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Understanding Your Path

*An introduction to the philosophy and method of working
through physical, emotional, and spiritual struggles.*

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Central to the Daoist worldview is the belief that you're here for a unique purpose — a unique journey.

By studying the major events of your life, you can begin to understand your journey.

By understanding your journey, you can become empowered by your experiences.

When you're empowered by your life experiences, you can begin to live with true freedom.

Understanding Your Path

This document is a short introduction to the philosophy and methods I use in my practice to help people work through various physical, emotional, and spiritual struggles. The teachings are rooted in the wisdom of Daoism and Chinese medicine, and have proven themselves to be insightful, empowering, and deeply moving for many of my clients.

I encourage you to give this article a read and then take some time to explore how these concepts show up in you and your life. You might be surprised by what you discover. You might start to see why certain things repeatedly trigger you or how you developed specific behavior patterns. Most importantly, it will give you the knowledge you need to begin to shift these patterns in positive, lasting ways. Most of my clients find that through this particular process they are less triggered by external events, have a deeper more meaningful connection to their partner and a healthier relationship, and are able to genuinely take care of themselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

So I invite you -- Be brave. Be curious. Discover yourself.

Our Origins

To begin this process, we go back to your origins - your parents and grandparents. We start here because key to this process is understanding the foundation of how you became you. Your immediate family is the source for your original physical, emotional, and social patterning. They are the people who taught you who you are, what the world is and how to live in it.

As you read through this material, please take some notes. Write down the things that float through your mind. Later, you can spend more time thinking about these topics, but sometimes the first things that come to mind are the most insightful.



First, we have our physical patterning. This is our genetics. It includes our height, weight, gender, and race. It also includes all physical characteristics that run in the family, including diseases. Part of our lessons in this life are about our epigenetic journey - what physical genes do we turn on or shut off? Can we break a cycle of disease that runs in our family? Can we understand what runs in the family and not pass it on to our children? Can we adjust our lifestyle to intentionally evolve and not turn on a disease causing gene?

What physical patterns run in your family? Height? Weight? Certain diseases? How long do people live? What did they die from? How much do they use their physical body? Are they more athletic or intellectual?

What are the advantages and disadvantages to all of these physical patterns? Take some notes on the genetic traits and patterns that come to mind while reflecting on your family.



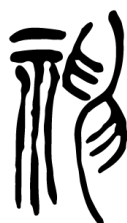
Second, we have our emotional and social patterning. We all know that our parents have quirks that we pick up. We'd like to say it's not true, but ultimately if we're honest with ourselves, we know it is. Our parents teach us important lessons about how to navigate life but they also impart us with patterns we might prefer not to have.

How they treat us, and the world around them, becomes a primary influence for how we interpret and experience life. The lessons they teach us, the good AND the bad, the conscious and the unconscious, become the glasses through which we interpret the world around us. Their behaviors set the tone for how we react to in the world around us. They also deeply influence how we feel about ourselves internally and in relationship to the world.

What are the patterns you learned from your immediate family? How well do your parents get along with each other? Are they honest and open with each other? Do they confide in each other? Do they live more like roommates than lovers? How do they show their appreciation or frustration to each other? How well do they express themselves and how well do they listen to each other? How do they treat themselves?

How do they talk about the world around them? Are they racist? Sexist? Republican, Democrat or Socialist? How do they feel about the politics of the country or world and how do they communicate about complicated social issues?

All of these patterns form the framework for what is normal to you. Like it or not, this framework created the world you knew as a child before you formed your own world view. Make a list of the patterns or traits that have come up for you while reading this section and write down the advantages or disadvantages of each.



Third, we have our relationship to the Divine. Our parent's relationship to religion and the Divine is where we get our first lessons on how to connect to something beyond humanity. As children we may have our own intrinsic connection into the world of Spirit, but as we grow we get introduced, and often indoctrinated, into their world view. Within the world of Daoism and Chinese medicine there's no attachment to what you name your God, it could be Buddha, Allah, Jesus, Krishna, or The Great Spirit. It could be nature. It could be the Big Bang. The only thing that's important is that you know your own beliefs and are at peace with them.

What is your relationship to the Divine? Your parents'? Did your family talk about life, death, and the Divine together? Do you all share the same beliefs and, if not, how do you navigate that as a family? What are your beliefs regarding the afterlife? Heaven and Hell, and how we get there?

Again, take some time to reflect on these questions and write down your answers. Knowing your personal relationship to the Divine is a very important part of our life path. Add the advantages or disadvantages of these beliefs.

The Journey

Beyond our parents we can also find many answers about our lives from our life experiences. Classical Chinese medicine has a beautifully rich way of looking at our life events to help us understand our journey and empower us towards health and healing.

We all have those really big life events that affected us deeply. Some of them even changed how we see the world or how we see ourselves. They caused us to shift course in our life. We felt one way about life, the event happened, and now we feel differently. The trauma is real and it is deep.



Looking back at your biography is the first step to understanding the story that's hidden within it. If you can understand the what and the why of that story you have the option to transform your relationship to your entire life.

This is a major part of what Daoist alchemy is all about...

Take some time to reflect upon the biggest events of your life. Include physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences. Include things like a broken leg, falling in love, a major heartbreak, and the times that you've felt very connected or disconnected to the Divine. Think about how these events affected you? How did your worldview change because of these?

