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Vergie Charlery's Self Care e-book #7

Spiritual Self-Care



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Spiritual Self-Care

Do you remember the last time you did something to take care of your spirituality? Until now, we have discussed how to take care of our physical, emotional, mental, and social selves. But each one of us also has a spiritual self that is often forgotten or ignored.

Spirituality means something different for everyone. Maybe it is a religion you practice or the cultural traditions you grew up with. Perhaps it is your bond to nature, the connection you feel with the universe, or anything else that evokes a sense of belonging and has a sacred value. Even if you practice the same rituals that billions of others

do, spirituality is a uniquely personal experience that connects you to something greater than you while giving your life meaning or purpose.

You might be rediscovering a spiritual path you are familiar with or establishing a connection to a new one. Maybe you are looking for a new way to nurture your spirit. Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, spiritual self-care can improve your well-being by helping you reduce your anxiety (Gonçalves et al., 2015), increase your resilience to daily stress (Whitehead & Bergeman, 2012), and enhance your optimism (Pardini et al., 2000). Let's get started!



Live Your Values

Do you know your values? Our values can serve as an internal compass, helping us find a purpose or a general sense of direction. When we don't know or don't live by our values, we feel lost or purposeless. Indeed, most of us go with the flow of our daily lives like driftwood on a river without thinking about the journey. The thing is, some of us don't even realize we are on a journey or feel like

we are getting anywhere despite being constantly on the move. Knowing our values can help us steer our boats in the direction we want. With our values in full view, we can find our way to our desired destinations.

Values are guiding beliefs that are long-lasting and may persist for an entire lifetime. When we know our values, we also know what matters to us. Using that knowledge, we can figure out how to live our lives in a meaningful way. In contrast, if we live in a way that contradicts our values, we start feeling ingenuine, and our lives feel imbalanced.

Suppose a person values sustainability and wants to protect the environment. Now imagine that this person works for a company that releases toxic byproducts into a nearby river. Living out of sync with their values may make them cynical, unhappy, and dissatisfied. However, if they were to find another job that doesn't contradict their values, not only would they be happier, but they may also find the will to right the wrongs and take practical steps toward protecting the environment.

Let's go back to the question above: do you know your values? Most of us have a sense of our values in general, but many of us aren't certain about which values matter the most. Once we figure out these core values, we can let them guide us on our journeys.





Exercise: Find your core values

Please look at the list of values below and mark any that matter to you. Although this list is long, you might realize that some of the values that you find important are missing. So, feel free to add any other values that matter to you.

Once you determine your values, identify the most important four or five among them. These are your core values. Take as much time as you need to figure out which values you care about. Keep in mind that these values should reflect your beliefs and not what you think society expects from you.





List of values

Acceptance	Assertiveness	Caring
Accountability	Athleticism	Cautiousness
Accuracy	Attentiveness	Certainty
Achievement	Authenticity	Challenge
Adaptability	Awe	Charisma
Admirability	Beauty	Charity
Adventurousness	Benevolence	Charm
Agreeableness	Big-thinking	Cheerfulness
Alertness	Bliss	Citizenship
Altruism	Boldness	Clarity
Ambition	Bravery	Cleanliness
Amiability	Brilliance	Clear-headedness
Amusement	Calmness	Cleverness
Appreciativeness	Candor	Comfort
Art	Capability	Commitment
Articulateness	Carefulness	Common sense



Communication	Courage	Discovery
Community	Courteousness	Diversity
Compassion	Craftiness	Drive
Competence	Creativity	Dualism
Complexity	Credibility	Dutifulness
Confidence	Curiosity	Easygoingness
Connection	Daringness	Education
Conscientiousness	Decency	Effectiveness
Conservativeness	Decisiveness	Efficiency
Consideration	Dedication	Elegance
Consistency	Deep thought	Eloquence
Constructiveness	Democracy	Emotional awareness
Contemplation	Dependability	Emotional control
Contentment	Determination	Empathy
Contribution	Devotion	Empowerment
Control	Dignity	Endurance
Conviction	Diligence	Energy
Cooperation	Discipline	Enjoyment



Enthusiasm	Fidelity	Glamorousness
Equality	Flair	Good-nature
Ethics	Flexibility	Goodness
Excellence	Focus	Grace
Excitement	Foresight	Graciousness
Expedience	Forgiving	Gratitude
Experimenting	Forthrightness	Greatness
Exploration	Fortitude	Growth
Expressiveness	Freedom	Happiness
Extraordinary experiences	Freethinking	Hard work
Fairness	Friendliness	Harmony
Faith	Friendship	Health
Faithfulness	Fun	Helpfulness
Fame	Fun-loving attitude	Heroicness
Family	Generosity	Honesty
Farsightedness	Gentleness	Honor
Fashion	Genuineness	Hope
Feelings	Giving	Humbleness



