



## THE TWELVE PRINCIPLES

### Heart Essence of The Way of Nature

For the conception of The Twelve Principles presented here, John P. Milton devoted many years of study, deep training and spiritual cultivation in some of the world's most profoundly enlightening, earthconnected traditions. Since starting in the 1950's - Buddhism, Taoism, Dzogchen, Tantra, Vedanta, and several Shamanic paths have all been an important focus for his training. These principles are also a culmination of his many years (starting in 1945) of solo immersion and spiritual practice in the wilderness. Out of all this background, John has essentialized these Twelve Principles. For him, they represent the core sacred principles that the teachings of the world's liberating, earthhonoring lineages have in common.

To build a strong foundation for the cultivation and realization of each Principle, John went on to integrate hundreds of practices. This body of over 800 practices supports deep cultivation, incorporation and realization of all The Twelve Principles. John presents these Principles here in the sequence of inner growth true for most people. For example, hearing the First Principle, the interconnected and continually changing nature of all form arising and dissolving from Primal Source, lays the proper foundation for engaging the Second Principle, our personal commitment to liberation. The Second is vital for us to enter onto the path, but the Third Principle, relaxation, is where most of us must actually begin to cultivate our inner exploration; if we are filled with bodily, emotional and mental contractions there is little room for real spiritual insight and meditation practice. The Fourth Principle, Presence, is the necessary companion for Relaxation. Without the union of Relaxation and Presence, the essential qualities of alert, yet relaxed meditation cannot be realized. All the Principles build on each other in this way.

Nevertheless, this sequential unfoldment is not a hard and fast rule. The Twelve Principles ultimately are realized as a multi-faceted Matrix, where we can enter from many doorways, depending upon our unique situation. Taken together, these Twelve Principles and their associated practices form an all-denominational body of unique teachings that form the Heart Essence of The Way of Nature path that John offers. Each Principle represents a key seed to the path of spiritual awakening common to each of these great traditions - yet in The Way of Nature the true commitment is to direct spiritual illumination, rather than emphasis on the outer forms of a specific lineage or religion. It is John's hope that the illumination of these twelve collective principles will help those of you practicing a particular religion. You will experience the fundamental nature of your path more clearly and develop great respect for all the other paths that share these same universal principles. For those of you searching for a direct path to the Sacred, these teachings are offered in the hope they will be helpful on your journey into the Boundless.



### 1. THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH: ALL FORMS ARE INTERCONNECTED, CONSTANTLY CHANGE AND CONTINUOUSLY ARISE FROM AND RETURN TO PRIMORDIAL SOURCE.

All material forms and all energetic, perceptual, sensate, emotional and thought forms are totally interconnected and interdependent. Also, all these forms, including the sense of individual self, are constantly changing and transforming. Fundamentally, all forms are in a continuous process of arising from, manifesting within and dissolving back into Primordial, essentially Formless, Source Awareness. At a deep level, all forms are transient and empty of permanent being. At the deepest level all forms, including ourselves, are a magical display of the Boundless, Formless Source that is our true Essence. We have the choice of either resisting this fundamental truth, and suffering; or surrendering into this truth - and dancing in the Flow.

### 2. COMMIT YOURSELF COMPLETELY TO LIBERATION IN THIS LIFETIME.

I personally recommend that you commit yourself, one hundred percent, to complete liberation, the enlightened realization of fundamental truth, in this lifetime. Further, I recommend you dedicate all the fruits of your path to the greatest possible service for all beings.

### 3. RELAX AND SURRENDER TO LIFE.

Deeply relax and profoundly surrender. To begin, first locate where you still hold contractions and tensions in your body, emotions and mind. Then learn to decontract and relax your body, your emotions, and your thoughts and mind. Let go of old ideas, judgments, emotions, structures, your own expectations, your need for approval or acceptance, and your idea of progress. Over time, replace your old habitual patterns of automatic contraction to life with new helpful habits of meeting life with openness and letting go. As you deepen yet further, come to completely trust your unfolding life. Trust yourself to unwind and empty completely and remain open to Now. Ultimately, your deepening trust brings you to the Ultimate level of this Principle: Surrender. In this most advanced stage, even the effort to let go and trust is released as you surrender completely to the flow of life's forms; you anchor your being in the stability of timeless Presence.

