

Authority of Self: Empowerment of Women and Men

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South Africa

www.skylarkpubl.com

skylarkpp@aol.com

The Authority of Self Workshop for men and women can be used for many purposes: to assist those who have been rendered powerless by oppression of any form, whether physical abuse, rape, sexual abuse, mental abuse, ethnic or religious intolerance, sexism or racism.

In addition, it can be used to awaken both men and women to each others need to develop birth-right power in the context of obedience to a just authority and enable them to walk equally with one another.

Another major purpose is to demonstrate that “Repeated, identical, conscious thoughts (affirmations) physically enlarge the neural circuits in the brain when they are attached to or tagged by positive feelings, which in turn facilitates a change in behavior,”¹ ultimately helping one overcome feelings of despair and anxiety. These repeated, identical, conscious thoughts will be even more powerful if they are preceded by acknowledgments from a mentor who reflects the worth of the oppressed individual, which shall be demonstrated as the workshop progresses.

Authority of Self: A beginning

In preparation for writing my book “Assisting the Traumatized Soul”, I did research through women’s literature for several years. The phrase “authority of self” kept popping up. I wondered “What does that mean? Why do the authors not define it?” Continued research turned up nothing. Finally, I looked up in my thesaurus every word that referred to power that I could find...from energy, faculty, capability, gifts, virtue, power, and such. I found hundreds of references to human birth-right powers in the Revelation of Baha’u’llah and defined “authority of self” as a combination of these powers working together, augmenting one another, controlled by me...controlled by you! I can say with certainty that these powers can be found in other sacred texts and traditions, from Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity to Islam and the Baha’i Faith.

¹ Hal Williamson and Sharon Eakes, “Liberating Greatness: The Whole Brain Guide to An Extraordinary Life”, copyright 2006, Word Association Publishers, Pennsylvania, p. 197.

I define “Authority of Self” as: the freedom and ability to use birth-right mental and spiritual powers to make rational and moral choices, self-regulation of the emotions; and the right or permission to act independently with the understanding that one has personal limitations.²

Mankind is in need of new powers and virtues, new moralities, new capacities in the day in which we live. They are fully within our grasp....such as the power of speech, the power of choice, the power of discernment, the power of reasoning, the power of identity, the power of wisdom, the power of faith, the power of intuition, the power of reflection, discovery, and understanding....the power of will, memory and to search for truth....the power of response, anticipation, attention, and receptivity....and the power of reasoning and deduction. I have defined each of these powers psychologically and theologically in my book, “Assisting the Traumatized Soul”.

Many psychologists and counselors adopt this particular model: Thought generates feeling which generates behavior or action. This model helps us understand why we do the things we do; explained this way, we can see that it also coincides with the definition of authority of self. Our thoughts about the events of our lives, how others treat us, our losses and our gains, create both positive and negative emotions. But negative emotions can disempower our ability to reason clearly because they affect us biologically. Oppression also disempowers us. Our oppressor may not allow us to have freedom of speech or freedom of choice. How do we restore balance even when we are being oppressed or simply when things are not going the way we wish they would?

A wise man, Ian Semple, gave a talk on “Obedience to a Higher Being” and its relationship to “authority of self”. He proposed five simple steps.

1. The first is to accept personal responsibility and accept myself as the ultimate source of authority (Do all my choices and actions, and responsibility for them, come back to me?).

Every human being has individual endowment, power and responsibility. Therefore, each person must depend upon their own reason and judgment for making decisions and investigating truth.

2. The second step is to recognize personal fallibility (Am I capable of making mistakes because I am not all-knowing and all-wise? Can I admit to myself that my authority is merely a “mortal authority?”);

It is wise and mature to confess our helplessness in the face of a Higher Authority in this regard and it marks the culmination of our development.

² Phyllis Peterson, “Assisting the Traumatized Soul,” copyright 1999, Baha’i Publishing Trust, Wilmette

3. The third is to recognize a source of authority outside myself, a source of a higher truth (Like a Supreme Being, who is All-Knowing, All-Wise);

Pride and a feeling of superiority can keep us from searching for a higher Authority like Buddha, Allah, God, or a Supreme Being who will help us walk a straighter path.

4. The fourth is to understand the requirements of a Just authority that I recognize.

Do we just reap the benefit of the promises of a Just authority or are there expectations/requirements/responsibilities to be met and carried out?

5. And the fifth step is the exercise of judgment in carrying out these requirements.

The fact that I am a reasoning human being means that I must judge for myself and carry out these requirements to the best of my ability which will increase my vision. Then I will be enabled to use “authority of self”, my powers with wisdom, discernment.

A New Definition of Power

Humankind has not always been allowed to use all of its powers, especially women, black men and latinos because power in a male dominated paradigm, as well as a racist paradigm, has always been used and defined as force. But in the 21st Century, we have a new definition of power. An author by the name of N. Josefowitz defines power as “effectiveness: the ability or capacity to act or perform effectively. This broader concept of power includes the capacity and the ability or competence to get things done by either influencing others or having access to resources. It also includes the idea of granting more autonomy to those with less power.

