

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.”