!

I really believed that I had sufficiently covered my weaknesses. I thought if I continued reading books, going to workshops, saying the right things to the right people—everyone would know how wonderful I was. I made one deadly error. In an earnest prayer, I asked Spirit to put me on the right path to do my life's work. I really meant it, and, of course, Spirit answered my prayer!

I was well on my way to becoming a sought-after spiritual teacher. I could demonstrate my knowledge in writing and through speech. I had gained the confidence of many people, even though my life was a mess. I was involved in a triangular relationship with a married man. I was up to my neck in debt. My children were unhappy and acting out. I kept teaching and writing. I convinced myself that it was a test, that if I kept doing the spiritual work, everything would work itself out. It didn't matter that I was



miserable, as long as I was able to keep up a good front. The facade continued for quite a while; then I prayed again and the walls came tumbling down!

One of my students became seriously ill. She was in the hospital. It was my duty as her spiritual teacher to go see her. When my student called, I promised to do something for her, but I was otherwise occupied. I hung the telephone up and forgot all about my promise. My male friend had told me that he was going back to his wife. I had never told anyone that he was still with her. I had led everyone to believe things were fine with us, so I had no one to talk to. I couldn't admit that I had been lying all along. I retreated to my bed to cry.

When my student was released from the hospital, she called me. Refusing to admit my own troubles, I told her I had done what I had promised to do. My promise had involved another person. In essence, I lied. When I tried to get in touch with that person, I couldn't. My intent, at that point, was to backtrack and do what I should have done in the first place. Better late than never. Months passed, and everything seemed to calm down. My student recovered. My boyfriend came back. Life was livable again. Every now and then, my student would raise the issue. I always brushed her off, saying that I was trying to locate the person. I tried for six months to get in touch with this person, to no avail. My student didn't question me, and I didn't bring it up.

One bright Saturday, the telephone rang. It was a friend of the person I had been trying to reach. He told me that he had spoken to my student and that she had expressed her concerns. He had contacted the person I had been trying to reach. He had no idea what my student was saying. Could I please clear this matter up? My ears got hot. My head was swimming. My lie was about to unravel. My student would know I had lied. My friend would know that I had not done what I was supposed to do, and his friend would know I had lied on him. *You get exactly what you pray for. You may not like it, but you will get it!*

I told my friend I would clear it up, but the truth was that I didn't know what to do. I needed to save face. No, what I *needed*

to do was get on the path. But I didn't want anyone to know what I had done. I had told a big fat lie, and they already knew. But I could fix it. I couldn't think. I couldn't speak. I sat down on the bed and cried. Crying is so wonderful. It really purges the poison in our minds. The key is to cry with an agenda. As I cried, I got in touch with everything I felt. I was tired of trying to live up to the false image I had created. I was tired of pleasing people. I was tired of lying, making myself out to be something I was not. I was afraid of failing, and I was afraid of succeeding. I really felt alone in the world. I had been trying to make people like me. I was really confused, with no idea who I was or what I really wanted to do. I wished everybody would leave me alone so I could take time to get myself together. I was born on a Sunday, and every truly transforming experience I have had has occurred on a Saturday. I now realize that if I deal with pain on Saturday, then I will be reborn on Sunday!

My first instinct was to lie. I couldn't face the fact that everyone would know what I had done. I had failed in my responsibilities as a spiritual teacher. I had lied. I had misappropriated someone's money. I had been involved in a relationship with a married man. What would people think about me? What would this mean to the following I had built up? How would I ever face these people again? My ego was frantic and kept showing me images of my destruction. I saw people laughing at me, ignoring me, and taunting me. I could hear the stories and see people's reactions. I thought about all the people who would find out and what they would say. I finally admitted that I didn't care; what I wanted was to get right within myself. It was then that I knew the strength of my spirit. I truly wanted to do the right thing, so I did.

I went to my desk and took out a pad. I wrote my student and my friend. I told them exactly what had happened. I admitted to the lie. I explained my motives without blaming anyone else, and I asked for forgiveness. By the time I had written the two letters, I wasn't crying anymore. I felt peaceful and strong. It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. I felt free. I mailed the letters and locked myself in my bedroom for 16 days. I didn't answer the telephone.

I didn't talk to my children or anyone else. I knew a part of me was going to die in that room; but I also knew I was ready to let that fearful, angry, unworthy, people-pleasing aspect of myself go to its final resting place.

