

Live the Medicine!

ÒRÌSÀ LIFESTYLE & MENTAL HEALTH

16 Strategies for Mental Health & Spiritual Freedom

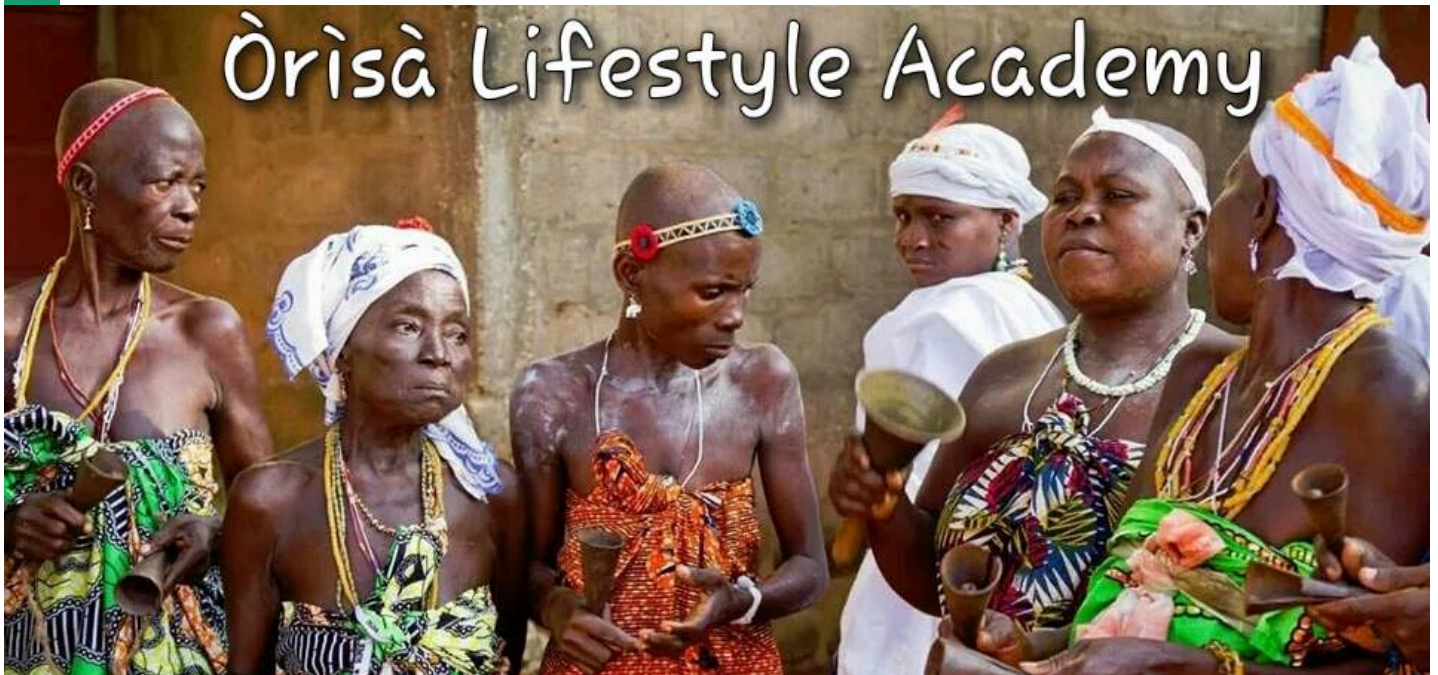




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INTRODUCTION

Òrìsà Lifestyle is the Natural Path of Spiritual Healing

Ask yourself why Òrìsà Lifestyle has endured, in spite of continuous invasion and assault from Christians and Muslims. Haven't you ever wondered why an indigenous African tradition, that is vastly different from anything practiced in the West has not only survived, but has actually flourished in far away places like Brazil, Trinidad and more recently in Europe? Of course, we must celebrate the heroic efforts of our African ancestors, who were forcibly taken to the Americas but never forgot their cultural and spiritual heritage. Likewise, we cannot overlook the fact that Òrìsà Lifestyle is effective and has consequently been preserved by those whose lives have been healed through our tradition. But that is just the beginning of the conversation.

