

Spirituality in the Workplace

The new paradigm



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Chapter 3



**Spiritual
Intelligence
in the
Workplace**

The word spiritual has strong connotations. Over the last century, the gap has widened between two ways of interpreting the world and reality in general - intellectually and spiritually. In writing about spiritual intelligence one runs the risk of alienating the more intellectual reader who perhaps has a strong background in academia, science or the business world. Many perceive the 'spiritual camp' as irrational, at times ungrounded, and in opposition to the intellectual way of thinking. It is time to be more open-minded, to broaden our understanding of each other and for people to be more accepting of things pertaining to the spirit. We can do this by revisiting previously challenging belief patterns. Rigid thinking limits us and creates divisions between people, cultures and the variety within our global system. Consciousness is evolving, whether we like it or not, and a balance between the two worlds of thinking is a positive shift.

Spiritual intelligence is just as important as emotional and cognitive intelligence. I feel strongly that by building our spiritual intelligence, preferably when young and definitely as we grow into adulthood, we can help to understand ourselves, others and the world. Spiritual intelligence is both hard to explain and to explore. It is impossible to measure quantitatively and so cannot be directly evaluated. Spiritual intelligence has been perceived as 'fluffy'; it cannot be discerned logically or with reason by scholars and members of the academic world. Spirituality sets us on a constantly unfolding and evolving journey that requires life experience itself to activate natural questioning and searching. It is not determined by study or by research and rarely follows a linear path or single direction.

How can we tell if a person is spiritually intelligent? The key characteristics of spiritually mature and competent people are evidenced by the depth and quality of their moral and ethical choices. These reflect a concern for others and for what is right and just according to universal principals. In the workplace, the spiritual journey is no different than our personal journey or the 'hero's journey' as described by Joseph Campbell. All experience is interpreted through a filter of beliefs; the choices an individual makes each

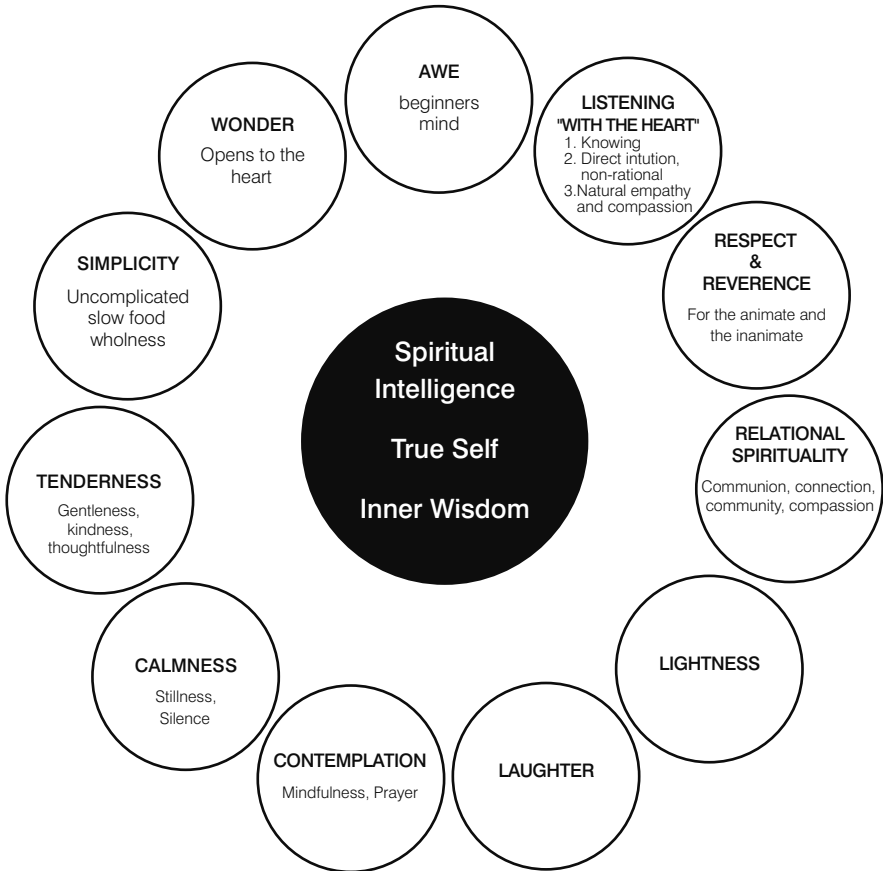
day reflect that filter. The spiritually competent person balances their head and their heart when making any decision that impacts on others. They consider their choices from both an intuitive and a cognitive position. That choice reflects universal truths that demonstrate core values about living and life. This template has formed over many years of thoughtful consciousness.

