



Lesson 4: **Curiosity, Scary Adventures, & Mistakes** *

Scene 4: "Uncle Scar"

Scene 5: "I Just Can't Wait to be King"

Scene 6: "Elephant Graveyard"

Guided Meditation: "Thespian at the Oasis"
8-Stage Human Circle of Life Diagram

Note: * signifies sensitive issues; requires 2 trusted adults in class

Objectives:

- (1) To give youth a chance to **reflect on their scary or craziest childhood adventures — and mistakes** — and to appreciate those experiences, while gaining compassion for themselves and others.
- (2) To revisit the concept of **"Explorer in the Garden"** and introduce the phase of life they will move into next: **"Thespian at the Oasis."**
- (3) To provide the youth with the context of the full life cycle, as graphically presented in the **8-Stage Human Circle of Life** diagram.

Materials:

- **chime or bell**
- *The Lion King* DVD and DVD player. Before class, **put Disk 1 to into the player and cue it up to Scene 4, then pause it.**
- *The Lion King* **Audio CD** and CD player with speakers.
- **Photocopies of Human Circle of Life Diagram** (one for each child)
- **Stack of lyrics to "Circle of Life" Song**
- **Grab Bag** with **photocopies** of the DISCUSSION QUESTIONS printed (with pictures) at the end of this lesson, cut apart and put inside the **Grab-bag.**
- **The lock box with the journals**, plus extra journals for newcomers, plus pens, colored markers and colored pencils.

ACTIVITIES: DVD watching; discussions; silent reflection; journal-writing; guided meditation; stretching; singing



Lesson 4: **Curiosity, Scary Adventures, & Mistakes** *

Scene 4: "Uncle Scar"

Scene 5: "I Just Can't Wait to be King"

Scene 6: "Elephant Graveyard"

Guided Meditation: "Thespian at the Oasis"
8-Stage Human Circle of Life Diagram

Note: * signifies sensitive issues; requires 2 trusted adults in class

Classroom preparation:

- Before class, cue up **Disk 1** of the DVD to Scene 4: "Uncle Scar." Cover monitor with cloth.
- Put the stack of **"Circle of Life" Song Lyrics** on a table.
- Have the **"Human Circle of Life Diagram"** copies ready to hand out.
- Put the **Lock Box** of **journals** onto a table; have **extra journals** available for newcomers, plus lots of pens and colorful markers
- Have the **chime** or **bell** accessible.
- Put the **Question Cards** into the **Grab-Bag**.

Lesson flow:

1. Recollections from previous week **(3 to 5 mins)**
2. **DVD:** Watch Scenes 4, 5, and 6 nonstop **(12 mins)**
3. **Grab-Bag discussion (10 mins)**
4. Silence, then **journal writing** on the themes and personal insights of the day. **(5 – 10 mins)**
5. **Guided meditation** for introducing the concept of “**Thespian at the Oasis**” as their next stage in the Circle of Life **(5 mins)**
6. Pass out and **discuss** the **diagram** printed near the end of this lesson: “8-Stage Human Circle of Life.” **(5 - 10 mins)**
7. Introduce **death topic** for following week. **(3 mins)**
8. Ritual ending: Pass out **song lyrics** and play the **audio CD** “Circle of Life song” (encourage sing-along with sheets of lyrics; possibly dance, too) **(7 mins)**



Lesson 4: **Curiosity, Scary Adventures, & Mistakes** *

Scene 4: "Uncle Scar"

Scene 5: "I Just Can't Wait to be King"

Scene 6: "Elephant Graveyard"

Guided Meditation: "Thespian at the Oasis"
8-Stage Human Circle of Life Diagram

Note: * signifies sensitive issues; requires 2 trusted adults in class

Recollections from Previous Week (3 to 5 mins)

GUIDE:

Q: "Is there a volunteer who would like to **pass out the journals** now? . . . You might want to have access to your journal right now because we are going to be watching a full 12 minutes of the movie — all at once — and you might want to jot notes to yourself during the movie that you can refer to in the discussion that will follow, or for writing about in detail in your journal later.

Q: "**Did anyone have an insight** during this past week that came to you as a result of our time together here last week — or because you kept on journaling and new insights came that way?

[Let the discussion continue, so long as it is lively and on point.]

