

## A Brief Treatise on Spiritual Madness and Ego Death

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I was having a discussion with one of my students about what it takes to be a Master. He contends that to break the connection with the personality—to experience ego death—is critical to that process. Otherwise, he suggested, the person never is able to genuinely take the perspective of the Soul, and cannot become its pure instrument.

He cited the example of a spiritual Master, Franklin Jones, who became the illumined Master, Adi Da, who underwent a complete “ego death,” and emerged as a Siddha on Shiva 8 in the Supracosmic Sphere. He also reminded me of my own “ego death” experience through which the Masters were able to turn my broken life into a conduit of their Grace and Wisdom.

This led me to reflect on:

1. How does the Soul interface with the personality?
2. What is a “normal personality?”
3. What are the varieties of “madness?” What is spiritual madness?
4. What is the relative tenacity with which an individual clings to ego and personality vs. the tenacity to which one cleaves to their spiritual core?
5. Which types of spiritual development lead to the awakening and empowerment of the Soul and stable personality functioning, and which lead to psychosis and ego death? What is ego death and how does it arise?
6. What are the qualities through which one can become an instrument of their spiritual essence, and ultimately, become guided by the Divine Will and become an instrument of Divine Grace?

What arose from this inquiry is the topic of this webinar, a “Brief Treatise on Spiritual Madness and Ego Death.”

### **How Does the Soul Interface with the Personality?**

The short answer is seed atoms. Without the seed atoms, a human being cannot initiate behavior, cannot connect to the lives of others, cannot think, and cannot create a “life.” The seed atoms in effect turn an animal body into a human being and an instrument for the expression of the Soul. So the first thing we will do is identify the seed atoms and show you what they do.

These six particular seed atoms within the personal zone of the mind—the Conscious, Subconscious, and Metaconscious mind—are the ones with which the Soul interfaces. So what is the action of the Seed Atoms?

- 1. Physical Seed Atom** – this seed atom in the physical heart incarnates the Soul, and enables it to carry out action on the environment.
- 2. Emotional Seed Atom** – this center enables attachment bonding to objects, people, and ideas; in higher states of Initiation, this may be a carrier of love, compassion, and saintly virtues in some spiritual traditions.

**3. Mental Seed Atom** – this is faculty of reason, which enables reality testing and the ability to carry out the activities of daily living. This becomes a barrier to the intuition and direction of the Soul, as reason fights against what it deems irrational. During “ego death” reason is shut off, and you have a vivid, naked experience of the Soul.

**4. Egoic Seed Atom** – depending on the level of spiritual development, this incarnates the idea of what you seek to become in life—this core idea of identity influences your career choices and embodies your ego ideal, what you dream about becoming. This ego ideal is tied up with your idea of being “happy,” e.g., “when I have, do, or become *this* [whatever *this* is for you], I’ll be happy.”

When we look at the ego ideal, we see the following *natural permutations*—for example, when the Egoic Seed Atom is influenced by the cutting edge ensouling entity:

- Those in the Lower Subtle look to play a role in their tribe.
- Those in the Middle Astral seek to live according to the ideal roles portrayed in the mythology of the world civilization in which they are embedded
- Those in the Lower Astral embody the dark passions of the unconscious—drugs and alcohol; sex; crime; worldly power and corruption; use of manipulation, intimidation and hypnosis to control others; and learning magic and the occult arts—and idealize those who pursue these paths, e.g., the urban gang member dreams of becoming a rich and powerful gang lord.
- Those in the Upper Subtle fight against the forces of darkness and free others from its thrall, like superheroes or wizards.
- Those in the lower portion of the Biophysical Universe focus on finding a life partner and raising a family. Those who open into the higher bands gain a fascination with our biological origins, the ecological webs in which we dwell, the origin of the earth and the universe.
- Those in the Abstract Mind seek to bring into expression the Divine Ideas of the Subplane on which the Soul dwells: Sports, Science, Art, Philosophy, the Akashic Records (which expresses as the ability to work out the issues from past incarnations), the Dynamic Creation Subplane (which brings out the ability to intentionally create what you want to have in life), and the Universal Mind Subplane (in which you align with the Divine “Laws” of Mind and create harmony and fulfillment for yourself and others).
- Those in the Psychic Realm endeavor to express the Psychic Powers and channel the spiritual inspiration and energy they receive from this realm.
- Those on the Wisdom Plane work on getting rid of bad habits and outmoded patterns of behavior, and to release the emotional and relational issues that keep them bound in negative patterns through forgiveness and understanding.

