

# Spiritual Counseling

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a relatively new aspect of counseling. What it means depends on who you talk to. It has been used as a new term for the traditional practices of pastoral counseling, psychic readings and psychotherapy, when spirituality is a topic. However, it can mean something much more. It can be a unique counseling perspective that helps fulfill the evolutionary needs of our time. Through spiritual counseling we can pioneer new ways of helping people from the metaphysical perspective of the new paradigm.

The Open Heart approach to spiritual counseling is an empowerment process, based on spiritual principles, facilitated from a spiritual perspective of internal resources that enliven the spiritual nature of both the client and the counselor. This process gives expression to new paradigm discoveries about the nature of consciousness, facilitating heart-centered experiences and spiritual understanding.

Understanding spiritual principles helps us live more loving, harmonious and fulfilling lives, regardless of our religions, politics or belief systems. Spiritual principles aren't rules of behavior to be obeyed. They are a simple and deep understanding of the metaphysical nature of life, including resonance and the mind. This helps us understand the consequences of our own thinking and attitudes.

Open Heart Spiritual Counselors can help people recognize and make the necessary choices to experience peace and love, moment by moment, as a way of being, instead of a way of doing. As people become more peaceful and loving, their behavior changes spontaneously.

Spiritual principles reveal our nature as spiritual beings, which is much more than we have ever thought we were. Open Heart Spiritual Counselors, working from a spiritual perspective of a developed inner vision, can see people as they really are and empower them to experience their greatness for themselves.

Spiritual principles can guide us to discern truth for ourselves, so we are not dependent on any outside authority. We all know much more than we think we know. However, what we know is not validated by traditional authorities, so we discount our knowledge or have it discounted for us. We all know truth, but we may not recognize it, because our inner knowing isn't objective. It's a subjective knowing that brings us peace. Open Heart Spiritual Counselors help people recognize the truth that lives inside of them.

## Validating Truth

How do we know what's true and what's false? We need a reliable standard for discerning truth that is not based on mere opinion or judgment, or dependence on some outside authority. We need a subjective standard, so that we can detect truth even in the midst of chaos. How can we know truth for ourselves with any degree of certainty?

Experience demonstrates that truth is known through the peace it brings. Think back to the moments in your life when you have had sudden insights or revelations of truth. They each came with a moment of peace in which you may have involuntarily sighed with relief or made a spontaneously exclamation-"ahhhhh!"-as a light came on in your mind. This common experience is illustrated in cartoons with a smiling face as a light bulb turns on in their mind. Whatever truth is, the realization of it always brings peace, if only for an instant.

We have a built in truth meter that resonates to truth. We know truth when we hear it. We have an inner knowing of truth, but we may not notice it or validate it, because we were never taught that it is real. We were taught to judge based on opinions, past experiences and the advice of authority figures. We weren't taught to listen within. We weren't taught that we have an inner authority with direct knowledge of truth.

Kinesiology, the art of muscle testing, gave us objective proof that we all know truth, even if we aren't conscious of it. In muscle testing, each person is asked a series of questions. After each question the tester exerts a slight pressure against specific muscles and the person resists the pressure. It is very easy to resist the pressure when the person

knows the answer and tells the truth. However, if they know the answer and lie, the muscle is weak and unable to withstand this slight pressure. Used in this way, it is like a lie detector test. Lie detectors work because lies weaken our bodies and the truth makes our bodies strong. The truth sets us free.

When people are asked questions about things to which they don't consciously know the answers, the results are the same. Muscles are strong when the truth is presented and weak when something is not true. This demonstrates that people always know truth at some level of their being.

When tested for allergies, muscles are weakened when something is not good for the person. Since lies also weaken muscles, we could draw the following two conclusions:

- Subjective assumptions have objective physical effects.
- Making false assumptions or judgments isn't good for us, because they weaken our bodies in the same way allergies do.

To put it another way-We have allergic reactions to lies. Perhaps allergies are reactions to lies we are telling ourselves.