Power Used as Force

Everyone knows what power used as “force” looks like. We witness it in a world at war today and our history books are littered with the brutality of force. We also see it in the dangers our children and youth face, early pregnancy...forced into sexual slavery....forced to live on the streets, homeless and motherless...and we see it in the battering of women forced to endure sex and rape with the consequences of HIV/AIDS and ostracism...and we see it in the funerals of HIV/AIDS infected black and white youth and adults world-wide, who could have, but were too stigmatized to ask for help or ARV medication (Anti-Retro Viral medication).

Just Authority

A Prophet by the name of Baha'u'llah once said, "What mankind needs in this day is obedience unto them that are in authority, and a faithful adherence to the cord of wisdom. The instruments which are essential to the immediate protection, the security and assurance of the human race have been entrusted to the hands, and lie in the grasp, of the governors of human society."

Here is a brief definition of a **Just** authority: A rational, nurturing and just authority treats all as equal with a right to dignity even though others may not have the same power, intellectual capacity, and experience or material status. A **Just** authority based upon genuflection to the Creator of us all, helps those under its care discover who they are through steadfast love, tolerance, and non-controlling encouragement. It is the responsibility of **Just** authority to encourage and teach ways of blending individual perspectives because we cannot live without cooperation and reciprocity.

The Power of Language, both Positive and Oppressive:

There are many ways to empower women and men. I have chosen to dismantle a series of negative, oppressive messages and awaken men and women to affirmations that confront this covert insidious, destructive language that causes despair, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness and unnecessary rebellion. Following the negative messages I have imbued the following positive messages and higher thinking affirmations with the powers of "Authority of Self," using the "thought, feeling, action model to rise above the negativity.

Identifying the Negative Messages and Oppressive Language:

Don't be smart or intelligent! Don't ask questions! Don't be close! Don't be weak!
Don't be strong! Don't need! Don't be a child! Don't learn and grow! Don't lead!
Don't be happy! Don't see from your perspective! Don't be important! Don't be afraid!
Don't change! Don't laugh! Don't be different! Don't set boundaries! Don't be aware!
Don't be sane! Don't trust! Don't be you! Don't try! Don't talk or express yourself!
Don't know yourself! Don't be! Don't take care of yourself! Don't be greedy! Don't
make choices! Don't disobey or challenge authority!

This language is in direct opposition to encouraging us to use our birth-right power of Authority of Self found on page three. Sometimes the language that imprisons our powers is directed as "You are lazy! You are stupid! You're crazy! You're BAD! You made me hit you! You are worthless! You're retarded! You whore! You're rotten to the core! You're never going to amount to anything!" No matter how the language is framed, the fundamental relationship is that of disempowerment of the individual's authority of self and destruction of their identity. These are "Labels" that we internalize; and we believe them to be true. But if we have someone, a friend, parent, therapist, a

Mentor or support group, *that reflects and acknowledges* our good qualities (which should have been done while we were children through adults) instead of receiving a negative label, we begin to believe in ourselves, and our true identity becomes strongly resistant to external criticism and stop being a victim to pathological self-criticism. Further, we begin to know how to “affirm” our good qualities which the following exercises will illustrate.³

Feelings:

Feelings are very important to this exercise because if we have been disempowered, our feelings are going to be negative. This can result in depression and/or a loss of a feeling of nobility. Our thoughts are going to be negative, too, and they, together, will negate our ability to change our behavior. There is much research that has been done on how to change how our brain thinks. In “Liberating Greatness: The Whole Brain Guide to An Extraordinary Life”, authors Hal Williamson and Sharon Eakes say that an “affirmation when tagged with positive emotions create strong, new neural circuits” in the brain. “These new circuits have the capacity to alter old, unwanted behaviors in favor of new, desired behaviors”⁴ because they lift us up out of the despair, paving the way for new thoughts which enhance our esteem and nobility.

Right now, think of the happiest moment you’ve ever experienced in your life! It may be a moment when you have achieved or accomplished a goal, the birth of a baby, the feeling you had when you learned to drive and became more independent; when someone saw the real you and accepted you. At any rate, it is an “I can do it!” moment that brought you great joy! Bring up the memory of it, then bring up the “Feeling” you had. What Mr. Williamson suggests is that you take that special, positive feeling and tag, connect, mark, or attach it to your new affirmation. This will create the strong neural circuits that will help you alter your old, unwanted behaviors and emotions. Whatever challenge you are experiencing needs to be tagged emotionally with that joyous feeling, instead of the feelings of disempowerment that weigh you down. When the negative thoughts repeatedly come up, as they always have, use the following affirmations and tag them with the invincible feeling of joy! Doing it repeatedly will actually change your brain given time! Repeat the affirmation “identically” three times, or craft your own affirmation, but remember to tag it with a positive emotion while you do so!

There are actually “twin concepts” to adopt to win the battle: Tag the affirmation with the positive emotion; and “detach” your mind and heart from the negative emotion. Becoming detached actually opens you up to a myriad of positive and wonderful emotions. **You’ve got to believe the positive emotions will work in this process.**

³ Dr. David Burns, “Feeling Good: 10 Cognitive Distortions that can cause depression.

