

LIVE THE MEDICINE



16 Truths About the Art & Practice

GET RESULTS!

"I have had nothing but positive change in my life since I began to "Live the Medicine" of the Yoruba traditions/Ifa way of life..." - C.H. Oakland, CA

"I am not exaggerating when I say that the experience was one of the most profound moments in my life. I came away from it with a real, tangible, palpable sense that my life had officially been ordered, structured, defined." - G.F. Detroit, MI



KNOW THYSELF

Living the medicine means knowing yourself better than you know anything else. After more than 15 years of teaching people to live the medicine, I have discovered that there are a handful of principles, strategies and practices that will help promote self-discovery. Unfortunately, however, some have been conditioned to believe that the number of *ileke*, charms and pots is what makes them more powerful. Likewise, others think that by merely reciting verses or performing rituals, they will automatically become more priestly. These people are misguided. Certainly, there is a place for charms, verses and rituals. They are, in fact, indispensable to *òrìsà* lifestyle. But when you invest time, money and energy into these activities without balancing them out with INTERNAL development, you end up with a meaningless collection of random experiences and empty vessels. In this **Live the Medicine Quick Guide**, I will share some simple, but essential secrets that I have discovered in my career as a professional educator, counselor and *Ifá* priest. No matter your level of exposure to *òrìsà* lifestyle, these principles, strategies and practices will support your internal development and protect you from self-destruction on the path spiritual integrity. Live the medicine!

4 PRINCIPLES

The main objective of living the medicine is to achieve spiritual integrity. Spiritual integrity means that your lifestyle is aligned with your spiritual essence. In *The Power of Myth*, Joseph Campbell tells us that the "Navaho have that wonderful image of what they call the pollen path. Pollen is the life source. The pollen path is the path to the center." The Navajo say that, when you find yourself on that path, your outer world matches the inner one, so that everything you encounter on the journey of life looks as if it is covered with pollen.

The world becomes golden. Within *òrìsà* lifestyle, we relentlessly pray, '*Ori inu mi ko ma ba ti ode je*', which means 'May my inner head not spoil my outer one.' It is an acknowledgement of the dynamic interplay between the visible and invisible realms. More importantly, this adage is meant to remind you that the invisible world is actually the source of the visible world. Stated differently, in the same way that the New Moon gives birth to the



Full Moon, so does *ori inu* - the inner head - give birth to *ori ode* - the outer head. So, your ability to align your outer lifestyle with your inner essence represents the pathway of spiritual integrity. Here are 4 Principles that will guide you towards spiritual integrity:

1. **The REALITY** of spiritual integrity- Spiritual law is not “part” of your life. It IS your life. Everything you think, feel, say and do either enhances or detracts from your spiritual integrity.
2. **The ESSENCE** of spiritual integrity – Spiritual power is about direct experience, not paraphernalia and stuff. Spiritual integrity has everything to do with how you experience the world AND how the world experiences you. Your strategy for spiritual integrity MUST influence people to think, feel and do things that are consistent with WHO YOU ARE, spiritually. Part of the goal has to be to create sympathetic resonance between yourself and the people you serve. This is why Ifá teaches us that, ‘If one ori is fulfilled, it will reach out and touch 200.’
3. **The PRACTICE** of spiritual integrity – The little things you do CONSISTENTLY are more potent than the big things you accumulate and more powerful than the big things you say from time to time. If you want the divinities and the ancestors to believe you’re serious about your devotion and spiritual development, you need to give them some concrete reasons to support you. And while you might not like the sound of that, you know in your heart that it is not right to just keep using the ancestors when you’re in trouble; you know it is immature to run to òrìsà just to feed your ego and beg for toys. As a practice, òrìsà lifestyle is well-planned, organized and executed with precision. As such, the practice enables you to consistently achieve meaningful experiences with the divinities. It is precisely these experiences that will cultivate your spiritual integrity.
4. **The GREATNESS** of spiritual integrity – Spiritual integrity is what makes the biggest difference between a good spiritual life and a great spiritual life. Paraphernalia can easily be replaced or replicated. But you are truly unique. Think about that. People can copy one another’s clothes. They can learn to mimic prayers in impeccable Yoruba. But human essence cannot be duplicated. The elders say that “It is because we are all born unique that each of us bears a different name.” It means you’re your uniqueness should be celebrated and reinforced. Only YOU can provide the kind of experience that reflects your particular contribution to the world. Identity is destiny.