Date and Title a New Journal Page

[Invite the Youth to select a fresh page in their journal to date, and title it "Curiosity, Scary Adventures, and Mistakes." . . . Also write down the titles of the new scenes we will watch today: "Uncle Scar" and "I Just Can't Wait to Be King, and Elephant Graveyard"]

DVD Viewing: Scenes 4, 5, and 6 (12 mins)

[Scene 4 is "Uncle Scar," which begins 18:24 into the movie. Let the movie run for almost 12 minutes, through Scene 5 "I Just Can't Wait to Be King" and Scene 6 "Elephant Graveyard." That scene ends at 23:26. Press the PAUSE button after Mufasa heads for home and Nala tells Simba, "I thought you were very brave," and then you briefly see Scar on the cliff above them. When the scene shifts to silhouettes of the lions walking home in the sunset, press the PAUSE button.]

Grab-Bag Discussion: Childhood Misadventures (10 mins)

GUIDE:

[You can presume everyone knows about the Grab-bag discussion style by now. Your job is to help close off discussion so that there will be sufficient time — about a half hour — for what follows during this session.]

*[After 10 minutes or so, urge the discussion to come to a close, even if there are still unopened questions in the grab-bag. **Call for a volunteer to read any questions that remain.** Say to the class something like,*

*"If you really, really want to say something about any of those unanswered questions, **remember it till next week**, or write your thoughts into your journal, and then you can say what you want to say about it at the very beginning of class next week."*

Journaling (5 - 10 mins)

GUIDE:

"Let's begin, as always, with **a minute of silence**, and then I'll periodically offer some questions for you to think about. As usual, ignore the questions that aren't helpful to you, and just **write or draw** about whatever might come to mind, or whatever you are moved to write. You don't have to care about your spelling, your grammar, or making complete sentences — or even making sense. Give your mind a chance to just flow and produce things without your always having to judge what comes out. Nobody except you will see what you write."

"So settle into a comfortable position . . . close your eyes . . . and start to breathe slowly and deeply. Just focus on your breathing . . ."

[ring chime and wait in silence for 1 minute, then say, softly:]

“And now, keep breathing peacefully. . . Begin to listen, too, . . . and with no effort, no effort at all. . . . When my words trigger an idea or a memory in your mind, you can either just think about it and watch any images or memories that flow . . . or you can open your eyes and write into your journal a few words or phrases — or a whole long gushing thought. . . So here we go . . .

- Can you bring into your awareness now a **mistake** you made, or a **humiliating** experience in your past, that you used to think about a lot and that made you feel bad — but that maybe now is not so troubling to think about because now you **can see that experience from a distance**? . . . as if you are now a different person — which, of course, you are. . . . Can you now remember that same experience and not feel quite so bad about it? . . . And, can you have **compassion** for that little kid who naturally made mistakes — that little kid who was you? — Can you just shake your head and sigh about it? Maybe even laugh a little?

[Allow some time to pass.]

- If there were any really **big mistakes** that the child-you made, can you forgive that errant little kid anyway? . . . Even if the mistake was intentional, you were, after all, just a kid . . . So can you forgive that child? . . . Would it be helpful to write a forgiveness message to that child-who-was-you? Would it be helpful to write that in your journal now? . . .

[Allow some time to pass.]

- Now, see if your mind is willing to call up an experience from long ago **when somebody else made a big mistake that then affected you**. . This might be when somebody made YOU feel **lonely or sad or frustrated or angry or ashamed** . . . Maybe it was intentional on their part. . . . Maybe they really meant to cause you harm. . . Or maybe it was not intentional. Either way, whatever it was that they said or did to the child who was you — whatever they did really did hurt you in some way, especially psychologically. You, of course, know it was *their* fault; it was *their* mistake — not yours — but it still is a painful experience for you to remember. . . So . . . can you now look at that experience from a distance, because you ARE at a distance: . . . you are older now . . . Is it less intense to remember that incident now? . . . Perhaps consider that the person who wronged you might actually feel just as bad as you do about that experience — or even worse? . . . Can you begin to feel even a teeny bit of **compassion** for them, because they made a mistake in the past that might still trouble them today — a mistake that they are ashamed to have done? . . . If you can begin to feel sorry for them, you might want to write that in your journal, too. . . . You may or may not

genuinely be able to forgive that person. . . . But perhaps you can feel grateful that YOU don't have to live *their* life. You have your own life to live — and you don't have to make the same mistakes or misjudgments that they made.

"I'll stop talking now. Go ahead and journal for a few more minutes, or just sit quietly and continue to reflect on these questions."

