



Spirituality

Defining it.

Why is it so hard?

What is it? What is it not?

How can we make it simpler, more practical and useful in strategic alliances?

The following is an excerpt from the book *Spiritual Principles in Strategic Alliances* by Joe Kittel, Chapter 6 - *The Power in Simple Truths*, pages 102-122.

Spirituality – improving attitude & mindset, deepening relationship

To help us transform our alliances, we need a simple definition of spirituality.

Spirituality is the use of practical principles that deepen relationship.

“*Use*” – thought creates. So “use” means the act of consciously holding certain thoughts in our consciousness. These chosen thoughts will then lead to authentic behaviors. Thus, we “use” them. And, as we use them, we will end up getting used, too (we will be changed).

“*Practical*” – useful *here* and *now*; something that produces an immediate result or benefit. If a solution isn’t practical, it isn’t spiritual.¹

“*Principles*” – basic ideas, truths or perspectives, especially our perception of Self, others, the Universe, situations and life. In other words, our attitude & mindset.

“*Deepen*” – given our core is divine, deeper is *good*. Given the universal force of love or spirit, going deeper into any relationship is always good. Deeper leads us toward greatness.

“*Relationship*” – with Self, others and the Infinite. That “something” that exists between individuals, companies and organizations. Even *between ideas*. Relationship exists in the midst; it *is* the midst.

The illustration below provides a rich means for talking about spirituality. It sheds light on why this is such an extraordinarily important, yet very difficult, topic to talk about. The metaphor of mankind as fish in water and the water representing spirit provides some practical insights into spirituality. We can see what spirituality *is* and *is not*. We distinguish between *using* versus *debating* spiritual principles. We get a sense of spirit's impact *on* us and *in* us. It helps defuse some of spirituality's mystical aspects. It helps neutralize complexities laid on this topic from some organized religions and spiritual philosophies.

This picture can help us clarify spirituality so we can more openly discuss and ultimately *use* its concepts for practical benefit. Note that if we are *using* water we will ultimately get *used* by water. In our trying to *use* spirit, spirit will *use* us. We will end up being changed. In this process we will be *transformed*.



Figure 6.4 – Spirituality – *using* water (and being *used* by water).

Imagine ourselves as being intelligent fish in an ocean. Water surrounds us and is between us. We are composed of water. We are *in* water and it is *in* us. In fact, we *are* composed of water.

Imagine a school of fish in our little area of the ocean. We may be in this school or we may be observing it. But this school of fish is intensely debating very important issues like:

- The very **existence** of water. If we are *in* water and it is *in* us, how can we *prove* it exists? Being both *comprised of*, as well as *in*, a substance makes it very difficult to prove the existence of that substance.
- We are so close to the water that we are both the **observer** and the **observed**. No wonder it is so hard for us to see it. We have no independent perspective on this substance that is ultimately *us*.
- The true **nature** of water. Does true water have salt or not? Either *your* definition of water or *my* definition of water must be true, but they cannot *both* be true.
- **Experiencing** water. What must we *do* in order to actually experience a state of water-ness? *Where* can we experience true water?
- Being in water's **presence**. What must we do in order to *earn* our right to be in water's presence?
- The **history** and **future** of water. How and when was water created? What is water's future? Where did it come from and where will it go?

We *are* intelligent and thoughtful beings. These are all very interesting and, at times, complex questions. But the questions we *should* be asking are, “Does debating help us *use* water, or is it a distraction? What affect does an understanding of the history or future of water have on our ability to use it, here and now? Does debating help us deepen relationships?” This last question takes us back to something a school or community of fish might practically work on together:

- What *is* our **relationship** with water?
- What are our practical **experiences** with water that we can *share* with one another?
- How can we collectively **grow in our understanding** and *use* of water?

It seems useful to think of the water in this illustration as representing *spirit* or *love*. It is the flow of life force. We can *debate* about water, its substance and flow, or we can *use* water. We can align with the current and more easily travel, or we can fight the flow; we can try to swim upstream.

