



COACHING AND CONSULTING FOR
SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERS

10 SIGNS YOUR INNER ACTIVIST IS CALLING YOU AND TIPS TO ANSWER THIS CALL



10 Signs Your inner Activist is Calling You
and Tips to Answer this Call

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10 Signs Your Inner Activist is Calling You

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10 Signs Your Inner Activist is Calling You
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About Shamillah Wilson



I believe we are all here to learn and master what we are meant to teach and share with others. Sometimes our curriculum includes an in-depth crash course on a subject. In my own journey, I have to confess that growing up there was always a part of me that believed and wanted to believe in that ‘someone’ saving me. I guess the expectation started with my parents, my grandparents, my teachers, later my employers and then finally my intimate partner. That is probably a strange thing coming from me given that everyone looks at me and sees this really strong woman – but deep down at an unconscious level I always believed that I only had to be strong until the ‘white knight’ came and rescued me from whatever circumstances in life I may be experiencing.

Early experiences in my life introduced me to feeling powerless and as a result I learnt the valuable lesson of my own inner power. The feelings I experienced in claiming my own power is indescribable. It is no surprise then that I was drawn to activism in my life. The need to speak out, give voice to and advocate on behalf of those who were powerless (that was my interpretation) seemed to speak to me very strongly. During my education and my employment, I found myself joining initiatives where I could channel this energy in my life. In both my formal work and my activism, my energy was directed at empowering, but in reality if I am really honest it was more about rescuing and fixing. While it all sounds motivated by good intentions, in hindsight I can say that I had never really interrogated what was it that drove me to be the person I was in all parts of my life – my relationships, my work and my community.

A breakdown 2006 pushed me to admit to myself that I was completely disconnected and felt empty in most areas of my life (including my work, my relationships and my activism). I had given all I had to everything and everyone and had in fact burnt out my flame. That very breakdown was the greatest gift in my life. At that point, the parts of my life that had not fallen apart or broken down, I decided to dismantle myself. I decided that it was an opportunity for me to start over, to recreate myself. I started by quitting my ‘great’ job of 6 years without having any alternative.

To be quite honest, I had no idea where to start on this process of recreating myself. So, I did the only thing I could, I read a lot and I journalled prolifically and in the process learnt about my inner activist. My own journey of awakening my inner activist and walking my life journey with my inner activist is what informs my work with youth as well as leaders across the globe. I have been able to apply the medicine I got from my own journey to young people as well as individuals (leaders) who seem to have disconnected from their inner centre to support them in creating their lives as happy, healthy and wealthy.

What is you Inner Activist?

"No one is coming to rescue you from the life you have created. It's your job to stop waiting and to begin moving in a direction you choose. Wayne C Allen

Growing up, we have been taught how to adjust to the society that we live in for the purposes of survival (emotionally, physically, financially). However, while it is true that society is a factor in our life, in the process of learning the rules of survival in a society, what ends up happening is a silencing of the inner voice, inner authority and very often purpose. The focus on the 'outer' world has in most of our cases led to a repression and denial of our innate qualities of creativity, intuition, nurturing, strength and wisdom. While some of us have been absorbed in the business of survival, some have channeled their energies in 'saving' others. In the process, they experience life with a strong inner sense of disconnect – from themselves, from their loved ones, from their spirituality, from who they thought they wanted to be.

This lack of connection and discontentment is an indication of being disconnected from one's inner activist.

As a starting point, it is important to acknowledge that every single person has an **inner activist**. The inner activist is that part of you that has your 'greater' interests at heart. Not only that, when activated, the inner activist can speak up over the chorus of negative beliefs and attitudes that lead to habits and behaviours that create the reality you experience today.

You can go around blaming society or some people for your problems in your social life. Or finances. Or health. You can always find scapegoats to judge to feel better about yourself. You can look for people that will "fix you".

In other words, let me say it up front now, there is no magic pill that is going to fix your life. There is no magic book, blog or person that is going to fix your life. They will give it a damn good try. And yes, some articles, books, products or people will give you support and insights that resonate deeply with you and that you can put into practice.

