

SEPTEMBER MONTHLY THEME:  
SPIRITUALITY—TOOLS FOR GROUNDING OUR LIVES

Spirituality can be difficult to pin down amidst its many usages and meanings. Is spirituality the practice of being in touch with unseen spirits? Is spirituality care of one's inner life? Must spirituality be "religious" or can an atheist or a "none" be spiritual? In general, spirituality includes a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves. When we find that kind of connection, what impact does that have on our lives? For some, the commitment to a regular spiritual practice helps to foster that sense of connection. For others, spirituality may seem irrelevant at best and a dangerous delusion at worst. In these ways, our theme this month challenges us to consider both our definition of spirituality as well as whether our lives do (or might) benefit from intentional spiritual practices.

**Which question is calling to you? Where is it leading you?**

1. How do you define spirituality? In what ways has spirituality defined you?
2. Do you have a regular way that you center or ground yourself? Do you identify this as a spiritual practice? Why or why not?
3. What examples of spiritual practice have inspired you? Puzzled you?
4. What helps you to feel connected to the world around you?
5. Do you identify as a "spiritual" person? A religious person? Why or why not?
6. Are there differences between a hobby, a ritual, a tradition, and a spiritual practice?
7. In what ways has your spiritual life changed over the years?
8. What's your question? As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

**Wise Words:**

Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred. *Christina Puchalski, MD*

Science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality. *Carl Sagan*

In answer to the question, what must one do to be enlightened, the Buddha said, "Wake up." Life is a spiritual journey that calls upon us to wake up, to become whole. *Johanna Nichols*

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience. *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

Your body knows more about your spiritual well-being than your mind does. Teach your mind to listen to it. *Necole Stephens*

Spirituality is a holistic and continuous process of becoming. ... It enables me to look at others with mutual respect. Spirituality is always coupled with justice. The more I grow spiritually, the more I am concerned with justice and taking action for justice. *Mercy Amba Oduyoye*

A [spiritual] practice is simply a habit that gives us energy and reminds us of what matters most. *Claudia Horwitz*

For me, a spiritual practice must have an ethical dimension. If it doesn't help me act with more justice and kindness, then its benefits are locked within the borders of myself and it is mere self-improvement rather than spiritual growth. *Amy Zucker Morgenstern*

Spirituality of everyday Life: Approaching life with a sense of wonder; Care and concern for others, the Earth and all living forms; Having a sense of gratitude and being thankful; Feeling blessed by energy greater than ourselves *Bob Calkin*

Spiritual can refer to a state solitary or communal. It can refer to an inward quality or a quality of connection. It can refer to both. Usually it indicates a quality of experience beyond the materialistic, time-bound habits that detract us from what our Buddhist friends call simply "mindfulness." *Rev. Jan Carlsson-Bull*

Spirituality is recognizing and celebrating that we are all inextricably connected to each other by a power greater than all of us, and that our connection to that power and to one another is grounded in love and compassion. Practicing spirituality brings a sense of perspective, meaning and purpose to our lives. *Brené Brown*

The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize at the center of the universe dwells the Great Spirit, and that its center is really everywhere, it is within each of us. *Black Elk*

The spiritual life does not remove us from the world but leads us deeper into it. *Henri J. M. Nouwen*

When I cook I am part of the interconnecting past, present, and future of humanity. I am completely involved in the activities of life and paying close attention to all that surrounds me. By being fully present in the moment, I experience a peace, a connection, and a rootedness. Through this awareness I am connected with the ultimate forces of the universe within and without. That is my definition of spirituality. When the activities of one's life become spiritual practice in these ways, the activities of life itself become a prayer. *Lynn M. Brodie*

For me, a spiritual practice is any activity that unites mind and body, is rooted in tradition, is entered into with intention, and communicates with a transcendent principle such as God, Dharmakaya, or Oneness. It is also non-oppressive and non-appropriative. We can create modern approaches to spiritual practices that are ordinary and simple and that honor the ancestors. *Jaelynn P. Scott*

Some periods of our growth are so confusing that we don't even recognize that growth is happening. We may feel hostile or angry or weepy and hysterical, or we may feel depressed. It would never occur to us, unless we stumbled on a book or a person who explained to us, that we were in fact in the process of change, of actually becoming larger, spiritually, than we were before. Whenever we grow, we tend to feel it, as a young seed must feel the weight and inertia of the earth as it seeks to break out of its shell on its way to becoming a plant. *Alice Walker*

What does deep spirituality *feel* like to you? Spirituality is impossible to define and difficult to describe. For me, it feels like *connection*—connection to myself, to others around me, to the earth and all of creation. Connection to myself feels like deep peace, awareness, calm, authenticity. Connection to others feels like compassion, community, acceptance, and enduring love. Spirituality is not an idea; it is an *experience*. *Peter Morales*

Those who seek the spirit without a grounding in reason get carried away with shallow, emotional religion; those who seek a sense of community without a grounding in their own sense of individual self-respect are vulnerable to the abuses of cults. What we seek, then, is the kind of spiritual experience that builds upon science rather than opposing it. What we create in our coming together is the kind of power that calls us to combine our gifts and talents and visions in a way that will make a difference in our lives and in our world. *Sara Campbell*

Spiritual practices in any tradition, including mindfulness in its many forms, are meant to help you live what is yours to live, not make you rise above it. These tools are meant to help you feel companioned inside your grief. They're meant to give you a tiny bit of breathing room inside what is wholly unbearable. That's not at all the same thing as making your pain go away. Rather than help us rise above being human, teachings in any true tradition help us become *more* human: more connected, not less attached. *Megan Devine*

No matter how I'm feeling — happy or sad, sick or well, fragile or unbreakable, loved or unloved — I turn to music. Music is my solace and my comfort, the one thing that's always with me. I feel its vibration deep in my soul; it's my spiritual practice. *Connie Simon*

An attitude of openness, the willingness to recognize and accept the diversity of human experience and the spiritual values of other traditions and cultures, is essential in the practice of nonviolence. *Thich Nhat Hanh*

My spiritual practice of Zen meditation and frequent Zen retreats is about noticing the luminous quality of the ordinary. I sit still and notice. *James Ishmael Ford*

You connect to the silence within you, that is when you can make sense of the disturbance going on around you. *Stephen Richards*

Spirituality lies not in the power to heal others, to perform miracles, or to astound the world with our wisdom, but in the ability to endure with right attitude whatever crosses we have to face in our daily lives, and thus to rise above them. *Sri Daya Mata*

## Resources:

General: <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/what-spirituality>

Buddhist Spirituality: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/returning-to-the-world>

Black Church: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/promise-and-practice-joy-unspeakable-reading>

Native Spirituality: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/spiritual-theft>

Toni Morrison: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/african-american-spirituality>

## Books

Claudia Horwitz, *The Spiritual Activist: Practices to Transform Your Life, Your Work, and Your World*

Erik Walker Wikstrom, ed., *Faithful Practices: Everyday Ways to Feed Your Spirit*

Scott W. Alexander, ed., *Everyday Spiritual Practice: Simple Pathways for Enriching Your Life*

Thich Nhat Hanh and the people of the Plum Village Community, *Planting Seeds Practicing mindfulness with children*

## Movies

Awake: The life of Yogananda: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyLkg3uDe1c&t=21s>

Monk with a Camera: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyLkg3uDe1c&t=21s>

Kundun: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TW2USm6wTSA>

The Letters: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAS\\_EeIxh5g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAS_EeIxh5g)