This “water substance” connects us; we are *in it* and part of *it*. We understand it better when we honestly and openly share our experiences with one another, when we are *in it together*. Because it is in us and we are in it, because it creates a natural oneness, a number of deep principles begin to make sense, such as: we learn by teaching; we are served by serving; we are loved by loving; giving and receiving are one. Our oneness with and because of this stuff makes our life very interesting. Understanding this stuff and using it makes our lives more effective and useful. But it is more helpful when we *share* our experiences about its use with another, rather than debate about it.

Notice other things in this picture. The seahorses symbolize beings who have realized that the purpose of life is to “sing and dance and laugh.” And so they help others to sing and dance and laugh.

Also, there is a *flow* of water in this picture. The porpoise has noticed this flow and he chooses to use it. Others can debate water; he uses the flow of water to get somewhere. The porpoise is living a life of purpose!

There is a spiritual jellyfish, a being so like the water, so at one with the water, that we might not notice her. When we are distracted by our complex debating we do not notice such translucent beings. When we start becoming quieter, more present and more aware, we see them and we are amazed by their wisdom and insight. Where did they come from?

If you have observed the illustration above very closely, you might have noticed that one of the large air bubbles has “God” in it, another has “Love” in it. Could it be that “spirit” and “God” and “love” are all words pointing to the same divine substance, of which we are all a part? I share this idea in the spirit of being helpful; this idea seems to help us see each other differently and relate more deeply. I am not sharing this idea to stir up doctrinal debate; simply consider it or discard it based on its usefulness here and now.

This illustration seems to help simplify spirituality so we can focus on *using* it for our practical benefit. It is our choice; we can *use it* or *debate about it*.

Spirituality	
Is	Is not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practically <i>useful</i> here and now • about benefits <i>here</i> and <i>now</i> • <i>connecting</i> – deepening relationships – “we” • about <i>servng</i>, <i>healing</i> and <i>sharing</i> • <i>enthusiastic</i>, inspirational, insightful, creative • singing, dancing and laughing – being <i>joyful</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a theoretical or academic <i>debate</i> • about benefits <i>elsewhere</i> or <i>later</i> • <i>divisive</i> – “me vs. you” or “us vs. them” • <i>depressing</i>, discouraging • about blame or guilt – being <i>judgmental</i> • about preaching, <i>converting</i> or “saving”

Table 6.4 – Spirituality *is* and *is not*.



Question: Are We Talking About Religion? Answer: Yes and No.

Now the big question, “Are we actually talking about religion?” There are two significant *risks* associated with how we answer this question. And there are two answers to this question.

One risk is premature *rejection* of spiritual ideas, dismissed as “that religious stuff” by those strongly opposed to organized religion. The other risk may actually be more problematic: premature *acceptance*. Someone might assume, “Oh, this is about God. I got it! I already know that stuff.” AA’s Big Book describes both of these reactions as “contempt prior to investigation.” For alcoholics, answering the “religion versus spirituality” question is literally a life and death matter. For alliance managers the risk of prematurely discarding or superficially accepting spiritual ideas can result in continued status quo mediocrity. This is a life and death matter for us as well, but of a different sort. We need to *deeply consider* and ultimately *use* these ideas if they are to make a real difference for us.

Let us get back to the original question, “Are we talking about religion?” “Yes,” to the degree that religion helps us *use* practical principles *here and now* to *deepen relationships*.

Is not religion all deeds and all reflection, and that which is neither deed nor reflection, but a wonder and a surprise ever springing in the soul, even while the hands hew the stone or tend the loom?

- *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran

The answer to the question above is “No” if religion does not help us deepen relationships here and now. If religious ideas are divisive, lead to debate, take us out of the here and now, or do not deepen relationship, then that it is *not* what we are talking about.

