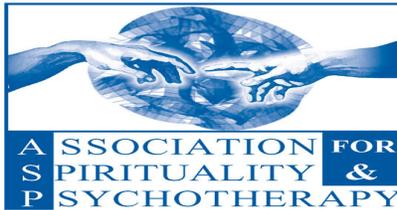


PsychoSpiritual Dialogue

"The integrated pathway of spirituality and healing in psychotherapy"



250 West 57th St Suite 501

New York N Y 10019

Questions: 917-779-0626 or 609-662-4911

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SUMMER 2013

ASPSpiritAndPsych@gmail.com

WWW.ASPHEALING.ORG

NEW: Please note that our new website, now called ASPHealing.org, is nearing completion; we hope that you find it more welcoming and attractive and mention it to your friends and associates to promote the Association. Your feedback is encouraged. Thanks!

Also, Look out for our e-Newsletter, where 2013 members may freely advertise their educational seminars

Our 2013 ASP Membership Drive is still on. Remember, we depend on Membership dues to keep this important work going. For a registration form and to pay visit our website and click on the Membership link.

Please note that our Abbreviated Professional Directory appears in every Issue and can be viewed at the Newsletter Archive Link

The Subject of this Issue of the Newsletter is
"It's Your Fault!" Can Spirituality/God Help Relationships?
See Pages 4 through 15 for several articles on this lively topic.

The subject for articles for the next issue is:
"What is Loneliness? How Can Spirituality/God Help Heal Loneliness?"

**See page 3 to learn about ASP's 2013/14 One-Year Program on
*Developing A Spiritually Informed Approach to Psychotherapy and Counseling***
*Please note that we are currently considering Offering ONLINE Courses or Modules
Please let us know of your interest in such presentations
By emailing ASPSpiritAndPsych@gmail.com or calling 609-662-4911*

To be notified about ASP Network Meetings, Events and to receive our e-Newsletter send us your email and snailmail address to ASPSpiritAndPsych@gmail.com or visit our website. Starting in 2012, ASP publishes PsychoSpiritual Dialogue on its web site only, at the Newsletter Archive link and mails paper copies to members only. In Addition, ASP will send an e-Newsletter each month, with links to individual articles from our authors.

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ASP President's Letter

Mary Marino, Ph.D.

The integration of spirituality and psychotherapy continues to be the purpose of ASP as we endeavor to reach more clinical practitioners in the healing arts. Our new website is in progress with a new name: ASPhealing.org. Our mission is to be an educational organization that allows the enrichment and learning of our professional members with opportunities to share expertise and knowledge.

All members are invited to share information about their educational classes, workshops, books and articles which will be posted on the website and website calendar. We are continuing to have an E-Newsletter which shares incoming events, articles of interest and other networking and meeting opportunities among members. If you discover an interesting book, article or video related to spirituality and psychotherapy, please share with us and other members by sending an email or link to me and we will post it (and/or link) on our website.

Since January of 2013, professional ASP members have been meeting once a month in NYC to discuss topics of interest related to spirituality and psychotherapy. June's 2013 meeting has the specific focus of "How do you apply spirituality in your clinical practice?"

These discussion groups are open to all members and provide a rich experience for learning and connection. We anticipate that future meetings will include clinical case presentations and guest presenters. We encourage you to come and bring your colleagues as guests to participate in collegial exchange. These discussions are designed and led by an ASP member. Each meeting is begun with a short guided meditation and the evening meeting lasts 90 minutes.

In July, ASP will co-sponsor a presentation by Lynne McTaggart to occur at the Meta center; please look for specific event details in upcoming announcements. In the fall we will be having Paul Levy present. We are looking to present a larger conference at the end of the year.

ASP is pleased to announce that Lisa Fawcett, LCSW, LP, a Jungian Analyst, has recently joined the ASP Board. Ms. Fawcett serves on other professional boards including the C.G. Jung Institute of NY and the Telos Organization. She has a clinical private practice in NYC and leads classes on sacred healing traditions. We hope to encourage more networking among clinical practitioners of different disciplines who have interest in this expanding field.

We continue to explore the questions of "What is spirituality?" and "How is spirituality applied or integrated into clinical practice?" and "How do traditional models of psychotherapy differ from those approaches that include some aspect of spiritual practice or spiritual concepts?" The answers to these questions are as varied as the individuals that engage in spiritual/clinical practice. We invite you to come share your ideas and learning with all of us.

Live, love and learn

The Association for Spirituality and Psychotherapy (ASP)

A Non-Profit (501c3) Corporation at 250 West 57th St., Suite 501, NYC 10019

www.ASPSpiritandPsych.org email: aspspiritandpsych@gmail.com

ANNOUNCES The 2013/14 Course:

Developing a Spiritually Informed Approach to Psychotherapy and Counseling

THE MONDAY NIGHT Year Long CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION PROGRAM

Offers an in-depth exposure to psycho-spiritual theory and method. In addition, the process/project class provides a coherent structure intended to help each student develop a personal perspective regarding spiritually informed therapy.

Course Faculty	<i>ASP therapists experienced in a variety of spiritually-informed orientations</i>
Monday Nights Sept. to June 7:30 to 9:30 PM	<i>Throughout the year 6 different Modules meet Monday nights for 4 weeks each for 2 hours a night: A process/project class meets after the conclusion of each module. All Classes take place in NYC at 250 West 57th St., suite 501</i>
Tuition	<i>\$1,800 -71 contact hours - 10% OFF FOR ASP MEMBERS</i>
NASWNY CEU's	<i>If Approved receive NASWNY CEU credits and a certificate of completion.</i>

Developing a Spiritually Informed Approach to Psychotherapy and Counseling offers the participant a unique program for personal and professional growth in a community of experienced teachers and like-minded fellow students.

Teaching Philosophy:

The Association's teaching philosophy is based on the belief that spirituality is necessary for psychological healing. ASP is dedicated to deepening our students' inner spiritual awareness to enable healing to take place for both themselves and the patients they work with. We believe that a spiritually informed therapy, while working with common presenting problems, can be maximally beneficial for the individuals who seek our help. ASP is committed to helping students work in a more effective, fulfilling way with individuals, couples, families and groups.

