

# Everything at the Same Time: why integral is essential

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A client comes in for a massage because his shoulder muscles are wired tighter than the suspension cables of the Golden Gate Bridge, and his lower back is screaming pain. We apply our best relaxation strokes and precision neuro-muscular therapy techniques, quieting the screaming trigger points, getting the steel cables to relax. Then he gets up the next morning and goes right back to the job that is eating him alive and making him crazy. We're not helping... and we may actually be losing ground if our work is enabling him to stay in a situation that is unhealthy for him physically, emotionally or spiritually.

If they continue and become chronic, the stresses in this person's life can easily cause significant health, emotional and relationship problems. The problems will not be resolved until there has been a "shift of center of gravity," or change in the person's very consciousness: the creation of a larger context or frame of reference. In order for such a shift to occur, the work needs to be "Integral," involved in all aspects of the person's life and not just pieces and fragments, working on everything at the same time: body, mind, spirit and shadow. Unresolved issues in one area (body, mind, or spirit) can show up as symptoms or problems in either or both of the other two areas; for example, a spiritual issue can show up as physical or emotional symptoms. In the same way, the solutions to unresolved issues in one area may be found only in one of the other areas; for example, bodywork may be the best connection to long-buried emotional trauma. And shadow—all those disowned/projected aspects of ourselves that we dump out into a cosmic landfill, or worse, onto other people—can and will show up everywhere, and at the worst possible times. An "Integral" approach is not only the best way to solve problems, it is the best way for persons to realize their full potential.

An "Integral" approach is one that includes all the dimensions of human reality. It includes the four dimensions of human experience: intentional (interior/individual, the "I"), cultural (interior/collective, the "You/We"), behavioral (exterior/individual, the "It") and social (exterior/collective, "Systems"). An integral approach includes major lines of development (some examples are cognitive, emotional, moral, psychosexual, interpersonal, aesthetic) and the developmental stages in each of those lines. It includes different types of awareness (some examples include masculine/feminine ways of knowing; Myers-Briggs types; Highly Sensitive Person types). And finally, an Integral approach includes the variety of states human beings experience (waking, sleeping, dreaming; peak experiences; altered states of consciousness).

Integral lifework proceeds through body-mind-spirit cross-training, specific practices that engage all quadrants, all lines, all states, stages and types. The design, or blueprint, for these cross-training practices will be unique to each person because each person and their life circumstances are unique. Most wellness/healing approaches provide only a single, and therefore partial, method of practice even though they may be "wholistic" in that they at least acknowledge the "wholeness" of a person. These healing approaches can be quite effective short term and somewhat effective middle term, but mostly fail over the long haul because they provide only a partial (incomplete) understanding which results in temporary "state" changes and not the shift in consciousness (stage development, more on

that later) necessary for substantial growth and transformation. Focus on only one aspect (body, or mind, or spirit, or shadow) will often miss where the unresolved issue (the "problem") really is; for example, a spiritual symptom may actually have a physical cause, a physical symptom might actually have an emotional cause. Focus on only one aspect will also often miss where the solutions are to be found; for example, considerable emotional distress can result from a destructive personal or corporate system of faith and belief.

These examples are over-simplifications: we are each a unique and complex inter-weaving of genetics and environment, learned behavior and hormonal impulses, grand dreams and biological constraints, complex chains of cause/effect where early emotional trauma can manifest as physical symptoms and then the symptoms, having become chronic and persistent and disconnected from their emotional causes, work themselves into further emotional distress or even spiritual crisis. "Working on everything at the same time" finds these hidden causes and effects and chains and patterns because it is a larger context that can hold all the work. Another way of describing that larger context is to see it as a "shift of center of gravity," something substantial that changes at the core of a person's being, from which there is no going back. Such a change is a far different thing than "having an experience," even a powerful one that at first seems to be a life-changing experience. The difference has to do with stages of development and states of consciousness.

A state change is temporary, a peak experience, a moving workshop experience, a spiritual formation retreat, isolated Reiki session or even a drug-inspired altered state of consciousness. It may even be a glimpse into a higher stage but it is only a peek, not the higher stage itself. Stage changes, in contrast, unfold more slowly and sequentially. Each stage of development builds upon its predecessor in concrete ways, and there is no skipping ahead. Stage changes are a person's own evolution toward higher complexity and integration along all the major lines of development (cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, moral, aesthetic). That evolution will be toward increasing complexity, increasing differentiation/integration, increasing personality organization/structuration, increasing relative autonomy, increasing sense of direction and purpose.

Stages, on the other hand, represent actual milestones of growth and development. Once a person stably reaches a stage of growth and development, they can access the qualities of that stage—such as greater consciousness, more embracing love, higher ethical callings, greater intelligence and awareness—virtually any time they want. States are temporary. Barring any significant trauma (such as brain damage or severe emotional/physical trauma) stages are permanent. Each stage of development, or unfoldment, of a life effectively "incorporates and transcends" the previous stage. Unresolved issues (called "shadow") at any stage of can hold back growth and development, or even worse, contaminate the next stage of development in destructive ways if dragged along for the ride.

We use the phrase "shift of center of gravity" in the sense of "stage change," and such a shift is permanent, not just a temporary altered state or peak experience and in fact may be experienced as quite subtle. It is an emergent larger context and perspective from which a person will experience their life and work and relationships differently enough to enable the next phase of developmental work to proceed. And it is indeed work, sometimes a lot of work.

Bodymindspiritworks Integrative Lifework® provides an intentional way for a person to move into the next stage in their life, no matter what that stage might be, by working at the level of body, mind and spirit all at the same time, and integrating "shadow" aspects as the work proceeds... in other words,

working Integrally. The synergy of the Integral approach will result in the fastest and most complete progress, and will honor the whole person and their unique life context. It works in a cross-disciplinary way. It builds on the strengths and preferences unique to each person and integrates all the energies that may be moving in a person's life as much as possible.

It is the task of the Integral approach (and of Bodymindspiritworks Integrative Lifework) to help persons toward healing, wellness and transformation, toward greater consciousness, more embracing love, higher ethical callings, and greater intelligence and awareness. It will ultimately be the task of such persons to heal the whole human evolutionary structure and care appropriately for persons at every stage of development, to help bring together the fragments of a wounded world. And embracing that task, supporting the work from within, is a Consciousness (sometimes called Spirit) that is connected to energy fields and to life itself—not just human life, but all life. This Consciousness is a healing bond that will make it possible for humans, for the first time in the numbers required, to free themselves from the gravitational pull of more primitive evolutionary stages and become genuinely beneficial presences in the world. Each spiritual tradition has a different name for it, but every tradition acknowledges this Consciousness.

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