*[Watch the students to see how long they want to keep journaling. Close it off gently before more than a few begin to fidget, and absolutely leave enough time (20 minutes or more) for the rest of the lesson time. **Ring the chime to end this period.**]*

Guided Meditation **"Thespian at the Oasis" (5 mins)**

Stretch:

"Let's all stand and stretch or jump or move around a bit to get our blood flowing." . . . *[then ask them to sit back down]*

"I'd like to run this as a **guided meditation**, using the same format that I used last time. This means I need you to close your journals, close your eyes again, and get comfortable. . . . In **the previous guided meditation**, the one we did last week, we focused on childhood memories and images. The **aim of today's guided meditation** is to begin to look at **your future**, as you step into the life stage of adolescence. You will keep your eyes closed the entire time, so that you can stay in your **own private awareness**. Later, you will have a chance to write in your journal, if you wish, about ideas and feelings that may come to you now . . . So let us begin with a minute of silence . . ."

*[**ring chime**]*

"There are, of course, physical changes that mark one's passage into adolescence, but here we are focusing on the **psychological** changes. During this psychological passage out of childhood, your interests shift naturally. Some of the things you used to love to do, and the friends you used to enjoy playing with, may no longer interest you in the same way. . . This shift may happen gradually . . . or it may seem to happen quite suddenly.

"This life passage is a time of **excitement** — and of **anxiety** and **sadness**. Some of you may feel like Simba about this transition: You just can't wait to "to be King" — or the next best thing to a King from your standpoint: a teenager! . . Some of you might eagerly look forward to this next stage

because you will get to do things you cannot do now, wear clothes that you are not supposed to wear now, even go to movies that you are not allowed to go see at the age you are now. . . .

"For others here today, however, there might be some fear about leaving childhood. . . including some sadness about the loss of your familiar world and your familiar way of being. . . Some of you may have an older brother or older sister who is now a teenager — and who has become quite weird and even mean and disgusting in your eyes — and you don't want to become that! So . . . you may actually want to spend a little time **mourning** the loss of childhood . . . because you know this passage is a one-way street. There is no going back. . . And it happens to everybody.

"So . . . Whether you are looking forward to the passage, whether you have anxiety about it, or whether you feel a whole range of emotions about it — one thing that probably isn't helpful is to ignore it completely. . . . Remember, too, that the adults in your lives will also feel the loss — maybe even more than you do. After all, they will be losing their precious little "Explorer in the Garden" and getting instead . . . *what?*

"Here is a mythic name for your next stage in the Circle of Life: **"Thespian at the Oasis."** — *say what?????*

"Okay, you can **OPEN YOUR EYES NOW**, while I explain. . . .

"Thespian at the Oasis" is a mythic name for the adolescent stage of life. The name was created just a couple of years ago by a psychologist who makes his living, in part, by taking people of all ages out into the wilderness and helping them do a **"Vision Quest"** to mark the end of one stage in life and the beginning of the next."

Q: Does anyone know what a Vision Quest is?

[Answers should lean toward going out into nature, and spending time alone, with nothing to do but watch the sky and the creatures around you and think. Vision Quests usually involve fasting and spending at least one night completely alone in the dark. Plains Indians of North America are well known for their tradition of having youth make the passage out of childhood by going on a Vision Quest (like many tribal cultures, there wasn't much of an adolescent stage: you went from childhood to adulthood. Q: Why do you think adolescence is such an important (and usually long) stage in our own culture?]

"Anyway, because of all these years of guiding Vision Quests in the wilderness, this psychologist got a chance to see the various stages of

life people were in, and what they needed to do in order to make a healthy passage to the next stage. He developed a diagram that takes the whole length of a typical human life and shows how it actually has 8 stages — or, at least it probably should have 8 stages to it, if one doesn't get stuck at one of the stages and never matures beyond it."

Pass out and Discuss Human Circle of Life Diagram (5 - 10 mins)

*[Ask for a **volunteer to pass out the photocopies of the diagram** at the end of this lesson, while you keep explaining:]*

"According to the diagram, all of you have long ago passed through Stage 1, which the diagram calls **"The Innocent in the Nest."** The stage that many of you are probably still in right now is, as I said before, **"Explorer in the Garden."** After that comes, **"Thespian at the Oasis."** . . . Look at what it says about all three of those stages on the diagram.