So many of us think that if we act like a thing doesn't exist, it will just go away. When you are on a spiritual path, you must come face-to-face with yourself and acknowledge all of who you are. Only through this process will you will grow and become the embodiment of a true spiritual consciousness. We cannot teach what we do not know. We cannot talk what we do not walk. If we resist this truth, we create pain for ourselves. Learning and growing spiritually does not have to be painful. We make it painful by resisting the unpleasant parts of ourselves. Acknowledging the dysfunctional and unpleasant aspects of who we are is an essential part of the spiritual purification process. We must clean ourselves out in order to be purified and prepared to serve God and others. We must face and release the thoughts, habits, and beliefs that limit us. The fears of the old self must die in order for the new spiritualized self to be born. In order to do this, we must embrace and live by code of conduct that embraces spiritual law.

In the quest for spiritual purification, enlightenment, and evolution, there are specific principles and understandings one must accept and incorporate into a life philosophy. The Code of Spiritual Conduct provides a basic framework for the development of individual desire, thought, and action that embodies the true nature of Spirit. It is not enough to pray, meditate, and visualize. One must reprogram one's thinking and indoctrination in order to absorb and be aligned with the principles of universal law. Purification embodies more than the elimination of toxins and meat from the diet. True spirituality requires acceptance of self as an expression of the Creator, and recognition of that same quality in all others. Our actions must be guided by spirit. The Bahá'í faith teaches, "Nearness to God is likeness of God," which means God-like principles must govern our behavior at all times.

The Code of Spiritual Conduct requires accepting your "oneness" with the Creator as the source of power, knowingness, truth,

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and order in your life. The code is judgment-free. It is the “I Am” principle, which acknowledges every individual as a unique expression of the Creator on a mission to serve the whole. For women, the following principles compose a Code of Spiritual Conduct that will result in the purification of the individual for the evolution of the entire group.

Unconditional Love

- Eliminates fear.
- The nonjudgmental acceptance and practice of goodwill for yourself and all others exactly as they appear to be (e.g., beyond their behavior) in the moment.
- Not to be confused with lust, or with love of another because he or she loves you.

Unconditional love means to see everyone and everything as an extension of yourself, and to act toward others as you would want them to act toward you. Surrender of judgment, criticism, and ego is imperative. Unconditional love is evaluated by your ability, in any given situation, to work toward the best possible outcome for everyone involved. It is evaluated by the question: Am I promoting and/or creating what I would want for myself?

Truth

- Eliminates the misperceptions of the ego.
- The immutable laws of the universe that are in alignment with the mind of God as they operate in the physical world reality.

- Not to be confused with what you know or believe based on your knowledge and experience.

A life of spiritual integrity and empowerment requires you to know truth, accept truth, speak truth, teach truth, and seek truth. Truth is not what you believe based on your individual belief system. Truth is consistent throughout the universe because it reflects the mind of God. It reveals and produces joy and peace for everyone. It is evaluated by the question: Is what I am thinking, saying, and/or doing a reflection of what I know about the nature of God?

Willingness

- Eliminates resistance.
- The ability to accept what happens in the moment as the divine order of what needs to happen.
- Not to be confused with willfulness or doing whatever you want.

Willingness is the surrender of self-centered desire. It eliminates limitation of thought and action in response to misperceptions of reality. Willingness means doing whatever is required and in alignment with spiritual law, whether you want to or not. It is an act of faith and is evaluated by the question: Is God's will greater than my will?

Righteousness

- Eliminates manipulation.
- The right use of your mind, speech, talents, and resources in service to the highest good for yourself and others.

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- Not to be confused with “I want to be right!”

Righteousness requires the purification of thought and desire in service of the truth. You must do what is most appropriate and loving considering all involved. It is evaluated by the question: What is the best possible thing to do/say that will create harmony or balance for all?

Responsibility

- Eliminates blame and projection.
- The ability to respond with a conscious intent without doing harm.
- Not to be confused with self-sacrifice and self-denial, or actions that impress others.

Responsibility is the willingness to be held accountable for every thought, word, and desire that manifests and motivates your behavior. It is evaluated by the questions: How did I contribute to this situation, circumstance, in which I find myself? And, What have I learned as a result of what I am experiencing?

Discipline

- Eliminates procrastination.
- Repeated actions that demonstrate internal and external cooperation in alignment with a specific intention.
- Not to be confused with selfishness, or self-denial.

