the path to higher consciousness

world renowned spiritual teacher mary o’malley leads us on a transformational journey through the six phases of conscious awareness and lays out, in every sense, the clearest thing we’ve ever come across to a path to higher consciousness

by mary o’malley
Your life is a journey from unconsciousness to consciousness

The healing you long for doesn’t come from changing anything. It comes from the ability to see and be with what is, for who you are is consciousness. You are the space that your story—teller is happening in. As awareness, you can see the spells (limiting beliefs), feelings and sensations that pass through you all day long rather than being lost in the stories they generate.

When you learn how to be curious about what is going on inside of you, you discover the ability to experience what you are experiencing without turning it into a problem. You can then give the energy that was bound up in your struggles the attention and the spaciousness it needs in order to let go. This brings you back to the free-flowing aliveness that you truly are—the meadow of your being.

In order to be this curious about what is going on rather than always trying to control it, it is important to know that your life is for you. Life is not just a random series of events that happen because you did it right or you did it wrong. Instead, it is an intelligent unfolding that is revealing itself to you all day long, bringing you step-by-step from unconsciousness to consciousness.

Take a moment now to feel how different that is from the way you usually perceive Life: as something happening to you that needs to be controlled, fixed and changed. Imagine what it would be like to let go of the whole game of resisting Life and instead to trust it. In this trust you could then open to it, listen to it, and grow from every encounter.

At the last Hawaii retreat I led on the island of Molokai, the core focus of the retreat was “All Is Welcome Here.” On the second day, one of the participants said that whenever that phrase was spoken, she heard “All is well. Come here!” When you learn how to stop trying to make your life be what you want it to be and show up for it instead (All Is Welcome Here), you discover that all is well and it is safe to be here. You can show up for the life that Life is giving you!

When Eben Alexander woke up from his seven-day coma, the first thing he said to his sister was, “All is well!” In order to open to “All Is Well” so you can truly be here for Life, it is important to recognize that the evolution which is unfolding on the Earth includes human beings. Everything is a part of this evolution, including you. You are Life evolving from unconsciousness to consciousness. Your life is not a random series of events. It is an intelligent and mysterious process that is for Life.

I like to call it the “flawless, methodical mystery.” It is flawless because each and every experience of your life is tailor-made to wake you up out of your unconsciousness. Also, it is truly methodical. There are basic steps we all go through on our journey out of the cloud bank of our minds back into recognition of the meadow of Life. And it is truly mysterious. Without fully understanding it, we can open to it, rediscovering what Joseph Campbell describes as “the rapture of being alive.”

The Six Phases of Consciousness

Your life is a journey from unconsciousness to consciousness. Michael Beckwith, minister of the Agape Church, describes this evolution in four phases. I have added two more, “Life happens through you” and “Life happens by you,” and call them the “Six Phases of Consciousness.”

1. Life happens to you.
2. Life happens by you.
3. Life happens in you.
4. Life happens for you.
5. Life happens through you.
6. Life is you.

Let us take a few minutes to explore each one. I invite you, as you read, to keep on checking in with yourself. You are being given important information in this article. Remember that the most powerful thing you can do for your healing is to have your attention and your experience together, even as you are reading this and no matter what it brings up for you.

Dip the finger of your attention into the river of your experience. Allow whatever is here to be here. You have never experienced Life quite like this and never will again. This moment in your life is unique, and it is okay exactly as it is.

Life Happens To You

For a good deal of your life you have probably lived like most human beings, feeling that Life is happening to you. Life is so big and if you are honest with yourself, you never really know what is going to happen next. You wake up one morning and your heart is light and happy and the next day you’re unsettled. Bosses fire you, the flu debilitates you, people you love reject you, every day you get a little older and death is always lurking around the corner.

So it is understandable that the more unconscious you are, the more often you feel
like a victim to Life. When you live in the belief that Life is happening to you, you often view it as a possible threat. So you stay caught in your head, finding yourself lost in your storyteller that resists, reacts, defends and explains, hoping to figure everything out. It generally does absolutely anything except be open to Life, right here, right now.