*[Wait awhile for the youth to **study the diagram at their own pace**. They will probably start saying things on their own: LET THEIR DISCUSSION UNFOLD WITHOUT INTERVENTION IF IT SEEMS ON POINT.]*

[Background: "Thespian" is an actor, and "oasis" is a gathering spot where one finds sustenance and community. The second dictionary definition of oasis is: "a place or period that gives relief from a troubling or chaotic situation"]

Introduce Death Topic for Next Week (3 mins)

Important!!! *In transitioning to the Ritual Ending, announce to the class that*

"Next week we're **going to start talking about DEATH** — especially the death of a beloved person or pet. We will do this in advance of watching the episode when little Simba experiences the death of someone he dearly loves.

"If anyone in this group has already experienced a death of someone really significant in your life (especially the death of a parent), I would be really grateful to know about it before class begins next week. Sometimes nobody in a class of this age group has yet experienced a really tragic death in their family. But if someone has, it helps for me, as the guide for this class, to be aware of it so that I can make sure that we all respect your situation and

your emotions.

"If someone in your immediate family has died during your lifetime already, please let me know before you leave. You can tell me directly, or just write it down on a slip of paper and hand it to me, or you can ask your parent or guardian to give me a call sometime this week to let me know.

"Of course, **it's okay too, if you don't want to do any of that.** And then next week you can decide to say something about it during class discussion — or not speak about it at all — whichever feels right for you. Either way will be fine. I just want to make sure, if possible, that all of us here are **appropriately sensitive to those for whom the tragedy in *The Lion King* has actually happened in their real life.**

Pass out Song Lyrics and sing-along "Circle of Life" audio (7 mins)

Stretch:

"Let's all stand and stretch or jump or move around a bit to get our blood flowing again." (2 mins)

Pass out the SONG LYRICS: *[After a minute or so of stretching, ask for a volunteer to pass out the SONG LYRICS to "Circle of Life," and to give out extra copies to those who missed the previous sessions. The volunteer will probably need to call out the names on each sheet, especially for the students he/she doesn't know. Kids should stay standing and moving during this time.]*

Play AUDIO CD of "Circle of Life":

[If the group seems to be becoming cohesive, you might suggest to them this time (or next, if you need to wait for more intimacy to grow) to stand together in a closer circle, rather than just at their own seat. Then say something like:

"As you read along with the lyrics or sing along, **imagine** that this circle you have formed is a **symbol** of the stage in the "Circle of Life" that **your generation** represents. I can't be in it with you in that circle, because, I'm not part of your generation — and, of course, because I've got to start and stop the CD.

. . . So get into a close circle, and try to become really quiet. . . . Look around in silence at everyone in your circle . . . Know that everyone

you see in this circle happens to share with you right now this moment in your own life journey . . . but you also know each of them will be spinning off to follow their own unique paths — life journeys that will be very different from yours. Look into each of the faces around you . . . and reflect on how each has their own hopes and dreams for their life What you all share right now is that you are standing in this circle together, getting ready to sing “Circle of Life” . . . and you haven’t a clue as to how your own life will unfold!”

*[The last phrase was meant to release the creative tension with laughter, so now you can **start the audio song, “Circle of Life”**]*

[Make sure the SONGSHEETS are stacked again, as the kids break up into their own conversations.]

NOTE: If anyone asks if they can take home their journal, give an enthusiastic YES! — but ask them to remember to bring it back for next week’s session.