Humility

Humor

Idealism

Imagination

Incisiveness

Independence

Individualism

Individuality

Influence

Innovation

Insightfulness

Inspiration

Integrity

Intelligence

Intensity

Intuitiveness

Inventiveness

Joy

Justice

Kindness

Knowledge

Lawfulness

Leadership

Learning

Liberty

Life direction

Life experience

Likability

Logic

Love

Loyalty

Mastery

Maturity

Mellowness

Moderation

Modesty

Motivation

Neatness

Neutrality

Newness

Niceness

Objectivity

Open-mindedness

Openness

Optimism

Order

Organization

Originality

Passion

Patience

Patriotism

Peace

Peacefulness

Performance



Perseverance	Quality	Security
Persistence	Rationality	Self-awareness
Playfulness	Realism	Self-improvement
Pleasure	Recognition	Self-reliance
Poise	Recreation	Self-respect
Positive attitude	Reflection	Self-sufficiency
Positivity	Relaxation	Selflessness
Potential	Reliability	Sensitivity
Power	Resourcefulness	Serenity
Practicality	Respect	Service
Preciseness	Respect for others	Simplicity
Principles	Responsibility	Smarts
Productivity	Restraint	Sociability
Professionalism	Results-oriented	Social connection
Prosperity	Rigor	Sophistication
Protection	Risk	Speed
Punctuality	Romance	Spirituality
Purpose	Satisfaction	Spontaneity



Stability	Teamwork	Trust
Status	Tenderness	Truth
Steadiness	Thoughtfulness	Unity
Strength	Thoroughness	Variety
Structure	Tidiness	Vivaciousness
Studiousness	Timeliness	Warmth
Success	Tolerance	Wealth
Sustainability	Tradition	Well-roundedness
Sweetness	Tranquility	Wisdom
Sympathy	Transformation	Wit

Take-home:

Determining your values may help you consider their influences on who you are and how you behave. Are you in tune with your values? If you realize that you're not, that's okay. But you might want to start thinking about how you can better align yourself with them

Finding Purpose

Do you have a long-term goal that gives your life a deep sense of meaning and has a positive impact? If you do, that means you have a purpose. Values and purpose go hand in hand. Without values, you may struggle to find your purpose. And

without purpose, your values can lose their meaning. Moreover, it feels good to have a purpose and to know that you are using your talents, skills, and energy for something good that truly matters to you. The question is, how do you find one?





Exercise: Find Your Purpose

The most straightforward way to find your purpose is by looking at your core values and asking yourself a series of questions. Here is a list of questions that might be helpful.

1. **What are your core values?**
2. **Think about the problems or injustices you have witnessed. Which ones are most important to you? In other words, what problems in the world do you want to see changed?**
3. **How do your core values relate to this problem?**
4. **What specific skills, talents, or resources do you have?**
5. **How can you use these skills, talents, or resources to address the problem you identified earlier?**
6. **Who can benefit from your efforts?**

Once you answer all questions, create a personal purpose statement by linking the answers together.

Note:

Even though some of the questions seem easy at first, they may require you to think thoroughly. So, please take as much time as you need to answer these questions and be creative when linking the answers to create your purpose statement.

Example: Suppose a person's core values are humour, empathy, and knowledge. They think that the biggest problems in the world are food waste and hunger. So, they decide to use humour to educate adults about food waste and increase empathy for the hungry. As a talented artist, they want to create infographics as their primary educational tool. Finally, they come up with the statement, "My purpose is to fight food waste and hunger through humour-filled infographics to educate an adult audience and increase their empathy for the hungry."

Compassion

Compassion is the feeling we have when we see another person suffering and want to relieve their pain. Although it is like empathy—the ability to understand another person’s emotions—compassion also includes the desire to help. For instance, if you listen to your friend’s problem and understand what they are going through, you are being empathetic. However, if you feel the urge to help them, you are being compassionate.

Believe it or not, compassionate action can be good for our physical well-being by fine-tuning vagus nerve activity (Kok & Frederickson, 2010), which is the nerve that regulates our heartbeats (and other things). Compassion also strengthens brain circuitry for reward and increases the sense of positive affect (Klimecki et al., 2013). Most importantly, compassion can make us feel connected to others. But how can you cultivate compassion?

Empathy is the first step toward becoming more compassionate. Try to chase away thoughts of judgment and blame and strive to be more understanding in your daily interactions. If putting

yourself in someone else’s shoes is tough, you might want to search for commonalities with them. The more you see yourself like someone else, the more you may be able to empathize with them and might be willing to help them out.



Spending Time in Nature

Immersing ourselves in nature can be a profoundly spiritual experience, but most of us rarely leave our indoor spaces. Indeed, a study revealed that people spend approximately 93% of their time inside buildings and other human-made enclosed areas (Klepeis et al., 2001). But it wasn't always like this. Our ancestors walked on this earth for tens of thousands of years with their lives deeply connected to the natural world. Yet, over the last few centuries, we have become increasingly insular, separating ourselves from nature and treating it like something to be tamed, organized, and shaped to fit our needs.

