

WORKING VIRTUES  
SESSION 4:  
*SPIRITUALITY,  
HOPE,  
BEING WITH ONESELF,  
BEING WITH OTHERS*

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## “TELL ALL THE TRUTH” EMILY DICKINSON

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —

Success in Circuit lies

Too bright for our infirm Delight

The Truth's superb surprise

As Lightning to the Children eased

With explanation kind

The Truth must dazzle gradually

Or every man be blind —

# DEFINING 'SPIRITUALITY'

Traditionally defined through religion:

“something that in ecclesiastical law belongs to the church or to a cleric as such”

*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*

# CONTEMPORARY DEFINITION OF SPIRITUALITY

## A transformative way of being in the world

- This world, not some other one, or some future one
- Marked by experiences of something larger than ourselves, sensed as ultimately real, or sacred, with extraordinary power and meaning
- Spirituality can include traditional religion, but is not confined to it
- A gateway leading to important virtues

And I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy

Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,

And the round ocean and the living air,

And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:

A motion and a spirit, that impels

All thinking things, all objects of all thought,

And rolls through all things.

“TINTERN ABBEY,” WORDSWORTH, 1798

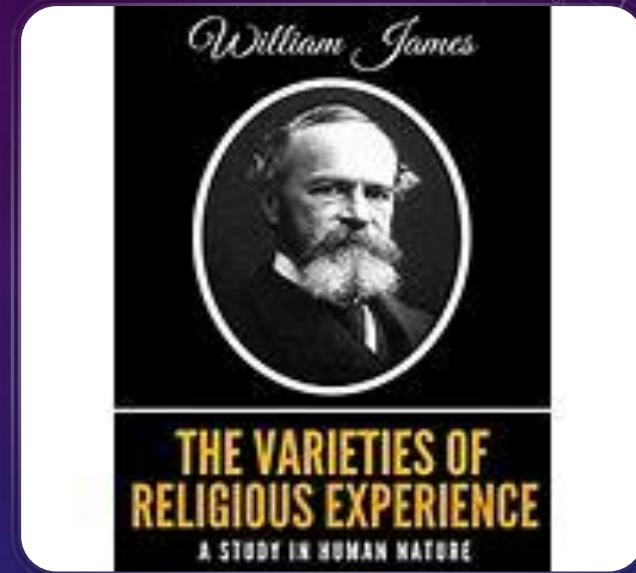
# A CAUTIONARY TALE

Question : “Are you religious?”

Answer: “No, I’m spiritual.”

