

WORKING VIRTUES, SESSION 6

CORE VIRTUES (HOW TO IDENTIFY AND MAP THEM),
A VIRTUE FLOW CHART,
HAPPINESS,
WHY BE VIRTUOUS?

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A RECAP: WHERE WE STARTED

WORKING VIRTUES: Essential Moral Skills for a Good Life --- the OLLI description

“the moral life goes on continuously and is best defined not as episodic choices but as streams of practical virtues, or traits of character. These character traits live in us as personal and interactive skills, and it is these skills that both give us our daily orientation, and also shape our decisions and choices. This course will define and explore those moral skills...”



"I'd like you to check my
Core Values."



"I keep my core beliefs written on my palm for easy reference."



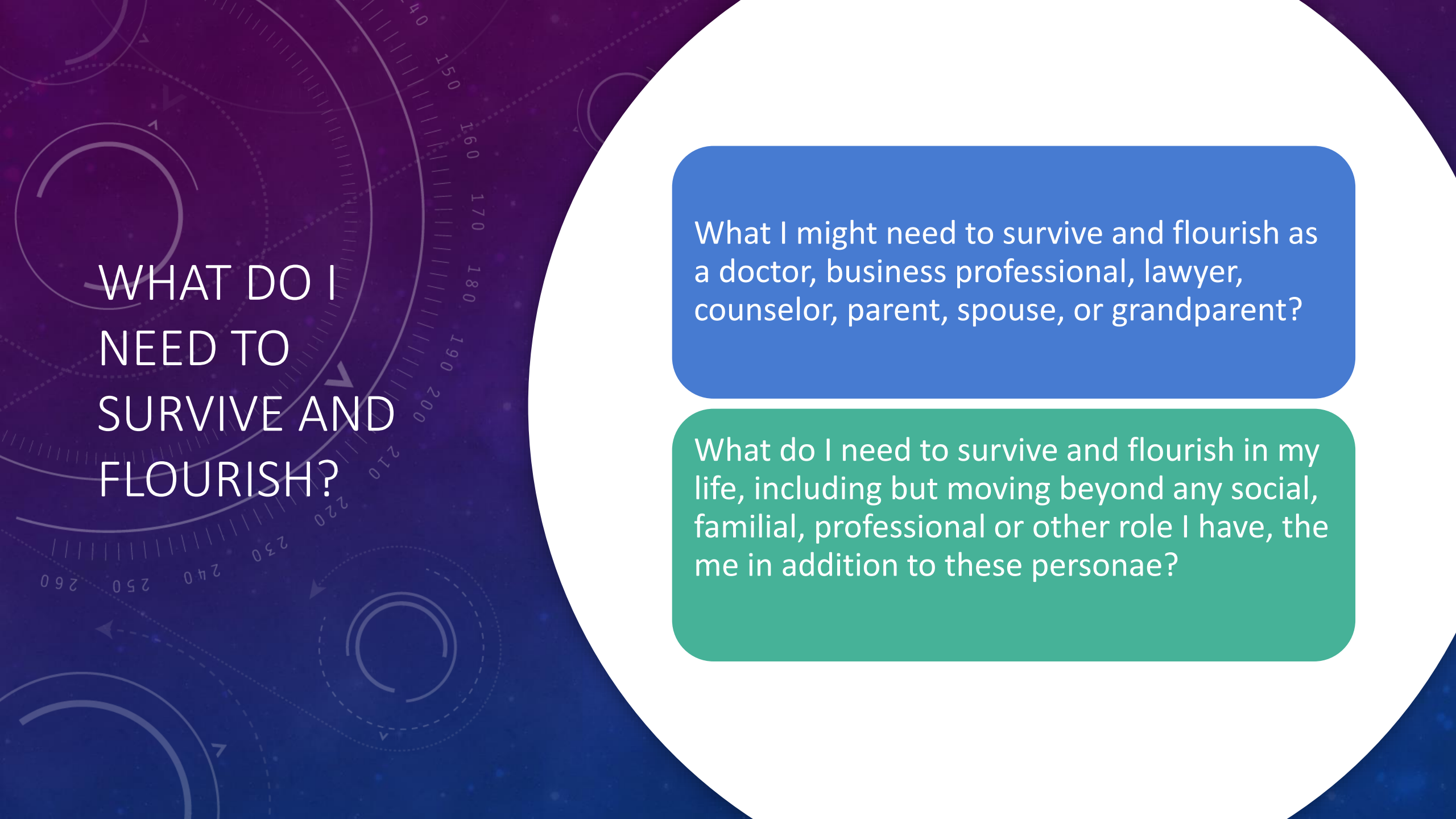
CHIEF SEATTLE'S ORATION, 1854

Your religion was written upon tablets of stone by the iron finger of your God so that you could not forget. The Red Man could never comprehend or remember it. Our religion is the traditions of our ancestors -- the dreams of our old men, given them in solemn hours of the night by the Great Spirit -- and is written in the hearts of our people.

WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT (CORE) VIRTUES?

FROM SESSION 1

- Virtues as Life Skills; **What virtues are needed to survive and flourish under the demands of living a life?**
- Are these the same for everyone? Do certain occupations or life situations call for special virtues?
- Are there age-appropriate virtues, e.g., different for the 20 year-old and the 80 year-old? Different for grandparenting than for parenting?

The background features a dark blue to purple gradient with intricate circular patterns, including concentric circles, dashed lines, and numerical scales (140, 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210, 220, 230, 240, 250, 260).

WHAT DO I NEED TO SURVIVE AND FLOURISH?

What I might need to survive and flourish as a doctor, business professional, lawyer, counselor, parent, spouse, or grandparent?

