

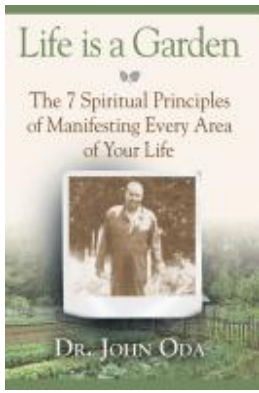
Life is a Garden



The 7 Spiritual Principles
of Manifesting Every Area
of Your Life



DR. JOHN ODA



Life is a Garden of self-help, personal development and spiritual principles to create success in any calling. This step-by-step book walks you through the trials and tribulations to create a proven system for anyone to go further faster by modeling the seven principles that Dr. Oda lives his life by. This book is a MUST for anyone seeking to manifest every area of their lives

Life is a Garden: 7 Spiritual Principles of Manifesting Every Area of Your Life

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Life is a Garden:

**The 7 Spiritual Principles of manifesting
every area of your life**

John P. Oda, Ph.D.

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First Edition

Dr. John Oda's Story

I grew up in Michigan City, Indiana, about 45 minutes west of Chicago. My parents are originally from Mississippi. As a child my mother always wanted to live close to a beach and have ten children. By the grace of God, my parents moved to Michigan City in the year 1946 and had ten beautiful children.

My father had a huge garden. My brothers and I worked outside with our father while my sisters didn't work in the garden at all. At times they went in the garden to just sit down and talk to my father. They would mainly take care of household chores.

My father planted everything a person can imagine in his garden. The garden had so many mosquitoes and they would bite our arms and legs. There were also huge spiders and worms. At night, we had lightning bugs and ants. In short, we had every possible insect in my father's garden!

The most amazing thing about my father is that he had two full time jobs. He worked 16 hours per day for five days. On the weekends he would devote all of his time to his second job: his garden. I would see him wake up at 4:30am in the morning to work on his garden. He wanted his garden to be the best and he was aware that a lot of effort needed to be put in order to make that happen.

Right from my childhood days and even as an adult, I never saw my father complain about work at all. He loved his work to the core. As a dutiful son, I would wake up every morning in the summer time from about 4:30 to 6:00am to make sure the garden was watered.

My father would plant his garden around Easter time every year, or may I say on Good Friday. In the Midwest, the weather is not the greatest during Easter time. It is the end of winter and beginning of the spring season. Before my father would plant his garden, my brother and I would make sure that the garden area was thoroughly cleaned. We had to dig out the garden with shovels and also

get the collard green stems. This was not only a tough task, but also something that had to be done with utmost care. Once we were done with cleaning the garden, our father would tell us to dig out the garden so he could plant the seeds. Digging involved using the tiller. Since we were young and inexperienced at using the tiller, our father would guide us.

Since our garden was quite huge, I would ask for help from my next door neighbor, Jerry Mitchell, and other's around the neighborhood. We would do our best to dig out this garden. After we would dig it out, my father and his friend would use a tiller several times so that he could plant by Good Friday.

My father gardened every year until he had a successful garden. He fed the family delicious organic vegetables and fruit. I sometimes wondered if we could take the same metaphor of "Life is a garden." When I look back at the seeds I planted, they grew in negative and positive ways. Let me share with you now a story about how a nun planted seeds in my

own life and how I manifested in a negative way.

My six sisters, three brothers and I went to St. Mary's Grade School. I had a severe stuttering problem. I could, however, speak without any problem to my friends and family (maybe because I felt very relaxed among them). At times I couldn't even say my name and I felt so embarrassed because other children around me spoke without any issues.

When I was in the first grade, I had this very mean class teacher who was a nun. She had many rules about what you could do, and even more rules about what you couldn't do. I was so scared of her; she never smiled and she was very serious all the time. Many times she would ask me to read out loud and when I read, other children would laugh at me, call me retarded and make fun of me.

One day the nun told me she wanted to meet my mother. After a couple of days my mother came to the school. My mother worked a full-time night shift at St. Anthony's Hospital. So,

one day after school my mother met the nun and she was familiar with her because she had taught some of my other siblings in previous years. My mother asked the nun if she wanted me to wait outside the room. The nun stated “No,” so I stayed in the room. I had previously never been part of serious discussions with grown people, as at my house that was something that never took place. The nun told my mother that the other kids in my class get along with people well. Then she went on to tell my mother I was retarded and suggested that she admit me to a school down the road called Garfield. She even felt that I would never even finish eighth grade if I continued studying in my current school. I was completely in shock. I never expected her to say something like this. She planted a huge seed in my mind. It’s natural to believe words coming out from a person of authority.