# A SHORT HISTORY : STUDY OF RELIGION AS A HUMAN EXPERIENCE LEADS TO CURRENT MEANING OF 'SPIRITUALITY'

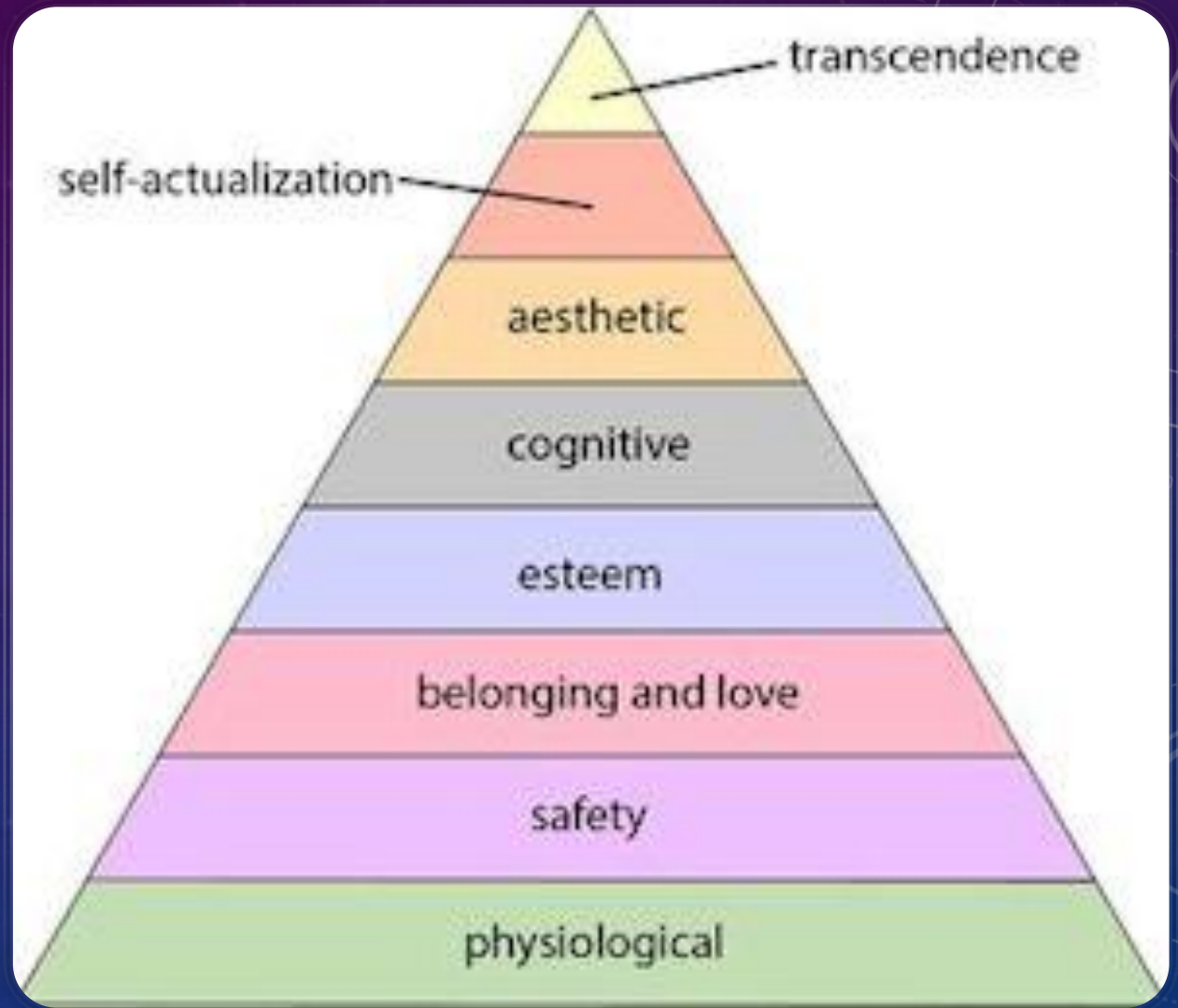
- Joachim Wach (1898-1955) -- response of awe to what is perceived as ultimate reality
- Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) – the holy as numinous (mysterium tremendum)
- William James (1842-1910)– democratizing the religious impulse



# ABRAHAM MASLOW

## Hierarchy of Needs, 1943

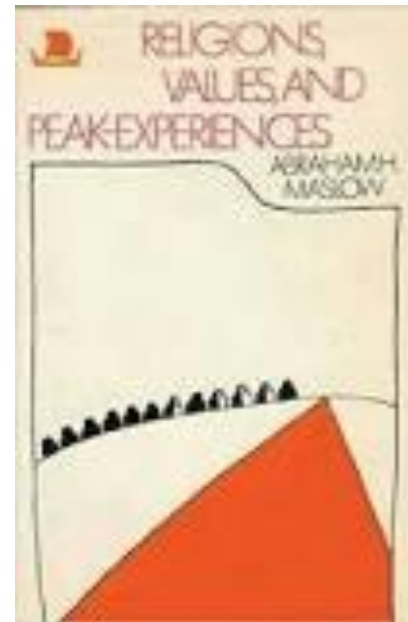
- Widely used in education, business, etc. as well as psycholo