I have been experiencing some interesting challenges in my own work of late. The last eight years of my life have been committed to raising community consciousness about healthy upbringing of children, so that our adolescents and young adults leave home with a strong sense of self and an inherent resilience. At the same time, I have been raising four sons and investing heavily in their tertiary education. This last year saw me reprint my first book, invest much time writing my second book, creating new audio products for young people and self publishing and printing my third book. This meant I did less paid work than usual leading up to the end of the year and, in eight weeks, paid \$20,000 to fund my projects. Over Christmas I was seriously cash strapped - and my spunky lads were home for a good family time. This created a real challenge for me and I questioned myself about the choices I had made. If I had not spent that money on the products and books and I had worked more I could have sat back and really enjoyed this special time with my family. If I had stayed teaching I would have been enjoying an eight week paid holiday! For a few days I was really in a spin and considered walking away from my passion. It seemed my protective patterns of quiet reflection, contemplative prayer and 'joyful filling of my cup' were no longer working. It was a very dark few days; I felt I was in the desert of self doubt. I was alone and struggling.

The heaviness of those three days of the 'dark night of the soul' lifted, as it always does. I returned to nature – and spent time walking on the beach, in the bush and watching the starry night sky. I had sensed it would be three days and so was able to embrace the 'shadowland' and share it with my close and trusted friends and my beloved husband. The darkness lifted and I spent the next few days filling my cup with spiritual joy.

Spiritual Intelligence in the Workplace

See diagram below for the characteristics that build spiritual intelligence.



I was fortunate to be able to ponder on and contemplate my experience of the dark days in the desert. I was reminded of the journey of people I choose to help as a resilience specialist. Many live in this dark place for weeks, months or even years. For me, it was a journey of strength and renewal that has brought me to a new understanding of true faith in oneself and in the Sacred – the source of ‘All’. Since then my work productivity has been exceptional. I feel and am incredibly rejuvenated and creative. The depth of my loving connections have become more honest and embracing on all levels. This shows how the duality of life can be positive and provide a consciousness that supports true growth in emotionally and spiritually mature ways.

A core aspect of healthy spiritual intelligence is awareness of the difference between the inner and outer worlds. Being able to interpret the events and experiences of life with a healthy balance of mind and spirit is a good indicator of having strong levels of emotional, social and spiritual competency. There are many people who struggle with being at the mercy of the relentless chatter of their inner critic; they are unaware of the spiritual inner world of their being, which supports and protects them. These people often do not have consciously aware, loving and caring people in their lives. The result may be that they have a complete lack of connection to their own inner wise counsel, or human spirit.

Building positive connections in the workplace is important. We all have a need to belong and to feel valued. People are protected from the darker moments of life while being part of a team or organization. Permission to have laughter and lightness is important, as a valued part of the work environment. This laughter is positive and does not include disrespectful allusions to gender, culture or age. Setting up a staff football tipping activity is one positive way of building connectedness, even if people do not follow football. It provides a safe ground to create funny moments and a reason to meet and chat every Monday. Small tokens of gratitude also work well as ‘connection builders’. Small affirmative gestures to fellow workers really do touch the spirit and feed it with some positive fuel.

Compassionate and life enhancing communication in the workplace builds on a sense of safety and connectedness. Simple manners show that we respect and appreciate other people. Manners are not something that only people in positions of power need to be mindful of. Simple hellos and greetings can really help someone who may be struggling with their personal life.

One of the trends of consciousness in the twenty-first century is for people to help to bring the best out in each other. We have moved on from the competitive focus of 'I must win at all costs' to one of 'we can all win'. This latter focus honours and celebrates the unique talents of each of us, without anyone needing to feel inadequate or less than competent. Being spatially competent is not one of the many things I am gifted in. At a recent conference for new teachers, I shared with them the need to accept our strengths and our weaknesses, what helps to make us unique. I shared with them my inability to follow maps even when they are positioned 'upside down'; I also often become confused in hotel toilets that have large mirrors in them. When I finished the presentation I went down to my car in the huge car park below the conference hotel. Well do you think I could find it? I knew it was near the lift – I just hadn't realized there were twelve lifts. It took me twenty minutes to find my car and spent much of that time pressing my key unlock to see if I could see the rear lights flash on. I ended up in such a state of laughter that it was some time before I could drive. I could have chosen emotions of frustration and anger or self loathing, however, laughter has always been great medicine for me and so I chose that. Spiritual intelligence can be that simple.

