“I Got Soul”: Soulfulness, Culture, and Contemplative Practice

Shelly P. Harrell, Ph.D.
Webinar Presentation for the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society
June 28, 2019
An Invitation to Soulfulness

• Experientially
• Conceptually
• Practically
INVITATION TO THE “RIVER”

• The river begins at Source, and returns to Source, unerringly. This happens every single time, without exception. We are no different. -Jeffrey R. Anderson

• I've known rivers: I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins. My soul has grown deep like the rivers. -Langston Hughes

• I feel myself a soul as immense as the world, truly a soul as deep as the deepest rivers. -Franz Fanon

• I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield, down by the riverside….I'm gonna lay down my heavy load, down by the riverside… I'm gonna study, study war no more.” –African American Spiritual

• I've got peace like a river in my soul, I've got a river in my soul. -African American Spiritual

• I will come to you river, wash my soul again. ~Ibeyi
WEBINAR GOALS

(1) To introduce soulfulness as an approach to contemplative practice
(2) To describe the primary influences on the development of the soulfulness approach
(3) To provide an overview of the SOUL-Centered Practice (SCP) framework
(4) To present the Eight Qualities of Soulfulness (the 8Cs)
(5) To integrate examples of SOUL-centered practices and applications
Soulfulness

• Soulfulness is offered as an orientation to meditation and other contemplative practices (like journaling, creative expression, & conscious movement) that centers contact with “soul”.

• It includes a variety of methods for reconnecting with one’s transcendent essence, the truth of one’s lived experience.

• Methods focus on opportunities for listening to the stirrings and callings of soul, the whisperings of soul wisdom, and being deeply touched, “moved”, and inspired through soul-level experiencing.

• Through processes that strengthen a sense of being “energized within”, soulfulness practices aim to enhance both inner attunement and deepen resonance with the soulfulness of others.

• Soulfulness practices honor a feeling-level knowingness that emerges from the power and truth of our interconnectedness.

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THE CULTURE OF "McMINDFULNESS"

- Cultural positioning of secular mindfulness: white, thin, “blissed-out”, healthy, “beautiful” people
- "McMindfulness" and the promotion of individualism, convenience, expedience, personal success and happiness
- Dominance of white males positioned as the experts on mindfulness and meditation
- Mechanistic and scripted mindfulness exercises incorporated into various third-wave behavioral psychotherapies
- Mindfulness in schools to tame the "unruly" children
- Mindfulness does not always "take" with communities where its association with Buddhism is experienced as conflicting with Christian religious beliefs
- **We need diverse voices, experiences, and "vibes" to enhance the inclusiveness, cultural-responsiveness, and relevance of mindfulness and contemplative practices**

("McMindfulness is a term used by Purser & Loy (2013) in their critical perspective on mindfulness")
WHAT’S missing FROM “McMINDFULNESS”? SOUL!

• Popularizing and secularizing contemplative practices risks the “soul” of the practice being taken out
  • In psychology this occurs through the colonizing practices of some psychotherapies and interventions
  • These interventions can become mechanistic and separate the “mind” from the whole person

• “Heartfulness” and compassion are receiving more attention (Kabat-Zinn; Neff; Shapiro; Murphy-Shigematsu; Brach; and more) and being integrated more substantially

• Not much focused attention on “soul” in the current mindfulness literature or within the standard practices taught!

• But authentic mindfulness practices recognize that the mind is inseparable from the heart and soul!
Why “SOULFULNESS”? 

• Mindfulness is often delivered with an emphasis on detachment, equanimity, “control”, pursuit of individual happiness and success, bliss
  • Doesn’t resonate with cultures that value expression and have a collective orientation

• Much of the popular writing on meditation includes body, heart, and mind but leave out the soul

• Soul refers to the deepest part of yourself, your truth, your wisdom, where you are “moved” to express yourself; important to listen to the stirrings of your soul and explore what it means for how you should live your life

• Soul is relational; you “feel” soulfulness and it is communicated strongly through music (e.g., African American “soul music”)
Culture is part of the soul.
~Duran, Firehammer & Gonzalez

- Culturally, soul resonates powerfully with many People of the Global Majority (PGM; i.e., non-white, non-European descended)
  - The concept of "soul" is embedded in the worldview of African, Native American and many indigenous peoples around the world (Duran, 2006).
  - It has strong roots in African American experiences and diasporic African cultural expressions where it is associated with an expressive aliveness and connectedness born of lived experience (e.g., soul music, soul food, soul brother/sister, soul power) (hooks, 2003; Rudinow, 2010)
- It is a doorway into contemplative practice that may be more accessible and experienced as more natural and culturally congruent than beginning with the mind
EMPHASES OF MINDFULNESS, HEARTFULNESS & SOULFULNESS

*Authentic mindfulness practice encompasses heart and soul and these three terms could be argued to be interchangeable with respect to foundational elements; it may be that the emphases resonate more or less in different cultural contexts*
A Perspective on Contemplative Practice

• Diverse strategies for deepening and expanding experiential awareness and critical consciousness by bearing witness to lived experience-- internally, relationally, and collectively.

