



UNIQUE SELF COACHING PROCESS™

by Rev. Samuel G. Alexander

It boils down to this: Wake Up! Grow Up! Show Up! Wake up to what is real; you are not a skin-encapsulated ego. You are not a separate self. Rather you are a unique expression of the One, the love intelligence that animates the universe. Grow up, raise your consciousness so that you expand your circles of care and learn to recognize what's valuable and what must be left behind within each level of development. Grow up because it is then that we can live into the hope and promise of a creation when all things are brought together in perfect harmony. Show up for it is only if you live your unique gift, if you perform the acts of love you were born to perform, something no one else can do, that the society will evolve beyond this polarized, consumptive, self-destructive moment and the dawn will rise on a new creation. "YES," you might say, . . . "but how?" How do I Wake Up, Grow Up and Show Up?

To be fair this essay is about a process that my wife Barbara, (and her partner Claire Molinard), developed so I can be forgiven for a certain bias. But trust me when I tell you that the reason I'm thrilled with the work, is because what they've done is develop a process that offers genuine help for adults who want to grow up and put their very best work in the world, . . . *and it is effective!* I swear to you: it is. I don't know why I should be surprised. The theoretical foundations of the process are absolutely solid and I'll describe them in a moment, but theory is one thing, practice is another. Nevertheless we have found that in practice, *when people engage the process*, they grow up before our very eyes. Let me be clear; this is not magic. I don't want this to sound like we've found some easy method with a name like "*3 Steps to Release Your Inner Being*," ugh! No, that's not it at all. The process requires commitment; it demands real work, life long work. There can be moments in the process when we see ourselves more clearly, but some of those moments are painful indeed. That is the nature of growth. The reality is, it's hard to develop new patterns of behavior or new habits. But when all is said and done, when the process has been engaged, we are seeing people let go of the things that have held them back. We've seen people move into the kind of work and the kinds of relationship that light them up. People are doing the acts of outrageous love they were born to do in the world.

This essay sets out to describe the theoretical foundations of the Unique Self Coaching Process and then outline the various methods we use so that the reader may develop some imagination or even gain some direction, as you take steps on your journey of growth.

We believe that everyone has a unique purpose, and that joy arises naturally when one lives into the reality of their unique calling as a gift to the world. This is what it means to be living as a Unique Self. The latest research in human development confirms what empirical wisdom and spiritual teachings worldwide have always affirmed: human consciousness is an evolutionary process that continues to develop throughout life. The Unique Self Coaching Process is a change technology to help us accomplish conscious evolution. It draws on our emerging knowledge of how the brain works to retrain itself. It is an “integral approach.”

I won't go into a lengthy description of [Integral Theory](#) here, but suffice to say that we recognize any developmental technology will need to account for the internal dimensions of a person – their spiritual development or emotional development, the internal dimensions of the groups a person lives in – the “worldview” of the culture surrounding them, the external or objective dimensions of an individual – the way the brain works, their health, and the external dimensions of the culture in which a person lives – the economic system, or company structure in which a person lives. All of this, all of creation really, is going through the process of evolution. That evolutionary movement is animated by Spirit, the ground of being, essence; it is called by many names. The process consciously taps into that creative power as it lives in us and through us. And so informed by the wisdom of the ancient spiritual traditions and by modern psychology, the Unique Self teachings shine a light on the truth that every human being has a story that possesses irreducible and infinite value. Expressing one's own unique story within the greater whole is each person's birthright and unique obligation.

If each one of us possesses a unique story of infinite value, if each one of us is a “gorgeous expression of the Divine,” as I like to say, then what happens to us? Why don't we live as though that is true? The answer is that we humans develop a case of mistaken identity. It is part and parcel of the human condition at this point in our evolution. Spiritual masters from across the traditions have been saying this for centuries. We mistakenly conclude that we are separate selves – “skin encapsulated egos,” as Alan Watts said. We are disconnected or divided from the source of love, the source of creative power that animates creation. The Apostle Paul in the Christian scriptures referred to this false self as “sinful flesh,”¹ which he described as essentially a spiritual disease. United, that is made one with the Christ, absorbed into the animating power of creation, Paul suggests, we are healed. Separated from the love

¹ Paul's most thorough discussion of this is found in his Letter to the Romans, chapters 5-8.

intelligence that animates creation we are lost, caught up in our own fear. This is the source of outrageous, mind numbing, horrifying pain in the world. The stuff that explodes our hearts in outrage when we allow ourselves to glimpse it.