This same question can be asked about philosophy, psychology, self-help books or any other area of personal study. If ideas satisfy the “Is” column of Table 6.4, then the answer is, “Yes – that is what we are talking about; otherwise, no.”

If something is not practical, it is not spiritual.

Our practically focused definition of spirituality seems to help. It leads us to the discovery of principles which improve effectiveness in ourselves and in our alliances here and now, not later.

Based on years of study, reflection and practical application, it seems like there are a few simple truths, which are discussed below.ⁱⁱ There may be other simple truths that you have found to be helpful in your alliancing work, things which help deepen relationships here and now. Please share your experiences.ⁱⁱⁱ

Remember the power of simplicity. It is interesting when we take philosophical, spiritual or religious ideas to their logical conclusion, to a simple extreme. It is quite interesting.

First, let’s think deeply but simply about *thought*.

Two Thought Systems – ego-based or spirit-based, in fear or in love

A common concept in most spiritual teachings is the idea that our greatest struggle is *within* our self (or with our Self). The ancient Greeks talked about having two horses in our heads, one black and one white. Man’s day-to-day battle is to determine which horse will take the lead. Spiritual teachings today talk about the ego and spirit as the labels for this inner struggle.^{iv}

Ego-based thinking promotes a sense of **separateness** – from others, from the Universe, and even from your Self. Separateness breeds a sense of isolation, leading to “me versus you” thinking. The ego-based thought system has a sense of *scarcity*, a need to find fault or judge, the idea of keeping *secrets* and an attraction for *complexity*.^v *Fear* pervades this thought system. The most damaging fear of all is our fear of success. Intense interactions with others often involve *conflict*, or an attack *of* the other. Competitive comparisons grounded in fear leads to *grandiosity*, to prove that one is better than the other.

Spirit-based thinking promotes a sense of **connectedness** – with others, the Universe and Self. We have an inner-sense of *integrity* or wholeness. We realize that life is “a we thing.” Spirit- or love-based thinking brings an awareness of *abundance*. This leads to *openness* and a desire to understand and accept others. Intense interactions are about being *lovingly confrontational*, jointly looking at what is between, what is *in* the relationship, for the *growth* of both parties. Collective and individual greatness embraces *grandeur*. We are *all grand*. And we discover our grandeur *together*.^{vi}

Spirit-based thinking sees the *simple* essence in things; it sees the truth clearly. Ego-based thinking is biased toward detailed analysis and *complexity*; it is threatened by the truth. The ego uses complexity to obscure its greatest fear, the truth.

Finally, in each decision and in each instant of time, our thoughts are *always* grounded in *one* of these two thought systems. We are either “hostage to the ego” or “host to the spirit and love” – there is no in between.

*Would you be hostage to the ego or host to [love]? Let this question be asked ... **every time you make a decision.***

*Every decision you make stems from **what you think you are** and represents the value that you put upon yourself.*

- A Course in Miracles

So as we explore the practical use of five simple truths which deepen relationships, we will look for signs of when we are in *ego* or in *spirit*. When are we in *fear* or in *love*?

Oneness – no separation between people, no duality of thought, integrity

When we hold a sense of oneness in our consciousness, our attitude and behavior toward self and everyone around us authentically changes. And oneness naturally leads to greater honesty and integrity. We increase in power through our integrity and wholeness. Loving service, therefore, makes complete sense, knowing we are ultimately loving our Self.

This table summarizes questions we might ask ourselves to determine whether we have a sense of oneness within ourselves, or if that sense of oneness is absent.

