



Wellness Week 2019

Reflection as Spiritual Wellness

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To me, it seems spiritual wellness is often the last dimension of wellness many choose to explore, in part because many people are not clear on what is meant by the term, “spiritual.” For folks who adhere to religious teachings the idea of spirit is embedded in their practice, but what about those for whom religion does not work? How do we relate to this dimension of wellness if we are not even clear about the term itself?

As the introduction to the topic of the week says, “spiritual wellness is typically defined as a sense of connection to something greater than oneself, something that provides a sense of purpose in one’s life.” How do we define something “greater than” ourselves, though? First, we must be very clear on who we understand ourselves to be.

In my personal experience, spiritual wellness is predicated on deep self-examination, a willingness to explore the root principles of one’s life. The questions we tend to ask ourselves as we dive deep into who we are have been documented and have persisted throughout all of human history:

- Who am I?
- What is my reason for being?
- What is my path?
- How do I live according to these ideals?

If these questions are asked of oneself on a regular basis it is likely to develop spiritual wellness.

It is important to understand that these questions are rarely definitively answered. Human beings are masters of change. As we grow through our lives the answers to these questions are very likely to change. The college-aged scholarly version of me is highly unlikely to consider the same answers to be relevant once I have decided to start a family, for example. To become

dogmatically attached to answers means we do not allow for expanding understanding to shape us.

Which brings us to the idea of a daily practice.

As is clear from these questions themselves, they are not tied to religion or indeed most established spiritual practices. To deeply explore one's own answers is a very personal pursuit and can be achieved regardless of any religious or spiritual practice—or lack of the same.

What does seem to be consistent across all humanity is the need to check in on a regular basis with these same questions. This is why many people, whether religious or spiritual, or neither, have a daily practice that sets the tone for the day or reviews the day upon retiring for the night. If we can take an honest look at how we moved through the day, we can easily determine whether we upheld our commitment to living our truth, whether we considered the beliefs of those around us, and whether we (intentionally or not) caused hurt to another.

I am a big fan of David Bowie. He was an internationally-famous and respected musician, a superstar, and that sort of status often leads to an inflated ego. Bowie, however, was known for being a rather humble guy, despite his fame. When he released an album around the time of the 9/11 attack he was interviewed and had this to say:

I'm so useless at actually describing what it is I am talking to [in my song]—is it life itself? Is it God? So, a universal agent—intelligence—that's what it's really addressed to. I can only, for me, in my life, work out a kind of a morality that I'm comfortable living with that does not harm anybody else. This is such a complicated world that I don't think I can make it any more complicated. The easiest and most simplified version of doing good things for me is living a full day and saying, "Now, was I [a jerk] to anyone today? Should I apologize to anyone today? Did I do the right thing?" (Guccione, 2017)

In my experience, spiritual wellness is the result of living an authentic life aligned with the other seven dimensions of wellness. When we feel safe and supported to express who we really are all of the parameters of wellness increase—a rising tide lifts everyone, or in this case, when all the dimensions of health are healthier we often describe this as feeling spiritually well.

Resources:

Guccione, Jr., Bob (April 2017). David Bowie on 9/11 and God. The Daily Beast. Retrieved from URL <https://www.thedailybeast.com/david-bowie-on-911-and-god>