

Valuing Your Spirituality

People often say that they value their spirituality highly, but find that they actually spend very little time cultivating it and expressing it. In today's webinar, I want to help you explore why this might be and to facilitate you to make new choices in this area of your life.

When we explore the ways in which you express valuing in your **personal life**, through what you say and how you act, we find you approach this through different behaviors.

As I read the following list, I'd like for you to find a time in which you might have done this valuing behavior, and notice why you felt it was valuable. Remember a time when:

- A) You volunteered your time to assist a cause or organization you believe in
- B) You spent money to buy something you valued
- C) You donated money to a cause or organization you believe in
- D) You spent time to learn something you felt was important
- E) You spent time doing something you felt was very important
- F) You told other people about something you felt was valuable
- G) You valued something enough to give it as a gift to another person
- H) You told others something was a priority for you
- I) You felt someone was valuable enough that you traveled to see him or her
- J) You made something an "A" priority on your to do list
- K) You practiced something regularly that you felt was valuable
- L) You defended something you felt was valuable against critics

As you review your responses, were any of these things you said were valuable related to your spirituality?

If you meditate daily, if you go frequently to a religious or spiritual meeting or gathering, or if you go on spiritual pilgrimages to a sacred site or to visit a spiritual teacher, your spirituality might be highlighted in your mind. You would likely say that your spirituality is very important to you or is a priority in your life.

Notice if you answered these process questions with a response related to your spirituality: (A) donation, (B) spent money on something you valued, (C) donated money, (D) learned something valuable, (E) spent time doing something, (F) told others about something valuable, (G) gave a gift, (H) identified something a priority to others, (I) traveled, (J) made something an “A” priority, (K) practiced something regularly, or (L) defended something against critics?

Please note that the objective of this exercise is not to make you feel guilty, but just to let you see where you are allowing your spirituality to have expression in your life.

For some of you, spirituality permeates your life. You answered most of these questions with a response related to your inner life. For others of you, these responses were mixed—some spiritual, some relating to other areas of your life. For others, it only appeared a few times. For some of you, *none* of these responses involved spirituality.

There is no right or wrong answer to these questions. But they hint at how much you value spirituality in your personal life.

But let’s go deeper. Let’s find out if you have deeply engaged your spirituality in its own sphere—in the realm of the sacred, the transcendent, or the eternal.

For this exercise, you will simply notice if you have engaged in these “sacred activities.” Notice how you felt when you participated in them.

- M) You felt something was sacred or holy
- N) You consecrated yourself for a higher purpose
- O) You believed in and prayed to a Higher Power
- P) You remembered a spiritual essence or the Divine Presence
- Q) You meditated upon an inner spiritual essence or the Divine
- R) You felt reverence for a spiritual teacher
- S) You offered your obeisance (bowed or prostrated) to a spiritual Master
- T) You surrendered your life to God
- U) You recognized something as the highest Truth; something of infinite value
- V) You obeyed what you felt was the Will of God
- W) You made spiritual vows and kept them

Have these activities shaped the way you feel about your spirituality? Do you associate positive feelings with these “sacred activities”? Are they mixed feelings? Are some of those feelings negative or cynical, because you have had bad things happen to you when you touched on this sacred part of yourself?



If you have had bad experiences when you touched on this sacred part of yourself, it will take time to heal and to be able to trust this part again, and to trust those who share spiritual teachings and ministry. Maybe when you touched on your spirituality

- Someone ridiculed you
- Someone criticized you
- Someone lied to you
- Someone cheated you
- Someone exploited you
- Someone abused or hurt you
- Someone abandoned you

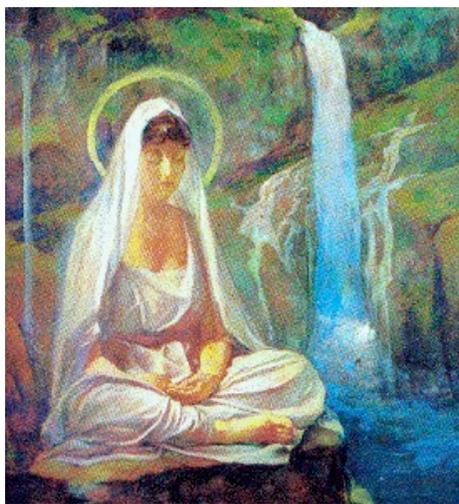
These types of negative spiritual experiences often make people cynical, and foster doubt and mistrust:

- Some lose their faith and struggle to find a new polestar to guide them.
- Some abandon themselves to drink and drugs, seeking to forget.
- Some steer a path far away from any type of religion or spiritual practice, seeking to avoid further pain and disillusionment.
- And some... think about what lessons they learned, make a plan to avoid these consequences in the future, and dive back in—seeking another way to return to God.