Presence (spirit and love)	Absence (ego and fear)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I treating others as though they <i>are</i> me? • Do I realize that what I do to another I am actually doing to myself? • Do I see us as all as being on the same team? Do I see the community among us? • Do I think life is a “we thing?” • Can I hear the collective voice of the entire organization? • Do I live a life of wholeness and integrity? • Can I see the interconnectedness of events over time and across space? • Am I focused on our commonalities? • Do I realize that judging is impossible, that I will never know enough to be able to judge? Instead, understanding and accepting are critical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I treating another as a separate person? • Do I think that what I do to another has no effect on me? • Do I think my thoughts have no effect on another? (Are there private thoughts?) • Do I view a team as a loose affiliation of individuals, focused solely on self-interests? • Do I think life is a “me versus you” thing? • Do I think that just understanding senior management’s view is enough? • Is my life compartmentalized? • Am I oriented toward analyzing situations and events into minute detail? • Do I focus on our differences? • Do I feel it is important to judge? That judging is actually a very useful thing to do so we can find and eliminate faults?



Table 6.7 – Oneness.

Some thought-deepening questions:

- How do universally-accepted truths, such as the Golden Rule or Karma, actually work?^{vii}
People simply accept these ideas, but *think about it ... how do they actually work?*
Many consider the Golden Rule as a *suggested* way to treat another, something we *should* do.
Could it be that the Golden Rule is also a statement of fact, the *truth about reality? We are one.*
- Could it be that what we do to others we are *really* doing to ourselves?
- Could it be that how we think and feel toward another is how we are actually thinking and feeling about ourselves?
- How can it be that when we give away our greatest possessions (our ideas, wisdom and love), these things come back to us, with gain?
How does that *actually* work?
- We often hear that if we want to have loving relationships we need to first love ourselves. Why? And how is self-love actually done?
- If we want to forgive others we must first learn to forgive ourselves. How are these things connected? What does it really mean to forgive? Who are you actually forgiving when you forgive?
- Why does the teacher sometimes learn more than the student? Aside from their rethinking the content of what they're teaching, how is it that the teacher learns when teaching? And *who* are they actually teaching?
- What is the connection between how I view self and how I view others? How are those things actually connected? Why do I attract into my life people whose world view aligns with mine?
- When we change the way we look at things, those things we choose to look at change. How does that actually work?

Now – to be fully present in each instant of time, one eternal now, eternity

It is always best to be more fully present; the more present we are, the better. In such moments creativity emerges and productivity peaks. If we want to affect true positive change in ourselves or in our relationships, we can *only* use the present moment. Feeling bad about the past, feeling guilty or shameful, beating ourselves up for what is not here and now, is self-flagellation – it damages both self and this moment. Bringing up past wrongs in a relationship prevents growth, which can only occur in the present moment. Worrying about the future doesn't help either.

The ego regards the present only as a brief transition to the future, in which it brings the past to the future by interpreting the present in past terms.

- *A Course in Miracles*



Presence (spirit and love)	Absence (ego and fear)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I fully present in the here and now? • Is my work like being “in the zone” or “in the flow”? Is my work meditative in nature? • In meetings or conference calls am I honest about being either fully present or gone? • Do I focus on first fully accepting the “is-ness” of a situation? Only after full acceptance do I figure out the next step? • Do I have a timeless perspective? Can I see how the “stars have aligned”? Do I drive toward an end-state vision, coupled with utmost patience and tenacious persistence? • Am I comfortable being alone, in a quiet room, with just my own thoughts? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What am I thinking? Am I thinking about another time or another place? Where am I? • Am I anxious to be in the next step? Do I think “once XYZ happens, <i>then</i> I will be OK”? • Do I live the lie of multi-tasking? Do I think I can check e-mail <i>and</i> still be present? • Do I feel like thoroughly examining a bad situation is a waste of time, and immediate action is urgently needed? • Do I have a timed perspective? Do I see the present moment only through the lens of the past, or the future? Am I impatient? Do I over-drive situations? • Do I always need something or someone, like music or white noise, in the background?

Table 6.8 – Now.

Some thought-deepening ideas and questions

- Only in the moment can we really change and truly grow.
- We are most productive, effective and creative when we are in the moment. When we block out any sense of time – time expands and time flies. Why in such timeless moments are we at our very best?
- When we emotionally detach from past problems and future fears, issues tend to resolve themselves.
- Why is meditation effective in increasing creativity and presence? How does that work?
- Does the past exist? Does the future exist? What is time?^{viii}

“Now” relates to *forgiveness* – to accept – to allow – to give up:

Forgiveness undoes the past in the present, releasing the future.