Ultimately, the Òrìsà themselves are carrying out the divine plans of Olódùmarè, who ordained that the cycle of rebirth would continue until Eniyan (humanity) brings about the Good Condition. You see, one of the primary purposes of the pantheon of Òrìsà is to support Eniyan. Here, it is important to emphasize the fact that Ori (your head) is not "owned" by nor is it "governed" by an òrìsà. Quite the contrary is actually the case. Ori is the supreme spiritual consciousness of humanity. This is why the babalawo teaches, "Ori is the creator of all. No one created ori." The Òrìsà support Ori according to the directives of Ifá. And so, the growth and expansion of Òrìsà Lifestyle signifies the Òrìsà doing what is necessary to set the stage for Eniyan to carry out our true spiritual mission on Earth, which is to bring about the Good Condition.



CHAPTER ONE

Physical Realm



THE BODY

*All spiritual energy is experienced
through the physical senses*

We practice Òrisà Lifestyle in order to increase and sustain physical energy. Furthermore, in the exact same way that the body is fundamental to personal existence, the body is also an archetypal symbol of collective consciousness. That is, the body represents that which is most personal and most universal at the same time. Consequently, when you explore the theology of òrìsà lifestyle, you will discover the various body parts as analogous to major principles of life.

ACTIVITY: With a group of at least three others, brainstorm a list of five healthy habits. Then brainstorm a list of five unhealthy habits. Write each habit on a piece of paper and place it in a bag.

1. Mark a starting point on the floor, using tape or a rope. Players start with their toes on the line. Pick a piece of paper out of the bag and read it aloud. Is it a positive habit-and something you do? Take one step forward. Don't do it? Take one step backward. Is it a negative habit-and something you do? Take one step backward. Don't do it? Take a step forward.
2. After you have read each habit, notice where everyone is standing.
3. Discuss steps to take to improve healthy habits and try three of them for a month.



THE HEART

The seat of intuitive knowledge and conscience

When someone asks the question “*Kíni ó wà lókàn re?*” it is literally translated as, “What is in your *ókàn?*” In reality, however, it means “What are your thoughts?” or “What is your sense of it?” In common Yoruba culture, gestures associated with the chest – the seat of *ókàn* – imply feelings of courage and fear. So, both emotional and mental states alike are functions of *ókàn*. In ritual settings, gestures associated with the chest reinforce the idea that this body part is identified with manifestation.

ACTIVITY: When you make decisions, you have to weigh several competing values.

1. Choose two competing values and have a values debate. With a group, divide into two sides. One group should take one side of the issue and the other group should take the other side.
2. Meet with your group for a few minutes to discuss the major points you want to make and then let the debate begin. Have one person serve as the moderator.
3. Make note of how each person makes his or her decisions. Pay special attention to the significance of intuition, data, emotion and direct experiences for each person.



THE BREATH

The seat of intuitive knowledge and conscience

Spiritual energy is symbolized by *emi*, the breath of life. Emi is closely associated with the breath and the whole mechanism of breathing which are its most expressive manifestations. Emi is the vital force, which is ever so subtle, but feeds the fire of life and differentiates the living from the dead. In òrìsà lifestyle, the most fundamental way to consecrate something is to simply breathe upon it with intention. But because the voice carries further than the breath, we use the voice as the primary vehicle of spiritual energy. Through ordinary speech, coded incantations and devotional songs, the utterances of your voice activate the principles of life.

ACTIVITY: Memorize this verse of Ifá and recite it daily for 30 days:

An albino is the one who grows grey hair all over his body

The cripple is the one who never outstretches his hands

And carries Òrìsà's calabash from the attic

These were Ifá's declarations to Emi, Life

The offspring of Òrìsà Gbowuji

Who shall become the most important part of the body

He was asked to make sacrifice

He complied

Lo, Òrìsà! Emi is the most important

Òrìsà, Emi is the most valuable

If Emi is not taken away

Verily, nothing is lost

Òrìsà, Emi is the most essential

- Holy Odù EjiOgbe



THE MIND

The seat of mental energy

Ori ode is what we call the mind. Mental energy is the matrix for physical, emotional and spiritual energies. It is highly valued because of its social and biological importance as a site of perception, communication, and identity. *Ori ode* is regarded as the outer shell for *ori inú*, the inner head. While *ori ode* governs everything anatomical and psychological, *ori inú* governs everything subtle, energetic and metaphysical.

