

An Urgent Wake-Up Call to Live More Simply, Harmoniously, and Respectfully

On November 23rd, 1993 Native American prophecy was fulfilled when a delegation representing the North American indigenous nations addressed a gathering at the United Nations building in New York. Hopi prophecies had directed messengers to knock four times on the imposing doors of the UN in an attempt to deliver an appeal to the peoples of the world. The messengers began knocking in 1948. It took 45 years for the last living messenger to finally gain access. The *Cry of the Earth Conference* resulted from that fourth—and final—knock. Native American elders took that opportunity to deliver the prophecies of their spiritual leaders concerning the state of the earth and the people living upon it.

Their message was clear and very simple: **The long-predicted time of purification is already under way.** The elders pleaded that we heed The Creator's original instructions to the indigenous peoples and voluntarily return to living in more simple, harmonious, and respectful ways. The prophecies warned that, should we choose to ignore this message, erratic weather patterns, earth movements, starvation, violence, and war would occur with ever-increasing frequency and intensity.

We live at a time when Native American prophecies and contemporary scientific predictions are converging and manifesting before our eyes. When we read the morning paper or watch the evening news, we are literally witnessing those predicted events

unfold. While there are occasional, encouraging, isolated bright spots of technological advance and humanitarian action, I still see very little evidence that we are seriously heeding the warnings.

My purpose is to reissue that call. I am asking each of you to voluntarily commit to living in ways that are simpler, more respectful, and more harmonious—more in line with The Creator’s original instructions. *You, as an individual,* must choose how you will respond. Will you voluntarily make the required changes in your lifestyle? If you do, there’s no question that it will have a positive affect on you, the people around you, and the earth upon which you live. You will bring the benefits of simplicity, harmony, and respect into your own personal life. You will prepare yourself to pass through the predicted challenges ahead more successfully and with greater ease and grace. In addition, you will provide a much-needed positive example for others to follow.

I have written this four part article to help you implement your commitment. In the first two parts, I suggest a number of specific steps you can take to achieve a greater simplicity—both internal and external—in you life.

Part I: Five Steps to Simplify Your Inner World

Any unresolved issues you carry inside can distort your perceptions of the world, inhibit your personal options, and make you more vulnerable to stressful life

events. You've probably heard the saying, "Wherever you go, there you are." Well, it's absolutely true. In order to live more fully, and flow more fluidly with disruptive changes, it is essential that you free yourself of any remaining unresolved issues.

Step 1: Release your attachments

I believe this is the most important internal change you can make. Imagine strands of your energy running out from you to all the people and things you rely on to define your identity. One strand may run to a person you love, another to your car, and still a third to your music collection. Some may stretch back in time to people who let you down, while others might reach far into the future, tied to an aspiration or desired possession. Strands might even run to your own body (how you look), or to your thoughts and beliefs (religion, politics, etc.). We can attach ourselves to anything...and we do.

Buddha said that we suffer because of our desires and attachments. We attach ourselves to people, things, and outcomes as if they were extensions of ourselves. Then we hold on very tightly (using words, actions, and our will). If another person must respond with the "right" expression, answer, or behavior in order for you to be "happy" or "okay," then you are definitely attached. If events must turn out in a particular way—match the picture in your head—in order for you to be "okay," you are attached. If you still carry unresolved feelings about something that happened in the

recent or distant past, you are attached. Those attachments handicap you by causing you to resist change or avoid making choices that might jeopardize a desired outcome.

The only solution is to let go. You must draw back—from your side—the strands of energy that you extend to hold, influence, or control people, things, and outcomes for your own ends. You must let everything and everyone go free.

There are a number of ways to go about releasing attachments. Satchidananda offers a comprehensive Eastern approach in *The Yoga Sutra's of Patanjali* and John Randolph Price presents a Western version in *A Spiritual Philosophy for the New World*. I describe my own set of eight release steps on my website (www.circledancer.com) in an article titled *Releasing Attachments*. If you discover that you need additional help with this process, some therapists and members of the clergy are able to provide assistance.

Ultimately, we let go of everyone and everything—we die. According to most spiritual traditions, the sooner you release your attachments, the more peace and ease you have in this life. The Native American prophecies provide a little extra incentive. It will be a lot easier to adapt to a changing world once you free yourself.

Step 2: Face and resolve your issues

Another powerful way to simplify your life and prepare for change is to solve any unresolved personal issues (fears, anxieties, judgments, reactions, addictions, compulsions, depression, etc.). The increasing stress and challenge presented during the difficult times ahead is likely to intensify your unresolved issues, making it even harder

for you to operate effectively. You would be wise to resolve those issues before those external pressures mount.