We Are Divine – see the greatness at our core, in everyone, in everything

The Hindu greeting Namasté epitomizes the concept that we are divine:

The god in me sees and rejoices in the god I see in you.

When we choose to see another person as divine, we treat them with great reverence. We see every relationship as sacred and eternal. We recognize the **light** in ourselves and in others. Are we aware of that light? We *are* light.

Presence (spirit and love)	Absence (ego and fear)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do I see others as being good, trying to do the right thing? Do I feel that deep down, at my very <i>core</i>, that I am good? That <i>I am great</i>? That we are all great? There is nothing to fear within. Do I see us as all indestructible spirits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do I feel like others cannot be trusted? They are “trying to get me.” Am I afraid to go within? Do I think it is dark and scary deep inside? Do I feel like others would run if they really knew me? Do I feel like survival is precarious, that I am at risk of annihilation? Survival of the fittest.

Table 6.9 – Our Divine Nature.

Some thought-deepening questions:

- Why do relationships fundamentally and authentically improve when we choose to see the greatness in others and then reflect that greatness back to them?
- Is fault-finding *ever* helpful?
- Why is strength-based personal development more effective than weakness-based personal development?^{ix}

We Create – based on our divine nature, thought is cause

As we become more deeply aware of precisely *what* we are thinking from moment to moment, we will realize the amazing creative power of our thoughts. Of course thought does precede action, but there is more going on here than that. Our thoughts, in and of themselves, directly affect our relationships and they have the power to change our world.

Maybe the admonition of many spiritual teachers to “have a constant prayer in the heart” is not just a suggestion. Maybe it is a statement of reality. Perhaps we *are* always praying or asking. The question is, “What is it that we are always asking for and, in fact, always getting?”

Are we awake or are we making random chaotic requests? Our thought, our attention, *is* our creative **light**. What are we doing with that light?

Presence (spirit and love)	Absence (ego and fear)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do I recognize that I create “perfectly,” based on the thoughts and perspectives I choose to hold? Life <i>is</i> a self-fulfilling prophecy, now. Am I “awake” to what I am thinking? Do I realize that my attention is my “light”? Where and how I choose to focus it causes transcendence, transformation and growth. I choose to see only the good in others and in events. Do I see the good in the world? Thinking about and pointing out the goodness in everyone and everything leads to greatness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do I believe that what I think does <i>not</i> matter? Do I believe that the <i>only</i> thing that matters is what I <i>do</i>? Am I “asleep,” unaware of my thoughts? Life is what happens <i>to</i> me. We are merely suffering through the “human condition.” Life is chaotic, deal with it. Finding fault is what is most needed. Otherwise, how will others improve? Someone needs to point out “areas for improvement.” That is my job in life.

Table 6.10 – Thought Creates.



Some thought-deepening questions:

- Some religious teachings suggest we should “have a constant prayer in the heart.”^x Perhaps these are not admonitions for something we should *do*, but instead a *statement of fact*. What if, in reality, we *are always praying*? What if we are *always creating*? And what if our prayers are *always being answered*? Does this change how we think about our thoughts?
- If our thoughts occur without our real awareness, is it any wonder that our lives seem to be out-of-control and chaotic? Are we “asleep at the wheel” of life?
- Do our loving thoughts extend immediately toward others? Do these thoughts affect them, whether they know it or not?^{xi}
- Have you ever noticed that what you look for, what you deeply expect, ultimately happens? Perhaps not in the form expected; often better than expected.
- Does the idea that you create, here and now, stir up deep fears within you? If so, what are those fears really based on? Is it fear of success?
- Here’s an interesting exercise to practice with people in your life. Ask yourself, friends or family members, “What are you thinking *right now*?” Do they really know? Does this question, by itself, deepen relationship by showing your real interest *in* another person? But be ready to hear the truth. It may feel uncomfortable, but it will be good – actually it will be *great*.
- Does this idea expand the ideas in the section titled *Oneness* in Chapter 6? Do we need to be mindful of the thoughts we choose about others? Are they really thoughts directly toward our Self? Does oneness encompass thought?
- What if there are no private thoughts? Does this idea fundamentally change how you think of others?

