



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

2.11 BLESS OUTSIDE FOR HAPPINESS INSIDE

The workplace is an ideal ground for cultivating our good qualities and striving for the welfare of our colleagues. Thereby, we can tap into our true inner happiness and to contribute to the inner happiness of others.

“**MAY ALL BEINGS BE HAPPY**” is a beautiful blessing that S. N. Goenka, a great teacher of the Buddhist Vipassana meditation, expresses throughout his teachings. This prayer was originally sung by the ancient spiritual masters of India and is still sung around the world even today.

In the moments of singing or saying these words in a spiritual context, they seem so full of meaning for us, and our hearts truly wish for happiness for all beings. But then, as we engage in the everyday world of work, it's not so easy to maintain the spirit of this blessing for all people. It's all too easy to become agitated and impatient, and to have negative rather than positive thoughts towards others.

For example, 10 months ago we were grossly overcharged on our telephone bill. The company personnel have admitted it was due to an error in the meter at the telephone office. Yet, even after numerous calls and trips to our local telephone office, we still have not been credited for the overcharge. As we have contemplated still another trip to their office, we find it quite challenging to heartfully wish for these people to be happy!

However, when we take the quiet time to think about the value of extending this blessing of happiness to the people who work at the telephone company, we are aware of how counterproductive it is to be angry and upset about what has happened. Most people return anger for anger when it's expressed at them – and if they *were* happy, they'd most likely be more caring, courteous, and productive. As Ashoke Maitra, former Director of Human Resources for the Times of India, said to us:

To my mind if a person is joyful, happy and inspired, then only can that person reach the highest level of productivity and performance.

All of this has had us inquire deeply into “What is this ‘happiness’ that we are wishing for all beings?”

Most people think of happiness as a feeling, an emotion, which is tied to external circumstances. Typically, we engage in the “pursuit of happiness” in order to fulfil our

worldly ambitions and desires. Yet we've learned from so many spiritual masters that true, enduring happiness is not a passing emotion, but a state of being – an unconditional, inner contentment (even bliss) that is a natural expression of our inherent Divine nature.

As such, we believe that happiness is inextricably linked to spiritual growth. As Janiece Webb, formerly a senior vice president with Motorola, once told us:

I believe that God put us on earth to find joy and happiness and to become enlightened.

For N. S. Raghavan, one of the co-founders of Infosys, spiritual growth provides happiness through serving others at work:

Spirituality is something that gives you joy, happiness and contentment, which cannot be gotten through material pursuits and knowledge; it is something beyond that. It also gives you the motivation to do something for others and gives you joy when you do.

So, how can we tap into this true inner happiness in our everyday work, no matter how challenging the circumstances? Sathya Sai Baba, a spiritual teacher in India, gives us clear guidance:

Cultivate good qualities and strive for the promotion of dharma (righteousness) in the world. This will give you more enduring happiness than the acquisition of perishable worldly things.

As we ourselves surrender our irritation with the telephone company to this lesson on happiness, it immediately begins to reshape our thoughts and has us wonder, “How can we use this experience to grow in our ability to be equanimous with the ups and downs of business?” and “How might we be able to lovingly contribute our business skills to help the telephone company transform their customer service?”

Work is a fabulous place to put these principles of cultivating our own good qualities and striving for the welfare of everyone into day-to-day practice. And, when we do, we foster both our spiritual growth and contribute to the inner happiness of others.

So, ask yourself: *What good qualities could I focus on cultivating that would increase my own internal happiness? In what ways can I give to others that would support them in growing in their happiness at work?*

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