A Soul Full Childhood
Birth ~ Key Points

- The nature, powers and the potential of the Soul are from the beginning.

- Development of the Soul begins even before emergence into the world.

- The changes that a child goes through before birth recapitulates humanity’s emergence in the world.

- The relationship between the body and the Soul is likened to that between the horse and the rider.

- The Soul is embodied in the womb ~ at birth emerges into the world of light ~ beginning it’s journey.

- The transition from the womb into the light need not be as traumatic as it typically is.

- Each new born child carries with it the hopes and aspirations of humanity ~ as a gift.
Birth

A child of Spirit - a new potential - a soul with a unique personality, potentials and part to play in the Divine plan is embodied and has entered the world of light.
Early Childhood ~ Key Points

- Human Development from a soul-Centered perspective involves developing the full potential of the soul.

- Throughout life we are in the process of becoming ~ each moment strengthens and fulfills.

- In early childhood the foundations are laid upon which this unfolding occurs.

- Each stage brings specific challenges that when met provide the strength needed to meet the next.

- The foundational challenge of early childhood is to acquire a healthy sense of SELF as a spiritual being.

- Each is given the work to do and the tools needed to do it.

- This stage is highly dependent on the choices and efforts of others to provide the opportunity to meet the challenge.
Early Childhood

Primary Tasks

- Development of a Healthy Sense of Self
- Protection of the Life of Innocence

The caretaker’s responsibility is to provide the child with a safe and varied environment, rich in challenge, affection, acknowledgment, play, and prayer.

Stage ends with the achievement of autobiographical memory and a fully conscious sense of self as a worthy spiritual being.
Facets of an Infant’s Soul ~ Key Points

- **Be Thou** ~ Our uniqueness is assured and each has a call to uncover who (s)he is - an individual Identity.

- **Become** ~ Each potential calls for fulfillment - each Virtue has a unique potential - the basis of Character.

- **Choose** ~ By our choices and efforts based on them, each rises/falls - not bound by instinct each has Choice.

- **Fulfill** ~ The soul is the repository of the individual’s ideal - unless the call is deadened each must Grow.

- **Love** ~ Everything is emotional - based on attraction - acting on attraction we form our Relationships.

- **Know** ~ The call to fully understand and express that understanding gives each Mastery and a unique voice.

- **Serve** ~ Each has a unique part to play and each stage gives a purpose - playing one’s part gives Meaning.

- **Return to Me** ~ Each hears a call to transcend the limitations of the world/self and seek purpose/Spirit.
Early Childhood

Identity  Who did Spirit create when I was created?

Character  What virtues was I given?

Choice  What is right? What is wrong?

Growth  When will I be a big kid?

Relationships  Parents • Family • God • Pure and innocent

Mastery  Body & the physical world

Meaning  Innocence - Conveys Spirit

Spirit  The Love of the Divine The Fear of the Divine
Identity ~ Key Points

- Each is born without knowing who (s)he is or even the limits of the self.

- Without knowledge each has the call to know and attends to every sign, word or gesture.

- Each child implicitly asks “Who am I?” and believes whatever comes in answer.

- Everything that is experienced - matters - everything is taken personally.

- Once awareness of a separate nature is achieved, not only “Who am I?” but also “Who are you?” matters.

- The Chinese saying applies, “Every child is a sheet of paper upon which each passerby writes.”

- Every thought, word and deed conveys information and an assessment of worth.
Identity

I am a Worthy Spiritual Being

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Identity ~ Key Points

- The Five Strategies of The Virtues Project present principles upon which a realization of one’s true identity can be achieved.

- The Language of the Virtues always conveys both a spiritual reality and sense of worth.

- Recognizing Teachable Moments grounds perceptions both in Reality and Truth.

- Clear Boundaries provide an accurate assessment of the limits of self - both self-respect and Respect.

- Honoring the Spirit grounds reality in Spirit and acknowledges each child as a child of Spirit.

