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Spiritual Evolution: The Path to a Meaningful Life?



BY: DRS. RON AND MARY HULNICK

Henry David Thoreau, in the mid 1800s, wrote, “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.”

A century and a half has passed, and Thoreau’s words still strongly echo in our lives. Consider the current levels of war, poverty, sickness, starvation, etc. present in the world today. We understand that a recent United Nations study¹ reported on the status, or well-being, of the people of member nations regarding challenges those people face daily. They took all the responses received and boiled them down to one word to describe the overall condition of the people of these nations. That word is “meaningless.”

And lest we egotistically think that such studies are only descriptive of so-called underdeveloped countries, do we not have ample evidence much closer to home that reflects this same condition? Consider distressingly high teen suicide rates, bulging prison populations, rampant family disharmony and pervasive political dissension. Imagine, for huge numbers of people alive at this time, perhaps including you, that life is experienced as meaningless.

But Thoreau said “most men,” and “most” is not “all.” Who, then, are those who did not, or will not, die without fully singing the song they were born to sing?

They are the ones who realize that true and lasting happiness and fulfillment can never be won on the battlefield of material success, no matter how powerful or wealthy one becomes, or how adept one is at surrounding oneself with the “right” people or circumstances.

The songsters among us are those who have come to know that, as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin reminded us, “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience.

We are spiritual beings having a human experience.” That one sentence has profound implications, for how does one live in the conscious awareness of his or her spiritual nature?

The single message of those who have realized such potential has always been the same, and basically, it comes down to this: True and lasting happiness and fulfillment are an individual affair and can only be found by going deep within, where one’s true essence is vividly and stunningly revealed as love -- and then living into the reality of that awareness.

For those of us alive today, this realization is actually good news and explains the rapidly increasing interest in spiritual activity worldwide. More people today than ever before in human history are waking up into the awareness of spiritual reality. In terms of the UN study, more and more people are coming to the realization that what they are truly seeking is meaning in their lives. Let’s be even more precise: it’s neither gold nor land nor even being right for which we truly yearn; rather, it is that our lives count for something a good deal deeper than the latest electronic gadget. It is not surprising that the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) worldwide continues to grow and provide enormous amounts of compassion-based service in various parts of the world.

From our 32 years at the University of Santa Monica educating several thousand people in the newly emerging field of spiritual psychology, we’ve become aware of an extremely important dynamic that ties together psychological well-being and spiritual evolution.

Who would have ever thought that resolving the seemingly endless experience of emotional suffering would be a measure of spiritual evolution?

The Persian poet Rumi had a clue when he stated, “Your task is not to seek for love, your task is to seek and find all the barriers you have built against it.” And to that we would add: “And to dissolve them.” At USM, we refer to Rumi’s “barriers” as “unresolved issues,” which are at the core of almost all emotional suffering.

It’s our unresolved issues (barriers) that keep us asleep and unaware of who we are: divine beings whose essential nature is loving. And what’s an unresolved issue? “Anything that disturbs your peace.” And we do mean anything. In fact, we’ve devised a simple, foolproof test for identifying unresolved issues. Ready?

Do you ever find yourself in an attitude of “I am upset because [fill in the blank]”? Consider the possibility that anytime you are upset about anything, regardless of all your well thought-through reasons, your school has gone into session and an unresolved issue has been surfaced in your awareness. Further, when viewed from within the context of spiritual psychology, such instances of moving into “upset” are sacred opportunities for healing the underlying, unresolved issue for the last time.

And how do you do it? One of the principles of spiritual psychology is that “healing is the application of loving to the parts inside that hurt.”

If ever there was a way to transform a life of quiet desperation into a life of effective peaceful living,

healing inner hurts surely ranks right up there. As you resolve issues, you stand up in who you truly are and find purpose and meaning in sharing your unique contribution.

The more issues you resolve, the more you evolve spiritually, the more peaceful and caring you become, and the more you contribute to the evolution of consciousness of the human species. As we say at USM, “Every time one person resolves one issue, all of humanity evolves.”

Meaning is a natural and automatic by-product of a life filled with acts of love. If you want to live a life filled with meaning, start expressing from your essential loving nature. Start singing your song.

Ready to begin? Here’s a simple process that you can try out and experience the result for yourself. For the next week, everywhere you go and under all circumstances, consciously choose to see the loving nature in everyone you encounter. That means resisting the urge to succumb to the negative habit of judging them.

And oh, there is one small guideline you’ll need to follow: This way of seeing extends to everyone, including yourself, regardless of any considerations.

REFERENCES:

1. *Nicanor Perlas, *Shaping Globalization* (Saratoga Springs: GlobeNet3, 1999)