• Practices involve experiencing, deepening, and enhancing mental, somatic, emotional, relational, and spiritual energies.

• Practices are in the service of optimizing the conditions for healing, transformation, liberation, and the highest expression of our personal-relational-collective potentialities.

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Contemplative Practices occur within larger sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts.

They reflect and serve values-centered and transformative purposes with the intention of having manifestation in how we live individually, relationally, and collectively.

Three critical considerations in the design and implementation of contemplative practices:

- CULTURE
- CONTEXT
- LIBERATION
Understanding CULTURE

A shared way of life among a group of people characterized by multiple organizing and integrated systems of knowledge, meaning, interaction, and activities expressed through patterns of:

- **Being** (understanding of “self”, identity, “rhythms” and “vibe”)
- **Believing** (interpreting “reality”, values, meanings, and worldview)
- **Bonding** (relational processes, interpersonal interactions)
- **Belonging** (community and group processes)
- **Behaving** (actions, customs, daily living)
- **Becoming** (transformation and change, healing)

and reflected at multiple levels of analysis including the ideological and institutional structures of the larger micro- and macro- systemic contexts.

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Culture is...

• **embedded** in social and institutional contexts,
• **internalized** as patterns of meaning and identity,
• **expressed** through actions and relationships in the context of power dynamics, and
• **interactive** with co-existing and intersecting cultural systems through multiple dimensions of human diversity that reflect shared identity and experience
Culture, Power, & Privilege

• Some ways of being, believing, bonding, belonging, behaving, and becoming are more valued than others

• The “culture” of dominant groups is often seen as “normal” way to do things

• Privilege is expressed as what we don’t have to pay attention to, things that don’t occur to us.

• We need to be aware of the internalization of unquestioned dominant cultural narratives of what is acceptable, desirable, healthy, normal, “the way things are done”
  • This applies to contemplative practices too!
  • Example: The way mindfulness is taught reflects cultural sensibilities of the United States and countries that share similar cultural characteristics (e.g., Great Britain, Australia, etc.) and resonates most strongly in those places)
CULTURE AND CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE: A RECENTERING
SUPERBAD
By James Brown
I got somethin’ that makes me wanna shout.
I am connected to an inner aliveness that is compelled into expression.

I got somethin’ that tells me what it’s all about.
I am connected to an inner wisdom where I can find personal and collective truths.

I got soul.
I am connected to the deepest essence of my being, an energy that stirs and moves me.

and I’m superbad.
I feel my innate dignity and worth, that I am an amazing person of value with gifts to share in the world.
MY SOUL ROOTS

“Soul Music”: Pathway to Soul-level Experiencing
• Expresses, Touches, & Heals the Soul
• Expression and Transmission of Culture
• Connects us to Human Experience across Time and Place
• Resonance, Affirmation, and Identification (shared experience, not alone)
• Facilitates Experiencing- Emotion, Body (Movement), Immersion(Flow)
• Communicates Collective Wisdom: Messages and Meanings of Lived Experience
• Processing and Working Through (listening to a song over and over)
• Healing and Transformation
Influences on the Development of Soulfulness

- Literature on the concept of Soul (Psychological, Spiritual, Cultural)
- Contemplative Studies
- African American “Soul”
- Diasporic African cultural expressions
- Liberation Pedagogy and Liberation Psychology
- Cultural Psychologies and Community Psychology
- Diverse spiritual and wisdom traditions
AFRICAN-CENTERED PSYCHOLOGY

• African cultural roots and diasporic expressions are studied in African-centered Psychology

• The centrality of spirituality, an ethos of interconnectedness, cultural and collective consciousness, and a communal orientation (Myers, 1987; 2013; Nobles, 2006) provide guidance for important areas of emphasis within contemplative practices.

• Ubuntu – “I am because we are and because we are I am”; Recognition of our interdependence and interconnected humanity; we exist and thrive in connection and community

• Sawubona – “I see you” (the truth and essence of who you are and your lived experience across generations, beneath and beyond the visible)
African-Centered Cultural Concepts Informing Soulfulness

- Spirituality / Spiritness
- Interconnectedness / Interdependence
- Communalism / Relationality
- Harmony and Balance
- Inner Knowing/Wisdom/Intuition
- Emotional Experiencing / Feeling
- Expressiveness, Creativity, Improvisation

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“Now, make the body still. Meditate that you may know truth.” – Ancient Khemetic Saying

African wisdom traditions, embedded in African belief systems (such as Ancient Khemetic, Yoruba, and Akan) provide us with insights into “ways of being” that are wellness-promoting and affirming of our humanity, and that we can apply in contexts of oppression.
Adinkra are visual symbols created by the Akan to represent concepts and aphorisms.

