

TWELVE

PEACE & SPIRIT

Shining the Light of Peace

*This little light of mine,
I'm gonna let it shine. . . .*

—A TRADITIONAL GOSPEL SONG

The journey for peace—inner peace and peace on Earth—is ultimately a spiritual journey. Our souls long for peace. Our spirit hungers to come home to its source, where Peace and Love reside unconditionally. When we remember our natural self, we swim in this essence. Thus, this final chapter completes the circle begun in the first chapter, on finding true inner peace.

The major religions of the world hold peace as a central goal and core value. Yet we do not have to be religious in the conventional sense to experience the spiritual dimension of peace. We need only connect with our true nature and know that we are part of something larger. We need only trust that whatever that greater whole (being, power, mystery, energy, God, divine essence) is, peace is at its sacred center—and so are we.

100 FIND YOUR PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE

The universe is vast and mysterious beyond imagining. The age-old question of “Who am I?” in relation to that great mystery continues to capture our attention. This is not a question for which we have definitive answers. Asking it periodically gives us the chance to unfold more and more of who we really are.

- Sit quietly with a friend or with pen and paper. Ask yourself, “Who am I?” or have your friend ask, “Who are you?” Answer. Ask the same question again. Give a different answer, whatever comes into your mind.
- Keep asking and answering that same question, pushing past your level of discomfort, even when you think there are no more answers to give. There are no right and wrong answers, just increasing levels of awareness.
- Stand outside on a starry night, somewhere where you have a good view of the night sky. Ask repeatedly, “Who am I?” Again, listen for the many answers that come.
- Hold a baby. Peer into the center of a beautiful flower. Put on the most beautiful music you know and listen (with earphones, if possible). Stand at the ocean’s edge. Ask again, “Who am I?” Listen for what comes back.

101 HEAL OLD WOUNDS WITH GOD AND RELIGION

Many people have trouble moving forward in their spiritual life because of unhealed wounds from the past. Perhaps the religion in which we grew up felt punitive or empty. Perhaps we suffered or witnessed a great tragedy, and wondered how any Divine Being could allow such evil or anguish. Or we may have felt betrayed by a trusted religious figure.

When we carry these old scars in our mindstream, it is difficult to be at peace with ourselves and our world, for our spiritual peace is at the heart of all our relationships. The split from Spirit makes honoring the Four Principles of Peace more of a task than a joy.

- Sit quietly, alone or with a trusted friend. Tell the story of your spiritual journey to date.
- Make note of the places in the story where you still have some negative emotional charge or reaction. Identify the wounds still to be healed.
- If you have moved away from your original religion, consider why that was. You may want to go back to the mosque, temple, shrine, sacred fire, church, or synagogue (either the exact one you used to attend or one like it) to see how it feels in the present time. Sing the songs or chants; practice the rituals. What do you notice?
- If you didn't have a religious upbringing or have not pursued any religious study or experience, ask yourself why. Try attending a variety of places of worship, or reading spiritually oriented books, to see what you notice.
- Find the right medicine to help mend whatever has been damaged. Is there someone you need to express your feelings to? Something you need to let go of? Someone to forgive (including yourself, or even God)? Something you need to talk about in a safe space?
- Take one step toward healing this most central of all relationships, trusting that further steps will follow in the right time if that is your desire.

*102 PRAY FOR PEACE;
MEDITATE FOR PEACEFULNESS*

Some say that prayer is speaking to God (or whatever name you give to that great spiritual force), and that meditation is listening to God. Both prayer and meditation come in many forms. Prayer can be a statement of gratitude, a petition or request, a wish, the sending forth of a specific positive thought—through attunement to a higher source or your higher self, however you understand that.

Meditation might involve conscious breathing, watching and releasing thoughts that arise, repetition of a word or sound, focus on an object or image, or just resting in the great emptiness.

Many studies have shown the positive effects of both prayer and meditation on the body and the mind. Something definitely happens in our energy field and in the fields of those around us, when we pray and meditate. If we pray and meditate for peace, even over long distances, we literally give peace power.

- Find a prayer for peace in some scripture, sacred, or inspirational text. Read it to yourself,

read it aloud, memorize it. Pray it with all your heart.

