

# Growth is a Journey

by Jean Kadkhodaian

## **The symbol for a journey is a spiral.**

Growth is a journey. Look at the center of the spiral, this is where life begins. As we walk on our journey we soon come to a challenge and descend into the shadow side. This is where we face our fears, learn our lessons and begin to seek the light.

We often do not notice the sun high in the sky on a bright summer day. But when we walk outside on a dark night we are drawn to the shiny stars, which are like pinholes in the night sky. Before modern technology we used these stars to find our way through the night. Follow the line of the spiral through the darkness and you will see that it returns to the light. It does not just return but it goes even higher into the light. The reward for journeying into the dark is to bring the subconscious into the light for illumination. This gives us greater access to our sacred self by integrating the lessons of our shadow. The benefit of going through the dark and facing our fear is not only to heal our wounds and feel better but also to gather strength and tools to face other challenges in life.

Think about the first time you fell in love. Falling in love is like walking on a cloud. This is when you are on the light side of the spiral and feel as though you can live on air alone. Now think about the first time that your heart was broken. Remember the stabbing pain that felt like it would never end. This is when you are on the dark side of the spiral and all you can see and feel is despair. As time goes by you realize that no matter how much pain you experience and no matter how broken you are you will heal. Once you have this

wisdom that you will survive your pain and heal, you will never have to feel that depth of pain about that issue again. This lack of wisdom is what makes teenagers so vulnerable to suicide. They believe that there will never be an end to their pain and so they don't give themselves time to heal and to grow.

Unfortunately, most people spend their lives hovering just above the centerline before the spiral dips down into the darkness for the second time. They stay stuck in dead end jobs that suck the life out of them. They settle for relationships that are dull, listless and boring. They resign themselves to a life of mediocrity in order to avoid the intensity of going through the growth process that requires facing the dark night of the soul. They focus on small things like getting a bigger house or car, losing ten pounds or buying more stuff that they hope will fill up the hole inside of them. It is not so much that they refuse to face their pain but rather that they don't have any idea how to travel through their shadow side.

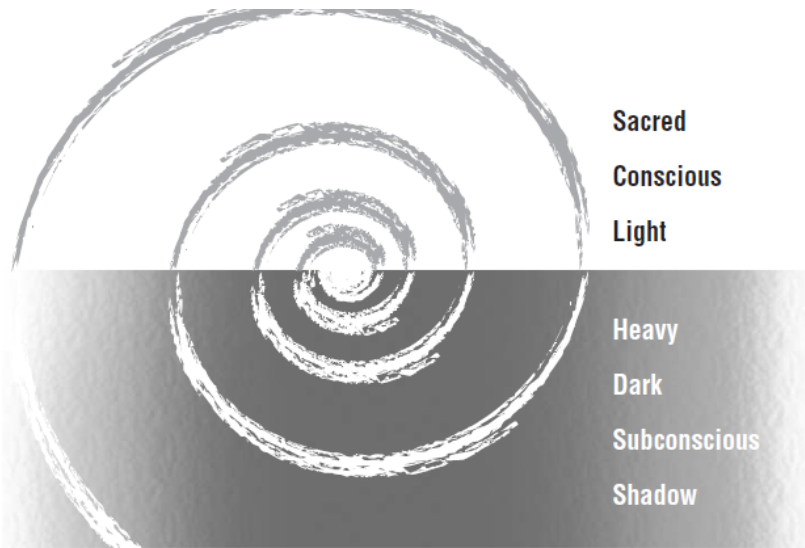
The first time we go through the process we are like a fool going along on our merry way until the floor drops out from under our feet and lands us on our bottom in a pile of crap. We are completely innocent and totally destroyed. No wonder 95% of people live their lives statistically similar to their parents. Only 5% of the population will profoundly change their lives from what they experienced as children in ways such as social-economic status, level of education, even living within a 50-mile radius. The number one reason for this stagnation is lack of growth.

Why? As human beings we like homeostasis. For most people change is like a bolt of lightning and comes as an external force such as getting laid off from your job. Positive change happens in the same way like a chance meeting that leads to marriage or finding out you are pregnant. Because change happens as a blast we are not prepared and struggle to get grounded again. So life has taught us that change is scary, and that we have no power or control. The blast of change that "happens" to us forces us to feel emotions that we have buried, after all it is not feelings of happiness that we are avoiding.

Just like sharks need to move in order to breathe or to live, as human beings we need to grow in order to thrive. We have the free will to tread water. Treading water keeps us in that stuck place and prevents us from feeling pain. But treading water comes with an enormous price tag. It blocks our ability to grow, which can make our lives mean, small and narrow. One question I ask my clients is "Why do we have life, and what happens when we die?"

I believe their answer to this question helps determine how they move through difficult things in their lives. When they answer that they think there is something more after this life, and that somehow what we do here affects what will happen after we die, I can see that it helps them understand that we are here to learn something for some reason.

I was talking about this with one client in particular who had an extremely violent and abusive childhood. She stared at me with terror



in her eyes and spat out with venom, "So you think that there is a reason that my dad did all those horrible things to me".

And I looked back into her eyes with love and compassion and said, "Try to think about it this way— wouldn't it be worse if there was no reason? No reason for all the pain and suffering on this earth. No reason for all the awful things that people go through and do. Because to me that would be cruel and pointless and depressing. And God would have to have a sick sense of humor."

I challenged her to think about how those experiences have shaped her life, who she is because of what she has been through and what she has learned. And over time she was able to release the pain and forgive in a way that has left her whole and at peace.

Yes, life is full of crap. But if you allow and if you choose to struggle and feel your feelings when they come up, when you start walking on your journey again— you can let all that crap decompose and turn into a rich fertilizer that you can then use to grow strong and tall.

Everyone has crap. Every life has pain. That is not something we can avoid, it just happens to us. But everyone also has the free will to get stuck in the never ending but tolerable dull ache or to dig in and feel that pain briefly and intensely, which will lead to opening your heart up again to love and joy and happiness. To be whole requires us to embrace our light and our shadow side. I'm sure you've heard *What doesn't kill us makes us whole*. It is only in the darkness that we can seek the light. Where fear and anger and resentment grips your life there you will find your victories. As endless beings we are destined to heal everything and become whole. It is our free will that determines how long it will take us to begin the healing process by facing the darkness. It is only by walking through the dark night of the soul that we can come to stand in the full light of day. I encourage you to stay in there and fight for your growth! ✨

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