8 Mythic Stages of the Human Circle of Life

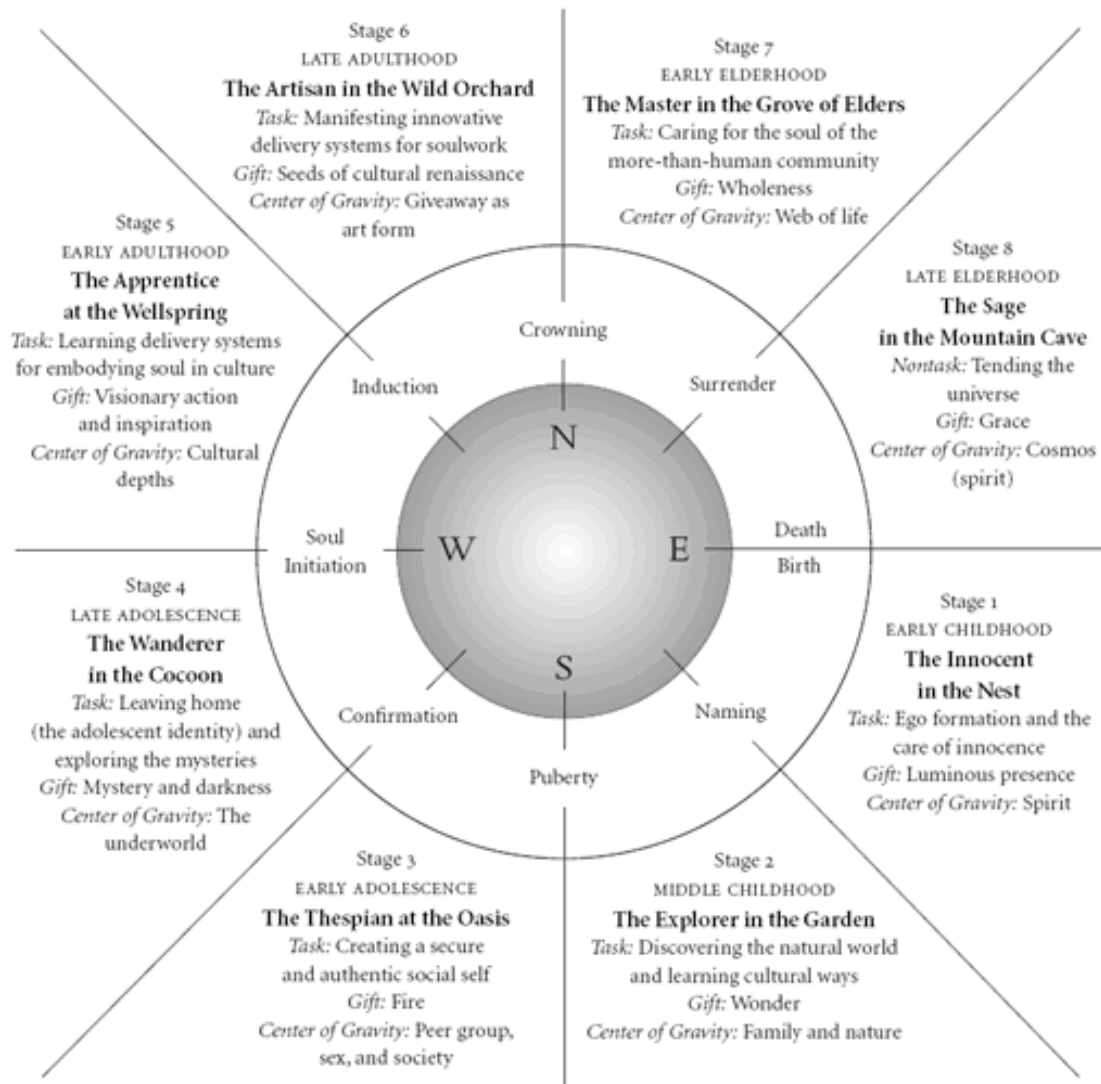


DIAGRAM 3-3: THE EIGHT SOULCENTRIC OR ECOCENTRIC STAGES OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Diagram from p. 61 of *Nature and the Human Soul* (Bill Plotkin, 2008). It is also available at <http://www.natureandthehumansoul.com/newbook/diagrams.htm>

Online materials (and free audio listening of interviews with Bill Plotkin) are also available through his website.

Note: The "Remember Who You Are" curriculum centers on grateful remembrance of Stage 2: "**Explorer in the Garden**" and preparation for entry into Stage 3: "**Thespian at the Oasis**"

Grab Bag Discussion Questions: *Photocopy, cut apart, put into Grab-Bag.*

All these are mixed together into discussion Grab-Bag

The Graveyard Scene



Q: How old were you when you first watched *The Lion King*?

[wait for answers; then ask next question]

Q: Who had to hide their eyes or got really, really scared the first time they watched the Elephant Graveyard Scene?

Hyenas



Q: *Who remembers one of the Hyena jokes?*

[wait for answers; then ask next question]

Q: *Does anybody remember whether they were too young — or too scared — when they first watched *The Lion King* to understand the hyena jokes?*

Scary Adventure



Q: *Is anybody willing to tell the group about an adventure you had with a friend, or by yourself, that turned out to be scary and maybe got you into trouble?*

Wildcard!



Q: Wildcard! Does anybody want to pose a question to the group or suggest a topic to discuss related to any of the Lion King scenes we just watched?

Nala or Simba?



Q: Were you (are you) more like Simba or like Nala when it comes to embarking on adventures? . . . Or are you sometimes one and sometimes more like the other?