With discipline, thoughts and actions are manifested in an orderly and consistent relationship to goals and responsibilities. Discipline is evaluated by the question: Am I doing all I must do to realize my vision, without harming myself or others?

Humility

- Eliminates feeling used or manipulated.
- Living, giving, and sharing from a heart-centered, egoless manner in service to others, without regard for reward or recognition.
- Not to be confused with being a doormat or sacrificing the self to please someone else.

Your actions must be prompted from a posture of service to the Creator and not for the satisfaction of the ego. Humility is giving for the sake of it, and not to promote self. It is evaluated by the question: What do I hope to gain for myself?

Compassion

- Eliminates false responsibility.
- Empathetic presence that inspires, motivates, and encourages rather than overpowers.
- Not to be confused with sympathy

Compassion is the ability to place yourself in the position of another, without judgment, criticism, or the need to control. It is the realization that everyone is fully capable of resolving their difficulties and challenges, then standing with them in that awareness.

It is evaluated by the question: Am I my brother's keeper? And the answer is: No. I am my brother.

Perseverance

- Eliminates mental and physical weariness.
- Consciously committed action toward a desired outcome.
- Not to be confused with stubbornness or reckless action.

Dedication and commitment to a stated goal, even in the face of adversity, equals perseverance. When moving in truth and righteousness, one must know that the best will manifest. It is evaluated by the question: Am I being true to my stated intention?

Patience

- Eliminates hasty or unconscious choices.
- Courageous inner strength born of trust and humility.
- Not to be confused with laziness or inactivity.

Patience is accepting the concept of divine order for the perfect outcome of all situations, in relation to the Creator's goals. Patience is evaluated by the question: Is this the best time for the manifestation of my desire?

Speaking with a Conscious Tongue

- Eliminates negative words and energy.
- Not to be confused with speaking your mind, or saying anything you feel.

We must be mindful of the energy that our words create. Because every word we utter is a prayer, we must always speak in a manner that promotes love and harmony. Speaking consciously is evaluated by the question: Are my words kind, necessary, and for the highest good of everyone involved?

Selflessness

- Eliminates quest for ruthless power.
- Inner security that serves the heart and overrides the demands of the ego to conquer.
- Not to be confused with doing something to get something, or acting to get approval or acceptance.

Selflessness is a state of being and behavior that nurtures and supports others and promotes universal truths. It is evaluated by the question: What can I do to serve and support others in this experience?

Tithing

- Eliminates supporting unworthy spiritual sources.
- Grateful giving and sharing of resources to a person or place that encourages or supports your spiritual growth.

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- Not to be confused with the obligation to give or pay for spiritual guidance.

Tithing requires one to give freely to the source of one's spiritual education for the purpose of maintaining that source. The universal law of reciprocity states that what we give, we get back one hundredfold. Tithing enacts this law.

Adherence to the Code for Spiritual Conduct supports the establishment of boundaries for our daily interactions and interpersonal relationships. These boundaries, or any boundaries of behavior that are grounded in spiritual principles, support and create a shift of mental, emotional, and physical energy. The result will be a more balanced, harmonious, and orderly approach to activity. For women on this spiritual path, this specific Code of Spiritual Conduct is in keeping with the ancient Kemetic (African) principle of Ma'at, as symbolized by the feather.

The Code of Ma'at

Ma'at is the intuitive sense of law and order that is aligned to and in harmony with divine and universal law, not the law of man. It is learning from within, based on who you are and what you have come to this life to learn and do! It is the foundation of life, symbolizing truth, righteousness, and moral conduct (intent). Ma'at encourages love, the principle of giving and asking nothing in return. It judges the heart, not the deed or external appearances. It is the universal law that evaluates the intent of your criticism and the truth of your actions.

When we pass from the physical to the spiritual plane (transition from life to death), Ma'at is the principle by which our life will be measured. If your heart was placed on a balancing scale with the feather of Ma'at, would the scale balance out? Using the Code of Spiritual Conduct as the tool by which we measure our lives, will create peace within our heart toward others and within the world. It is this peace that will balance the scale of Ma'at.



