

## Characteristics of healthy spirituality

Spiritual is about feeling there is something transcendent even magical. For most people it is rather vague but it is enough to make them feel they are their lives are worth something in a sense akin to religion. Religion is more concrete. There can be spiritual without religion but there cannot be religion without spiritual. Spiritual is really a cloak for emotional experiences of a certain type spiritual is not the right word either but we will say no more.

Spiritual rights are not the same as religious rights. Spiritual rights trump religious rights. That is obvious for spiritual is more basic. If you need water then you have a right to water. You do not have the right to demand that the water comes from anywhere specific when the well in your garden is perfectly good.

Healthy spirituality has to recognise that it is more of a right than religion as such is.

Here are some of the characteristics of Healthy Spirituality.

Healthy Spirituality is:

1. Focusing on a personal relationship with the higher power one is a part of, not religion. You create the higher power to help yourself. A real higher power does not tell you what to do but invites compromise and supports you if you make mistakes. That is what a relationship is.
2. Looking to the Law of Attraction, which is your own power, to meet the needs for security and significance. The Law is based on the idea that if you open yourself up to goodness you will receive goodness. For example, you will feel good about being friendly to others. The more people will be drawn to you and the better you will feel.
3. Growing in confidence as evidenced by walking into pain when it needs to be faced.
4. Knowing that to help yourself is to bless others.
5. Serving others for the better self-esteem of all.
6. Being vulnerable and admitting your vulnerability. To admit it is a strength not a weakness. It is a proof and a sign of trust and courage and it heals you.
7. A trusting atmosphere.
8. Celebrating uniqueness by recognizing people's spiritual gifts.
9. Relationships being the heart of everything.
10. People being taught to think.
11. Balanced thinking rather than extremes in black and white.
12. Non-defensive - you don't feel the desire to silence people who criticise your spirituality or to bully them.
13. Non-judgmental - not looking for something to criticise but something to praise.
14. Reality-based - eg, it does not have people imagine that they are helping others by being locked away in a convent and praying for them.
15. Leaves us able to embrace our emotions.
16. Enables us to embrace our humanity as evidenced in its ability to allow for mistakes.
17. Is lively and gives us a laugh.

COMMENT: All of this is sort of fine. And it is good that the Higher Power is substituted for God. It is about feeling a relationship and experiencing one with a better part of yourself. Not one thing in the list demands that you believe in a supernatural spirit or soul.

The list is taking advantage of the fact that spirituality is a vague term. Adler said that anything too private - he gave the example of thinking for yourself when you go too far with it - can lead you far astray unless you consider the society you are a part of and want to listen to it and support it and be part of it. He could have said the same thing about spirituality. Today it has become dangerously individualistic. Adler said that the best way to deal with feelings of inferiority is to develop a sense of community and say and do things to help and maintain and improve the community. He said it is okay to want to be better than others but only if you do it in such a way that others benefit. Keep it in line with the good of others. This is a humanistic approach - doing it all for God will only make others feel used and exploited and undervalued. It will only lead to you resorting to religion in order to experience a superiority complex before God though you may be adept at hiding it from others. Catholic priests are often largely remote characters and have no wives or children are make good examples of that.

Envy is pain at the fortune of another and reflects that you feel dissatisfied with what you have. It makes sense to assume that if God is giving the blessings that envy should feel even worse.

Religion says we are created by God and we even use our free will because of him and not in spite of him for he makes our freedom. They deny that we make ourselves but say that we have some say in what we will do and will be. In fact we have no say. God decides if I will have the choice to commit adultery and he gives it to me. A bird in a cage has more freedom than that! Spirituality is no use if belief in God is no use. Love the sinner hate the sin implies - "How dare that disgusting and vile sin happen!" This will cause an emotional response of anger and anger is unhealthy and destructive. And since love the sinner and hate the sin is nonsense and based on the delusion that the problem is the person's actions and not the person being evil as a person at least partly it follows that if God gave us free will to love others then he was wasting his time. It is not right to give us free will when we will abuse it more than use it. And any good we do is based on a delusion and a lie so it is not as good as it looks. If we are not well when we are so deluded then our goodness is not really goodness from the heart.

There is no spirit. Spiritual health is just a form of emotional health. Nothing spiritual happens but that is not what is important. What is important is that the person is in touch with their own feelings and able to heal them and direct them in positive ways.