- Make up a prayer for peace. Pray it with all your soul.
- Send out that prayer for peace to the people you'd like it to benefit. Send it with all your might. See it fulfilled—for instance, see the people suffering from war able to stop the fighting and rebuild sane and trusting relationships.
- Find or create a song that carries a spiritual message of peace meaningful to you. Sing it with all your soul.
- Learn a meditation technique that works for you. Practice it regularly. Let it center you home to the place of inner peace.

103 FIND AN INSPIRATIONAL ROLE MODEL

A spiritual role model is someone—living or dead or even imaginary—who represents for you the highest spiritual ideal. This person or being represents the qualities you would like to attain and inspires you to reach for them.

This role model is a doorway onto your spiritual path, and a guide and friend along the way. It both pushes you to stretch beyond your presumed limits and invites you into new and exciting sacred territory.

- Identify a person or a being who especially inspires you, touches your soul.

Find a picture of this great one. Or draw one that shows how you think they might look.

- Put the picture somewhere where you will see it every day. Look at the picture as if you were looking into the mirror. See yourself reflected in the eyes of this being. Try on their good qualities, as if they were your own.
- Read whatever words may have been written by or about this person. Write words you think they might write if they could.
- Talk to your friends and family about this spiritual ideal and what it means to you.

104 WATER THE SEEDS OF PEACE IN EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE

In every situation, no matter how conflictual, the seeds of peace exist. In every person, no matter how distressed, the seeds of peace exist. These seeds exist because we exist; they are part of us from birth, part of our spiritual DNA patterning. Peace is always possible, because it is encoded

within us as our sacred birthright.

Seeds, like acorns, carry the imprint of their own maturity. The seed is the potential; it is programmed for success. Sometimes the seed needs a little help in order to grow. Seeds especially need careful watering.

- Practice looking at every person you meet as if they were the living embodiment of Peace. Try it with yourself as well.
- When someone is breaking the peace, hold the thought that the seeds of peace they have temporarily forgotten might be remembered. Actively water those seeds by addressing that potential in the person rather than reacting to the immediate behavior.
- In any conflict situation you are involved in, or a witness to, give your attention to the possibility for peace. Never let go of that awareness, no matter what the circumstances might seem like. In fact, the worse the circumstances appear, the stronger you need to be calling out that potential. Pray that this potential might be realized.
- If the conflict seems impossible to resolve, pray for the miracle of peace. Pray for peace to blossom, even if you cannot find the formula for its flowering.

105 HONOR THE SPIRIT OF PEACE IN ACTION

This inner pattern for peace is not an inert possibility; it is a living presence that we can call the Spirit of Peace. The Spirit of Peace longs to be activated, set in motion, so that peace itself can be a force for good in our relationships and in the world. In this way, Spirit lives through us, and life is peace in action.

When we see the Spirit of Peace in action we need to honor it, so it will grow. To become part of our everyday culture, peacebuilding activities need to be known, seen, and heard about. We need a promotion campaign for peace.

- When anyone does something—no matter how small—to increase peace in any aspect of life, applaud them. Let them know how grateful you are for their courage and example.
- When you see a success story for peace, spread the word about it. Write it up for your local newspaper; tell your friends; call it in to a radio talk show.
- Collect success stories and put them on the Internet. E-mail them to your friends.
- When your own efforts in any of the activities listed in this book bear fruit, let people know. Don't be shy; practice shameless acts of self-promotion for peace.
- Get together with others and plan a mini-advertising campaign to inform people about one aspect of peacebuilding or nonviolent conflict resolution.

- Encourage your workplace, place of worship, or community organization to host an awards dinner to honor the most outstanding peacebuilders in your group.

106 LOVE LIFE AND ALL WHO LIVE

Peace, life, and love are intertwined in our being. To be fully alive is to know peace; to love peace is to love life; to live peace is to live love. The Spirit of Peace is also the Spirit of Love and the Spirit of Life. Spirit is one.

To know and express our love for peace, we express our love for all who share this planet with us, for all who live, for all our relatives. In respecting life, we honor that potential for peace that is within us all. In respecting the whole family of life, we honor the sacred circle of all that is.

- Hug a tree; bless a star; say “Thank you” to a butterfly; cherish a worm; caress a leaf; blow a kiss to a bumblebee; tickle the grass; pat a cat. Treat all life as your favorite relative.
- If there is any creature that you are afraid of or that repulses you, find something to like about them. Spend one hour getting to know all you can about them. Pretend that this creature is your best friend.
- When you wake up in the morning, offer a prayer of gratitude that you are alive. Fill your lungs with fresh air, and feel the fullness of life.
- When you go to sleep at night, list the highlights of your day. What were the best moments? What can you celebrate?
- Make an offering of your joy. Whenever something happens during the day that brings you happiness, important life lessons, or a moment of peace, dedicate the benefit of it to others. Make a simple prayer that whatever good you are experiencing might ripple out from you and bring the same good to others.