# ABRAHAM MASLOW, 1908- 1970

REDEFINING THE NORMAL HUMAN





## ABRAHAM MASLOW: “PEAK EXPERIENCES” AS COMMON TO OUR SPECIES, AND “NORMAL”

1. Universe as sublimely beautiful
2. Ordinary concerns fall away; ego-transcending, egoless
3. Being part of an integrated whole
4. Glimpse into a reality where evil is reconciled
5. Non-comparing acceptance of everything
6. Other people and things seen as intrinsically valuable
7. Feeling of being lucky, very fortunate, graced
8. Responses of awe, wonder, gratitude, reverence, humility, worship

BIG PEAKS  
AND LITTLE  
PEAKS

No everything in this category  
is a “road to Damascus”  
experience

Comes in big and small doses;  
once in a life-time, and  
everyday, routine experiences



SACRALIZATION OF THE EVERYDAY  
WALTMAN WHITMAN, 1819-1892  
*LEAVES OF GRASS*

- “Why should I wish to see God better than I do this day?  
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each  
moment then,  
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in  
the glass;  
I find letters from God dropped in the street, and every one is  
signed by God’s name”

# VIRTUES THAT EMERGE FROM SPIRITUAL ATTUNEMENT

- Finding Transformative Gain in Loss
- Letting Go
- Awe and Reverence
- Deep Gratitude

# FINDING TRANSFORMATIVE GAIN IN LOSS

“Peace? There was never any in the world. But in the pliable water, under the sky, unmoored, I am traveling now and hearing myself laugh, at first with nerves and then with genuine amazement. It is all around me.”

---Harold Brodkey, near end of his long dying with AIDS

“This cancer saved my life...”

--from hospital ethics consult work

# LETTING GO, RELINQUISHING

“Not soon, as late as the approach of my ninetieth birthday  
I felt a door opening in me and I entered  
The clarity of the early morning  
One after another of my former selves were departing  
Like ships, together with their sorrow.”

- ---“Late Ripeness,” Czeslaw Milosz (Nobel Prize poet)

# AWE AND REVERENCE

“Awe is inarticulate. . .reverence at such a moment forbids any attempt at words. That is why awe is the most reverent of feelings. You feel when you are in awe, that you are human, that your mind of dwarfed by what it confronts, that you cannot capture it in a set of beliefs, so you has better keep your mouth closed and your mind open while awaiting further disclosure.”

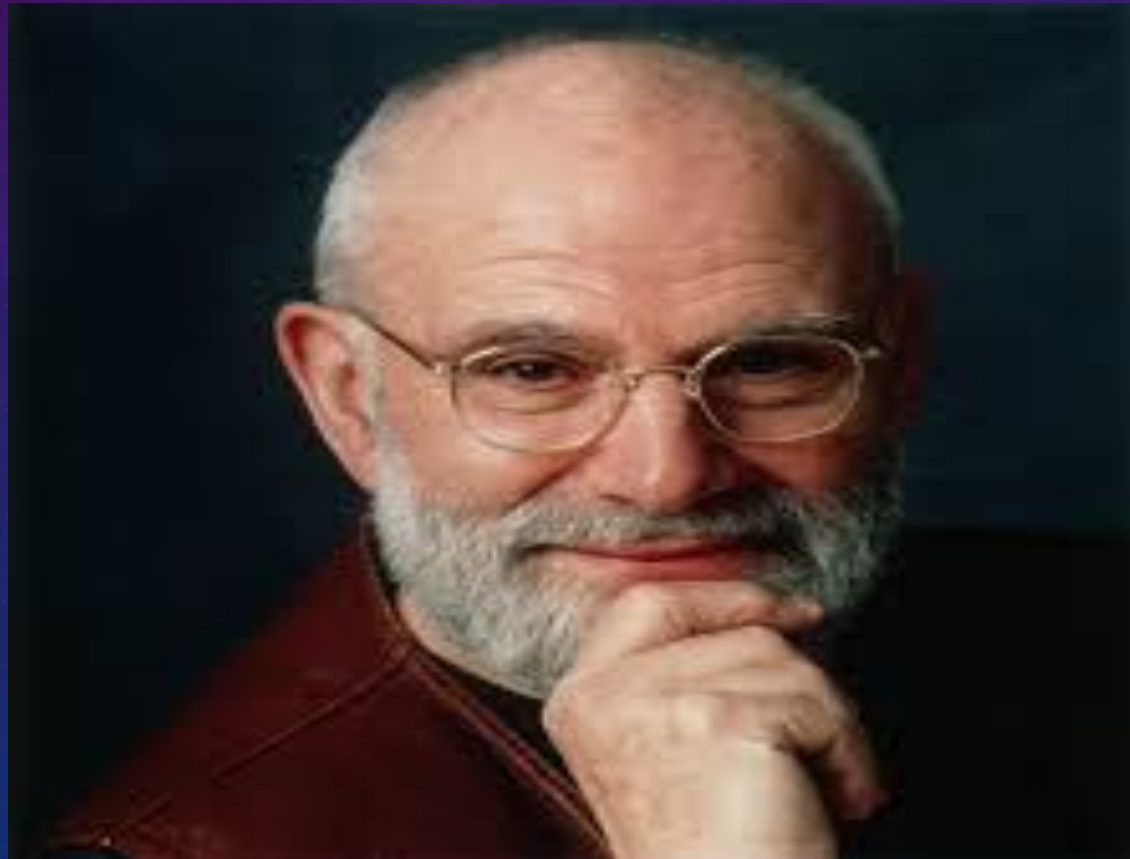
--from Paul Woodruff, *Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue* (Oxford, 2001),  
interpreting the Confucian *Analects*