In this condition even our highest intentions and efforts for creating a better collective future for others and ourselves dissemble. "I do the very thing I hate," says Paul.² We become overwhelmed by the world's suffering. The pain is so vast and complex that we numb ourselves to it out of helplessness, fear and the inability to heal it. We close our hearts and having closed our hearts, we become increasingly alienated from the source, the love intelligence of the universe that holds and sustains us.

This condition of separation is what each of the world's religious traditions, in their own unique way, address. They use different language and sometimes different approaches, but each moves the faithful to let go of this sense of separation, the separate self and come to know the One. They encourage us to discover the truth that there is no separation, there is no "other," for we are in fact a True Self and, (and this is important), the total number of true selves is one! When we wake up to this reality we are waking up to our being. Eastern religious traditions often refer to this as "enlightenment," Marc calls it "sanity," because if a person does not know who she is, she is insane.

This is wonderful as far as it goes, removing the separation between us and the Divine is surely a necessary first step, but let's take this one step further. If it is true that our being is known in True Self and the total number of true selves is one, if waking up to that is the recovery of sanity, then how come this idea of enlightenment, this denial of the separate self, hasn't caught on in the world? Answer: we have an intuition that there is something very wrong with that. Marc likes to say, "Of course there's something wrong with that, it has taken creation 13.82 billion years to make Sam, or Zion, or Claire, why on earth would we want to get rid of them and see them absorbed into the One?" It just doesn't feel right. Something is missing.

This is the struggle for "enlightenment" from the perspective of the Eastern traditions, but Western enlightenment has always come at these issues from a different angle. In the West the "Enlightenment" was all about individual freedom, individual self-actualization. At one level the two seem diametrically opposed, but this does not have to be the case. What happens if we transcend both of these traditions but include each in our understanding of human conscious development? I believe it is correct to say there is only one True Self. It is essential for us to realize that we are not separate selves, skin encapsulated egos. But it is equally true that each one of us has a unique perspective on that one True Self. Each one of us is a unique expression of that One. We are each a Unique Self. Alfred North Whitehead

² Romans 7:15

spoke of the “seamless coat of the universe,” Marc says, “Yes, the coat of the universe is indeed seamless, but it is not featureless!”

This is tricky business of course. For thousands of years both Eastern and Western mystics have shown us how clever we can be at fooling ourselves into thinking our separate self, is our enlightened self. I would not want to deny that for one moment. It is true that the separate self is relentless in its pursuit to keep hold of our lives and unless we are able to dismantle the separate self we remain cut off from the Source of all that is. But we would also be loathe to deny the irreducible beauty and value of each and every Unique Self in creation. Each one of us infinitely valuable, a puzzle piece in the vast puzzle of the Universe. No one is extra!

What we have come to understand then is that we are in reality a Unique Self, a unique expression of the love intelligence of the universe. That is who we are. Now, just as the religious traditions each have their own way of describing that reality of our Being, so each points to the ways in which we must Become who we are. This is Growing Up and when we grow up as unique expressions of the animating power of the universe, we are co-creating from our unique perspective. Let’s be clear here! It is NOT the separate self that is engaged in this evolutionary work, it is the Unique Self, that which is identified with the One, the True Self that is engaged in this work. The world is in outrageous pain. The only response to outrageous pain is the outrageous love that lives within and through us as Unique Selves.

Consider that when any significant action is taken for the sake of the all, whenever we are living in our greatness, infused with a profound awareness of evolutionary context, whenever we stop reacting from ego and begin acting from the place of a powerful evolutionary integrity, we are acting to heal the enormous pain that permeates our world. This powerful statement elicits the inquiry: How would the world change if more people considered the work of our unique gift, the unique act of love we are called to accomplish, before taking any decision or action? A beautiful thought, yes? Now, what would need to shift in people’s current consciousness so that they could hold and sustain such a vision? That is the question facing humanity today.