Who should take this Course?

We invite analysts, psychotherapists, counselors, and other psycho dynamically oriented healing arts practitioners and ministers as well as individuals who have a spiritual and psychodynamic orientation to register for these programs.

General Learning Objectives:

- Provide a spiritual perspective on working with psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, addiction, somatic problems and relationships, as well as casting "spiritual light" upon them.
- Develop "spiritually-informed therapists" by providing sound theoretical bases and learning experiences that will broaden perspective and increase skills in diagnosis, treatment, therapeutic presence and listening.
- Provide opportunity for psycho-spiritual growth as it relates to personal and professional development
- Offer a professional community.

Teaching methods will include

- Relevant meditations
- Relevant Supportive Psycho-spiritual Readings
- Didactic presentation of theory, method and technique
- Case discussions
- Experiential exercises including practice therapy sessions
- Process papers including the development of personal perspectives on spiritually informed therapy.
- Project and Class Presentation.

To View the Previous Year's Curriculum, Visit

<http://psychospiritualtherapy.org/2011-2012%20NewOneYearProgram.pdf>

Or Call Diana Kerievsky at 917-834-9228 or

Dr. Kelly Murphy Mason, Curriculum Co-Chairs at 347-497-3741

The following section is dedicated to this issue's dialogue on "It's Your Fault!" Can Spirituality/God Help Relationships?" As usual, we invite all readers to offer their responses, which may appear in the next issue of the newsletter.

Romantic Relationships as a Spiritual Experience and a Source of Spiritual Growth **By Joseph Cavanagh**

How does one define spirituality and spiritual experience? Yoga? Meditation? A religious service? A uniquely personal experience that evokes a connection with a higher power? A sense of "oneness" with the universe? A feeling of inner peace?

Whether we realize it or not, our society has been giving us a healthy dose of pre-conceived notions about spirituality and spiritual experiences. In a modern western society, our focus individuality tells us that the world is our oyster and we are here to do whatever we wish to do. As applied to spirituality and spiritual experiences, it often means anything goes. As the saying goes, "Whatever floats your boat." The freedom and opportunity this gives us as beings with our own agency is powerful. We can create *our own* spirituality, it doesn't need to conform to what works for someone else. While this expansiveness is a tremendous opportunity to explore oneself, there is a point where our pre-conceived notions, our individuality and the extreme personalization of our society can also be a limiting factor to spiritual growth. Our definition focuses so much on personal exploration and our own thoughts that interpersonal exploration is often neglected if not outrightly discarded, especially among young people. We're so focused on the depth of our own experiences and thoughts that we miss the powerful idea that interpersonal romantic relationships can not only offer the same quality of spiritual experience but also can often be a space where two mature individuals are able grow spiritually, together, more than they would have been able to if they remained apart.

We don't often realize this because individuals are always looking for their counterpart to fix or help them with a particular problem or struggle they have in their life. As an adult, one is free from controlling parental influence. However, one is then also free from the love and affection, or lack thereof, that one experienced in childhood. Often then, in a search for a romantic partner, one looks

to repair, rebuild, or recreate the love and affection they had or lacked in childhood. This tendency to gravitate towards homeostasis, to balance oneself, is natural, it can help us to survive and even thrive. However, this approach leaves us skeptical of romantic relationships as a source of spiritual growth and leaves us caught in a constant state of comparison and analysis of how our romantic relationship and partner measure up to our parental affection.

Therefore, the questions we ask ourselves about romantic relationships leave no room for spirituality. We ask ourselves: *"Is this person making me happy? How much money does this person make annually? What is their career direction? Is this person going to make enough money to support my children? Is she/he hotter than my last guy/girl; is this person an "upgrade" or am I going backwards? Does this person deserve my time? How will he/she age? What occupation were this persons parents?"*

Our current model of *"Does this person give me what I am looking for? Or Does this person balance out my flaws?"* has led us down a road where the number of all legal unions between partners that ends in divorce is approaching 50%. This is a signal that how we are framing our romantic relationships, what we expect from them, and the significant other in our lives is deeply flawed.

What would happen then, if we changed our focus, and changed the questions we ask ourselves by shifting our value system? What would happen if we fitted a spiritual template onto our interpersonal relationships?

A spiritual mindset reinforces an idea of, "what can I learn from this experience/event/happening?" In evaluating potential romantic partners and our romantic relationships, what would happen if our level of analysis became, *"What can I teach this person? / What do I want to impart on this person from my journey so far? / Does this person look to teach me anything? / What can I learn from this person and my experience in a relationship with them and how can this help us to grow spiritually, intellectually and emotionally?"*

relationship with another human being may even be the end goal of experience here on earth.

Can Spirituality And God Help Relationships And Our Sex Life? By Penny Cohen, LCSW

In order to discuss the topic of spirituality and God and whether they can help relationships, I need to give my interpretation of both. To me spirituality is not about religion, alchemy, astrology, tarot or numerology. It's not even about experiencing ESP, mental telepathy, or having visions - although these innate talents often emerge. More importantly, it's about becoming a good soul, living with an open heart, knowing one's Self and living with meaning, passion, purpose and compassion.

Furthermore, God, to me is not the God of the bible who watches over us to reward and punish. It's a force of energy; our life force that incorporates the oneness and consciousness of us all. And, as Einstein said, "My conception of God is an emotional conviction of a superior intelligence manifest in the material world." I think of God as the love and wisdom of us all.

That being said, how can spirituality and God help in relationships?

It allows us to avail ourselves of states of love and wisdom that prompt us to be with each other and treat each other from a place of unconditional love, passion and compassion and in our primary relationship it can help us experience deep erotic intimacy.

These divine forces are inside us and around us. When we open our hearts to receive more love and wisdom, these energies radiate out to others. When they are received and shared with another there's a feeling of connection, oneness and intimacy. In the act of lovemaking it's reaching states beyond the physical of two souls merging in deep intimacy, ecstasy and bliss. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in pure consciousness before being clothed in "animal skin." You feel like you're in the womb of Divine love together. It's heavenly. When your two erotic essences merge in oneness you realize the sacred is the sexiest thing imaginable.

