

Spiritual Activism,

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The purpose of this paper is to support our next generation's role of integrating spirituality in our lives. Increasingly, people are including spirituality as part of daily conversation. Books on the subject of spirituality and leadership are emerging in the fields of organizational development and business. Meetings held around the world are calling for inner reflection and are seeking information for living a life filled with more meaning and joy. Self-help books support people in their inner discovery of who they are and how to build better relationships. But, alas, the future generation, the inheritors of all our actions, is rarely given the tools to prepare for this life journey. Spirituality is not to be associated with religion but rather as a guide for conscious living as a species inhabiting our planet. We are interconnected and interdependent as realized now and must behave accordingly.

If only we could help these young people now rather than later. Imagine if you did not have to reconstruct your past and peel away your life experiences. Imagine if we had been told, "just be yourself" and be loyal to your inner voice. Imagine if we had been given the tools to learn how to make and keep positive relationships with your friends and fellow human beings. What a wonderful world we would live in!

This work is similar to a rite of passage into mature clarity. If there is to be a new leadership model for building a better global society then it must have spirituality as its base. Spirituality is the uniting force. It is the understanding that holds us together as a species, the awareness that we are interconnected and need to care for one another.

We offer a book, [Pioneering Spiritual Activism](#), as a resource for those who want to create a peaceful world through spiritual activism, activism that comes from the heart. While it is designed primarily for youth, ages 15-30, this book may also be used by teachers, facilitators, and initiators.

Our book introduces the potential activist to the ethics, principles, and values that are the essence of COE's spiritual activism. It proposes a model and techniques that have proven effective for youth to create positive change. COE's model, Reflect – Connect – Act, provides guidance and structure.

The methods and techniques proposed here constitute a learning process designed to consolidate spiritual growth and societal actions. Two approaches, Connect: Conflict Transcendence and Act: Lateral Leadership, are Children of the Earth's contributions to one's development and involvement with spiritual activism. The book invites an 'Inner Revolution for Social Evolution'. It is a path for global citizens united in a movement for peace.

Why Spirituality as a Focus?

There is a global consciousness arising in the hearts and minds of humanity. Some call this consciousness the "spiritual revolution"—the evolution of humankind into

full awareness. From this awareness we finally learn that peace is possible for individuals and our world. In our unity we will be able to accept our diversity and finally find ways to live together here on Mother Earth. We are learning from science that we are interdependent and interconnected as one life.

Today, science and spirituality are coming to the same conclusion that all people are intrinsically similar. The human genome project has proven that we are genetically 99.9 percent alike, with only one tenth of one percent making us different. The realization that I am you and you are me, can only lead to right action and thought. Only when we concentrate on what makes us the same, instead of what makes us different, can we deal with the challenges ahead.

What is Spiritual Activism?

As one delves into one's inner life becoming a spiritual seeker, one begins to discover both eternal truths and personal truths. Through this uncharted seeking you most often realize that one is bonded and connected with all life. This realization is clear in the history of the great sages who describe this inner state of being as a place of total peace, a "cloud of unknowing" and a unified space of consciousness where everything is one. How one lives, why one lives, and what one's purpose is are integral to inner peacefulness and knowledge of self.

To live a meaningful life, you make a conscious decision to be of service by manifesting peace and by linking to others who hold the same intention. Inner peace is for personal evolution. Inner peace is for world peace. Outer peace is achieved by serving others and all of life. One by one, each has the ability to become your authentic self. The voice of the authentic, or essential self, is your voice remembering who you are no matter what the surroundings. It is the voice of remembering and feeling as if one conjures up that sense of original self prior to being influenced by one's familiar surroundings.

This inner self wishes to live in right relationship by improving relationships with the outer self as well as those who are in one's own community. There is an inner imperative, or calling, to learn to live in mutual harmony with oneself as well as others. As our inner and outer selves become more integrated and harmonious, so to do our relationships with others. Harmonious relationships, through mutual understanding, kindness, and compassion do take time and effort for each of us to develop, but are the way to a more equitable world. Heeding the voice of your authentic self leads to better relationships, be they family, local, national, or international. This makes the world a better place right now and for future generations. This is Spiritual Activism.