⁴ Hal Williamson and Sharon Eakes, “Liberating Greatness”, copyright 2006, Word Association Publishers, Pennsylvania, p. 197

Go through this list of 29 negative messages and positive affirmations as a group, selecting 5 or 6 that apply to your situation, depending on the size of the group. Divide into groups of two. Because each of us is dependent upon a caregiver for the development of our power of identity, partner #1 will sit before you and look directly into your eyes with compassion and gentleness, reflecting and acknowledging your identity in a positive way without words for one full minute. And partner #2 will gaze with trust in his/her partner's eyes.

The following quote is the reason for this:

“You can talk with someone for years, everyday, and still, it won't mean as much as what you can have when you sit in front of someone, not saying a word, yet you feel that person with your heart, you feel like you have known the person for forever.... connections are made with the heart, not the tongue.” — C. JoyBell C.

It may be difficult or strange for partner #2, but gently try to connect with his or her eyes with compassion.

After one minute Partner #1 will say the acknowledgement.

Partner #2 will say the affirmation three times and each time consciously try to increase his or her feelings of joy and faith, with a remembered event of happiness:

Discuss the times you have listened to the negative messages automatically, without being aware of the accompanying feelings and without challenging the negative messages. By tagging the affirmation with a positive feeling, you change the neural circuits in your brain. Think of the affirmation as a celebration of “higher thinking.” Know that even if you have no resources or if violence surrounds you, emotionally tagging your positive/past experience with its remembered feeling of joy, will help you to become detached, and able to use your power of reasoning and, I repeat, it will change the neural circuits in your brain. Believe it.

The reason for having you partner with a “Mentor” who acknowledges you is because they are the advocate you should have had as a child who was to be there to reflect your wholesomeness and assist you to develop your true identity. Babies look with longing at their mother’s face and are dependent on those peaceful moments of reflection. If you did not get that, it doesn’t mean that this process is gone forever. You can grasp for it today with trust, with acknowledgement confirming your affirmation.

If the person who has a partner cannot read, select a volunteer who can assist them. Let the volunteer read for them as they listen and look into the Mentor’s eyes.

The following acknowledgements and affirmations grant you your birthright powers of Authority of Self. Repeat each acknowledgement and affirmation three times:

1. Don't be smart or intelligent! You're stupid!

Q. What feelings and thoughts about yourself would prevent you from revealing that you are smart or intelligent?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak): I acknowledge that you are an intelligent person. You don't have to pretend to be stupid with men, women, or **just** authority. I encourage you to develop the power of independent investigation of truth today. You can discover a new reality with your power of reasoning, and feel joy while you do so!"

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak): I challenge the belief that I have to pretend to be stupid with men, women, or **just** authority. Today I will look for ways to reveal instead of conceal my intelligence. I will develop the power of independent investigation of truth. I will discover a new reality with my power of reasoning by bringing my inner thoughts into public view. I will speak my truth without fear. I celebrate my visible intelligence. I tag this affirmation, these new thoughts, with a feeling of joy that comes from a memory of a prior accomplishment! And I repeat this affirmation word for word, knowing it will lead to a change in my behavior! (Feel the joy you remember and then say the affirmation three times with that feeling of joy glued into every word!)

2. Don't ask questions!

Q. What feelings would prevent you from asking questions?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak): I feel sad that you have been prevented from asking questions in the past, but I encourage you to seek out people who are "safe" and ask them questions. Ask them how they overcame their fear. I acknowledge that asking questions is a birthright power that can lead you to equality with others as well as learning truth. Asking questions is a ladder to knowledge. I believe that you can do it with safe people without fear of violence.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak): I challenge my belief that I will experience violence if I ask questions. Asking questions now becomes my basis for searching for reality or truth. Consciously developing the power of independent investigation of truth means I don't have to blindly obey authority or follow

tradition and culture exclusively. I celebrate my birthright power to question. I attach a feeling of courage and curiosity to this affirmation; and I do it repeatedly!! (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

3. Don't be close!

Q. What feelings do you have when someone tries to get close to you?

Partner # 1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak): I acknowledge that unity, friendship, and relationship are gifts that are given to us regardless of whether our family of origin is troubled; and I believe you are capable of forming close bonds with safe people. I encourage you to call a community member, write a note, and enter into a reciprocal relationship, one in which personal, sexual, emotional, spatial, and energy boundaries will be respected.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak): I challenge the belief that I have to be totally independent or that I am not lovable because I am different than my siblings or my peers. I no longer have to do everything all by myself. I can observe varying degrees of development, perfection and consciousness and determine who is safe to be close to and who is not. Clarifying the limits of acceptable behavior will allow me to be close to others and experience safety. I tag this affirmation with the feeling of joy that comes from decisiveness because I can tell others what I need and want, offering the same to them. I repeat this affirmation identically, marking it with a feeling of previously remembered joy. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

