



Kabbalah  
Experience

# The 11 Awareness Principles of Kabbalah Experience

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## **Eleven Awareness Principles of Kabbalah Experience**

- 1. Pay attention to what shows up as a reflection of what you still need to learn and grow into.**
- 2. Be present to the moment. This includes fully processing emotions that come from the past and how plans for the future impact your present living.**
- 3. Accept reality as it is. Live with a deep sense of gratitude. Seek and offer forgiveness in your everyday experiences.**
- 4. Live by setting intention. Be open to possibility—one door closing opens another. Measure success by effort not by outcome.**
- 5. Hold opposites and recognize that those qualities you may judge in others are mirrored in you. Seek common ground with others.**
- 6. Set limits to access greater intimacy and focus in your relationships.**
- 7. Expand your concern and love for the “other”**
- 8. Recognize the multiplicity of masks you wear (so they don’t wear you)**
- 9. Perceive and understand the metaphors that underlie your life choices.**
- 10. Witness the masks and metaphors and enter a state of no-thingness.**
- 11. Flow in the paradox of being and non-being in every moment.**

# Awareness One: Objects in the Mirror



*Objects, objects on the wall  
Mirror my life as a crystal ball  
~David Sanders*

**Awareness 1:** The most basic awareness principle is to pay attention to who and what shows up. Who and what is in *your* mirror? We may not be asking how and why questions—just notice the what and the who.

Have you noticed imprinted on the passenger side mirror of your car or truck:

“Objects in mirror are closer than they appear”

Physicists explain the need for this message on the passenger side mirror because of the angle and distance from the car driver—the convexity of the mirror lessens the size of the blind spots and at the same time diminishes the size of what is viewed. Our brains interpret size as a measure of distance—the smaller an object the further away it is—hence the warning.

But why choose the word “objects” and not “vehicles”? What objects other than vehicles would be closer than they appear? That is why the message placed on the mirror can be understood as a teaching tool for awareness.

The Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of the Hassidic movement, wove into the fabric of his Kabbalah teaching the mirror principle: “If you see a fault in another recognize the reflection of that fault in yourself.” Objects in the Ba'al Shem Tov's mirror are “closer” because they are to be observed in a very personal manner.

To enter the practice of this first awareness take a good look in the mirror to see who and what is showing up—these are the lessons for your growth. “Objects” also refer to your thoughts, dreams, emotions and actions— which reflect your work on the upper levels of awareness in the Tree of Life.

What showed up in my mirror this past week was the offer of a free ping pong table, an unexpected and profound conversation with a neighbor, a student’s unresolved grief from fifty years ago, a question about what is beyond thought, my stubbornness in the face of another’s immaturity, my immaturity in the face of another’s stubbornness, autoimmune diseases, not getting Hamilton tickets, and the list goes on.

There are so many objects that pass by my passenger side mirror, some whizzing by so fast it would be dizzying to recollect the makes and models of each. When it comes to the myriad of experiences, the whats and whos of this past week, I am admittedly a bit overwhelmed and yet very grateful for how each one reflects potential growth in awareness. In the Tree of Life, the Malchut sphere represents the energy flow being expressed. The color brown is the ground from which awareness is most easily accessed because it is manifest to our senses.

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**Awareness practice:** Whether you drive a car or not, take time each day to reflect on the mirror of your life and be at attention to what and who shows up. Carry that awareness on the roads you travel, the lanes you cross and the exit and entrance ramps you take throughout your daily life.

# Awareness Two: If Not Now, When?



**Awareness 2:** If it was simple to be (fully) present “now” would we need so much instruction on how to be in the moment?

Kabbalah places our relationship to time at the base of our awareness practice. In the Tree of Life, Yesod means foundation and is colored green to represent renewal and the possibility of growth.

Being fully present is an integration of past, future and present as exemplified by the ineffable name of God which though not pronounced, speaks of: “is, was and will be.” We too, are in each and every moment an is, a was, and a will be.

