

from *Pathways to Serenity* book, by Philip St. Romain

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Spiritual Living Skills

Right Actions

A. To refrain from actions that generally hurt oneself and other people.

1. Loose speech. Lying, gossiping, cursing, and pretentious speech.
2. Stealing, cheating, and all dishonesty.
3. The use of violent behavior and speech, especially to impose one's will on others.
4. Illicit sex acts.
5. Overindulgence in food and drink.

B. To acknowledge one's powerlessness over those abusive behaviors that are repeated compulsively, and how these behaviors have made one's life unmanageable.

C. To practice acts of compassion that up the human community.

1. The Corporal works of Mercy: to feed the hungry; to give drink to the thirsty; to clothe the naked; to visit the imprisoned; to shelter the homeless; to visit the sick; to bury the dead.
2. The Spiritual works of Mercy: to counsel the doubtful; to instruct the ignorant; to admonish sinners; to comfort the afflicted; to forgive offenses; to bear wrongs patiently; to pray for the living and the dead.

Right Desiring

A. To practice renunciation toward desires that lead to wrong behavior.

1. Consider consequences to self and others, and relationship with God.
2. Consider how those who have done this action were affected in the long run.
3. Walk away from the harmful situation.

B. To desire the best for oneself, other people, and all of creation (benevolence).

1. To wish harm to no one.
2. To envision oneself behaving kindly toward others.
3. To surrender one's life and will over to the care of God.

Right Use of Feelings

A. To accept all feelings without pronouncing moral judgement on oneself and others because of feelings.

B. To express one's feelings in a manner which does not lead to wrong actions.

1. To avoid projecting emotional states--even positive ones~—into the future. '
2. To avoid introjecting or repressing feelings unnecessarily.
3. To avoid blaming, judging, criticizing, or using violence toward oneself and/or others because of one's feelings.
4. To share one's feelings using "I Messages." ("I feel, *feeling* about/when issue / behavior ."

C. To learn what feelings are teaching us about our beliefs and the meaning of our lives.

1. Anger. wants/needs not met; hurt; disappointment.
2. Sad. Loss of important person, place, thing, or part of ourselves.
3. Glad. Wants/needs being met.
4. Fear. Problem that threatens fulfillment of wants/needs, but no easy or painless solution.

5. Guilt. Behavior conflicts with values.
6. Shame. Guilt turned inward on self in judgement.

Right Beliefs About Life's Meaning

A. Beliefs About God

1. God is Spirit
2. God is Love
3. God is immanent and transcendent
4. God is creator of all that is
5. God's will is sovereign in history.
6. God wants to be in relationship with human beings
7. Jesus Christ reveals the nature of God
8. God forgives all our sins
9. The Holy Spirit joins us with Christ and the Father
10. Our conceptions of God are always inadequate

B. To understand the nature of a human being.

1. Humans are a holistic composite of body, mind, and spirit.
2. We are most ourselves when we are close to God.
3. The faculties of consciousness (reason, will, memory, etc.) are the property of the person.
4. The faculties of consciousness have been distorted by sin and become easily focused in fear and selfishness.
5. Human consciousness can be energized by God's love if we invite
6. God to do so.

C. The meaning in life.

1. Life is short, and it will end in death.
2. Life presents us with an opportunity to define what kind of persons we wish to be.
3. The life we have chosen will be given to us after death (heaven or hell), and we shall live in this manner for all eternity.

4. Selfishness brings isolation and misery; love brings happiness and unity.
5. The way to eternal life with God comes from living in the truth and love of Christ.
6. We are to work hard in this life, using our talents for good.
7. All things are good if used appropriately, and have been given to us to help us meet our needs and lead us to fuller growth.
8. We shall suffer in this life, but we may learn valuable lessons from our suffering.

Right Values

A. To practice the three mega-values which embrace all the rest.

1. Awareness
2. Honesty
3. Benevolence.

B. To cultivate the virtue of temperance in regard to the fulfillment of our bodily wants and needs.

1. Beliefs.
 - a. We are stewards of our bodies. It is our responsibility to properly care for our bodies.
 - b. The human body is good. It is a temple of the Holy Spirit. As we treat our bodies, so do we treat Christ.
 - c. We regard our sexuality as a gift to be shared fully only with those with whom we pledge love and fidelity.
2. Practices.
 - a. Commitment to proper nutrition, rest, and exercise.
 - b. Avoidance of intoxication with any chemical.
 - c. Refusing to indulge in sexual fantasies and acting-out.
 - d. Learning to recognize stress signals, and to diminish stress.

C. To cultivate the virtue of humility in regard to one's esteem of self.

1. Beliefs.

- a. No one is perfect; this includes you.
- b. No one is completely bad; this includes you.
- c. God loves you just the way you are.
- d. You are a unique individual.

2. Practices

- a. Accepting oneself in all one's strengths and weaknesses without putting oneself down.
- b. Acknowledging one's giftedness in gratitude.
- c. Acknowledging one's limitations without shame.
- d. Acknowledging one's selfishness with remorse.
- e. Fully accepting one's need for God and the help of other people to grow in character.

D. To cultivate the virtue of prudence in regard to securing for oneself the necessities of life.

1. Beliefs

- a. It is a good thing to do as much for oneself as possible.
- b. It is a good thing to allow others to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.
- c. It is important to distinguish between wants and needs. Needs are that which, if lacking, leads to physical or emotional death.
- d. Our God is a providential God, leading us to people and circumstances which will enable us to grow and prosper.

2. Practices

- a. We define our needs as simply as possible, and we desire no more than we need. We practice renunciation toward anything in excess.
- b. We identify resources necessary for securing our needs.

