A watercolor landscape painting featuring a path leading through a green valley towards a blue body of water. The sky is a mix of pink, purple, and yellow. In the foreground on the left, there are several dark, slender tree trunks.

Five Spheres: A Home Educator's Trail Guide

by Rick Tan

the circumpunct

SELF

vitality | development



The SELF is the individual: you or another person, such as the child. The SELF is everything from which all experiences begin and end. Our experiences encompass thinking, feeling, and doing. In being fully engaged with the world around us, the SELF builds a vitality of being.

In the child, this building is the development of SELF-worth, SELF-esteem, and SELF-identity. Vitality of being means having a sense of purpose, where the thinking, feeling, and doing are directed outside of the SELF. It is directed in service of others. So, nurturing the SELF is not about being SELFish, it is really about being SELFless.

Giving is a major virtue of the SELF, and you can only give when your personal health and wellness are nourished and operating at optimum. Regarding the SELF is the practice of keeping one's SELF healthy and happy through proper nourishment, activity, and involvement.

By giving your SELF time to maintain your health, you are giving others your best SELF. How do you maintain your vitality of being, your SELF?

By reflecting on your child's SELF, you can nurture the development of SELF-worth. How do you foster a child's sense of SELF-worth?

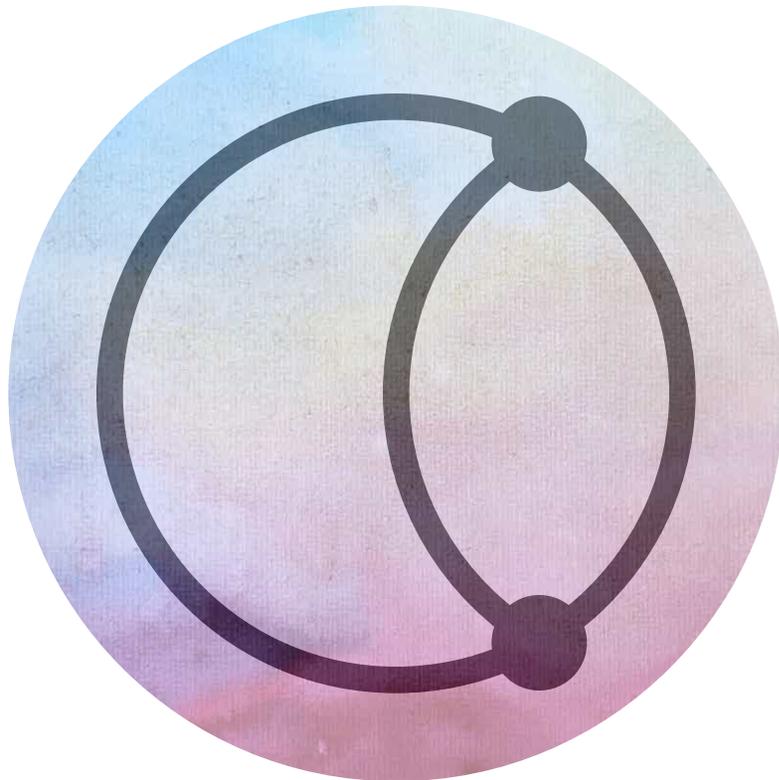
The promises of this world are, for the most part, vain phantoms;
and to confide in one's self, and become something
of worth and value is the best and safest course.

Michelangelo

the almond eye

RELATIONSHIPS

synergy | entrustment



RELATIONSHIPS refer to the exchange of thinking, feeling, and doing between SELF and another SELF, or simply, the interaction between people. There are so many ways we connect with each other, defined perhaps by who we are and what we bring to the table.

Each RELATIONSHIP creates something unique and powerful. It creates synergy between us. Even in the roles of teacher/parent and student/child, each and the other are learners, where capacities and skills are built, honed, and enhanced.

When we value the RELATIONSHIP that we are in, we are better individuals. We are more empathetic, more understanding, more compassionate. We are more open and trusting. We nurture as we are nurtured. We love as we are loved.

Imagine that a string connected you with another individual. Imagine that the quality of the string (its color, sheen, tautness, length, thickness) represents the quality of your RELATIONSHIP with that individual.

What does the quality of the string say about you? How will you create synergy between you and the other?