Constantly placing oneself in state of mind where one is reminded that in a romantic relationship, there is another human being with thoughts, feelings and emotions separate from your own that are equally valid, is quite a struggle in today's materialistic individualist society. However, looking at romantic relationships as an opportunity for spiritual growth for oneself and one's partner, opens the doors to an entirely new experience. Respect for self and one's partner becomes activated automatically when one instead focuses on what our partners can teach us about life and what we can offer to our partner's lived experience. This focus tells us no matter who we are and regardless of who our partner is; we all have the ability and the duty to continue to help and to learn and move the relationships in a vibrant, positive, growth promoting direction by acting and behaving differently, leaving no room for the constant anxiety of wondering whether or not a certain person is "good enough."

Spirituality in relationships, while it does not hold the key to longevity, also acts as a quality filter. Rather than compulsively chasing partners to replace parental love, if one instead asks whether or not a romantic relationship fosters spiritual growth, one puts oneself on the fast track for exponential personal growth, as one will attract and only accept as long term partners, trusting, loving individuals that respect themselves and others.

If we as a society can expand our perception of spirituality and thereby change our definition of a spiritual experience to include one's search for a romantic partner, this shift in focus that revolves around learning and helping one's partners throughout life, rather than, "*What does this person give me?*" creates a genuine romantic relationship, a life-affirming experience of mutual validation, support, and love between human beings; an experience where both partners have the opportunity to grow by spiritual leaps and bounds.

A life devoid of interpersonal connection, romantic or otherwise, is a stunted life; so we are in this world to impact others, have relationships with others, relate to others and learn from them. As Jackie Robinson once said, "A life is not important except the impact it has on other lives." From a spiritual standpoint then, sharing the love that comes with experiencing a genuine romantic

Reaching these states takes time, patience and practice. It's learning how to live with spiritual qualities.

Spiritual qualities include the following:

- inner peace and belief in a higher power
- self sufficiency and trust in a Higher Self
- gratefulness
- faith
- compassion and tolerance
- justice and restraint
- unconditional love, loving-kindness and grace
- understanding of purpose and vision
- wisdom and prophecy
- oneness and will

How does this pertain to relationships?

We come together to be coaches and lovers for each other to learn divine lessons and live with these divine qualities. I believe we all have an inner craving to live with love, meaning and purpose. We want to feel significant, important and make a difference. And it begins with our primary relationships.

When coupling, we are attracted to each other because of images we have in our minds about what a relationship looks like and in our hearts of what it feels like. The main attraction is the underlying unfinished business we have with one parent or sometimes a collaboration of both our parents. We are here to heal these unfinished issues where love was lacking. And although our partner may not look like our parent, or act like one, there is an underlying energy vibration that is similar and needs to be healed. People come together to help each other accomplish that.

We are mirror reflections of each other's inner meanderings, voices, visions, thoughts and feelings. And, everyone in our lives and how we treat others and they treat us is a reflection of our relationship to the divine and our higher Self.

An axiom I teach and preach is that whatever we judge in another is something that is unresolved within ourselves and separates us from the Divine.

For example I have a lot of women coming to me complaining that their mates are emotionally unavailable. The women believe they themselves are – but they really aren't truly emotionally

available either. Women may act out their emotions more than their partners by crying, yelling, whining, and nagging, but they are still not dealing with or feeling their own core feelings in order to process them internally and free them. Unconsciously they want their partners to help do that for them – so they can feel better. And when they don't, look out – of course their partners are seen as being emotionally unavailable.

Ironically when I ran my first workshop on "Marital Strife To Intimacy For Men Only," I told them it was the first time I was doing this for men only and I was going to "wing it." I added, "Us women know what you men want. I'm here to teach you what women want."

One man asked rather cunningly, "What do they want?"

I said quite frankly, "They want you to help them identify and feel their feelings with them, understand where they are coming from and validate and empathize with them. And they want you to support them in living with meaning and purpose. They want you to be their coach and help them feel better."

He responded rather glibly, "I thought that's what they have girlfriends for!!!"

Need I say more?

In the 1970s Morton Hunt, a former prominent researcher on marriage, said, "A healthy relationship is mutual psychotherapy." At that time therapy involved analyzing each other. That could be disastrous to a relationship. It's like saying, "I know what's wrong with you." I'd rather think of it as being love coaches for each other. What does a love coach do? A love coach listens, connects, validates, empathizes, and offers inspirational feedback, and support. And, hopefully, the lovemaking is left to the individuals and their partners, unless you are mates.

As mates, in order to be effective love coaches for each other we need to listen with an open heart, a deeply feeling soul and a compassionate presence. Therefore, we need to work on our own issues of defensiveness, confrontation, impatience, intolerance, lack of forgiveness, lack of compassion, being controlling, and being needy. And, most importantly, we need to overcome our fear of intimacy. This we can do on our own by

looking into ourselves, our attitudes and our unruly behaviors. We can open ourselves to our own divine love. Yes, love is Self imposed.

To go deep into ourselves we need to let go of a great deal of baggage. As a great sage once said, "Greatness is not measured by what we accomplish but by what we've learned to overcome."

What we need to overcome are our old ways of dealing with people that are based on beliefs and feelings we had in childhood and decisions we made about how we would live our lives. These are either in agreement with, or the opposite of, the way we were treated by our caretakers, parents, siblings, teachers, friends and the images of how we witnessed our parents relating and communicating. We have to break from these patterns and decisions, which means we have to break from the "old umbilical cord" – the ancestral influences and familial attractions, attachments, thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and actions that run in our heads and rule our lives. The goals are to become self-led, self-motivated, self-loved, and self-kind, and kindly, collaborative and cooperative with others.

To accomplish these traits it helps to open to a "new umbilical cord:" our own connection with our Higher Self and divine love and wisdom. That's where the spiritual and God come into play. By opening to our own umbilical cord we become autonomous, spontaneous and free. Coming from divine love and wisdom there are no dysfunctional patterns, no demeaning voices, no self-putdowns and certainly no self-doubts, fears, anxieties. There is only love, wisdom and compassion. And when we come from that love the right words, attitudes and actions shine through automatically. Communication techniques are unnecessary because the words come out naturally effectively without an attitude – even when setting boundaries or saying no.