- c. We make a budget, listing expenses necessary to meet our minimal needs, and sources of income to secure these goods.
- d. We undertake moral work to secure our needs.
- e. We ask for help when we cannot do for ourselves.
- f. We pray for our specific needs, knowing that God is generous.

E. To cultivate the virtue of courage to become assertive for the good.

1. Beliefs.

- a. We have a free will too use for good or bad. Our greatest freedom is to use our will for good.
- b. We recognize that other people also have free-will, and that our freedom cannot be exercised at the expense of their welfare.

2. Practices

- a. We never do for others what they can and should do for themselves.
- b. We allow others the freedom to make their mistakes and to learn" from them.
- c. We meditate on the fact that all things are possible when we act in union with God.
- d. We counter our fearfulness by asserting ourselves in behalf of goodness.
- e. After doing what we can, we wait on the Lord for results.

F. To cultivate the virtue of service unto justice to meet our needs for status.

1. Beliefs

- a. We live in a broken, unjust world.
- b. Some people are born into very difficult circumstances; others, very fortunate ones.
- c. Those who have much are responsible for using their gifts to help those who have little.

- d. Impressing other people is a very shallow way to attain status. What if they change their minds?
 - e. Christ works with us to restore the world. We are co-redeemers with Christ.
 - f. We recall that ministry to other people is ministry to Christ's body.
 - g. Status attained through service will never exceed one's integrity; status artificially bestowed will rob one of integrity.
2. Practices
- a. We meditate on the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.
 - b. We identify specific circumstances in our lives to which we are called to practice works of mercy.
 - c. We avoid temptations to impress other people with our lifestyle and our works by practicing right desires and right speech.

Right Awareness

- A. To be reconciled in memory with one's past experiences.*
- 1. To take a fearless moral inventory.
 - 2. To acknowledge before God, ourselves, and another human person the exact nature of our wrongs.
 - 3. To forgive others the wrongs they have done you, letting go of all resentments.
 - 4. To ask God's forgiveness for the wrongs you have done to others and yourself.
 - 5. To make amends to others except when to do so will hurt them unnecessarily.
 - 6. To forgive oneself for one's own mistakes and sinful behaviors, knowing that no one is perfect and that all are forgiven sinners in the eyes of God.
- B. To utilize imagination and intuition to identify new options and possibilities for the future.*

1. To cultivate an ideal image of oneself
 - a. How does Christ see me?
 - b. What is my ideal job description?
 - c. What is my ideal lifestyle?
 2. To actually see and feel oneself living in the ideal through positive imaging.
 - a. To envision oneself interacting with Christ in Gospel scenes.
 - b. To envision oneself showing love and compassion to other human beings and all of creation.
 - c. To envision oneself behaving in the ideal in the everyday circumstances of life, especially in areas where selfishness has prevailed.
- C. To live in conscious awareness throughout each day.*
1. To live in the present moment as much as possible.
 - a. Non-judgmental awareness of what one is experiencing on a sensate level (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and other sensations).
 - b. Non-judgmental awareness of what one is thinking, feeling, and deciding to do
 2. To fully surrender oneself to what one is doing.
 - a. To avoid doing one thing and thinking about something else.
 - b. To be totally present to what you are doing.
 - c. To concentrate on doing what you're doing as well as you can; this is how to resist distractions.
 - d. To find interesting and stimulating things to think about or listen to during long, boring and monotonous tasks instead of letting your mind wander.
- D. To bring conscious awareness into the serenity of God's loving awareness of oneself.*
1. To surrender one's attention to God through prayer and meditation.
 - a. To take time each day for silence, solitude, and reading Scripture.

- b. To allow God to energize you in love.
- c. To surrender your ego awareness to God, allowing God's awareness of you to take root (contemplation).
2. To do all things in God's loving presence.
 - a. To say a short prayer before doing anything.
 - b. To invite the Holy Spirit into all that you do.
 - c. To ask the Spirit to guide you in all that you do.

Right Discernment

A. Basic Assumptions

1. God is a good God. God wants to give us much more than we want for ourselves.
2. God knows who we are better than we know ourselves. God also knows what we need in order to become the people we were created to be.
3. When we are faced with a number of options, it is possible that some of these options are better for us than others (in terms of our overall human growth).
4. When we surrender our preferences for different options to God, we become free to discern God's preference {if any) among these options for us.

B. Practice (some of these are from St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises)

1. Options that require wrong actions are not to be taken.
2. It is not necessary to agonize about God's will in choosing between healthy options in the small affairs of everyday life.
3. In areas where binding commitments have been made, our choice ought to be to continue to live out the implications of these commitments unless they lead to a consistent increase in wrong actions.
4. It is usually best to live out the implications of important, but non binding decisions that we have already been

made until it becomes very clear that God is calling us to leave this commitment.

5. If possible, we should avoid making important life decisions during times when we are emotionally upset, for it is likely that we shall then be running away from a problem rather than responding to God's call.
6. When attempting to discern God's will among a number of options regarding significant lifestyle choices, we do the following:
 - a. Clearly define these options.
 - b. Clearly list the pros and cons of each option.
 - c. Honestly admit what attracts and repels you for each option.
 - d. In a detached manner, envision yourself living out the implications of each option.
 - e. Sincerely pray that God will enlighten and draw you to the direction leading to greater growth in holiness.
 - f. Decide which option you prefer most.
 - g. Imagine how this choice will look from the vantage point of your deathbed.
 - h. Imagine yourself explaining to Christ why you have made this choice.
 - i. Surrender this preference to God; acknowledging your willingness to pursue another option if it is His will.
 - j. Pray for a sense of serenity about the path you take.
 - k. After making this choice, do not look back. Begin to live out its implications.