**Life Happens By You**

When it becomes too uncomfortable to live with this much powerlessness, you evolve into the belief that Life is happening by you. Rather than being a victim to Life, you believe you can control it. There can be a great feeling with this much powerlessness, you evolve. When it becomes too uncomfortable to live by you and control Life, you believe in the story of your life. Instead it comes from your suffering doesn’t come from the experiences of your life. Instead it comes from your suffering doesn’t come from the experiences of your life. Instead it comes from the experience of the movement of the ocean. Yes, it does change the movement of the water right where it is, but it can’t influence all the other powerful forces that make up the ocean.

“**Life Happens In You**

You eventually begin to see that all of your reacting and controlling hasn’t brought you the ease and joy you long for. Instead of being the victim to your life and or needing to make it be any particular way, which is the endless game of struggle, you begin to get an inkling that Life is something to be listened to, opened to. This is where you start evolving into the next step, where Life is happening in you.

At this level of consciousness you begin to realize something very startling: most of the time, rather than experiencing Life, you think about it, seeing only the thoughts in your head! When you experience Life through your thoughts, you stop experiencing it as it is. Or, as the well-known French author Anais Nin once said, “We don’t see things as they are. We see them as we are.” You project your spells onto yourself and others rather than really seeing what is. When was the last time you truly saw a loved one’s face? If you are honest with yourself, it has probably been a long time.

It is in this phase that you also realize that your suffering doesn’t come from the experiences of your life. Instead it comes from your
Life is not a random series of events. It is a highly intelligent unfolding.

Life is not a random series of events. It is a highly intelligent unfolding that is putting you in the exact situations you need in order to see and unhook from the spells that keep you separate from its flow. No matter what is happening in your life, you finally understand that Life knows what it is doing.

Rather than Life being something you have to mold and shape into what you want it to be, you begin to show up for Life exactly as it is. Yes, the flow of Life includes pain, loss and death. But resisting the pains of Life only turn them into suffering, and the suffering that comes from resistance is always much greater than directly experiencing your pain. Instead of tightening around your experiences and turning away from them, which only thickens your cloud bank of struggle, you bring your attention to your experience, whatever it is.

Even little moments of curiosity about what is going on right now sprinkled throughout your day are powerful! Every time you respond rather than react to what is going on inside of you, what was formerly bound up begins to loosen. Remember, your natural state is free-flowing aliveness. When that aliveness gets trapped in the spells, your energy and joy dim. When the spells receive the light of your attentiveness, they let go, and the trapped energy flows freely, bringing with it the bliss of openness. Remember: Life is setup, to bring up, what has been bound up, so it can open up, to be freed up, so you can show up for Life!

Close your eyes for a few moments and open into this living moment of your life. Hear it, sense it, feel it. This is the only moment that matters in your whole life for it is the only moment where Life is happening!

Life Happens Through You

The for you phase shows you that there is no such thing as an ordinary moment in your life and helps you to see that Life is speaking to you at all moments. Becoming curious about what you are experiencing and giving it the light of compassionate attention so it can let go, you evolve into the next phase of allowing Life to move through you. This is where you recognize that Life is trustable. It is not always likeable, but it knows what it is doing.

Imagine a life where you trust Life implicitly. Every morning you wake up with a sense of adventure. Your belly is soft, your mind is curious and your heart is open. Rather than struggling with Life, you open to it, even when you are facing deep challenges. If you find yourself caught in reaction, you give your reaction the attention it needs to let go.

Just as when you unkink a hose, the vibrant flow of energy that is Life can now move freely through you and this brings forth the joy and aliveness you so deeply long for. Creativity that you could never imagine on your own becomes clear to you, blessing yourself and everyone you meet with the wisdom of the meadow of Life.

You experience deep gratitude for absolutely everything. You see that your life is dependent on every ounce of creativity that has ever happened in the universe. You also see that all that has happened to you, even the difficult, has been a part of your journey back into Life. Step by step Life is bringing you into consciousness, into the ability to be fully here for Life. Now you can relax and show up for the adventure. As Cynthia Bourgeault so beautifully says in her book Mystical Hope, “You find your way by being sensitively and sensually connected to exactly where you are, letting ‘here’ reach out and lead you.”

stories about what is happening. It comes from inside of you! There could be a gray day and you’re just fine. Then on another gray day you could be miserable. You may say it is because the day is gray, but it comes from your story about the day, not the day itself.

This is where you begin to live what we have been calling the you-turn. You become less interested in being a victim to your life or even trying to make it be any different than it is. You realize that the healing you long for comes when you turn your attention within. When you get to know the spells that are the source of your suffering, you can unhook from them and come back to Life.