Remember, spiritual integrity will influence and empower every dimension of your lifestyle. It cannot be let to chance. Live the medicine.

4 PRACTICES

Based on the 4 Principles of spiritual integrity, I have developed 4 Practices associated with living the medicine. These four practices are meant to activate the psychology of spiritual evolution, which refers to the

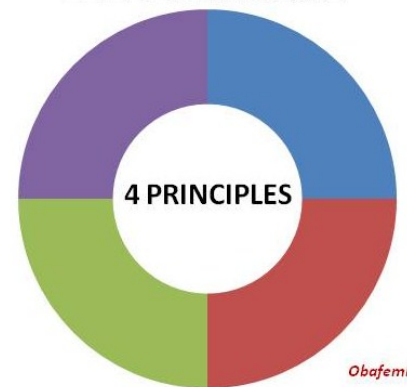
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ability to understand your own process of spiritual development. Educators, parents and good managers know that people learn differently. Some are auditory. Others are kinesthetic. Still others are visual. Similarly, there are a variety of ways in which a person experiences spiritual development. But whereas the five senses can be influenced or even controlled, the soul is far beyond your intellectual control or influence. In fact, it is the soul that actually serves up the raw material for spiritual development. So, the psychology of spiritual evolution must concern itself with the very source of human consciousness, out of which various aspects of awareness arise. For this, you must direct your attention to ori. The *oriki* - praise poetry - of ori teaches us that it is one's cause and creator. Ori is one's providence. It is the one that fills the breasts with milk even before physical birth.

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“ It all had a dynamic impact on life, but if I were to choose one it would have to be the new found change in my consciousness I've discovered. One thing that makes Baba Obafemi unique and special is he is real genuinely honest in his approach in helping an individual to live the higher version of themselves.”

- D.R. Fresno, CA

Sometimes referred to as 'destiny', ori is the perfectly timed intersection of preparation and need. And, in exactly the same way that even the tallest trees cannot reach the abode of Olódùmarè, ori is that dimension of yourself that the outside world can never disturb. In short, ori is synonymous with invincibility, which is why the elders will say 'Ori b'ogun je' which means 'Ori destroys spells' as well as 'Ori eni lawure eni' which means that 'One's ori is one's powerful charm.' However, the greatest threat to ori, and thus invincibility, is bad habit. So, when it comes to the 4 Practices of spiritual integrity, it behooves you to remember that the little things you do consistently are more powerful than the big things you say from time to time:

1. Study. Your first step to internal development is to recognize yourself as the foremost expert on your personal priesthood. You absolutely HAVE to study yourself if you really intend to progress in any meaningful way. One of the most important sources of information on your spiritual identity is your dreams. Carl Jung said it best when he advised us that: "The dream is the small hidden door in the deepest and most intimate sanctum of the soul, which opens to that primeval cosmic night that was soul long before there was conscious ego and will be soul far beyond what a conscious ego could ever reach." Dreams are the elders of consciousness. They do not lie. They do not tell you what you want to hear. They do not edit their messages in order to protect your self-image. You may not always understand them right away, but you can ALWAYS count on your dreams to tell you exactly what you need to hear, when you need to hear it. The challenge is learning to listen to them. This requires study. I'm not talking about reading generic books of dream symbolism. Forget about that! Study YOUR dreams. Look at every detail, from the setting to the way it made you feel. Draw a picture of your dreams, no matter how simplistic. Keep asking yourself "What does this symbolize to ME? Why is this meaningful in MY life?" If you

are patient, you will gradually get the message.