Adinkra symbols embody various aspects of an African cosmology, such as the centrality of the spirit and interconnectedness.

Each symbol has a distinct meaning to convey particular wisdom and values, many have associated proverbs or sayings.

Symbols help to anchor us in what we need to remember and activate.

Visual symbols carry meaning and resonate deeply, touch the soul, energy can be felt from symbols.
Adinkra Symbols and Wisdom

**Sankofa**
“go back and fetch it”; ancestral connection, reconnection, learn from the past to build the future.

**Mmere Dane**
“time changes”; change is inevitable; dynamics of life, good and bad happen

**Ananse Ntontan**
“spiders web”; wisdom, creativity, ingenuity

**Nyansapo**
“wisdom knot”; depth of wisdom, wise decision-making; application of knowledge

**Nkonsonkonson**
“chain link”; unity, connectedness, communal responsibility, interconnection and interdependence

**Owia Kokroko**
“greatness of the sun”; healing, radiance, enlightenment

**Sesa Woruban**
“change my life”; new beginning, renewal, transformation

**Nokore**
“Truth cannot hide”; truth
The Struggle to “BE” in the Context of Oppression

- Historical, transgenerational, and ongoing oppression-related trauma, cultural violence, messages of inferiority, and ongoing dehumanization are threats to health and well-being.

- Contemplative practices can facilitate accessing the cultural wisdom within to reclaim our humanity, restore our knowledge and dignity, affirm our existence, and manifest our highest potentialities.

- We have to first learn to “BE” with OURSELVES. Meditation and contemplative practice opens space to BE.
Reflections on “Mind” of Oppression

• The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. –Steven Biko

• As long as the mind is enslaved, the body will never be free. –Martin Luther King, Jr.

• Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds. –Bob Marley

• Power is the ability to define someone else’s reality and get them to accept it as if it were their own. –variously attributed to Na’im Akbar or M. Karenga
INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION/SUBORDINATION

• Devaluing one’s own social identity group; Pathologizing, believing negative stereotypes and having prejudices against one’s own groups

• Colluding with prejudice, discrimination, and bias against one’s own group; engaging in behaviors and making decisions that are against the interests of one’s group’s liberation, or that maintain an oppressive status quo

• Idealizing the dominant group and believing they are better, smarter, more attractive, competent, etc.; using dominant group behavior and characteristics as the standard or norm

• Seeking the approval, validation, and acceptance from dominant group

• Self-destructive behaviors

• Native American psychologists talk about the deep damage of historical trauma like genocide, enslavement, and colonization as “soul wounds”
Soul Murder and Soul Wounds

• bell hooks (2003)
  • contends that surrendering “the ability to feel” as a way of managing assaults on one’s humanity ultimately threatens one’s capacity to care for the soul;
  • she describes this repression of feeling as “soul murder”.
  • hooks contends that it is a strong connection to an inner soulfulness that allows for strength in the midst of racism.

• Duran (2006)
  • discusses the cultural “soul wound”,
  • conceptualized as the intergenerational impact of devastating historical trauma that causes destruction at a deep soul level requiring a spiritualized soul healing.
  • This soul wounding also takes similar forms in other cultural contexts such as the Maafa (i.e., African Holocaust) (Nobles, 2006) and what DeGruy (2017) describes as post-traumatic slave syndrome, as well as in Comas-Diaz’s (2008) discussion of post colonization stress syndrome among Latinx peoples.
What is “Soul”?  

• What is soul? It’s like electricity—we don’t really know what it is, but it’s a force that can light a room. -Ray Charles

• Soul is something creative, something active. Soul is honesty. -Aretha Franklin

• Well, I think soul is certainly a feeling that is transmitted in one way or another...It’s something that’s very empathetic—and it’s deep. Soul is deep. -Aretha Franklin

• Soul is the ability to feel oneness. -Johnetta Coles
WHAT IS SOUL?