# *GRATITUDE*

FROM OLIVER SACKS, 1933-2015



## *GRATITUDE*, P. 18-20

- “Over the last few days I have been able to see my life as from a great altitude, as a sort of landscape, with a deepening sense of the connection of all its parts. . . .”
- “I cannot pretend I am without fear. But my predominant feeling is one of gratitude... above all I have been a sentient being, a thinking animal, on this beautiful planet, and it has been an enormous privilege and adventure.”

# EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL ATTUNEMENT PRACTICES

- Mindfulness
- Meditation (e.g., meditative walking, or eating)
- Prayer, Centering Prayer
- Inner practices of letting go, relinquishing ego concerns
- Fasting
- Retreats (e.g., from commercialism--buying nothing for a year; silence, especially in groups)
- Potentially anything. . .
- Spiritual practices help us “put up our sails”

# A SPIRITUALITY PROFILE

1. What was I taught at home (my prehistory) about religion and/or spirituality?

1A. Did I have spiritual experiences as a child?

2. What experiences in my life would I name as having spiritual meaning?

3. What practices do I use to keep me spiritually attuned?



THE  
PERSISTENCE  
OF HOPE

“Hope” is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul  
And sings the tune without the words  
And never stops - at all

--Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

DISTINGUISHING  
HOPES/  
EXPECTATIONS

A crucial part of good health care, and for living in the real world

“Tell me what you hope for” -- physician speaking to patient or family

# HOPE IS NOT OPTIMISM

**Optimism** – the U.S. “ideology”;  
a compulsive American  
exceptionalism

“We can do anything.”

Can spring from magical  
thinking; denial of limits

-- Terry Eagleton, *Hope  
without Optimism* (UVA Press,  
2015)

**Hope**--“open hope”; realism  
about the facts; yet openness to  
the idea that something good, as  
yet unknown or even  
unimagined, can emerge

Springs from the human ability  
to overcome despair

--Judith Andre, *Worldly Virtue*  
(Lexington, 2015)