ACTIVITY: Turn negative thinking into positive thoughts.

1. Come up with ten things that people often say that are negative.
2. For each item, figure out a way to turn it into a thought or idea that is more positive.
3. Share your list with friends to get an even better perspective on how to take positive actions.



CHAPTER TWO

Soul Realm



THE ANCESTORS

*The Ancestral Promise defines the earthly mission
Of the extended family*

The founding ancestor serves as the nucleus of all economic, political and religious activity of the lineage. The founding ancestors of each family lineage are emissaries of Olódùmarè. As such, their mission and greatest concern is to continually increase the predominance of harmony and balance among and between family members. To a much greater degree than the deities, the founding ancestor is the family's patron saint or principle deity. His descendants adore and worship him as their spiritual guide and support.

ACTIVITY:

1. Can you inherit creativity? Maybe you believe innovativeness is an individual expression, or that creativity can only result from artists. But imagine all of the kinds of innovation involved in creating and raising a family lineage over generations. Recall a time when you felt inspired, discouraged, bored or impressed by your family, its name and reputation.
2. How did that experience impact you physically, emotionally, intellectually or spiritually?



THE MATERNAL SOUL

*The Ancestral Promise defines the earthly mission
Of the extended family*

The Mother is the sustainer of life. She embodies nurturing and nourishment. As an archetype, the mother represents compassion, forgiveness and altruism. Spiritually, the maternal soul is symbolized by *Ori Iya*. In this latter regard, mothers are even deified, as expressed by a wise saying, which reminds us, “*Orisa bi iya ko si. Iya la ba ma a bo.*” It means, “There is no deity like mother. It is the mother who is worthy of being worshipped.”

ACTIVITY:

1. Build an altar dedicated to your maternal soul. Include icons, colors and images that invoke your mother’s attributes; ones you like and ones you don’t like as well.
2. Make prayers every morning, asking your mother’s soul for guidance, support and loving care.
3. Write down your experience everyday. Review your notes and learn from it. What can you learn from your maternal soul?



THE PATERNAL SOUL

The Paternal Soul is your Conduit to Spiritual Identity

There can be no connection to the source of collective consciousness and ancestral wisdom without *orí baba*, the paternal soul. This is the case because the Ancestral Promise is handed down to you by way of *orí baba*. One aspect of this is your family name, which you inherit from your father, who inherited it from his father and so on. In this regard, you are an ambassador of your paternal lineage. As such, the way you show up in the world either enhances or detracts from the integrity of *orí baba*.

ACTIVITY:

1. Build an altar dedicated to your paternal soul. Include icons, colors and images that invoke your father's attributes; ones you like and ones you don't like as well.
2. Make prayers every morning, asking your father's soul for guidance, support and loving care.
3. Write down your experience everyday. Review your notes and learn from it. What can you learn from your paternal soul?



THE ANCESTRAL GUARDIAN SOUL

*Each of Us Has a Sponsoring Ancestor
Whose Duty it is to Guide and Protect the Individual*

Orí isèse is the 'ancestral guardian soul', which is that aspect of your identity that you inherit from your lineage. According to *òrìsà* lifestyle, each person has a sponsoring ancestor who is charged with the duty of conducting the soul to its destination in the earthly body. It is the one who accompanies each of us at his birth, follows and watches us all our lives, and empowers us with ancestral wisdom.

ACTIVITY:

1. What do you think you have inherited from your ancestors? You might think of money, property or your family name. But what about ideas and abilities? Imagine what it would be like to access and move ideas, skills and abilities from the ancestral realm into the present day.
2. How do you imagine that would improve or hinder your development?