2. Apply. While you will definitely benefit from absorbing the wisdom of your dreams you can't become a true expert on your personal priesthood until you learn to apply what you have learned about yourself. For example,

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a person who aspires to public speaking might dream of addressing an enormous crowd and being met by uproarious cheers. As favorable as those symbols might be, you certainly can't expect to master your gift of public speaking just by deciphering that message from your dreams and then reading about public speaking; you have to actually speak in public. Likewise, you can't overcome your fear of commitment just by recognizing the symbols in your dreams and then doing Ifá rituals; you have to actually practice commitment. You can't become an expert on Ifá Divination just by feeling close to Ifá and reading books about Ifá Divination; you have to apprentice with a babalawo firsthand. By applying what you learn through your self-study and personal analysis, you'll deepen your understanding of what the alchemists call "*prima material*." So, in simple terms, your dreams will reveal your "pollen path," but you still need to take the journey. Here, taking the journey means putting in the time to master specific skills. It means you need to be tested to assess your proficiency and determine your strengths, as well as your weaknesses. This will help you to fill in some of the gaps in your spiritual discipline.

3. Summarize. Once you have studied yourself and made some discoveries, you need to explain it to yourself in a way that you will easily remember. To achieve this, create a concise definition of the major ideas and concepts that inform your personal philosophy. It will help to use a metaphor, like "I am the needle that sews my family together." Similarly, you could use a metaphor from a story or a movie that captures the idea. Perhaps, in the story of your life, you're the Pied Piper or Sita. This will seem contrived and a bit pretentious at first, but it will force you to identify the real key points of your inner truth. Then, you can translate the main ideas of your deep consciousness into simple and memorable words; the key word is MEMORABLE. So, after you first analyze a dream (or come for a reading, have an "a-ha! moment" or awaken to an epiphany), and second, after you apply what you have learned, the third step is to summarize your discovery. I personally prefer 3-5 bullet points. This will deepen your self-development even further and provide you with a very concise, valuable resource to refer to for years to come.

4. Teach. As every teacher knows, you learn most when you teach. Now, when I say "teach" I don't mean you set up a classroom and make up a syllabus. After all, we're talking about teaching what you have learned about yourself in the process of self-discovery. Your LIFE is the textbook! So, by teaching I mean that you need to be able to articulate your discoveries to other people. You need to be able to break down the science of who you are and how you arrived at this particular phase of development. When the opportunity presents itself, tell people about the process you have undergone. To illustrate, let me tell you briefly about a young man I worked with fairly recently. Shortly after he and I had started working together, he had gone to see a counselor he had known previously. As soon as he walked in the counselor remarked, "You're GLOWING! What have you been doing???" When the young man explained it in his own words, the counselor reassured him, "Whatever you're doing with the òrìsà, it's working! Keep it up!" Now, in addition to affirming the impact of his journey, the real value of that experience is that it deepened the young man's personal mastery by forcing him to articulate something very intimate and personal in a way that another person could understand and appreciate. By teaching, your level of understanding reaches an even higher level. Please note that you can teach your discoveries by posting on Facebook. You can teach strangers on the train while you commute to and from work. You can deliver presentations at work, in your spiritual community or by making Youtube videos. The point is to share your discoveries with others in a meaningful way. Remember, what is most personal is also most universal. Teach!



4 STRATEGIES

Whereas the 4 Principles of spiritual integrity give structure and context for the 4 Practices, they do not necessarily guarantee cohesion. Consequently, you will still find it necessary to organize your spiritual discipline in a way that promotes well-defined outcomes that not only complement one another, but also increase the value of your contribution in the world. Contrary to popular belief, spiritual development does NOT culminate in you becoming a disembodied ball of light. Quite the contrary, òrìsà lifestyle is meant to empower you to become a more effective, innovative and active member of your family and spiritual community. These 4 Strategies will help you to practice òrìsà as a way to become more useful to yourself and the people you serve:

1. Assign each of your natural gifts and talents to a well-defined role or set of core functions. If you're a dancer, for example, you have to know how dance affects the people you serve. You will learn this kind of information from teaching, for example. If the core function of your dance is therapeutic, then you ONLY perform dance-related activities that will support healing. More precisely, all of your time, effort and money should be allocated in way that supports dance as a healing art, and not entirely based on the money you think you'll make as a dancer.

