

Some text

Spirituality and Stress

Brian McCarthy



INTRODUCTION

As human beings, we all have a spiritual side--even atheists. It is the part of who we are that seeks meaning in life and is drawn to be connected with a greater reality outside itself. We can become more in touch with our spiritual side and use it to to find peace in times of stress.

Does spirituality mean religion?

In many cases, spirituality does find its expression in religion but not always. Think Buddhism and 12 step programs. However, it does point us to something outside ourselves--to a higher power be it God or the consciousness of a group.



Troubling Times

Many of us are scared and anxious

We are worried about jobs, family members,
bills our health and so many other things.

■ So what do we do?

Bring it to your higher power or to God!

- But wait! Before you do—take some time to think about what it is that you want to bring.
 - Are you scared? Anxious? Bring it to God or your higher power in your own language—not in the flowery words we associate with prayer.



Are you angry?

- OK! Let it all out! Be rageful and angry with God or your higher power!
 - For some reason we are not always comfortable with being angry with God!
 - Time to get used to it!
 - Lots of examples of good anger over the years in spiritual literature.
 - The Psalms
 - Job.



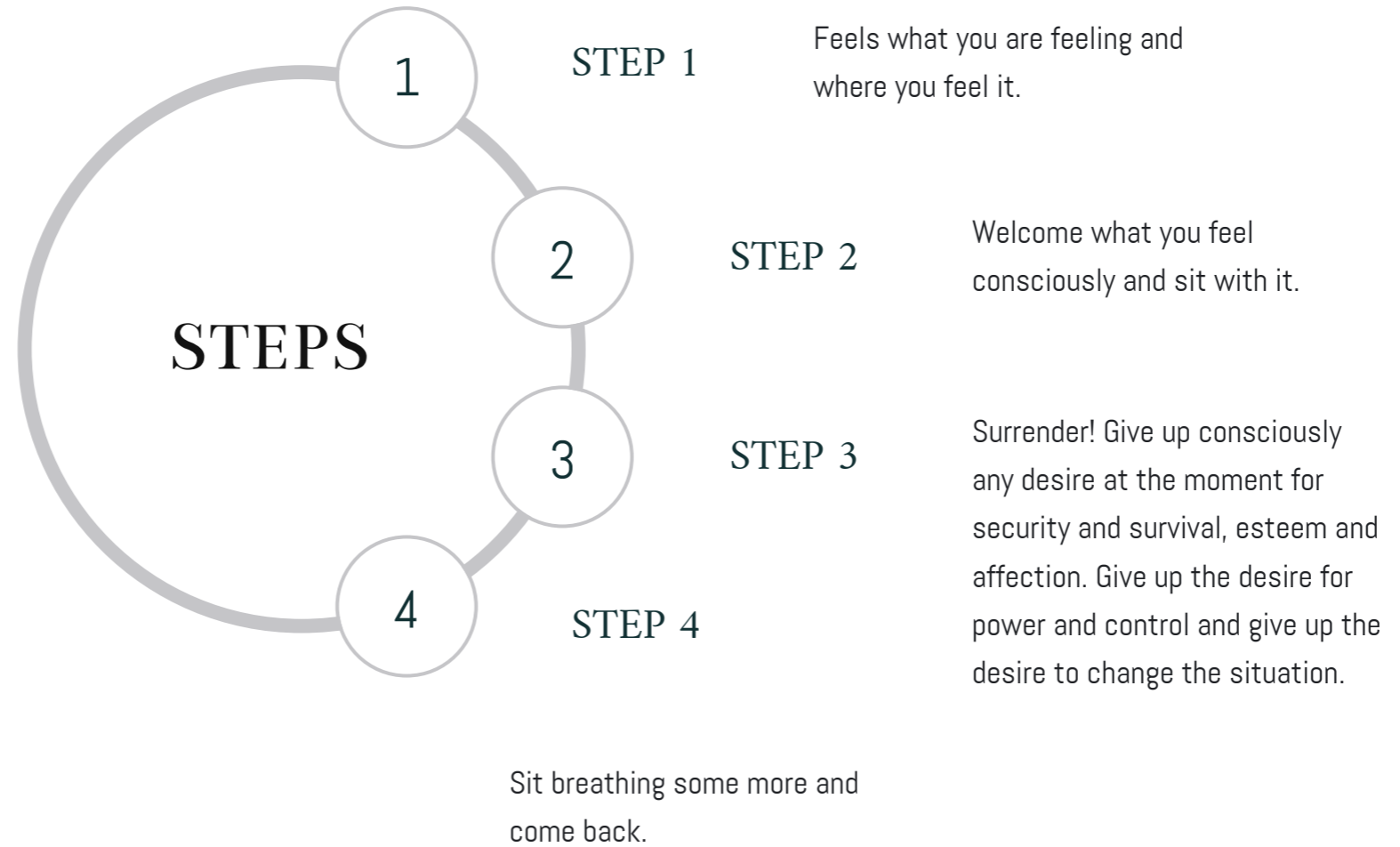
OK. The anger and other feelings are out. Then what?

**Time to get ready to
let it all go.**

Mary Mrozowski

- Truly an amazing lady.
 - A natural mystic and a tough one at that from Brooklyn
 - Raised a family as a single, divorced, Catholic woman.
 - Founding member of Contemplative Outreach.

■ Welcoming Prayer



Looking forward

With clearer minds with welcoming, we can begin to do some more internal work!

As the spiritual life calls us to greater connectedness, we are usually challenged to find greater meaning, deeper intimacy and virtue in our lives.



Questions?

Finding Meaning

- Each day, consciously ask your higher power for guidance in finding meaning in strife.
 - Seek to identify your unique gifts and explore how to use them in this situation.
 - Do what you have thought to do!
 - Reflect on the results.
-
-

Intimacy: Vulnerability for the Sake of Love

- Consciously think about ways to make the lives of others around you easier or more pleasant.
 - Respond generously to requests from those close to you.
 - Over come the fear of speaking hard truths charitably.
 - Be appropriately affectionate.
-

Explore Virtue

- The main virtues are faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude.
 - Try to identify which one of these virtues your difficulty is challenging.
 - Consciously work on developing and living out of that virtue.
-
-

Ellen's Story

Ellen's 22 year old daughter lost her baby to an aggressive cancer.

- Ellen withdrew from family and life in general. She got depressed and developed physical issues.
- She got depressed and felt lost and alone.
- She prayed but still felt flat.
- She avoided all things and people that made her feel anything.
- With encouragement, she was willing to admit her anger to God.
- She began to welcome her feelings and then she got to work.

Ellen saw that she had a gift for being nurturing and compassionate. She realized she was feeling pretty powerless at this time. She felt ashamed that she could do so little. Her biggest insight was that she was focused on someone dead who needed nothing from her. Ellen realized it was her daughter who was in need. As a young adult, her daughter needed her mom. Nancy pushed herself to be more present to her daughter and made herself available to her anytime she was needed.

Ellen pushed to be more intimate with her daughter. She listened to her. She held her while she cried. She took over many household chores for awhile.



Finally, Ellen was aware of her need for both fortitude and charity. She needed to be strong for her daughter and push beyond her sense of feeling powerless and focus on what she could do. She needed to be charitable—to care for her daughter even when the situation was hard and painful for her as well.

Ellen found the meaning she needed. She knew she was here for a reason. She had to care for her daughter now and she was going to do it the best way she could. She found peace in doing so. She was still not happy about the fact that her grandchild died. In that sense, she still had some very normal and understandable grieving to do. However, her spirituality led her to a conscious purpose for herself during this time and it helped her to go on.