On the path toward spiritual enlightenment, it is easy to mistake the lower nature of the ego as a newfound spiritual power. We can justify almost anything by saying, “Spirit told me...” or “My spirit says [thinks, feels]...” However, if we have not achieved a true spiritual consciousness, we are simply using spirit as a scapegoat for the ego. One must be cautious not to allow human emotions to color the principles of spirituality. Remember, spirit is energy! Consequently, there are spirits of light, as well as spirits of a lower, darker nature. Spirits of light follow universal law. Dark spirits satisfy human lusts and weaknesses. We create energy and attract spiritual energy that matches the level and state of our consciousness.

As human beings, we are innately committed to the satisfaction of our physical senses. We are led by those things we can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. We are socialized in a society that emphasizes tangible evidence as a source of security and control. We are trained and encouraged to accumulate tangible things to substantiate what we know and have. A brilliant, enlightened spiritual being becomes suspect without a degree; yet, a dark-hearted, egotistical individual with a degree is held up as a model being. As difficult as it may be, those on a spiritual path must seek to have a clear conscience and a personal sense of integrity, regardless of whether the outside world recognizes the light.

Unfortunately, satisfying the demands of our physical nature usually puts us in violation of universal law. Because our physical senses are enslaved by our will and ego, we are motivated to be in control of people and situations. Will and ego, ruled by emotions and perceptions, places the individual self first, whereas spirit recognizes the Creator as the First Cause, the creative power in all things. The physical nature will use dark energy to achieve light, while spirit moves in the light to achieve enlightenment. Unless we adhere to spiritual principles to govern our thoughts, conduct, and words, we will create harm and discord. And it is in this environment that dark spiritual energies are attracted to us for strength.

What we draw to us is what we are. Whatever the condition of our external life, it is a reflection of our internal state. For every

physical sense, there is a spiritual equivalent. The physical eyes are related to the third or spiritual eye, located in the center of the forehead. The third eye sees truth from a universal perspective; physical eyes can relate only to what we know. The sense of hearing is related to the heart. The heart is centered in unconditional love, while our hearing is limited to emotions. The sense of touch is related to the life center, located in sexual organs. Touch is a function of desire, which must be purified by denial and sacrifice. The sex organs are the root of satisfaction of all lusts, not just the sexual. The sense of smell is related to the solar plexus, located in the center (stomach) region of the body. The solar plexus is the seat of our ability to make decisions, while the stomach is satisfied by the conscious will.

When we are motivated by satisfaction of the physical, without consideration for the spiritual, we fall into the trap of doing “what feels good.” What feels good is not always best for us, in the final outcome. When we experience misfortune, delay, and disappointment in our physical life, it is a reflection of an imbalance in one of our spiritual centers.

As women, many of us are desperate to find a way out of our suffering, pain, and immobility. Most of us want peace and happiness. We are taught to look for happiness in things and people. We are indoctrinated to seek peace in what we are doing, rather than in who we are! Most of us are trained to be dependent and irresponsible, expecting others to create our happiness. We live according to roles, as opposed to purpose. These are the life issues that take us out of alignment with the laws of the universe. We will remain slaves to our weaknesses, our fears, and the lower nature of our human consciousness, until we surrender our will and ego to spirit. As long as we continue to do what we *think* is right, without clear guidelines to know what is right, we will remain limited.

A spiritual brother of mine, who is of the Bahá'í faith, teaches that the only way to determine if you are in compliance with the Spiritual Code of Conduct is through a process of self-accounting. We must take ourselves into account each day to determine if we are moving in a spiritual light. This brother taught me that, before

retiring each day, you must review your actions—from the last thing you did, to the first. After listing your activities, you should ask yourself the following questions:

- Who did I serve today?
- Who did I help today, without asking for payment?
- With whom did I share some knowledge today?
- Did I speak consciously today?
- Did I keep the agreements I made with myself today?
- Did I keep the agreements I made with others today?

As much as possible, your thoughts, behavior, and words should be in alignment with the code. When you miss the mark, don't beat yourself up. Forgive yourself by making a commitment to do better the next day. With patience, perseverance, and a conscious commitment, you will become more consciously enlightened.

Oh, my Glorious Lord, help me to
refrain from every irregular inclination;
To subdue every rebellious passion;
To purify the motives of my conduct;
To conform myself to that meekness
which no provocation can ruffle;
To that patience which no affliction can overwhelm;
To that integrity which no self interest
can shake, that I may be qualified
to serve Thee and teach Thy word.

—`Abdu'l Baha

What I Know Now

Your life is a demonstration of your relationship with God. Every behavior is a function of conscious or unconscious choice. Knowing and embodying spiritual principles transforms reactions into responses.