What do I need to survive and flourish in my life, including but moving beyond any social, familial, professional or other role I have, the me in addition to these personae?

BE SKEPTICAL OF “THE CORE”! (AT LEAST AS A SINGLE THING THAT LASTS A LIFE-TIME)



What are *the* core virtues for me? The answer is practical, not theoretical; the definite article often leads us astray.



What are *my* core virtues? Now, at this life stage; given my situation now, those that address the surplus of self beyond my roles

WHAT DO WE
HUMANS NEED
TO SURVIVE
AND FLOURISH?
A COMMON
CORE



Cooperation, Reciprocity



Solidarity

WHAT ARE MY PRESENT CORE VIRTUES?

4 QUESTIONS

from Session 1

1. What are the traits of character, the virtues I most admire in others?
2. What virtue deficits do I think are most damaging?

WHAT ARE MY PRESENT CORE VIRTUES?

3. What is my mantra?

- “Let me be worthy of the day” + “May I find joy in the day.”
- “Do the best you can and take what comes.”
- A mantra is a daily saying , but also part of what we say at decision time, in times of uncertainty, or peril, or confusion.
- If my mantra shifts it is because my circumstances and the demands of my life have shifted; and/or I have had new insights.

WHAT ARE MY PRESENT CORE VIRTUES?

4. What is my practice?

- I must have a virtue practice. Beliefs and convictions won't get me there. A practice is not an illustration of a virtue; it is the virtue.
- The practice is its own reward; it holds within it the knowledge I seek.
- This knowledge is only partially conceptual; it resides most powerfully in the body.
- This knowledge is largely apophatic (ineffable), and I point to it, symbolize it, talk about it in parables, puzzles, and metaphors.

VIRTUES WE HAVE CONSIDERED

- Love
- Being with Oneself
- Being with Others
- Truthfulness
- Courage
- Forgiveness
- Humility
- Reverence
- Kindness
- Probing Curiosity
- Empathy
- Compassion
- Equanimity
- Capacity for Awe/Wonder
- Relinquishing/Surrendering
- Spirituality
- Hopefulness
- Patience

PRACTICING JUST 1 WILL LEAD TO SOME OF THE OTHERS?