4. Don't be weak/strong! You weakling!

Q. What feelings tell you that you have to be weak or strong?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak): I acknowledge that you have been raised to think you have to be weak and dependent in the face of challenges...or strong at all times. I encourage you to know that all of us have human frailties. This does not mean you are a weakling. Believe that you don't have to play out the roles that have been assigned to you. You don't have to cower in front of anyone...weak or strong.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge the belief that I should be superwoman or superman. Today I perceive weakness as vital to understanding my relationship to a Superior Being who is All-Powerful. I no longer have to tough it out and hide all my human frailties. Using the power of will I can let go of the role I have accepted and the mask of strength I wear. I will begin to trust that I will be accepted for who I am in moments of weakness as well as strength. I can allow myself to cry when I feel sad or frustrated, but I promise myself to rejoice after the tears because it will help me detach from the sadness. I feel

successful; and I will no longer allow myself to cower in front of anyone. I emotionally attach a feeling of joy continuously while I repeat this affirmation word for word identically. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

5. Don't need! You're so needy, you're pathetic!

Q. What feelings do you have when you sense that you have a need?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge to you that when a person's needs are unmet in childhood, it causes them to postpone indefinitely meeting their own needs as adults. It also causes them to believe they are undeserving. I encourage you to seek to acquire your moderate needs and if the scale tips and you reach out for something extra, I hope that you will not self-punish. Just recognize it as an attempt at "need-fulfillment" and go on to establish a balance next time.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that I am undeserving, that I must continually martyr myself, or that I must self-punish when I need something. I will speak my needs and the needs of others. I will use the power of will to overcome the feeling of inertia or apathy that prevents me from acquiring my moderate needs, whether they be material or spiritual, energy, or space, time or emotional. I celebrate the power to ask to have my needs met; and I repeatedly tag this affirmation with the feeling of reassurance and joy, both for myself and others. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

6. Don't be a child!

Q. What feelings prevent you from being child-like?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I will acknowledge to you that all of us have an inner child that must have expression in play...whether that is through music, dance, art, writing, photography, or anything that helps us get beyond caretaking to celebrating life with joy. I encourage you to capture the creativity that lies within you as a gift that you can give to yourself.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) All of us have a child within and so do I. I challenge the belief that I must always work and should never play or be spontaneous. I will advocate for my inner child. I will become more aware of the power of my identity to firmly know who I am, what is important to me and where I fit in this world. I will not settle for the rigid role of caretaker which was assigned to me as a child. I can give care willingly and also take care of myself. I celebrate my ability to satisfy the needs of my inner child and the adult that I am

because I am multi-faceted. I continuously tag this affirmation with the feeling of playfulness and confidence. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

7. Don't learn and grow!

Q. What feelings prevent you from seeking out knowledge?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that you are capable of growing and developing the gems of knowledge within you as well as digging deep into the collective knowledge of humankind. I encourage you to listen to your power of intuition, which is strong in women, for it will confirm the pathway you choose to knowledge.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge the belief that I have to fit the mold prescribed for me by authority figures. This week I will turn toward the source of my inner knowledge, my power of intuition. I will educate myself to discover the gems of knowledge within me. Though I have often felt discounted and discouraged, I celebrate new success in my capacity to grasp knowledge, my power to discover something new. I emotionally mark this affirmation with the feeling of inquisitiveness that has guided me and helped confirm my intuition; and I do it repeatedly with a feeling of joy. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

8. Don't lead!

Q. What feelings hold you back from showing others how capable you are?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that you are fully capable of making decisions, and that you have both leadership capacity and the ability to be an active participant. I encourage you to choose a mentor or to be your own mentor in the process of changing and growing.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge the belief that I have to be less than capable in order to escape the wrath of authority. I challenge the belief that I have to be passive and compliant while other people make decisions. I no longer have to be a follower only. I can take the lead or be an active participant. I celebrate bold action and with my power of identity, I change and grow. At this point of my development I would not feel shame, but would welcome a mentor who would teach me servant/leadership skills. I emotionally attach a feeling of courage to

this affirmation. I repeatedly combine this affirmation with the feeling of courage, joy and determination. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

9. Don't be happy!

Q. What feelings squelch your happiness and spontaneity?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that you were created to experience happiness and that you can now reach out for it. I encourage you to be spontaneous and to find people you can laugh and play with, for drawing near to others in oneness, reciprocity and co-operation are some of the reasons you were created.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that I have to be emotionally sober and duty bound at all times. I can be spontaneous. I can allow myself to laugh and play instead of rigidly sticking to the list of things I need to complete. I can sing, dance and listen to music. I can also achieve spiritual happiness by seeking out things that will give my life meaning. I celebrate the ultimate happiness...drawing closer to my Creator. I repeatedly and identically tag this affirmation with the feelings of happiness and spontaneity! (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