- Offering Spiritual Companioning permits each child to realize (s)he matters.

- Taken together these five strategies provide the surest way to help a child realize (s)he is a worthy spiritual being.
Identity

- Speak the Language of the Virtues
- Recognize Teachable Moments
- Set Clear Boundaries
- Honor the Spirit
- Offer Spiritual Companioning™

The Five Strategies of The Virtues Project

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Character ~ Key Points

- The Virtues are the building blocks of Character - by them we know the nature of an individual.

- We know ourselves and others by the Virtues we have and those we still have to develop.

- Each person has the potential for all of the Virtues and each has a different potential for each Virtue.

- The Virtues provide the Spiritual basis of our personality.

- The Virtues provide us with the inner strength to do the right thing for the right reasons at the right time.

- Character is set early in life - it is never too early to begin the acquisition of the Virtues.

- The Virtues are there, in potential, from the beginning.
Character

Virtues ~ Building Blocks of Character

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Character ~ Key Points

- The Virtues are awakened by recognizing them and naming them when they appear.

- The Virtues are strengthened by acting on them - call for Them and acknowledge when any effort is made.

- If the world, and those in it, are too harsh our Souls move to protect the “SELF/self”.

- Each Soul is exquisitively sensitive - if one cannot cope with the world and those in it, (s)he risks damage.

- When your words are weighty - weigh your words.
Choice ~ Key Points

- Unlike the animals we are not bound by instinct - humanity is given free will - the right to choose.

- Humanity is given a moral sense that is awakened by choice and the consequences that come from choice.

- Right and wrong - good and bad ground the moral sense in spiritual reality.

- To serve as the basis for a “true” moral compass these judgments must be consistent, true and objective.

- Principled based judgments that result from choices freely made ring true because they are true.
Choice

A Moral Compass

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Choice ~ Key Points

- Virtues are always good - Virtues are always a matter of choice.

- Choice must have clear, reasonable consequences to have the impact of that choice appreciated.

- For choices to matter there must be accountability.

- Accountability comes from clear, consistent and reliable ground rules with the consequences outlined.

- For each person’s choice to matter, each person must be free to make them.

- Guidance helps to see the end from the beginning.

- Choices made within an individual’s capacity brings a sense of worth and competence.
Choice

Choice within Clear Boundaries
Relationships ~ Key Points

- Every relationship has an emotional loading - even if the emotion is indifference.

- We are created out of Love to be governed by attraction.

- Love thrives in a climate of Trust - when you Trust there is no reason to control - what you can’t Trust you attempt to control.

- Each knows the world in relation to the self - each element has a place and a purpose.

- Each element, by virtue of its place and purpose in relation to self, has an emotional loading.

- All elements in a person’s life have an importance and significance that is acquired through observation, thought and experience and is unique to the individual.
Relationships ~ Key Points

- In the early years foundational Relationships are formed that set the tone for all further Relationships.

- We quickly learn who and what matters - if they do not matter at this stage they will not have the depth of those early Relationships.

- Through observation and thought everyone and everything is assigned a place and importance.

- The inner circle - that which truly matters - has it’s place and importance tested through experience.

- We are guided to who and what matters by the actions and reactions of the significant others in our world.

- If our world (and those in it) is predictable, consistent and safe - Relationships will be based on Love.

- If our world (and those in it) is unpredictable, inconsistent and threatening - Relationships will be based on fear.
Mastery ~ Key Points

- We are little learning machines - through observation and thought we acquire concepts.

- Through experience we acquire know how, ability and competence.

- In the early years, physical reality dominates - particularly the body that embodies our SELVES.

- Through observation and thought we discover what is going on.

- Through engagement, trial and error and experience we master our selves and then the physical world.
Mastery ~ Key Points

- Jean Piaget has carefully documented the process of acquiring knowledge and competence in this period.

- A stability that enables us to survive is achieved - often through trial and error.