Do a you-turn and ask, “What is asking to be seen?” Be curious about what sits here right now.

Life Happens For You

The more you become curious about what is happening rather than reacting and controlling, the more you come to a wonderful realization that your life is for you. Rather than Life being something that is happening to you that you must control, you realize there are no ordinary moments!
Conscious Lifestyle Magazine Spring 2015

Life Is You

The more you can stand with Life, allowing it to move through you rather than reacting to it or controlling it, the more you begin to get glimpses of the sixth phase in which you see that Life is you. You are no longer a separate being. Instead, you merge completely back into the creative flow of Life, understanding that everything—every rock, person, cloud, molecule and ladybug—is you. You are Life! As Eckhart Tolle said, “You are not in the universe; you are the universe, an intrinsic part of it. Ultimately you are not a person, but a focal point where the universe is becoming conscious of itself. What an amazing miracle.”

All is well. Come here.

As you look closely at the Six Phases of Consciousness, you will see that the first two are about fixing, changing, resisting and trying to control Life (Life is happening to you and by you). These phases are the world of your storyteller that doesn’t want what is here (doesn’t know how to open to Life) and wants what is not here (I can have what I want if I just think right). Throughout both of these phases, there is a veil between you and the living experience of Life because neither phase is about showing up for the creative river of Life.

The next two phases of consciousness are about using your mind to be curious about what is happening rather than resisting and controlling. In Life is happening in you, you recognize that the storyteller inside of you is what separates you from Life. So rather than trying to change anything, you become interested in what you are experiencing in any given moment. The more you are here for Life, the easy and the difficult, the joyous and the sorrowful, unhooking from all of your spells, the more clear it becomes that Life knows what it is doing and it is for you.

The final two phases of consciousness are all about coming home to the meadow. The more you live the truth that Life is for you, the more you relax into the flow, bringing you to the joy of Life moving through you. As your cloud bank dissipates, you not only recognize the meadow again, you recognize that you are the meadow! Life is you and you are Life!

Most people live in the first two phases, to you and by you, never knowing that right in the middle of these beliefs is a doorway into the last four. Life is waking you up from the contraction of the first two and into the opening of the last four. This is not only for your own healing, but for the healing of all beings, because as you see through your cloud bank of struggle, you become a healing presence in the world.

There is a paradoxical truth that is important to acknowledge. Human beings are evolving from the first phase to the sixth. It is also true that most days you will experience a number of these phases. It is not about getting rid of any particular phase or making one better than the other. They are all part of Life, and as you evolve, you will recognize and be able to embrace them all.

The Truth of Trust

In order to evolve into and through the last four phases, the tattered threads of your trust of Life need to be rewoven. You, like most people, don’t trust Life! It certainly feels un-trustworthy. Life breaks your heart, brings illnesses to your body, and feels, at times, as though it gives you way more than you can handle.

If you don’t trust it, how can you show up for it, opening to all that it is offering you in every experience you have? How can you allow it to bring you, step by step, from unconsciousness to consciousness? There is a shift of perception that will help you immensely in relearning how to trust Life, discovering that your life, rather than being something that needs to be controlled, is something that can be opened to. The shift is: Life is smarter than you!

Most of us are so caught in our storyteller that we live in a small world. What we pay attention to all day long is the cloud bank around our heads that is made out of our spells. We don’t see what is going on here! And we definitely don’t recognize the meadow.

As a means of opening your awareness from the tight and small world of your storyteller into a more spacious perspective, I invite you into what I call a big-picture exploration. Imagine you are sitting on the moon, looking at the beautiful blue-green jewel that is our planet. See it as a living being that has been unfolding for 4½ billion years. Look beyond it into the black, velvety depth of space that is filled with more stars than there are grains of sand on every beach of the Earth!

Now bring your attention back to the Earth floating in front of you, and as you drink in its beauty, recognize that absolutely everything

You are not in the universe; you are the universe, an intrinsic part of it.
You are a community of 70 trillion cells that pump blood through 65,000 miles of arteries and veins on this planet was created from atoms that come from the stars—and that includes you! So everything you see is made out of stardust.