My mother told the nun, “If John has to leave St Mary’s, his brothers and sisters who studied in the same school would follow suit.” Hearing this, the nun thought about the monetary loss that the school would incur

and decided to keep me in the school on one condition; I would have to take speech therapy. Shortly after that meeting, I met my speech therapist whose name was Mr. Anderson. He was a nice gentleman who would greet people by saying: “Hi my name is Mr. Anderson, I stutter.”

I told myself that I would never say anything like that because I was embarrassed that I stuttered in the first place; why would I ever mention it to the world? Mr. Anderson told me to say “real--- ize” by breaking it apart in two separate phrase/words. I thought to myself that I *would* be retarded speaking like he was telling me to. I went to speech therapy class twice a week for about 4-5 years and we would do a whole lot of things like jumping jacks, sit ups and a lot of exercise. I guess all these activities were to build up my self-esteem.

I always had this question at the back of my mind as to why only I had to do speech therapy and not my classmates. Mr. Anderson did his best at helping me with my stuttering problem, although at times I was

confused and did not know to speak the way he taught me or would just attempt to push through my stuttering. For example, if I was attempting to say the word “car” I would sound like “cccccccar” because the words just did not come out! Mr. Anderson would ask me to say “My name is John, I stutter.”

I found this weird as I had never seen people introducing themselves, “Hello my name is _____, I have cancer.” I really believe the words you use shape your destiny and you need to choose your words carefully. I did not want to create my identity inside of being a person who stutters.

Despite abiding by all the rules, the following year I returned back to first grade again! I felt awful. I really felt that there was seriously some problem within me because even after getting 90% positive marks, I somehow still had to repeat the same grade again!

The children would mock and call me “O-DA, you are so stupid why aren’t you in the second grade with us?” At that point I couldn’t give them a reason at all. I really

didn't know and everyone I spoke with couldn't tell my parents of why I was in first grade again.

My first grade teacher this time around was Mrs. Resteck. To make matters worse, we had first and second grade in the same classroom, so I was constantly getting teased a lot by my previous class mates. At that time I had so much anger and depression. I kept wondering and would question God; why me? What did I do to deserve this?

My mother was an angel sent by God. She was an inspiration for me. She would tell me that my father stuttered, my grandfather stuttered and they all overcame it, and so would I. Those seeds my mother planted stayed with me for the rest of my life. When I would have a bad day, I would remember the seeds my mother planted with me at such a young age.

My third grade teacher, Mrs. Kutch was a young blonde and a very nice woman by nature. I remember one day she wanted me to read a book. I told Mrs. Kutch that I could

not read. She told me to take my time and read. She waited for about ten minutes. It seemed like hours for me. She told the other children not to laugh at me. This was the first teacher who took her time with me and really wanted me to succeed in life. I remember staying after class and speaking with her about my dreams in life. Every time, she encouraged me to be the best I could be. I really appreciated her love and support.

My fourth grade teacher was Mrs. Jones. At a young age my father taught me my multiplication tables. I was an expert in saying times tables and would beat everyone to the answer. This is what I excelled in so much. I remember one day, I came in from the playground early and Mrs. Jones was speaking to one of the teachers. I overheard her saying “I feel sorry for John Oda, can you imagine growing up stuttering, and he can’t even read well, how he will make in this world?”

Those words hurt, like someone punched me in my stomach over and over again.

Mr. Jones lived down the street and he had two sons. When I was in my fifth grade, my father always told me not to hang out with the Jones brothers as they were trouble makers. I remember one time we were riding our bikes and I had a three speed bike while they had a ten speed one. It seemed that they were messing with this white man about 35 years old, teasing him and calling him names. At that point, I didn't know what exactly was going on. The only thing I remember is that all of a sudden the man starts chasing me on my bike and I had this blank expression on my face trying to understand what caused him to chase me! The Jones brothers were laughing as I was trying to pedal to save my dear life. The white man caught me on my bike, called me some racial slurs and punched me in my stomach. I went home and told my mother about what happened. She immediately called the police. The police arrived and I told them everything that took place. They told me that they will register a report and investigate further. After a few days, we called the police station to find out if they were able to trace that white man.

The police did trace him but stated that the man denied of doing anything to me. The police believed the man and set him free.

My sixth grade teacher was a blessing from God, very positive, nice and encouraging; exactly what the doctor had ordered. At this time I grew to be around six foot. I started playing basketball with my coach, Coach May, who was a great role model.

My sixth grade teacher would always encourage me to read out each and every word loud even if it took time. She told me that I would grow up to be a great person. She planted so many positive seeds in my garden that when I reflex back now, I see why I grew so much in confidence and self-esteem. She adored me so much that she even named her baby after me! It was such an honor for me. Her son should be 38 or 39 years old now.

