

# The Authenticity Project

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# What is the Authenticity Project?

- The Authenticity Project is an interdisciplinary approach to integrating Baha'i ethical principles with psychological insights into personal growth and healing.
- Members of the Authenticity Project are: Leslie Asplund, Sheri Dressler, Carmel Hatcher, William Hatcher, Lonya Osokin, Michael Penn, & Mary K. Radpour

# Why attempt to integrate ethics and psychology?

- Abdu'l Baha foretold “*severe mental tests*” that would “*inevitably sweep over his loved ones of the West .... tests that would purge, purify and prepare them for their noble mission in life.*”
- We are now experiencing those tests.

# Psychology is divided about values, despite their central role in human life.

- Jung, Frankl, Assagioli & others proposed a spiritual psychology of values, indicating that maturity involved relating to our spiritual Self.
- But others fear that the introduction of values to psychology will inhibit freedom of conscience & invite narrow definitions of health.



**How do the Baha'i teachings  
resolve these polarities?**

# The harmony of science and religion:

- Religion
  - explains the purpose of our existence
  - states what is most and least important
  - explains the spiritual laws of cause & effect
- Science
  - inquires into the laws of cause & effect
  - describes a hierarchy of complexity in the material world
  - prescribes an unbiased method of inquiry

# What hierarchy of values exists in creation?

- the Creator
- human beings
- the animal kingdom
- the vegetable kingdom
- the mineral kingdom

# “Should the lamp of religion be hidden, chaos and confusion will ensue.”

- Ideologies:
  - elevate doctrines and dogmas above the value of a human being and justify cruelty to human beings
  - lead us to believe that there are multiple truths
- True Religion:
  - *“This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”*
  - *“Truth is one, but the ignorant have multiplied it.”*

# The law of cause and effect

- Operates in both the material and spiritual worlds
- Understanding this law in the material world allows us to predict and control events
- The spiritual law of cause and effect describes what happens when we are not loved and do not love. We do not grow.

# Human beings bridge the material and spiritual world: *“O Man of Two Visions!”*

- Animals:
- do not have conscious choice
- function in response to instinct
- have no spiritual powers
- Humans:
- have conscious choice
- are aware of their desires
- have imagination, memory, thought, & comprehension to intensify their animal nature

# A healthy human being who is integrated

- Knows what his values are
- knows how he feels
- knows how to do what he thinks he should do
- wants to do what he thinks he should do
- knows how to want to do what he thinks he should do

# In both science and religion, a true seeker

- is free of the dust of acquired knowledge
- has an open mind & an open heart
- knows the power of love & hate to distort the truth
- is disciplined in the search after truth
- abandons self interest in favor of a truth which will serve all

# Values and the Search for Truth

- It is **not true** that a multiplicity & diversity of seekers will necessarily result in a multiplicity & diversity of truths.
- If truth is one point, then all who persist in seeking truth will approach that point and draw nearer to each other.



**How does an understanding of values assist in personal transformation?**

# Spirituality is the proper development of our innate spiritual capacities

*the capacity*

**Mind**

**Heart**

**Will**

*its  
manifestation*

**Ideas,  
thoughts**

**Feelings,  
emotions**

**Intentions,  
actions**

*in the mirror-  
like soul*

**Truth**

**Love**

**Service**

*in the ego*

**Falsehood**

**Egocentric  
desire &  
passion**

**Competition  
for value &  
powerseeking**

# Key Concepts Related to Human Development

- Growth = increased *consciousness*
- accurate *inner model* of reality = recognition of *intrinsic value* = *authenticity*
- action based upon an accurate inner model is characterized by *inner freedom*
- *authenticity & autonomy* are essential to spiritual development

# What is the relationship between spirituality and mental health?

- Spirituality is the proper development of our innate spiritual capacities, including mind, heart, & will
- Mental health + physical health = spirituality
- Physical illnesses veil & obscure our spiritual powers but do not have an effect upon them.