Self Esteem

As a spiritual activist it is important to practice listening to one's inner voice of creativity and intuition. This is how one reaches one's own true authentic self. The external self is most often used as the basis for self-esteem assessment. This concept of self-esteem is based on a desire to feel more valued and by comparing yourself to others. Such as saying, "I am ok." Often this kind of self-esteem limits us as it teaches us to feel good when validated by others or when feeling better than someone else. It is a model based on feeling inadequate due to these external comparisons and drowning out the sound of one's own inner voice.

Spiritual seeking frees one to feel whole and complete. It helps one find one's own uniqueness. A sense of self emerges that knows what one wants and needs to live life to its fullest. This spiritual inward seeking process fosters knowledge of your authentic self. The personality and character become a treasure chest of traits and skills used for accomplishing tasks.

Our message is that the deeper one goes, the more ethical and committed one is to one's authentic voice. Fewer external demands drive you. This leads one to a more committed powerful leadership role for positive change.

Using the Children of the Earth Model As a spiritual activist, there are three stages to address. The first is Reflect. This helps one find a means to access the inner self. It is a lifelong quest to know this self. This search then leads to a desire to Connect with others in a positive manner. One becomes aware of the authentic self, and at the same time become more aware of others. These skills help one to be an effective communicator and listener. Further, one may then start to partner with others and wish to Act finding the inspiration and leadership to undertake projects and activities reflective of positive change.

The Spiritual Activist Model

Proposed by Children of the Earth

Reflect is the journey that we take to awaken the inner self. The path may include meditation, contemplation, and/or prayer. As we become still, we hear the inner calling of our authentic self and experience personal purpose.

Connect bridges the perceived gap between self and others and leads to unity. Through deep compassion and listening, conflict transcendence and non-violent communication, we learn that it is possible to live in harmony, and thus we weave the interconnectedness of our family worldwide.

Act is taking the inspired will to serve others in the world through individual actions, local projects and global work These acts are based on spiritual principles and ethics of Spiritual Activism.

Ethics, Principles, and Values

From years of asking young people to delve into their inner nature and to discover the voice within, we at Children of the Earth noted that there were many commonalities in terms of how to live and what is meaningful. We asked youth at different meetings to distill this into a Code of Ethics that would be relevant to them as well as a message to others. What emerged is a universal set of ethics to which all agreed. They were willing to live by this code and to continually assess their own behavior to see if it aligned with their code. They rely on their own self-assessment rather than someone else's judgment. When one lives by this Code of Ethics – love, respect, honesty, truth, courage, humility, wisdom – you are a great human being and a great role model!

Code of Ethics: Actions Based on Selflessness and Love

LOVE - for the form, voice, thoughts and spirit of each person

RESPECT - for differences

HONESTY - of our feelings, thoughts and behaviors; to be transparent

TRUTH - in feelings and thoughts

COURAGE - to take a stand

HUMILITY - to reflect inner peace

WISDOM - to be a seeker

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles are standards by which you direct and assess your behavior, with no other person to evaluate or judge you. You may do this by using each of these as a form of self-assessment. If you are having trouble reacting to a difficult situation, you can use these principles. You can also use these principles to reflect when you are dissatisfied with your actions and wish to improve them.

- Trust your intuition
- Demonstrate dignity and respect
- Communicate with honesty and clarity
- Assume the good intentions of others
- Support shared leadership
- Celebrate diversity
- Be inspired to take risks
- Allow decisions to emerge and embrace the process
- Understand the whole is greater than the parts
- Strive to support sustainability both personally and environmentally
- Honor agreements and take ownership for outcomes

Values for Becoming a Global Citizen

One of our goals is for one to experience one's self as a global citizen. One feels the connection with others in your local life, the national arena, and the world. One is uniting with the family of humankind and will live caring for one another.