But in the end, if you are an adult then no one is coming. No one is coming to save you. You have to take responsibility for your own life and what happens in it. Other things and people can certainly aid you quite a bit. But you are responsible.



Signs of a Slumbering Inner Activist

1. You harbour the illusion that 'something or someone' will save you

A sign of this is that you live in the hope that someone will see how hard you are working, how much you are giving. You have in truth activated a behavior that has rendered you passive and powerless in the hope that "If I only suffer long enough, if I only yearn desperately enough, somehow a miracle will happen". The price of this kind of self-deception is that it drains away your life force into the abyss of unredeemable possibilities and irretrievable days, months, decades.

2. You are not a Priority in your own life

Most likely you keep on putting your needs on the back-burner. You may have focused on your own survival or on taking care of others, yet, in the process you have sanctioned self-neglect, burnout, and very often financial distress. By not making YOU a priority, you have attempted to escape responsibility for your own nurturing and self-care.

3. You are running on Empty

You may have been taught that it is better to give than to receive, but you're you have given ALL that you have to 'help, rescue, save, fix' (the list is endless) others, it is inevitable that you will run on empty. Also, in the law of balance (yin and yang) – you have to learn to receive too. Your Inner Activist here is calling on you to strengthen your receiving muscles. To make sure your cup is overflowing with energy and joy before you give any of it away.

4. A Stranger in the Mirror

When you look into the mirror, you no longer resonate with the person staring back at you. You may even feel like an imposter. This person is not who you were going to be or who you wanted to be. But don't despair. Your Inner Activist has allowed you to have the awareness so that you can wake up and make the changes you need to. You are most probably called upon to recognize your passions, your desires and allow your very essence to shine through

5. You Feel Stuck or Overwhelmed

While many of us try to cram too much into our 24 hours, a sense of overwhelm doesn't have to result from "lack of time." Rather, a sense of overwhelm tends to manifest when we are doing too many things that are not in alignment with who you truly are and what we truly want.

6. You keep getting sick

Do you keep on getting ill, recover and then get ill again. Your Inner Activist is calling on you to start paying attention to yourself, to treat yourself with patience and care and to see the connection between your body and self.

7. You feel shut-down, disconnected and/or all over the place

In some cases, your emotions don't seem to match situations. For example, you start screaming at your family for no reason or laugh hysterically in the middle of a PTA meeting or cry during your lunch break. Or you are just disconnected from feeling what is real and true in your life.

8. Things are Falling Apart

Stress, loss and heartbreak affect all of us and many times what can seem like the worst event – death of a family member, bankruptcy, losing a job, divorce – can open doors we never imagined existed for us. In the midst of every tragedy, know that your Inner Activist is giving you whatever lesson you need in your life right now. Let your Inner Activist learn to find out what your soul needs to learn from every situation.



Your Inner Activist is Calling!

“Rule of Adulthood: You have to Rescue Yourself” Mareliisa

If any of the signs above applies to you, you are called upon to go inward and spend sacred time to reconnect with the essence of who you are. The feeling of disconnect and discontentment you are experiencing is your soul’s message that you have become disconnected from your truth. The call of your Inner Activist is a call for you to reconnect with the qualities of love, nurturing, and compassion – essences that are within all of us, so that we can return balance to ourselves and our world.

Now more than ever, you are called on to transform your life, get your mojo back so that you can have greater clarity and focus. This process will ultimately put you back into the driving seat of your own life.

The name you give your inner activist is very personal. If the term doesn’t resonate with you feel free to replace it with one that does. Whether you use the term Intuition, Inner Guide, Inner Knowing, – think of it as your connection to the Divine.

As alluded to previously, YOU have the power to reconnect and awaken your Inner Activist. While each of us as human (divine) beings are whole, it does not mean that our experience will not call upon us to do some healing. Envision for a moment....