- This stability is challenged by changes both within and without.

- Meeting this new challenge results in new learning.

- The new learning is integrated with the old to develop a new synthesis and stability.

- Encouragement provides direction and the support needed for growth.

- Challenge permits us to go beyond current limitations and achieve continual Growth.
Mastery

Encouragement & Challenge promote Control

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Meaning ~ Key Points

- Each of us is to serve and to be served - to have a place and a purpose that is fulfilled by just being.

- It’s not what you do but rather who you are that matters - we are human beings not human doings.

- The purpose of a small child is to remind us that all comes from Spirit and that Spirit is what matters.

- Children call on us to acquire the Virtues - they remind us of what is possible.

- They remind us what truly matters - “Except as ye become like little children …”

- Being in the presence of a child opens each of us up to the possibility of delight.
Meaning

Conveys Spirit & Delight

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Meaning ~ Key Points

- To benefit from the gifts that a child brings requires involvement.

- To help a child maintain the gifts of Spirit each brings requires involvement.

- Joy comes from play - play is the work of a child.

- Engagement with a child requires time - some of which may end up being quality time.

- Involvement brings a child guidance, joy, knowledge, and a sense of worth.
Meaning

Involvement

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Spirit ~ Key Points

- The Soul is embodied in a body dominated by the senses.

- The reality in which we live hires the best and the brightest to assure that each child does see beyond the physical and personal, selfish needs.

- It is the challenge of the significant others in a child’s life to re-orient/remind her/him that there is something more.

- This involves awakening the Spiritual Powers each child possesses and to ground them fully in Spirit.

- This is best accomplished by assureng that each child lives in the presence of Spirit, day to day.

- Love of the Divine grounds a child’s relationship with the Creator and the SELF the Creator created.

- Like any relationship this one has elements consistent with it - Respect calls for living within the limits defined by the Creator.
Spirit
Living in the Presence of the Divine Day to Day

Appreciation & Respect

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Spirit ~ Key Points

- How does one guide a young child to a Relationship to Spirit marked by Love and Awe/Respect/Fear.

- Not by demanding it but rather by modeling it.

- Modeling it by involving the child in your relationship to Spirit.

- Modeling it by assuring that your relationship to the child is based on the one you have with Spirit.

- Unconditional Love - Not unconditional approval, indifference or condemnation.

- Clear Boundaries - Principle based, moral, consistent with consequences based on reason.

- Expectations - Based on knowledge, realistic and positive supported by acknowledgement when effort is made.
Spirit

A Relationship with Spirit Informed & Formed by Relationships with Significant Others

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Growth ~ Key Points

- In the early years growth and the change that accompanies it is driven by the process of physical maturation.

- The physical process of maturation determines the readiness for the next stage of development.

- When a child is ready to take the next step, encouragement and challenge will support the development.

- If a child is not ready - encouragement and challenge may have negative consequences.

- The developmental process programmed in the body is aided when the significant others are informed and vigilant.
Growth

Physical Maturation

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Growth ~ Key Points

- Physical development requires fuel - nutrition being critical.

- The process begins in the womb with the well-being of the mother being critical.

- The closer you come to the historical ideal the better off you are - breast feeding is preferred for example.

- Environment that minimizes (but not eliminates) harmful elements is critical.

- Environment that provides for constant, consistent and loving guidance and involvement is critical.

- Environment that provides for protection and oversight is critical.

- Environment that provides for stimulation, challenge and encouragement is critical.
Growth

Nutrition & Environment

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The Naming ~ Key Points

- Dr. William Plotkin calls this stage of development the Family Cocoon - a potential is born into the family and a person emerges from it.

- This transition is an acknowledgement of that person.

- It is the family that presents the person to the community - it is the community that acknowledges the presence of a new member.

- Names have meaning - they convey place, person and significance.

- A new name marks a new status.

