

## **What Is Your Self-Actualization?**

**By Ingrid Bacci, PhD, CST**

Self-actualization is a term that describes the process by which you become everything you can be, living up to your possibilities and the inner dream that motivates your life. Your life is a journey that gives you the chance, through both obstacles and opportunities, to self-actualize. Doing anything less is cheating both yourself and the world.

Each of us needs to actualize our full potentials in order to feel deeply satisfied with who we have been during this lifetime. Yet many people do not, because they do not recognize the signs they need to follow in order to achieve this goal. Many people also do not believe in their potential to step beyond the bounds of their everyday life to create what is truly meaningful for themselves. This is nobody's fault. If there is anything we suffer from as a species, it is our lack of self-awareness. We have a hard time figuring out how to make life a truly great success for ourselves because we continually undermine ourselves. That is why so much of living well is a journey of unlearning: unlearning the patterns we have developed that hurt us and lead us down a darker rather than a more brightly lit road.

There are few self-actualized people in our culture, primarily because our culture's sights have been set so low for so long. We do not live in an age of great aspirations! And so it can happen that as individuals we think that it is inappropriate for us to have great aspirations too. We may think having high aspirations is just being too idealistic, with our heads in the clouds. That is a fundamental error, and one reason so

many people today are so restless, unhappy, anxious or frustrated. They have so few inspiring aspirations!

Here are just a few signs of being headed toward your self-actualization. You feel emotionally more peaceful than you did a year ago. You generally have abundant vitality. And, very importantly, you have one or more goals that you really want and need to stretch for, goals that excite you but that also require something more of you than you have inside right now. In other words, you're having the experience of reaching toward your possibilities. Finally, whatever those goals are that you are reaching for, they are meaningful in a way that will benefit others as well as yourself.

The wonderful thing about self-actualization is that there is a science to it. You can learn and practice that science. Many spiritual teachers have helped guide us on the path to self-actualization by identifying, in their own language, the psychological, mental and spiritual traits of people who are self-actualizing. Eastern philosophical and psychological traditions offer specific advice on self-actualization.

Soon, I will be systematically teaching the process of self-actualization. This is my stretching toward my possibilities, and helping you stretch toward yours. More coming soon!