## Reality Testing

We always test assumptions and ideas relative to the nature of our reality; whatever we consider real; our truth. This truth is the basis of all our beliefs, because our assumptions have to fit within our reality for us to believe them. Everything we believe is relative to what we think is real. Scientists carefully weigh and measure their observations relative to axioms or self-evident truths considered to be the nature of objective reality.

When scientists assumed the world was flat, they made up beliefs and rules based on this truth. Therefore, they decreed that boats would fall off the edges of the world and there was a shortage of land, etc. When they discovered the world was round, the edges disappeared and there was an abundance of land, etc. When the understanding of the nature of reality changes, all beliefs based on the old assumption crumble and new ones emerge out of the new definition of reality.

Each one of us tests everything relative to what we value most-our truth and deepest assumption about the nature of life. How will this affect me relative to X? Will it bring me more or less X? For example, if we value money, we would always want to know what's in it for us. The more profit it brings, the more realistic it would be to us. Our values might be money, things, prestige, approval of friends or family, or they might be qualities of life, like enjoyment, peace, love or compassion.

Whatever we value most is what we consider the source of our peace and security in this world. This is rarely God, even when we believe in God. We tend to let other gods or other goals get in the way, thinking our peace depends on some "thing" outside of us. We might think, "How can I be at peace if I can't pay my bills?"

If we value peace more than anything else, we test everything relative to peace. This gives us the simple awareness or truth of "what is." Emotional discomfort or pain signals the presence of a faulty assumption, a misperception that is clouding or limiting our awareness. This is a lie we are telling ourselves and it is weakening us. We feel better when we simply see and accept things as they are. This expands our awareness, giving us the clarity to make positive choices that bring more love, joy and happiness into our lives. This will also take care of our material needs as a side affect. Jesus said, "Seek ye the kingdom of heaven and everything else will be taken care of." In other words, having peace as our primary goal can be infinitely practical.

Spiritual experiences are direct experiences of these metaphysical qualities of life. Therefore, it is a function of Open Heart Spiritual Counseling to help people find peace by learning to discern truth for themselves, the truth that is revealed to them through their own metaphysical experiences.

We cannot value peace more than anything else in the world, unless we have first accepted the validity of subjective reality and see our metaphysical experiences as real and affecting the events in our lives. Metaphysical experiences are not usually separate from the normal experiences of daily life. However, when we are able to observe thoughts, emotions, energies and/or qualities being expressed on the subjective level as real events filled with information and impact, our orientation to the world changes.

When we accept peace as our new standard, we have to reexamine each and every belief we hold to see if it is true or false. Does it bring us peace or conflict? This is a purification process. Helping others with this purification process so that everyone can live more loving and peaceful lives is the purpose of Open Heart Spiritual Counseling.

Open Heart Spiritual Counseling helps people find truth and peace for themselves. Wherever we find one, we find the other. When we are at peace, we have the clarity to see truth, and when we see truth, we are at peace.

## The Price of Peace

Most people do not really want peace, because they are afraid they will have to pay a high price for it. This fear comes out of the distorted perception of the old paradigm and its confidence in the exchange principle, and the resulting beliefs in scarcity and sacrifice.

The exchange principle is an underlying assumption that asserts energy is never gained or lost. It just changes form. In other words, everything happens through interaction. Creation is over. This is all there is. Therefore, as long as we are influenced by the old paradigm, we will draw the following conclusions:

- There is a limited supply of everything.
- We must give up something to get anything.
- The more scarce something is, the more we will have to give up to get it.

Even though they are not true, these beliefs justify a fear of peace for the believers. Notice how rare peace is. By this standard, peace and love are very costly and could be purchased only with great sacrifices. This same assumption could make us afraid of God and all authority figures, because we would see them as needing sacrifices in exchange for everything they give.

The assumption that everything costs us something distorts the meaning of love, changing it into need. It causes people to believe in a needy, jealous and vengeful God who loves only for a price and needs people's worship to be okay, punishing them if these needs aren't met. It does not show God as loving, simply because it is God's nature to love, as it is our nature, when we are truly being ourselves. There is no room in this assumption for unlimited resources and unconditional love.

As long as people are outer directed, they feel at the mercy of those in authority and are therefore motivated to please or appease them. They are afraid of being punished for disloyalty for even trying to discover truth for themselves. When they are happy, they are afraid that something terrible is going to happen as a result; the price they will have to pay. This distortion is very common.