That being said, when we are not in that open loving state we can still learn techniques to identify and spontaneously release the emotional charges, express our innate wisdom and love, and treat each other lovingly and help another do the same.

The challenge of letting go of the old umbilical cord and opening to the new one takes a lot of patience and practice. Enlightenment is not an end result. It's a daily practice of letting go and opening to the

flow. It means processing our thoughts, feelings, speech and actions and always opening to love daily and even throughout the day. In that state of love we feel calm, confident, and connected to a source that reflects in our connection to others.

When we let go of our own emotional charges and open to love we have the fortitude to truly be with another with heart, soul, and compassion. When we listen, reflect, validate and empathize (by feeling our partner's feelings with them) that's when there's a feeling of oneness and connection. Your mate truly feels like he or she has been heard, understood, and believes, "You 'get' me." When people feel heard, validated and at one with another in empathy they melt into their own truth and experience that deeper love.

To take this a step further, in romantic relationships, and in the act of lovemaking when two people are in that state of divine love together there is ecstasy and bliss. Sex in this way is more commonly known as sacred sexuality.

Sacred Sexuality and Making the Sacred Sexy

The term sacred sexuality is used often by sex and couples psychotherapists and in particular tantra yoga teachers for feeling the eroticism of sexuality. The connotation is sex is sensual and sexy and should be sacred. I'd like to see it as making the sacred sexy. As a matter of fact sacred sexiness is the foundation of healthy erotic sex. Sacred sexiness is bringing the divine into the act of having sex – or a term I prefer to use is lovemaking, or even better, love receiving.

When two people bring the divine into their lovemaking, and receive each other's love, lovemaking is sublime.

So can spirituality and God help relationships and sex?

Only if we can accept the sacred as sexy. After all, creation began with the blast of energies that resulted in the ultimate orgasm of the big bang, which culminated in creation and many births. When we allow ourselves to merge with those original energies and experience the sexiness of the sacred, sex is erotic. We come from our erotic essence.

How do we experience our erotic essence?

We experience our erotic essence when we allow waves of higher vibrations to pass through us. These include higher vibrations of love, sensuality, creativity, ecstasy and total emergence in oneness.

Many people are closed off from this intimacy with these sublime energies because the vibrations are extremely high, strong and raw. We're not accustomed to these sensations piercing through us. And often when we do allow them in it's almost impossible to sustain them. And, in actuality we can't sustain them because then they will become stagnant. Instead we can channel them in a cycle of receiving and sharing.

Working with a client during a relaxation visualization exercise I had her visualize a brilliant light above her head and experience a warmth of love. I suggested bringing it into her head, and then expanding it into her heart. After a minute or so she said she was beginning to feel pins and needles on her skin. And then she shuddered and opened her eyes, "Wow, that was scary," she said, shaking her head in disbelief. "The energy was too strong for me. I couldn't handle it. It made me nervous."

Another client wanted to open to his creative self. I did the same exercise and suggested bringing in the light and warmth of love. When he relaxed into it he said, "It feels so peaceful." When he got even deeper and allowed even more in he said, "It's getting stronger. It's so powerful." He hesitated, "It feels like my own power." He sat a little longer and then said in awe, "I'm resisting it. I can't believe I'm afraid of my own power."

Another client on the verge of divorce came in with her husband. Over a six-month period they learned how to communicate better, deal with the children better, and get along better. Yet, one day I received a call from the woman. She said, "We really are doing so much better with communicating and getting along, but we're like brother and sister. The passion is gone."

I had her come in and we did a visualization exercise to open to the divine, let her experience the passion of divine light and love and send it to him and to allow her self to experience receiving his love as well.

She learned how to open to and receive the passion of the divine on her own and radiate it out. At home, as she later reported, he actually

apparently melted in the energy and learned to respond in kind.

They both came in together a month later and she had a big smirk on her face. "The exercise worked. We're passionately pregnant."

We can learn how to open to these energies when we meditate. However, it's more challenging to maintain these higher Divine energies in daily life by the way we relate to each other and listen and communicate our needs, desires, and nurturing activities. When we relate through love even in the most challenging situations, we feel connected and our relationship and lovemaking get better and better. Lovemaking turns into love receiving and bliss.

I'd like to leave you with one of my recent Facebook Posts: To be "In love," it takes excitement, mystery, and surprise. When we are each connected to our own truth there is magic because we are engaged with the mystery of life. So just remember to stay "in the mystery, in love, and remain exciting."

Spirituality- Can it Help Relationships? By Michael S. Isaacs, LCSW, NCPsyA, JD

Absolutely! After all, spiritual discernment leads to more love, compassion, and often wisdom. And, is not true that relationships thrive with more love, compassion, and wise judgment towards to each other?

Let me quote related gems from various spiritual souls. I believe you will agree with me that if incorporated to a degree into the lives of partners what a positive effect it would have! I am sure many of you also have your own favorite quotes on the subject of how spiritual principles and truths can help relationships.

Here is the well known Sioux Indian prayer: "Great spirit, help me to never judge another until I have walked two weeks in his moccasins."

Sarada, the "Holy Mother", the wife of the Indian Saint Ramakrishna, said: "I tell you one thing-if you want peace, my child, do not find fault with others. See your own faults instead."

The Western mystic Joel Goldsmith: "Love is of God. The moment we turn our thought away from

the idea that a person can give or withhold love, we find love pouring itself out to us. If we are not receiving enough love in the world, stop looking to people for it and look to God.”

Psychiatrist Dr. Gerald Jampolsky, influenced by “A Course in Miracles” wrote:” I realized that all I had to do was to make peace of mind my top priority and my only goal...No one ever told me all I had to do is to live one second at a time, being kind, gentle, tender, and loving to all that is living---and to exclude no one from my love, including myself.”

From the Talmud we have this Golden Rule: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. That is the entire law. All the rest is commentary.”

The ancient Greek Seneca said “The greatest remedy for anger is delay”.