- Internally - this transition occurs when a child is fully aware that (s)he is a separate human being - the events of everyday life are events in her/his life (autobiographical memory).
The Naming

A new person has entered the world

The “new person” acquires an important nickname or in some culture chooses a new name.

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Late Childhood ~ Key Points

- We have a sense of SELF, spiritual & worthy, know right from wrong, growing in competence and confidence, joyful and delightful, grounded in Spirit and in a relationship with who and what matters - now is the time to figure out how it all works together in a meaningful whole, day to day.

- We construct a world in which we can live - Bill Plotkin’s Stage of World Genesis.

- No two people live in the same world - our reality is our thought.

- Each has a unique perspective - a piece of the truth.

- Observation and thought - experience and the events of daily life inform our reality - the world in which each person lives.

- As we live with others there is constant adjustment and accommodation - all of which informs a personal conception of how it all works and fits together.
Late Childhood

Primary Tasks

- Exploring the givens of life -- enchantment of the natural world
- Gaining social acceptance (from family then peers)

The child must have access to unpressured learning, a spirit of enchantment, and the presence of the natural world to be able to explore the givens of life -- acceptance of others and self-approval to gain social acceptance.

Stage ends with a sense of being in the world as a competent spiritual being in relationship with the totality of creation, and the onset of puberty.
Facets of a Child’s Soul ~ Key Points

- **Identity** - Each person is unique - What is makes me unique?

- **Character** - Everyone has Virtues - What difference do my Virtues make in my world?

- **Choice** - Everyone has free will - What is good and bad for me?

- **Growth** - Everyone has a unique part to play - When will I be ready to play my part?

- **Relationships** - We all share this world - What is my unique place and purpose?

- **Mastery** - Everyone can see what is going on - What is my understanding?

- **Meaning** - Everyone has something to offer others - What do I have to offer?

- **Spirit** - Spirit created everyone and everything - How is Spirit reflected and involved in my world?
Late Childhood

**Identity**
- How am I the same and different from others?

**Character**
- What impact do I have?

**Choice**
- What is good?
- What is bad?

**Growth**
- When will I be an adult?

**Relationships**
- Creation * Family * Peers *
- Playful, trusting & hopeful

**Mastery**
- Nature & Society

**Meaning**
- Wonder - Emotion

**Spirit**
- The Divine reflected/embodied in Nature
Identity ~ Key Points

- The same awareness that permits a person to know her/himself is finely attuned to differences.

- Variability confers uniqueness and it begs for comparison.

- Variability brings diversity which potentially enriches or threatens as difference ought to mean something.

- If each is made by the same Creator then the difference implies a different role to play in a larger purpose.

- If this is not the case then difference means something else - the meaning assigned by the observer.

- If the Creator introduced the differences then each part is equally critical - equally valuable.

- If this is not the case, then one is potentially better or more important than another.
Identity

I am a Unique Person ~ One of Many

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Identity ~ Key Points

- To promote and support the principle that differences enriches and enhances unity requires effort.

- One must acknowledge the differences and give them an appropriate meaning.

- An appropriate meaning typically involves a different part in a larger plan.

- Value must be found in the plan rather than the part played - one part is not more important than another.

- Synergy must be acknowledged - two can do more together than either can do apart.

- Unity - a single point - does not imply sameness - it implies a single purpose bringing together many inputs into a coherent whole - greater than the sum of the parts.
Identity

Differences Enrich & Enhance Unity
Character ~ Key Points

- Character is destiny and the Virtues are the building blocks of Character.

- The Virtues are the keys to success at whatever is undertaken.

- These spiritual qualities are the necessary, but not necessarily sufficient ingredients for any predictable success.

- In the search for how the world works each seeks to find what leads to success or failure.

- In the interactions of all the elements in our worlds we seek predictability and control.