“Your inner light/essence/activist is and has always been there. It is the truth of who you are. Over time your human experiences created layer upon layer of what I like to envision as gauzy veils which began slowly smothering your connection to your truth. At times, when you are really quiet and go within, you intuitively know it is there yet you struggle to hear and feel it. Your work is to remove the layers of veils (wounds, old stories and beliefs) that are blocking you from seeing and shining your inner light/ essence/activist.”

Becoming aware of what is needed is the first step to awakening your inner activist. The awakening of your inner activist means that you develop the ability to first and foremost realize that you cannot take care of others unless you take care of yourself. It means that you learn to focus on your own needs, learn to love and appreciate yourself and take responsibility for your life, whatever you desire it to be.

So, the first step is to stop focusing outward – on trying to fix the world (or getting the world to fix you), but to start with YOU. In other words, awaken your inner activist to walk the journey with you. It starts with YOU making the CHOICE and the COMMITMENT.

Benefits of an awakened Inner Activist

To name but a few, walking the journey with your inner activist means that you have access to greater freedom, choice, greater results (financial, emotional, mental and spiritual) such as:

- Improved relationships such that you experience greater love, sense of intimacy, trust and connection.
- Increased emotional well-being with a developed ability to reduce stress and manage negative emotions that drain you.
- Achieve goals faster in all areas of your life (financial, social and spiritual)
- Make more powerful decisions by accessing greater creativity, intuition and higher order of thinking.
- Discover your life's purpose and live your life in alignment with your soul's purpose and heart's desires.
- Become the BEST most authentic version of you and thus you are able to show up for others and able to serve in the world (outer activism)

The journey of awakening your inner activist is not an easy one (though not impossible) and requires great commitment and a willingness to dig deep.



Answering the Call of Your Inner Activist

1. You harbour the illusion that 'something or someone' will save you

The most important thing that is needed for living life fully, is to take personal responsibility for your life. **Personal responsibility** means **responding wisely** to life's opportunities and challenges, rather than waiting passively for luck or other people to make **CHOICES** for us. Accepting personal responsibility is sometimes difficult to do, but without it, success is almost impossible. So, it starts with accepting that **YOU** are in charge of your life. **You are 100% responsible for how you choose to respond to the events in your life.** If you respond as if you are responsible for the results in your life, then you will often discover **choices** that you would not have discovered otherwise.

Exercise to move you from waiting to taking responsibility:

- Look into your life currently without judgement and identify what are the areas in your life that is not working and where you feel unhappy.
- Instead of focusing on the negative, identify the ways in which you have contributed to these situations.
- Accept complete responsibility for your situation, and then identify some actions you can take to transform your reality.
- Journal regularly on what it means to take responsibility for your life

2. You are NOT a Priority in your own life

Learning to prioritise yourself will always remain a challenge. It's all-too-easy for healthy eating, exercise, and self-care activities to slide off the to-do list. You've probably been there—you get worn out and lose your motivation or you just can't figure out how to fit it all in your already busy schedule.

When life gets busy, personal priorities, self-care, or “me-time” may start to feel

expendable and to drift off your radar. Many smart, busy people get stuck in the mindset trap of believing that self-care is selfish or a luxury—something you can get to later. **Not true.**

Tips to start prioritising your own needs even if it feels like you are too busy

a. *Start claiming 10-15 minutes a day for yourself.*

It won't take away from your productivity. In fact your productivity will increase it. Really. Use this time to connect with yourself and to pay attention to how you feel and what you need. Journal, walk, meditate, soak in the tub. Try not to save this for the end of the day when you are too tired to move and your brain has stopped working. Pay yourself first or, if necessary, take a break during your day.

b. *Adopt mantras to create a different mindset*

For example the following mantras: "I'm doing my best," and "I can't do it all." They are true. Put them where you can see them and remind yourself of them frequently.

