

## Spring Message Series: The Great Integration

Millions of people quit their jobs in 2021. Over the last two years, people sold houses, changed careers, ended marriages, and moved to new towns at rates far beyond the norm – so much so, that journalists and social scientists started calling it “The Great Resignation.” It makes sense that in times of change, people change too. What does it look like to re-build, and re-integrate, all these new pieces of a life... with the old ones that are still hanging around?

### Challenge:

In their article, “[\*It’s time to replace work-life balance with ‘life-work integration’\*](#),” (in *Fortune*) Arianna Huffington and Jen Fisher write that “life-work integration starts with asking ourselves what our non-negotiables are, what are the things in our lives that are critical components of who we are and who we want to be.” The challenge for this message series is to ask yourself this question and examine whether the response inspires any changes.

### Spiritual practice:

An excellent spiritual practice in times of change and evolution is journaling, and the events of the past years and the adaptations they have required of all of us are fertile ground for journaling topics. Devote some time during the next six weeks to writing about the challenges, and opportunities for spiritual growth, these times have presented.

### Discussion question:

“Resignation” can mean to drop out or quit. I can also mean acceptance: surrender to the inevitability of certain changes, but choosing to own the choices now before us. What things have you “resigned” in recent years, and how have you chosen to approach the change?

### Journal/reflection/art prompt:

Living your truth

### Family Resources from Miss Carol:

[\*A Handful of Quiet\*](#) - a partial reading of the book we'll be following in YS

[Exploring Memoir Writing with Kids](#)

[Cooperation Can Foster Creativity in Kids](#)

[\*Too Tall Houses\* by Gianna Marino](#) - A sweet story about competition vs cooperation

[\*The Remember Balloons\* by Jessie Olivaros](#) - On memories: given, lost, and shared

[Something to keep from March 2020](#)

## Readings, etc. from the Preachers:

Books:

[\*My Grandmother's Hands\*](#) by Resmaa Menakem

[\*A Hidden Wholeness\*](#) by Parker Palmer

[\*Active Hope\*](#) by Joanna Macy

[\*Take What You Need\*](#) by Rev. Jen Crow

[\*Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life\*](#) by Fr. Richard Rohr

[\*When Things Fall Apart\*](#) by Pema Chodron

Articles:

["The Roots of the Great Resignation"](#) by Jessica Stillman in *Inc.com*

["We Need Time to Rehabilitate from the Trauma of the Pandemic"](#) by David Rock in *Harvard Business Review*

["The Serviceberry: An Economy of Abundance"](#) by Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Emergence Magazine*

["Feeling Distressed at Work?"](#) by Ludmila Praslova in *Fast Company*

["The Long-Haul Symptoms of Being a Covid-Era Mom"](#) by Meredith Shiner in *Jezebel*

["Vespers"](#) by Cheryl Strayed on *Substack*

["What Does it Mean to Integrate Grief?"](#) from *What's Your Grief*

["A Tool for Staying Grounded in this Era of Constant Uncertainty"](#) by Rebkeah Taussig in *Time*

["Maybe We Can Begin"](#) by Carvell Wallace on *Medium*

["The Blackfoot Wisdom that Inspired Maslow's Hierarchy"](#) by Teju Ravilochan on *Resilience.org*

["Forget work-life balance – it's all about integration in the age of COVID-19"](#) by Melissa A. Wheeler and Asanka Gunasekara on *TheConversation.com*

["Life Post-COVID-19: Six prominent thinkers reflect on how the pandemic has changed the world"](#) by Daniel Susskind, et al on *IMF.org*

["The future of work after COVID-19"](#) by Susan Lund, et al on *McKinsey.com*

["Experts Say the 'New Normal' in 2025 Will Be Far More Tech-Driven, Presenting More Big Challenges"](#) by Janna Anderson, Lee Raine and Emily A. Vogels on *PewResearch.org*

["The Great Resignation? More like The Great Renegotiation"](#) by Greg Rosalsky on *npr.org*

Poems:

[“Whole-Hearted & Unafraid”](#) by Rev. Sean Parker Dennison

[“Not Busy, Focused; Not Busy, Full”](#) by adrienne maree brown

Songs:

[“Level Up”](#) by Vienna Teng

[“We Shall Be Known”](#) by MaMuse (performed by Thrive Choir)

[“Resilient”](#) by Rising Appalachia

[“Hurt”](#) by Arlo Parks

[“Surface Pressure”](#) from the *Encanto* soundtrack

[“What's Up”](#) by 4 Non Blondes

[“Once in a Lifetime”](#) by Talking Heads

[“Don't Dream It's Over”](#) by Crowded House

Quotes:

“Sabbath, in the first instance, is not about worship. It is about work stopping. It is about withdrawal from the anxiety system of Pharaoh, the refusal to let one’s life be defined by production and consumption and endless pursuit of private well-being.” ~Walter Brueggemann

And more...

[Intro to Autistic Burnout](#) - a channel by a NYT best-selling expert on burnout who is also autistic.

Whether you are autistic or not, there is a nugget to ponder here.

