

SereneScene



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SPIRITUAL INVESTMENT

By Andrew T. Martin, MBA, CADC II, SAP

In the opinion of this Writer, the concept of spirituality changes meaning as humankind evolves. In the modern world, spirituality is often understood as one's internal self-experience. It is the culmination of one's understanding of their whole being combined with one's symbolic, and possibly secret, representations of humanistic connection. In the context of recovery from substance use disorders, spirituality involves connection with other energies such as people, nature, a higher power, etc. The vast majority of recovering persons agree to certain fundamental philosophical principles when discussing spiritual investment. It is these principles, and their practice, that will be discussed in this article.

Already mentioned is the principle of a higher power which is a belief in an external power greater than one's self which one can turn to for spiritual connection. In other words, a higher power is an individually perceived force which binds one with their perception of a greater understanding of one's cosmos. A higher power is often wrongly associated with an organized religion such as Christianity, Judaism, Muslim, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. However, a higher power is intentionally defined very broadly in order to allow any individual to define their own conceptualization of a higher power. So, by example, an individual may define their Higher Power as Jesus or Allah, and another individual may define their higher power as the energy that binds all together.

One of the principles of spiritual investment suggests applying a higher power to one's belief system as a tool

for finding help, guidance, strength, and opportunity. It is in this practice that one is relieved of the burden of solving all life's difficulties alone. The guidance and/or intervention of the higher power helps the individual to continue with perseverance through difficult times. Likewise, the guidance and/or intervention of the higher power also helps the individual recognize the bounty of prosperous times. The personal spiritual relief experienced is directly proportional to the spiritual investment made by the individual.

Spiritual practice also includes the concept of kindness. Being charitable or acting charitably toward others creates a sense of fulfillment for social animals such as human beings. Many cultures consider kindness a virtue, perhaps because kind acts not only benefit the recipient of the behavior, but also the giver. Perhaps one of the most bonding experiences between people is asking for help in a genuine way, and receiving that assistance from someone who genuinely wishes to be helpful. In fact, people are designed for kindness as being kind results in the release of 'feel-good' neurotransmitters in the brain. The investment of kindness bonds humans together with emotions such as compassion, empathy and generosity. And to the extent of the investment into kindness, one will receive the gift of belonging.

Possibly the concept most associated with spirituality is serenity which is the peacefulness resulting from the absence of agitation. Because the human mind can be preoccupied and/or distracted by turbulent thoughts, many who practice spirituality seek to eliminate the

turbulence. If successful, one can become fully present and in the moment. For human beings it is terribly difficult to find serenity for a pronounced amount of time. However, many experience serenity on occasions of spiritual practice and devotion. Common practices include prayer, meditation, mindfulness, nature treks, chanting, and open journaling.

Humility is a part of spiritual investment as well. Understanding that one is not more important, better than, or more valuable than another is a belief system that is virtuous because it contributes to one's ability to comprehend that they are not in control of most circumstances. The relinquishment of false control over circumstances that cannot be controlled is empowering to the individual because the tremendous futile effort spent on trying to control can be diverted to being present and in the moment. It is in humility that people actually find empowerment and connection.

Spiritual investment also requires forgiveness. Forgiveness is the spiritual process of relinquishing feelings of resentment, offense or anger against another person or one's self, and liberating one's self from the expectation of punishment or restitution. Resentments are often eliminated once the individual accepts that almost everyone does the best that they can with what they have at the time. It is with this belief that one can begin to adjust their expectations of others, and of themselves, into more realistic expectations. Once expectations are set within realistic parameters, the performance of others is quite often acceptable and the resentments never formulate to begin with. Forgiveness is central to one's ability to let go of the past and move into the present.

In the context of recovery from substance use disorders, most recovering persons agree to the principles of a higher power, kindness, serenity, humility, and forgiveness when discussing spiritual investment. These are not exact practices, and all of these principles are unique for every person. Therefore, spirituality must remain a concept with tremendous latitude in explanation and understanding. Spiritual investment is measured in the result to the individual. The higher the investment, the greater the return on quality of life.



Andrew Martin
M.B.A., CADC II, SAP

Andrew Martin began his entrepreneurial approach to business in 1982 at the age of fifteen. Throughout his career, Andrew has fulfilled his duties as a senior executive in viable business ventures in various industries including; health care, sound reinforcement and lighting, electrical safety equipment, commercial catering, specialty metal

shapes manufacturing, and the entertainment overhead suspension industry.

Andrew's current business efforts are encompassed by Serene Recovery Network, a group of branded organizations with a common vision of helping people in early recovery to help themselves to a long-term rewarding quality of life without addiction. The individual businesses include Serene Center, a 36 bed transitional sober living facility in Long Beach, CA which also conducts outpatient counseling services, drug testing and monitoring, and outpatient detoxification. Serene Connections, a publishing and professional educational conference production company catering to the field of addiction treatment. Serene Directory, an online directory of professionals and organizations affiliated with behavioral and mental health. Serene Foundation, a micro loan lender providing funding for the continuum of addiction care.

Andrew has authored many articles related to addiction treatment, health care agency productivity, industry specialties, as well as business approach and leadership and has been published in Serene Scene, Behavioral Health, Freedom Newspaper, Sound & Video Contractor, Western Wall and Ceiling Contractors Association Bulletin, Connections Magazine (Australia), dB Magazine, EQ, Lighting & Sound International (Canada), Sound & Communications, Live Sound International (UK), Recording-Engineering-Production. Additionally, many patents and trademarks have been awarded to Andrew Martin for various business related products, brand names, and service marks.

Andrew is also very active in the California Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (CAADAC) Board of Directors and Sober Living Network. Andrew also keynotes for many organizations.