# Abdu'l Baha's diagnosis:

- ignorance
  - requires education
- immaturity
  - requires training
- illness
  - requires healing

# What is the Virtuous Cycle?

- The Virtuous Cycle is a six step process of systematic transformation which employs specific strategies to increase awareness and self-mastery.
- It involves using one's spiritual powers to examine one's spiritual powers.

# The Virtuous Cycle

- **Preparing for Change**
- Step I: Identifying our current condition;
- Step II: Gaining insight & understanding;
- Step III: Envisioning the possible & desirable;

# The Virtuous Cycle

- **Implementing Change:**
- Step IV: Choosing a realistic plan of action;
- Step V: Identifying & anticipating barriers to change;
- Step VI: Acting, receiving feedback, & evaluating



# Step I: Investigating my current condition

## Mind

What am I currently thinking about  
this situation?  
Is this familiar?

## Heart

What am I currently feeling  
about this situation?  
Is this uncomfortable?  
Have I felt this way before?

## Will

What am I currently doing  
About this situation?  
Have I behaved this way before?  
What are my motivations & desires?  
Do I want to change?

# Step II: Gaining insight & understanding

## Mind

What thoughts & assumptions  
underlie my behavior in this  
situation?

Are these reasonable or  
unreasonable?

Are they conscious or unconscious?

Are they healthy or unhealthy?

Am I ignorant, immature, or ailing?

## Heart

What feelings & attitudes  
are producing my behavior?

What feelings & attitudes  
are generated by my behavior?

## Will

What goals does this behavior seek  
to achieve?

What is the “payoff” sought?

What needs & desires motivate the  
behavior?

Are these needs and desires  
legitimate?



# Step III: Envisioning the possible & desirable

## Mind

When I imagine change, what would it look like?  
How would my point-of-view be different?

## Heart

What would I rather be feeling in this situation than what I am feeling?  
What feelings & attitudes would be more authentic, or in keeping with the example of Abdu'l Baha?

## Will

What would I rather be doing in this situation?  
Is there an authentic action or a more noble model for the action I wish to adopt?

# Step IV: Choosing a realistic plan of action

## Mind

What realistic step could I take towards implementing this virtue given my current abilities and limitations?

Which action would lead to the greatest autonomy & authenticity?

## Heart

With divine assistance can I be loving and humble enough to accomplish this action?

## Will

What is my intention?  
How can I maintain a pure motive?  
How can I be mindful of the unconscious traps of the ego?  
How can I deliberately avoid being competitive or seeking power in this action I've chosen?

# Step V: Identifying & anticipating barriers to change

## Mind

Do I know what to do?  
Have I ever done it before?  
What perceptions of myself  
will I have to give up in order  
to make a change?  
What reaction to my changed behavior do I  
anticipate from others?  
What strengths have I developed which  
will help me sustain change?

## Heart

Do I feel like avoiding change?  
What losses will I experience by making  
change?  
What feelings about myself will I have to  
give up in order to make change?

## Will

Have I the courage to act differently  
regardless of my anticipated reaction from  
others?  
Am I ready to take responsibility for the  
consequences to my actions?  
What kind of internal and external support  
do I need to help me sustain this change?

# Step VI: Acting, receiving feedback & evaluating

## Mind

What thoughts went through my head as I acted?  
What seemed to be the thoughts of others?  
What “change-back” messages have I been receiving since taking this action?

## Heart

What emotions did I feel as I accomplished my action?  
What seemed to be the emotions of others?  
Did I feel the anticipated resistance from myself and others?  
In retrospect, do I feel rather good or rather bad about what happened? Why?

## Will

How did I react (inwardly) to my action?  
How did I react (visibly) to my action?  
Has the situation now moved a step closer to the ideal?  
Has there been an increase in altruistic love & justice in this situation?