PRACTICES WE HAVE NOTED

- Mindfulness
- Meditation (e.g., meditative walking, or eating)
- Prayer, Centering Prayer
- Inner practices of letting go
- Fasting
- Retreats (e.g., from commercialism--buying nothing for a year; silence, especially in groups)
- Enacting “boundary markers”
- Potentially anything. . .

ANYTHING, REALLY... ?





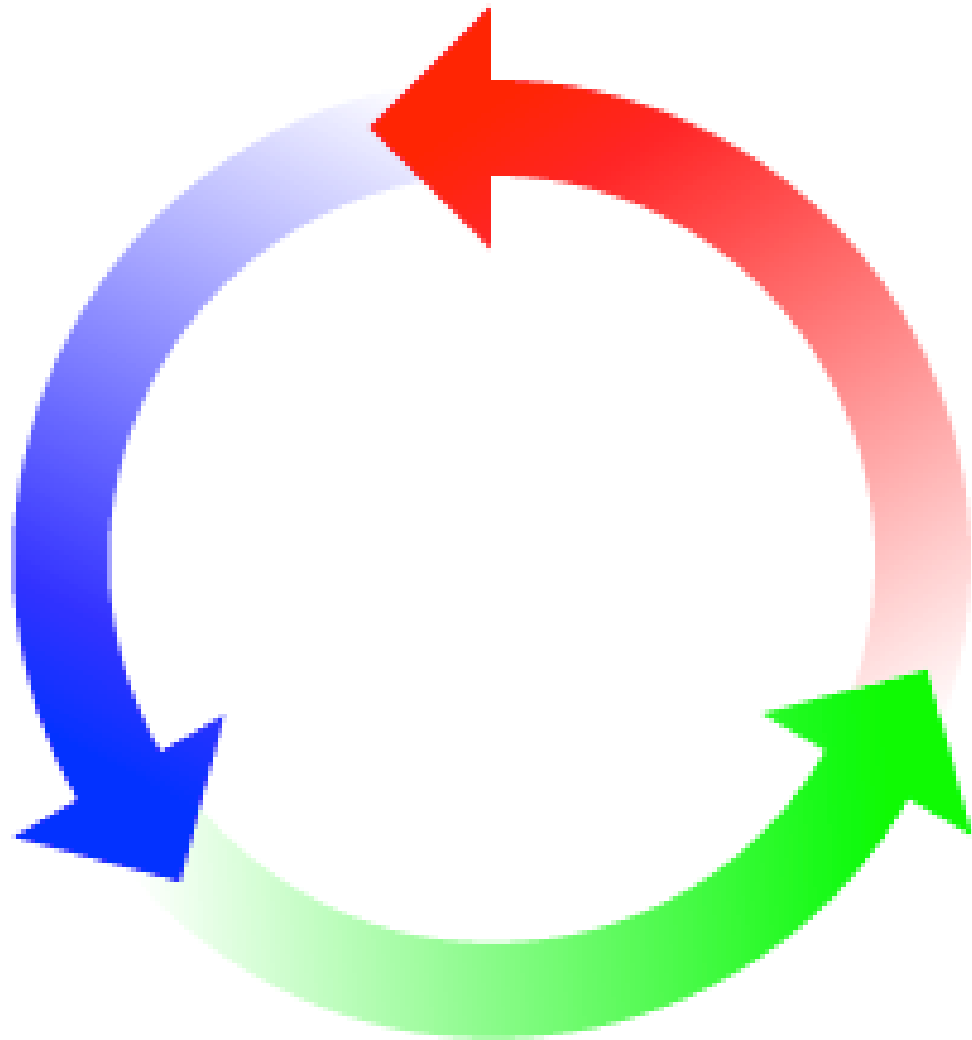


A VIRTUE FLOW
CHART

Virtue named

Practice engaged

Virtue redefined



A FLOW CHART: VIRTUE TO SKILL IN PRACTICE, AND BACK AGAIN

- Empathy 1

- Imaginative Skill Practiced—

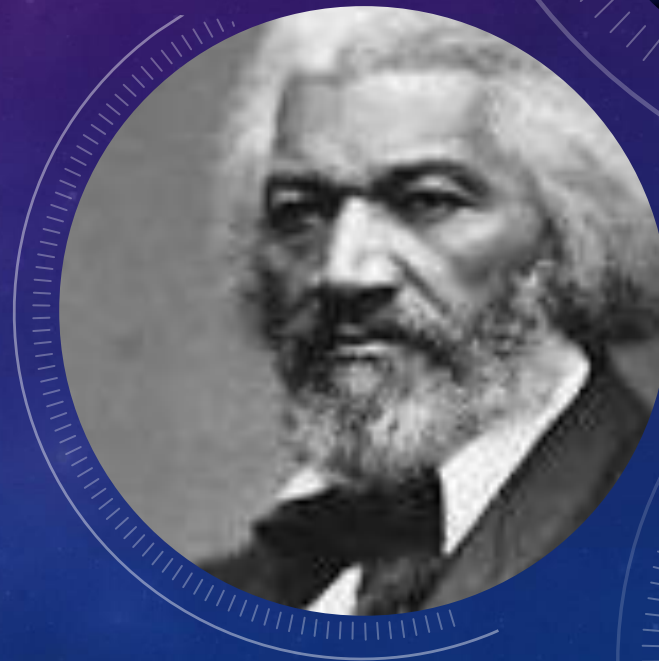
- e.g., suspending judgment, “seeing” the other person. . . which results in. . .

- Empathy 2



HAPPINESS IS EMBRACING MY VIRTUE POTENTIAL

1. There are similarities among us, but our virtue profile is unique and unrepeatable, like fingerprints and faces.
2. Bringing the potential of our virtue profiles to fruition is why we are here.



WHY BE VIRTUOUS?

1. It should be a clue that we want to appear virtuous to others, and that our deceptions and prevarications are so often in the service of avoiding dents to our virtuous image to ourselves and others.

2. Virtue works well only in a social-cultural context that values virtue and tries to promote it as important to a well-functioning society. Being a just person in an unjust society, or a good person in an evil society is saintly, and often dangerous.

3. A democracy can only function well when virtuous people occupy the legislative, judicial and executive positions.

WHY BE VIRTUOUS?

4. On a personal level, virtue leads to a higher form of happiness (flourishing). John Stuart Mill said “better to be a human dissatisfied than a pig satisfied.” There is a distinctive kind of happiness for humans—that is our telos, or purpose.

5. The un-virtuous person is ignorant of what kind of happiness virtues can provide, because the knowledge available through a virtue is only disclosed when it is practiced. It’s not primarily a reasoning process, not a conclusion of logic. It is incomprehensible apart from living a life. David Hume: justice is two men rowing a boat. Cooperation is better for us. Otherwise, we go in circles.