2. Identify the strategic activities that will allow you to make the MOST SIGNIFICANT contribution to the most important people in your life, today and in the foreseeable future. You'll know how to define the "Most Significant Contribution" by the fact that the people you serve actively seek you out for it and are even willing to pay you for it. Your Most Significant Contribution is measured by more than any particular task you perform. The true value of your contribution is determined by the great things you enable others to accomplish or by the calamities you help them to avert. The better you understand your contribution, the easier it will be for you to use it strategically in order to limit adversarial elements in your circle of influence (i.e., home, temple, workplace, community). When used strategically, your strengths minimize the exposure of your weaknesses.

3. Refer to your core functions when deciding on how to expand. More specifically, if a proposed activity, acquisition or relationship doesn't directly support your core contributions, don't do it. Only complimentary elements should be practiced. If, for example, one of your main talents is organizing information by creating filing systems and data bases, you are probably good at making up to do lists, too. This is a complimentary talent. The challenge here is to use your complimentary talent strategically, so that it both creates more time and space for you to be innovative with your main talent AND supports your ability to make the most significant

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"The single biggest impact of working with Obafemi is receiving spiritual guidance that is communicated in a caring, patient manner. Obafemi's understanding of the human psyche and his experience working with diverse personalities makes him unique. He freely shares his knowledge and understanding without condescension. Obafemi is an inspirational and a powerful gift to our community."

- K.R.H. Sacramento, CA

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contribution. When you continuously refer back to your core functions you will experience freedom within the framework.

4. Communicate openly and frequently with the “right” people. You need to constantly ask yourself ‘Who knows what I am doing, what I am good at and what my goals are? Who NEEDS to know? Who else is doing what I do? Who is telling the people who need to know what I am doing?’ Most of the answers to those questions are the “right” people. Make it your business to find those people and communicate with them on a regular basis. Teach them and learn from them. I cannot emphasize this enough. Your ability to grow as a person and evolve spiritually is tied explicitly to specific clusters of people. Some will be colleagues. Others will be peers. And still others will be clients. But if you’re serious about living the medicine, all of them will influence your work in some way or another.

These 4 Strategies provide grounding and purpose. As you practice them, you will gradually come to understand the practical value of spiritual development. Even more concretely, the 4 Strategies reveal the true significance of spiritual inheritance as an indispensable element of your destiny.

4 PROFICIENCIES

When we think of Òrìsà Lifestyle, the first thing that comes to mind is usually related to the efforts required to get the outcomes we want; money, spouse, power. The reality of the universe, however, is not OUTCOME based. It’s actually RELATIONSHIP-based. Ecosystems, planetary systems as well as human biological systems are all driven by relationships, as opposed to outcomes. In life, for every desired outcome, there is a complex of system of relationships between two or more entities. This is hinted at in Yoruba proverbial wisdom, which tells us “*Tako tabo, ejiwapo*”, which is translated as “Masculine and feminine, together in twoness.” It means that the convergence of masculine and feminine produces a third possibility, which is altogether new. This kind of dialectical logic encourages systems thinking. It emphasizes the importance of relationships in order to create new realities.