The Tibetan Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron: “Refrain from the discomfort of the immediate urge to react to criticism. Avoid being hooked into self-denigration, blame, anger, jealousy-emotions that end up poisoning us.”

The Dali Lama has said: “If you want to love and be loved be compassionate to another and to one’s self.”

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do and forgive as much as seventy times seven.”

Again, Joel Goldsmith writes: “Begin your spiritual life with the understanding that all conflicts must be settled within your consciousness.”

The Lebanese poet, artist, and, philosopher Kahlil Gibran writes: “Stand together, but not too near together, for the pillars of the temple stand apart.”

Lastly, Paramahansa Yogananda, the Indian saint: “I will speak the truth, but I will at all times avoid speaking unpleasant and harmful truths. I will offer no criticism that is not motivated by kindness”

I rest my case!

On Relationships and Spirituality By Bruce Kerievsky

Charles Barzun quoting his grandfather, Jacques Barzun advising him on marital compatibility: “If your bookishness strikes your soul mate as wimpish and her passion for nightclubs and dancing seems to you juvenile, it’s best not to become one in civil and canon law.” A good marriage, you wrote, depends on equal degrees of punctuality, orderliness, and thriftiness: “Some couples are very happy living always in debt, always being late, and finding leftover pizza under a sofa cushion.”

Sissela Bok in a letter to the NY Times: Leo Tolstoy provided the “generalization at the beginning of the novel Anna Karenina: ‘Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.’ To which the critic John Leonard reputedly responded, ‘Every family is a Russian novel.’

Metapsychiatry has an unusual orientation toward human relationships. Its principle, that “There is no interaction anywhere; there is only omni-action everywhere,” implies that what is nearly unanimously perceived as authentic communication between people is actually imaginary. Instead, it asserts that only the actions and communication emanating from the universal, divine mind are real and effective in human life. The rest is illusion, confusion, and unnecessary strife.

If we examine the belief that we can know exactly what another person is thinking, we find that we are actually fooling ourselves. More precisely, Metapsychiatry claims that “we are thinking about what others are thinking about what we are thinking,” which is its definition of interaction thinking.

We are advised to consider the biblical statement that “The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” Where nations are those entities that are constantly warring with one another, the leaves on a tree have absolutely no interaction with each other. In fact, they derive their identity, nourishment and very life from the tree itself. The lesson, then, is that even when we appear to be in a relationship with someone, we attain harmonious co-existence with that individual in the universe of mind only by recognizing and maintaining conscious awareness of our identification with and utter dependence upon the source of life and well-being.

Khalil Gibran expressed these ideas poetically and succinctly in “The Prophet” where the statements “The pillars of the temple stand apart” and “The strings of the harp vibrate separately” communicate the accurate understanding of what seem to be

interpersonal relationships.

In other words, the appearance of relationship deludes us into creating interactions that disrupt the peaceful equanimity that is our birthright. Unfortunately, unless all parties involved in an ostensible relationship are aware and appreciative of the governing principle in their lives, the descent into challenging temptations for interaction is inevitable. In those circumstances, God, i.e spiritual consciousness, is the essential resource for remaining a peaceful, beneficial presence in the face of provocation toward the interaction that characterizes relationships.

When we are enticed into an involvement with another individual, reminding ourselves to be mindful of the spiritual identity of all parties is needed to sustain an issue-oriented perspective that minimizes the likelihood of interpersonal conflict.

If such a state of consciousness seems impossible or, at the least, arduous to attain, one may hearken for inspiration to the various Zen stories about enlightened individuals who became, if only for a moment, successfully immune to the incitement of relational wrangling.

It is always helpful to remember that, if we don't want anything from someone else, then we become free from the inclination to engage in interpersonal conflict. We can thus become transcendent observers of various human follies, while maintaining a cheerful equanimity and compassion for those suffering the many torments of relationships.

Relating/Freedom/Community By Paul Lowe

Over and over the question that comes up most is about relationships.

Consider: There is no such thing as a relationship. The imagined idea of a relationship is based on time—and there isn't any. Just this moment—relating.

What we do not realize is how much we assume that we are 'couples.' In even the slightest more advanced state of consciousness couples are not natural. Our natural state is alone, or community. All one.

Jealousy probably generates as much negativity and anger as anything else on the planet. We just don't seem to be able/want to adjust—to be alone, or sharing in a community.

And just what is the state of the average relationship? Not very pretty eh? Check it out. Ask around. We are so conditioned that we do not even consider that two people can live together without disruptive compromise. And compromise eventually begets resentment.

Check it out—when you get riotously jealous, what are you actually assuming? This person is 'yours'? You have exclusive right over this person—because they made a (false) promise years ago? Have you not changed? Have they not changed? Has not everything changed? And who gave you the right? That piece of religious/government paper? Come on—wake up! It is just your insecure ego.

What actually is the process. This: You 'fall in love'/your chemicals get infatuated/either this is 'the perfect soul mate—or you give up looking. You live together, you discover lots of things about the other you didn't realize—because they/you can no longer be on best behavior all the time; you grow tired/used/bored—with the sex and each other; you have met someone who is more exciting?

When you meet someone new to whom you are attracted you usually feel excited; fresh; you have changed since the last time you were infatuated; not encumbered with domestic practicalities; they/you are on your best behavior; and lots of other things.

Imagine: Living in a smallish community. Not exclusive to other communities, but in numbers where you know everyone. 100? We are all open to each other. We do not have to identify which child 'belongs' to whom—because, first of all we cannot be sure who has 'fathered' the child, and because we consider all the children as family.

Or even more advanced—we are in no need to divert our energies – thus do not need children to distract us from the discomfort of the moment. What freedom eh? Free to love, share, look after the children. All one. Lovely.

A community does not have to live on the same land—just close, each person having a space where

they can be alone if they feel to, and have a communal area where everyone can be together for some of the time. And no hierarchy! Everyone is equally responsible—for everything.

When you want it enough, and can see it, it is happening already. But, are you ready to be that open—share, on every level—even on the thought level? Until then—carry on compromising—as best you can.

Being so complete, being alone is not being alone, or, a fun, adventurous, loving community.

You can do it. There are enough of you reading this that coming together would make it happen—easy. Just disconnect with your present way of living, and it will happen. It is just if you want it enough.

