

The 9 Phases of Interspirituality

as explained by Wayne Teasdale

A universal spirituality is eminently practical in nine ways and, through these ways, becomes immensely transformative of the individual, the community, and the world. Interspirituality finds these nine elements in the mature expressions of spirituality in every tradition – that is, in their saints or mystics. These include 1. an actualized moral capacity; 2. a sense of solidarity and interdependence with all beings; 3. deep nonviolence; 4. humility of heart; 5. a spiritual practice; 6. mature self-knowledge; 7. simplicity of life; 8. love in action, or compassionate service; and 9. prophetic voice, or witness, and action.

The first way, or element, is moral consciousness, having an actualized moral life: that one is naturally moral. It has become second nature to the person. That's the foundation of the spiritual life, the path, the evolution of one's development. Second, the enlightened man or woman knows of his or her interdependence and joyful solidarity with all living beings in all worlds. Because of this, third, there is an innate commitment to nonharming of all beings with whom we come in contact, since we are all interconnected, and everything we do affects everyone and everything else. Fourth, it is humility of heart that knows, sees, acts aright in each situation. Humility of heart is honesty about yourself, who you are, and the integrity you have. Humility is a nonmanipulative relationship toward everyone, everything, and reality itself. One doesn't impose on or manipulate others but respects their inherent right to be, and to be respected. The fifth way or element of spirituality and interspirituality is spiritual practice, the utter necessity for it. It is primarily through a spiritual practice, the central commitment to a method of prayer, that the person pursues the spiritual life, in real dedication of praxis, whether in meditation, verbal prayer, singing, chanting, dancing, or giving adoration to the Divine (*Remember, snowboarding, hackey sack, playing guitar can all be forms of meditation*). These and many other forms of spiritual practice become the ground of real inner and outer growth, especially when there is genuine transformation and they are the basis of great breakthroughs in the spiritual life.

The sixth is related to the fifth, in that self-knowledge often results from, and is the fruit of, prayer, meditation, or whatever form spiritual practice takes in the committed activity of the person. This self-knowledge is a precious gift from prayer, part of its fruit in knowledge of ourselves, our nature, and deeper motivations-motivations often hidden from view in the unconscious life of the person.

When we reach the seventh element or way of a universal spirituality, an intermystical spiritual path, we are in the clear understanding of the need for simplicity of life, which requires a more simple lifestyle. The aspect of spiritual life, of a viable spirituality, connects us with nature and all beings. It makes it possible for us to simplify our needs so the planet, the natural world, is not harmed by our presence but greatly enhanced. It opens us to all others, especially the poor, because there are no material concerns that keep us apart. Being simple, we are open to the vulnerable, the poor, the marginalized of the world. It then makes us docile and receptive to the Divine.

Then comes the eighth element, or way of love in action, selfless service, or compassionate action. This capacity for love, kindness, compassion, even sensitivity is related to all the other elements and, in many ways, is the fruit of them in relation to all others. Spirituality is not genuine if it isn't engaged with the world- that is, with others.

This attitude, activity, and being concretizes our spirituality; it makes it authentic, or real. It is this capacity that constitutes us most like God.

Closely related to the eight element in its active orientation is the ninth and final element of spirituality, as a viable interspirituality, and that is prophetic voice, witness, and action where warranted. Part of being an engaged spirituality is a concern with justice, with social and environmental responsibility, with the struggle for peace and the promotion of justice in the search for common ground and harmony. The enlightened individual will stick his or her neck out for the sake of justice, for others-that is, will take risks in order to help the vulnerable, marginalized, and ignored of society. A spirituality not so engaged is poor indeed. Spirituality is engaged when it arrives at maturity and greatness.

This spirituality, as a whole, is marked by this attitude and practice of engagement with others, with the world. Furthermore, it is holistic; it integrates the body, soul, and mind, or spirit, and it unites the conscious with the unconscious, and them to the superconsciousness. Finally, this spirituality is integral because it seeks to relate faith, mysticism, contemplation, science, and creativity-that is, unite all avenues of knowing.