That is the reality we are just waking up to because for the first time, this generation, is becoming aware of our own participation in evolution. The Universe has made a way to look at itself, to understand itself, to evolve itself. We are co-creators responsible for the next step in the evolution of this planet.

Consider what that means! As we continue to live more consciously from our Unique Self, we start to feel more at home in our own life, with a deep sense that our story is irreducibly important, we realize that all along we have longed to carry out a unique purpose and obligation. This perspective gives rise to greater self-compassion and appreciation for all we are. This is an important shift in the course of the emergence of Unique Self, because in

becoming more intimate with our own life we also start developing a new relationship of intimacy and mutuality with the universe. Grounded in the awareness that we are one with the whole, our unique obligation that is ours alone to fulfill, naturally arises. What do we do with all the pain in the world that overwhelmed us in the beginning of this reflection? From this state of clarity, we are no longer stuck in overwhelm in the face of the impossible task of “having to fix an ailing world” nor do we wonder any more what our life purpose might be. Instead, our purpose becomes us . . . it arises naturally from our own unique story along with the sense of responsibility to fulfill it as best we can.

We believe that when more people open and surrender to this way of being, individually as their Unique Self and collectively as an evolutionary space of Unique Selves, this will create a new way of relating and functioning as a species. Ultimately, this new way of being can and will change the world.

So how do we go about helping people to live more and more stably in their Unique Self? That is the work of the Unique Self Coaching Process. The more we know about the architecture of human life and creative expression, the more clarity we have about the steps we must take – they’re not easy, but they are clear!

The Unique Self Coaching Process is designed around four capacities that need development. We increase our connection to Unique Self as we engage in a series of practices designed to build more capacity in those four aspects of life and to access a deeper source of wisdom. So for instance, after we engage our imagination a bit and consider the area of our life we’d like to see develop we begin by identifying our false self, its patterns of behavior, its desires, its fears. Some have done this kind of work under another name in various therapeutic settings. The idea here is to make your false self, which is often largely out of your awareness or unconscious, recognizable to you. It’s important to recognize the moment your false self engages because without that awareness there is no way to work with it, or to dismantle its hold on you. Robert Kegan at Harvard has done a great deal of work on this kind of developmental work. He says what we are doing is “making what is subject, (that which is unconscious to you), an object, (that is something we can look at and work with). You can see that when we make that move we are recognizing that the false self is not the real you. The real you looks at the false self and its patterns.

We have developed exercises that facilitate the re-training of our brains. If we train ourselves, literally train our brains to recognize when we are stuck in our false self, acting out of fear, or powerlessness, or a belief we are unimportant in the world, we shatter that false construct. So in that moment, in the moment we sense that false self taking control, rather than rejecting it or denying it, we ask, How would things be different right now if I had more compassion for myself? We keep asking the question and then each evening track the kinds of things that

come up by journaling. Over time we learn to let go of those false beliefs. They lose their grip on us and we have an opportunity to act without the fear, or sense of hopelessness. Again, this is not a formulaic answer. This is difficult and sometimes tender work. It's why we need the support of people as we work through the process. The work is also never done, but there is a point in the process when we move on to another prototype or capacity that needs to be strengthened.

The key to this next capacity is to become more aware of our connection to True Self for if we sense the connection to True Self, to the source of love and power in creation, we do not feel powerless, or useless. We feel empowered and connected. So do we have to go off to a mountain somewhere and sit for ten years in order to develop this capacity? No. We find that each one of us already has some sense of our connection to the whole, to the One. We often do recognize it as such until we look at it, or sit with it for a time. A True Self experience is any experience that gives you an experience of connection to all that is. This is what Marc refers to as the "democratization of enlightenment." One of the appendices of my book lists fourteen ways that we can feel a connection with True Self. As we identify those ways that seem to work with us, we practice them and strengthen them so they are available to us all the time.

