

Everyday spirituality

by Jeff Davidson

Spirituality does not have to be restricted to the confines of organized religion. Freed from the rules, restrictions, and impediments that organized religion may impose upon you, how and where might you be more spiritual in your life?

If you smile at someone, they tend to smile back. If you go out of your way to help someone, that person may in turn help another and so on.

You can practice being more spiritual in little ways that add up quickly to your being a more spiritual person. For example, there are relatively minor things you can do to start the process, although nothing is minor when it comes to acting spiritually. After all, each little action sets in motion the potential for greater good. So, as you proceed through this list, don't discount the value of engaging in any of these. They all have the potential to add up to more.

Spirituality behind the wheel. Sociologists tell us that when people get in their cars, they think they're in some type of invisible vehicle. No one sees them as they motor down the road. If you curse or scream, who's to know? Obviously, you're not invisible and the way you conduct yourself as a motorist potentially impacts other motorists as well as pedestrians.

The next time someone cuts you off in traffic, fails to use their turn signal properly or otherwise engages in improper (but not dangerous) driving, practice maintaining your composure. Don't curse, don't scream, don't honk your horn, and don't engage in one-upmanship. If the other person is in view, look at them blankly, but not with disgust or anger or a mocking smile.

Often, the other person knows what he or she did wrong. If he or she doesn't, venting your spleen is not likely to change their behavior.



Each time you can remain composed, you increase the probability that you will be more composed in other aspects of your life. Perhaps you'll even be kinder to people in face-to-face encounters when they commit a transgression.

If you travel frequently, say as part of your job, and often traverse high traffic arteries, chances are you'll have an opportunity at least several times a week to practice engaging in small displays of spirituality. As a goal, why not establish for yourself one composed response per week?

Personally aid someone less fortunate than you. It's one thing to write a check to charity, it's another to encounter someone who is in need and aid that person on the spot. As a small gesture of spirituality, what can you do for someone you see right on the street?

When you have shoes that you no longer wear, but which are not necessarily in pieces, keep them in your trunk as you motor around town.

Then, if you see a homeless person with less than sufficient footwear, and it looks like you might be roughly the same size, pull over. Without equivocation, get the shoes from your trunk, walk up to the person and tell them that you want them to accept the shoes. If he or she accepts, fine, bid them good day and be on your way. If he or she chooses not to take them, that's okay, too.

Your goal in this area could be to give away each pair of shoes or other worthwhile item of clothing that you

no longer want, perhaps on a monthly basis.

Serve as part of a group. If this is not your cup of tea, volunteer once a month to serve a meal at a local shelter for the homeless. If you're a busy career type, perhaps serving dinner will work best for you. Whatever your preconceived notions about this may be, once you actually serve dinner to real live people, you'll see that reality is different than you thought.

Perhaps you think that people would be reluctant to speak up for what they wanted. Or worse, they'd be groveling, and you would have to do your best to remain humble. Perhaps you feel like you'll seem to be some kind of "goody-two-shoes," dispensing dinners with an overly pleasant, "And how are you this evening? Here's a nice dinner for you."

Actually, none of the above usually happens. Person to person, you simply serve another, as if you were in partnership. More peas? Less carrots? It's much more matter-of-fact than you might imagine. They're appreciative but not groveling. Some of the people who show up at a shelter are well-dressed. Perhaps they're temporarily unemployed. Perhaps they had a financial emergency they were not prepared to handle.

The more often you serve others in this way, the easier it becomes to do it again. You start to get the notion that there are a lot more similarities between human beings than differences. The old axiom, "There but for the grace of God, go I," is much more true than we all often acknowledge.

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