Love – the universal force which compels growth; enthusiasm, inspiration, joy

We are not talking here about romantic love, but the love that is often equated with God.^{xii} God *is* love.^{xiii} Love is at the heart of spiritual teachings.^{xiv} Love – the universal force countering entropy.^{xv} Love compels growth. In my mind love is synonymous with growth. Experience indicates that, in time, all things either grow or die. We as people, organizations, companies, countries and mankind either progress or cease to exist.

In *The Road Less Traveled*, M. Scott Peck defines love as “the will to *extend* oneself for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.” So, love is equated with *growth*, especially spiritual growth – healthy, loving, positive growth. Spiritual growth is rooted in love.

“Teach only love, for that is what you are.” This is the one lesson that is perfectly unified, because it is the only lesson that is one. Only by teaching it can you learn it. “As you teach, so will you learn.” If that is true, and it is true indeed, do not forget that what you teach is teaching you.

- *A Course in Miracles*

Presence (spirit and love)	Absence (ego and fear)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do I recognize the love within me? Can I accept my greatness, my grandeur, in humility? Do I experience this love among us and between us (like the water in Figure 6.4)? No matter what, things will ultimately work out for the best. Am I optimistic? Do I live a life of acceptance? Do I have a sense of connectedness? Am I self-assured? For example, in negotiating, can no deal actually be the best deal? A belief that the best growth comes from focusing on the good and strengths. I can then simply <i>let</i> growth happen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Am I in fear? Fear of failure. Mostly fearful of success. Fear of my grandeur. Am I afraid of others? Am I fearful of life's events? Is my outlook basically pessimistic? Fear, worry, depression, sadness, anger. Am I judgmental? Do I have a sense of separation? Survival mode? Is every deal a must-win deal to assure my personal survival. A belief that growth only really comes from focusing on problems, mistakes and weaknesses. I must <i>make</i> growth happen.

Table 6.11 – Love.

Some thought-deepening questions:

- Do we clearly see what is happening around, within and among us?
- Does an optimistic outlook, a deep-seated belief that growth is inevitable, always produce better results?
- What is the interconnecting “stuff” between people, organizations, companies, countries and even between ideas? How are these things actually interconnected? What is the substance of those connections?
- Could it be that as loving thoughts are extended, *love* forms the connectedness *between* us?
- Is love “that wordless language of empathy,” creating an atmosphere in which we can “feel time, touch reality and recognize spiritual values long lost”?^{xvi}
- Could it be that our loveless, fearful thoughts cannot be extended, so they end up being *projected* onto others?
- Are we all naturally biased toward love?

Assessing and Changing Attitude & Mindset

So, as we are working with others, as we are *thinking* about others, as we are *thinking* about ourselves, as we are *thinking* about our alliance, we ask ourselves, “What is my currently-chosen *perspective*?”

- Can I *hear* the voice of the collective? Do I see others as myself?..... **Oneness**
 Am I *fully present*, in this instant of time, *here* and *now*?..... **Now**
 Can I *see*: the *divine* in all, all relationships as *sacred* and *eternal*?..... **We are Divine**
 Do I see my loving thoughts as *light*? Am I *mindful* of my thoughts?..... **We Create**
 Am I *optimistic*? Do I see *goodness* as inevitable? Am I *in love*?..... **Love**

Assessing and changing our own attitude & mindset sounds simple. But this is extraordinarily hard work, it requires persistence, patience, self-love and healthy relationships with trusted others. Beyond sounding simple and being hard, this is *our most important work*. This work is at the heart of transformation.^{xvii} This is how we as individuals will “be the change” *in* our strategic alliance. This is how we will live with great



integrity, loving our work and working our love – not as a workaholic but as an enthused transformational change agent.