During my eighth grade year, I went to California to see my two older brothers. My brother Joe stayed in the OC (35 years ago OC was called Santa Ana). I really felt very

confident at this time in my life. I won a dance contest at Disneyland, and my life appeared to be taking off. I remember during my eighth grader year I must have been around 6'5 and my basketball skills were improving a lot. One day coming home I went to play some basketball with some children. I played many a times with my brother and cousins. This time I was all alone and so I beat them pretty good. It was getting late, so I told them that I had to go home. On my way home, I noticed that the kids I played with were behind me and they were going in the same direction as me.

I thought that their home must have been in the same direction. Then I got nervous so I took a shortcut to in order to get home more quickly. To my surprise, two of them were behind me and three were coming in front of me. They asked me to give them my money. At first, I thought these guys were joking because I played basketball with them many times.

I refused.

One of them pointed a gun to my head and pulled the trigger. My heart skipped a beat. By the grace of God the gun didn't go off. The boy was surprised. Then he took the gun away from my head and put the gun in the air and the gun went off. I gave them the money and ran to my cousin's house to tell him what happened.

My parents called the police and I explained to them what happened and I also told them the person's name. The white officer told me since he didn't witness the act; he could not arrest the person. He told me it's my word against his word, and he will make a report. I guess since it was a black on black crime it didn't matter that much. Those guys could have killed me and the police would just make a report and take no action at all. After these two incidents with the police, I made up my mind to never trust anyone wearing a police uniform.

I recall a happy moment in my life when I cleared the eighth grade. I went back to let the nun know about this. Instead of appreciating me, she said that it was sheer

luck that I graduated and also stated that I would not graduate high school.

My ninth grade year I confronted the nun, because I kept wondering why a person of God would keep saying all of these negative things about me. The nun told me she never told me any of those things and I must have made them up in my head. At that time the nun must have been around 90 years old.

My ninth grade year I went to Marquette High School. Most of my classmates were children that I knew from the other private schools. They were smart and could also read well. We played sports together. Our classes were pretty small; around 25-40 students.

Attending the religion class was mandatory. We had a young person who was probably two or three years into priesthood as our teacher. He seemed to be a student favorite. I remember many times in class I would raise my hand to read and he wouldn't call on me at all. The young priest would point out everything I was doing wrong and nothing I was doing right.

I remember one time in class during the Iran Contra, one of the students raised their hand and asked the priest as to why the black people were sent home first. The young priest told the student, “Black people are not worth anything; they drive around in their Cadillac and live off the government.”

The student then asked the priest, “What about John and Dion?” The young priest quickly replied, “Well, they are a different type of black populace.”

At this time, the priest planted a seed that black people are not worth anything, so the 25-45 children in the room believed what he stated because he had the authority.

I went home to tell my mother about what the priest mentioned in the class. My mother made an appointment with the school principal and the priest. We met about three days later. When we arrived, we all sat down. I spoke first to explain what took place. After I spoke, the young priest agreed to whatever I had stated and he also explained even more. The principal then took up for the young

priest. At this point my mother told the school if that was how they see black people, that her son would be leaving the school. It seemed like they really didn't care. My mother seemed very upset since most of her children attended Marquette and this was the way they were treating us after many years of dedication to the school. My mother decided to get me admitted to a different school.

The following year I went to Elston High School. Compared to Marquette, it was night and day. I remember my first day for college prep courses. I arrived to class and the teacher asked if I was in the right class. I inquired if this was the Chemistry class and he nodded. He again stated that I must be in the wrong class and that the shop class was down the hall. I told him that I am very much in the right class. The teacher had me go to a counselor just to make sure if I am in the right class. Going to Elston made me understand how to be black in America. Going to Marquette High School they treated as I were a white person and or color didn't matter. At Elston High School I understood my place in the society/world.

I really felt it was a blessing to go to Elston as it made me face reality about who I was and about life. Elston, at first seemed very hard for me. The teens were very rude and mean. They were always talking trash, which was something I didn't get at Marquette. I had the honor of being able to be a part of both worlds. I grew up with all my friends from St Mary's, and after going to Elston, people would see me as being a black person whereas at Marquette we were in a fantasy world and we thought we were the same as the white children until reality kicked in. I have always believed that everything happens for a reason and a purpose in life, and I am happy for going to Elston as I really met some good lifetime friends at both schools.

The nun died while I was at my tenth grade year. It was a bitter sweet feeling that I had and more than anything I was saddened that she died before I could prove her wrong. Though she was not at her best behavior with me, she had helped so many people along her career.