In medicine, on the standard Mental Status Exam, a person is evaluated on their alertness and orientation—and it is determined whether they are “oriented x 3”—to person, place and time. The “person” question refers to knowing who they are (name). Place is an orientation to the dimension of space (location) and time to knowing the year, month and day or to knowing about “current” events. If the person is not able to correctly identify their location, does not recall who they are or when it is, we say they are not oriented and know that something is altering their brain function.

We are always “locating” ourselves in space—we are standing on this corner, we are in our car heading west toward the mountains, we are sitting on our couch, which is in our living room, which is in a city we call Denver, which is in a land mass we call North America, on a planet we call Earth, a part of a solar system in a galaxy we call the Milky Way.

To locate ourselves in time we are also standing on a corner on a Tuesday morning, or heading west in our car on a Sunday in the winter, or sitting on our couch late at night. It is a day we call Tuesday, which followed a day we call

Monday and precedes a day we call Wednesday, in a month we call February, in a year we are designating as 2018.

Each of us has our personal orientation to place and time. While a visitor might call to say, “I am at the intersection of so and so streets, you would call that intersection “home.” Another intersection may have one meaning for one person (the spot they fell in love) and a different one for another person (the spot they were hit by a car). The same applies to our personal (or communal) orientation to time when it comes to a designated day such as a birthday or anniversary or a holiday on the calendar. Even seasons are not generalizable, the summer solstice depends on the place you find yourself on this planet.

What then is “this moment” in personal orientation? There is the larger “was” of this incarnation—from womb to birth to childhood, adolescence and adulthood and the more compact “was” of what happened yesterday or a moment ago. There is the larger “will be” of the future which is impacting this present moment—doing something now in preparation for the planned event in the future and the more compact “will be” of what word I will use to finish this thought.

This moment. At the intersection of past and future; fully present to where we have been and where we are heading and the liminal time in-between. When does the present moment begin? Now.

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**Awareness practice:** Meditate on how this moment and place is different than any before it. Consider the profoundness of the teaching that a person can never enter the same river twice for both river and person have changed. This also applies to the dimension of time—this Thanksgiving or New Year is not the same even if it is celebrated with the same people, at the same location and dinner is called for 4 p.m.

# Awareness Three: Accepting, Living, Surrendering



**Awareness 3:** Accept reality as it is.

The voice synthesizer fell silent, the screen turned black. The vast network of neurons in his brain, much like the stars in the sky at dawn, began to recede from view as Stephen Hawking took his last thought with him beyond the space-time continuum.

Hawking, the person who perhaps lived longest with ALS, is one of our exemplars of the third principle of awareness: accept reality as it is. Acceptance does not imply a defeatist or even passive attitude. It is rather acknowledgement that there are life circumstances which require our surrender. Hawking, diagnosed at the young age of 21 (ALS develops more frequently later in life) was given 2 years to live. Had he died according to plan he would not have had to surrender for 55 more years to the indignities of an unresponsive body and we would not have observed the courage of a man who stubbornly willed himself to live in a body many would choose to forego.

At breakfast this morning my young daughter asked: “When did time begin?” and upon further inquiry provided: “Time goes on and on and on, but when does it start?” She was referring to the bigger question that perplexes many physicists and exercised much of Stephen Hawking’s creative genius. A fitting question for a morning thinking about Stephen Hawking.

The principle of accepting reality is particularly connected, in time, with our relationship to the past. In order to be “present” we need to accept the past as is, we cannot change the past even if Hawking stated that from a quantum mechanics view, “the past is indefinite, and only exists as a spectrum of possibilities”.

What we can do is change our relationship with the past. Sometimes we do this by simply letting go, sometimes by reminiscing or rehashing the past (a hurt that has not gone away still needs to be processed for full acceptance.) A deeper form of acceptance is what is called in Kabbalah “surrender” which is translated as “giving way” and not the more usual term we think of when waving a white flag, “giving up.” In the Tree of Life, Hod, the energy of surrender is colored orange, nature’s color of retreat and acquiescence.