A Proudful Encounter

I had already missed my submission deadline, so I was on a crash schedule to complete the book. I was working 14 to 15 hours a day, eating once, if I remembered, and sleeping in my clothes. Everyone I knew and loved did their best to leave me alone. They called only to make sure I was still breathing, knowing I would simply grunt my responses to their questions because all the words I knew were pouring out of me as my fingers tapped the computer keyboard. It was two o'clock in the afternoon when my significant other called. I was still wearing my pajamas. I tried. I really tried to pay attention to what he was saying because I had summarily dismissed him for the past two days. Typing slowly, hoping he would not hear the sound in the background, I still found it necessary to ask him to repeat every other statement. He tried. He really tried to bring me up to date on the events of his life. Failing miserably, he finally conceded.

"Go back to work, baby. I'll talk to you later."

"No, no, sweetie," I insisted. "I'm sorry. Now what did you say?"

He knew better. "No, you go back to work. Call me later."

He hung up long before I did. In fact, I didn't take the telephone away from ear until the operator told me hang up the telephone if I wanted to make a call.

As soon as the telephone hit the cradle, I got the message. It was as if a very tall, very stern teacher was whispering in my ear. Although the tone was gentle, almost soothing, I knew I was in trouble.

Are you so busy that you don't have time to let him love you?

My heart sank and my mouth instantly became dry because I knew it was true. There was more.

The way you treat him is the same way you treat God—too busy to be loved.

I thought I was going to faint. Thank goodness I was sitting down. Instead, I dropped my head in shameful horror.

As my mind took me back over the past two weeks of my life, the best I could do was assume the position. I put my hands up

over my head and spoke aloud, "I surrender." I knew I was caught and convicted by bad behavior. I had been driving myself to the point of exhaustion, dishonoring my body and my mind. I was not being kind or loving to myself, and I was extending the same disservice to those who loved and cared about me. My son had arranged for me to have six hours of treatment at a day spa. I had canceled twice because I had to finish the book. My sweetie checked in every day, sometimes twice a day, and I hadn't taken the time to be present and speak to him. Friends wanted to cook for me. I told them no, thank you. Hour after hour I sat to meet the demands of a schedule that I had created, a schedule that I had convinced myself was necessary. I tried to tell myself, "You gotta do what you gotta do," but the Holy Spirit was not going to let me get away with it. *If God is love, and if He loves you, then you are too busy for God.* With that, I turned off the computer and got in the shower.

There was a time when I could convince myself that almost anything I did was okay as long as I did it for the right reason. *I'm better now!* What I know now is that you cannot violate spiritual law or a Spiritual Code of Conduct for any reason and get away with it. When you are out of order, you are out of order. Period! That 24-hour schedule our bodies are accustomed to must include time for eating, sleeping, and other life-giving and productive activities. When we push the body beyond its limits, we harm ourselves and others. We overload our circuits, place undue pressure on the bodily systems, and disrupt the orderly flow of life that is gifted to us. Because the body is the temple of the Spirit of God, it must be valued and honored. It must be nurtured and cared for. It must be fed and washed. I know these things, and, yes, even me, Lord! I forget. I push the limits. The good news is that I have a relationship with the spiritual realm that offers me loving and gentle correction when I push the envelope too far. This day was a day when I was totally on the brink of violating everything I knew, because for just one second, I tried to ignore the voice of Spirit.

***Self-Correction Is Essential
to the Code of Spiritual Conduct***

The moment I stepped out of the shower I called him back and apologized. Because he loves and supports me, he offered me an escape route.

“It’s really not a problem. I know you’re busy.”

I was tempted, but I also knew better.

“Thank you, my love.” I wanted him really to hear me because I knew it was a lesson for both of us. “But it is unacceptable to me and to God that when you show up in my life to love me, I am too busy to be present. If God is love, then you are a manifestation of God’s love in my life. I create my own schedule. I make time for what I think is important, and anytime I don’t have time to receive love, yours or God’s I need to reevaluate my schedule.”

The telephone line was silent. I was just about to say hello when he responded,

“I am overwhelmed because I know I do the same thing.”

I asked his forgiveness several times before he could respond. When he did and we hung up, I ran a bath, broiled myself a nice piece of salmon, made a salad, ate, bathed, and I took a nap. When I awakened three hours later, the book was still there, my mind was clear, and I was in alignment with what I know to be true; God works through a rested mind and opened heart.