- Those in the First Initiation are motivated by the urge to live by moral principles, to treat others with kindness and caring, to develop a relationship with God, and to draw nearer to Him. Those in the Exoteric band expect this deeper communion to take place after death; those in the Mesoteric and Esoteric bands work to draw nigh unto the Divine during life through the cultivation of saintly virtues, mystic contemplation, and acquisition of esoteric wisdom and insight.
- Those in the Second Initiation incarnate the dynamic power of the Mighty I AM Presence, and take on the great issues and injustices of the world, and inspire themselves and others to overcome their weakness and limitations and embody their strength and greatness.
- Those in the Third Initiation aim to be of service to the Masters of the Hierarchy and to humanity, and develop the processes and institutions that enable the working out of the Divine Plan on Earth.
- Those in the Fourth Initiation express the illumination of the Buddhi as consummate art and literature, or guide nations to freedom and justice.

We also have the *unnatural permutations* of the ego ideal, which occurs when people are led to identify with spiritual essences outside their cutting edge of spirituality:

- When they identify with cosmic consciousness, they seek to gain Mastery as a Yogi Preceptor or incarnate the gods and goddesses of the First Cosmic Initiation.
- When they identify with cosmic soul awareness, they yearn to become spiritually liberated and become a Light Master.
- When they identify with the Astral Soul, they aspire to ascend through the Cosmic Initiations to become a Cosmic Master, or reach Liberation in Brahm Jyoti.
- When they identify as a Supracosmic seed atom, they seek to gain union with the form of God that dwells on that Path and attain the abode where the Supracosmic Master of that Path dwells.
- When they identify with the Supracosmic Soul, they seek to incarnate the love, wisdom, and power of that essence in the world. [Adi Da is an example of this type of ego ideal expression].
- When they identify with the spirit on one of the Transcendental Paths, they seek to liberate their spirit in its origin and ascend as the ensouling entity of this Path to the highest Plane where their Sat Guru or Perfect Master dwells.

When one follows the path of Integral spiritual progression into these realms through the Soul Plane, the Transplanetary Realm, the Astral Soul, the Supracosmic Soul, and the aligned Transcendental Ensouling Entity through balanced unfoldment at the cutting edge of spirituality, these states of identification and aspiration of the higher octave become integrated into the natural permutations for their ego ideal.

When Integral spiritual development is adopted, one does not assume a pseudo-identity, which must be maintained by constant remembrance and union with that state of awareness.

**5. Subconscious Seed Atom** – this seed atom is contained in the Swastika center of the chakras of the Subconscious mind. It opens the creative intelligence of the chakras progressively as the Soul unfolds. Work outside the cutting edge of spirituality opens higher aspects of the central channel (Sushumna) corresponding to higher aspects of spiritual development; this is some cases can cause a energetic “short circuit” that draws the Kundalini up to the spiritual essence that has been awakened, and can produce Kundalini syndromes that markedly impact personality functioning.

**6. Metaconscious Etheric Seed Atom** – this has two centers that are of significance in our discussion.

The first center, at the point between the eyebrows of the Etheric Body of the Metaconscious mind, enables the will (the volition that operates from the Self) to interface with the Subconscious mind, to draw upon its reservoir of memory, creative intelligence, and imagination.

The second center, which is the actual Etheric Seed Atom, is in the brain. This mirrors the spiritual development of the Soul. This enables the Soul to interface with the Subconscious mind, and channel its gifts and abilities through the personality.

## **What Is Normal Personality Expression?**

This topic is far too vast to take up in this webinar. We have written on this topic in several of our books, and will refer those interested to those sources. We will, however, summarize two factors that can be used as relative indicia of normal development: meeting developmental challenges (Erikson) and actualizing human potential (Maslow).

I’ll excerpt from our Recovery from a Dysfunctional Family Workshop to quickly summarize these Erikson’s theory about developmental challenges:

“So what are these developmental challenges? Eric Erikson, a psychiatrist, came up with a model of how people grow and change over a lifetime.”

“I have slightly expanded this model to encompass the entire life cycle [my additions are in *italics*], which is shown in the table below. This revised model first appeared in an article published in our book *Religions, Cults, and Terrorism: What the Heck Are We Doing?* [It’s on pages 377-379, and it’s called “Parallel Psychological Development in Cultic Groups.”]

“Erik Erikson described a series of life challenges that a person needs to master during each period of life. Sigmund Freud also described the psychosexual stages that correspond to these Eriksonian developmental stages. In the table below, I have summarized these concepts...”