As you realize, I had many seeds planted in my life before turning 16 years old. I view my seeds as a blessings because I always had the most powerful seed. My father told me I had to be 100 times smarter than everyone else and so I worked very hard by studying and doing my best. He also told me that he had only received a third grade education and all of his children would go to college because the more you learn, the more you will earn. My mother would always call me handsome and would always say that I would be someone of great influence. Both of my parents constantly planted positive seeds in my garden. The world would plant seeds as well. I had a choice to believe the world or my parents, and I am so happy I chose to believe my parents most of the time.

People would always tell me “sticks and stone may break your bones but words will never hurt.”

This statement is false. I would rather have someone beat me up instead of have someone hurt me with their words. Wounds will heal with time, but if someone plants negative

seeds in your life, you will think about it, visualize it and then will manifest the negative statement or phrase the person told you. Eventually you will end up believing it.

I did graduate high school and I praise God for that. I beat what the nun told me. I still had this label about who I was stuck in my mind though. In the back of my head the seeds the nun planted for me I sometimes watered, put on sunshine, and asked myself if I was really retarded.

I remember when I was 31 years old, I had a career in the mental health field and I still had those negative seeds planted from the nun. I still had a question of who I was. I remember reading excerpts from this book called Unlimited Power by Anthony Robbins. This book changed my life. I would use some of the same techniques from the book at my job.

At that time I was working at River Edge Hospital in Forest Park, Illinois. I helped my mentor; Carl Scott, open up the first Residential Treatment center for adolescents.

I found out that Anthony Robbins would be in Chicago for a one day sales seminar. The ticket was priced at \$297.00. This happened in the year 1995. I went to the seminar and this one day event changed my life. After the seminar I wanted to be on stage helping people. I wanted to be the next Anthony Robbins. I remember that I told some of my close friends about my experience.

They would discourage me by saying “Who would pay to listen to you? You stutter!” I took those words as a challenge. I told myself that I was not in first grade anymore. I will dictate my own future by planting positive seeds.

Anthony Robbins had a second seminar coming in the Chicago land area in July of 1995 called Unleash the Power. A four day program would cost \$695.00. This was equal to my two weeks of pay, way back in the year 1995. I did not think much and attended the seminar. What he taught me changed my life forever. He planted so many positive seeds in my life. For the first time I was around liked minded people who were dealing with some of

the same challenges and having the right tools and strategies to overcome them. At the seminar, I changed my meaning of my stutter problem. I viewed it in a different way, which changed my destiny.

At that seminar I met Joseph McClendon III, a head trainer of Anthony's organization and he taught me a breathing technique that changed the way I spoke forever. I didn't label myself as a stutter anymore. I told the world I that am a genius and sometimes I might stumble across my words because I have to take more time to choose the right one. At times I see Anthony Robbins stutter, so I know that I am in good company. Being a genius was something that I was OK with. Taking on this meaning really changed my life forever.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank Anthony Robbins and my mentor Joseph McClendon III for giving me the tools I needed to change my life and all the privileges I have had to be a part of changing other people's lives.

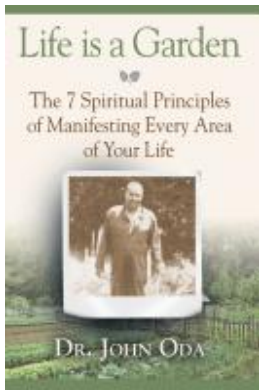
I know without a doubt that the seeds that Tony Robbins and Joseph McClendon III planted stayed with me for a life time, because I water them, and add fertilizer on them, and nourish them. I pulled out the weeds that were negative thoughts and I changed my environment. I had to be around like-minded people who had the same goals and dreams as I did. Your weeds will come up; meaning the seeds someone else has planted about you. When this takes place, pull up the weeds and replace them with something else which is positive. When I changed my environment, it really changed my life. I got around people who are living an incredible life in every area. So I have to play my A plus game to keep up with them.

Take a look at your own life right now. What seeds are you planting? When you talk about your problems, you are planting your seeds. When you are complaining, you are planting your seeds. When you are telling everyone your problems you are planting your seeds. Remember our thoughts, words and actions are creative, meaning that this is how we plant seeds in a negative way and in a

positive way. What seeds are you planting today? Are you planting what someone told you about yourself or are you creating your own garden by living your dreams and goals by your own rules?

When I do reflect back on what my father mentioned so many times; that life is a garden and we dictate our life on a daily and weekly basis by what we hold in our mind and our thoughts.

I really believe the only thing that will make anything grow is having the right environment. Once we planted our garden we had to create the right environment in order to make it grow. I also believe that in order to make me grow to the person I am today I only have two people to thank. My parents. I really believe my parents planted their family in the right environment.



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