As one begins the journey inwards, one also works outwards from the principles toward becoming a global citizen. It is the process of seeing the whole. One moves from the principles to serving the collective good, from a world of competition to a world of mutual collaboration. When one chooses to live in a different way, the shift from what exists to what is possible follows.

Values evolve from self-serving and individualistic to altruism and compassion, from a competitive society to one in which we collaborate and care for each other.

Changing Values

Competition	Collaboration
Materialism and Nature	Non-attachment
Violence	Compassion
Separation	Wholeness
Dualism	Unity
Conflict	Peace
Nationalism	Global
Understanding Reason or Logic	Imagination and Intuition
Knowledge Within	Wisdom from
Domination	Empowerment
Cultural	Multicultural

Reflect–Connect–Act

I. Reflect: The inner quest for the authentic self As you go more deeply into the self, you realize that you are not defined by your surroundings, parents, culture or religion. Rather, inside you dwells a loving human being seeking full expression.

Questions

1. Who am I really as my authentic self?
2. What unique gifts do I bring to the world?
3. How can I manifest my inner dreams for the world?

II. Connect: Deep compassion for others

You become conscious of how you can best express yourself in the world for the highest good. Transforming conflict, using language that recognizes the other, appreciating without judging, all these can occur when you no longer judge yourself. You begin to act as part of a whole. A sense of unity occurs that can be called love or spirituality in action.

Questions

1. How do I find connectedness and build a purposeful unity?
2. How do I hear the inner heart of another person?
3. How do I handle conflict in my life?

III. Act: Knowing what to do

The third step is based on awareness of a global community of young people who are waiting to connect with you. Together you are the new leaders of this evolving consciousness for social change. You share a growing awareness of how to live as stewards of all of life. From this consciousness, new models of how to live in our world emerge ensuring a sustainable future for all of humanity.

Questions

1. What does it mean to live as a Spiritual Activist?
2. What actions can I take to promote conscious social change?
3. What skills and abilities do I need to make a positive difference in the lives of others?

Conflict Transcendence

The approach developed by Children of the Earth goes beyond conflict. While differences are acknowledged, it is understood that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. When this unity exists, a sense of integration prevails over a sense of conflict to such an extent that all parties wish for the same outcome.

Conflict Transcendence goes beyond conflict resolution and conflict transformation; rising above the situation and looking down into the totality of all that is.

Conflict Resolution is achieved by resolving conflict through active listening and non-violent communication, which leads to compromise. You and others want to resolve the issue and foster a better relationship.

Conflict Transformation is achieved by using your skills to transform the conflict into a learning experience. Focus is placed on the outcome and even more on resolving the underlying issues so a win-win solution emerges.

When one experiences conflict one may dive into it from the view of what is right and what is wrong. But when one rises above the conflict and views it from above, one sees all its pieces. Einstein believed that the only resolution to a problem is to go above it, that no problem can be solved at the level it was created. As spiritual seekers and spiritual activists, our goal is to unify. To unify the pieces it is more than to understand, compromise, or tolerate; rather to unify all pieces from inherent oneness.

When one knows who one is with others then when a conflict arises you realize that it is one's own problem as well as that of others. The only solution lies in realizing that all contradictions are interrelated. The sun, moon, rain, clouds, and snow are all aspects of weather.

As one begins to transcend, then the need for an answer that fortifies a position dissolves. The issue begins to look like a pattern showing that we are universal human beings with cultures, religions and ideas. As this universal human we can see from above that the problem is just an expression of our differences and within that is the essence of what is the same. Thus formulating a means to an answer acknowledges that we hold this sameness in our hearts, so that the external differences become mere

minor concerns. We transcend the 'I' and become a 'we,' and thus all parties are responsible for the solution.

CONCLUSION

As a spiritual activist who reflects and connects, whose activism comes from the heart, these are a few tools and guidelines that may be useful to take action in the world to create positive change. Remember that compassion is the high standard, the watch word is "do no harm", and the universal golden rule is the guide. Spiritual is no longer a word of religion but rather of a universal understanding that we are one humanity and that we must treat ourselves in this manner walking forward.