107 LIGHT UP THE WORLD

Many faith traditions speak of Spirit as Light. Light is the essence of our spiritual nature. The Bible says, “Don’t hide your light under a bushel.” When we shine the light of peace, we are dressing the Spirit of Peace in all its radiant glory.

The eternal light, the lamp, the torch, the flame, the candle—these are archetypal metaphors, across cultures and throughout time. They signify a light that is sacred, holy, inspiring, inviting. When peace is our lamp, people can find their way through any darkness.

- Know yourself as light. You are a being of light. Your unique flame of life burns bright and

strong. You are part of a larger fire, the inner light that ignites us all from the same source.

- Imagine that your body is full of stars. You are shining from the inside out. Feel this as the light of peace. Turn up the volume, and send it out. Radiate peace.
- Pretend you are a lighthouse. Flash that beacon of light in all directions, so that those who are lost in the violent seas might find their way safely home to peace. Direct the beam of light especially to those places in your nation or around the world where people are suffering the anguish of war.
- Become, for a moment, like the Statue of Liberty. Hold up the torch, the light of peace, that the oppressed of the world can have hope that peace is possible.
- Play with other metaphors for light: flashlight, candle, campfire, light bulb, starlight, sunlight. Think of new ones. Draw them, be them, act them out. However you can experience yourself as light is useful in reminding you that you can, through conscious choice, light up the world and your unique corner of it.

108 LAUGH A LOT

When we know ourselves as light, as Spirit, as one with all life, we feel boundless joy. Joy and its physical expression, laughter, are the natural language of the Spirit of Peace.

Medical practitioners know that laughter has great healing power during times of sickness. We even have a saying, “Laughter is the best medicine.” We can get to the joy through laughter, or to the laughter through joy. It doesn’t matter. What does matter is that we celebrate the Spirit of Peace with joy.

- Play the laughing game. Several people lie down, each with their head on someone’s belly. One person starts laughing. Soon all the bellies are bouncing with laughter, and no one can stop!
- Be silly. Don’t worry what you look like or what people will say. Do something totally unusual, ridiculous, and laughable. Make a fool of yourself.
- Go to the video store and take out five comedies you have never seen. Tell your friends about the three best ones.
- Pick a favorite comedian and watch, read, or listen to much of their work. Become a Lucy expert, a Dave Barry fan, or a *Saturday Night Live* aficionado.
- Enroll in clown school.
- Tell jokes. When you hear a funny joke, write it down and practice telling it to your family. Or get a joke book and try some.

- Be like a child. No matter how old you are, you can be playful. Tease, hop, skip rope, imagine, wonder, focus completely and earnestly on one small thing, be full of awe.
- Remember three of the most joyous moments in your life. Tell someone about them, savoring every bit of the memory.
- Be at peace with the joy of life.

REVIEW

Practice the Four Principles of the Spirit of Peace

COMMUNITY

Cherish all that lives.

COOPERATION

Work with the Spirit of Peace in action; make it real.

NONVIOLENCE

Acknowledge the seeds for peace in all people and all situations.

WITNESS

Practice the living presence of peace;
shine your light as a beacon of hope.

HEALING THE HOLY WOUND

*How easy it is to get caught in day-to-day life in the material realm and forget our spiritual nature!
Sometimes, if we look deeply, we might actually discover a moment when we made a choice to
forget. Here is a story of blessed remembrance, when one man's temporal pain turned inside out to
reveal a long-hidden sense of wholeness and joy.*

On the surface, my life seemed great. I had a wonderful family, an exciting job, a lovely home. Yet from time to time I would experience waves of anguish and despair.

One day, when I felt particularly bad, I went for a walk on the beach. It was an early winter day, and I had the beach to myself. I started talking out loud, to whom I wasn't sure. I complained bitterly about the unexplainable hole in my life. Why wasn't I satisfied? What else did I need?