Can Spirituality Help Relationships? Marina Maurino, MA

If we are going to speak of the importance of spirituality in a relationship and how it can impact our partnering, it is important to understand what we mean by spirituality because it is a very personal explanation. For me, spirituality can be defined as choosing to live a conscious life based on my belief that there is something that is greater than we are, whether we call it God, the Divine, a Higher Power, or the Universe. I view being spiritual as living in a way that connects us to the love and peace that we attribute to that higher power. The vehicle for that connection is consciousness. It is how we practice spirituality. What does that look like? If we are choosing to live spiritually we will be conscious of our choices. We will be vulnerable by sharing what we are really feeling. We will be authentic in our dealings with others. We will be loving and compassionate with others. In other words, we will be aware and conscious. We will live truthfully and regard every challenging person and situation as an invitation to practice open heartedness, loving kindness, and integrity. I think that spirituality is the conscious ongoing effort to grow into the fullest human being we can be. Relationship provides us with a way to do that. Relationship is one of the hardest and yet richest ways to practice spirituality and consciousness. It is also true that we can live as conscious, kind, sensitive and compassionate people even if we don't consider ourselves "spiritual."

Spirituality, then, is a way of living and relating. It isn't a list of rules or a to do of activities. Spirituality is being conscious that there is a choice, a greater good to be had, beyond the ego driven needs of the personality. It has us see the other as a fellow journeyer on the path of life. Being spiritual means we are consciously striving to enhance our experience on earth. Practicing consciousness means being responsible for our choices. In every moment, we have the choice to think something negative or positive, to judge or not judge, to react or respond, to blame or take responsibility for what is ours. Relationships are full of these choices which are challenges intended to have us grow into ourselves. It is so much easier to point out what the other is doing, how s/he is hurting us and to be righteous in our anger but it will get us nowhere. Instead, we can use these challenges as a grand opportunity to grow up by looking at ourselves, seeing what makes us tick and what gets us triggered, and doing something about it beyond blaming the other. It is an opportunity to heal the hurting inner child, to "tame the outer child" (Taming Your Outer Child by Susan Anderson) who is the one defending, denying and acting out, and to put the adult in charge. As we begin to make choices out of awareness instead of via autopilot, we create a state of consciousness that then builds upon itself. The more you make conscious choices, the more you realize that you and you alone have the power to transform your life and your relationships. The more you take responsibility for what is yours, the more empowered and free both you and your partner are in the relationship. When this conscious behavior has a belief in a higher power at its core, it is a practice in spirituality.

Intimate relationships are a dance of two complex energies and histories coming together in the form of two people. For most of us, relationship is the partnering of wounded children in adult bodies "playing house" and those two children are the ones running the show until one or both wake up and become conscious. That moment of realizing that our personalities and egos are causing us a lot of pain, is a moment that can herald the awakening of our spirituality and our consciousness. It spurs us to find healthy, mature ways to live respectfully and lovingly with our partner, whether or not we are spiritual. And, if we are spiritual, we can be motivated to practice our spiritual beliefs and principles for the enhancement of the relationship.

I believe that relationship's purpose is for us to grow. It is where we get to face all the unresolved childhood issues and to exercise the power of the conscious adult to heal the powerless child and defiant teenager. If I am conscious about my choices I'll opt for my heart over my ego. I will learn to point the finger inward instead of outward, to find and integrate some of the parts of myself that I haven't seen before or haven't healed yet, and to learn about myself in ways that will ensure my growth into a fuller and richer human being; and in so doing, to improve (or end) my relationship.

We practice spirituality in our relationships when we unconditionally accept the other, share vulnerably, listen deeply and treat him or her with respect and compassion. Acknowledging and sharing our deep truths with our partners, being conscious of our words and actions, and accepting the "what is" are ways that a spiritual consciousness is at work. We must also practice looking at ourselves and letting go of unhealthy attachments, addictions, needs, controls and expectations. These shifts will create more love and peace, and enhance your relationship with yourself, your partner and the others in your life. You will feel love and peace, be less burdened and have more energy. Bringing consciousness and spirituality into our lives and relationships is a process that requires great willingness and awareness. It isn't easy but soon the dramas, crises, and upheavals overwhelm, confusion disappears, and an inner peace and centeredness take their place. The presence of spirituality in our lives enhances us, our partners and all our other relationships.

Spirituality and Relationships **By Sam Menahem, Ph.D.**

Can spirituality heal relationships? Yes, if you understand spirituality. It is not a magical panacea. Reaching the spiritual place of peace and oneness is hard work. As I see it, we are all attracted to our opposite. People with a tendency toward guilt and shame are attracted to others with a tendency toward anger. "Guilties" marry "angries." The guilty one needs to be punished for imagined guilt. The angry one needs to deny all guilt and project anger, blaming the guilty one. It is a perfect neurotic match. So where does spirituality come in? I am defining spirituality here as the one true source of all being. That means we

are still one with this source energy, even when we are embodied on Earth as seemingly separate, distinct, different creatures. "A Course in Miracles" teaches us that we never really leave the Oneness; it just seems that way. If we keep God in mind as our true being we can let go of judgment of others and ourselves. Then we are able to see the "other" as part of the same spiritual source as us. We see through the mask of self or ego and see the true core being of the "other." This enables us to let go of guilt, anger and fear. This vicious triad of emotions is replaced by the atonement (at one ment..) In a "holy instant" or moment of enlightenment we feel true peace and forgiveness. In other words, we all need to utilize our relationships to withdraw our projections (Jung), own our feelings and release them as a mere byproduct of the "separation" from the Godhead. We don't forgive because we are better than the other person. We forgive because at the deepest level, we are all One; so nothing really happened.

Now, this may sound good to "A Course in Miracles" student, but what about the rest of the world? No matter what terminology you use, it is vitally important to recognize that you have the three basic feelings: guilt, anger and fear. Awareness meditation practice enables us to see these feelings arise. As they appear we learn to watch them non-judgmentally. We pause before reacting to any seeming provocation from our significant other. Eventually we begin to see that the longer we pause, the more we are able to resist judgment and angry retaliation. Life becomes more peaceful; relationships work better. Peaceful, loving, compassionate feelings predominate and the relationship becomes more harmonious. You still get upset at times; you just own your feelings and react less. With much practice, relationships become more pleasurable and less strenuous. You may even reach enlightenment.