c. *Create effectiveness in do-able steps*

Each evening, identify your top three personal action items for the next day and decide when you will accomplish them. Think do-able. If these daily goals seem overwhelming, make them smaller. A 15 minute walk that you take is better than the 45 minute one you couldn't fit in. If possible, knock out your personal priorities early in the day

d. *Plan for food that fuels you*

Especially when time is tight. Don't skip breakfast, have a plan for lunch, and don't starve yourself before dinner. Make sure you have the groceries that you need. Choose foods that are appealing. No starvation diets.

e. *Cut down on multitasking*

It stresses us out and makes us less effective. Practice focusing on doing one thing at a time. You won't get it perfect, but that's okay, remember step number two.

f. *Take emotional eating seriously*

It's often a signal that life is out of balance and your personal priorities need more attention. Emotional eating happens when our spirit or our life isn't getting fed the non-food things we need or crave. We have to pay attention and develop other ways of caring for ourselves instead of turning to food, huge changes are possible. This can be complicated but it doesn't have to be overwhelming. If you feel stuck, consider an emotional eating program or coach. There is so much more to life than this vicious cycle.

g. *Don't skip #1* (you'll probably be tempted)

Learning to prioritise your own needs is a process, but you don't have to get it perfect to see big, far-reaching benefits. Try out these tips and keep me posted on your progress.

3. You are running on Empty

You may have been taught that it is better to give than to receive, but you're you have given ALL that you have to 'help, rescue, save, fix' (the list is endless) others, it is inevitable that you will run on empty. Also, in the law of balance (yin and yang) – you have to learn to receive too. Your Inner Activist here is calling on you to strengthen your receiving muscles. To make sure your cup is overflowing with energy and joy before you give any of it away.

Tips to help you fill up your tank again!

a. *Journalling and exploring what you need to take care of yourself better*

These questions below helped me to find out what I needed and to start taking care of my needs. Hopefully they can assist you too.

What are your needs and who do you need it from?

Initially undertaking this enquiry may result in feelings of guilt, yet, by acknowledging and honouring your feelings and hearts desires it will lead to more wholeness on your part. Once you are able to figure out what they are and able to communicate it to yourself, you will be able to communicate it to others.

b. *Experiment with nourishing yourself*

What would it look like to self-care and nourish yourself? As you allow yourself to do more of this, you will allow yourself to experience more of your gifts and you will have more to give in terms of serving.

c. *Create a practice for a quiet, clear mind.*

d. *Practice showing your love to others by simply being (not doing) with them.*

4. A Stranger in the Mirror

When the person you see in the mirror is a stranger, it is time for you to get real and acknowledge some hard truths to yourself. It is also time for you to start connecting to your passions, your desires and allow your very essence to shine through.

Exercise: Start journaling, using the following prompts:

- *Who am I behind the image I see in the mirror?*
- *9*
- *What do I appreciate most about the person in the mirror?*
- *In what ways can I begin to show my body that it is loved?*
- *What do I want to change? Why?*
- *What can I do TODAY to create that change?*
- *What are my passions?*
- *If I could do anything in the world (if money was not an object, if it did not matter what anybody thought) what would I do?*
- *What dreams have I given up on?*

Just connecting to your truth is already a step in the direction of awakening your inner activist.

5. You Feel Stuck or Overwhelmed

The feeling of stuckness and being overwhelmed is definitely not good for your health. It interferes with your joy and your experience of life. In order to address this, you need to get to the bottom of what your stuckness and overwhelm is about. Here are some steps you can take:

Tips on how to get unstuck:

a. *Slow everything down*

Stop as many activities/actions as you can. Do you really have to do all the things you think you do? Pretend an emergency has happened. If it did, wouldn't you be able to clear your plate? This is an emergency – it is your personal emergency. Treat it the same way. Then do the minimum yourself, and set the intention for God and the universe to support a slowing of all outside activities for you. It is amazing, but it works. Once it does, you will have the space to change what's going on, and tackle your problem area(s).

b. *Honor whatever feelings you are experiencing*

It's probable that you will be feeling spaced out, and finding it hard to function on the physical plane. Yield to this – be with it. It is okay. Be in touch with your feelings, spend time with them and honor them.

