

## Inspired Life Formula with Nina Lockwood Module 2 Explore Your Spirit

This is Nina Lockwood and Welcome to the Inspired Life Formula v6 Module 2: Explore Your Spirit. This module is devoted to an exploration of Spirit - what it means to you, how it applies to your life, how to transform your vision of who you are and allow you greater access to the wisdom and guidance that's available to you. As you do this, you'll begin to see the signs of transformation occurring across the board in your life and transforming your life into a single and seamless expression of connection and fulfillment. There is a lot of thought provoking ideas and questions here, so I recommend that you listen to this audio at least twice to really get the benefit of it. And take notes. This module is not about giving you the answers - it's about giving you the questions to ask yourself at this point in your life now. The answers may be very different from what they were 10 or 20 years ago, or maybe even a year ago. And by answering these questions and allowing the answers to show up for you in the context of living an inspired life, you'll get new insight and awarenesses.

I want to do this exploration in a way that fits in to whatever your personal definition of spirit and spirituality may be. So I'm not promoting any doctrine or dogma; I'm going to be asking you to reflect on questions that can fit into any religious or spiritual framework and will simply be a springboard for going deeper, then offering you some tools and methods to help you take what you discover to the next level. This process of questioning and allowing the answers to serve as your guide is quite different from trying to figure out the answers from your logical, analytical mind. So let's get started.

In my own pursuit of the spiritual and in my direct experience, the most essential concept in spirituality or the development of consciousness is the absolute necessity of looking within yourself for the answers to life's bigger questions. It's not about "follow the leader." We're told by many different sources, including the bible, that "The kingdom of heaven is within." What does that mean? One of the things that it means is that of all the teachings out there, it's your job not to follow blindly but to see them as pointers that

can lead you to your kingdom of heaven, your own truth, your own connection to Spirit, or to God, or whatever name you use. This looking within will take you to the realm of the timeless, the eternal, to that which is changeless. We live in a world which is transient - everything in that outer world will pass away, our families, our loved ones, our friends, all the things we've done or seen, our bodies will grow old and die - so what is it within ourselves that can anchor us and ground us in a rapidly changing world? Give yourself some time to think about this, because how you respond to these questions has the potential to align you with the power and the wisdom and the love that creates and supports our world. And here's a big clue: the understanding that comes from answering these questions is not to be found in any set of how-to instructions but in asking "what is" and allowing the answer to come to you.

There are common questions to be found in any spiritual pursuit, whether it's in a formalized religion or in an informal, individual search. And there's no set hierarchy, because your unique needs determine which questions take priority for you. So I'm just going to mention a few that might be rumbling around in the depths of your being.

I'm going to start with the question of whether there's something higher or bigger than you, and if there is, how you connect with it. Are you a part of something greater? And if so, does this knowing come through your mind or do you feel it in your heart, or perhaps in some other way? What's the evidence that supports your knowing this? Do you recognize an intelligence to the natural world, to the workings of the universe as a whole? Do you see relationships or connections in or across the various life forms on the planet? Try not to settle for just a yes or a no answer - let yourself think about the details of what it is that you perceive....and then notice what kinds of feelings arise when you're aware that there's something larger than yourself? HOW you experience this knowing is important because you can use this "how" for other kinds of knowing. And equally as important as these questions is this: how do you yourself feel connected to this intelligence, to this web of relationships and connections? Is this because of the understanding that comes from reading or listening to spiritual ideas or is this your direct experience? Often there are no words to explain what it is you're connecting with, but you know if it takes you deeper into your truth and what would be "right action" for you.

This is a very important set of questions to reflect on because it can reveal a fundamental but erroneous belief we've been conditioned to believe, and that is that we're separate from this great, mysterious web of life, including the source of this web. The idea of a separate self causes a lot of suffering. Just the thought of being disconnected from our source can be disempowering and terrifying, so we believe we have to do something or find someone who can show us how to get reconnected. But this belief is just a thought, isn't it? And that comes from the mind. What if we were to put that thought aside and pay attention to our direct experience. How can we ever be separate from the world or from other people? We're a part of this world, just as a tree or a river or a cloud is part of it. Is there anything other than that thought to validate this concept of separation? WE may have separate physical bodies but we all breathe air, require sunlight to live, we all want health and happiness for ourselves and our loved ones. The only differences are superficial.