Typically, “we” – the shoppers and consumers – have little or no direct relationship with “them” – the manufacturers and producers of our gadgets, clothes and food. Over time, we become conditioned to not even think about where things come from and how we are directly related to the source of the products we use on a day-to-day basis. Not only that, when we lose the capacity for systems thinking, it actually divides us from the people closest to us; our families, friends and community-members. Consequently, it has been said that instead of using things and loving people, we end up loving things and using people. Òrìsà Lifestyle provides a real solution to this serious problem. So, what follows are 4 Proficiencies that will help you properly evaluate the ways in which you participate in relationships:

1. **Proficiency #1.** People are the most important element of your social, spiritual and economic system. Retaining relationships with the people you serve is a direct result of actually building relationships in the first place. Ifá teaches us that “People provide more warmth in the cold than clothes... There is nothing greater than bringing one’s people together.” (Holy Odu OturuponOkanran). Treat the people you serve as people, and not customers, tools or objects; even professionally, associate with people who show they care about others. To grasp what this means, consider, for example, how you drive in rush-hour traffic vs. how you drive down your own street, past your neighbors. Basically, when you



know you will see people again, or if you want to see them again, you treat them better. How proficient are you at tending to the people within your social system?

2. **Proficiency #2.** Productivity and service are almost as important as the people you serve. These are the direct results of your natural gifts and talents. If you're habitually under productive or delivering poor service, you will have a difficult time with the remaining proficiencies. However, if you deliver high quality products and services, you will accomplish the rest of the proficiencies much more easily. When using your talents to design your work for maximum relationship-building, you absolutely HAVE to strive to add value to your people's lives today, tomorrow and into the foreseeable future. You'll know that you're adding value because the people you serve will seek you out and create opportunities to compensate you for your natural gifts and talents. How proficient are you at being productive and delivering high quality service at home, in the shrine and at work?
3. **Proficiency #3.** Positioning is of the utmost importance, both in terms of your physical location and timing. For example, my work is almost entirely service-driven. When I communicate with my clients and students, and offer them something that will enhance the work we have been doing together, it makes the most sense to do so during the consultation, at the time that we are actually exploring their emerging needs. This is the time when the person is most attuned to her needs. Otherwise, even if the need is real and the enhancement is going to be effective, if the communication is out of context, there is a lower chance that the person will take proper action. When the message is shared within its proper context, at the time when the client is emotionally and mentally connected to her needs, it has a higher likelihood of evoking a favorable response, which means that my client is more likely to actually get what she needs in order to progress. Position is all about context, and context provides deeper emotional connection. How proficient are you at properly positioning your service or communication?
4. **Proficiency #4.** Reciprocity. In any progressive relationship, people take care of each other. That is the basic expectation all mature relationships. The people you serve assume that you will look out for their needs. Even though it is seldom articulated as such, that is what they "pay" you to do. Even in personal relationships, where money is not exchanged, reciprocity still the rule. Your friends and family expect that you will take care of them AND allow them to take care of you. Professionally, reciprocity covers everything from giving deals to your recurring customers to increasing services over time, without charging more. Likewise, it sometimes means that you demand a bit more from your clients. When you recognize that your services or products are saving or earning people money, but they do not outwardly recognize your contribution on their growth, you will have to periodically make demands that reinforce the value you add to their operations. This is not about being greedy or an attention-seeker. Reciprocity is a kind of reality check. It reminds people that "The right hand washes the left and together they wash the face." How proficiently do you practice reciprocity?

By constantly revisiting the 4 Proficiencies, you guarantee continuous improvement.

THE 17th TRUTH

Evaluation is an indispensable aspect of living the medicine. You absolutely have to evaluate yourself according to each of the principles, strategies, practices and proficiencies. The best way to evaluate yourself is to set measurable goals – with specific outcomes and dates. And if you reach the goals or not, the important thing is to learn from the experience. Above and beyond how well you perform, you really want to know what exactly contributes to your success or failure.



Ultimately, to Live the Medicine means participating in a system of strategies that are interwoven to create a personalized Òrìsà Lifestyle for yourself. Imagine what your life would be like if all of your natural gifts and talents actually supported one other and consistently supported your life's mission. It would be an amazing experience! Live the Medicine!



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