Most issues can be resolved by bringing them fully into your awareness, facing and accepting them, and then taking any required actions (e.g., learning a new approach to managing stress). It's likely that your unresolved issues have already been brought to your attention. If so, perhaps you dismissed them (e.g., I only drink on weekends.) or even defended them (e.g., If you didn't do what you do, I wouldn't react the way I do.). Winston Churchill noted that we often stumble over the truth, but we quickly pick ourselves up, brush ourselves off, and hurry on our way. I strongly encourage you to stop and acknowledge the issues that repeatedly trip you up.

You may be able face and resolve your issues on your own, using methods such as introspection, meditation, or journaling. You might even be able to address the issues that arise in your relationship—with your partner's help. However, if you have trouble facing an issue, or coming up with the means to handle it, you may want to seek the help of a counselor. It always makes sense to remove a rock from your shoe rather than limp along with it, but that's especially true when the road ahead is likely to be rough and full of unknown twists and turns.

Step 3: Tell the truth

Your personal power comes through representing your true self in the world. Your power with others lies in their being able to count on you and to trust in you. Any lie diminishes your credibility in this world...and it diminishes you. Tell the truth at all times, and under all conditions—without exception.

Step 4: Reduce your dependency

In a dependent relationship, another person (a lover, a parent, a child) appears to control the availability of something you desire. That desired thing can be almost anything, but most often it tends to be acceptance, love, or financial support. Dependency occurs when you surrender your own personal power and control in an attempt to obtain the thing you desire. Then, you and the other person both end up feeling bound, unfulfilled, and resentful.

The only way out of dependency is by becoming independent. You are independent when you are willing and able to make your own choices, regardless of the reactions and responses of others. Independence also requires being willing and able to stand alone on your own two feet (e.g., take care of yourself financially).

One of the best indicators of whether you are independent is whether you are willing to address issues that arise in your relationships. If you are reluctant to express the truth to a friend, a colleague, or a partner, you are probably in a dependent relationship. Your life will be very complicated if there are unexpressed negative

feelings or unresolved issues present in your relationships. Say what you need to say and make certain you avoid the binding ties of dependency.

Step 5: Remain light-hearted

I saw the Dalai Lama when he visited Salt Lake a few years ago. He walked out on the stage, and everyone in the audience lit up. That didn't happen because of his importance as a spiritual or political leader. It happened because he came out grinning so excitedly, waving so lovingly...with his socks falling down. His light-heartedness was absolutely contagious. I know the Dalai Lama was fully aware of all of the suffering in the world. I'm also certain he was under tremendous pressure to meet with the crowds and deliver his teachings that day. Still, he remained exuberantly light-hearted. It didn't diminish him one bit, and it elevated all the rest of us.

There is suffering in this world, and maybe even in you own life. According to Native prophecies, it's likely there will be more. But, your anger, discouragement, and sadness will not diminish that suffering. It will only aggravate and amplify it. It will rob you and those around you of the possibility of perceiving the joy and love that exist right along side the suffering. Be the light-heartedness that brightens even the most difficult times.

Part II: Six Steps to Simplify Your Outer World

We are like fish, swimming in a vast, cultural sea. We seldom notice the water that surrounds us—how it influences us, and even dictates our choices. As a result, we can easily take the life we live for granted, assuming it is as it should be, and that it will go on this way forever. It cannot and will not. Here are some concrete steps you can take to reduce the external sources of stress in your life. They will make it much easier for you to ride the rising waves of change.

Step 1: Eliminate anything you don't need

In a culture that aspires to acquiring, it may seem heretical to suggest that you aspire to having less, but that's my first suggestion. Go through everything you own, find anything you aren't currently using (clothes you haven't worn in the past two years, a bike your child has outgrown), and recycle those things. Let someone who needs them put them to use. Clear the clutter from your life and prepare to travel light.

Step 2: Reduce your purchases and expenses

Before buying *anything*, ask yourself, "Do I really need this?" With the possibility of economic adjustments looming on the horizon, you would be very wise to begin reducing your expenses. The interrelated world markets—a veritable house of cards—could change on a dime, making it much more difficult for you to increase, perhaps even maintain, your present income as a way to absorb increased expenses. Cutting

your expenses will make it possible to decrease the amount of income you are *required* to earn, increase your buying power, and accumulate some savings...just in case. It will certainly help reduce your worries.

