

Vision Quest: What for?

Life is filled with transitions; growth is characterized by change. Humans must pass from one life stage to another.

Starting from our birth, we are weaned from infancy and brought into the world of childhood. We pass from childhood into adolescence and into adulthood.

If we marry, we leave the world of single adulthood behind. If we divorce, we return to the single state. We make our way through the adult passages, facing predictable crises at middle age and "retirement".

With aging comes preparation for dying, and finally, the ultimate passage of death.

Moving to another town, changing or losing our job, becoming seriously ill, mourning the death of a loved one, all these things cause transition, bringing us into situations in which old structures no longer apply and a new structure, a new sense, hasn't yet appeared.

This is the nature of a growth-crisis. In all cultures and eras, such transitions were celebrated by rites of passage and ceremonies of initiation. Without these ceremonies, individuals could not have understood or interpreted their life experiences, nor could they have been capable of assuming the social responsibilities and privileges required by their changes in station.

Traditional life passage ceremonies are no longer part of mainstream culture in the western world. In the information-focused society of today, the wall between humans and their natural environment is growing, the basic social unit of the family is breaking down and individuals are expected to be efficient and fit. We often stumble painfully through our life passages like victims, a burden to others and ourselves.

This is why people often feel ashamed, suppressing the symptoms of their crises, and with them their deeper meaning and the opportunity to heal. This is where long-term crisis comes from.

The coping strategies we are usually taught are about consumption. Particularly when we are in a phase of transition, we often feel we need something, some medicine, a new book, a car, chocolate, or drugs.

Vision Quest offers the chance to become empty instead. You must become empty and say goodbye to the old, in order to become open to the new, to what you don't yet know about yourself. Vision Quest is a way to ask Life what it wants to do with you, instead of carrying on thinking about what you want to do with it.

