



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

2.3 SPIRITUAL CHARACTER PART 1: DEFINING YOUR SPIRITUAL CONTEXT

Spiritual context is the first step in developing your spiritual character; it is the 'container' or 'frame of reference' within which you experience all of life, including your work.

IN OUR 1ST article on spiritual character ("The Power of Spiritual Character"), we shared with you the following equation that we use to define and develop spiritual character:

$$\text{Spiritual Character} = \frac{\text{Spiritual Context} + \text{Spiritual Purpose} + \text{Spiritual Values}}{\text{Ego Desires}}$$

The first element of this equation, your spiritual context, represents your spiritual view of life. The dictionary defines context as: *the interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs: an environment*. So your spiritual context is the spiritual 'container' or 'frame of reference' within which you experience all of life, including your work.

To define your spiritual context, take some time to inwardly reflect on and answer these questions:

1. How do you define spirituality, in your own words?
2. How would you expand more fully on your definition? (this is your spiritual context)
3. What is the theme, in 1-4 words, that summarises what you've thought of?

Here's how Ashoke Maitra, former Human Resource Director for the Times of India, answered those questions:

1. *My definition of spirituality is that the soul is Divine, and the goal is to manifest this Divinity.*
2. *I believe that I am not the body; I am the soul, and each soul is potentially Divine. I may manifest this Divinity through karma, bakthi, or jnana yoga; or, I may do it by teaching, training, or being a carpenter. What matters to me spiritually is to give expression to the Divinity that is perceived as dormant, but is actually alive in each person.*
3. *My spiritual context theme is "Manifestation of latent Divinity."*

What does a spiritual context look like in action in the business world? Ashoke has brought his spiritual context alive in his employee training programmes. As he says,

We are telling people that, “Yes, you have joined an industry. Yes, you need your children, family, a certain amount of technology, and money to survive in life. But this is not all there is. Your true joy will come in your own spiritual realisation.”

To put his spiritual context to work, he has developed employee training programmes that include subjects such as self-perfection, controlling and integrating the body and mind, and examining values and mental balance. *“All of this has to do with your original self,”* Ashoke says.

Here’s how you can put your spiritual context to work:

1. Identify a work situation that you would like to see from a new perspective.
2. Look at that situation from your spiritual context.
3. From your spiritual context, ask yourself: How do I now see this situation? What new insights and feelings am I aware of? How could I approach this situation from my new perspective?
4. Write down any creative ideas or solutions that come as a result of seeing your situation from your spiritual context.

Sometimes it’s easier to practice these steps on a work situation that isn’t quite so personal.

Try this situation:

Imagine that you’re working in an insurance company processing claims. Your company recently made a major public commitment to reply to claims within 96 hours, so the pressure is on everyone to be very productive.

You work fast, but many in your workgroup are dissatisfied with this work pressure and spend a lot of time complaining instead of working. For the past two weeks, your supervisor has given you almost twice as many claims as she has to others who are equally paid, but less productive. The supervisor tells you it’s because you’re faster and the group needs to keep up with the new performance standards.

From your spiritual context, how would you see and approach this practice situation?

To build your skills in working from your spiritual context, find ways to keep it in your awareness throughout the day. Find such things as pictures, cards, poems, quotes, and books to remind you to keep your focus on seeing things from your spiritual context. Perhaps share this article and your spiritual context with co-workers who might be interested and supportive of these ideas.

It’s important to give yourself a chance to mature as you grow in your overall spiritual character. Ultimately, be patient. Be persistent. And remember to “practice, practice, practice.”

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: Book 2 – Work as a Spiritual Practice*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of “spirituality and human values for leadership and work”, visit our website: www.globaldharma.org