

An excerpt from *Your Ultimate Life Plan: How to Deeply Transform Your Everyday Experience and Create Changes That Last*, by Dr. Jennifer Howard.

Spiritual Warrior

It takes courage to face life as it arises; it takes becoming a spiritual warrior. To be a spiritual warrior is to stand for *what is*, and tolerate choosing, again and again, to be here in this moment. Committing to wrestle with awakening and walk the path of rigorous self-discovery is holy work. The mark of a spiritual warrior is moving toward sacred awakening with determination, persistence, and tenacity. We mature psychologically and spiritually when we face darkness, personal challenges, spiritual impediments, and groundlessness one moment at a time. Your willingness to confront your stuck places, and work through the layers of false self, uncovers your authentic self, allowing you to create a life that you love.

The warrior strips away layer after layer to live in greater Truth and Presence, no matter how weary and battered they become. When you have true compassion for yourself and the world, you love the Truth more than your momentary comfort.

The spiritual warrior (“Tzaddik” in the Kabbalah) lives with honesty and integrity, high morals and ethics, and responds with right words and actions. According to Rabbi Joseph Gikatilla’s book *Gates of Light*, the Tzaddik or “righteous one” infuses his/her blessing and goodness on everyone, sustaining all of creation, holding the pleasure and delight of God, as well as human suffering.

To be a Tzaddik, you live with a compassionate, humble heart. You’re self-contained and personally differentiated. Humility is knowing what and who you are and are not, not just in the ego sense of personal limitations, but in the vastness and awe of an infinite Universe and God.

The Buddhists call it the Bodhisattva Vow, to stay with the world as it is—the good, the bad, the beautiful, and the ugly. At the same time, you see the larger goodness, and help others see it too. You also notice when you’re living in fear and grasping, and are willing to work through it. Then you soothe yourself, sinking back and settling into who you really are, and the pulsatory movements of the world.

Being with the pulsatory movements of life allows you to sink further into the Strands of Consciousness, and what makes up the fabric of the universe. Your commitment to self-examination and rigorous personal work allows you to live more fully in all dimensions of consciousness. You’re flexible. Your malleability helps connect you to reality outside your concrete, 3-D world, and to the deepest all-encompassing dimension of consciousness—Emanation-Spiritual.

You made the commitment and entered the gateway to change yourself and the world. You have preferences, yet receive everything as it is. You’ve taken the vow to be present,

and to see when you're not; to gently remind yourself, and others, to live in and from Truth, returning to the ever-present Wholeness and Grace awaiting you. These are the tasks and pleasures of being Spiritual Warriors, Tzaddiks, and Bodhisattvas.

- *What does the phrase "spiritual warrior" mean to you?*
- *In what ways do you see yourself as a spiritual warrior?*
- *In what ways do you wrestle with awakening?*
- *Where in your life does your grasping show up?*
- *What do you give the world in your own special way?*

Meditation: Spiritual Warrior

Take a deep breath. Relax your body, beginning with your feet and moving upward to your legs, buttocks, stomach, back, chest, organs, shoulders, neck, head, jaw, eyes, and scalp. Starting at the top of the head, allow your crown chakra to open. Allow whichever color of light seems most nurturing to you to enter. Allow this healing light to move down through your entire body. Let it bathe you, soothe you, support every cell, every part of your body-emotion-thought-spirit. Let it support you as a spiritual warrior, a Tzaddik, a Bodhisattva. Feel the light bathing you inside from head to toe. It's supporting you, healing you. Now, notice a bubble of light surrounding you. It's holding you and all your energy. Let this bubble of light strengthen you. Now, let this bubble fill up with even greater light. Very slowly, ever so gently, open to the idea of other people and their bubbles of light. Imagine your bubble and your body connecting to others with their bubbles and their bodies. Take that in. You have your energy, you're a spiritual warrior, and you can still connect with others. Sit with this for a while. Now, come back to yourself. Take a few deep breaths.

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