Another concern that many spiritual seekers have is around the question of meaning. What is the meaning of life, and as a result, my life? Do you have your own answer to this question? How did you arrive at that answer? Maybe your current answer works for you, or it's still unfolding. But consider this: with all the teachings that exist in the world, with their differing explanations and requirements or beliefs, is there a single truth? These teachings are all differing points of view, and even if they have similarities, they arise from the mind; they are created by words and concepts, and words and concepts are not the same thing as direct experience. So, What's your direct experience? What's the meaning of your life? Not, what story sounds good or exciting according to popular spiritual teachings but what is really meaningful for you? Even if it doesn't match up with what anyone else says. The answer to this question has to be validated by your own experience. Your answer this question will make it clear to you how to live in integrity and what actions will cause you to feel aligned with that integrity of your highest and best self. You'll know this because your actions will cause you to feel satisfied, fulfilled and connected to something much larger than your small self or your ego.

And this brings up an interesting back and forth in the way we view in the world. The first is based on the idea of materialism; the other is based on a

spiritual perspective. The materialist view works from the short term, immediate feedback of the senses and the logical, left brain about the appearance of things and what does or doesn't "work". Improving the way things are involves switching things around - like moving the pieces on a chessboard - so that conditions in life appear to be better, or at least more desirable. The spiritual perspective looks beneath appearances, beyond the so-called evidence of the senses and relies upon a deeper understanding, informed by a higher perception, of the causes that lie beneath the outer conditions of life, not just the problems themselves. But throughout the Inspired Life Program, we're going to do something a bit differently: we're not going to be categorically rejecting what the senses are telling us. We're going to be using the information our bodies provide through those sensory impressions and cognitive/neural impressions and let them inform our abilities to recognize higher perceptions and higher truths.

You can see that each perspective will either provide you with or take away from your emotional well being and peace of mind. And if you look, you can see the connection between spirituality and emotional well being. Some of the ways this shows up is in your ability to have a broader outlook in life, to be more positive in your expectations, in your ability to forgive, in your ability to appreciate everything you've been given and to trust the process of life to provide for you. And, If you look closely at your life, and the issues that are important to you, you'll find that your life reflects some of each perspective. I've been thinking a lot about the correlation between the materialist perspective and the older part of our brain - the reptilian brain at the back of our head that reacts with fight or flight - no thoughtful consideration - just a survival mechanism. Where there are emotional triggers, primal fear or anger, for example - the default mechanism of materialistic thinking takes over because we just want the problem to go away. When we're able to put some psychological distance between ourselves and our problems, and take the time to reflect and see the bigger picture, we're taking action from our neocortex, where we have access to conscious thought. That enables us to embrace a spiritual perspective and live in a way that has a much more profound and far reaching consequence when we're dealing with the problems in life. Here's a quote attributed to Albert Einstein that you've probably come across before; it fits perfectly into our examination of the spiritual: "There are two ways of looking at the

world, one as if everything is a miracle, and second, as if nothing is.” Which way is your way? Clearly, there some things you look at that fit the “everything is a miracle” perspective but there are other more sticky situations that aren’t. And when you find those sticky places, you can choose whether you want to befriend and transcend them. And if you choose to move them over to the side of the miraculous, you’ll get miraculous help to do that.

You’re probably very aware of the times and places in your life where you experience a sense of the transcendent. So my question to you is: What keeps that sense of the transcendent from happening in other areas of your life? Check to see whether your definition of what should and shouldn’t be happening is preventing you from seeing the miracle, from experiencing life as a conscious, benevolent experience.... Here again is another example of how we listen to our minds tell us what’s good or right, is or is not a miracle. You can try this experiment: when you can’t see the miracle, could you just, for one moment, put aside what the mind is telling in order to experience what’s actually happening without the mental interpretation. If we take out the “right or wrong” or “good or bad” or should or shouldn’t, what do we experience? Byron Katie said: “Life is happening for you, not to you.” Is it possible that you could take more time to notice if this is true for you and how it might be true?