Amelia Nagoski presents an interesting hypothesis: the cure to burnout is not self-care, that is a myth that perpetuates the cycle of stress that leads to burnout (autistic or not). Nagoski posits that self-care asks us to hoard our resources and close ourselves off from helping and being helped by others.

**Advice You Will Not Follow** by Rev. Hugh Hollowell Jr. from a public FB post on January 26:

Since posting my story of burnout, I have had no less than 5 conversations with people in similar places. All people in the so-called helping professions, all doing good work, all exhausted.

I used to teach classes on self-care, but if I did it now, I wouldn’t call it that. Because sometimes, the most self-loving thing you can do is walk the hell out the door, never to return. And I’m not really interested in helping uphold failing systems that rely on the sacrifices of good people to survive.

But, I do recognize that exhausted people have very little capacity to effect change, or to fight for their own liberation. And if giving someone the tools to conserve even a portion of their energy for their own use gives them margin to effect change, then it’s probably worth doing.

Here are some things, in no particular order, that I wish I had learned and taken seriously early in my career. Many of them I have shared before, while others I have only recently learned. None of them

are definitive – in most cases, they are starting points for you to investigate. Most of them are inexpensive, or can be budgeted for. None of them involve spa-days or pedicures.

I also want to say that you will probably ignore all this. I did, and I was the one teaching it. But I really wish I hadn't.

The most important thing you can do, if you want to change the world, is to survive long enough to do it. It has been my experience that dead people have very little influence on society.

1. Buy yourself a calendar, and write things down. A calendar is an integrity document – things that go on it are promises to yourself and others. Important things get scheduled. Schedule non-work things – lunches with friends, trips with your spouse, doctor visits – just like you would an appointment. Guard these against work intruding.

2. You need a few people you can trust without question. Schedule regular time with those people.

3. Make friends who have nothing to do with your work. You are more likely to keep up with friends if you schedule them as appointments. Like, the 3rd Friday of the month at 3 PM is always "Coffee with Judy" on your calendar.

4. Related to #3 – the more standing appointments you can have, the less you have to think, and the fewer decisions you have to make. Set it as a recurring meeting in your calendar and then you never have to think about it again. This can be everything from the barber to the gym to the therapist to the coffee shop. I had a period there where every Tuesday afternoon from 2-5 was just when I did my writing, and every Wednesday morning I met with my direct reports.

5. Remember always that you, as a person, are nowhere near as important as you think you are to anyone at your work. If you dropped dead tomorrow, they would have your job posted before you were in the ground. If removing you from the picture will kill it, it's already dead and you are just paying for it to stay alive with your energy.

6. Decisions you make when you are Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired will probably be bad decisions. If you feel any of those things and are facing a big decision, HALT. (Get it?)

7. Sleep is everything. If you aren't getting at least 7 hours of sleep (without self-medicating) on a regular basis, do whatever you need to do to make that happen.

8. A surgeon must protect her hands to protect her ability to work. You must protect your energy for the same reason, and just as rigorously. Energy is like money – it's easier to spend less than it is to make more.

9. Develop a life and an identity apart from your work. You won't always be Pastor Sarah, but you will always be Mom. So maybe don't invest so much energy in something that won't last.

10. Read books and watch movies that have nothing to do with your work.

11. Find affordable luxuries to pamper yourself with. You are unlikely to go broke because you bought the good face soap rather than the generic, but the good soap will make you feel special every time you use it.

12. Take the vacation. In blocks of 5 days in a row or more.

13. Develop rituals in your life. They will ground you and give you things to do when you don't know what to do.
14. The more options you have in any given situation, the better you will sleep and the more peace you will have. Fight to have as many options as possible.
15. Eat the best food you can afford. It is both fuel and pleasure.
16. Daily exercise – even if it is just a walk around the block or riding your bike to work – is crucial. And no, all the steps you get in while at work doesn't count.
17. You are probably dehydrated.
18. The temptation to use chemicals to manage your state is overwhelming. A “beer after work” is easy to become a “bottle of wine after work”. Find non-chemical ways to manage your state.
19. If you don't work from your home, figure out how to turn work off before you walk in the door of your house. Transitional rituals (like stopping at the coffee shop on the way home, or silencing your phone after you park the car in the driveway, or walking around your garden before you go in the house) can help with this.
20. If you do work from home, figure out how to signify when you are done with work – like, closing the laptop, or shutting the door to the office. I will often walk around the block when I'm done, as a way of telling myself I'm “walking home”.
21. There are no such thing as guilty pleasures. Like what you like. If that is eating ding-dongs while listening to Taylor Swift, own that shit. The sheer amount of guilt people will try to put on you is nearly endless, so don't guilt yourself.
22. Your ability to survive long-term in a world filled with ugliness is directly related to how much beauty you have in your life. Beauty is like Vitamin C – your body needs it, and yet cannot store it. Search for beauty and surround yourself with it like your life depends on it. Because it does.

Questions? Suggestions? Feedback? Please feel free to contact one of the members of the Spiritual Development Ministry:

Majid Alsayegh [malsayegh@altamgmt.com](mailto:malsayegh@altamgmt.com)

Deb Soderland [deb.soderland@gmail.com](mailto:deb.soderland@gmail.com)