# Genuine Altruistic Love

- is the recognition of the intrinsic value of another
- provides the motivation to serve the other
- is unconditional and involves total acceptance
- involves reciprocal service of one another's legitimate needs, which leads to growth
- requires sincere acceptance of the other

# Justice

- is the knowledge of how to apply the spiritual force of love
- involves rights & responsibilities
- creates the conditions for growth
- creates the condition of inner freedom by making life predictable
- makes reciprocity possible
- is defined by the Manifestations of God

# Love + Justice = Unity

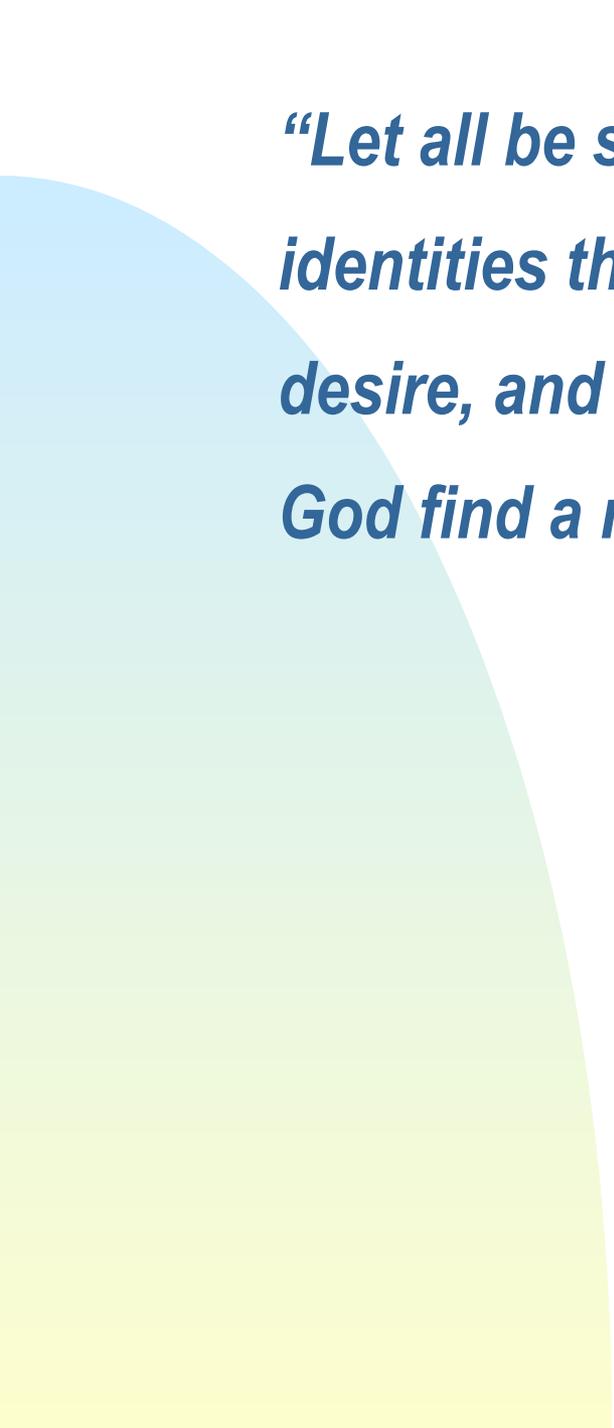
- Love = a recognition of intrinsic value
- Justice = the knowledge of how to implement love
- Unity = the fullest development of the individual, the community, and institutions

# Power

- Power is an attribute of God
- Power is focused energy
- Power must be used in service of higher values
- Power must always be used in service to others
- The pursuit of power is forbidden
- The pursuit of power is unjust and the misuse of power

# Responses to Injustice

- To seek revenge to an injustice is to seek power over another
- To do nothing in response to injustice is to perpetuate it
- Our response to a personal injustice must be to meet the need of the wrongdoer for moral education
- It should increase the likelihood of his gaining insight into his own moral condition



***“Let all be set free from the multiple identities that were born of passion and desire, and in the oneness of their love for God find a new way of life.”***