c. *Address why you feel the way you do*

Once you have spent time with your feelings, it is time to explore why they exist. Limitation is a great teacher. If we have brought ourselves to a point of being so paralyzed, so limited, there is probably something about us, our thoughts or our beliefs that we need to address. If that something is playing havoc with us, chances are it is something that we have disowned on a conscious level, but is playing itself out on a subconscious level. So, we need to identify this, own it, clear, and cleanse it. The act of doing this, usually funds the will and the strength needed to proceed. The recognition that something about you is in need of adjustment will disperse the darkness and provide an opening for a new beginning.

d. *Create a new image of yourself, within yourself*

If you strive to be different, to have your life different, it starts with you. Change your mind. Create a new image of yourself within your thoughts. Let go of beliefs and patterns that no longer serve your best interest. Keep your goal at the forefront of your mind. Take your guidance from within. Be calm, patient, and steady. Be assured of your success.

e. *Enjoy the present*

Be joyful. Take a break. Do something to pamper yourself. Experience the joy of being in the present moment, versus in the 'have to do's'. Do whatever it is that you feel like doing. Be however it is that you want to be.

6. You keep getting sick

When your body keeps on giving you messages, it is time for you to change your attitude, become more mindful, and practicing compassion and happiness. These things are ongoing, but your body, like your heart, mind and spirit is asking for time and attention. When you take time out to breathe and think happy thoughts, you create alignment between the mind and body and energise your nervous system. In the madness of life, it is important to take care of our bodies.

Tips for dealing with recurring illness:

a. Take time for exercise and move

This is the point of exercising your body—only do what your body can manage if you're struggling, as there's no point in making things harder. Even a little activity can have a huge impact. Whether it is a good daily walk or a retreat with days of internally inspired movement, you could come away feeling juicy and more alive.

b. Make sleep a priority

If you're tired, even if you feel that you need to get more done, give yourself permission to sleep. By allowing your body rest and sleep it allows the body to regenerate itself.

c. Eat well and savor it

We're encouraged to be increasingly mindful of what we eat nowadays, and for good reason considering the state of the food we consume. I'd like to encourage you, however, to turn your attention inward for a moment and think about eating as more than a bland necessity or ethical conundrum. Food is fuel, and we need it to function optimally. Eating well means feeding your body what it needs, in the most natural way you can manage and afford. Changing how you eat doesn't need to be an all-or-nothing thing. Maybe you could add just an extra bit of fruit a day or swap a cup of coffee for a glass of water instead.

Relish the food you eat too, and take your time. Paying attention to flavors, textures, and smells, even the mechanical act of eating can soothe our bodies and reawaken us to the sensations of being alive. How long has it been since you've recognized your body like this?

d. Listen to pain

When something hurts, something somewhere has gone wrong, and your body is trying to tell you that. We often pay no attention to pain unless it becomes unbearable: that tooth ache isn't so bad, it can wait for a while; the sharp tugging in my shoulder is a result of repetitive strain but it usually goes by the time I'm home, so no need to worry.

These things, no matter how small, shouldn't be brushed aside because they

represent damage to our bodies. Ignore them and they could come back to haunt you later.

e. *Slow down*

If we squeeze every second out of our day at record speed, our flesh, bones, muscles, organs—the whole lot—will eventually suffer. Show your body the same compassion that you endeavor to show everyone. It needs it just as much

7. You feel shut-down, disconnected and/or all over the place

Emotions are reliable indicators of what is really going on inside of us. There are many ways to identify emotions and you will have to choose the manner that is most suitable to your personality. Some people need to do this in solitude whereas others need to do this with others. Some will want to write while others will use a much more casual approach. Sometimes it's best to combine a number of approaches for a deeper identification of emotions.