# HOPE, HOPEFULNESS

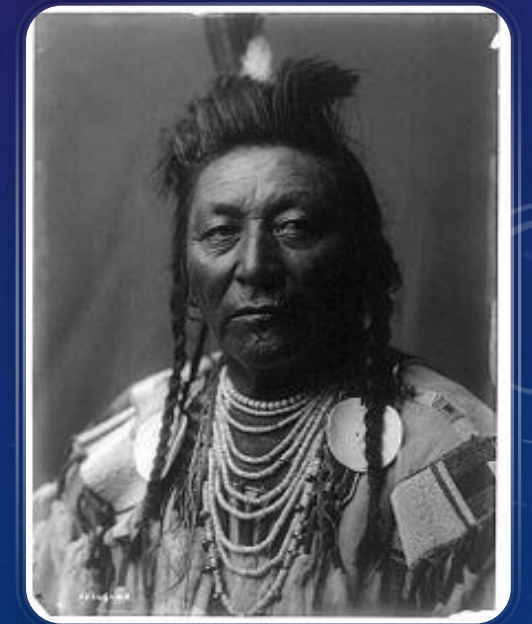
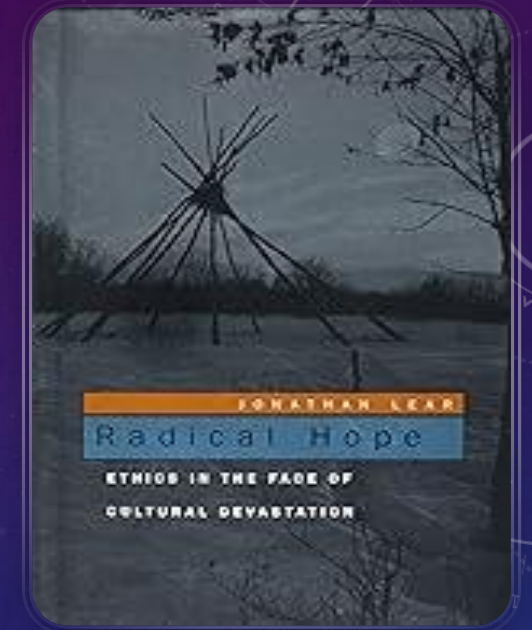
Does hope need an object?

The difference between *hoping for* and *being hopeful*; being hopeful is a life posture not tied to specific outcomes.

--Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973)

# RADICAL HOPE

- “Open Hope” -- Judith Andre
- Hopefulness in the face of disaster, while not denying the facts
- The Crow Chief, Plenty Coups
- “The hope that emerges when ordinary hope dies. . .”



# A HOPE PROFILE

What are your experiences of hope? What were you taught about hope as a child? How do you now think about hope?



What practices nurture, refine and strengthen hope as a virtue?





# VIRTUES DESCRIBE A WAY OF BEING

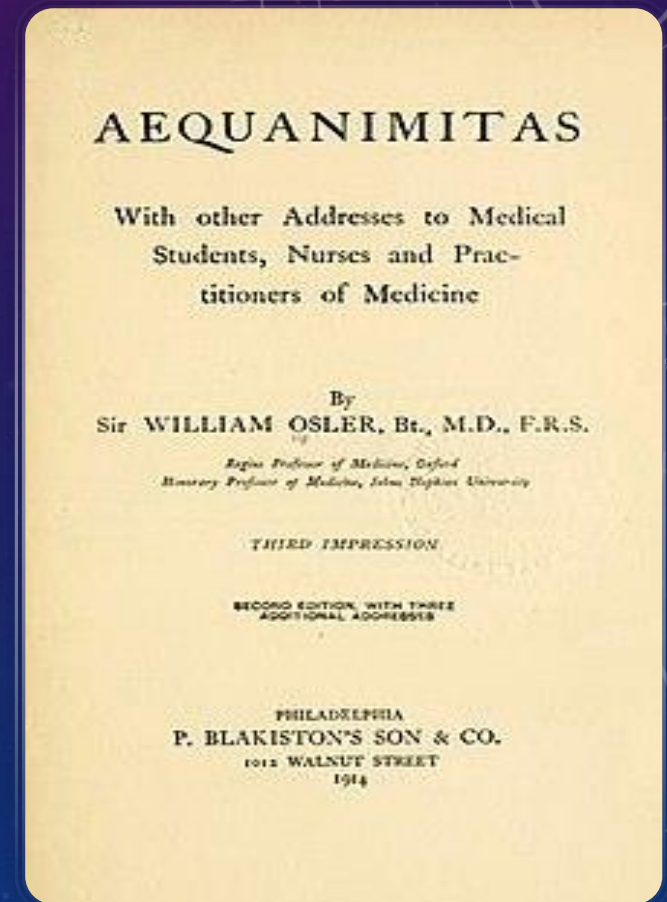
- Being with others
- Being with oneself