From general literature on psychological and spiritual aspects:
(1) A sense of depth or deepness,
(2) A sense of aliveness, an experiential or feeling modality,
(3) Qualities of authenticity, self-knowledge, and collective wisdom
(4) An inner resource for healing necessary for “wholeness” (in conjunction with attention to mind, heart, and body).
(5) Spirituality (where the human and transcendent merge)

From African-Centered and Liberation Psychology perspectives
(6) Connectedness and Resonance
(7) Creativity, Expressiveness, Spontaneity
(8) Source of Power, Perseverance and Resilience
(9) Truth of one’s Lived Experience
(10) Freedom and Refuge from Oppression

Sunsum
Vital life force, spiritual energy in all things, divine part of the embodied soul

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A WORKING DEFINITION OF SOULFULNESS

Emerging from the convergence of spiritual, psychological, and cultural perspectives on “soul”, soulfulness is conceptualized as

- the quality of experiencing life in a deeply connected and connecting way,
- an enlivened inner attunement that illuminates authentic lived experience and radiates into outer expression.
- an interconnected “soulful aliveness” that is often experienced as a resonating, liberating, life-enhancing, spiritually-infused energy of deep connectivity and inspired expression.

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THE SOUL OF WHO YOU ARE: Contact with your personhood from the sensory to the socially-embedded to the spiritual.

THE SOUL OF EXPERIENCE: Feeling, naming, claiming, freeing, and expressing the truth of your lived experience.

THE SOUL OF ENLIGHTENED ENGAGEMENT: Relational resonance and conscious connection to others and the world.

SOULFULNESS

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The SOUL-Centered Approach to Contemplative Practice

**Soulfulness-Oriented**
- Aliveness, Deepness, Authenticity, Healing Path
- Expressiveness, Spirituality, Creativity, Resilience

**Unitive**
- Connection, Relationality, Attunement, Belonging
- Inter/Connectedness, Interdependence
- Wholeness, Inclusion

**Liberatory**
- Transforming Oppression Towards Liberation
  - Intrapersonal (internalized oppression)
  - Interpersonal (relational oppression)
  - Societal (cultural and institutional oppression)
  - Spiritual (“soul wound”, “soul detachment”, “soul murder”)

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Liberation Pedagogy and Liberation Psychology

• Liberation Psychology is the study of the social transformation of individuals and society such that oppressive systems are eradicated and humanity is moved towards justice, unity and connectedness

• The central task of liberation is humanization; we humanize the world by transforming it towards liberation

• Martin-Baro- *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*

• Paolo Freire – *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
Critical Consciousness and Liberatory Praxis

- **Critical Consciousness** is sociopolitical, sociocultural and sociohistorical awareness. It about developing, strengthening, changing, liberating, and mobilizing consciousness of the dynamics, manifestations, and effects of oppression.
- Critical consciousness is a process of critical awareness that oppression is dehumanization
- Liberation and humanization involves claiming ownership of one’s consciousness in ways that are affirming of one’s humanity
- Praxis involves cycles of reflection and action toward transformation
  - These two processes go hand in hand, they are unified and inseparable
- Liberatory praxis must involve BOTH—making space for contemplative processes and transformative processes
Everyone knows that peace has to begin with oneself, but not many people know how to do it. ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

If you cannot find peace within yourself, you will never find it anywhere else. ~Marvin Gaye
SOULFULNESS & PRAXIS

➢ Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” ~James Baldwin

➢ Meditation is to see deeply into things, to see how we can change, how we can transform our situation. –Thich Nhat Hanh

➢ Meditation is not to escape from society, but to come back to ourselves and see what is going on. Once there is seeing, there must be acting. –Thich Nhat Hanh
“Breaking out of your mental and emotional prison and deepening the range of perception enables you to link inner reflection and vision— the mental, emotional, instinctive, imaginal, spiritual, and subtle bodily awareness— with social, political action and lived experiences”.

~Gloria E. Anzaldúa
CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE THROUGH THE LENS OF SOULFULNESS
# SOUL-Centered Contemplative Practice Framework

