

## **Living Guidelines**

Creating a personal map<sup>1</sup> to the soul offers both insight and direction to clear away many obstacles we encounter within life. The first step is to list the principles behind our actions. Writing such a list was a critical milestone in my spiritual growth. It opened my life to be lived rather than just passing the time. I am in no way stating other people should live to these guidelines. Instead this is the process I used to come to terms, with my own personal acceptance of living. These “guidelines” shift with the movement of my life.

Realistically, guidelines don't determine how I live;  
instead by living I will express who I am.

With care, I aid those who are extended expressions of my nature.

My children, partners, parents, friends, pets, any spirit who lives within my essence: are all extensions of my own nature. I must take the time to care appropriately for those who are dependant upon my own nature. This is an ever changing and shifting balance. Blind co-dependence is not something I encourage, as it subtracts from my nature. However, mutual sharing of spirit is very beneficial as it enhances my nature. Caring for the ones I love thusly fulfills a major part of my own essence.

Be true to myself

If I cannot be true to myself, I end up destroying myself. I cannot aid another by destroying myself. Even if it means disappointing others, it's important to take care of my very own nature.

To those in my heart, it's better to disappoint than to disappear.  
To those outside of my spirit its better to disappear than disappoint.

I cannot give away my soul to another, as to do so would destroy that nature. My spirit can freely entangle with others, but our nature is always uniquely our own. Giving your soul away is to not be true to yourself.

Connect to the world as I want to be treated.

My actions reflect back to me on every level.

While I can act as I please, I also have no desire for people to treat me without respect. I will almost always try to treat others with respect and patience. At times, I will act outside this rule, since to gain respect sometimes means responding to people using their own rules which can be quite different than mine.

1) Many different maps exist. One of my favorites is the mandala. Navajo and Buddhist traditions use the mandala to create a visual map to our spiritual world. Not every principle can be expressed in words, many times the best way to reveal something is art itself.

Connect to those outside my nature with decisive action.

It subtracts from my nature to give mixed signals to others. When connecting to something or someone outside me, the way I represent myself reinforces my own nature. When dealing with those outside of my spirit, I will be decisive and clear in my actions.

I have learned part of acting decisively is to base actions clearly on my own nature.

To those unwilling to accept me for my true nature, I will then reflect them.

To some this means I am a chameleon, blending in. To others I will seem to be a fool. In either case it's a waste of time trying to convince people about who I am. I am always myself. But it's foolish to not accept each person as uniquely themselves. To those unwilling to accept me I often will reflect them. In most cases it typically means I become the fool. Perhaps I do this to protect myself, at times I do this in the hopes I will shatter a tarnished mirror. But I act the fool when, {as quite simply}, I just wish to be left alone. Most people (even those who once loved you) leave fools blissfully alone.

Now to illustrate why these are living guidelines

Having been the chameleon for many years, and having played the part of the fool, I have come to the conclusion that either role, while a quite safe place, is no longer a place I wish to hide.

This rule has changed recently to become:

To those unwilling to accept me for my true nature, no action is required: just silently let them be themselves as I remain myself.

Once in my life I was a chameleon and a fool. Those were part of my nature, to protect myself as I needed time to develop and grow in a culture which almost crushed my spirit. Now that I have fully and truly accepted my nature I can shed these aspects, safely becoming myself. I am grateful for the time within the protection of those two roles and a chance to try out the many different aspects the role of chameleon and fool permitted me to experience. But for now I have settled into a more reflective role. In time I will change again.

I own nothing: I am merely a passing custodian of items outside of my nature.

I pretty much share everything. Thinking I own something is an illusion. I might hold control over something, but possession is not ownership. The moment I believe I own something is the moment I am no longer free to be my own nature. I openly share what I have with **those who show respect to the items and myself**. A custodian has a responsibility of respect; a person who shares with me, has the responsibility of returning some respect back. When multiple people become a custodian of an item, I am more careful on how openly the item gets shared as I must also respect and consider the other custodians.

I have found these guidelines have been a way to live unselfishly: helping others freely and openly is a direct result of being true to my nature.

This is a very nice way to live. It leads to a balance of becoming part of an ever growing community of those I love and connect to within life.

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Paths  
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Here are two stories from my path as samples of the guiding principles within my life.

Example of caring for those whom I love, while being true to myself.

Olympia is a special place; unfortunately the Pacific Northwest is the source of a few pretty serious allergies which cause me quite a bit of pain. For health reasons, I would have long ago meandered to Central America or other warmer climates better suited to my nature. However, after my divorce I didn't want to leave my two children. That left me in a terrible position. Stay somewhere which was literally tearing my mind and shredding my body (severe allergies can really mess a person up I discovered), or to leave which would have consequences for my children. Several additional factors in the situation left me at a point of internal conflict.