Sustained spiritual growth encompasses certain characteristics:

1. **This work is best/only done with trusted others – life is a “we thing.”** We may *think* we know what is going on inside us, but often we do not. When we struggle with problematic situations, when we are stressed out, we need trusted others. We each need an interpersonal “strategic alliance.” We need confidants with whom we can have open, trustful and in-depth discussions. We need people who will tell us the truth as they see it, based on their own personal experiences and what they see in us, not based on prescribed practices or dogma. We need others, trusted others, who can be objective “sounding boards,” where we can “get things out” without the fear of being judged. We need relationships where we can fearlessly and thoroughly examine our own hypocrisies, where we can embrace our hypocrisies.

We need an environment where the focus is on what is *between* us, not on any one person. A setting where the discussion is based on shared experiences. Where it is not about “fixing” someone else or having someone “fix” us. Where it is not about debating and proving someone is wrong so the other can be right. We need a place where we are all about teaching, learning, sharing, healing and loving together, as a community. We need a place where we can learn to *use practical spiritual principles*. This type of practical growth occurs *in between* – in between people and within ourselves.^{xviii}

2. **This work is all-encompassing.**

If we are about living a life of integrity and wholeness we can expect to gain insights in one area of our life and apply them in other areas.

*When the student is ready the teacher will appear.
When the teacher is ready the student will appear.
And when the student is really ready he will realize
The teacher is with him always and everywhere.*

There are limitless opportunities in our life where we can have learning/teaching opportunities and draw closer to the truth within and between us:

- Working with a trusted manager, personal coaches, clergy, psychiatrists and psychologists.
- Personal inventories like MMPI (psychiatric assessments), or www.strengthsfinder.com (focusing on strengths), 4th Step work in 12-step recovery (assessing personal defects and assets), personality assessments – this work is about first accepting and then embracing (growing through) personal hypocrisy or integrity gaps.
- Working in 12-step recovery programs, support groups and trust-filled communities.
- In-depth discussions with dear friends, life companions, family members, colleagues and co-workers.
- Anyone, anywhere, anytime – constantly and openly solicit feedback from others, as appropriate – deeply listen to the Universe.

A while back I was with my oldest son at my barber. My barber and I were having a deep discussion about our personal spiritual experiences. Afterward, my son asked me, “Is there anyone you do *not* have these types of discussions with?” To which I said, “I certainly hope not.”

3. **This work calls for – and so it develops – openness and fearlessness.** This work requires great love – confidence that growth will occur and things will improve over time. It requires us to face our fears – the fear of going within, fear of failure and, most deeply, our fear of success.

All this stuff – trust, love, openness, fearlessness – seem to go together. These things develop and deepen together. Relationships with self, others, and spirit/God/Universe seem to deepen in parallel.



Below are two paragraphs from the book *A Return to Love* by Marianne Williamson. You may have previously heard the first paragraph; it is quoted in a couple of movies (it is incorrectly attributed to Nelson Mandela):

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

4. **This work leads to an amazingly fulfilling life.** Fasten your seat belt! Is there more important work?

A miracle worker is an artist of the soul. There's no higher art than living a good life. An artist informs the world of what's available behind the masks we all wear. That's what we're all here to do. The reason so many of us are obsessed with becoming stars is because we're not yet starring in our own lives. The cosmic spotlight isn't pointed at you; it radiates from within you. I used to feel like I was waiting for someone to discover me, to 'produce' me, like Lana Turner at the drugstore. Ultimately I realized that the person I was waiting for was myself. If we wait for the world's permission to shine, we will never receive it. The ego doesn't give that permission. Only God does, and He has already done so. He has sent you here as His personal representative and is asking you to channel His love into the world. Are you waiting for a more important job? There isn't one.