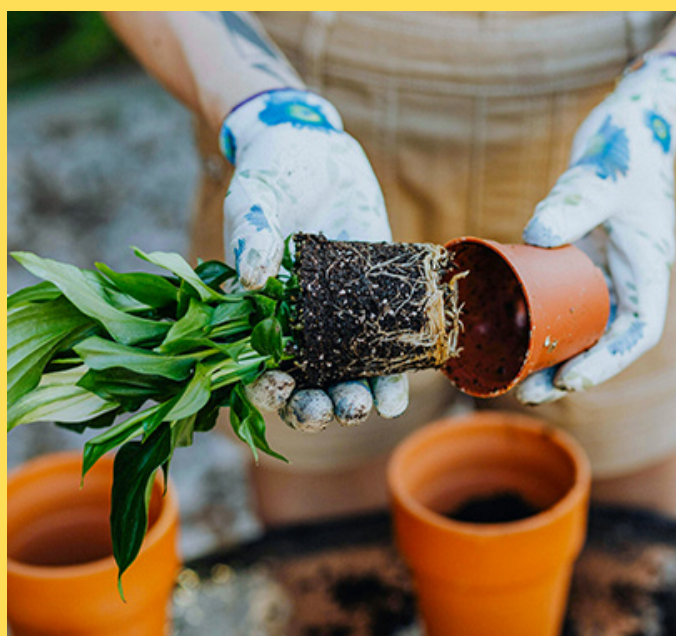
Spending time in a natural environment has many benefits. Most people might equate being in nature with getting some fresh air—and breathing clean, oxygen-rich air can be quite invigorating. Yet, a major benefit of spending time in nature is feeling connected to the world and all its wonders. Absorbing the beauty of nature can reduce stress and anxiety (Thompson et al., 2012; Nisbet, Zelenski, & Grandpierre, 2019), increase creativity (Plambech & van den Bosch, 2015), and cultivate a sense of wonder. Here are a few ways to feel better connected to the natural world.



Forest Bathing

Forest bathing is one of the easiest ways to become immersed in nature and use all your senses to increase your awareness of the natural world. This practice began in Japan in the 1990s as Shinrin-yoku, which literally means forest bathing and spread to the Western hemisphere somewhat recently. But what exactly is it?

Forest bathing is immersing yourself in nature. It usually involves going to a natural environment such as a forest and absorbing everything around you using your senses: you see the plants, animals, rocks, water, sky, and clouds; you smell the earth, grass, flowers, and leaves; you hear the birds chirping, leaves rustling, small critters scurrying; you feel the rough texture of tree bark, moisture of mud, and so on. You can try forest bathing next time you go for a hike by taking a moment to pause and absorb everything around you.



Gardening

Gardening can help you relieve stress by letting you focus on plants. Growing plants takes commitment; therefore, gardening encourages you to spend time outdoors and interact with plants regularly. Moreover, gardening can also give you a sense of achievement when the plants produce flowers, fruits, or vegetables. And if you run into issues, such as wilting, it might help you improve your problem-solving skills. Finally, knowing how much time and effort is required to grow one vegetable may give you a new appreciation for food and make you feel grateful.

Indoor Nature

For those of us, who can't leave our enclosed spaces easily due to work and other responsibilities or inclement weather, indoor plants or a small fish tank can help you bring the goodness of nature into your living spaces and enhance

your mood. If you have a hard time keeping your plants alive, you might want to choose low-maintenance species. With a bit of dedication and good lighting, you can also grow herbs, tomatoes, and peppers indoors.





Exercise: Nature Bucket List

Take a moment and reflect on the natural environments you have been to and the activities you have done in nature. Mark the ones you enjoyed and would like to try again.

Now think about natural environments you haven't yet experienced but would like to visit someday. For instance, it could be a national park or a nearby lake that you have always wanted to visit.

Next, think about the activities you want to try, such as canoeing, rock climbing, etc.

Now, write down every natural space you'd like to visit and activities you want to do one day. You may also rank them in order of importance to you or based on distance or ease of access.

Take-Home:

Places and activities on your bucket list don't have to be completely new; you can include as many familiar places and activities as you want. The purpose of this bucket list is to help you generate your intention to visit natural spaces and increase your motivation to visit and interact with nature.

In Sum

Taking care of our spiritual well-being is just as important as attending to our other needs. Our spiritual lives complement our physical and mental lives and make us feel more whole. We all walk on different spiritual paths. Based on our needs, we can nurture our spiritual selves in many ways. In the end, taking care of our spiritual needs can make us feel connected to the greater good and give us a sense of belonging and purpose.