I decided to stay in Olympia for my children, but I also decided the reason to stay in Olympia should be to support my nature. I had a need to understand the depression, and as it later turned out the allergies which were the source of that depression. I decided my staying in Olympia needed to be the time to understand why it felt like the Pacific Northwest was driving me away. The reason to stay was to discover more about myself. The solution took years to uncover. I had to stop and examine my nature. I spent time to understand my needs thru activities such as spoken word poetry to closely examine my mind and spirit. I learned more about my body, beginning to seriously explore yoga and martial arts which healed my physical self, and in turn strengthened my overall system to better resist the allergies. I spent time to determine what foods I should or shouldn't eat, as it turned out food also played a role in the allergies. I then discovered how the body works internally, so I could perform deep internal exercises to aid my liver and kidneys, which in turn helped purify the body of the allergens. All these activities led me to discover interconnections between mind, body and spirit. Over 5 years I took the time to understand myself so I could also support those I love. As a result of this hard work, patience and time I was able to be true to myself and care for my children.

Many times staying and not running is the hardest thing a person can do

Everyday, I lie to myself  
"I can leave whenever I wish"

Everyday I say this. Everyday I stay  
Beaten bruises should push me away  
I stay  
Hiding tears, pain, truth  
Hide it in lies, smiles and fantasy

It doesn't matter  
Everyday losing something more of myself  
Everyday laying a little longer,  
    picking myself off the ground, slowly, to continue this play

Every night I lie to myself.  
Going to sleep, it feels so easy  
Maybe the gray, the midnight dark will stay, keep the day away

It doesn't, it never does.

Leaving me to morning, another day  
Saying: "I can leave whenever I wish"

Could have, should have, would have left  
Living, living free, not beaten, to be true to life, is who you are  
Is what calls, howls in my dreams  
    **No!**

As much as I want to flee  
Truth, true to my life, means to love others...  
It's returning love in my children's eyes  
It's helping friends beaten to the ground  
    with my hand so they may walk again.

Silently unknowingly:  
These loved ones pick me up off the ground everyday.

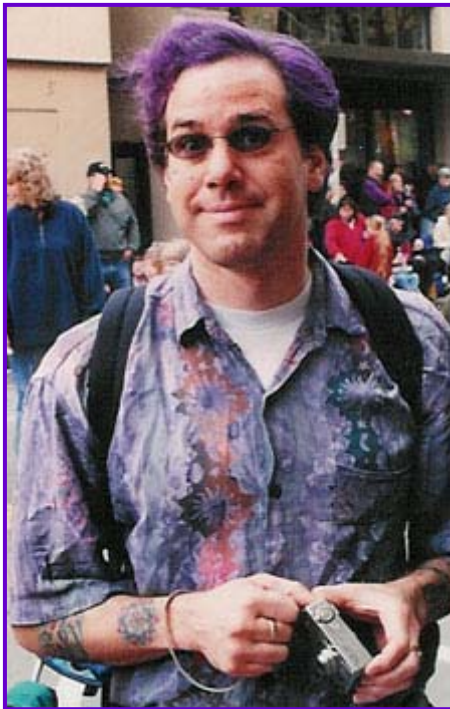
I won't lie  
I will leave someday  
It just won't be today

Allow time to discover yourself, a process that spans an entire lifetime.

Story of connecting to those outside my nature with decisive action.

One evening, Julie and I were walking home. Along the way, a pitbull attacked us. In that moment I acted decisively. I became my full self and demanded directly to the dog to stand down. The dog and I sized each other up in one of those perfect seconds that last a little longer than a second. The dog reacted as if I would have taken it down completely<sup>1</sup> because I knew and decisively told the dog as much with my full expression of self. Then the pitbull walked away. If I didn't act as myself, if I had any mixed emotions, doubts or fear, the pitbull would have then had doubt about my nature, and it would have attacked me, since a pitbull's nature is to attack when in doubt. Instead Julie and I walked away 5 seconds later with no harm to anyone. While this is an extreme example, in some aspects, it shows the truth of clearly communicating with decisiveness.

1) Just because I am a Taoist and peaceful 99% of the time doesn't mean I am always passive. Being a Taoist means always living relative to your nature and the situation you are within. If a situation requires forceful actions then you need to be prepared to use forceful actions with full commitment.



Procession of the Species Olympia WA, 2003  
Photo by Kris Hicks-Green

*Me*

Poet, Sage (not all sages have grey hair),  
Father, Lover, Casey, Former Fool,  
Boy, Man, Patterner, Author, Chameleon,  
Wind, Dragon, Sun, Cat,  
Once upon a time even a Purple Jester  
Joyful  
Countless  
nouns and adjectives  
- trying and defining one a day -

Explorer

Always myself  
NO matter what appearance<sup>1</sup> is playing<sup>2</sup>

We are what we are, be true to your own guidelines  
ever following the tumbling stars strewn along the way

- 1) Don't underestimate appearance. While it's a shell, we still gain strength and protection from our appearance. It's a powerful form of magic being a shape shifter and controlling your appearance.
- 2) Be warned appearance is often a shell game of ego. There is no power, only deception, in these shell games.