5. **The work is ongoing, ever-deepening and ever-expanding.** At the start of each work day, decide ahead of time what kind of day you want to create. Decide what thought system you will consciously use as you make decisions throughout the day.^{xix}

Who will be helping you make decisions, ego or spirit? How will you be able to distinguish which thought system you are using at any point in time for any specific decision? Are there trusted others you can check in with as needed, for a "sanity check?" Are there people to help you see more clearly what thought system you are relying on? With whom can you confide to accurately assess your motives?

Ego is based on separation and fear, leading to projection and a need to "make things happen." Spirit is based on connectedness, peace and love, leading to extension of ideas and *creating*.

When things seem distressing, take a break, take a breath.^{xx} Do we want to be right or at peace? Perhaps there is another perspective. Do we want to judge or accept?

Summon the courage to live a life beyond your wildest dreams!

*Seek the path of the soul and let your spirit show you the way.
Embrace the truth as you would a beloved friend, and revel in the freedom that she brings.
View the world through loving eyes that see goodness and beauty all around.
Practice the art of seeing with your eyes closed and your mind open.
Summon the courage to paint your own destiny.*

- Sally Deems-Mogyordy



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- ⁱ *Narcotics Anonymous* basic text, page 87.
- ⁱⁱ See *Books Along My Path* in the Appendix for a list of readings that have impacted my spiritual path and the *Biography* in the Appendix.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Send e-mail to joe@spibr.org. We intend to establish a forum for practical, experiential sharing.
- ^{iv} See *Key Terms* in the Appendix for definitions of ego and spirit.
- ^v Clearly, trade secrets are necessary and need to be protected in business.
- ^{vi} See *Thoughts on Two Thought Systems* in the Appendix for a more detailed discussion of these ideas.
- ^{vii} The “Golden Rule” is a common principle in many religions, the ethic of reciprocity – love another as Self. “Karma” is similar – what we do in life, what we do to others, comes back to us.
- ^{viii} See *Thoughts on Time* in the Appendix.
- ^{ix} Ref: www.strengthsfinder.com.
- ^x Ref: “Pray in ... all occasions” (Eph. 6:18) and “... pray about everything” (Phil. 4:5).
- ^{xi} *Evidence of Correlations Between Distant Intentionality and Brain Function in Recipients: A Functional Magnet Resonance Imaging Analysis* in *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, Vol. 11, Nov. 6, 2005, pp. 965-971 (this article can be found at http://www.spibr.org/2005_JofACM_Distant_Intentionality_and_Brain_Function_by_Achterberg_et_al.pdf).
- ^{xii} Previously, I committed to use “The Infinite” rather than “God.” In this section, for brevity and succinctness, I revert back to “old ways” and use this 3-letter word, rather than a 2-word phrase, all pointing to the same idea. I hope the use of “God” does not offend you.
- ^{xiii} 1 John 4:8 in the *Bible*. See also the definition of “love” in *Key Terms* in the Appendix.
- ^{xiv} In the Bible it says the most important commandment is to love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Mark 12:30-31.
- ^{xv} The 2nd Law of Thermodynamics – over time, randomness increases and energy decreases. Things fall apart into lower levels of order. Eventually all things fall into disarray. This is a “universal law,” especially in closed systems. Well, the universe is not closed, and love is the counter to the universal force, entropy. Otherwise, why do we humans even exist?
- ^{xvi} *Narcotics Anonymous* basic text, pg 85.
- ^{xvii} See Figures 4.6 and 4.7 for review.
- ^{xviii} See the quote about “home” toward the end of the section titled *Transforming an Alliance into a Productive Community* in Chapter 8.
- ^{xix} See *Two Thought Systems* in Chapter 6 and *Thoughts on Two Thought Systems* in the Appendix.
- ^{xx} See *Thoughts on Meditation* in the Appendix. Regularly practice meditation or simply being quiet.