Developed by Shelly P. Harrell, Ph.D.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE SOULFULNESS PRINCIPLES*</th>
<th>CORE MINDFULNESS-BASED PRINCIPLES*</th>
<th>MODALITIES OF SOULFULNESS PRACTICE</th>
<th>DOMAINS OF SOULFULNESS PRACTICE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centeredness</strong>: &quot;Remember Who You Are&quot; (sense of identity beyond current conditions and circumstances; cultural, ancestral, spiritual rootedness)</td>
<td><strong>Contact</strong>: &quot;Right Here, Right Now&quot; (present moment awareness, being &quot;fully present in the present&quot;)</td>
<td><strong>Meditation</strong>: opening temporal-mental-emotional space for directing and/or regulating attention and energy in the service of awakening, illuminating, enfolding, liberating, and manifesting &quot;soul&quot;</td>
<td><strong>Soulitude Practices</strong>: Intentional turning inward and making contact with &quot;soul&quot; through meditation, visualization, breathing, sensory grounding, use of mantras, etc. (Example: SoulWord Guided Meditations)</td>
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<td><strong>Congruence</strong>: &quot;Keepin’ It Real&quot; (authenticity; truth-telling to self and others; &quot;walking the talk&quot; - living in alignment with beliefs and values)</td>
<td><strong>Connectedness</strong>: &quot;Bearing Witness&quot; (connection to lived experience-sensory, emotional, interpersonal, environmental, spiritual)</td>
<td><strong>Movement</strong>: experiencing and expressing body-soul integration</td>
<td><strong>Wisdom-Centered Practices</strong>: Integration of quotes, proverbs, sayings, poetry, lyrics, passages from sacred texts, etc. (Example: SoulWisdom Dialogic Practice)</td>
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<td><strong>(Critical) Consciousness</strong>: &quot;Free Your Mind&quot; (emancipation from &quot;mental slavery&quot;; awareness of oppressive processes; disentangling and unshackling)</td>
<td><strong>Commencement</strong>: &quot;Born Again&quot; (or &quot;All Things New&quot;) (beginner’s mind, experiencing everything as if for the first time)</td>
<td><strong>Music</strong>: to touch the soul, or for anchoring, grounding, and/or relaxation</td>
<td><strong>Expressive-Creative Practices</strong>: Journaling, creative writing, art-making, playing and/or listening to music, movement and dance (Example: SoulSongs Practice)</td>
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<td><strong>Courage</strong>: &quot;And Still I Rise&quot; (resilience and empowered action, thriving in adversity; &quot;making a way out of no way&quot;)</td>
<td><strong>Clarity</strong>: &quot;It is what it is&quot; (acknowledgment and acceptance of all that is going on; being &quot;woke to what is&quot;)</td>
<td><strong>Meaning</strong>: reflective exploration and discovery of deepest meanings, values, beliefs, purpose, illumination of inner wisdom of the soul</td>
<td><strong>Relational Practices</strong>: Conversation and dialogue, deep listening; experience of interconnectedness and shared humanity; nurturing community (Example: Soul-to-Soul Dialogue)</td>
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<td><strong>Calling</strong>: &quot;Soul Power&quot; (inspired aliveness, being energized within, passion and purpose)</td>
<td><strong>Calm</strong>: &quot;It’s All Good&quot; (or &quot;Peace, Be Still&quot;) (inner sense of harmony and serenity, place where all is well)</td>
<td><strong>Meeting</strong>: connecting meaningfully and deeply with persons, nature, transcendent phenomena, etc.; relational attunement/resonance through deep soul-to-soul listening and dialogue</td>
<td><strong>Experiential Practices</strong>: Experiences that &quot;touch the soul&quot; and where one feels &quot;moved&quot;; the beauty, awe and miracles of nature; enhancing sensory experience; visiting &quot;soulful&quot; places; witnessing the human capacity for excellence and inspired expression (Example: SoulTrek - Contemplative outings in nature or to artistic performances or exhibits)</td>
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<td><strong>Communion</strong>: &quot;I Feel You&quot; (deep relationality and resonance; willingness to be seen/known and to see/notice others beyond appearances)</td>
<td><strong>Compassion</strong>: &quot;The Struggle is Real&quot; (honoring the vulnerability and struggles of the human condition; agape love; heartfelt goodwill for self and others)</td>
<td><strong>Making</strong>: soul-inspired expression and discovery, creating, constructing, innovating through art, ideas, etc.</td>
<td><strong>Daily Practices</strong>: Infusing passion and meaning into daily activities, looking for opportunities to bring routine activities &quot;alive&quot;; connection of everyday experience and events to larger purpose and meaning; infusing of daily experience with sense of gratitude and blessings. (Example: Creation and Accessing My Soulfulness Log)</td>
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<td><strong>Creativity</strong>: &quot;Focus and Flow&quot; (inspired and emergent expression; improvisation, innovation)</td>
<td><strong>Change</strong>: &quot;Roll with It!&quot; (being with the ebb and flow of experience, understanding the everything evolves and transforms, honoring the cycles of life)</td>
<td><strong>Connecting</strong>:</td>
<td><strong>Spirit-Infused Practices</strong>: Integration of any of the above with explicit transcendent elements (e.g., ancestral, Ubuntu, religious prayer) (Example: &quot;Living Wisdom&quot; Naming Ceremony (identification with the spirit of ancestors carried within))</td>
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<td><strong>Co-Existence</strong>: &quot;Everything is Everything&quot; (recognition of the interconnectedness of phenomena; toward wholeness; simultaneous holding and embracing dualistic nature of &quot;oppositional&quot; energies—joy/pain, stability/change, light/darkness, surrender/power, stillness/movement, etc.)</td>
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*The Core Soulfulness and Mindfulness-based Principles combine for the 15 Core Principles of the SOUL (Soulfulness Oriented, Unitive, Liberatory) Approach to Contemplative Practice (The 15 Cs)