10. Don't see!

Q. When does the feeling of confusion cloud your perception of the truth?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that in the past your family of origin caused confusion as you witnessed such crazy-making behaviors and messages as "I love you. Leave me alone." I encourage you to find a neutral party to speak your truth to and have it validated so you can stop minimizing the great stress it has and is causing you to feel.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that the truth is too painful to experience. When things are not going well in my relationships and I experience confusion or crazy-making behavior, I can test out my perceptions with a neutral party. I don't have to minimize the effects of others' treatment of me or rationalize excuses for others' behavior. I celebrate as I perceive the truth

and speak the truth. I emotionally attach a feeling of peacefulness and courage to this affirmation every time I want to express the truth of my experience. I also connect a feeling of freedom to this affirmation repeatedly. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

11. Don't be important! You are worthless! You'll never amount to anything!

Q. Where does your feeling of worthlessness come from?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge the personal worth, dignity and nobility that is inherent within you. I admire the peace and unity you bring to your community for that is what has made you achieve a noble station. I encourage you to remember the confidence and amazement you felt when someone in the past has advocated for you. Know that more advocates and mentors will affirm your value as you journey on.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief and the emotional feeling I have that I am worthless. My value does not come from measurable achievement or having money. It comes from my ability to love, from the justice with which I treat others, from the unity and peace I alone bring to my personal relationships or my community. I celebrate my nobility and dignity whether I do menial work or preside over a company. In either case I am merely my Creator's servant. I tag this affirmation with the feeling of relief and confidence that I have experienced when someone advocated for me in the past and I do it repeatedly! (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

12. Don't be afraid! (or) You coward!!

Q. What acts in the past have made you feel brave? What person makes you feel brave?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge the fact that you are living is a testimony of your courage and bravery, having gone through all the trials that you have. I encourage you to celebrate your courage and use it to make healthy changes, even if it means that you have to formulate new friendship. Look forward with joy!

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge the belief that I am a coward. With a healthy fear of a Higher Being which teaches me to obey JUST institutions of authority, I no longer need fear any man. I celebrate courage. Through the power

of faith, I can take risks to make healthy changes in my life. I repeatedly tag this affirmation with the feeling of courage and security with every cell of my body and brain; and I repeat this affirmation identically each time fear comes up. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

13. Don't change!

Q. What feelings are so strong that they keep you from expressing your true identity? Who gives you "Change back!!" messages when you have tried to change?

Partner # 1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that change is difficult, whether it is your beliefs, job, relationships or values. I also acknowledge that others may be uncomfortable when you take a different direction than they do. I encourage you to stay the course and accept their limitations, making choices that are right for you.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge the belief that I have to be passive and compliant while others make healthy changes in their value systems, beliefs, jobs and relationships. If others are uncomfortable with the changes I make, I can still bring my true identity into focus and wait for them to adjust to the change. If they cannot make the adjustment, I can accept their limitations while staying on my course of growth. I celebrate my right to choose and have a self-determined life while observing the Covenant of God which sets spiritual, physical, and moral limits for me. I visualize not only new growth, but connect the virtues of Faith and Patience to it repeatedly as I say this affirmation word for word. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

14. Don't laugh!

Q. Are you afraid to have such positive emotions as hope, faith and love? Are you afraid to laugh or that people will laugh at you?

Partner # 1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge for you that laughter is a very healthy action and response to the contrasts of life and our own foibles. It is cruelty when it is used to ridicule others. I encourage you to celebrate happy occasions and the full range of your positive emotions such as faith, hope and love.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that people laugh only to ridicule my body, my thoughts or my speech. I now celebrate the joy that laughter can bring to happy occasions. I also celebrate the full range of my positive emotions such as hope, faith, love, determination, purpose, festivity and a strong will to live. Tears also become an important release of frustration and

anger and become a signal to me that I may need to address a need or confront a wrong doer. Emotionally I return to that moment in time when I did have hope and I connect that hope to this affirmation so that I will experience a full range of positive emotions. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

15. Don't be different!

Q. Guilt is a powerful emotion. Does it stop you from trying new things... or a new approach to life as you appear to be different from friends and relatives?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge your individuality in developing your gifts, your thoughts and your character. I encourage you to try new things and to try a new approach to life, free of guilt because we all live by grace and mercy as we develop our virtues of trustworthiness, forgiveness, love, and compassion.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I now challenge the belief that I have to be the same as everyone around me. If my thoughts, character and the way that I dress set me apart from others, I can celebrate my individuality as I add variety to my relationships and environment. I will no longer allow my differentness to be swallowed up by convention and tradition or guilt that others try to heap upon me. Some things will always remain the same...the fact that rights always come with responsibilities; but I will conquer my guilt with the feeling of Freedom with which I mark this affirmation repeatedly and intentionally. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

16. Don't set boundaries!

Q. Your internal alarm is a combination of negative feelings that cause confusion and can immobilize you. Have you recognized it in the past? What is it like for you?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that many people are either depressed because of violations of their boundaries, or they isolate themselves, further increasing their depression...and feel angry because others treat them as an object. I encourage you to take control of issues regarding your sexuality, energy, money, time, and emotions so that you and others can glimpse the real you.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that it is too risky to set boundaries with others. I am not the property of others or an object to be used as others please. I celebrate my freedom from boundary enmeshment (violation). I celebrate my internal alarm that tells me something is wrong and needs to be set right before my relationship proceeds. I now take control of and practice vigilance for the boundaries that govern my thinking, spirituality, emotions, will, perceptions, sexuality, money, time, space, energy, body and belongings. With

the virtue of vigilance, I tag this affirmation and set boundaries with others repeatedly until they begin to know who I am – my reality. The end result of this is that my identity will become clear to me. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

17. Don't be aware!

Q. Some people minimize their emotional pain, saying, “Oh, it’s not that bad.” Or they rationalize the behavior of others by saying “Oh, he was drunk otherwise he wouldn’t have done that.” Give examples from your own life.