Now in your imagination, see the evolution of Earth as a movie. At its inception it was just a ball of gas and dust. Fast-forward the movie in your mind’s eye and see land and water appearing as the Earth’s atmosphere forms. Then see Life beginning to come together into various rudimentary beings in the seas. Now see Life crawl out of the seas and onto the continents as a wave of green flows across the formerly barren land. Insects appear, animals emerge and dinosaurs come and go.

In the evolution of Life on this planet, there was a time when there were no creatures with thumbs, so Life could not be picked up with two arms with fingers and thumbs along the kind of brain that was interested in picking up Life and exploring It. Life had two arms with fingers and thumbs, along with the kind of brain that was interested in picking up Life and exploring It. Life had never shown up in this way before! Now see early human beings coming together into tribes. As their frontal lobes became more complex, see them discovering one another, birthing one half of the partnership of your great, great grandparents being born, growing up, discovering one another, birthing one half of the partnership of your great, great grandparents and then disappearing back into mystery. This same cycle brought forth your grandparents, your parents and then you. Now see yourself appearing out of mystery at the exact place on this planet where you were born. Watch yourself evolve from a baby, to a young child, to a teenager and then into an adult.

As you are watching the movie of your life, bring it to this morning when you woke up, began your day and eventually came to the moment where you are reading this article. Realize that all of the millions of moments of your life have unfolded to this moment and this moment is the leading edge of the wave of evolution on this planet. Open to the knowing that this moment is no ordinary moment. Right here, right now, you are being given a very rare gift: the phenomenal gift of Life. For a short slice of time you get to be here, and then you too will dissolve back into mystery and Life will continue to unfold.

Pause for a moment and contemplate all of the creativity that has gone before you that allows you and everything around you to exist.

Your Story
This movie about the unfolding of Life on this planet that we just explored is your story. You are a being who is an expression of 4½ billion years of Life evolving on this planet. You exist in this body because of the vast creativity that has gone before you. Let’s take your eyes for example. The first ancestors of your eyes came from polyps on the oceans floors that created cells that were able to differentiate light and dark.

In between that first rudimentary step into seeing and your ability to see are vast amounts of creativity that allow you to see this article! And it is not just your eyes that are dependent on the entire ingenuity of Life. Your whole life, like everybody else’s, is dependent on every single act of creativity that has ever happened on this planet.

It is amazing to recognize the creativity that enabled Life to take stardust and make this planet and everything on it, including you. It is even more astounding to see that as you sit here reading this, you are a community of 70 trillion cells that pump blood through 65,000 miles of arteries and veins, send messages along your nerves at the speed of light, regulate hormones, repair cells and digest food without a single thought from you. If you doubt that there is an amazing Intelligence that permeates and penetrates all of Life, just acknowledge what is happening in your body right now.

Because you don’t recognize the Intelligence at the heart of Life, you believe you are separate from it. Believing you are separate from it, you buy into the illusion that you must control it. As soon as you believe you must control it, you become cut off from it, losing sight of the joy of being open to Life.

You actually trust Life a lot. You trust it enough to beat your heart and breathe your breath. But you think that the Intelligence at the heart of Life has nothing to do with your daily life. You, like most people, bought into the arrogance of the human ego that says that it is in charge. Because of this belief in separation, you think your life is just a random series of events that you must mold and shape.
into what you think they should be.

What would happen if this was not so? What would your life look like if you understood that the same Intelligence that keeps the planets spinning, heals the cuts on your skin, and brings spring forth out of winter is with you every step of the way? Can you open to the possibility that this creative Intelligence is weaving your life out of the primal opposites of dark and light and it is giving you exactly what you need in order to evolve from unconsciousness to consciousness? What would it be like if you understood that the same awesome force of evolution that created this planet and brought Life out of the sea and onto land is working its magic in your life?

To get even an inkling of what we are exploring here will allow you to let go of that grip of control enough that you can begin to feel the magic of trusting your life. The more you trust it, the more you will show up for it, and the more you show up for it, the more you will see that Life is wiser than you and is bringing you the exact set of experiences you need in order to come back to Life.

Lift your eyes from the page and recognize that in the vastness of all time this moment will never be repeated, and you have the privilege to bear witness to it.