October 2018 Revision
General SOUL-Centered Contemplative Practice Principles

- CONTACT ("Right Here, Right Now")
- CLARITY ("It Is What It Is")
- COMMENCEMENT ("Born Again")
- CALM ("It’s All Good")

- CONNECTION ("Bearing Witness")
- COMPASSION ("The Struggle Is Real")
- CONTEMPLATION ("Wade in the Water")
- CONVERSION ("Work It")
- CHANGE ("Roll With It")
### CULTURAL GROUNDING: THE 8 C’s OF SOULFULNESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soulfulness Quality</th>
<th>Culturally Grounded Foundation</th>
<th>SOUL Practice Objective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communion</td>
<td>Interconnectedness and relationality; ethos of ubuntu</td>
<td>Facilitate connection, belongingness, relational resonance, and agape love</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centering</td>
<td>Rootedness and identity; cultural and ancestral grounding</td>
<td>Facilitate groundedness, secure foundation, contact with inner wisdom/truths, reconnection to deepest beliefs and values</td>
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<td>Congruence</td>
<td>Authenticity; alignment, harmony and balance (with self, others, nature, spirit)</td>
<td>Facilitate authentic experiencing and interaction, speaking and living one’s truth; consistency between values and behavior (“walk the talk”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calling</td>
<td>Spiritually-infused inspiration and purpose</td>
<td>Facilitate inspired purposefulness and meaning; transcendent experience; passion and aliveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consciousness (Critical)</td>
<td>Liberation from oppression</td>
<td>Facilitate emancipatory processes at multiple levels of analysis (experiential, interpersonal, societal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Perseverance and resistance; rising from adversity</td>
<td>Facilitate empowerment and resilience; stepping out of comfort zone and living fully</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Expressiveness and improvisation</td>
<td>Facilitate creative processes and expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coexistence</td>
<td>Holistic orientation; diurnal logic; multidimensionality of phenomena</td>
<td>Facilitate wholeness, inclusion, integrative processes, “both-and” consciousness; intersectionality; dialectical awareness of co-existing opposing energies</td>
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“I Feel You” / “I See You” (aka Communion)

• An intuitive, sensing/feeling level of understanding and communication;

• Willingness to feel/see/know others, and be felt/seen/known by others;

• Deep relational attunement and resonance, experiencing profound connection with persons beyond external presentation

• Connectedness with the collective and transcendent dimensions of persons

• Communal belongingness and sense of being part of a larger whole.
“Remember Who You Are”...and where you come from (aka Centering)

• Dropping down into your embodied and soul-level experiencing
• Connecting to your truths and collective wisdom-centered Truths
• Reconnecting to your lived experience, culture, places, relationships
• Reconnecting to values, to what is most important and meaningful
• Reconnecting to your strengths and gifts, sense of purpose
• Awareness that you are more than what has happened to you, more than your circumstances, that you have familial-cultural-ancestral-spiritual roots extending through time and place.
“Keepin’ It Real” (aka Congruence)

• Authenticity in your words and actions;
• Harmony of body-mind-heart-soul;
• “Walking your talk”; alignment with deepest values, beliefs; living your purpose,
• Responding from one’s highest truth rather than reacting from impulse.
“Soul Power” (aka Calling)

• Feeling the soulful aliveness of being “energized within”
• Opening up to dynamic energy moving within/around you as a source of revolutionary/evolutionary direction
• Deep connection to what fuels your passion and purpose
• Catalyst for empowered and transformative activity.
“Free Your Mind” or “Don’t Believe the Hype” (aka Consciousness)

• Raising, expanding, and liberating consciousness;
• Increased awareness of mental/emotional/spiritual bondage and blind conformity;
• Releasing the shackles of internalized oppression-- externally imposed definitions and limitations of who you are and your potential;
• Letting go of what you are chained or clinging to that degrades or dehumanizes self or others.
“And Still I Rise” (aka Courage)

• Accessing your inner strength and resilience in the face of adversity;
• Drawing from the “oasis within”;  
• Facing and telling difficult truths to self and others;  
• “Making a way out of no way”;  
• Living from integrity and conviction;  
• Tolerating distress while persisting toward the manifestation of one’s gifts and the realization of one’s highest potential.
“Focus and Flow” (aka Creativity)

• Inspired, naturally flowing, soulful expression that emerges from experiential awareness and soul callings;
• Ideas, innovation, imagination, improvisation;
• Allowing creative processes to flow through you;
• Experiential immersion, being “in the zone”
“Everything Is Everything” (aka Co-Existence)