PERIOD	Significant Life Events	Erickson's Developmental Stage	Sexual Development Stages
<i>Birth</i>	<i>Physical separation from mother</i>	—	<i>Pre-Oral</i>
Infancy	Complete dependence on parents	Trust	Oral
Toddler	Toilet training, first discipline, development of ego sense	Autonomy	Anal
Young Childhood	Learning, exploration	Initiative	Phallic
Socialized Childhood	Achievement, comparison with others, school, intellectual growth, identifying one's life work/career	Industry	Latency
Adolescence	Puberty, peer influence, first sexuality, group interaction and pressures	Identity	<i>Primary Genital</i>
Young Adulthood	Independence, marriage	Intimacy	<i>Mature Genital</i>
Middle Adulthood	Career advancement, children	Generativity	<i>Parental</i>
Late Adulthood	Retirement, grandchildren, community involvement	Ego Integrity	<i>Post-Parental or Grand-Parental</i>

In the Recovery from a Dysfunctional Family Workshop, we gave a checklist for each of the challenges that an individual must overcome at each of these levels, from Initiative to Ego Integrity.

If you are experiencing your life is not functioning right as a result of growing up in a dysfunctional family, a struggle with addiction, or the aftermath of significant abuse or trauma in your life, you may wish to take this workshop; and also review the webinars of the Psychological Insight Series part two, which frankly examines the issues of fear, trauma, and abuse and how to deal with them. If these challenges are severe and you are truly in emotional pain and despair, then you may wish to obtain the professional services of a counselor or psychotherapist who specializes in these issues.

The take away from this is that if you survived your family and school intact, you were able to get a stable job and find a life partner, get a house and a car, have children, and retire and have grandchildren to enjoy, you have—developmentally at least—lived a normal life. And if you didn't have children like me, you did something significant and meaningful with your life that touched the lives of others and made a difference—and justified us feeding you and otherwise putting up with you.

The other piece of this equation of normality is how much of your innate potential have you been able to actualize in your life. For this, we draw from the writings of psychologist, Abraham Maslow.

I excerpt from an article in *The Practical Applications of Meditation in Daily Life and Education* called “What Motivates You” to quickly give you the warp and woof of Maslow’s theory.

“A psychologist named Abraham Maslow believed that people have to meet certain needs before they can express their highest potentials. Maslow called this state of expressing their highest human potential self-actualization. In the table below are his five basic categories, some of the sub-levels of these categories, and what you experience in these sub-levels.”

Maslow’s Hierarchy		Sub-levels	Contents
I - Survival	1	Survival	Obtaining food, water, basic housing, medical care, transportation, childcare; getting money to meet these most basic needs
II - Safety	2	Safety	Locking up possessions, getting insurance, safe baby sitting, getting a stable job that pays enough money to pay bills and live
III – Love and Belongingness	3	Romance	Finding a lover or spouse, enjoying a satisfying sex life
	4	Belonging	Finding a circle of loving friends, family or a group that supports you, loves you, and helps you
IV - Esteem	5	Achievement	Accomplishing personal goals, completing your education, getting your own apartment, preparing for your career and learning job skills
	6	Esteem	Earning enough money to enjoy things you want, like a nice car, a house, vacations and entertainment, wearing clothes you like
	7	Pleasure and Beauty	Acquiring aesthetically pleasing objects of art, creating a beautiful environment, acquiring jewelry and collectable objects, making yourself stylish and beautiful by wearing expensive dresses or suits
V- Self-Actualization	8	Spirituality	Activating your spirituality by prayer and meditation, joining a religious group
	9	Aspiration	Inner exploration and self-discovery, leading to deep insights and realization
	10	Self-mastery	Learning to control addictions, habits and behavior, cultivating the abilities of your Soul
	11	Service	Expressing your Soul’s abilities and gifts to be of service to others, doing volunteer work for others, living love and compassion
	12	Self Actualization	Discovery of your Soul’s Purpose, living in harmony with that purpose and making this deepest vision of the heart real—living your dream

Maslow predicted to the degree that people can free up their time, attention, energy, and efforts from focusing on the issues of survival, security, love and belongingness, and esteem, to that degree can they participate in those activities that arise from the band of self-actualization.

It is normal to struggle with these things: these are the challenges of this life. But only a few actually begin to express elements of their self-actualization; and not all who tap this level are able to do this in an integral or balanced way. For example:

- Some are completely overwhelmed by these challenges, and never express their Soul purpose at all.
- Some get fixated on a certain level, such as obtaining wealth and the accoutrements of esteem, and never leave any room for their Soul to express.
- Some jump ahead into the activities and pursuits of self actualization without taking care of basics, and wind up becoming spiritual wanderers, and perpetual, ungrounded and spaced out seekers

To assess how well you are meeting your basic needs to have the wherewithal to do spiritual work at all, I refer you to the article in *The Practical Applications of Meditation in Daily Life and Education* called “Taking Care of Basics.” In case you don’t have the book, this article is on our web site.

So if you have met your life challenges reasonably well and have fulfilled your needs to the point where you can meditate and participate in the Great Work, you are likely functioning in the normal range. This is the even keel of what is termed psychological health: you are sailing in this zone when you are coping, functioning, and handling the day-to-day challenges of this life.

## **Personal Madness**

Personal madness encompasses three major zones. They get more severe as you move from level one to three.