**What It Looks Like To Trust Life**

When you realize that Life is smarter than you, Life becomes very interesting. Rather than being lost in your storyteller, you realize something very extraordinary is happening here: there are no ordinary moments in your life! You become much more alert to what is happening, both outside and inside of you. If one’s life is like an iceberg, most people just pay attention to the part above the water while what is really going on is happening underneath the “water level” of their everyday awareness.

It is true that you are driving, working, showering, cooking, arguing, making love, raising children, birthing and dying. But underneath it all is the unfolding of intelligent evolution, and you are a part of that. You are evolving from an unconscious human being into a conscious one. This is happening in every experience of your life—every experience! Life is for Life. It is supporting your shift from being asleep to being awake. Just as Life assists a peach tree in creating fruit by sustaining it with sun, rain, bees and the nourishment of the Earth, it is giving you exactly what you need in order to know the fruit of a conscious human being, which is the ability to be awake to Life.

Living from the truth that your life is for you, you begin to let go of the belief that your suffering is caused by something outside of you: other people, your job, the shape of your body, the kind of mate you have, the type of health you have, the kind of past you had, or the sort of mind you have. You begin to see that your suffering is coming from inside of you, caused by the spells. Yes, there are difficult things that happen in your life, but when you don’t get lost in your stories about them, you respond to the situation, gathering the gifts that are always embedded in the challenges of your life.

As you awaken, you become less interested in trying to change anything in your life and more interested in what is going on inside of you, especially in difficult situations. You have a deeper sense of allowing Life to put you in the exact situations you need in order for the core spells that make up your storyteller to be brought to the surface of your awareness. It is there that you can see them, watch them in action, and discover that they are just spells that were conditioned into you when you were young and that you no longer need to buy into them.

It is almost as if these deep and ancient spells of fear, shame, doubt, jealousy, not being enough, loneliness, and anger, to name a few, are like champagne bubbles that have been trapped inside of you. As your resistance to experiencing them lessens, they begin to loosen, arising to the surface to be seen. As they are fully seen, they burst, and the energy that was formerly trapped in them lets go. Rather than being afraid of this purification process, you begin to welcome it as the longing to be fully awake to Life becomes stronger than the fear of your spells.

Pause for a moment and check into your belly. Allow any holding you discover there to melt away and let a smile fill you with its healing presence. Allow this softening to move all the way down into your pelvic floor and around to your back.

**The Joy of Respons-ability**

Whether it is an illness, pain, a difficult neighbor, a compulsion, a financial crisis or any other challenging situation in your life, it can
be initially threatening to your storyteller to take responsibility (the ability to respond) for your own experience. Old reactions that come from spells can be very strong. But you learn how to become like one of those three-foot tall inflatable dolls with a weight in the bottom. When you’re in a difficult situation, you feel like the doll when it is hit and falls over. More and more quickly, however, you do the you-turn, becoming curious about what this is bringing up inside of you, and you bounce back up again just like the doll does.

This is where you truly begin to trust Life. You know that difficult situations are for you. You see that just as the body cleanses itself of foreign viruses and bacteria, your being will cleanse itself of the old spells. The more you want to see your spells, the more Life puts you in the situations that will bring them up so they can be touched enough with the light of your consciousness to let go. Thus you are no longer the victim to your life.

Even feelings like aloneness, or unending sadness, or the black hole of nothingness that seem so deep and real when you are resisting them become something to say “hello” to and touch with compassion. As you stand with them, they no longer have the power over you they used to have, and the energy that was bound up in them is released, opening you to the meadow that is always with you.

It is important to remember as you are bringing consciousness into your daily life that you have never left the meadow; you just thought that you had. All of the joy, clarity and aliveness you long for have always been with you, right here, right now. You just haven’t seen it because your storyteller has grabbed hold of your attention and rarely let it go. The more you allow Life to put you in the situations that bring up the core spells of your storyteller, the more your cloud bank will thin and you will be able to recognize and live from the meadow of your being.

Mary O’Malley began changing her relationship with her challenges after a powerful awakening in the early 1970s, freeing her from a lifelong struggle with darkness. Mary’s new book What’s In the Way IS the Way, provides tools and techniques for healing fears, anxieties, shame and confusion, and transforming struggles into the peace we all long for. Mary is committed to helping people heal their inner wars, so they can become a part of the healing of our planet. Eckhart Tolle says “Thank you, Mary, for your contribution to the evolution of human consciousness.” Visit her website: whatsinthewayistheway.com