For those of you who might still have some confusion and pain about these issues, especially if you might have been involved with a “dysfunctional spiritual group” or cult, there are several things you can do:

- You may find reading our book, “Religions, Cults, and Terrorism: What the Heck Are We Doing?” may help you better understand these experiences and can suggest pathways for healing.
- You may do further reading on cults.
- You may opt to obtain psychotherapy to help you resolve these issues.
- I can also suggest targeted meditations for you in a meditation consultation to help you deal with these issues, and help you construct a plan for healing.



If you have noticed that you are not valuing your spirituality very highly, or you have mixed or negative feelings about it, it may be beneficial for you to examine how negative experiences you have had when you exposed your spirituality to others, or when you pursued spirituality in the past, might be impacting your current feelings—and your valuing—of your spirituality.

What Else Impacts the Expression of Your Spirituality?

Those of you who attended our webinar on 2/11/12, **Doing Your Life's Work (Self Actualization)**, will remember that I said that consciously pursuing spirituality is part of Maslow's Self Actualization zone of the hierarchy of needs.

If you didn't attend that webinar, I will replicate that part of the table from the hierarchy of needs here. [Items in the table in *italics* are my modifications to Maslow's original model].

Maslow's Hierarchy		Sub-levels	Contents
V- Self-Actualization	8	<i>Spirituality</i>	Activating your spirituality by prayer and meditation, joining a religious group
	9	<i>Aspiration</i>	Inner exploration and self-discovery, leading to deep insights and realization
	10	<i>Self-mastery</i>	Learning to control addictions, habits and behavior, cultivating the abilities of your Soul
	11	<i>Service</i>	Expressing your Soul's abilities and gifts to be of service to others, doing volunteer work for others, living love and compassion
	12	Self Actualization	Discovery of your Soul's Purpose, living in harmony with that purpose and making this deepest vision of the heart real—living your dream



Spirituality on Your Hierarchy of Needs

In Maslow's model, to the degree that you are engaged in meeting the needs at a particular zone in this hierarchy of needs, it will influence what you value. You would primarily value these items if this were your main focus in your life. For example:

On level one, **survival**, finding money for food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and medical care are paramount.

On level two, **security**, you would seek to find money for security systems, guns for protection, insurance, or company benefits that protect your self and your family.

On level three, **love and belongingness**, establishing and maintaining a loving relationship, finding and keeping friends, networking, caring for your family, and maintaining good relationships with your relatives would be primary.

On level four, **esteem**, having a beautiful spouse, having an expensive home, a collection of beautiful objects or artwork, gaining wealth, and increasing your investments would be would be coveted.

On level five, **Self Actualization**, spirituality, aspiration, self-mastery, and service are embraced, and you seek to know, express, and live your Soul's purpose.

Meeting your needs at level one to level four takes up time, energy, money, effort, and motivation. The value of the needs at this level can supplant or obscure the values of your Self Actualization needs.

Those who come to Mudrashram® have been able to some degree work through their needs at levels one to four, enough so they can give some time to Self Actualization, and consciously develop their spirituality.

This may not be true for much of the world. We would estimate that among the world's over seven billion people, perhaps

- 65% are focused primarily on meeting basic survival needs
- 10% are preoccupied with security
- 20% are absorbed in love and belongingness, caring for their families, and focusing on their romantic and family relationships
- 4% have handled these other needs and have the requisite wealth to pursue their esteem needs
- 1% have freed up enough breathing room from the press of these other needs to work on self-actualization

And you? If Self-Actualization is your life's focus

You are one of the 1%



What Would You Change?

In this meditation, you will check in to see where you are today, and what you might change to allow yourself more time for your Self-Actualization needs. Here we go!

How much of your life is focused on meeting your survival needs? Notice the time and energy that you spend working on these needs.

- How about your security needs?
- How about love and belongingness?
- Do you devote time to your esteem needs?
- Do you have any time and energy left over to work on your Self-Actualization needs? If yes, where do you put the majority of your efforts in this arena of Self Actualization?
 - *Spirituality* - Activating your spirituality by prayer and meditation, or joining a religious group?
 - *Aspiration* - Engaging in inner exploration and self-discovery, which leads you to deep insights and realization?
 - *Self-mastery* - Learning to control your addictions, habits and behavior, or cultivating the abilities of your Soul?
 - *Service* - Expressing your Soul's abilities and gifts to be of service to others, doing volunteer work for others, or living love and compassion?
 - *Self-Actualization* - Discovering your Soul's Purpose, living in harmony with that purpose, and making this deepest vision of your heart real—living your dream?
- If you could wave a magic wand, how would you change your life to allow you to spend more time in activities of self-actualization, how would you change your life picture?
- How would you divide up your time in the sub-levels? What would you change from what you are doing now?

Thank you for attending our webinar today!