1. **Anxiety disorders** – in the 1950s, psychiatrists used to call these disorders, neuroses. In this state, worry, fear, and obsession consume your life to the point it impacts your functioning. You sense something is wrong. You may feel ashamed that you have these conditions, and try to keep them secret. You might be paralyzed when you try to give a speech. You might have a full-blown panic attack when you are in high places like me. You might obsess whether you turned the lights off and find yourself driving back to your house to “check.” You might have mild depression or “the blues,” you find it difficult to see things in a positive or optimistic light.
2. **Personality disorders** – these occur when the patterns of anxiety disorders become a part of your character. Unlike an anxiety disorder, you are generally not aware that there is anything odd or strange about these dysfunctional patterns. Instead of having islands of compulsive behavior as in the anxiety level of compulsion, in obsessive compulsive personality disorder, these patterns take over every aspect of your life: you become a “neat freak,” every thing must be arranged in an exact pattern, your room must be scrupulously clean, and others must not violate this pattern, lest they earn your wrath. Some obsessive-compulsive personalities become hoarders or collectors.
3. **Psychotic disorders** – this is marked by global disorganization and dysregulation: you no longer control your moods or your thinking. Like in personality disorders, you are not aware that there is anything odd or unusual about the way you are acting, feeling, or thinking.

In psychotic disorders, your “sins” can take on cosmic proportions and you feel that you are the vilest sinner in the universe, like you experience in psychotic depression. You can lose your boundaries and become manic, and act on wild, irrational impulses and urges. Your thinking can become scrambled and delusional, like in schizophrenia. You can become grandiose, and believe you are Jesus Christ.

As you slide down the hill of personal madness, your insight progressively decreases, and your ability to function “normally” in your life—to get an education, hold down a job, maintain a relationship, or care for children—deteriorates.

Sometimes the factors that produce personal madness are not within the individual’s control: for example, some people are born with neuro-cognitive and mood-regulation disorders. In others, they can be precipitated from severe trauma and abuse. In others, they are the end product of years of substance abuse and addiction.

If you are suffering from any of these types of personal madness, and they are significantly impacting your life, you need to get professional help. The self-help measures you learn in our classes may be insufficient to address them or work them out; if they are, you need to seek the assistance of a mental health professional.

## **Spiritual Madness**

*Spiritual madness starts when you begin to detach, dissociate, and disidentify from your life, your ego (sense of embodied identity), and your personality on a permanent basis.*

When you meditate and pray, you enter an altered state of consciousness. *This is normally a temporary visit to your internal spiritual world.* You might commune with God, a Master, or a spiritual guide through prayer and dialog in that state. You might do core spiritual activities there, such as transformational mantra, Nada Yoga, or Raja Yoga. You might work with the issues of your life while in that state. You might engage in healing or spiritual ministry there. *But when you are complete with this communion, spiritual activity, or ministry, you come back to your normal waking awareness.*

The process of becoming spiritually mad goes through seven stages.

1. **Detachment** – once you learn to move your attention from the waking state of awareness, you can observe your mental content. At this point, you can detach from that content: instead of saying “I am depressed,” you observe and note, “Depressed thoughts are arising in the present time.” You learn to do this with the practice of mindfulness; you are trained to take this detached perspective in different types of psychotherapy to allow you to engage this content.

There is nothing pathological about becoming detached, but it becomes a problem when you are perpetually detached and you no longer have ownership of your life. Your life appears to unfold on its own; there is no Self to guide or direct it; you passively observe your life happening. This is the first symptom of spiritual madness.

2. **Dissociation** – in dissociation, you begin to feel that your feelings, your thoughts, or your wishes and impulses are not your own. In psychosis, you have the delusional belief that other people or spiritual entities are injecting your feelings, thoughts or impulses into you.

In dissociation, you just don't believe these aspects of your nature belong to you or characterize who you really are. No one is putting them there, but they just aren't you.

Forgetting that something occurred, no longer feeling that you are the same person (e.g., you have been reborn), or just not focusing attention on a particular feeling or thought are strategies of dissociation. Most people dissociate from time to time when it's necessary to do so. For example, you don't ruminate upon your hurt feelings that arose after your partner told you he or she was breaking up with you when you are taking the final exam in your class.

Dissociation becomes a problem when you shut down whole aspects of your life, and you can no longer feel your feelings, or remember what you were doing for long periods in your life.

3. **Disidentification** – spiritual groups have widely used this tool to promote insight and enlightenment. Disidentify from the vehicles of the personality and you discover the Self. Disidentify from the painful issues in your unconscious mind and you merge with the wave of the present time resonating on the Akashic Aether, which confers an eternal and empowered perspective. Disidentify from all of the forms in your Superconscious mind and you encounter your Soul.