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**Awareness practice:** Each sunset is a time to consider our relationship to the past—to do a good “past cleanse” by examining those aspects of the past that can block access to be fully present; our hurts, resentments, procrastinations, habits and identifications. Symbolically, this is the work of getting rid of those things, feelings, thoughts and attitudes that clutter and constrict our ability to begin anew.



# Awareness Four: Orchestrating Change



**Awareness 4:** Live by setting intention. Be open to possibility—one door closing opens another. Measure success by effort not by outcome.

In the Tree of Life this awareness principle is connected with the energy of Netzach meaning both victory and orchestration. The color purple speaks to the confidence necessary to overcome obstacles and fulfill on intentions and choices.

Sometimes victory, such as the young shepherd boy David, felling Goliath with a single stone, can be accomplished by a courageous individual. Sometimes victory, such as the Parkland students' taking on the goliath gun lobby, will manifest through brave young people orchestrating millions of voices.

Shaken by trauma, the students from Parkland set an intention that the murder of their fellow classmates would not just be another blood-soaked stain added to the litany of school shootings. Shaken but not silenced, they are stirred to set in motion demands for changes in gun access. They speak and use social media individually to keep the pressure on, but act as a unit to orchestrate massive protests, collectively vowing to not rest until change occurs that will save – and would have saved, lives.

Netzach energy is about overcoming obstacles and seeking an outcome. What is meant by measuring “success by effort” and not by outcome is aiming for a goal

while recognizing that it may not come to fruition just the way it is planned. It may take a different form, be realized later or finished by others.

What we do have control over is our intention and effort. The Parkland students, many of whom honed their skills in Debate Club, are not backing down—they know both sides of an argument and can therefore articulate the possibility for a more reasoned approach to the freedom to bear arms alongside the freedom to go about your school day without the fear of deadly weapons of mass murder.

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**Awareness practice:** Set personal and communal intentions. Be courageous in overcoming obstacles, even the ones that appear insurmountable. Be inspired by Margaret Meade’s quote to “never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world.” Likewise, you and I, acting courageously, can change ourselves and the world.

# Awareness Five: Holding Your Opposite



**Awareness 5:** Hold opposites and recognize that those qualities you may judge in others are mirrored in you. Seek common ground with others.

Learning to hold opposites includes developing greater comfort with differing points of view, conflicting emotions, the confluence of light and darkness, death and life, as well as contradictory qualities in everyone we encounter (including ourselves). In the Tree of Life, Tiferet means the beauty of harmony reveals inner beauty as compassion. Compassion for ourselves and others is predicated on our ability to hold opposites. The color of Tiferet energy is yellow and is located in the body at the solar plexus. While Yesod (green) is the foundation energy of being present, the central awareness, the sun of which the other energies are in orbit around is the energy of holding opposites.

“Don’t I have the best life—I’ve been on the highest mountain and I’ve been to the bottom of the well. And because I’ve been to the bottom of the well and survivors know that, they come to me. Because they know I have and if I hadn’t been there they wouldn’t come to me. So, it’s a life of privilege, I love it.”

This testimonial about holding opposites comes from Marilyn Van Derbur Adler, the tireless advocate for those silently suffering the shame of incest. I was working in Family Medicine back in 1991 when the former Miss America revealed her secret—she had been sexually molested by her father for 13 years. Her survival mechanism, she described, was a form of dissociation, the splitting of herself into “daychild and nightchild.”

During my doctoral training, and in the first decade of my psychology practice, I had read about, but never encountered, people with Multiple Personality. In 1991 that changed. At first one, but then a number of people, who sought medical care, presented in very different manners during their ongoing visits. As this was

a training clinic we often videotaped the appointments. To my astonishment, I witnessed a woman “transition” from one personality to another as the physician left and then re-entered the room. The doctors were perplexed and often felt manipulated by what they thought were fictitious complaints. Remarkably, one personality had one set of medical and social concerns and another personality had different concerns (later in the mid 1990’s a number of studies reported that one personality could test diabetic while another personality had normal blood sugar levels).