### 4. REMAIN IN NOW.

Become aware of your distractions. If need be, even meditate singlemindedly on the flow of your inner and outer distractions. Be patient. Over time, as you meditate regularly, the flow of distractions should begin to slow, allowing present-centered awareness to rise. Remain in that pure presence. Give more and more precise, clear attention to the Now and Here - Meditate on the exact instant of the present moment and the surroundings ® as you directly experience them. Release



distractions even more deeply; stay with present perception, emotion, or thought as it arises, rather than withdrawing to the past or leaping ahead to the future. Refine Nowness. As gaps naturally appear between thoughts, as open spaces arise between emotions - rest in the gap. Let the clarity of your pure awareness settle naturally in itself. Enjoy the bliss of Nowness.

#### 5. CULTIVATE UNION WITH UNIVERSAL ENERGY

As you relax - old bodily, emotional, energetic and mental blockages are released, freeing up bound life force (Qi). When you combine presentcentered awareness with relaxation, you can deepen the journey of inner unblocking. Gently bring your awareness into deeper and deeper levels of body, emotions and mind. Wherever inner obscurations are discovered, relax and release them. Feel your life force liberated as you refine relaxation and presence within. The union of relaxation and presence leads to natural cultivation of your life force. Find a peaceful, good energy natural place outdoors. Spend some quality time there each morning practicing Qi Gong or another energy cultivation discipline to purify, gather and refine your Qi. In the afternoon or evening take some additional time to do energy practices that help clear away the blockages and obscurations of the day. Then absorb the healing energy of Nature through intention, presence, and relaxation. For the rest of your waking hours, as you move through your daily challenges - learn to spontaneously purify blockages in your energy body with the skills of unified relaxation and presence. Learn to renew your life force in the midst of daily activity. Without union with universal energy there can be no true transformation. Cultivation methods we teach and utilize in The Way of Nature include Qigong, Taoist meditation, T'ai Chi, Yoga, Dzogchen energy cultivation work and specific shamanic energy practices to work directly with Nature and the elements.

#### 6. GO WITH THE UNIVERSAL FLOW.

Ultimately, over a lifetime of practice, you may realize true energy mastery: the ability to flow in complete union with universal energy, no matter what may be happening externally. At this stage, the flow of natural movement and stillness effortlessly express the Creative Source. At this point, the need for formal energy practices falls away.

#### 7. REST IN THE RADIANCE OF YOUR OPEN HEART.

Relaxation and presence unify within to help unblock and cultivate the radiant life force. You realize and experience this radiance as pure, unconditional love. There are no preconditions for this experience, which naturally arises as the direct innermost quality of relaxed, present, liberated energy. Through the natural deepening of this openhearted radiance, the separation between self and other gradually dissolves.



#### 8. ACTIVE COMPASSION ARISES NATURALLY OUT OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

The natural activity of open, unconditioned love is compassionate action. This expressive kindness spontaneously arises, moment by moment from your heart essence. Your compassionate activity can manifest through inner practices like Tonglen, or in through outer service in giving peace and happiness to all living beings. This expansion of the heart into active compassion arises naturally from the inner unfoldment of principles one through seven.

#### 9. CUT THROUGH TO CLARITY.

Cut through to the clarity, spaciousness, and luminosity of pure Source Awareness. In some cases, this cutting through occurs with the help of your human teacher; in other cases it may arise through the grace of the Great mystery. Such a cutting through event may be powerful, like a thunderbolt; or it may be very subtle, like the sound of a leaf falling to touch the Earth. Powerful or subtle, it stops the world in an instant, and cuts through all distractions, contractions, attachments and aversions - all obstacles - to the direct experience of Source. Inner obscurations, including attachment to the bliss of an open heart, are cut through in a moment, laying bare pristine awareness.... the naked essence of Source.