Tips for dealing with your emotions

a. *Pay attention to your emotions (awareness is the first step)*

Record what makes you feel strongly for a month. Keep an ongoing record of strong emotions regardless of the cause, if it's the weather, the traffic, your husband, wife, children, politicians, the stock market, your fellow church members, whatever and whoever, add it to your list. Try to identify what really made you angry. Sadness is a mask for anger, and anger is a mask for fear. If you can identify your real fears, what you are afraid of losing or not having, you are well on your way to emotional health. Again, writing this down will help you see things much more clearly, increase your awareness, and help you to know your emotional self at a much deeper level.

b. *Figure out what you want to do with the emotions*

The following are a few questions you can ask yourself when deciding what response would suit a particular situation best – and each emotion, each situation is different.

Am I reacting to this situation or is this reaction partially a reaction to a past situation as well?

Am I able to discuss the issues with the person without venting anger? *Will I be able to talk about how I feel to the person?

Is a direct approach the best way to proceed?

What are the consequences of dealing directly with the person/ situation?

What do I expect from this ?

c. *Make a decision to deal with them and seek help/support if necessary*

8. Things are Falling Apart

Whether it's a business challenge or a personal situation, tough times happen for everyone. Trying to "stay positive" and "keep the faith" can feel almost impossible. And no matter how strong we think we are, unforeseen change can leave us all feeling quite vulnerable and lost.

Tips:

a. Acknowledge what is happening

With as much neutrality as possible, honestly assess the situation. Simply look on as many levels as you can: physical, emotional, mental and even spiritual.

What's going on?

What are you feeling? Are you hurt?

Are you disappointed? What is missing?

Check in, take an inventory, try to go below the obvious levels, and do nothing more right now. Your aim is merely to observe what is going on with you.

b. Take responsibility for your part

What got triggered? Did you somehow initiate your own upset?

c. How might I use this as an opportunity for growth?

What lessons can I learn from this? How might I reprioritize or refocus my life based on what I learned?

d. Assess what you really and truly want (where would you like to be beyond this situation).

e. Forgive, forget and let go

Last but not least, check to see if there are any judgments you've put on yourself or someone else. If there are, forgive yourself and others and let it go. When we try to move forward without letting go of the past, it has a way of sneaking its way back into our present (and future!) lives. This time, try forgiveness and letting go. This gives you the opportunity to complete your breakdown, and marks the beginning of your breakthrough. To forgive, simply say these words either silently or out loud: "I forgive myself for judging myself (or another) for (fill in the blank)..."

In Closing

I hope you have found these exercises helpful and enjoyable and that you have started forming a relationship with your Inner activist. Like any relationship, your relationship with your inner activist takes time and requires maintenance. Devoting some time each day to taking care of yourself and nourishing this relationship can not only make your life more enjoyable, but also give you a renewed sense of purpose.

For some of you, getting this point was as much as you needed for your journey. If so, please continue to make time for yourself and connect to your deepest self.

Big Love, Shamillah

About Shamillah Wilson

Shamillah Wilson is a social justice activist, a social entrepreneur and a catalyst to change activists, entrepreneurs and youth.

She has been coaching for the past 10 years and focuses on helping individuals access parts of themselves that embody self-love, nurturing and growth. Shamillah has an MBA degree and has just completed her MPhil in Inclusive Innovation at the University of Cape Town. She has her roots in human rights and women's rights activism and it was in her work of empowering other activists to get better at their activism, that she discovered that most activists are disconnected to the activists within themselves. The activist that would enable them to nurture and care for themselves and take care of their business (finances, health, vitality). As a result, for the past 7 years, she has focused her work on empowering, inspiring and supporting leaders (activist and non) to connect to their inner activist to create lives that are happy, healthy and wealthy.

Shamillah's own **awakening** and embracing of her Inner Activist gave rise to a book called: *Waking UP: How I woke up my Inner Activist to Live a Bigger Life.*

Shamillah is passionately dedicated to empowering today's leaders (especially women) in reconnecting with their Inner Activists, stepping through their perceived fears, and supporting them in the journey of self-discovery.

www.shamillahwilson.com