When I wore myself out with moaning and groaning, I looked around me, noticing the beach and its beauty in what seemed like a new way. There was a strange shimmering quality of light on the curling tops of the waves. A thought, like a voice, came into my mind: "Here I am," it said. "Here who is?" I asked. "Here I am. Here, I am," repeated the thought.

Suddenly a memory came—the moment I decided not to go to church anymore because I couldn't stand the hypocrisy of the religion-on-Sunday-only crowd. I saw how I had cut spirituality out of my life with that decision. Now I knew what had been missing. I looked around and found in that instant a new church, the church of here, where I am, where my heart is open and my senses alive, where the vast forces of life work mysteriously but surely, and I am part of it all.

I found a beautiful shell on the beach. I stood for a moment with it in my hand and waited for a prayer. The prayer that came was gratitude, pure and simple, for the joy of life. I gave the shell back to the water, from whence it came.

RESOURCE GUIDE

Check within your local community for special prayer services for peace, for programs of meditation instruction, for spiritual or religious activities related to peace. Here are some suggestions:

PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Quaker organization that includes people of all faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. Focuses on issues related to economic justice, peacebuilding, demilitarization, social justice, and youth, in the United States and around the world.

PHILADELPHIA, PA; PHONE: 215-241-7000; FAX: 215-241-7275;

E-MAIL: afscinfo@afsc.org; WEB SITE: www.afsc.org

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

A relief, service, community development and peace agency of the North American Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. The Mennonite Conciliation Service (MCS) is a network of individuals committed to transforming conflict. Teaches effective conflict resolution skills and promotes positive attitudes toward conflict.

AKRON, PA; PHONE: 717-859-1151;
E-MAIL: mccwash@mcc.org; WEB SITE: mcc@mcc.org

SUNRAY MEDITATION SOCIETY

An international spiritual society dedicated to planetary peace. Home fire of the Green Mountain Aniyunwiwa (Cherokee) and a Tibetan Buddhist Dharma center of the Nyingma and Drikung Kagyu schools, Sunray offers practical and skillful methods for realizing peace, compassion, and right relationship with Earth and all relations. Ongoing programs of education, service, and spiritual training.

BRISTOL, VT; PHONE: 802-453-4610;
E-MAIL: sunray@sover.net; WEB SITE: www.sunray.org

UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE

A growing global community dedicated to building cultures of peace and justice to serve a better future for the Earth Community. People around the globe have joined together, celebrating the uniqueness of their traditions, to explore how interfaith cooperation can make a positive difference in their local communities.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA; PHONE: 415-561-2300; FAX: 415-561-2313;
E-MAIL: office@uri.org; WEB SITE: www.united-religions.org

BOOKS, TAPES, VIDEOS

Attitudes of Gratitude: How to Give and Receive Joy Every Day of Your Life. Mary Jane Ryan. Conari Press, 1999.

Being Peace. Thich Nhat Hanh. Parallax Press, 1988.

Compassion in Action: Setting Out on the Path of Service. Ram Dass. Crown Publishing Group, 1992.

The Courage for Peace: Daring to Create Harmony in Ourselves and the World. Louise Diamond. Conari Press, 1999.

Praying Peace. James Twyman, Gregg Braden, and Doreen Virtue, Findhorn Press, 2000. Available from Source Books, P.O. Box 292231, Nashville, TN 37229-2231; phone: 800-637-5222.

Seeking Peace: Notes and Conversations Along the Way. Johann Christoph Arnold. Dutton/Plume, 2000.

Voices of Our Ancestors: Cherokee Teachings from the Wisdom Fire. Dhyani Ywahoo. Shambhala, 1987.

WEB SITES

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Online magazine, *Peacework*, offering resources and articles from AFSC.

www.afsc.org/peacewrk.html

EMISSARY OF LIGHT

Offers books, music, newsletter, workshop information, and message board relating to the work of Jimmy Twyman, Peace Troubadour.

www.emissaryoflight.com

RELIGIOUS PEACE FELLOWSHIPS

Numerous faith-based associations committed to peace. Affiliated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Includes:

The Baptist Peace Fellowship

www.bpfna.org

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship

www.bpf.org

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship

www.episcopalpeacefellowship.org

The Jewish Peace Fellowship

www.jewishpeacefellowship.org

The Muslim Peace Fellowship

www.mpfweb.org

The Orthodox Peace Fellowship

www.incommunion.org

Keywords to explore through your computer search engine: *spiritual peace, religion and peace*