Disidentification becomes a problem when you remain in that disidentified state and no longer return to your normal state of identification. Once you identify with a spiritual or archetypal essence and you no longer return to your normal awareness, you introduce the possibility of perceptual abnormalities (hallucinations), distorted beliefs (delusions), inappropriate self-concept (grandiosity and narcissism), and extreme emotional lability (rapidly shifting back and forth from ecstasy to agony).

4. **Deprecation** – this occurs when you begin to believe that your Path is the only true Way, your doctrine is the only one that God approves, your spiritual Master is the only true savior or prophet, and that all others are deluded—and when others don't agree with your perspective—you start to regard them with suspicion, and may suspect that they are being influenced by an sinister and evil force that is deluding them and keeping them back from realizing the truth that you are perceiving.

Deprecation influences some to go out to evangelize and convert others to the “knowledge of the true way.” It persuades others to believe that members of other faiths or the government are persecuting them, and they become paranoid. Yet others respond by believing that they are special, chosen ones, and they are far superior to others who have not known the true faith, and look down on others.

Deprecation can lead to discrimination against those who are not members of your group, and can be used to justify injustice, and maltreatment or abuse of those who are different. Many terrorist groups resort to deprecation to justify their atrocities.

5. **Depersonalization and Derealization** – If you spend enough time in an altered state of awareness, you can begin to feel that the world, your body, your life, and your personality are not real—only the spiritual essence with which you have become identified is true. You may come to believe that the entire world is just a dream—and your life, just a dream life.

The terrifying thing that occurs when you do temporarily return to your normal state of awareness is that your body does not feel like your own—your body seems alien and strange, your feelings are numb, and you function like a robot. Through depersonalization and derealization you become a spiritual zombie.

6. **De-animation** – if you continue to remain in an altered state of awareness and transform the spiritual essence with which you have identified along its track outside the cutting edge of spirituality, you may reach a state where it seems your body stops breathing and you can no longer move your limbs. You experience full catatonia in Samadhic trance. You are fully awake within, but you cannot move your body. At this stage, you cannot take care of yourself: others must care for you.
7. **Divine Madness** – if you continue your spiritual journey, you may merge into the form of the Divine that appears on your spiritual horizon and become one with God. Only God remains in this state: your sense of personality and spiritual individuality are obliterated. Unless there is someone to prepare you to come back and reanimate your human life, you remain in this state of Nirbikalpa Samadhi—at one with Infinite Bliss and Power, but you are completely unable to function in human life.

These states of progressive detachment and relinquishment of the personality, for those who become immersed in them fully, can culminate in God Realization. But for every one who reaches God Realization, there may be hundreds of others who slip from spiritual madness into psychotic decompensation.

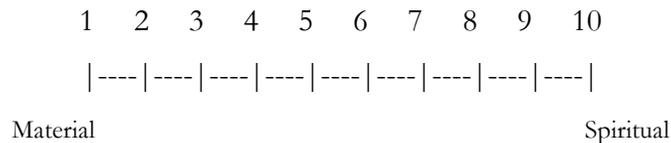
When meditation is done with the guidelines of Integral meditation—always return to waking awareness after you have done your spiritual work, do your spiritual work at the cutting edge of spirituality to avoid imbalance, and learn to function in both worlds, spiritual and personal—you sidestep these perils of entering into spiritual madness. You maintain your groundedness and your sanity, while you do the Great Work in full consciousness.

### **The Relative Intensity of Clinging to the Personal and Spiritual Pole**

Individuals have a different propensity for spiritual experience. Some reject it outright, regard it as a regression into madness, and will have nothing to do with it. Others embrace it with their whole heart and mind, and dedicate themselves to it completely—it pervades every aspect of their lives. Most people are somewhere on a continuum between these two extremes of being completely materialistic and being entirely spiritual.



We can picture this as a continuum ranging from the material and spiritual poles:



Those who embrace spirituality at 8, 9, and 10 on this scale make spirituality the central motivator in their lives. Nothing else is truly important. Nothing else is worthy of their time and attention. It is these ones, the most fervent ones, who run the greatest risk of spiritual madness, as they are willing to sacrifice everything to draw closer and gain ultimate union with the Divine.

They may abandon their education, may not care about career or making money, may not plan for the future, may not marry or may leave their marriage to pursue their spirituality. By jettisoning all of the anchors that draw them to the material life, they dive deeply into the sea of spirituality and make this their one aim and rationale of being alive.

I can tell you about this because I was such a one. When I was 21 years old, the only thing that was on my mind was going back to God. I walked away from the woman who would have been the mother of my children at 19. I left college. I had no plans for the future. I only knew I wanted to go back to God, and I dedicated nearly every moment to this pursuit. I spent 12 years of my life completely absorbed in spirituality.