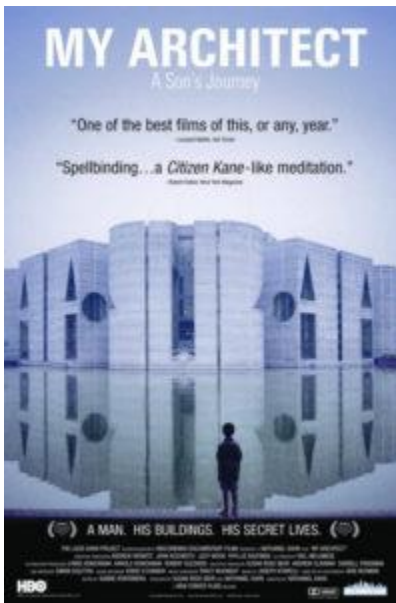
Once it was understood that we were treating people with significant dissociation, we asked about their histories and, over time, all of them reported either significant physical or sexual abuse in their childhood. Marilyn Van Derbur Alter not only came forward with her story, she also endowed the University of Colorado to focus on the prevention and treatment of sexual abuse and our physicians did rotations at the Kempe Center to further their understanding of the lifelong impact of childhood abuse. With our greater awareness of the prevalence of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, Multiple Personality, and other forms of dissociative mechanisms, were more recognized, and proper help was offered.

Holding opposites as an awareness, challenges us all to recognize our “split” off selves—those parts of us that we have not fully accepted and want to keep hidden. We may not want or be willing to see an “opposite” in us that feels unacceptable or produces shame. Marilyn Van Derbur Alter came to a place of integration. She was able to welcome the opposite of her day child and no longer need to split her off. When she could free herself of shame, she went a step further—she saw how that opposite could serve her to be a role model for others, could serve her to help heal others. And since then, she has dedicated her life to do just that.

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**Awareness practice:** To develop compassion for others start with compassion for your own selves. The more you can experience and accept your own (challenging) opposites you can have compassion for those qualities in others. Are you smart and at times naïve, calm and at times angry? As part of this awareness practice you come to realize that there is usefulness in all polarities—anger and naivete have their time and place as do calm and smart. We hold opposites because we contain opposites.

# Awareness Six: The Intimate Picture



**Awareness 6:** Set limits to access greater intimacy and focus in your relationships.

Louis Kahn, the great American architect, died in 1974 in a washroom at Penn Station. He was alone when his heart gave out. His only son, Nathan was eleven. A shadowy figure in his life, his famous Dad was busy at work, travelling abroad, and unbeknownst to Nathan, a father to girls with two other women. Louis Kahn had three families, simultaneously.

The adult Nathan, a documentary filmmaker, set out on a journey to discover his biological “architect” by visiting the projects his father designed—each one a masterpiece. As he wanted to garner a deeper understanding, he set up to meet architects that worked with his father on each building project. His journey is documented in the Academy Award-nominated film: *My Architect*.

When one looks at the big picture, the gestalt of a person, one sees the whole, but may not see the parts. An intimate portrayal, just like the need for the documentarian’s camera itself, needs focus to capture the essence of a person. This is a principle of Kabbalah awareness, that clarity often emerges from one story, one in depth uncovering of a layer of a person. We need focus to not only penetrate to the innermost depths, focus helps create the possibility for intimacy.

In the closing scene of the film, the Bangladesh architect Shamsul Wares, through tears, explains to Nathan Kahn about his Dad's "failure to satisfy the family life" as an inevitable association of a great person. We watch Nathan, tear up, during this unrehearsed moment; a final scene at the final architectural project of his father's career.

Mr. Wares: "Your father had an enormous amount of love, he loved everybody, he could not say no to anything. To love everybody, you sometimes do not see the very closest ones."