## The Realm of the Heart

Before we can really want peace, we must be inner directed enough to believe we can make a difference and have at least some trust in our inner resources and higher power. This shift in consciousness has begun as more and more people are looking within and seeking to direct their lives from their spiritual center, the heart.

Open Heart Spiritual Counseling emerged as a response to the evolutionary need for support entering the realm of the heart. The spiritual heart is our connection to our higher power, which transforms us from being outer directed, relying on external authorities, to being inner directed and guided by a higher power.

Whether we are dependent on an authority or being in authority, we are relying on external authority, manipulating others for self-interest. However, when we look within our hearts for peace and harmony, we create solutions that are in the best interest of everyone involved. Being inner directed involves, not just an intellectual change in values, but a change in the resonance of our being, the result of a heart-centered process.

Making this shift requires a quantum leap in consciousness, a leap very few people have made, but one that many people are ready to make as we enter the new paradigm of self-empowerment and personal responsibility.

Traditional psychological, pastoral, and psychic counseling approaches are inappropriate to help people with this developmental task. Traditional approaches are based on the old paradigm, which is authoritarian, manipulative and diagnostic, qualities that are opposite of those needed to help people become self-directed, self-motivated, and self-assessing. It is difficult to learn to think for yourself while being told what is best for you, according an external authority. This creates the need for nontraditional approaches to counseling that can fill this need.

Open Heart Spiritual Counseling focuses on helping people experience and be directed by their innate spiritual nature and the inner wisdom of a higher power. This process of self-discovery empowers people to become more pro-active, taking responsibility for their own happiness and well being, while loving others as themselves.

We cannot take anyone where we have not been, so those who would be spiritual counselors need to first take this quantum leap for themselves. We must be able to rely on internal resources for the inner vision necessary to validate spiritual experiences of others, helping them gain confidence as they learn to discern truth for themselves.

## Peace As A New Value

We, as a society, are beginning to value peace more and more as we take more personal responsibility and realize we can create peace for ourselves. Every day new methods of stress reduction become popular, and more people incorporate them into their lives. Not only are we learning to relieve stress in the body through meditation, exercise and diet, but we are also learning how to change the way we see the world, so we don't get as stressed in the first place. Prevention is becoming preferable to cure. Why should we wait until we are in pain before we seek peace?

One of the most astounding discovery is that blissful, altered states of awareness, commonly thought to be available only through deep states of meditation, are actually available to us while we are in the midst of activity, fully participating in the world. The common experience of "runner's high" is only one example of the bliss that can be found in any high performance state. The practice of "mindfulness," introduced to the west by Buddhist monks, demonstrates we can have bliss as part of our daily life by bringing our awareness into the present moment and being fully present. Both pure experience and pure presence is pure bliss. However, purification is necessary first to release the blocks to this awareness.

Whether we go inside or outside for our happiness, the greatest happiness is found in the present moment, being fully aware of "what is." We can transcend hell temporarily in present moments of joy, or we can begin our inner work to dispel illusions and establish a peaceful state of mind. The way out of hell is through discernment of the spirits, sorting out "what is" from what isn't; truth from lies, reality from illusions.

## Role of Spiritual Counseling

Humanity is at a point in evolution where many people are ready to take responsibility for their lives and enter the realm of the heart. As we become directed from within, we base our lives on the inner reality of a higher power and the harmonious resonance of unconditional love.

Corresponding to this evolutionary development, science is discovering the superior power of metaphysical reality, the internal reality of life. The timing of these discoveries is no coincidence. They were made possible by our evolution in consciousness. We are becoming capable of seeing and understanding this inner realm.

It is extremely important to make counseling available that is centered in the new paradigm and its understanding of metaphysical reality, resonance, ongoing creation, equality of spirit, and undivided wholeness. This non-authoritarian approach can empower people to discover truth for themselves, giving them a way to become self-directed enough to make this new evolutionary leap in consciousness. Open Heart Spiritual Counseling offers people this opportunity as they enter the realm of the heart and higher states of consciousness.