But as a result of taking this leap into the Infinite, I paid a high personal cost. I never had children. I didn't finish college until I was 32. I didn't enter into a career related to my major until I was 39. I didn't save one dollar towards my retirement until I was 40. I worked at odd jobs for most of that time, and my lifetime earnings, as a result, are lower than a person who didn't complete high school—even though I have a Masters degree.

I've personally experienced profound detachment, dissociation, disidentification, spiritual deprecation of others, depersonalization and derealization. I've experienced the breathless state and Samadhi. I touched the boundless shores of Nirvikalpa Samadhi, but I was led to come back.

As a result of my own experience, I now recommend to others that they find a life oriented towards God that does not abandon their material life and their legitimate personal fulfillment, but also does not neglect their journey back to God—they just do it in a steady, methodical way without losing their grounding. This is 5, 6, and 7 on this scale: taking care of material responsibilities, planning for their future, making their personal goals real, and enacting their Soul's actualization, while they progressively unfold their Soul's spiritual evolutionary potentials.

Doing their spiritual work in this fashion will prevent them from falling into the abyss of spiritual madness as I did, and let them have spiritual experience while maintaining a personal and spiritual balance.

Perhaps you may say, "there is no way that you could have become the spiritual teacher that you are today without undergoing these experiences." And perhaps that is true. But maybe I can make your way a little more comfortable, a little more balanced, and a little saner than the journey I took into the great spiritual wilderness driven by my irresistible yearning for God.

For those of you who might like me to elaborate on the points of this scale:

<b>Pole</b>	<b>Point</b>	<b>Description</b>
Material	1	Grossly material, only believes in the material world, that the brain is consciousness, and there is nothing outside the observable universe. Has active antipathy for any religious or spiritual viewpoint, branding them as madness. Holds atheistic beliefs.
	2	Moderately material, but entertains the idea of myths and legends as stories that attempt to explain the origin of the world. Recognizes people hold these beliefs in gods and goddesses, angels, and different Divine beings, but views these as primitive worldviews not enlightened by science. Views spiritual teachings as expressions of art and culture, and holds an accepting stance towards them as aspects of human diversity. Holds atheistic or agnostic beliefs.
	3	Mainly has a material grounding, but has questions that science does not answer and cannot be explained by an empirical, scientific worldview. Recognizes the human unconscious and what science does not know, and is willing to listen to alternative perspectives outside of science, and examines these viewpoints with critical analysis. Maintains an open mind about the possibility of a Supreme Being, but has no experience upon which to ground this belief. Holds agnostic beliefs.
	4	Has material grounding, but has begun to have experiences that suggest there is something outside the consensual worldview advocated by science. May have had an astral projection experience, a mystic or peak experience as a result of ingesting psychedelic drugs or they may have occurred spontaneously, or may have experienced highly unlikely coincidences or miraculous occurrences that reason cannot explain. This is the neophyte stage of spirituality. Has an open mind to the possibility there may be a higher Intelligence or Divine Creator based on these mystical experiences.
Balanced	5	Is oriented to the external world and takes care of all responsibilities; begins an active quest to explore the inner world. This marks the start of the aspirant phase of spirituality. Material responsibilities still take much of the aspirant's time, but there is a window through which the aspirant seeks to enter the inner world through prayer and meditation. Actively believes in God and seeks to encounter the Divine.
	6	Has had sufficient inner experiences to confirm the existence of the three immortal centers—attentional principle, spirit, and Soul—and has had encounters with universal states of consciousness that give credence to the presence of God. Discharges material responsibilities and actively works on actualizing personal goals, but spirituality becomes a greater priority. Actively believes in God and has some experiential confirmation that God exists.

<b>Pole</b>	<b>Point</b>	<b>Description</b>
Balanced (continued)	7	Has begun to commune with inner guides and Masters and a form of the Divine. May begin to carry out invocation and ministry, and use spiritual abilities to serve others. This is the advanced aspirant stage of spirituality. The individual knows God exists.
Spiritual	8	Here one begins to lose desires for material pursuits and for sex, money, power, and fame. Spirituality becomes the primary focus of life, and one seeks to find a spiritual Master and embark on the spiritual Path. Spirituality has become a mind and life-consuming obsession.
	9	At this stage, one becomes a devotee of a spiritual Master. The devotee follows the Master everywhere, and surrenders their life to the Master's guidance and direction. They may engage in long period of meditation, go on extended spiritual retreats, or embark on spiritual pilgrimages. They may come to believe that there are Masters and saints with miraculous powers, and may actively invite these Initiates to intervene in their lives. They no longer listen to reason, may regard the ego and personality as illusions, and identify fully with the spiritual essence. These ones are fully immersed in God, and they live only for God.
	10	These ones dive off the deep end into spiritual madness willingly. Like a moth on the flame, they only seek to merge into the Light. Meditation is with every breath, every heartbeat. They continually are meditating, and they have only one desire: to unite with God. These ones may go off to perform continuous meditation in the Himalayan caves. They persist in their inner spiritual practice until they gain Realization, they die, or they go insane.

