



5 courses that could CHANGE YOUR LIFE

If you're looking for a shift in the way you feel and behave, the answer may lie in a course of self-development or spiritual study. But which to choose? *Spirit & Destiny* investigates five of the most famous

THE JOURNEY

WHAT IS IT?

The Journey is a step-by-step process that works through emotional layers to get to a traumatic memory that's causing problems, and release it. Brandon Bays, who's worked with self-help guru Anthony Robbins, developed The Journey when her football-sized tumour disappeared after using the technique. She believes healing emotions can also heal the body.

WHAT HAPPENS?

The Journey Intensive is a two-day workshop. The first is a seminar, listening to the ideas behind The Journey and its heart-warming success stories, along with inspiring music, meditation and even massage. Then, with a Journey practitioner, participants do a guided meditation process that takes between two and four hours. It takes you through your

emotional layers – for instance, an emotion such as anger has another emotion behind it, like fear. When you get to the emotion at the heart of these layers, it often corresponds with a childhood trauma. The theory is, you can release the suppressed emotion associated with that memory, allowing yourself to heal, mentally or physically.

WHO'S IT GOOD FOR?

Anyone who feels there's something wrong with their lives, and who wishes to resolve problems that are causing mental or physical pain. Anthony Robbins has described Bays as 'a remarkable soul'.

WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?

Some have criticised The Journey for simply using established NLP techniques. Others have queried Brandon healing her own tumour, and the implication that The Journey can heal serious illnesses.



'IT WORKED FOR ME'

Sylvia, 34, a teacher from Keswick, Cumbria

'I was always complaining about some ailment or other, and felt dissatisfied with my friends, family and partner. My doctor could only offer antidepressants. Four years ago, I went to a homeopath, who suggested I try The Journey. Initially, I was cynical, as it seemed a bit schmaltzy. But when Brandon Bays started to speak, I was riveted. She explained how when her tumour was discovered, she retreated to detox. Suddenly a childhood memory of violence flashed in front of her – she'd had therapy for this trauma and thought she'd dealt with it. But when she

released the feeling attached to the memory, it coincided with her tumour disappearing. 'During my Journey, the practitioner took me back

through all my layers of feelings to quite a random childhood memory – my mother shouting at me for breaking an ornament. Another child had done it, but I hadn't said. About 25

years of resentment flooded away from my body. It seemed such a petty trigger for my problems, but I felt on a high afterwards. 'My friends soon noticed I was happier, and I've continued to be content. I now use The Journey to

'About 25 years of resentment flooded away from my body. I felt on a high afterwards'

help deal with any issues of unhappiness that crop up.' **WANT TO KNOW MORE?** Call 01656-890400 or visit www.thejourney.com. The Journey Intensive costs £375.



LANDMARK FORUM



WHAT IS IT?

Landmark Forum is a development programme that aims to help people realise happiness and success by giving them the ability to step outside their usual perspectives. Landmark is not religious but has ideas that resonate with Zen Buddhism, Hinduism, Freud and self-help gurus.

WHAT HAPPENS?

The three-day course caters for 75-250 people, and each day lasts 13 hours. People work for three to four hours at a time, and there's even homework during the breaks. Afterwards, a leader talks you through the philosophies behind Landmark, such as when we get into a disagreement with someone, we think that we're right and create a preconceived notion that the other person is wrong. This creates a distortion, a 'racket' that we get caught up in. Once we take responsibility for this feeling, we'll become happier.

People take to the floor to 'share' life experiences. The leader is often tough in his assessments of them: anger, self-pity or sorrow can be 'rackets' preventing us from being happy. Once participants realise the rackets they've been caught up in, they're encouraged to heal rifts with their new-found knowledge.

WHO'S IT GOOD FOR?

Anyone who's dissatisfied but doesn't know why, or whose relationships aren't what they'd like them to be. Ninety per cent of those who attend Landmark Forum do so after a friend's →



recommendation. Novelist Esther Freud has taken a course.

WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?

Landmark encourages participants to recruit to the courses, and some of its unorthodox methods, such as long hours, have made critics wary. Some accuse it of being a cult. But a study by Professor Raymond Fowler, ex-chief executive officer of the American Psychological Association, concluded Landmark wasn't a cult.

'IT WORKED FOR ME'

Jenny, 37, a media analyst from Weybridge, Surrey

'I found myself in a pretty bad place when I was 32. My fiancé left me for another woman, and my mother had attempted suicide just before this. I was feeling very low when a friend recommended Landmark Forum.