- We seek the qualities that pre-determine the results - an operational knowledge of the world

- In this search we find the Virtues if we are dealing with a world grounded in Spirit.
Character

Virtues ~
The Keys to Success
Character ~ Key Points

- Acting on the Virtues is always a matter of choice - it involves intent.

- The Virtues are not found in behavior - They are found in the spirit that animates the behavior.

- What matters more than what happened is what made it happen.

- Choosing to act on the Virtues results in what the Virtues bring.

- Choosing to act outside the Virtues brings what the absence of Virtues brings.

- We build a real world, one in which we have a part to play as Actor, Observer and Critic.

- We test that conception by evaluating the impact our Character has on the world.
Character

Intent & it's Impact in the World
Choice ~ Key Points

- On what basis do we exercise our free will - what do we seek by our Choices?

- We engage the physical world to find what it offers in terms of rewards and punishments.

- We engage the Spiritual world to discover what it, in turn, has to offer.

- Using our intent we make choices to achieve what we set out to do - observing what comes from them.

- Quickly we learn that many choices might get you a version of what you set out to do.

- Choice have consequences in a Spirit grounded world - different choices at different times alter the course of events.

- With this knowledge comes a certain power - the ability to choose between courses of action - the ability to engage in deliberate action.
Choice

The Greatest Good
Choice ~ Key Points

- What you want and what you are willing to do to achieve a state of affairs becomes your motivation.

- What results in achieving what we want becomes our motives.

- When we choose to seek immediate physical satisfaction we adopt a hedonistic perspective.

- When we choose to act in our best self-interest we adopt a prudential perspective.

- When we choose to act because it is way that it is done we adopt a social/ethical perspective.

- When we choose to act because it is “right” or “fitting” thing to do we adopt an esthetic perspective.

- Every situation we find ourselves in contains an opportunity to act on each of these perspectives and impact the world accordingly.
Choice

Motivation & Motives in the Real World
Relationships ~ Key Points

- To build a world in which each can thrive calls for a world that is consistent and predictable.

- A world in which each element plays a unique part - contributing to a larger whole.

- A world in which each element acts independently and yet finds itself dependent on the whole.

- A world that makes sense when viewed as a whole and from the perspective of each of its parts.

- A world in which choices alter the flow and the Relationships within it.

- A world of interdependence in which each person plays an essential part.

- A world where Spirit is heard in the silence and heard roaring in each of its parts.
Relationships

Dependence & Independence
Relationships ~ Key Points

- Only the natural world is complex, rich, consistent, predictable and grounded enough to qualify.

- Exploring the givens of the natural world provides a sense of what is the case and what could be.

- At every level of exploration the natural world brings wonders and delight and a deepening enchantment.

- Sharing this world with others brings a common point of reference in which each can learn from the other.

- Acceptance comes when nature provides a place for each and when each acknowledges the place of others as well.

- As each explores, tests and learns - self-acceptance comes with growing competence and mastery.

- Respect for the Creation and the Creator and appreciation and awe are the result.
Relationships

Enchantment of the Natural World
Mastery ~ Key Points

- Exploring the givens of life is not a spectator’s game.

- We must know not just what is the case but also how it works and what makes it work that way.

- We find that out by interacting with the world as we find it and then learning from the result.

- We learn about the givens of life from how it behaves and how it feels, tastes and touches.

- We engage in practices that influence the world we find ourselves in and anticipate the results.

- Each anticipated result confirms our knowing - each surprise delights and alters our knowing.

- In the physical realm, experience brings competence - in a physical sense there are few things more competent or confident as a fully developed child.
Mastery

The Workings of the World & Givens of Life

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Mastery ~ Key Points

- The world each of us creates sense - in the knowing is the sense that it makes to the individual.

- In the world as we know it - everything we think, do or feels matters - it makes a difference.

- If we do not fully understand something we will construct a reasonable explanation so it does make sense.

- The explanation need not be rational, only reasonable, and account for what we know to be the case.

- No part of our world need be avoided if it is founded in Love and Trust.