What Buddha called the Middle Way—between the extremes of gross materiality and atheism and complete absorption in spirituality and embracing spiritual madness—is the sweet spot where you can maintain personal and spiritual balance.

### **What Is Ego Death?**

To understand the idea of ego death, you need to look at two variables: relative absorption of attention, and effect on identity. While there are many techniques used in hypnosis, psychotherapy, and meditation, and each technique has a varying degree of impact on these two variables, to produce ego death requires a radical shift in both attention and sense of identity.

Typically, when meditators undergo ego death, their attention is focused on a spiritual essence, and they are deeply absorbed in this state of awareness. Concomitantly, there is a radical shift in their sense of identity. The ego or sense of “I” may vanish. They may no longer sense they have an individual life, but rather, they are a Divine essence that was never born, and never dies.

This state is ecstatic and full of Light. But once ego death has occurred, the question is, “how does one live one’s life if there is no “I,” no “Self,” no purpose for living, no goals or objectives—just the unfolding of a dream-like stream of thoughts and feelings that have no beginning or end?”

Since personal achievement is predicated on setting a goal, making a plan to achieve the goal, and then using volition to accomplish the goal—if there is no Self to set a goal, and no Self to enjoy its accomplishment, how shall one accomplish anything? How shall one study at school? How shall one hold down a job? How shall one maintain a relationship? How shall one care for children, or teach them anything?

When one is in ego death, one can wander, one can beg, one can sit and meditate, or one can speak the words that form within from some unknown source. But in ego death, one abandons desire, life, or any sense of I. Things arise and pass away, seemingly independently of the human mind. One can mindfully witness what is arising in the present time and wait.

## **Levels of Potential Interface between Human Life and Spirituality**

To understand how spirituality and human life interact, we must first understand the three modes in which human life and spirituality operate.

A. Human life revolves around three points:

- (1) *Active*: Set and achieve goals, transform life and circumstances through constructive action
- (2) *Passive*: Abide in being; experience what *is* in the present time
- (3) *Autonomous mental origination*: Issues arise from the unconscious, which must be processed and integrated

B. Spirituality likewise revolves around three points:

- (1) *Active*: Perform spiritual techniques to unfold the potentials of mind and consciousness, utilize spiritual abilities to help others, and give guidance and direction to the human personality and to other individuals
- (2) *Passive*: Witness or observe the levels of consciousness, gain union with the spirit or the Soul, and abide in union with that state; experience Samadhi or enlightenment
- (3) *Autonomous trans-mental origination*: Receive communications from other spiritual beings, receive attunements of the Light, become a channel of this knowledge and these energies to others

So we can characterize the potential interface between the spirituality and personality as comprising the following ten postures:

1. No interface between spirituality and personality, one is completely absorbed in personal concerns and achieving personal goals (A-1)
2. One contemplates, observes, or studies the levels of the mind within the personality without connecting with spirituality (A-2)

3. One interfaces with material arising from the unconscious mind that may take the form of autonomous behavior, spontaneous welling up of feelings, and emergence of thoughts and beliefs arising from deeper layers of the psyche (A-3)
4. One engages in meditation or spiritual activities to unfold a spiritual essence, and to develop this essence so that it manifests its abilities, expresses its wisdom and compassion, and purifies the mind (B-1)
5. One's spiritual essence gives guidance and direction to the personality while the personality passively receives this intuitive downpour, or channels its gifts through the personality (B-1 with A-2)
6. One enters into Samadhi and realizes the true nature of the spiritual essence (B-2)
7. One channels the Light sent through one's spiritual Master, or one has communion with spiritual beings that come from levels beyond the current state of spiritual evolution of the spiritual essence (B-3)
8. One channels the Light sent through one's spiritual Master, or the guidance of spiritual beings through the personality (B-3 with A-2)
9. One fully overshadows the personality so that the personality enacts the Purpose of the spiritual essence (B1 with A-1)
10. A Divine Being incarnates through the personality in an Avataric Advent (B-3 with A-1)

Each of these ten postures does not undermine the existing structures of identity, function, or form. But there are two additional postures that do so.

11. The content of the unconscious mind invades the conscious portion of the mind, such that it interferes with function and identity. This is seen in mental illness. (C-1)
12. The structure of the mind is changed through focusing on spiritual essences that are outside of the forms that embody consciousness, and that alternate essence is transformed, so that it uproots the foundations of identity, resulting in ego death. (C-2)

So we see that as personal madness arises as the result of (C-1), ego death (C-2) can be one of the sequelae of spiritual madness.