The wheel of our economy turns on consumption, so you are encouraged to purchase things even before you earn the money to buy them. The interest you pay for that “privilege” increases both the financial and emotional price you pay. I strongly recommend you pay off any debt you carry—as quickly as you possibly can. Debt is a weighty—and totally unnecessary—drain on your resources. Then, save the money you need *before* you make any new purchases (say a car). You’ll reduce the total price you pay—considerably—and you’ll eliminate impulse buying.

Once you begin to look, you’ll be amazed just how many easy ways there are to reduce your expenses—and your strain on resources. Here are a few things that I’ve discovered recently. Instead of purchasing a new DVD or a book, check it out from the library. Learn to prepare the foods you enjoy and serve them at home, rather than going out for costly meals. Only purchase clothing that can be machine- or hand-washed, rather than dry-cleaned. Put on another layer of clothing, rather than turn up the heat. Pursue inexpensive recreational opportunities such as walking, hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing, rather than engaging in activities that require costly equipment, or usage and maintenance fees. Design an exercise program you can do at home, rather

than paying gym fees. This list is far from exhaustive. I'm certain you can come up with many more ideas relevant to your own living situation.

Step 3: Downscale

I recently read in a local paper that developers are selling 4,000-5,000 square foot, zero-energy-use homes on a near-by mountain. I was delighted to see that the builders are incorporating that high level of efficiency, but wouldn't it make better environmental and economic sense to buy a smaller house instead? (The average house size has increased significantly in our lifetime.). You would automatically reduce furnishing expenses, your upkeep costs, your mortgage payment...and you would save more energy.

When the time comes to make any new or replacement purchase, seriously consider trading down. For example, trade in your current vehicle for a smaller, cheaper, or more efficient one. Better yet, why not move closer to your workplace, your kids' schools, and the services you use so you can walk or bike, instead of driving at all. Think smaller...and think less...any time you have a choice.

Step 4: Surround yourself with good company

Select good traveling companions for the bumpy road ahead. Wouldn't your journey be easier if the people around you were light-hearted, independent, truthful people who had addressed their issues, freed themselves of attachments, and made a

similar commitment to change their lifestyles? People like that will be able to carry their own load, even if things become difficult. They'll even be able to offer support and lend you a hand should you need it.

This may sound harsh, but you may need to cut some people out of your life. You might have a friend or member of your family who isn't going in the same direction you are. Maintaining that relationship might require that you either give up your own direction or that you drag someone along with you who doesn't want to go.

Step 5: Maintain your health

We are already experiencing mounting stress. The purification was under way in 1993, and things have definitely intensified since then. According to the prophecies, it's likely to get worse. You need your body to be healthy and capable of carrying you wherever you need to go, even when faced with stressful, challenging circumstances.

I suggest you begin a training program, just as if you were preparing for an adventure-filled trip (physically demanding plus unfamiliar circumstances). Before you start, get a medical check-up and address any problems that are identified (e.g., blood pressure).

Interestingly, many of the things you do to prevent or treat illness are the very same things you do to get in shape. At the top of the list is eating healthy. Reduce the unhealthy saturated fats and high glycemic index carbohydrates in your diet and

increase the fresh fruits and vegetables. Add some regular aerobic exercise (e.g., walking), beginning at a very easy level and gradually increasing the rate and distance. Do some light weight training to build strength and add a little yoga or Tai Chi for increased balance. You will see and feel the improvement very quickly, but remember the trip ahead will more like a marathon than a sprint.

Step 6: Be prepared

It is quite likely that the events predicted by the Native American spiritual leaders (erratic weather patterns, earth movements, starvation, violence, and war) will affect you personally. The occurrence of any of those events will seriously disrupt your life. (Hurricane Katrina provides an excellent point of reference.) Coping with a social or environmental event of that magnitude is extremely difficult, but you will handle it much better if you prepare in advance.

Minimally, you should put together a personal emergency supply kit (including food, water, a first aid kit, a radio, a flashlight, toiletries, personal hygiene needs, clothing, sleeping bags, medications, some cash, financial information, etc.) and a response plan (meeting places, contact information, etc.) for you and your family. You can find more detailed information about what to include in your kit and how to plan for disasters at www.ready.gov or www.redcross.org. If you wish to be even better prepared for disasters, you can learn the skills necessary to assist others during an

emergency by attending one of the training programs (e.g., emergency medical care) offered by your local Red Cross or fire department.

Conclusion

I certainly hope you will heed the call and begin to live more simply, harmoniously, and respectfully. It is up to each of us as individuals now. The steps outlined in the four sections of this article will both improve your current life and prepare you to face a dramatically different future. Even as old beliefs and structures unravel, you will be helping to create new and better alternatives. The third and fourth parts of this article suggest some specific steps you can take to live more respectfully and harmoniously.