Governing your life by a Code of Spiritual Conduct means having a set of guidelines, standards, and/or boundaries for self-correction. You don’t have to wait for some disaster to befall your life or body before taking course-corrective action. It is your spiritual responsibility to honor yourself and your life in the process of serving God. We can make an excuse for almost anything. We can always find a good reason to be self-abusive, self-righteous, and, often, self-destructive. As my coach Steve Hardison once told me, “Your life will only work to the degree that you refuse to accept or offer excuses for bad behavior.” It is not personally productive or spiritually conducive to engage in bad behavior, even when you have perfectly legitimate reasons to do so. Bad behavior is not

only what you do or say to others, it is also what you think about, do to, and speak to yourself. In many instances, we take on more than is required in service to an unconscious need or an unhealed wound. We deny our own needs and desires, believing that's what is required to provide adequate service to something or someone external to ourselves. This is not to say that there won't be occasions when we are required to go the extra mile to complete a task or honor a commitment. We must be mindful not to make a steady diet out of late nights, missed meals, broken nails, tired feet, bird baths, and quick showers.

Over the years, the code for my spiritual conduct has evolved. I have become clearer about my weak spots, committed to eliminate my mischievous behavior, and conscious of the myriad of tricky methods I employ to escape my spiritual responsibilities to myself. My current spiritual code focuses on building spiritual character, spiritual integrity, and spiritual strength. It is my deepest desire to be the best me I can be in service to God, myself, and my purpose. I also want to be around for a long, long time, fully-able and productively contributing to the evolution of human consciousness. I know how slippery I can be, so I started with a clear intention. I share that with you now, as well as my new code, encouraging you to consider them for your own practice so that we may all evolve together.

Spiritual Code of Conduct Prayer

*It is my sincere, reverent, and humble intention
to open my heart and lay down all defenses
I ask for and open myself to receive correction and direction from the
Holy Spirit as it relates to any limitations present in my consciousness
as a thought, feeling, belief, attitude, judgment, projection,
perception, learning, or pattern of behavior that in any way hinders,
blocks, delays, or obstructs my willingness, readiness, or ability
to make self-loving, self-honoring choices in every aspect of my life.*

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I ask that the parts of me that are ready to be healed and the parts of me that resist healing be brought into submission and service of God's will for the highest and greatest good of all involved.

Let it be so!

And so it is!

Act as If You Know the Truth

- *Never Underestimate Your Own Need, Ability, or Power to Effect Change in Your Life*

When I was 20, I knew everything I needed to know. I checked in with other people only to make sure I was right. When I was 30, I knew everything and felt it was my duty to let others know what I knew. When I was 40, I realized that I didn't know much, and half of what I did know had changed since I first knew it. At 50-something, I remember less than half of what I thought I knew. My point is, we are changing, moment by moment. Internally and externally, new information is always being presented to us. It is a mistake to believe you know all there is to know about anything or anyone, including yourself. Be willing to be a student of life forever. Be willing to grow. Be willing to learn. Be willing to heal. Make your internal landscape your homeroom class, and check in frequently. Make your external world of experience your study hall, where you observe, take notes, and sharpen your skills.

- *Mind Your Own Business First*

One of the most powerful lessons I garnered from my study of Byron Katie's *The Work* is: Stay in your own car. I expanded that notion to: Stay in your own car, in your own lane, on your own road, in your own world. This is a spiritually advanced way of encouraging you to mind your own business before you go out helping people or telling them how to do what they do. As a recovering control freak and the mother of adult children, I have found this concept particularly



helpful. After a consistent and conscious practice of self-reflection, I discovered that my drive to fix, change, or correct others was actually of function of the things *I* feared. And the things I wanted to correct in my children were the things *I* was ashamed of or guilty about in myself. I also noticed that each time I attempted to drive someone else's car—in other words, fix their life—something in my own world crashed. Well, of course! If no one is driving my car—meaning my life, my mind, my heart, and my affairs—it is headed for danger. I also realized there was a distinction between *helping* someone and *supporting* him. “Help” meant I was attached to the outcome. “Support” meant I waited to be invited in, and did only what enhanced harmony in my own life.