CHAPTER THREE

Spiritual Realm



THE SPIRITUAL COHORT

*The Collective Spirits That
Support Your Evolution*

The spiritual cohort consists of spiritually advanced entities who abide with you. It can be considered your social link to spiritual advancement. As such, your spiritual cohort helps you to leverage resources that can only be accessed from outside of your family of origin. These resources allow you to be better attuned to the energy that directs your spiritual development. The spiritual cohort frequently uses dreams to share information on the past, present or future.

ACTIVITY:

1. Who are the achievers in your life? Who are the supporters? Who are the bystanders? Maybe the positions change according to the circumstances. Perhaps there are some people who maintain the same position no matter what the circumstances. Recall a time when you felt frustrated, deeply connected, or ignored by your personal or professional peers.
2. What if you had spiritual peers, whose function was to enable your maturity and evolution? What would that mean to you?



MENTORSHIP

The One Who Instructs You In the Art and the Practice

All work is dignified and divinely inspired. The ability to master one's craft is essential to spiritual development. Mentors are expected to act as catalysts who guide apprentices towards higher levels of personal excellence. Talent is not enough. Hard work is only the beginning. Anyone who wants to go from good to great, needs a qualified mentor. This is why the elders will say, '*Eniti ko ni baba ni'gbejo, bo ba ro ejo are, ebi ni i je.*' It means that 'A person who has no mentor on the throne of judgment will lose even if he has a clean and just case.'

ACTIVITY:

1. Who is teaching you how to approach your craft? Maybe you learn technique from one person and philosophy from another. Maybe you learn how to serve from one school of thought and networking from a totally different school of thought. When did you ever feel conflicted, clueless or confused about the various aspects of your craft?
2. How important is it to have a mentor to teach you specific ways to advance in your craft?



THE MARKET

*Where You Must Demonstrate the
Quality and Value of Your Offering*

The market is where entities converge for the sake of exchange. *Ejigbomekun*, for example, is the mythological market where the deities go to find the things they need to fulfill their divine missions. This is one reason why the elders say, “*Ona kan o wo oja*”, which means “There are many paths to access the market.” It suggests that there are many possible means through which we can attain a single goal. In this regard, the marketplace represents the place where you and others engage in collective efforts that produce mutually-beneficial outcomes.

ACTIVITY:

1. Make a list of your skills and interests.
2. Talk to some people in your neighborhood to get ideas about what kinds of products and services are needed in your community.
3. Make a list of businesses that would combine your skills and interests with your community's needs.
4. Ask three people if they agree with your assessment and how much they would be willing to pay for your services.



CHARACTER

How You Show Up In the World

The elders will sometimes say, “*Ori-inu eni nii ba nii s'aye eni*”, or “One’s ori-inu makes his life for him.” It means that your ability to succeed in the marketplace of life is entirely dependent upon how you show up in the world and how you choose to exhibit your natural gifts and talents. Your character is the image of you that lives in the hearts and minds of others.

ACTIVITY:

1. What do you stand for? You might believe strongly in fairness, or religious freedom or financial fitness.
2. How do you manifest your deepest values and beliefs?
3. When was a time when you felt weak, fearful, convicted or confident about your values?
4. Who would you be without these values?



CHAPTER FOUR

Universal Realm



OLÓDÙMARÈ

The Creator

The source and cause of Creation, in all of its dimensions is called Olódùmarè. The entire universe is powered and sustained by Olódùmarè, which is the undifferentiated whole of existence. In His capacity as Creator, He is known as *Eleda*- "the Creator". He is the Origin and Giver of Life, and in that capacity He is called *Elemi*- "the Owner of Spirit", or "the Owner of Life." Olódùmarè is incomparable and thus, has no equal.

ACTIVITY:

1. How do you define Olodumare? You might consider it to be the same as the Christian God. Similarly, you might think of Olodumare as the equivalent of the Islamic Allah. Likewise, you might believe that Olodumare is the same as the Hindu Vishnu.
2. When did you ever feel confused, certain, or ambivalent about the nature and identity of the Supreme Being?
3. What is the basis of your understanding of Olódùmarè? How much of it comes from the Odù Ifá?