#### 10. RETURN TO SOURCE.

The ninth principle cracks through the ego's seed coat that has been blocking off Source. With that clear recognition, Source is realized as the underlying reality out of which all form, including you yourself, manifests. This primordial state is formless, yet gives birth to all form, holds all form and is the ultimate receptacle for the dissolution of all form. Applied to an individual, Source is the most fundamental, simplest, most complete, perfect state that underlies who we are. It is realized by following our perceptions back to primordial awareness - that level within ourselves which is our deepest nature. When that essence manifests, it is indestructible. It is infinite and beyond all conventional measurements and descriptions. It was never born and never dies. The closer one approaches Source, the more synchronous events become. When Source is accessed, extraordinary creativity occurs. Most great inventions and breakthroughs have come through deep communion with Source.

#### 11. PURE SOURCE AWARENESS IS... REMAIN IN RECOGNITION.

Remain in continuous, complete, flowing recognition of Source Awareness. When one has mastered principles one through ten, one's path naturally culminates in Remaining in Source Awareness. Full commitment to the previous ten principles (and the practices that cultivate them) inevitably results in remaining in perfect, continuous recognition of Source. This is the natural condition of perfect liberation; all forms, inner and outer, are simply experienced as the natural display of Source's pure creativity.



## 12. SERVE AS A WARRIOR OF THE OPEN HEART AND LIBERATED SPIRIT

This is a warrior-like Principle. But the warriorship comes in the challenge of opening your deepest levels of living the Twelve Principles. Not just for yourself, but allowing them to flower into serving other humans and all species. Here you come back to the full embrace of the world, whatever your degree of accomplishment in integrating the previous eleven Principles into your life and being. The key is to bring each of these Principles into creative interaction with the challenges of everyday life. As you actively cultivate each Principle, you dedicate your activity to the happiness and liberation of all those beings in your field of relationship. For example, in applying the third Principle, you not only relax contractedness in your own life, but you also seek to help others become more open, relaxed and trusting. When relating to the 8th principle, you become a Warrior of the Open Heart in the service of all life. Wherever possible, you bring loving, compassionate service to help all living beings. With the full application of the Twelfth Principle, ultimately all eleven previous Principles are naturally unified and expressed in the moment-by-moment radiation of compassionate, liberated activity creatively arising from Source. All of the Principles become naturally unified; you dedicate yourself to compassionate service in all aspects of normal life - in your business, your civil, your ecological, and your personal lives. The Eleventh Principle clearly describes recognition of Source. Source, the formless Clear Light of Pure Awareness, is itself the ultimate origin of all creativity. Out of your deepening communion with Source, continuously arise fresh, innovative ways to engage life. These new forms of creative response, when they are clearly recognized as arising from Original Primordial Awareness, have the capacity to bring profoundly appropriate new means of healing, happiness, integration and liberation for all our relations. The deeper One rests in formless Source, the vaster the creative upwelling of freshly evolved forms & forms in the service of the whole and all its parts. Embracing this pure creative insight through trust and loving, liberated action is the Heart Path of the Compassionate Warrior.

## 13. DON'T TAKE ALL THESE 12 PRINCIPLES TOO SERIOUSLY.

Don't become attached to all of these principles. Laugh. Celebrate Life's gift. Enjoy Coyote's howl.

"I invite you to join us in The Way of Nature Fellowship as we explore these Twelve Principles. They have emerged from over fifty years of my vision questing, spiritual training, wilderness solos and Sacred Passages - often in many of our beautiful planet's wildest and most sacred places. May these Way of Nature Principles and Practices be of great benefit to your spiritual cultivation. My deepest wish is that you become inspired and truly free as you walk your spiritual path."

John P. Milton, November 30, 2002