

Article 8. Concerns about the New Age Movement

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Introduction

I am concerned about the effects that certain "New Age" practices are having on those of us who are sincerely seeking spiritual connection and personal growth; especially if we are relatively new to the process. Before discussing my concerns here are some definitions to help you understand where I'm coming from as a wholistic educator.

Wholism An attempt by us humans to describe the Big Picture or Universal Laws and how they operate in daily life. This description includes the core concepts of Energy Flow, Systems, Interconnection, Relationships, Balance, and Harmony. The value of the wholistic worldview is that it is **timeless**, respects the contributions of both **science** and **spirituality**, and can be used as a **standard** or **template** for creating balanced and harmonious relationships in all areas of human life e.g. wholistic education, wholistic agriculture, wholistic commerce, etc. "Wholistic" simply means a relationship in which all the participants are in balance and harmony. Personal growth from a wholistic understanding requires an awareness that all parts of our being are valuable and each has its own unique role to play in our lives. As we grow as human beings, this awareness eventually expands to include **all** living beings and **all** living systems.

Personal Growth The ongoing process of becoming more **energetically sensitive** and **self aware** and using that increased awareness to make **better choices** in daily life. Better choices means choices that are more compassionate, loving, and human in nature. This process requires that we **pay attention** to the two-way flow of energy within and around us as we engage in our daily relationships and observe the effects these energies are having on our thoughts, emotions, inner feelings, and physical reactions. From this place of awareness we can then consciously **choose our actions** rather than simply **react** mechanically to people and events. The standard for assessing how we're doing in the personal growth process is the degree to which we can show through our daily actions our compassion and love for ourselves and all other living beings.

The New Age Movement An approach to personal growth that emphasizes **esoteric or hidden knowledge, special techniques** taught by **teachers, experts, or masters**, and the use of various **energetic devices** and **products**. Today, thousands of people attend workshops and courses where they pay to learn techniques and buy products that are supposed to help them heal their pain, connect with higher beings, expand their level of consciousness, be more successful in their material life, etc. While some New Age practices **are** wholistic in nature and encourage the practice of self awareness and good choices, many are based on mental fantasies, faulty understandings of universal laws and principles, and outright fraud.

There are four things that are troubling me about the New Age movement:

1. Taking a Profit-Making Approach to a Process that is Highly Personal and Sacred

Personal growth is **not a commodity** to be bought and sold in the marketplace. It is a highly personal experience and is one of the sacred duties we are required to perform during our time on Earth. People who make everyone or everything in life a **potential commodity** for material profit suffer from a disease called **materialism**. The cause of this disease is a lack of spiritual connection to balance an overly-aggressive mind. The New Age approach to personal growth seems to find it perfectly acceptable to commoditize, package, and sell personal growth products and services for mass consumption and profit. Often these products and services attempt to "dumb down" the growth process so it can reach a larger market, externalize it so the focus is shifted outside ourselves to teachers, products, and techniques, and provide bells and whistles to distract us from the often difficult work we all have to do with and on ourselves.

2. Turning Over Personal Responsibility for Our Growth to Another Human Being

We all benefit from the wisdom, knowledge, and experience of other living beings. Wholism points out that we are all interconnected and rely on our relationships with each other to survive and prosper. Therefore a true teacher, expert, or master has the potential to play a useful role in our personal and collective development. Serious problems arise when we turn our focus from the message or content to the **personalities** presenting the information.

Many New Age teachers have developed big reputations, devoted disciples, and have created an attractive presence because of their smooth presentations and apparent outward success. New seekers are influenced by these external factors and are prepared to follow their advice (and of course buy their books, attend their workshops, etc.) without taking personal responsibility for the content or message they are buying. Taking personal responsibility means **ignoring personalities** and becoming aware of the effects the content or messages are having on our ability to display compassion and love for ourselves and all other living beings in daily life. Sadly I've met people who have attended hundreds of New Age workshops, invested thousands of dollars, and have made little progress because they still haven't taken ownership for their own growth and development as a human being. In fairness, some of us **have** benefited from the inspired words of an exceptional teacher, whether New Age, Old School, etc.

3. Over Complicating a Simple Process with Unnecessary Techniques and Devices

Personal growth is about increased awareness leading to better choices. The use of crystals, coloured lights, sound vibrations, drugs, breathing techniques, swimming with dolphins, etc. may be interesting and fun activities but they have little connection with our basic need to **pay attention** and then **make more conscious choices**. These external techniques and devices can have some temporary positive effects by bringing our focus and awareness to what's happening energetically within and around us. In the end it's the awareness we place in the ordinary things we encounter each day (eating food, talking with someone, etc.) and acting from that awareness that determines our long term growth. Why complicate things? Don't our minds have enough to do in this world without having more external stimulation thrust on them? The answer seems to be that there is money to be made!

4. Confusion about the Use and Surrender of Will

Most of us eventually comes to a place where we must decide which things in life can be accomplished through our own willful actions and which aspects need to be surrendered to something greater than ourselves. Making these types of decisions is the beginning of spiritual maturity and true wisdom. One of the New Age principles, based on a mental idea divorced from universal law and reality, is that **everything** is possible through our own **willful actions**. If we can imagine or visualize it, we can do it! This is neither true nor helpful. We cannot purify our own bodies of ancestral mistakes; this requires a purifying energy we don't possess. We cannot get one inch closer to the Creator through any man-made techniques; this requires the submission of our will and the surrender of results. We can't change our character, just certain aspects of our personality. Wholism teaches that life is a balanced mix of doing and being, clever intellect and compassionate heart, science and spirituality, and the active use of will and its surrender.

So for those of you promoting New Age events, teaching New Age principles and practices, creating products to enhance our growth as human beings, attending New Age workshops in the hopes of personal growth and healing, etc., I have the following five things to say:

1. We are all in this Life together
2. The vast and overwhelming majority of you are not the "bad guys"
3. Mistakes are certainly being made ... but they are **correctable**
4. Let's all be aware of the effects our actions and energies are having on each other
5. Be Well and Be Prepared

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