

1. To be enlightened means to live in a place of acceptance, loving whatever exists as is exists. What leads to change is awareness. If I am aware that I have created exactly what is before me at this time, then I understand myself as the originator of my body, the originator of my experiences, and the originator of my relationships. If I inquire into any of these and sense a desire for change, then I can create a strategy for making those changes. It is all in my hands. Feeling bad about anything depletes our energy. Making a strategy for change energizes and empowers us.
2. Being moderate is simply a matter of mindfulness. It means paying attention to what we put into our bodies. In the dictionary, moderation is referred to as “an absence of violence,” or “a state of calmness.” When we eat and drink in moderation, we keep ourselves calm. When we drink or eat to excess, it is like being violent against our very selves. It is challenging to be mindful, because all around us are people and circumstances that tempt us *not* to be. The cultural drift is toward excessiveness. We are encouraged to want more, have more, get more and this becomes part of our whole conditioning. Living an enlightened life means stepping outside of our conditioning and making choices that promote calmness.
3. What we feel and say about our bodies has a lot to do with how our bodies respond. Scientific evidence has proven that water is susceptible to messages. Photographs of water crystals that have been exposed to the words “love” and “gratitude” are beautiful and crystal-clear, where the same water crystals that have been exposed to the word “hate” become muddied and deformed. (see *Hidden Messages from Water* by Dr. Emoto) Our bodies are 70% water and are susceptible to the messages of our thoughts and words. In one study at the Institute of Heart Math, human placenta DNA was placed in a container to measure changes. 28 vials of it were given to 28 researchers who were trained in generating and feeling feelings. Researchers found that the DNA changed shape according to the feelings of the researchers. Quantum science now takes this idea one step further, stating that it is precisely our feelings that creation responds to, by matching the feeling of our inner world with like conditions in our outer world. As we feel and speak, so shall it be. Knowing this, it behooves the enlightened ones to speak kindly of their bodies.
4. Being aware of our thoughts and words is the first step in living an aware or enlightened life. As women, we have been programmed to focus a lot of attention on our bodies. It has to do with competing for the best mates. As we’ve been taught to believe, those who are thinner, younger, bustier, prettier are stronger competitors, so we look at others and constantly compare ourselves. Enlightened individuals see beauty everywhere—in themselves and in everyone else. There is no need to compare. Roses do not wish they were tulips.

5. Intuition is the compass to the enlightened wayfarer. When we are guided by messages from within, we stay true to our course, for those messages come from our soul who knows its mission and the means for its fulfillment. When we deny our intuition and take direction from sources outside ourselves, we take the risk of losing our way or getting caught up in someone *else's* mission. It is possible to live a meaningful life in the service of another's mission, but the enlightened ones are here to fulfill their own. When we act in the service of our soul's mission, there is nothing but joy and communion on the path.
6. Every time we wish to be something we are not or cannot be, we are diminishing our own light. Imagine that you were born with the light of a 100-watt bulb. Every time you have a regret or resentment, a dissatisfaction with the circumstances of your life that you cannot change, then you are powering down your own radiance. Instead of shining out your 100 watts, you are offering a mere 60 or 70 watts—or less, if you're harboring anger along with your disenchantment. To be enlightened, you must snuggle up to the Real and love it with all your might. An eighty year old who is in love with her life is far more radiant, alive and attractive than a thirty year old who is not.
7. There is a Zen saying, "Everything in moderation, including moderation." This is the advice an enlightened one follows, knowing that a discipline of moderation will not diminish if it is abandoned every once in awhile. Rigid adherence to any discipline, healthy or not, may become more about rigidity than the practice—and this is a danger to watch for. To be enlightened is to be free to choose anything at any time; it is not to adhere so fervently to a practice that one loses all freedom in the matter.
8. The important thing is that you claim some solitude for yourself, some time where everyone knows you are not to be disturbed. Just being alone, having our own thoughts, feeling our own feelings, dwelling in the presence of the moment, this alone can constitute a spiritual practice. There is nowhere to arrive at, nothing to be sought. The Great Mystery is the aliveness we feel in this very moment. God IS the present moment, and any activity that roots us in the present is a holy act.
9. Engaging in a physical activity helps us to embody our spirit and unify what becomes fragmented in a dualistic world. Our bodies are the manifestations of our souls. We are the arms and legs, the eyes and ears of the Divine, and keeping ourselves in shape is an act of enlightenment. Physical activity nourishes the body as prayer nourishes the soul. When we move, our cells are refreshed, our organs are revitalized, our muscles are strengthened and our entire being realigns itself.
10. Being aware of our body as a vessel or vehicle of our soul leads us into reverence, an underpinning of consciousness. When we revere our bodies, that penetrates into every cell and generates wellness and a sense of wellbeing. The thoughts that we have about our bodies are as essential to our health as the food we put into them. Deepak Chopra writes: "At the very instant you think, "I am happy," a

