

## Week 52: Reflecting Upon the Unfolding of Your Truest Self

The myth: you can't fold a piece of paper in half more than seven times.

In fifth grade, a friend challenged me to debunk it. We sat in the back of the classroom, wasting trees, trying to fold sheets of notebook paper at least eight times. We couldn't do it. Recently though, *Mythbusters* accepted the challenge. They started with a sheet of paper the size of a football field. A team of people—along with a steamroller and a fork lift—folded the piece of paper eleven times. It turns out, if a piece of paper is big enough, you *can* fold it more than seven times. The real problem is, ironically, its growing thickness and weight.

Yet, there is one piece of paper that does not get thicker as it gets folded. There is a piece of paper that feels thinner and smaller and less consequential with each crease. Sometimes, it seems to disappear altogether. This particular piece of paper is your soul, or your true self. Each soul enters the world inside several pounds of wrinkled skin, tiny bones, and wispy hair. However, though our body may initially be wrinkled, our soul is birthed as smooth and as unwrinkled as a crisp, new piece of paper.

Your soul is your truest you.

It harbors your eternal identity, your most beautiful self. It possesses all the love you have to give, and it has the courage to risk actually giving it. It has an energy that feels like passion. It has dreams preparing to be lived. Its temperament is redemptive. Its personality is inclusive. Carried within the tininess of a body, your soul is a living mystery as big as the universe.

Yet, souls get folded in upon themselves. Repeatedly.

I remember a summer afternoon before my third-grade year. Our family was penniless at the time, living in a mobile home in the hills of Missouri, and just barely scraping by. A local theater was showing *Benji* for free, so my mom and I were planning to enjoy the free entertainment and the free air conditioning. When we arrived, we parked beside the towering brick façade of the theater. I got out and my mom lingered in the car for a moment—just long enough for me to pick up a pebble and wonder how high up on the wall I could throw it.

My first throw was a decent one. The pebble tapped the wall innocently and fell harmlessly to the pavement. I picked it up again, knowing I could do better, a soul enjoying the abilities of the body it was in. I put a little something extra into my next throw, but rather than hitting higher on the wall, the pebble went harder *at* the wall. It rebounded off the brick, ricocheted over my head, and landed with a tinkle on the hood of the car behind us. Just as the owner of that car walked around the corner of the theater.

She lit into me. She screamed. She berated. She said things about me that had never occurred to me before. She found the edges of my paper soul and folded it in half. Then she did it again. And again. As she did, I felt smaller. And smaller. And smaller.

Each of us can recall at least one moment in which our soul was folded in upon itself. Most of us can remember many. Your true self is like a piece of paper that gets folded in half by life, again and again, until it becomes almost invisible. And yet the good news is, the folding of your soul is not the *end* of the story.

A soul that can be folded in on itself can be *unfolded*, too.

Your true self folded in upon itself never ceases to be your truest you. And just as a piece of paper unfolded is becoming once again what it originally was, when your soul finally comes out of hiding and expands once again, it is becoming what it already is. Your soul is bigger and more beautiful and more mysterious than you can possibly imagine. It has been folded in upon itself by people and by experience and by life. But it need not remain that way. You can become what you already are. You can unfold. You can smooth out. Until one day, you are once again a big, beautiful, ageless soul traveling inside of skin gone from one kind of wrinkled to another, bones gone from tiny to brittle, and hair gone from wispy to wispy-and-gray.

This year, the unfolding began.

May it never end.