To find balance between unbounded love and intimacy. We practice the sixth awareness principle of focus—contracting, limiting, setting boundaries. Our love for people, for work, for nature—our desire for more expansiveness, can dilute the intensity of the inmost experience. Nathan found an answer—his father's love was unbounded. He found an answer by focusing on the specifics, the "parts" of his Dad's life and work, and by choosing to connect not just to his buildings, but to the people his father touched along the way.

We are all on our own journeys to discover both our unboundedness and our focus—and to fully be aware that intimacy is best nourished by saying no to one person or task in order to be a yes for another person or task or solitude.

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**Awareness practice:** In the Tree of Life, the energy of Gevurah, often translated as strength, is the fortitude to say no, to set limits. The color of red signifies a boundary (as in a red light or stop sign). Be adept at setting boundaries so that your energy (and others' energy) can find focus and be intimate. Notice the space and energy that exist when you say no.

# Awareness Seven: Melting ICE



**Awareness 7:** Expand your concern and love for the “other”

The United States remains one of only a handful of countries to retain the Fahrenheit temperature system and therefore, we are aware that ice begins to melt as it reaches and moves beyond 32 degrees. How Daniel Fahrenheit’s system places water’s freezing (and melting) temperature at 32 degrees is a complicated scientific story. The number 32, in Kabbalah numerology (gematriya), is the value of the Hebrew word Lev—the heart. The value of the warmth that melts away barriers and let’s caring, concern and compassion flow.

My 7 year-old daughter this past week came to a revelation—she saw a pattern in some of the Disney movies she watches. She called her insight “replacement” as in when one person (character) in the story offers to “replace”—switch places with another. There is the scene in the film Hercules where the Greek god offers Hades, the Lord of the Underworld to switch places with his love interest (Meg), “You like deals, take me in her place,” he says. And in Beauty and the Beast, the heroine Belle offers to stay as the beast’s prisoner in order to free her father. We began to see this theme in many other (Disney) films—she is too young yet to have read the immortal words of Sidney Carlton in the culmination of a Tale of Two Cities: “It is a far, far better thing I do today, than I have ever done.”

The seventh principle of awareness, the energy of Chesed in the Tree of Life—unbounded love, guides us to expand our circle of concern, melt away the differences that separate and wall off emotions that we might otherwise feel towards others and moves us to take action. The color of this energy is blue

symbolizing the flow of water, a sense of interconnectedness between all of created reality.

There have been many ordinary citizens who have offered refuge to immigrants who fear ICE deportation; there are many religious organizations that have set up areas of refuge. Those on the front lines see their efforts as an updated “underground railroad” and as one man interviewed off-camera, who has set up a room in his house for immigrants, stated simply: “This isn’t a moment to stand idly by.”

There have been those throughout history who have adopted a “replacement” moral stance—risking their lives or giving up their lives to save others, even strangers. Who at this point can still turn a deaf ear to the wailing cries of children and their parents separated from each other?

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**Awareness practice:** Ask yourself—who is in my circle of concern and how can I expand that circle to people, other living creatures, the ecosphere? There is always room for expanding your energy of love beyond where you are comfortable. For this you will have to turn a new leaf, by putting an extra leaf in your table to bring comfort to someone who you might not have a natural affinity for.



# Awareness Eight: Addressing Your Masks



**Awareness 8:** Recognize the multiplicity of masks you wear (so they don't wear you).

God has given you one face, and you make yourself another.

The Book of Genesis starts off with a bang and ends with some dust. In between it is one masquerade after another. The ball gets rolling from the beginning — energy slows down to parade as matter. Then comes the Garden of Eden story in which human self-awareness is portrayed as becoming carnal—fleshing out the naked truth. Once again, energy finds a material mask.

The final story, that weaves itself through the latter half of Genesis uses the beguiling motif of dress-up. Clothing, put on or removed, conceals identities and reveals motives; it is a window through which to address the dual nature of masks.

Jacob, father to 12 sons from his four wives, perpetuates the family dynamic of parental favoritism through gifting Joseph with a special royal coat. His brothers address the situation by stripping him of the coat and selling him into slavery. The next time they are to see him, Joseph has a new set of threads. He is the viceroy of Egypt and his brothers address him as royalty, with a deference that acknowledges his power and position of prestige.