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner’s eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that minimizing your emotional pain and rationalizing the behaviors of others is a way of denying your awareness of boundary violations. I encourage you to stay in the present rather than go into a trance in order to grow into greater emotional and mental health.

Partner # 2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner’s eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that it is too painful to be confronted with reality and truth. I allow myself to become conscious of the defense mechanisms that prevent me from being fully aware of my denial, the times I minimize my emotional pain and rationalize the behaviors of others; I take responsibility for my dissociation (going into a trance) and its consequences. I celebrate my growing awareness that protects me because it keeps me in the present where I can choose relationships that are healthy instead of harmful. I repeatedly connect the feeling of gratitude to this affirmation and repeatedly affirm my consciousness knowing it will lead to new behaviors. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

18. Don't be sane!

Q. Do people in your life allow you to have access to the truth of your history? Explain further.

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner’s eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that unhealthy family dynamics may have prevented your having access to the truth of your history. I encourage you to step outside the limiting roles that have been forced upon you and communicate your truth and past with courage.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner’s eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge the belief that I have to seek the safety of a fantasy world and live in denial. I celebrate the independent investigation of truth which will rid me of that which is false – the roles I have been forced to play, the perceptions that were discounted by others, the thwarting (blocking) of my attempts to communicate my intelligence through speech or feelings. I also celebrate having access to the truth of my history for that is the

root of my sanity, even though it may be painful, yet I have determined to not live in the past. I mark this affirmation repeatedly with the feeling of determination, combining intuition and truth to live my life fearlessly in the present to change the future. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

19. Don't trust!

Q. Do you trust your perceptions, feelings, and thoughts regarding who is trustworthy? What has happened in the past when you have or have not trusted? What did it feel like?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that you have the right to exercise all of the component powers of "authority of self so that others do not control you. I encourage you to trust your perceptions, feelings and thoughts regarding who is trustworthy and who is not.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that I have to control everyone and everything in my life. I celebrate the component powers of "authority of self," within the guidelines of Justice. This makes it possible for me to trust and give up my need to control others and always be defending myself. I now trust my perceptions, feelings and thoughts which help me come to a conclusion about who is trustworthy and who is not to be trusted. I am no longer open to boundary enmeshment or violation. I repeatedly connect this affirmation with the feeling of trust and joy, combined with caution, knowing that all three are virtues meant to protect me. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

20. Don't be you!

Q. Everyone has multiple roles to play in life. Do you have a role that is too rigid, in which others control you? How does it make you feel?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that your identity is a very precious thing and that it is continually evolving as you learn from the collective knowledge of humankind and sacred texts. I encourage you to expand your noble identity beyond the rigid roles that you accepted before you had enough life experience to realize that they were unhealthy.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that I have to play a role or have permission to be the person I really am. I no longer allow myself to be affected when others to ridicule, discount, ignore, manipulate or control who I am. I celebrate my inmost true self which is a trust from my Creator, and which was created in His image as noble and full of beauty. I follow my true purpose now,

and that is to develop virtues, and know the sacred aspects of life. I repeatedly connect the feelings of boldness and spontaneity, which I remember from my past, to this affirmation, no longer dependent and powerless. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

21. Don't try!

Q. Do you feel like giving up when you don't have cooperation and reciprocity coming from others? What could you do instead?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that in spite of (or because of) your family history you inherited the Herculean task of not only trying to rise above your trauma, but also trying to please those who were never satisfied, were uncooperative and would not reciprocate. I encourage you to seek out friends who will be cooperative and extend reciprocity to you. Be assured that they are out there!

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that life is too hard to keep trying. I challenge my feeling that I'll never be able to please anyone no matter what I do. I rekindle my desire for cooperation and reciprocity. With my power of faith I begin anew to make efforts toward my goals whether they relate to my work or my personal life. I now celebrate my power of speech, my power of will and my desire to rise above the trauma in my life. I repeatedly attach the feeling of success and joy to this affirmation because I know I am cooperative and that I reciprocate at appropriate times. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