## **How Does Ego Death Arise?**

Ego death typically first arises when one enters the breathless and catatonic stage of De-animation. But the unraveling of a stable sense of identity begins when the Derealization and Depersonalization stage dawns on the mind—the idea of a Self seems like an actor in a dream; it is completely unreal.

These stages are commonly produced when one reaches the fourth, fifth, and sixth degree of spiritual imbalance.

When the fourth degree arises, the spiritual essence has shifted from the background of awareness to the foreground. One identifies with this essence and the personality starts to appear unreal or dream-like.

During the fifth degree, the undertow from this spiritual essence moving upon its track dredges up deeper and deeper layers of the unconscious mind behind the ego and the Self—at some point, this generates a psychic collapse, where these integration centers of the personality become permanently turned off, and they enter a state of dormancy.

By the sixth degree, you merge into God and any separate notion of Self disappears—there is only God. At the culmination of the sixth stage, you become enlightened and empowered to guide others on the same path you have traversed.

But entering these advanced phases of spiritual imbalance is not required for all individuals to experience the dissolution of the sense of Self. We soberly note that even sustained practice of detached mindfulness can begin to disrupt stable identity structures and place you in the state of mind of “no Self,” in which mental content appears to arise on its own, with no doer, no thinker, and no one feeling the emotions that arise. We suspect that even mindful detachment, if sustained, can push those who already have a tenuous grasp on reality and weak ego structure off the deep end into identity collapse and ego death.

The three primary strategies for actively attenuating personal identity are:

1. *Dissolution through Samadhi Trance and Divine Union.* Yogi Preceptors and teachings that arise on the Supracosmic Paths commonly use this strategy. These states may be generated through transformational mantra, Kriya Yoga, and Kundalini awakening, or through reception of the Light (Shaktipat).
2. *Surrender of personal will to God and Guru.* Here one lives only to serve God and Guru, and to follow their commandments (Agya) implicitly. Sat Gurus, who awaken the spirit upon one of the Transcendental Paths, predominately use this strategy. The ego disappears when the spirit merges back into its origin, or when the ensouling entity merges into the Infinite Ocean of God.
3. *Spiritual Discernment (Viveka) or Sudden Awakening.* In this approach, the Guru teaches the meditation student to detach from the personality and to awaken as the spiritual essence, and then detach from the spiritual essence and re-awaken as God. This approach typifies the Jnana Yoga Advaita tradition; the Zen “Sudden Awakening” sects use a similar strategy.

We also note that spontaneous ego death can also occur in four other instances:

1. *Ingestion of psychedelic drugs.* Those who take these mind-expanding drugs commonly report that at least temporarily, their ego dissolves and they experience union with the Divine Spark within the Soul.
2. *Near Death Experiences.* Those who experience clinical death and are revived tell us that their ego disappeared, and they experienced union with a loving, eternal presence.
3. *Sudden Awakening of the Kundalini or a Peak Experience.* Those who enter these states, which arise unbidden and unannounced, state that suddenly their ego boundaries disappeared and they felt one with the cosmos and everything that is.

4. *Direct encounter (Darshan) with a God-Realized Master.* Some seekers react to the encounter with a God-Realized Master with loss of any sense of identity and are swept up into the depths of a fathomless Ocean of Light.

We see that there are a number of ways that ego death can occur in you, both actively cultivated and spontaneously produced. But we suggest that one can approach the Divine without resorting to this drastic measure.

## **Preparing to Be an Instrument for Grace without Ego Death**

You might then ask, “Are there ways that aspirants and disciples can prepare themselves to become an instrument for their Soul and the Divine Grace without losing their ability to function in the world through their personality, to lead an authentic and meaningful personal life, and to maintain an unbroken connection with their spirituality?”

The answer to that question is “yes.” Some of the things that will help you achieve these aims are:

1. Enter into the state of Samadhi at your cutting edge of spirituality, and realize your Soul.
2. Actively transform your Soul and contemplate the changes that occur within after the Divine downpour.
3. Be willing to have God and the Masters transform you into an instrument of your Soul and the Divine: be willing to change so you can become readied for this work.
4. Be willing to be of service and ask for guidance on how you can do this.
5. Be willing to let God’s Light and Love flow through you as attunements and spiritual ministry.
6. Have a willingness to know and follow the Divine Will in every moment of your life.
7. Be willing to express your Soul’s Purpose and enact the Divine plan for your life: seek to understand what this is and how you can carry it out in your life.

In this brief treatise, we have explored what spiritual madness is and what produces it, and what is ego death. We have outlined strategies for you for you to make spiritual progress without falling into the abyss of spiritual madness or ego death. We hope that you will reflect upon these ideas and discover what you need to do to actualize your personal and spiritual potentials in a balanced way.



Thank you for attending our webinar today!