I find that a sense of humor about life also helps ease tension and reduce the tendency to judge, blame and angrily attack the other. I am

not talking about sarcasm. I am talking about developing a sense of the wonderful absurdity of life. Woody Allen once said, "My only regret is that I am not someone else." That is because he spent too many years in psychoanalytic therapy where he minutely examined his fragile ego: the false self. He might have done better with a spiritual therapist. Maybe Yoda of "Star Wars" could have helped him. Woody also once said, "I don't mind dying...I just don't want to be there when it happens." Once again he feared the obliteration of himself-his false self or ego. Yet, he dealt with it via humor.

So if we can lighten up, stop projecting our emotions, feel and accept our own feelings, and release them, we can begin to glimpse true Spirituality. This glimpse of the peace and love of Spirit will encourage us to learn and grow via the nourishment of our source, Spirit. We might even be happier and more peaceful. Namaste! Shalom! Peace!

Spirituality and Relationship **By Kenneth Porter, M.D.**

In my understanding, spirituality is fundamentally about deeply knowing what is our true identity. Is our identity our everyday, familiar self or personality, or is our identity knowing ourselves as something deeper, connected to or one with other people, the world, and whatever we know to be the highest power in the universe – in other words, what is often called our authentic self, our Buddha nature, our soul, our atman, our core spiritual self?

For me the major issue in my relationships has been giving up my narcissism – or in everyday language, my selfishness. In relationships we all want to have it our way, to have the other person fulfill what we feel are our needs, to be right, to use the relationship to repair whatever we feel was unsatisfactory in our growing-up years. In other words, we want the relationship to nourish and strengthen our everyday familiar self or personality. This is natural.

When both people in a relationship want this, what we have is a power struggle, not a relationship. But true relationships are like the tender growing shoot of a new plant in Spring. They need to be

constantly watered and nourished and cared for, as a third, precious experience that is separate from the personality needs of each individual.

What I've learned, gradually, painfully – I've been a slow learner – is that the more I can let the past be the past – mourn it, accept it, forgive it, and let it be – and the more I can let go of my selfishness, then the more I can see other people as who they really are, the more I can nourish the plants that are my relationships, the more I can truly love and be loved. This is a lifelong path, it seems to me.

How can we do this? The right psychotherapy, of course, can help enormously. But spiritual work specifically helps us know that we are not fundamentally our familiar personality. We are our true spiritual self. Knowing this makes it easier to be less focused on what we feel are the needs of our individual personality. And as we do this, we find that our deeper authentic self has capacities for love and wisdom that are far greater than we ever dreamed of. We can begin to relax, enjoy and nourish our relationships and feel more fulfilled by them. This is the gateway to happiness and the birthright of every human being. It is possible for all of us.

Relationships and Spirituality **Albert Speranza, Jr., MD**

Relationships are ubiquitous. We are relating to everyone, all the time, every day. This includes relating to ourselves. The first thing that comes to mind when I hear the word "relationship" is a love relationship. You may understand my perspective to apply to any relationship since the foundation of any love relationship is supported by what I am about to describe.

My discussion will be based on certain assumptions. First, if you are reading my article, I assume you have an interest in spirituality which involves an inner relationship with yourself. Second, if we wish to adequately answer the question, "Is spirituality helpful in relationships?", we must establish the usefulness of spirituality in the relationship you have with yourself. This would include any

relationship you may have with a Higher Power, Divine Love or God.

At this time, I only have the authority to speak from my own experience and so the following is a description of my own relationship with myself and Divine Love. My spiritual journey and spiritual practice was born from intense emotional pain and suffering. Interestingly enough, this occurred from the ending of my love relationship with my ex-wife and the separation from our daughters.

Spirituality born of intense pain, physical or emotional, is quite common and has been occurring for thousands of years. Given this observation, my experience was not unique, but quite original and life changing for me, for my soul. What happened next became very personal for me. I did not have a "white light moment." My spirituality and spiritual practice grew and evolved over a number of years, 20 years to be exact, and continues to evolve.

Because concepts of spirituality and God can be quite amorphous and difficult for me to "relate to", I tailored my spiritual experience to create something I could "relate to". I imagined Higher Power in human form, possessing all masculine and feminine qualities. This imagined Being became my best friend. She / He fully loved, cared for, accepted and guided me in moving through and eventually beyond my unbearable pain, so that I could heal.

I also understand this personalized Higher Power to be an infinite source of Divine Love. My spiritual relationship had materialized and served to heal me. This did not happen instantly but as a gradually healing of an emotional wound that became less and less painful. One day I noticed that the pain was gone. There was no more suffering. I spend time in this relationship with my "best friend" when I pray and meditate. It is an unfailing relationship that grows richer and deeper with time.

We were addressing a question, weren't we? Is spirituality helpful in relationships? In the

context which I just described, my answer is an unequivocal "yes." My spiritual relationship allows me to be my authentic self. This deepens my self-respect and draws me closer to others. With the clarity of this Divine Love, my personal relationship with Spirit enhances all my relationships. This is my experience. It certainly applies to love relationships as well. I wish you peace and many blessings.

Can spirituality help relationships?

By Charlotte Wolovsky, LCSW

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As a therapist with over 30 years experience, specializing in couples therapy since 1989, I have come to believe that the only effective way to heal relationships is through a spiritual approach.

In most intimate relationships, partners are frustrated at the failure of their partner to meet their needs. When couples first start therapy, they focus on their partners' failings and believe that they themselves are entitled to be the central focus of the dyad. As an Imago Relationship therapist for 23 years, I work to shift that perspective. The change I work to create is to empower each partner to tend the garden of their relationship, systematically weeding out the negativity of blame, shame, criticism and defensiveness.