It is this part of our work that grounds us in the knowledge that the source of creative power for the work we do, for the acts of love we put into the world, is not our separate self, but True Self - the animating force, the love intelligence of the universe that has moved creation from the Big Bang to Shakespeare in 13.82 billion years. This is of course a life long journey; the exercises we do, and the journaling we do helps to ground us in this reality.

This has prepared us to discover the outlines of our Unique Self. We begin to engage in practices that allow us to recognize our incredible genius, our enormous beauty! That would be an egotistical move if our false self did it, but the Unique Self is recognizing only how Spirit is living through us. What are the contours, the gifts, and the opportunities that make up your unique perspective, your unique self and therefore your unique obligation? That is one of two ways into recognizing our Unique Self. The second may seem counter-intuitive. We discover our unique value by looking at the shadow of our false self. Our shadow behaviors, the things we're ashamed of, the things that we sabotage ourselves with, are the un-lived portions of our Unique Selves, placed into darkness. You can be sure that the moment you are doing your most creative work, your shadow will emerge. When we recognize it, again, not with judgement, but with compassion, we can follow that shadow all the way back to our Unique Self. All of this is work we do to grow up.

Recent research on human development shows that as adults grow into higher levels of awareness, their capacity for perspective taking increases which in turn impacts what they do,

how they do it, who they are and are becoming. It appears that as consciousness evolves into these higher levels, the capacity to access and express spiritual qualities emerge as well. As this happens we find that a person is more able to stop her habitual train of thought while becoming present to a sense of “what wants to happen for the highest good of all” right now. This is a shift to “my will is God’s will” that comes as we start hearing and listening to the whispers of our Unique Self.

The more this happens, the more we are able to work in the fourth capacity. Again from a series of exercises and reflections we train our brains to think from the perspective of the animating power of all that is, we learn more and more to express the evolutionary power and love into the world. This has to do with seeing ourselves as part of the overall pattern of creation. Instead of thinking of ourselves as separate we live from the perspective of knowing that we are part and parcel to evolution. That’s showing up, putting it into action!

By living out and developing these four capacities, or ways of being, we find ourselves living out a life of purpose, a life rooted in joy, a life exploding with possibility. The more we work on these capacities the more we see the development in our own lives and the lives of those we serve. We are watching it work! I can tell you for absolute sure that the work I’m doing right now I could not do, might not even want to do, if I weren’t doing work on these four capacities. I simply would have self-sabotaged myself until the project became impossible. It is impossible to do this on my own steam. It requires access to the animating power of God moving and guiding me forward. I want to use this process to help people take a next step forward.

If you would like to talk with me about the possibility, please get in touch. The first hour is always free. (I find sometimes the first hour has an impact all on its own and that is just fine with me!)

Shameless Promotion of My Wife’s Work

From Barbara and Claire: We want to put this work into the world. We believe it is our unique gift, our unique obligation to do so. We are training pastors, therapists, coaches, spiritual directors, and other helping professionals to use the process and support people on this journey. The Unique Self coaching training is a 9-month certificate program. It is designed to support helping professionals who wish to deepen their experience of their Own Unique Self while learning a practical and elegant coaching process rooted in the Unique Self Dharma, integral theory and the practice of presencing. Upon completion of this program you will be certified to facilitate the Unique Self Coaching Process with individuals and groups. As a Unique Self coach, you will join a collective of amazing people from diverse background - coaches, consultants, clergy, spiritual directors, therapists as well as creative professionals - who are committed to spiritual development as a way to change the

world.

The training itself combines on-site retreats and intercession training with extensive individualized coaching utilizing our Unique Self Coaching methodology. The process develops a person's unique gifts by facilitating the emergence of their Unique Self. Our vision and greatest hope is that Unique Self Coaching may serve as a skillful means to structure and promote the emergence of Unique Self in men and women of all ages. We want this so they will live more purposeful, successful lives in service to the world. We don't want much. We just want to change the world. If you think you might like to work with us, we would love to connect with you!

Unique Self Certification Program Founders



Barbara Alexander is an Integral Master Coach and teacher. Her passion for human development spans 35 years of training and practice in integral coaching, integral theory, counseling psychology and Spiritual Direction. She is a long time practitioner in the Theravada Buddhist and contemplative Christian traditions.

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