'After the first day, I felt I'd been hit over the head – it was so long. On the second day, as soon as we were seated, the group leader came down very hard on us, shouting that we were failures as human beings and disgusting. It genuinely upset me. But just when you start to believe that could be true, we're reminded that we can be the master of our destiny, if only we change the way we perceive things.

'By the third day, I found myself making a tearful call to my ex – I never thought I could forgive him, but I found myself asking for his forgiveness! He was a bit bemused, but it eased the bitterness between

'We're reminded that we can be the master of our own destinies'

us. Taking three days out made me realise the rackets I'd been caught up in – going over and over my ex's shortcomings and not taking responsibility for myself.

'I can see why people are mistrustful of Landmark. We're encouraged to get people to try it – initially, I was a bit of a bore because I kept telling everyone how great Landmark was. But it gave me the push I needed to get out of my negativity. I'm happier as a result.'

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Call 020-7969 2020 or visit www.landmarkeducation.com. The three-day Landmark Forum costs £345.

THE ALPHA COURSE

WHAT IS IT?

An introduction to Christianity designed for those who have had little or no exposure to the faith. It was developed at Holy Trinity Brompton church in Knightsbridge, London, and more than two million people have done the course in the UK, and 13 million worldwide.

WHAT HAPPENS?

There are 15 meetings over 10 weeks, usually held in the evening. Everyone has dinner, then the group leader talks for 30 minutes about that evening's prescribed topic. Underpinning Alpha is the idea there are only three possible ways to explain Christ – he was mad (deluded that he was the son of God); he was bad (manipulating people for his own means); or he was who he claimed to be (the Son of God). Christians believe he

couldn't have been mad or bad, because his teachings made – and make – such good moral sense. Afterwards, there's a discussion, during which you can debate with the group's leader.

WHO'S IT GOOD FOR?

Anyone who feels life is not all it could be, wonders about the 'big' questions ('Is there a God?') or is curious about Christianity. The average age of attendees is 27, and many people come on the advice of a friend. Geri Halliwell is one of many well-known people who've been associated with Alpha.

WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?

Critics say Christianity is still anti-abortion, anti-gay-sex and against premarital sex, and makes sinners of people who do these things.



Singer Geri Halliwell

'IT WORKED FOR ME'

Hayley, 23, an Alpha coordinator from London

'A year ago, I had a job in the City and lived the high life – champagne bars, shopping sprees and a good social life. I thought Christians were needy, old or ill. I suppose I was searching spiritually. I'd visit psychics and tarot readers, and often they were accurate, but after a reading, I'd feel empty.

'My boyfriend started to go to the Holy Trinity Brompton on his parents' recommendation. I thought it was all rubbish, but when his grandad died, I attended a service to support him. I was surprised at how relevant it felt to me. Someone there mentioned the Alpha course, and, curious, I signed up. It was absorbing. You could say or ask the course leaders anything – they were unshockable. As part of the

course, we went away for the weekend. I had a very profound experience. I felt God and the Holy Spirit. I felt forgiven for all the things other people could not forgive me for. The hairs on the back of my neck stood up.

'I've given up working in the City, although many Christians do work there, and now I work for Alpha, bringing Christianity into the workplace. I'm no longer with my boyfriend – but we're still good friends. I date, but although I used to live a very sexual life, I'll wait until I'm married to have sex again.

'Alpha isn't a 10-step plan – "Do this and you'll be happy." It's about an intimate relationship with God, and through His love, your life becomes transformed. I was fairly content before, but now I'm joyful.'

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Call 0845-644 7544 or visit www.uk.alpha.org. The Alpha course is free to attend.

THE HOFFMAN PROCESS

WHAT IS IT?

An intensive residential personal development programme that's well-respected because of its good results – studies have demonstrated that it works for conditions such as anxiety and depression. Different techniques are used to unravel patterns passed down from parents, which cause you to behave in certain ways. It also teaches new positive ways to behave.

WHAT HAPPENS?

You'll take part on the eight-day retreat with between 20-30 other people. What the Process does is work out which negative patterns have been passed on to you by your parents, and you 'exorcise' them – by writing, visualising or beating cushions! Then you go about forgiving your parents and are taught psychological

tools to help you in life. You also reconnect to the spiritual side of life – rituals are employed, such as lighting candles. There are group meetings organised in the weeks afterwards for post-Process support.

WHO'S IT GOOD FOR?