The mask of clothing catalyzed jealousy and the brothers sought to rid themselves of those feelings by removing both its symbol and their brother, dipping the coat in blood and presenting it to their father Jacob. They may have used goat's blood to deceive, but the blood on the coat was from their own betraying hands. Their collusion, though concealed, is on a collision course with the stain of guilt that is not so easily wiped off.

Joseph, covering his identity with the cloak of royalty, gives them the full dress down. He recognizes them but they don't recognize him. He could easily put an end to their denial—strip them of their cloak of innocence. He chooses instead the route of masquerade, the “play is the thing” for self-revelation—a different conclusion about their collusion. The longer he stays masked the wider the cracks expand and the brothers' wall of denial comes tumbling down.

The master Kabbalist, Adin Steinsaltz clarified, that even if we were able to get fully naked, to get down to the bone there would still be, as the stories of Genesis let us know, the mask of our manifesting in form. Perhaps that is why the final verses of Genesis inform us of Joseph's bones being interred in Egypt. The man who mastered the use of masks is still Joseph, down to his bones.

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**Awareness practice:** In Kabbalah, in the Tree of Life, this awareness energy is called Da'at—knowing. The color associated with it is gray. The greatest masquerade is the one we refer to as black and white (thinking) and so it is our gray matter that helps us to move beyond that mask. There is nothing pejorative about the word “mask”—it simply connotes the coverings we inhabit, from the clothing of our physical forms, to our character traits to the stories of our families, cultures and religions. We cannot fully unmask ourselves (one mask will be replaced by another.) We can though strive to be aware of all our masks. Deepen your awareness of your masks through the question: Are you wearing the mask or is the mask wearing you?

# Awareness Nine: The Postman Rings Twice



**Awareness 9:** Perceive and understand the metaphors that underlie your life choices.

What does the electrician who is now a spiritual teacher and the postal worker who now interprets dreams, share in common?

Typically, we see metaphor as beyond the concrete and literal—traversing imaginative realms of our symbolic experience. Kabbalah takes a hybrid position. If we were using a metaphor to explain the Kabbalah’s take on metaphor we might suggest an abstract piece of art—a Picasso like image that shares some suggestive semblance and yet differs, at times radically, from the form and shape in representational art.

What Kabbalah would suggest about the electrician turned spiritual teacher is that she has a common current running through her choice of professions—she brings light into people’s lives—illuminating what might have remained dark. The metaphor of shedding “light” finds its concrete representation in wiring and sockets, and in re-wired thinking or plugging into new ways of feeling.

The same can be applied to the mail carrier who leaves the postal service to become an interpreter of people’s dreams. The common metaphoric delivery is beautifully suggested by this phrase in the Zohar, the classic Kabbalah text, “a

dream not interpreted is like a letter not opened.” There are “letters” we need to receive for our emotional and spiritual growth and the carrier of those messages are the dreams that arrive in our “inbox” every night. On occasion, the dream has the wrong address, but most of the time it is delivered certified and requires our signature (we have to recall it to open it.) So pay attention to your dreams and if they recur, remember that the postman always rings at least twice.

Metaphor, which is a form of thought is always manifesting in reality. Put another way: there is a story behind or within the things, creatures and events that populate our lives. He may not have been the first, but Aristotle was emphatic that appreciation of metaphor was the hallmark of genius.

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**Awareness practice:** The initial awareness practice is to pay attention to what shows up. The awareness principle of metaphor, Binah in the Tree of Life, means understanding (dark red). Binah takes the ground (brown) of manifestation (Malchut) and adds color to it so that the story level can be illuminated on the potter’s wheel or through the mason’s chisel. Consider what lays underneath, what motivates you, sniff out what story it is that you want told.