• Toward wholeness, away from fragmentation,
• Diunital “both/and” thinking (challenging rigid dichotomies and categories)
• Embracing the fullness of human experience;
• Recognition of the complexity, intersectionality, multidimensionality, and simultaneity of phenomena;
• Sense of the interconnection and interrelatedness of all things;
• Tolerating and holding contradictions and paradoxes.
Modalities of SOUL-Centered Practice

- **Meditation** (opening temporal-mental-emotional space for directing and/or regulating attention and energy in the service of awakening, illuminating, enlivening, liberating, and manifesting “soul”)
- **Music** (to touch the soul, or for anchoring, grounding, and/or relaxation)
- **Movement** (experiencing and expressing body-soul integration)
- **Meeting** (connecting meaningfully and deeply with persons, nature, transcendent phenomena, etc.; relational attunement/resonance through deep soul-to-soul listening and dialogue)
- **Meaning** (reflective exploration of deepest meanings, values, beliefs, purpose; illumination of inner wisdom of the soul)
- **Making** (soul-inspired expression and discovery; creating, constructing, innovating through art, ideas, etc.)
MEDITATION

A Mindfulness Meditation Reframe: “BEING PRESENT IN THE PRESENT AND WOKE TO WHAT IS” ~Shelly P. Harrell

Remove the veils so I might see what is really happening here and not be intoxicated by my stories and my fears. ~Elizabeth Lesser
SOULFULNESS MEDITATION = MINDFULNESS + SOUL

• Meditation refers to a diverse set of intentional strategies for the practice of training, directing, and/or regulating attention and energy. It is creating a time for “quietude”, by taking that sacred pause and opening up some temporal-mental-emotional-spiritual space to visit with yourself and connect with your embodied, lived, and/or transcendent experience.

• Mindfulness as foundation: Being present and aware
  • Process of grounding, clearing, and opening to facilitate soul-level experiencing
  • Paying loving attention to the ebb and flow of what is happening here-and-now, to whatever arises moment-to-moment in your embodied experience, in your inner world of emotions and thoughts, as well as in your immediate surroundings.
  • Mindfulness involves tuning in to both inner and outer experiencing-- from the most nuanced sensory experience, to relational experience, to what is happening in the world, to profound truths and inner wisdom, to what lies beneath words and beyond appearances. It is a courageous “coming home” to ourselves and our lived experience over and over and over again so that we can live in the world as more conscious, connected, and compassionate beings

• Emphasizes Qualities of Soul and activation of soulfulness to enhance experiential awareness and “feel what’s real”
Soulfulness Meditation as “Meditation for Liberation”

Our personal liberation is tied up with our collective liberation; we cannot be fully liberated alone. –Jan Willis

We have to talk about liberating minds as well as liberating society. - Angela Davis

“Without inner change, there can be no outer change. Without collective change, no change matters.” –Angel Kyodo Williams

➢ Distraction, mindlessness, survival masks, and internalized oppression separate us from ourselves and our truth and make us vulnerable to be defined and controlled by ego and others’ definitions of us and their desires.
MEDITATION FOR LIBERATION

• Expressions of soulfulness are a testimony of the truth of one’s lived experience, including efforts to name, resist, dismantle, overcome, and transcend internalized, interpersonal, and systemic oppression.

• Through contacting, illuminating, and listening to soul-level experiencing, soulfulness meditation opens a path to the freedom of truth, authenticity, experiential wisdom, meaningful relationality, and purposeful action through the cultivation of deep multidimensional connectedness to body-mind-heart-soul, other living beings, ancestors, community, humanity, nature, and Spirit. (Mindfulness + SOUL!)

• “Meditation for Liberation” is fundamentally about intrapersonal, interpersonal, and collective emancipation. As a liberated and liberating process, soulfulness meditation involves:
  • healing soul wounds and restoring soul connection;
  • discerning genuine truths from the lies of internalized oppression, illusions of the ego, and the noise/stories of the mind;
  • cultivating resilience;
  • nurturing our capacity to feel deeply, connect meaningfully and live authentically; and,
  • ultimately, rising to our highest potentialities individually, relationally, and communally.
MEDITATION AND “WOKENESS”

• Helps us become more “woke” by opening our eyes and expanding awareness; illuminating aspects of our experience we are cut off from

• Helps us tolerate the distress of seeing things that are difficult to see so that we can take action rather than numb ourselves or escape