It's ideal for those who've struggled with emotional issues, or feel generally unhappy or 'blocked', and wish to move on. You're assessed for suitability before going on the course to check you'll be able to cope with what it offers. Well-known graduates include Ruthie Henshall and Goldie.

WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?

It's pricey, drawing criticism that the Process is only open to the wealthy. You're required to cut yourself off from the outside world for eight days, which makes some people nervous, and is impractical for others.



Musician Goldie



The Hoffman Institute's grounds



Take time out to find peace within

'IT WORKED FOR ME'

Penny, 40, a finance director from King's Lynn, Norfolk

'Doing the Hoffman Process was the most positive step I've taken to becoming content. After years of battling low self-esteem stemming from my dad's alcoholism, I had to do something for my children's sake, so I signed up for the Process. I struggled over the week, and was in tears a lot. You'd listen to others' stories and learn about yourself through your interactions with the group. I even lost some weight as I felt too chummed up to eat.

'On the last day, I wasn't sure it had "happened" for me, and I felt up and down. But when I got home, I realised I felt more alive and joyful, and my family definitely noticed the difference. I still get bad days, but they don't last too long. I stay "present" in my emotions, and I'm not scared by them. I feel grateful for the good things in life. It's like a light has been switched on.'

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Call 01903-889990 or visit www.hoffmaninstitute.co.uk. The eight-day course costs £2,350, including full bed and board.



KABBALAH

WHAT IS IT?

Kabbalah (which means receiving) is the mystical aspect of Judaism, but you don't have to be Jewish to practise it. Central to Kabbalah is giving to others – the idea being the more you give, the more you receive spiritually and materially. Giving



Devotee Madonna

can be in the form of time and volunteering. Kabbalah as we know it developed from Jewish mystics and scholars in 1st-century Palestine. Its founders believe that numerology and astrology can help unlock hidden spiritual secrets held in The Old Testament.

WHAT HAPPENS?

During a 10-week introductory course called The Power of Kabbalah, the basic tenets of the philosophy are taught, as well as its practical applications in life, such as dealing with negative emotions and external stresses through Kabbalistic tools. For example, concentrating on cards with one of the 72 names of God, and corresponding positive mantra, are said to magically transform our lives. Powerful meditation techniques are believed to bring followers to another realm. Techniques such as resistance are taught to help in everyday life – this entails resisting an immediate emotional response to stress and formulating a proactive response. One-on-one study is also available, as is home study.

WHO'S IT GOOD FOR?

Those who want to be more fulfilled spiritually, and anyone attracted to the mystical side of life. Madonna is its most famous devotee.

WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?

Critics have pointed out that once in the Kabbalah fold, devotees incur expenses for books, courses and Kabbalistic paraphernalia. Traditional Jewish scholars dismiss Kabbalah as being a 'false' faith.



Kabbalah cards can transform your life

'IT WORKED FOR ME'

Miriam, 31, a charity worker from London

'I was curious about Kabbalah and went to a meeting at the London Kabbalah Centre. At first it didn't seem to make much sense, but then I kept thinking about it and booked myself on a course. As soon as I started studying, I began to feel more at one with myself. I'd had ME for seven years and was virtually housebound. At times I had no energy and had to use a wheelchair. Plus, I was in and out of hospital.

'A lot is made of Kabbalah "forcing" people to give up their riches, but that's not true. It's about giving of yourself. For me, because I had ME, and felt like I wasn't much use, I had a huge issue of thinking of myself as a contributor. At the Kabbalah centre, I helped wrap presents for a homeless shelter, and at Shabbat – the Jewish day of rest – serving

meals. I started to give, and as a result, I certainly received back. 'For example, I found a therapy that helped me with my ME. It wasn't Kabbalah that cured me, but I feel there was a link between

'Our deepest needs are spiritual, and I think Kabbalah addresses this, which makes it so powerful'

me beginning to give of myself and at last finding something that worked for my ME. Kabbalah opened a door. 'I'm far more positive and outward looking as a result of Kabbalah teachings. 'Our deepest needs are spiritual, and I think Kabbalah

addresses this, which makes it so powerful. As it happens, I'm from a non-practising Jewish background, but Kabbalah is open to all.

'There's this image that Kabbalah is only for the rich, but it attracts people from all walks of life. I have friends here who are teachers and lawyers. My life is much more fulfilled. I'm closer

now to my family and friends than I've ever been.'

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Call 020-7499 4974 or visit www.kabbalah.com/london. The Power of Kabbalah course costs £220 for 10 weeks – each class lasts two hours. **SPIRIT&DESTINY**