# Awareness Ten: No-thingness is Something Else



**Awareness 10:** Witness the masks and metaphors and enter a state of no-thingness.

*I search and I scan for the perfect metaphor  
Abhorring imprecision or worse selling out,  
To the exigencies of a concocted cocktail  
A ballerina poisoning on a sharpened pinkie toe  
The tone of skin, voice or deafness.*

*What can one say of no-thingness  
Without being led into a perjury trap.  
Ayin or Ayn (in Hebrew) mean the same,  
Carving out a no-thingness if  
Understood is no-thing unto itself.  
To be Ayin is to open to it all  
No-thing contrasted to a  
Something that is separate.*

*Go to a stream or the Amazon  
And scoop out a bucket full  
Bring it to class and proclaim  
Behold the mighty Amazon!  
Classmates will prime the breaks  
Question what you present  
A conceptual miss, the thing-water  
Appearing as a separate form,  
Not flowing downstream  
To a fabled City of Gold.*

*Leonard Cohen:  
If you are going to destroy  
Versions of yourself that  
Provide too easy a solution,  
You have to murder those  
false persons who whisper  
untruths about things.*

*I prefer letting go  
To words of annihilation  
The awareness of no-thingness  
To see the illusiveness of thingness  
Separateness is thought of,  
Interconnectedness experienced.*

At the last day of school their names were selected—recipients of goldfish each in a small, water- filled plastic bag. Off to the store for a tank, a filter and colored gravel. One sister is assigned the morning and the other sister the evening feedings. They live in their domain and we live in ours.

I have had the idea for a children’s book entitled: God Creates a Whale. It pops into God’s mind one day, “Time for a pet?” and thinking big, the choice is a whale. But where to put the whale so that it can live? Eventually an entire universe is necessary to house but a single whale. And then, seeing that whale is lonely it needs a mate and a much larger tank. It gets complicated.

Form forms and then un-forms, nothing is uni-form. All form needs other forms. Space itself, whether positive or negative, is form. All is constantly re-forming, re-formulating from something into no-thing and back again (the blue-black of this energy flow—something and nothing).

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**Awareness practice:** Get simple through recognizing the complexity of interconnectedness. See your existence as a flow in time and space, as an interconnected push me-pull you. There is no something (you) in and to itself—there is always correspondence, interdependence, entanglement and the constant shifting of being. That is what is meant by the improvisational “going with the flow.” In Kabbalah’s Tree of Life this energy is called Chochmah, the seed of wisdom because the seed disintegrates to become...

# Awareness Eleven: You Killed My Father: Prepare to Learn



**Awareness 11:** Flow in the paradox of being and non-being in every moment.

Yesterday, a student sent her class a story she read about a young man, a football star who was adopted as an infant and his search for his biological family. It turned out that his biological father, who had not known that he had a son (the mother did not inform him she was pregnant) later recruited and then coached him for his football program at Miami University. It is one of those heartwarming stories of synchronicity that we playfully and meaningfully call a “Kabbalah Experience.”

The 11th awareness is Keter—the Crown in the Tree of Life. Similar to the eastern Crown Chakra, Keter--the crown energy sphere--floats above the head—hovering above consciousness into the superconscious realms. Keter is “beyond thought” and yet is still connected to thought as we share those inexplicable moments with others such as synchronistic occurrences that are beyond our logical comprehension. Likened to a crown of gold, it is an enlightenment that shines down upon all of the awareness’ below—all the way down to the mundane manifestation, the multiplicity of the masks that are our created reality.

In appreciation for all our continued evolution in awareness, both individually and as a community, I want to accentuate a point that can be missed when we are

moved by our own or other people's experiences of serendipity and synchronicity. In a most brilliant use of metaphor, Julie Beck writes:

"The overstuffed crate labeled coincidences is packed with an amazing variety of experiences, and yet something more than rarity compels us to group them together. They have a similar texture, a feeling that the fabric of life has rippled. The question is where this feeling comes from, why we notice as certain threads of our lives collide, and ignore others."

I pondered Julie's question from another angle: "How does it help us with our spiritual growth to notice the way certain threads of our lives collide?"