I want to mention an important aspect of living from a spiritual perspective and how it affects our perception of time. So I’d like to distinguish between two types of time that we experience as human beings, which come from the greek words that describe time. The first type is called chronos time. This is our usual sense of clock time. Chronos - Chronology: the linear trajectory of seconds to minutes to hours to days to months to years and so on. The days go by, our children grow up, our bodies age. This is the measurement of passing time. It’s a quantitative measurement: consistent, relentless, sweeping everything in its wake into an foggy realm of memory and loss. And then you have kairos time, which describes a qualitative experience beyond your normal sense of time. The definition of the word includes a sense of opportunity, the supreme moment, the “rightness” of things. Kairos time feels timeless, eternal, there’s a sense of everything happening at the right time in the right place and all is well. You may have already had this experience, and you can increase the possibility of it

happening more frequently as you shift your awareness from the external world and its reasoning to the internal world of the spiritual. You'll have that experience of Kairos time intersecting with chronos time, and you'll know it when your basic intelligence (that happens in chronos time) is replaced by wisdom (coming from kairos time). This pure potentiality, pure love, pure life energy suddenly appears and lights up chronos time like a bolt of lightning; you feel the timelessness of who and what you really are, and that eternal moment fills your existence with inspiration, peace, connection, harmony.

The last point I'd like to cover might be the most important, and here's my question for you: why are you drawn to the spiritual? What do you expect to get from it? Are you trying to escape from the world and the awful things that are happening here by immersing yourself in high flying teachings, or is your intention to engage with this world as fully as you possibly can? What is it that really brings you happiness and peace of mind? Spirituality can be self-serving (and I'm sure you've seen plenty of people who demonstrate this) or it can serve others, it can shine a light in the darkness, it can bring love and kindness where there's hate or fear. It can open hearts that have been shut tight, it can give hope and encouragement. As far and as deep as you go with your spiritual awareness, that's what you bring not only to your own life, but to the world. And the world needs that, needs you. So when you ask for help from Spirit, or Source, or whatever you name it, you're not asking for yourself. You're making that request in order to be of service, and to help others. It is a strange but true paradox that in giving to others that you yourself receive, and as you ask for help to become your best self you enable others to reach for that in themselves.....

So we've talked about some of the basic questions posed in any spiritual quest and how to reflect on those questions to get the most out of them. We've talked about materialist and spiritual points of view, the parts of the brain that are involved when we choose a more conscious perspective, and we've talked about how our sense of time can be altered. What I'd like to share with you now are some practices that you can incorporate into your life that deepen your connection with Spirit so that when you're out in the world, in the thick of it, or when you're in the midst of emotional turmoil, you can instantly connect with that compassionate spaciousness and inner freedom that's your true nature as spirit. Now, being able to instantly drop into this experience is not going to make you forget where you are,

especially if you're crossing the street or in the middle of a conversation! It will help you take the high road in your actions with others, make the best decision for yourself or your loved ones, do the least harm possible in any situation and to know without a doubt that whatever the circumstances, you are whole, complete and perfect and that all is well.

I'll go over these practices in more detail in the accompanying exercises, but I'll give you a brief overview here of what we'll be doing. These exercises are simple but profound; and the repetition of these exercises will bring awareness to those parts of you that can benefit from nurture and encouragement. I recommend that you start your day with them, try them on throughout your day in different settings, and then revisit them in the evening. You might find that you get the most benefit from doing them in a quiet place where there are no distractions, and once you're able to feel comfortable in that quiet environment, see how you do in the midst of your busy day. And as with all the exercises we do in the Inspired Life Program, do your best to keep track of what you notice. It's okay not to notice anything in the beginning. You're fine-tuning your awareness and that takes practice! So if there were one "rule" for doing these exercises, it's to remain non judgmental about your efforts.

The first exercise involves setting an intention at the beginning of your day and following it as best you can til you come to the end your day. The second exercise invites you to deepen your skill at acceptance. I know some of us have a negative association with surrender, so perhaps a gentler way of saying it so that doesn't imply giving up or giving in is acceptance. Acceptance of the fact that events are out of your control yet you still have a choice in how you express your reactions and responses. The third exercise involves the practice of silence, or interior stillness. This experience has often been called Presence - because it's an awareness of an overriding Presence of Spirit or the Divine or simply what is, and there are very specific, expansive emotions that are experienced when your attention is directed in this way.