chemical message translates your emotion, which has no solid existence whatsoever in the material world, into a body of matter so perfectly attuned to your desire that literally every cell in your body leans of your happiness and joins in.”

11. Forgiveness of ourselves and others is a prerequisite for an enlightened self-image. Holding onto anything from the past keeps us from being fully in the present, which is the location one must be in for enlightenment. *A Course in Miracles* says: “Heaven is our natural state. Forgiveness is the means by which we will remember.” Forgiveness is the healing of the perception of separation. When we clear the slate, forgiving ourselves and anyone who has ever done us harm, we free ourselves to experience our own divinity. And if not, then not.
12. Happiness is a choice I make about the conditions of my life. To make anyone else responsible for my happiness is setting myself up to be a victim of someone else’s choices. If I take responsibility for my happiness, then I am taking creative control over my own life. If I need to alter my circumstances to create more occasions for joy, then I can do that. It’s in my hands, not someone’s else’s, and that eliminates the need to blame or try to change anyone else. The Jesuit psychologist Tony De Mello used to say, “Do what you want. That’s not selfish. Selfish is expecting other people to do what you want.” Taking responsibility for our own happiness is not selfish. It is an act of mindfulness and self-respect.
13. Choosing our own values is another prerequisite for a strong self-image. From our earliest years, people all around us try to instill *their* values in us and we let it happen—because, as children, we trust them and want to please them. But as adults, we create our own value systems based on the wisdom of our learned experience. People with an enlightened self-image live in complete accordance with values they have confirmed as true, honorable, and integral. The values they have let go of often outnumber the values they hold to, as so much that we inherited is questionable and ought to be dismissed. Rethinking our values and creating a life based on those that are sustaining for ourselves and the world is an important step in building a strong self-image.
14. Someone once said, “What others think of me is none of my business.” If we let ourselves feel great when they applaud us, then we set ourselves up for feeling bad when they don’t. It’s giving our power to others, abdicating creative control over our own lives. When we act from our intuition, from our own internal compass, there will be joy and vitality to our actions. There will be confidence, passion, purpose—for we will be living by heart. A friend of mine who was raising her children as a stay-at-home mom in the 70s was always troubled when people asked her what she did. She conjured up a sassy response, saying she married a rich man and did anything she wanted, though she confessed it didn’t make her feel good to say it. Years later, now that her children are grown, she called me to say she had the perfect answer now. “When they ask me what I do, I just say, “About what?””

15. One of the greatest myths religion has perpetuated is the myth of “selfless action.” There is no such thing, and striving for it has led to a lot of misdirected energy. When we’re looking for guidance about how to act, we need only ask ourselves the question “Who am I?” This inquiry returns us to our source and essence and will lead us to actions that are authentic and rooted in integrity. Trying to figure out what Jesus would do is not the solution for the crises of our times. WE are the light of *this* world. We are the sons and daughters of God in *this* century and it is not backward, but *inward* that we need to be looking. When we are clear about who we are, why we’re here, what mission we’re here to serve, then what we should do is exactly what we *want* to do, for our greatest joy and service comes from living in accordance with our soul’s desire.