The principle of working together for the greater good of all seems foreign to many people. Spiritual principles are hard to understand when they are processed through the logical and rational mind. The notion of having an attitude of gratitude is another concept that many people struggle to understand. By being able to focus on that which is already great and wonderful in our lives, the focus of our mind is towards creating more

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of the same. That makes sense to me! The same goes for working for the greater good - by doing so we all have to win, eventually. A simple way of understanding this principle may be to say that what goes around comes around. This is karma as described in Eastern cultures. Whatever you do will come back to you in some way – following this philosophy is a beautiful and simple way to live life. Sometimes when I have given hours to a troubled teenager without any money to return the gift of my time, I choose to believe that someone somewhere will do the same for one of my sons, in one way or another. This may be as simple as getting their bogged four-wheel

drive out of sand at the beach, or retrieving a lost wallet or mobile phone. The huge benefit from this form of consciousness is that it keeps the mind away from blame and judgement. These are soul-destroying mind games that stop the flow of our inner goodness; they place us in opposition to our fellow man. Accidents do happen and things do go wrong. These experiences challenge us to see how we can overcome them and move on. Think about people you know who are still dragging around a moment of regret – and does that help them to be content in their life - no!

Spiritual competence and intelligence can be seen as something that underlies all of life, now. It encompasses people of all ages and every moment of our physical existence as human beings. It plays out when we go shopping. Do we purchase products that can harm our environment, do we recycle shopping bags or do we support companies that exploit others? It influences what food we eat and how we take care of the earth. Spiritual intelligence is both inclusive and expansive. When a person walks a pathway of deep darkness they have lost their connection to spirit. They are also showing an absence of many of the qualities and attributes that make up spiritual intelligence. Being able to find a balance between our logical rational mind and our emotional and spiritual domains is the challenge of being human. This journey of awareness in action is what the human journey is all about. We are all responsible for feeding our own spirit; it is our responsibility, not anyone else's.

How to nurture your own spirit

- Learn to love, accept and appreciate yourself exactly as you are
- Take a nap on Sunday afternoons
- Learn how to be a good friend
- Have a generous heart
- Practise random acts of kindness
- Love, accept and nurture your body
- Smile with your eyes and heart at the same time
- Believe in dreams and miracles
- Develop an attitude of gratitude to life, love and leisure
- Cultivate your sense of humour, laugh often
- Learn to cry openly
- Be as real and honest as possible
- Celebrate life's moments, both special and unimportant
- Know where your special place is and go there often
- Play your favourite music everyday

How to nurture your own spirit continued...

- Do something you love everyday
- Disappear into a good book
- Breathe deeply, often
- Believe in the power of prayer
- Respect people of all ages
- Spend time in nature, quietly and gently
- Learn how to make 'melting moments', cookies of joy
- Live with people or animals who really love you
- Drink champagne for no reason at all
- Love rainbows, sunsets and your favourite flowers
- Learn how to show your love through touch
- Take yourself off to the movies
- Help someone else in need
- Cook from your heart
- Hum or whistle when you are happy

Essentially, our life journey presents us with experiences that allow us to grow in our understanding of ourselves and others. Rather than thinking 'look what the Universe has done to me', reconsider and restate it as, 'look what the Universe has done for me'. A healthy balance between the head and the heart allows us to live from a place of unconditional regard, with acceptance and love of all things. I remember doing a personal development workshop many years ago - in a warm hydrotherapy pool. It was fascinating what happened when we suspended ourselves in a warm liquid of similar temperature to that of the womb. At one point the facilitator urged us to take off our bathers. Well did that bring up all those hidden attitudes about our bodies and nudity! We didn't have to take them off; it was to show us how we really felt about ourselves. The next day when the facilitator invited us to take them off again it felt like we were being provided with the opportunity to break through an invisible barrier of old shame and judgement that had built up for years. What helped me to break through my defences was that I was standing next to a woman who would have weighed around 150 kilograms. She was so comfortable with her body that she had torn her bathers off both times, without hesitation! Not only that, she hugged me at one point and I disappeared into her and that was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. I learned from a true master about unconditional regard and acceptance. We secretly yearn for this place and search for it; what an irony that it lies hidden within us.

Transcendence is another area of spiritual intelligence that deserves exploring. Loosely, this state of awareness is one that allows us to feel expanded or out of our normal waking state. Rachael Kessler (The Soul of Education 2003) explains the term 'to transcend' in the following variety of ways:

- to be lost or immersed in a play, dance or creative process;
- 'flashes of intensity' against a dull background of ordinary days;
- to rise above, or pass beyond, a human limit;

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- reaching beyond ordinary life and consciousness;
- opening to the domain of spirit.