- If our world is based on fear there will be much to avoid and/or explain away.

- The way we know the world to be is based on and reflects the most consistent experiences we have in day to day life.
Mastery

Development of a "Real World" in which to Live
Meaning ~ Key Points

- Each serves and is served - the service provided by a child is the opportunity to explore and account for the givens of your life.

- Emotions are not controlled - but ring loudly and true in harmony with circumstances.

- An opportunity to contribute is an opportunity to more deeply immerse in the givens of life.

- Curiosity explored becomes the motivation to more fully learn the basics that lead to a greater and deeper knowing.

- Involvement in the greater world opens further opportunities for confidence and competence.

- With greater competence and confidence comes greater assurance of a plan, place, purpose and destiny for each Soul.

- With greater assurance comes a willingness to accept responsibility for one’s self.
Meaning

Immersion in Worlds of Wonder
Meaning ~ Key Points

- It is in the involvement that comes from guiding a child to learn what matters and how it works that the true worth of this stage is most fully appreciated.

- Providing explanations when called for assures (as much as possible) that the givens of life are fully and accurately understood.

- Providing explanations brings the added opportunity to more fully examine the life being led.

- Guidance provides a sense of what matters and what does not - saving the pain that comes with bad experience.

- Total immersion and the full understanding it brings comes when we can trust we will not find ourselves in too deep.

- This level of trust comes only when we know someone is watching over us to assure our success.
Spirit ~ Key Points

- The Creator is known by the Creation - the Creator is not the Creation.

- Each Soul is given the power to recognize the Creator in the Creation given the opportunity.

- In each element of Creation there is a sign of the Creator, a place, a part to play in a bigger plan.

- Given the opportunity to do so each child is empowered to grasp how the Creator works in this world.

- The body has a place in this world - the Soul has a place and destiny in this world as well.
Spirit
Spirit Reflected in Creation
Spirit ~ Key Points

- Nature is the will of the Creator in the contingent world.

- Human society is a part of this contingent world - Nature can be a metaphor for us as well.

- Acknowledging the Creator becomes fulfilling your potential.

- Acknowledging the Creator involves playing your part in a bigger plan.

- Acknowledging the Creator becomes valuing others for being who they are and for playing their parts.

- We are caught in a web of life where things are more, much more, than they seem to be.

- Self-acceptance comes from this understanding and acceptance of your SELF as child of Spirit with a destiny.
Spirit

The Divine as All with a Place and Part for Each
Growth ~ Key Points

- Early childhood growth was grounded in the process of physical maturation.

- Late childhood development is grounded in the processes of Mastery and Meaning.

- We long to know what there is to know - and seek the knowledge.

- We long to understand what there is to understand - and seek the understanding.

- We long to matter and to have a positive impact on the world - and seek the experience that enables us to do so.

- We long to seek the presence of the Divine in the contingent world - and find it in Nature.

- We long to be acknowledged for ourselves - and await the recognition.
Growth

Recognition
Growth ~ Key Points

- When we are ready to take on the broader world of human relations - we are ready to move on.

- When we are eager to acquire the knowing that separates the child from the adult - we are ready to move on.

- When we are ready to accept responsibility for our self - we are ready to move on.

- We await the recognition that will enable us to do so.
Growth

A Competent Individual ~ Ready

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Puberty ~ Key Points

- Puberty is more a state of mind - a state of readiness than a physical change.

- It is the passage into Social and Sexual Maturity

- A passage - a journey from one status to another.

- Expectations change - entitlements change as well.

- The new expectations are laid out - the new responsibilities presented.

- The bigger plan is presented and its true significance grasped.

- An opportunity to rise to the challenge is presented - the trial is undertaken - and found ready - a new adult is presented to the community.
Puberty

Passage into Social and Sexual Maturity

The things of childhood are set aside and preparation for the rights and responsibilities of adulthood are undertaken and its purpose and mysteries revealed.