The central question for each partner then becomes: ***Ask not what the relationship can do for you but what you can do for the relationship.***

Spirituality is activated when each partner shifts from Me to We and sees the relationship as their baby that needs to be jointly nurtured. The spiritual position is complete when each partner aspires to serve his or her partner and nurture the space between them. This term, the "space between," comes from Martin Buber. It is the terrain of the relationship, with its own needs and requirements separate from each partner's.

The couple also needs to transform its understanding of conflict. Conflict must no longer be seen as the sign that you have picked the wrong partner. It is rather an indicator of growth trying to happen. Conflict points to unfinished issues from childhood that need to be known, talked about, and

healed. The Imago couples dialogue is one important tool to facilitate this.

In my work with couples the three arenas I most emphasize are vulnerable communication, praise and positivity, and healing physical touch. I then work with each partner using Imago tools, Gestalt therapy, Gendlin Focusing, and Energy Psychology to clear these blocks to intimacy that were created in childhood. This is all within the framework of the Imago structure.

In my view this synthesis of psychotherapy and spirituality is vital to real transformation that opens the heart to unconditional love.

Bruce Lipton and the Evolution of our Humanity with Alan Steinfeld (A@NewRealities.com)

In my interview with biologist Bruce Lipton for my cable program *New Realities*, he laid out for me the next phase of our human evolution.

Alan Steinfeld (AS): As organisms, we have developed from the organelles of cells to the organs of animals to the organizations of cultures. Human development has now covered the planet with a web of ideas. What is the next phase of evolution for the individual?

Bruce Lipton (BL): Our evolution is not with the individual. We already have all the information capacity that we are capable of dealing with as individuals. Our evolution is the evolution of community. In reality, I am a bustling community of 50 billion single cells sharing organization in a community of cells to a create a larger entity that will have a greater life.

The human body is a cell that exists as a community of cells functioning as a single unit. No matter how complex we are, there are no new functions in my human body that is not already present in a single cell. The human is a reiteration of a cell. A community of humans is like a multi-cellular organism that came together to share awareness to make a new whole.

We human beings are each individual cells coming together to form a community to share awareness to create one living organism called humanity. We are not humans until we create humanity. This is when we all recognize that we are all cells in the same living organism working in a coherent

capacity. When we come together as a *one*, we have created the next level of evolution.

When humanity is complete, the earth as an organism completes its evolution as a living, breathing, pulsing being — Gaia. This completion as a single unit is equivalent, on a fractal level, to the completion of the single cell.

AS: Julian Huxley said, "Humanity is nothing else than evolution becoming conscious of itself."

BL: The internet is an evolutionary leap. It is the equivalent of the communication system by which all the cells of my body are coherent. So now we have the ability for all the cells in our new human organization — humanity — to communicate with each other and share information. This is why the cells came together in the first place.

AS: So what is next step?

BL: You tell me! According to this pattern, when the cohesive functional unit like the single cell was complete in its evolution, what was its next phase of evolution?

AS: To hook up with other complete cells to form a greater multi-cellular organism.

BL: Right. And when humans are complete in their evolution as individuals, what was their next step?

AS: To hook up with other humans and form communities.

BL: So when the earth completes its evolution with humans, coming together as humanity, functioning as coherent unique receptor sites, what is the next phase?

AS: To hook up with other ones.

BL: Yes! When we as humanity are at the level of a unity, with a single voice, that will allow us to speak as a one. And that will allow us to speak with other Ones.

AS: Ah ha! Thank you.

At that point in the interview I had an epiphany. I realized that in a very concrete way we absolutely need to know that we are all equal parts of one greater living being. Then we can come together as

conscious elements of a greater whole and share our awareness for the common benefit. I feel this is when we will evolve out of our cosmic isolation and establish relationships with others. It is only then that we will formally expand humanity and become part of the greater community.

Awareness **By Dr. Robert Schenck**

What did Jesus mean when he said: “they have eyes but do not see and ears but do not hear?”

The people were not blind and deaf, they saw and heard, but they were not aware of seeing and hearing.

When awareness of seeing and hearing arise then one is aware that one is seeing and one is aware that one is hearing.

Awareness is awareness of the bodymind and of perception.

Awareness is a higher dimension than bodymind and perception.

When Jesus says: “I have overcome the world.” he is saying that he is aware of the world,

aware of bodymind, aware of perception.

He has disidentified with the world and bodymind and perception and knows that he is awareness of the world and bodymind and that awareness is eternal.

When awareness arises, it comes with wonder; wonder comes with appreciation; appreciation comes with love; love comes with joy.

Waking up and awareness are different words for the same experience.

Before awareness eyes see and ears hear but love is absent.

Classification of Psychological Problems **By Dr. Robert Schenck**

Psychological problems can be carried into the present indicating that they come from the past; they can be reactive to some present dynamism (or complex of forces) impinging on being in the now; or may arise from future projections in the imagination.

If the problem is rooted in the past it means some

psychic content that happened in the past could not be absorbed and has led to a distortion of objectivity that affects attunement in a creative way to unfolding reality; it leads to fixed patterns of behavior and a lack of congruence with the most obvious manifestations of reality. These are the various personality types: introvert/extrovert, pessimist/optimist, and so on.

If the problem is rooted in the present and is reactive to some real dynamism by which the being is confronted and the being frightened and confused and does not know how to respond; deer in the headlight syndrome; the underlying problem is lack of trust and lack of self confidence. The being feels unsupported, doesn't know what to do, is dominated by mind and fearful of its criticism; often is resentful and angry and judgmental.

If the problem is rooted in the future it is imaginary and the individual's mind has found its way into imaginations that are upsetting; most so-called panic disorders are of this type; mind is perverse and enjoys dominating the psyche; mind domination is confirmed and mind is delighted when it can produce a panic attack in a human; therapy with this type of psyche requires the development of presence and the presence being undisturbed by the mind's imagination.

ASP ABBREVIATED 2013 PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

Appearing below is the yearly, abbreviated listing of all Professional (\$70 or more membership) members of the Association for Spirituality and Psychotherapy. Business telephone numbers were

used where they were available. To update your listing, notify aspspiritandpsych@gmail.com. We will be mailing the full Professional Directory with the 2013 membership dues letter. We need your continued support to publish our newsletter, arrange networking meetings, and plan ASP conferences.

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