

# Principles of Evolutionary Culture: How you can create a microcosm of "Heaven on Earth"

We recommend these principles of engagement for groups coming together to pursue the practices of Integral Enlightenment. They can also be used as guidelines for any group wishing to create an evolutionary culture between participants. We recommend reading them aloud before each meeting to help build a collective field of receptivity and intention.

## A Wholehearted Intention to Transform

Bring all of yourself to this group. Recognize that this is a forum where your own deepest longing for a greater life, a holy life, can be fully engaged and expressed. Have the love, trust, and courage to give your heart and soul to the exercises you'll be doing in the group and outside of the group. Do this in the knowledge that the single most transformative power in the world is the power of our intention. If you want your life to change in a profound way, it will. With that kind of intention behind you, this group can be a powerful catalyst.

## A Commitment to Engage

One thing group practice reveals is how profoundly we all impact each other, both through our participation and our non-participation. Your full-hearted participation is critical, both because it is the only way for you to really reap the benefits of the group practices, but even more importantly, because it is needed by the group. We are all counting on you to push your own edge, to speak up when things are unclear, to share when something inspiring or meaningful happens for you. We are going to get a tangible sense here of how everything we do either lifts us all up or pulls us all down. Seeing our impact on the world is not something we'll use to create a "story" about ourselves ("I'm good" or "I'm bad"), but something for us to observe and understand so that it will guide our individual and collective efforts to help humanity evolve.

## A Beginner's Mind

When entering into serious collective spiritual engagement, it is important to suspend everything you already know about spirituality, psychology,

transformation, and the meaning of life. This is not about “dumbing down” or pretending or permanently abandoning hard-won wisdom. It’s about “suspension” of what you already know in order to make room for new ideas and perspectives to emerge. A large part of what makes it possible to live on the edge of evolution is to be in a state of perpetual and profound receptivity. If we want to be available to the movements of the Spirit, if we want to be able to change and discover new things, we have to be willing to constantly let go of all of our fixed ideas and look again.

## Speaking from the Deepest, Most Authentic Parts of the Self

Each time you contribute to the group, seek to bring forward the deepest part of yourself. Take the risk to express the deepest truths you know, to be a representative of humanity’s highest potential. One of the most transformative activities we can engage in is speaking from the deeper parts of ourselves, because in doing so, we are coaxing them out of the depths and allowing them to infuse our personalities with their wisdom and Presence. And when we do this, that authentic wisdom and Presence infuses the group as well.

## Deeper Listening

One of the foundations of authentic evolutionary collective engagement is the practice of deep listening—listening from the deepest part of yourself. This means that when someone else is speaking, you strive to listen for the deeper chords in what they’re saying and respond only to those chords that ring with the greatest spiritual presence and power. When something profound touches us in what someone else has shared, we’re going to take the risk to reflect it back to them, or to share it with the group. By building a field of deeper listening, we are creating a powerful supportive container for each of us to step into when we speak.

## Risk Taking

Nothing takes us to the edge of evolution faster than taking big risks. This means speaking on an intuition when you’re not sure you have the words to give voice to it. Or, responding to a gut feeling that something isn’t right, but doing so

vulnerably, realizing that it might be you that's not right. It also means being willing to step into new ways of being, even if they feel scary and unfamiliar. Indeed, the greatest risk of all is to express something so profound that we will never be able to go back to pretending we don't know. The risk to embrace our godlike nature, once and for all. Once we've stood in and as that divinity in the presence of others, we can't go back without a price. Not only have we admitted it to ourselves. Everyone else has also seen who we can be, how wise we can be, how free of neurosis we can be, and they now have a right to expect us to live up to what we've expressed. The more risk we are each willing to take in every meeting, the more profound will be our experience of and impact on the group.

## We All Have Evolving Edges

We're all imperfect beings on an endless evolutionary journey. So, it doesn't matter where we are on that journey. What matters is where we are in relation to our edge. If we're pushing our edge, we're always in the right place, and immense transformative capacities become available to us. In this context, there is no value in trying to be somewhere we're not, or to appear to have it all together. There is immense value in revealing our confusion, our uncertainty, our vulnerability. Saying "I don't know" or "I don't understand" is a beautiful thing because it opens us to understanding and insight.

## If We're Not Uncomfortable, We're Probably Not Evolving

Because evolution means moving into new territory in the self, a certain degree of discomfort always accompanies it. Unfortunately, we are deeply conditioned to see discomfort as a negative thing, so we tend to avoid it. Living on the edge of evolution means being willing to embrace these "growing pains" so that we can live a life of perpetual growth and development. In this group, begin a practice of actively pushing into those uncomfortable edges in yourself, and shifting your perspective so that you no longer see them as the enemy, but as your friends on the path of deeper and higher evolution.

## A Life of Constant Resolution

One aspect of living on the edge of evolution is what spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen calls "living a life of constant resolution." This means always striving to

clear up any interpersonal tension as soon as possible, so that we can build a field of deep harmony and trust in all of our relationships. It is about leaving each interaction “without a trace.” For groups interested in authentic co-evolution, this practice is essential. If something bothers you about the way someone is addressed or the way something is handled, look for an appropriate moment to bring it up for discussion. Based on where the group is at that point in the evening, it may or may not be the right moment to discuss it. The group can decide whether or not to engage it at that time, later in the meeting, or perhaps to take time to resolve it after the meeting. The important thing is to always keep clearing away any residue from past interactions, so that the collective field of the group can continue to strengthen.

## Always on Stage: Being an Example for Everyone We Meet

Another aspect of living on the edge of evolution is always being on the spot, realizing that it's our job as evolutionaries to be an inspiration in every moment to everyone we encounter. In the mythic religions of the past, the belief that God was watching over us used to create a larger moral context to spur us to act in accord with our deepest knowing. Now, in Integral and Evolutionary Spirituality, it's the knowledge that everything we do is setting a template for the rest of humanity to follow. We all take cues from each other all the time, consciously and unconsciously, so if we want to create a better world, we need to always show up with the greatest wisdom, integrity, care, and authenticity that we can muster. The New World will be created by billions of small acts of spiritual courage. Create a culture based on this kind of evolutionary conscience in your group.