• Being “woke” activates the strength within to resist, persevere, overcome and transform oppression at ALL levels
  • Internally (self-hatred, sense of inferiority)
  • Relationally (abuse, exploitation)
  • Societally (racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, etc.)
• Importance of meditation for historically and currently oppressed people
  • See the lies and distortions of oppression more clearly so that you don’t perpetuate them
  • Listening deeply to your truth so you can stand strong in it
  • Finding your voice so you can tell your story
  • Enhanced awareness is necessary for increased participation in social justice activities
  • Meditation helps create the space, silence, and stillness to see and hear so that one can act

When lions become historians, hunters will cease to be heroes.
~African Proverb

Take a day to heal from the lies you've told yourself and the ones that have been told to you. ~Maya Angelou

“People who shut their eyes to reality simply invite their own destruction” - James Baldwin

Check yo self before you wreck yo self. ~Ice Cube (O’Shea Jackson)
THE THREE CORE SOULFULNESS MEDITATION PROCESSES: STOP, DROP, AND ROLL

• **STOP:** The sacred pause. Creating temporal-mental-emotional-spiritual space; taking a break from the noise of the world and the stories of the mind to get grounded and centered.

• **DROP:** Dropping down into soul-level experiencing, the soulful, interconnected and transcendent core of your being; deepening attunement to self, other beings, nature, Spirit; metabolizing of somatic-emotional-mental-spiritual energy and lived experience.

• **ROLL:** Experiencing the freedom and flow of a liberated mind, open heart, and empowered soul that manifests in how you live in the world.

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PRACTICE: SOULword MEDITATION

“SOUL” Calling

Sense the call of the stirrings of your soul and create some temporal-emotional-mental-spiritual space to contact what is moving within you.

Open yourself to experiencing your inner aliveness as you awaken and bear witness to the truths of your lived experience.

Unveil deeper understandings as you discern and illuminate the meanings and messages for your life, welcoming them with courage and gratitude.

Liberate your soul’s truth and wisdom, freeing its emanating energy into expression as you actualize its highest manifestation infused with love and in co-existence with all of creation.
The SAWUBONA Visit: A Guided Meditation

- Centered in the African greeting of Sawubona (“I See You”)
  - Sawubona Seeing requires being fully present in heart, mind, and soul so that we can see “behind, beneath, and beyond” appearances.
  - Sawubona is an affirmation and deepening of our connectedness with each other, with community, with our ancestors, and ultimately with the spiritual life force that is within all things.
  - Strengthening Sawubona Seeing is about resisting participation in the dehumanizing dynamics of oppression and engaging intentionally in our own liberation.
  - Being seen and heard is critical for oppressed populations
  - Important to experience self and community as more than dehumanizing stereotypes, conditions and treatment
- Inspired by Metta (Lovingkindness) practice
  - Bring energy of “Sawubona Seeing” to self and others

Akwaaba
Welcoming, Hospitality, Greeting, Reception

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SOUL-CENTERED PRACTICE: SOULsongs

*I’ll Rise* by Ben Harper
(based on *Still I Rise* by Maya Angelou)

“There is no such force as the force of a man determined to rise. The human soul cannot be permanently chained.

~W.E.B. DuBois

“But still like air I rise...”
The **SOULsongs** Process

- Intentional Song Selection
- Centering Breaths
- “Whole Soul” Listening
- Process Experiences (somatic, emotional, mental associations, memories, connection to lived experience)
- Journaling/Discussion
  - What are you rising from?
  - What are you rising above? Overcoming?
  - What does it mean to rise?
  - What are you rising into?
  - What will rising look like for you?
  - What/Who will support your rising?
- Closing integrative guided meditation
• Nothing can dim the light that shines within. ~Maya Angelou

• The soul’s guiding light still shines no matter the extent of our collective blindness. At any moment, at any time, we can turn toward this light to renew our spirits and restore our souls. ~bell hooks

• You cannot keep the human mind forever locked up in darkness. A ray of light, a spark from freedom’s altar, the idea of inherent right, each, all, will become fixed in the soul. ~From Slave Narrative of William Wells Brown
CLOSING REFLECTIONS...
• The only possibility of stability for the person, is to establish an Island of Peace within one’s own soul. ~Howard Thurman

• The soul that is within me no man can degrade. ~Frederick Douglass

• We can cancel the captivity of our soul and destroy the enslavement of our minds by refusing to compromise any of our human rights. ~Adam Clayton Powell

• One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up and show your soul. Struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit and willing to show it. ~Clarissa Pinkola Estes

• Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives. ~Martin Luther King, Jr.
BACK TO THE “RIVER”

• When you do things from your soul you feel a river moving in you, a joy. –Rumi

• May what I do flow from me like a river, no forcing and no holding back. -Rainer Maria Rilke

• Don’t go with the flow, be the flow. Jay-Z (Sean Carter)
THANK YOU!

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