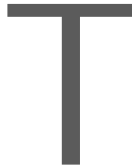


Chapter 8

*A*wakening the Soul:
Recovery-based Spirituality



*Together, God and I can take chaos and be calm,
take the tensions and be tender, take the hurts
and be content, take the obstacles and build
opportunities. When God says that's what He can
do for me, only my unbelief keeps me from
experiencing it. If life is worth living, then
God is worth believing. And if I believe God,
there is no end to the possibilities.*

-Ruth Senter

"I'm not going to those meetings and be around all those religion crazies." "I don't believe in all that God stuff they talk about." "What's religion have to do with me no longer drinking?" "God gave up on me a long time ago. Why should I welcome God back into my life?"

These are oft-spoken protests about the role that spirituality plays in remaining abstinent from alcohol and other drugs. But rest assured, this chapter will not examine the pros and cons of God, religion, spirituality, and Recovery. Nor will this chapter be a metaphysical discussion about what the meaning of life is or whether or not God exists. This will not be the place where a discussion occurs about the differences between religion and spirituality. In no way will I attempt to discuss an expanded notion of God as a Higher Power as you understand him.

Quite simply, your understanding of what spirituality is and is not will arise out of your own intensely personal spiritual awakening rather than anything I might say. The only thing I am willing to say is that chemical dependency is a symptom of a much more fundamental dis-ease process that I refer to as *spiritual bankruptcy*. Given that fundamental premise, it's only common sense that a daily spiritual practice would be necessary to heal the spiritual dis-ease of spiritual bankruptcy.

That's why the fourth building block of a Recovery-based lifestyle is your *spiritual health and well-being*. In this chapter we'll examine three of the elements that make up this particular building block of your Recovery-based lifestyle. Those three elements are:

Pathfinder's Checklist

Three elements of the spiritual well-being building block of a Recovery-based lifestyle.

- 1) [Re]connection with your Higher Power
- 2) An active daily spiritual practice
- 3) Active working of a Twelve Step program

The first element of the spiritual building block of your Recovery-based lifestyle is *[re]connection with your Higher Power*. A central tenet of most spiritual practices is the idea that a power greater than your self exists. It's difficult for many individuals to make such an acknowledgment. What people feel most is a combination of skepticism, hopelessness, despair and willfulness forged by the events and circumstances of their lives. The idea that you should openly embrace the notion that a benevolent Higher Power exists given all that you've been through may be more than you're willing to consider.

Be that as it may, through trial and tribulation, through prayer and meditation, through times of joy and darkness, through doubt and blind faith, millions of people have discovered the miracles that can be born out of [re]connecting with their Higher Power.

Again, the enormity of such an undertaking can't properly be addressed in a few paragraphs. Let me just suggest that it's critical that you start your own journey of search and discovery. To do so, adopt the following list of actions and add them to your daily routine.

Pathfinder's Compass

How to [re]connect with your Higher Power

- 1) Pray
- 2) Meditate
- 3) Acknowledge the creator of the good that exists within you.
- 4) Acknowledge the creator of the abundance that exists in your life.
- 5) Develop relationships with people in your Twelve Step community.
- 6) Open yourself to discover the presence of your Higher Power in all that exists in your world.

The second element of the spiritual building block is *a daily spiritual practice*. Spirituality is something to be lived each moment of each day of your life. There's any number of ways to practice spirituality. Two of the more common techniques that you can do on your own are pray and meditate. You need not make things any more complicated than that. Just keep in mind that the point of your daily spiritual practice is to *acknowledge* that a power greater than your self exists, *connect* with that power greater than your self, and to *live your life through your connection* with your Higher Power.

To live your life through your connection with your Higher Power is to live your life in accordance with a few universal spiritual principles. Examples of these universal principles are surrender, forgiveness, tolerance, humility, letting go, and gratitude. To help you integrate these universal principles into your daily life use the following inventory.

Pathfinder's Compass

How to develop a daily spiritual practice.

- 1) Identify what you must surrender to in the course of this day and surrender.
- 2) Identify what you must express gratitude for in the course of this day and express your gratitude.
- 3) Identify what you must express tolerance for in the course of this day and express tolerance.
- 4) Identify what you must let go of in the course of this day and let go of it.
- 5) Identify how you must live humility in the course of this day and live humility.
- 6) Identify what you must forgive yourself for in the course of this day and forgive yourself.
- 7) Identify what you must forgive others for in the course of this day and forgive those people.
- 8) Identify service work you can perform in the course of this day and perform it.

The third element of your spiritual building block of your Recovery-based lifestyle is *active involvement in a Recovery-based Twelve Step program*. There are three aspects of active involvement in a Recovery-based Twelve Step program. The first aspect is *fellowship*. Fellowship is the development of relationships with other Recovering individuals. This involves two things. First, you must take the time to get to know other people at your Recovery-based support group meetings. Second, you must take the risk of letting other people at your meetings get to know you. Simply put, fellowshipping entails allowing yourself to touch and be touched by the lives of others.

The second aspect of working a Twelve Step program is *mentoring*. We'll discuss mentoring in chapter 9, *Recovery-based Coping Mechanisms*. [Re]constructing and preserving your Recovery-based lifestyle is a difficult, often times overwhelming task. There's much for you to learn, there's much that you'll need help with from others. To cut yourself off from the compassion and wisdom of those who've walked the walk you're currently walking is prideful and foolhardy. Just keep the following in mind—*those who will help you need to help you as much as you need to be helped*.

The third aspect of working a Twelve Step program is the combination of attending Recovery-based support meetings, working with a Recovery-based mentor known as a sponsor, and working each of the Twelve Steps. There's no getting around this although believe me, I know hundreds who've tried. No matter how uncomfortable this sounds to you, it's an important aspect of your daily spiritual practice.

Pathfinder's Compass

How to work a Recovery-based Twelve Step program.

- 1) Attend ninety Recovery-based support group meetings in ninety days.
- 2) Interact with individuals who attend the same Recovery-based support group meetings as you.
- 3) Maintain daily contact with those individuals that you believe can support you and help you work a Recovery-based Twelve Step program.
- 4) Ask one individual that you meet at one of your Recovery-based support group meetings to be

your Recovery-based mentor known as a sponsor.

- 5) Follow the guidance of your sponsor as he guides you through each step of the Recovery-based Twelve Step program.

I have kept this chapter short and sweet because your spiritual awakening is a very personal experience that will require you to *walk your own walk*. I've identified some very general principles for you to follow in order to start walking your walk. But bear the following in mind—*your spiritual awakening won't happen over night but over time*. Your spiritual awakening won't occur through the mastery of information but through the mastery of your Ego-driven attachments and impulses. Your spiritual awakening won't occur with a wink and a nod but through the transformation of your heart and soul.

As you practice your spirituality, do so in the image of what you believe is best for you. Don't allow fear and discouragement to alter your direction. Don't allow the lack of instant gratification deter you from following the course you've created for yourself. Be patient. Be kind. Be compassionate. Be loving. But most of all, BE BRAVE!