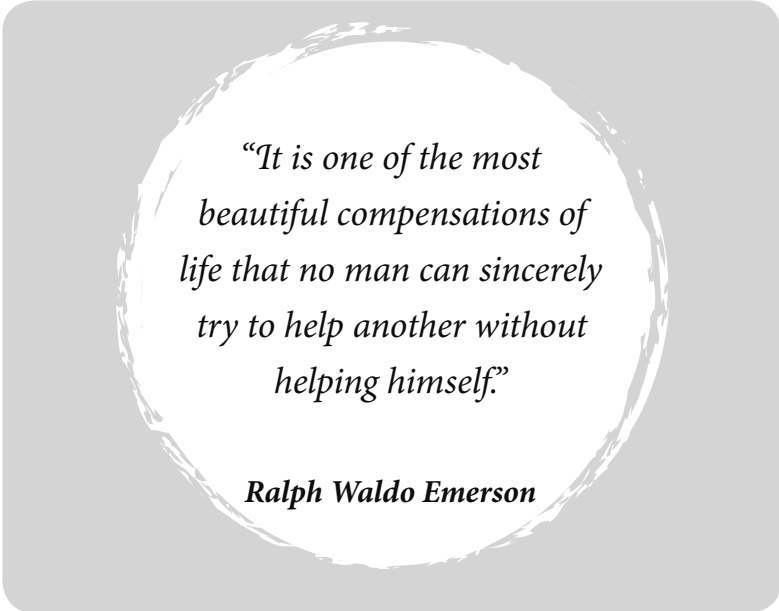
People with strong spiritual competence can access a place of bliss, or nirvana, often in their lives. This place can be reached spontaneously or by choice, without assistance from alcohol or drugs! Moments of exquisite connection with others can create this space, so can the following:

- an athletic high, attained both by watching and participating;
- outdoor pursuits, like camping, orienteering, bush walking;
- artistic or musical expression, like dancing, playing in a band, painting;
- moments of deep truth;
- deep relaxation, like meditation or gentle healing touch;
- rituals or ceremonies;
- moments of deep intimacy with someone you love.

We are unable to 'stay' in a transcendent state long because being human means being present in our bodies. We have the unique quality of existing in a human body surrounded by others; we live in social matrixes on a planet called Earth. People who are able to experience deep transcendent experiences in their life, naturally, often have a great 'joie de vivre'. They live with mirth and joy bubbling just below the surface, and they have shiny happy eyes!

A high level of spiritual intelligence allows us to make choices that create less suffering and pain for ourselves and others. The pulls created by living with opposites and dualities calls our attention to the act of living rather than the act of being. We can experience the exquisite joy of deep connection and the love of others at home and in the workplace. Spiritual intelligence allows us to be beacons of light that help others find their way in the darkness – the human journey is not meant to be walked alone. Finally, spiritual intelligence allows people to fulfill their life purpose, their sacred contract whatever that may be, and to ensure they leave the world better than when they found it. In my mind, spiritual intelligence allows the soul to express its divinity and wisdom in an honest, beautiful way while surrounded by the chaos and confusion of life.

Maggie Dent ●



*“It is one of the most
beautiful compensations of
life that no man can sincerely
try to help another without
helping himself.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Maggie Dent is an author, professional speaker and consultant specialising in building personal and professional resilience. From an extensive background in education, palliative care, the funeral industry, ABC radio and running her business Esteem Plus – a counselling, training and education centre - Maggie has become gifted at assisting people from all walks of life to build their resilience by quietly improving their lives. She focuses on building emotional, social and spiritual competencies in a commonsense and practical way.

“Maggie we all need an injection of your blithe spirit.” Bryce Courtenay

Maggie is a unique humanitarian with the ability to initiate transformation and positive change while creating a sense of self mastery and optimism for one’s life and future. She is particularly gifted at assisting businesses, communities and individuals through the darkest crises brought about by sudden trauma, unexpected loss, death or professional disaster. Her ability to give people the guidance and insight to manage, re-group and rebuild are exceptional.

“If you want to find more purpose, direction and meaning in your life, spending time one on one with Maggie will help you achieve greater success in your chosen field. She has the unique ability to cut through the complex and identify the greatness that exists in each and every individual.” Thomas Murrell MBA, CSP International Business Speaker