# BEING WITH MYSELF

*Equanimity* Evenness of mind, calmness, being at peace

---an essay by Sir William Osler, delivered to new doctors on May 1, 1889 as his farewell address at the Penn School of Medicine



# BEING WITH OTHERS MEANS HOLDING THE SPACE FOR THEM. . .

- to be safe
- to open possibilities
- Appreciating the mystery of others
- Those who can hold us in safety and possibility are our true friends



GABRIEL  
MARCEL  
(1889-1973)  
PROBLEMS &  
MYSTERIES



Problems admit to logic, to strategies for resolution. Problems don't rely on the problem-solver to give something of himself/herself to reach an answer.



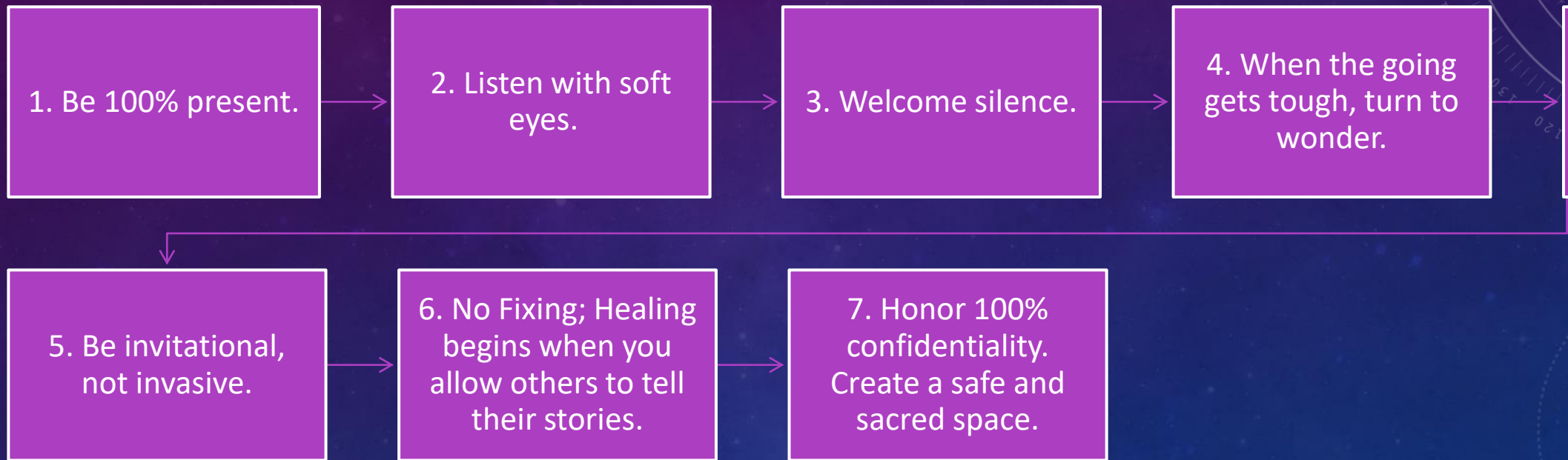
Mysteries do not admit to being solved; Statements about mysteries are more poetic than analytic; mysteries must be lived with, lived through; we don't find solution to mysteries, we find discernment.



Persons are mysteries. Moral mistakes occur when we treat persons only or primarily as problems.




# PRACTICE OF “BEING WITH” OTHERS: SOME BOUNDARY MARKERS



--from Keith Hagan, MD, inspired by Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*

# A “BEING WITH” PROFILE

*Being with Oneself:*  
What practices do I engage in that help me be tranquil, and at peace?



*Being with Others:*  
What practices help me hold others in safety and possibility?