KEEP PRACTICING

BE PRESENT TO YOUR PRACTICE

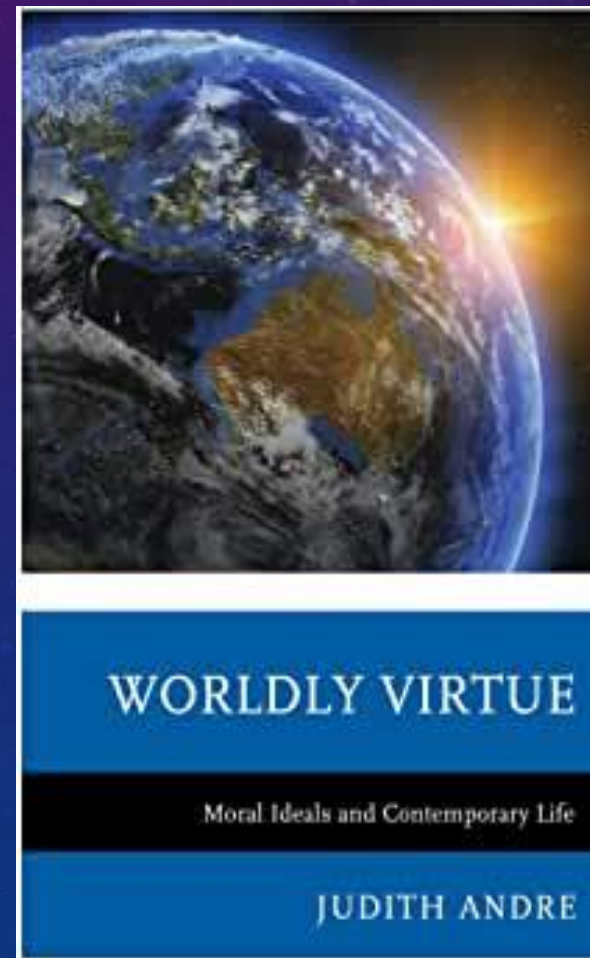
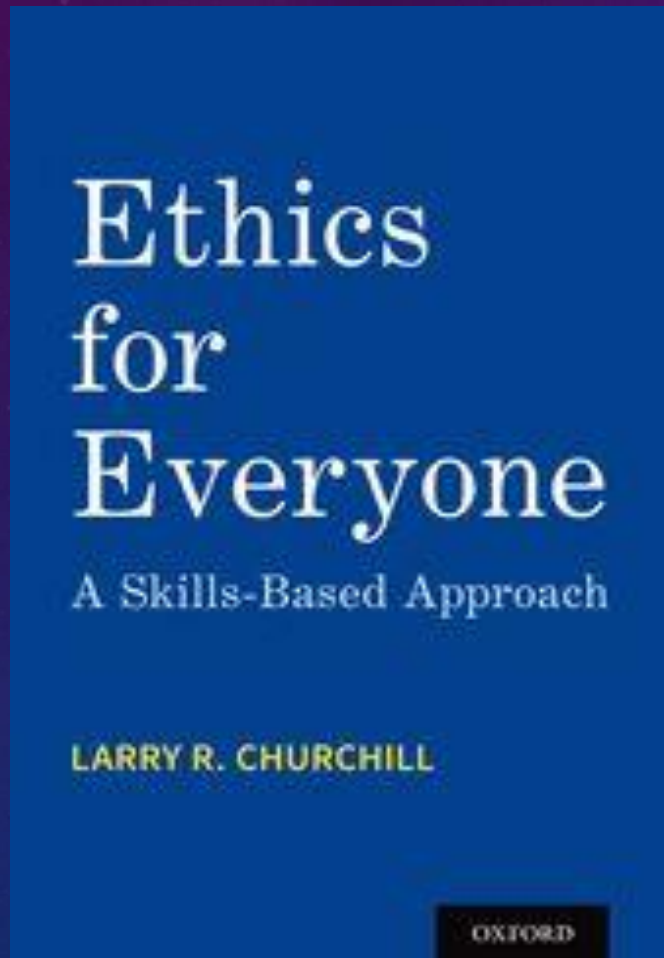
REFLECT ON YOUR PRACTICE

Be a witness rather than a critic or judge

Notice how your body is engaged

("your body is smarter than you are")

BOOKS I HAVE RELIED UPON...



ADDITIONAL INFLUENCES ON MY PERSPECTIVE

(A PARTIAL LIST)

- Richard Rohr, *Daily Meditation*
- St. Francis of Assisi, *Canticle of the Sun*
- Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*
- Buddhist teachings
- Epictetus, *Handbook, or The Art of Living*
- Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*
- Martin Buber, *I and Thou*
- David Schenck and Larry Churchill, *Healers: Extraordinary Clinicians at Work*
- Jay Mc Daniel, *Living from the Center*
- Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*
- Jesus of Nazareth's teachings, especially the beatitudes. . .
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Abraham Heschel, *Essential Writings*
- Abraham Maslow, *Religion, Values and Peak-Experiences*
- Ken Wilber, *The Simple Feeling of Being*
- Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*
- *Emily Dickinson (Helen Vendler [ed.] Selected Poems)*



THANK YOU!
May the road rise to greet
you...