22. Don't talk!

Q. Have you ever had your feelings and thoughts reflected by others? What did it feel like?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that you may never have had someone to share your feelings and thoughts with in open, direct, and honest consultation. But try to remember at least one person who has advocated for you. I encourage you to imagine that he or she is here before you while you release your feelings and thoughts...no longer silent.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that I must remain silent, refrain from expressing my thoughts and opinions or refrain from confronting others with my power of speech. I challenge my belief that open, direct, honest discussion or consultation is too risky. I no longer fear the threat of violence if I should talk. I can ask to have my feelings and thoughts reflected by others who are safe. I can ask for validation. I can offer my viewpoint and show respect for others' views without discounting my own views. I celebrate release from oppressive force that kept me silent all these years. I repeatedly mark this

affirmation with the feeling of freedom to speak that I remember from my past. If I never had that feeling of freedom, then I choose the feeling of gratitude and happiness for that one person I remember who advocated for me and my voice, utilizing that as a key freedom. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

23. Don't know yourself!

Q. Do you feel like you are the only one in the world who makes mistakes and therefore, you shame, blame, crucify, and guilt yourself every day?

Explain.

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that there is no one person on earth who is perfect and has never made a mistake. Self-criticism is the hardest of habits to break, and compassion for others comes easily. I encourage you to now extend compassion to yourself instead of shaming, blaming, and crucifying yourself every day.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that I cannot put aside the roles that have been assigned to me and discover my true identity. I challenge my belief that my world will fall apart and others will be uncomfortable if I seek to know my inmost true self through the awkward process of elimination that a teenager goes through as part of her or his development. I release myself from shaming, blaming and guilt when I make mistakes. But I turn toward the Sacred Texts of my Creator for guidance and using "authority of self, take responsibility for the consequences of all my choices. I celebrate the unveiling of the ever-evolving self that I am beginning to know. I repeatedly attach the feeling of compassion for myself that I have experienced in the past, and gratitude of knowing that others, too, have had compassion for me when I have made mistakes. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

24. Don't be!

Q. Nobility is not only a virtue...it's a feeling as well. What kinds of behavior help you feel noble?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that you have been created noble and encourage you to seek out that which will lead you to self-worth and nobility. This will be found in the purposeful things that you do and the service you render to your Creator and to humankind. Purposeful service to others helps expand our noble birthright enabling us to feel our dignity.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that I am not enough as a child, a woman, a man, a friend, a spouse, or an employee. I reclaim my identity as a child of my Creator. I no longer have to continually do something spectacular to be accepted. Yet I can seek to know that which leads me to self-worth and nobility, or that which leads me to shame. I celebrate the fact that a

Supreme Being created my soul with His light within, and I claim nobility as my birthright. I recreate that feeling of nobility in my heart that I felt when I gave of myself to the Cause of Justice and the Greater Good; and I attach that feeling repeatedly to this affirmation. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

25. Don't think!

Q. Does problem solving by your self make you feel like you are going in circles? That's called being locked into your own perspective. Who could you trust in asking for feedback or to validate your powers?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that it can seem difficult to find someone you could trust for feedback on problems, validation of your powers, or simply to vent emotions that distract you from discovering your own perspective. I encourage you to communicate your thoughts and feelings confidently with a safe person who encourages you to problem solve.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that it is threatening to think. I no longer have to drift into a fantasy world when things go wrong. I can stay in the here and now to problem solve, to ask questions, to communicate my feelings, thoughts, history and hopes, to ask for feedback, validation, and guidance. I celebrate my powers of reasoning and understanding for they are spiritual gifts from my Creator. I repeatedly connect the feeling of confidence to this affirmation, knowing that a mentor, if asked, would help me problem solve by pointing out to me my unique powers. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

26. Don't like yourself!

Q. Do you have an internalized voice that says, "You are bad?" When ever you hear a "YOU" message like that, know that it was imposed originally by an external source. Who gave you messages like that when you were a child?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that "YOU" messages are not part of your permanent identity. They came from an external source...and you were too young to deflect them. Long after that external source was gone, you adopted these messages as your own. I encourage you to free yourself from them and from the self-criticism that results from them.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge myself that I have to abuse myself every time I make a mistake. I challenge the belief that I have to listen to an internalized, abusive voice that has haunted me from childhood. It tells me I am bad but I don't have to own its judgment of me. I no longer have to compare myself to others, but justly seek to do my best whatever my goal. I celebrate my freedom from constant criticism and punishment whether by self or others. I repeatedly connect the feeling of excellence in a job well done, creating pride and

joy that I remember from my past; because nobility is the way I was created. I detach myself from “you” messages such as “You are stupid”, which I have learned from an external source. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

27. Don't be greedy! You are so selfish!

Q. We need material as well as spiritual bounties. What needs are you thirsting for...and what feelings do you have when you try to fulfill those needs?

Partner # 1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that the true bounties are “spiritual” and are meant to support our material needs. I encourage you to celebrate the material as well as the spiritual wealth a loving, merciful, bountiful Creator has in store for you.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that to “need” is to be greedy or selfish. I can fulfill my need for food, clothing, love and attention without labeling myself as a greedy person. I allow bounties of my Creator to build trust and pride and hope within my heart and mind. I allow my needs to become conscious. I celebrate the material as well as the spiritual wealth a loving, merciful, bountiful Creator bestows upon me. I repeatedly connect the feeling of contentment and joy with the will of a Supreme Being with this affirmation, knowing that He provides me with both material and spiritual bounties. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

28. Don't make choices!

Q. What has happened to you in the past when you tried to assert your power of choice? What feelings do you have when you come to the point of making a choice?