THE ÒRÌSÀ

The Emissaries of Olódùmarè

The òrìsà are emissaries of Olódùmarè. There are 200 who sit on the right and 200 who sit on the left of Olódùmarè. They maintain balance in the universe. There are another 400 òrìsà who continuously shuttle between heaven and earth. They maintain balance between heaven and earth. Ultimately, the òrìsà support Olódùmarè's injunction to bring about the Good Condition. Learning the nature of the òrìsà is a necessary aspect of internalizing the supreme purpose of iwa, or existence.

ACTIVITY:

1. Research three òrìsà of your choosing. Limit your research to oriki, Odù Ifá and verses of the Erindinlogun (cowry shell divination). Reject and ignore anything that does not reference oriki, Odù Ifá and Erindinlogun. What blessings do they bring? What kinds of protection do they provide? What are some of their praise names and attributes?
2. List some similarities and differences between them.
3. What stands out most to you after doing the research? What does this mean to you? What are the implications?



ÒRÚNMÌLÀ

Intermediary of Fate

Òrunmìlà is the òrìsà who governs Ifá divination. In this capacity he acts as the spokesman of Olódùmarè. In the pantheon of deities, Òrunmìlà is the custodian of all shrines, providing each òrìsà with the spiritual support and attention that they need. As such, Òrunmìlà is the go-between, who communicates instructions, information and wise teachings to the òrìsà and humanity alike. At the time of Creation, it is Òrunmìlà who is present, and as such, knows the beginning and the end of all things. And so, whenever we have questions about the journey of life, we consult Ifá through a babalawo, or Ifá priest.

ACTIVITY:

1. As the mind thinks, so Ifá will speak. Therefore, divination is only as good as your thinking. Think about a specific situation in your life for which you need clarification and direction. It might be something pertaining to your professional life, your spiritual development or even your intimate relationships. What is more important to you right now, to know the truth or to get what you want?
2. When you think about the situation at hand, what do you estimate to be the three most likely outcomes? Why do you think these are the most likely outcomes? What is the basis of your conclusion?
3. What are you willing to do about the situation and the most likely outcomes? Define the limit of your commitment.



ORI APERE

The State of Spiritual Perfection

The position of maximum elevation and spiritual perfection associated with your personal destiny is called Ori Apere. It is the pinnacle of your existence and represents the total optimization of your character, abilities and purpose. As such, Ori Apere might be considered the final stage of spiritual maturity. Ifá teaches us this way:

He who prints the chalk on the back of crocodile
He was the Awo who cast Ifa for the 401 Irunmole
When going to Apere, a state of perfection
He who prints the chalk on the back of crocodile
The Awo of Ori who cast Ifa for Ori
When Ori was going to Apere
They were all advised to offer sacrifice
Only Ori responded by offering the sacrifice
The sacrifice of Ori had been abundantly rewarded
Ori is higher than all Òrìsà
It is only Ori which reaches Apere, the perfect state
No other Òrìsà can give support
Outside of one's Ori
Ori is higher than all Orisa (deities)
- Holy Odù IreteOfun

ACTIVITY:

1. How do you define spiritual perfection?



Obafemi Orangunwa, MA
Ifá Priest, Counselor and
Educator with twenty
years' experience. I believe
in the healing capacities of
Òrìsà Lifestyle. By mapping
the anatomy of Yoruba
spiritual consciousness, I
hope to make the basic
tenets of our tradition
more accessible to those
who are interested in the
wisdom of Òrìsà Lifestyle.

*“Live the Medicine that will heal your life
and heal the lives of the people you are
destined to serve.”*

- Obafemi Orangunwa, MA



Join the Òrìsà Lifestyle Academy!

Orisa Lifestyle is a philosophical and initiatory tradition. As you develop physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually, you are introduced to deeper ways to live the medicine that will heal your life and the lives of those you serve.

JOIN TODAY