What advantages AND disadvantages came out of those experiences and how you changed because of them? Write down a list of your major life events as well as the advantages and disadvantages that you can think of.

You will notice right away that some of these events will have opened your heart and some will have closed it. It's difficult to go through life feeling happy if our heart is closed to the world around us or the world inside of us. If you know your heart is closed to parts of life because of something that happened in the past that should give you at least one area of your life that you may need to explore more deeply with this process.

Sometimes it can be difficult to know how the past affects us in daily life. Sometimes our memory is not clear or the significance of the event isn't easily understood. Don't worry. Just start writing things down. Many times you will have to spend a bit of time looking at this stuff to start to connect the dots. Sometimes the history can be understood via the things that trigger you in the present day. Can you see a connection between the present and the past?

If you know you're not as happy or as free as you would like to be but just can't figure out how your past is part of all of this, you might want to give my [Yin Fire Self-Discovery Tea](#) a try. Over the years my clients have used this combination to uncover some of the deeper patterns they didn't know about themselves.

Trying to make sense of things

Long Term Excuses - We make excuses to accept things we don't like in our life. Everyone does this to some degree, however, most of us don't know we do this in two very different ways.



In the first scenario, we accept something or someone and just move along with our life. We carry no grudge or charge around the issue. It is as though the event never happened. Maybe you wanted to have a burger for dinner and your friend wanted sushi. You decided on sushi and moved along with your life. In this case you gave up your desires for the sake of a friend and left the experience perfectly happy. I'm not talking about this type of event.

In the second scenario, we make an excuse for someone or something and we carry some sort of grudge afterwards. Someone was short tempered with you and you used the excuse that they were having a bad day to explain their behavior. In these cases, if you're able to slow down and be honest with yourself, you know their behavior actually hurt, that you chose to suppress that hurt and are still carrying it around with you today.

In cases where you can recognize your feelings were actually hurt or you were angered you want to look at a couple of things. First, you have to be honest with yourself about the pain you feel. Second, you want to make sure you don't beat yourself up for being reactive in this way. Judging yourself for being human, and complicating the situation by having negative emotions about yourself, won't

help you through this process. Third, you have to commit to not stuffing that pain back in the closet like you normally do. Don't indulge the habitual behavior. Finally, you can begin to investigate why you made an excuse for that person or that behavior. Sometimes we make these excuses for certain people but not all people. Is that the case here?

"Acknowledge, Honor, Don't Indulge, and Investigate" is one of the practices I teach my clients to help shift this type of chronic patterning. Over the years I've found this process to be deeply transformative and empowering. With a bit of practice, and some internal honesty, we can quickly begin to see patterns that are there and begin to change them.

If you've ever had repetitive struggles in your professional or personal life, and if you just can't seem to shift how you react to certain things, then it's likely you're making excuses for the behaviors of yourself and other people.

If you find it difficult to put this into practice, you might want to give my product [Three Shen Tea](#) a try. This combination can really help you slow down your reactionary patterns so that you can begin to see more clearly and start making lasting changes in your life.

Tying it all together

For most of us the deeper lessons of our life are often hidden in plain sight. Many of the things we consider common sense are signs pointing towards some of the inherited patterns we have. These beliefs often affect our overall patterns of happiness and unhappiness with much of life. If we can begin to observe these “givens” with a sense of curiosity, we have the option to explore their validity and make sure they are actually our own personal truths and not just something we were “taught” by our parents or society.

I encourage you to take some time and actually write your thoughts down on paper. Try to answer some of the questions.

What physical traits and diseases run in the family? What are your family’s social norms? What are the quirks of Mom, Dad, and your siblings? What did Mom and Dad pick up from their parents? What are your triggers and how do they relate to all of this? Does diabetes run in the family? Colon cancer? Depression?

Write the lists and begin to look for relationships. Do you have themes later in life that you could see connected back to the patterns in your childhood? Are your parents’ narcissistic or controlling tendencies connected with your current relationship dynamics? If your parents were absent and uninvolved in your life, can you see themes showing up in your life now which relate back to this?

Did they teach you how to work through your struggles in life or take the standard American approach of numbing out in front of the television in hopes that the difficult things disappear?

Write down the initial things that float through your mind. Later, after further reflection and few days of integration, you may start to see more of the habits in your life and want to revisit this list and go deeper.

The wisdom and power of this approach is how it helps connect the dots from your physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences so that you can begin to see your life from a new perspective. The goal is to understand what all of these experiences have helped you to become. The goal is to help you learn whatever lessons you need to learn and connect into your beautiful and unique life journey. When we start to see the path of our life in this way our experiences in life begin to change automatically.

This is part of how I help my clients – it is a path of both education and empowerment.

For More Information

Now that you have been introduced to this process, I encourage you to spend some time taking a renewed look at your life journey so far - Where do you come from? Where are you now? Where are you headed?

If you need additional assistance, I offer [free 20-minute consultations](#) to help you learn how to cut through the things that are blocking you from living the life of your dreams and full potential.

You can also find more resources on [my website](#).

Sincerely,

Justin Ehrlich, L.Ac.
Integrative Chinese Medicine