Partner # 1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) Did you know that babies are not passive and compliant? Did you know that there was a time that you explored your small world, making choice after choice, until you were overly criticized and lost the ability to assert yourself? I encourage you to celebrate freedom from oppression, knowing that freedom does come with responsibilities and consequences for your choices.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge my belief that I must be passive and compliant instead of a choice maker. I challenge my belief that I must conform to escape the criticism of others or self-punishment. I now choose to assert myself and my identity. I now choose to be different, to have higher thoughts, to develop virtues that set me aside for my true purpose. I can say “This is who I am!” and respect the differences of others. I am no longer afraid of my power of choice. I celebrate it as freedom from oppression. I now celebrate taking responsibility for the consequences of my choices, knowing that

ultimately I am responsible to my Creator for the choices that I make. I repeatedly tag this affirmation with the feeling of enthusiasm and joy because it uplifts my soul as I make hopeful and moral choices. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

29. Don't disobey or challenge "authority!"

Q. What has happened to you emotionally when you have blindly obeyed authority in the past? How can you break free of this injustice and use "Authority of Self", to regulate your emotions, and act with the power of discernment?

Partner #1: (Look directly and with compassion into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I acknowledge that you have been encouraged to blindly obey authority, and that has resulted in emotional and mental oppression. But you cannot find safety in blind obedience or by abdicating your powers. I encourage you to utilize "Authority of Self" as you search to recognize those truths that are universal and that lead us to service for the Greater Good.

Partner #2: (Look directly and with acceptance and trust into your partner's eyes for one minute before you speak.) I challenge the belief that blindly following authority is the safest way to live my life. I challenge the belief that I must blindly obey regardless of the content or context of the issue. I refuse to discount my own search for truth, my own inner vision, or invalidate my ability to recognize the truth I discover. I now celebrate "Authority of Self" bestowed upon me by a loving, just and merciful Creator, to be used for the Greater Good. And I celebrate my spiritual perception that assists me in recognizing truth. I repeatedly mark this affirmation with the feeling of gratitude and joy I have felt in the past, grateful that I know right from wrong, good from bad and that I have the Sacred Texts to guide me. (Repeat this affirmation two more times.)

Create your own Affirmations with the powers that make up the Authority of Self. Make it a time-limited action statement.

“I challenge my belief that I must remain silent in the face of the unjust anger or criticism of others. This week I will use the power of _____ speech _____ to speak up for myself when someone criticizes me. Though I may normally be silent, this time I will defend myself, but I will speak kindly. I also know that I do not have to speak kindly to a tyrant or an oppressor. I may feel like withdrawing, hiding or running away because I am afraid, but I will stand my ground and speak my truth. I repeatedly connect the feeling of safety and joy with this affirmation.”

“I challenge my belief that I cannot tell people who I am and what I need, distinguishing myself from them. This week I will recognize my power of _____ identity _____ and express my opinions, what I want, and what I need with freedom. I will tell at least two people what I need; and I will share my opinions with two people. I may feel timid because I’m not used to telling people what I want and need. I may have to reinforce my statements 3 to 5 times again and again; but I will stand firm. I repeatedly tag this affirmation with the feeling of courage that I have experienced even at one moment in time.”

“I challenge my belief that I have to numb my feelings. This week I will use my power _____ of speech _____ to speak my **feelings** of anger, resentment, and outrage when someone discounts my feelings or memories of the past, or when they do not treat me as if I am equal to them. I also know that “venting” these emotions is not problem solving. I can prepare myself for this in the privacy of my home and make angry faces in the mirror, growling noises in my throat as I express my feelings, and yet regulate my feelings so that when I confront the person who is treating me as “less than”, I will still retain my dignity. I repeatedly attach the feeling of justice to this affirmation; and if I have never experienced justice in my history, I will choose serenity as I act with nobility.”

(Examples of feelings: Anger, resentment, perturbed, unhappy, joyful, glad, sad, disappointed, ticked off, excited, glum, hopeful, disillusioned, patient, mixed-up, conflicted....and others.)

Questions and Answers: 10 to 15 minutes

Authority of Self:

Here is the definition of authority of self again: “Authority of Self” is the freedom and ability to use God-given mental powers to make rational and moral choices, self-regulation of the emotions; and the right or permission to act independently with the understanding that one has personal limitations. Remember, the model is “I think! I feel! I investigate truth and reality. (I then regulate my emotions.) I act!”

There are a total of 29 negative messages that are combined with positive affirmations to lift one up and demonstrate how to use the powers of authority of self to achieve balance, well-being and greatness.

For more information contact:

Phyllis K. Peterson
7945 Coopers Hawk Trail
Machesney Park, IL 61115

815-633-0492
www.skylarkpubl.com
skylarkpp@aol.com