Seeing coincidences as a part of some mysterious quantum entanglement or divine providence fills us with amazement and awe. It provides us with a framework, a structured meaning to what others would term happenstance or probability of coincidences due to the "Law of Truly Large Numbers."

I suspect that many of you have seen the Princess Bride or are at least familiar with the incessant refrain uttered by Mandy Patinkin's character: "My name is Inigo Montoya, you killed my father, prepare to die." Inigo, as a small boy, witnessed the murder of his father at the hand of a six-fingered man. Inigo swears to avenge his father and kill the six-fingered man. As fate has it, their paths (finally) cross and Inigo's life-long quest is fulfilled. In the final scene, Inigo, having fulfilled his youthful promise, ponders, in a poignant self-reflection:

"I have been in the revenge business so long, now that it is over, I do not know what to do with the rest of my life."

Mandy Patinkin was 34 years old during the production of the Princess Bride. His own father died when Mandy was 20 years old. It was not lost on him that the role of Inigo was both fiction and a serendipitous healing for him.

"I would walk through the maze of the gardens and talk to my father and I had it in my mind that if I could get the six-fingered man, if Inigo could get the six-fingered man, then my father, would come back and be with me. And so I kept talking to my Dad as I was walking around the gardens, 'Help me find this guy, help me get him, help me bring you back.' When I killed that six-fingered man I killed the cancer that killed my father and for a moment he was alive."

Here we begin to see the power of paying attention to what shows up (the first principle of awareness) and its connection to revealing the masks we wear (the eighth awareness principle) whether embodied in a fictional character such as Inigo or a role we play in "real" life (the ninth principle of awareness). And then



we begin to have a further realization, the awareness of being and not being and the freedom to choose, to take on a different mask and the superconscious awareness that it is all mask—a flowing between being (a masked something) and non-being (pure awareness).

Mandy Patinkin:

“Right at the end of the film, when I say: ‘I have been in the revenge business so long, now that it is over, I do not know what to do with the rest of my life.’ That to me is the line that mattered. I never realized what I was saying and then in my late fifties I heard the line (as if for the first time) and it became the real cornerstone for my life. As a young man I think I was in a bit of the revenge business. And, you know, somewhere in the past 10 years, I stopped being so angry and started being a little more grateful, literally for the sunrise and the sunsets and my kids and my family and the gifts I’ve been given.”

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**Awareness practice:** Serendipity and synchronicity—if we listen carefully to the messages contained in our experiences it helps us access crown awareness—helps us unmask even our quixotic quests and search for a meaningful life—to stop trying to control or avenge our wounds and let the love, generosity and beauty of sunrises and sunsets flow through us.

# Dr. David Sanders



**Dr. David Sanders**, Founder and Executive Director of Kabbalah Experience, is a teacher's teacher. He combines over thirty years of experience as both a psychologist and Kabbalist helping guide people to deeper awareness and fulfillment in their lives. His own transformation from religious studies to mysticism intrigued him to broaden the study of Kabbalah to practical spiritual growth. He is now considered a Master of KE's unique teachings – "Transformational Kabbalah" – which combine traditional mysticism, contemporary psychology and quantum physics.

It is David's joy to help others challenge their views of themselves and the world. Through study and practice David's students regularly change their perceptions and choose to alter or modify their behavior – which in turn brings positive change to relationships, community, and expressing their purpose in the world.

David maintains an active therapy practice, specializing in working with couples and families, and is co-authoring a book on creating new families after divorce. He is the author of 2 books on mysticism and language, and is currently writing a book on MASKS, the subject of one of his most popular courses.

David sees psychological and spiritual growth as a continuum of learning and becoming more aware of the self and others. His creation of Kabbalah Experience is a way to enter into people's lives from a different premise – spiritual learning and guidance that does not have a starting point of "my problem." Says David, "we are all linked in this work together, the teacher becomes the student and the student becomes the teacher."

David considers it his fortune to live with and learn from his wife Rita every day. With two sets of twins and an eldest son, life is rich for the whole family.