



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

2.21 WAKING UP AT WORK

Increasing our self-awareness can be a spiritual practice that reduces ego and fear – thereby making a positive difference in our creativity and overall effectiveness at work.

AFTER WE CREATED the acronym “SPIRITED” to represent qualities that unlock our creative potential¹, we found that each one can be a *sadhana*, a spiritual practice, to integrate into our everyday work. The more we began to practice each of these qualities from this perspective, the more enlivening and richer our lives became.

The first quality is to be “self-aware”. According to the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, to be aware means *having or showing realisation, perception, or knowledge*. Two of its synonyms are also insightful: cognizant – *having knowledge as from firsthand experience*; awake – *becoming alive and alert*. To us, being self-aware gives us an alive, vibrant life in which we are aware of our intuition, conscience, values, emotions, thoughts and insights... as well as our interconnection with others and the transcendent.

Parantha Narendra, Strategy Director of Eurotel in the Czech Republic, told us how he was awakened to a new level of self-awareness when he went to India for the first time and visited the ashram of his spiritual teacher:

For the entire time I spent at the ashram, it was as if I could see the whole interconnectedness of life, and I was aware of everything as I moved through my daily routine. It was effortless. I was aware of people’s thoughts and ideas. I was aware of everything going on in the background. I had no stress or anxiety. I just had awareness and contentment.

From that awakening, it naturally made an impact in his life:

When you view your life as spiritual, you start to make certain choices. There are positive values that I have accepted and I try to be aware of those values in everything that I do. Through experience, I have noticed that as I’ve become more aware of myself, I’ve become more content and happy, and have learned things about other people and life that have just seemed to come to me.

¹ From our previous article titled “Becoming a SPIRITED person”: self-aware, purposeful, incisive, rewarding, inventive, transforming, evaluative, and dauntless.

As a spiritual practice at work, there are two ways that being self-aware helps Parantha to be more creative:

First of all, spirituality makes me less egotistical – I am very aware of my ego. And secondly, it makes me less fearful. Both of which have had a major impact in the way that I work.

When I do not have an active ego, I am able to help get things done far more effectively; I realise I am a lot more capable than I give myself credit for. If my ego is active, then I tend to think, “I can’t do this and I can’t do that” because my ego is afraid of failure.

As I listen to conversations going on in a meeting, I can see how people perceive things and want to lead them in a particular way. I can see how they are mis-communicating with each other. I understand what the real issues of the meeting are, and where we should be going; I can help pull things together in a way that I couldn’t do if my ego was in control. I can present things clearly and talk to everyone in their own language. I think this is an enormously spiritual exercise. It is like meditation when I am sitting there listening to everyone.

Parantha’s insights point to two ways that becoming self-aware can positively impact our work creativity: reducing ego and fear. When we have less ego, we have greater self-confidence and can more clearly see the issues at hand; thus we remain open not only to others’ ideas, but also to the next evolution of our own thinking. And when we have less fear, we’re more able to let the best ideas unfold over time, as needed, and to think more expansively into unconventional, less certain-to-succeed ideas.

Ultimately, cultivating the spiritual discipline of being self-aware can lead us to be more aware of the transcendent in our work, leading us to a higher knowledge, as the *Bhagavad Gita* tells us:

When one sees Eternity in things that pass away and Infinity in finite things, then one has pure knowledge.

So, ask yourself: *In what areas of my work could I be more self-aware – about myself and about my interconnected with others and the transcendent? How can I best cultivate this self-awareness?*

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