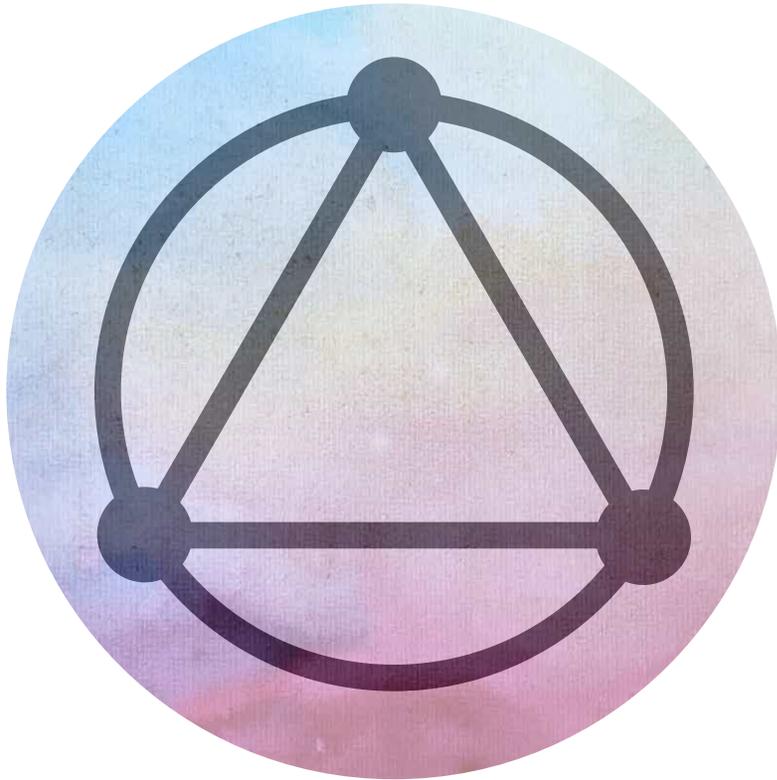
Trust is to human relationships what faith is to gospel living.
It is the beginning place, the foundation upon which
more can be built. Where trust is, love can flourish.

Barbara Smith

the triangle

BALANCE

harmony | engagement



Happiness is when what you think,
what you say, and what you do
are in harmony.
Mahatma Gandhi

Dynamic equilibrium: maintaining BALANCE in the face of constantly changing conditions. Life is always changing and evolving. The SELF changes (growing older, maybe wiser!). RELATIONSHIPS evolve.

To maintain vitality and synergy, we must aim for harmony.

Here are some fundamental triads of Waldorf education that easily translate to the homeschool landscape:

Thinking, feeling, doing.

Head, heart, hands.

Imagination, inspiration, intuition.

Relevant as well to the homeschool journey is awareness of the 12 senses, which I have grouped into Communication (other's ego, hearing, speech, gesture), Comfort (sight, smell, taste, warmth), and Coordination (touch, balance, movement, homeostasis). How can you create a path of learning that engages all 12 sense?

If you were to study botany, for example, how would you create a lesson plan that is harmonious?

For your SELF, how do you create a peaceful mood of harmony?

the sun cross

RHYTHM

sustainability | contentment



My body doesn't have any rhythm, you know.
I've got quite good rhythm when I'm singing,
but my feet are very much two left feet.

Adele Adkins

The passage of the four seasons of spring, summer, fall, and winter has a reliably recurring RHYTHM. The flow of blood through the four chambers of the heart has a reliably steady RHYTHM. Whether it is the organism of earth or the human being, life is sustained in RHYTHM.

Homeostasis describes the internal harmony of the body's systems. We thrive on the RHYTHM of sleeping, eating, breathing, and moving. We can choose in our daily living to follow our bodies' needs for RHYTHM.

If the homeschooling trail is to be completed, you must be cognizant of creating a sustainable RHYTHM that meets you and the child. This means aligning with the needs of the body for rest, nourishment, work, and play. Set a pace where you can sustain a feeling of both contentment and wonderment.

Music is a perfect example of how RHYTHM plays a key role. The underlying, perfectly measured beat of a song allows for interplay of melody and harmony, of dynamics and tempo. Similar mechanisms are found in story-telling.

In a homeschooling day, what does a healthy RHYTHM feel like to you and the child? In a main lesson, how do you engage the child so there is both contentment and wonderment?

the star

COURSE

discovery | wonderment



Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
Robert Frost

A star is source of luminous light, a focal point that draws our attention, awe, and wonder. The North Star guides wayward explorers. The Purple Star is awarded for courage and valor. A star tops a fairy's magic wand.

Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man is a star upon a square and circle. It is a schematic representation of a deeper reflection on the "cosmografia del minor mondo" (cosmography of the microcosmos). We are interwoven with the workings of the universe. We are stars!

The star represents COURSE of study. The curriculum can be categorized into 1) Language, 2) Music, Arts & Crafts, 3) Mathematics, 4) Social Studies, and 5) Physical Sciences. Current modes of education focus on content-based learning, on the curriculum. For it to have any relevance and meaning to the developing child, it must capture the imagination.

The star represents COURSE of discovery. Discovery is skills-based learning. It is teaching the child the capacities to want to be creative thinkers and compassionate feelers and caring doers.

With vitality, synergy, harmony, and sustainability, we go on a COURSE of discovery. The adventure of the humankind calls us to explore and to seek. We search for meaning and purpose.

And no matter how far we travel or what path we choose, we go on a voyage only to come back to the origin of our journey, the SELF.