- *Seek Harmony*

What I know now is that harmony is a higher principle than balance. Very often, as we strive to achieve balance, we actually create an environment for the polarity, or opposite, which is *imbalance*. Harmony means creating a life in which everything gives to and supports every other aspect of your life. Creating harmony encourages us to give time and share time with others doing those things that are life-affirming, life-supporting, and life-enhancing. It requires that your mind and heart, your work and play, your physical reality and spiritual reality enhance each other and add value to others.

- *Replace External Referencing with Inner Authority*

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Calling all overcommitting people pleasers! You have the inherent right, ability, and power to determine what goes on in your own life. In fact, you are the only one who gets to say what goes on in your life. Your inner authority is the producer and director of your authentic identity; it is the aspect of your being that is a demonstration of God. One of your purposes in life is to awaken to this aspect of your being, and to celebrate it in all that you do. You cannot stand fully in the truth of your being if

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you make the needs, demands, acceptance, and approval of others more important than your own inner voice. Stop it! Putting the voice of others before your own voice is an example of poor spiritual hygiene.

- *Stop Being Bad and Wrong*

I have done many things in my life that I am not proud of, and God still loves me. I know this is true because it was the grace of God's love that has taught me to distinguish between the belief that I am *bad to the bone* and the belief that I have a latent propensity for making unwise, uninformed, or downright stupid choices and decisions. Like everyone else, I am a creation of God. This means that our essence—our core—is pure and innocent. This is a truth that cannot be altered by any mode of dysfunctional behavior. Believe in your goodness! Affirm your divinity!

- *Take Your Rightful Place*

For some reason, most probably because someone told us, we believe that it is pleasing to God and obedient to Spirit to deny our gifts and power. Some of us have difficulty accepting a compliment. We deny our beauty, question our innate talents, and undercharge for the expert services we offer to the world. We embrace a false sense of humility because we have been socialized to believe that it is bad or wrong to have a sense of pride in who we are or what we do. I encourage you to be mindful that there is a distinction between self-aggrandizement and honorable self-affirmation. Your rightful place is in the latter.

- *Go for the Joy!*

What I know now is that happiness is a temporary condition that arises from external stimulation. Joy is a state of mind and being that feeds and nurtures the soul. Many things that make us happy satisfy the demands of the ego. Joy is a Spirit-driven, Spirit-



given experience. When we have joy, we are centered in the heart, grounded in calm, and unshaken by the world at large. Joy is a function of knowing the truth, trusting the truth, and living the truth of your being. When you have joy, you don't worry about losing it. Quite often when we have an experience of happiness, we are watching and waiting for the next shoe to fall.

Now That You've Got It, Use It—at Your Discretion

My hearts weeps with joy when I realize all that I have experienced, learned, and been able to share with you. Yet I also understand that your expectations and commitment to practice will determine the outcome and what you receive. As with anything of a spiritual nature, there is no way I can tell you what to expect. Spiritual healing, growth, and evolution is a process, much like the turning of leaves, the growth of body parts, and the graying of hair: it just happens! Neither you nor I can pinpoint the exact moment you will have a full-body experience of your spiritual connection to the Creator of your life and all of His creations. However, when it does happen, you will know it.

Nothing can help you unless you *believe* it can help you! If you have read this book believing it will provide you with information, then that is exactly what you have gotten. Nothing more, nothing less. And that may work for you. If you believe this information can help you achieve clarity, peace, strength, health, love, or good fortune, then that is what you will see manifest in your life. Where the mind goes, the life follows! If you believe you are too far gone, too messed up, too confused to make sense of the things I have shared in this book, then you will believe it has been a waste of your time. You and what you believe are the key factors in all of your experiences.

There will be people who are in total disagreement with as much as 75 percent of what I have shared. There will be others who will use some and discard the rest. To yet others, these pages will contain the revelation they have prayed to receive! No matter

 *Spiritual Code of Conduct* 

which category you fit into, this book will bring you exactly what you have been looking for. Actually, this book does not tell you anything you do not already know! The keys to your kingdom are within you! Having the keys, however, can be very frustrating if you do not know which doors they fit and if you don't have the faith to unlock them. What this book does is structure the mechanics. Spirit will give you exactly what you need, when you need it, if you are honestly searching. With that in mind, I leave you with the words of a song written by my spiritual sister and friend Rickie Byars-Beckwith and her husband, my brother Rev. Dr. Michael Bernard Beckwith:

*I release and I let go, I let the spirit run my life.
Now my heart is opened wide because I am only here for God.*

