Spiritual Checklist



- [ ] Am I stuck in a downward spiral of spiritual frustration as I think more and more about unanswered questions and spiritual dilemnas? The sea of frustration leads to nowhere but exhaustion. Instead, stop. Practice the classic relaxation technique: paying attention to one's breathing (use meditative breathing techniques) and focussing (softly) just above the horizon "jump starts" the mind out of frustration loops

- [ ] Am I feeling sorry for myself as the victim of unfair and obnoxious actions by others (or perhaps a victim of circumstance)? As below, I must recognize evil for what it is --- but I need to remember that self-pity does not do the right thing. Remember, "Self-pity is bad for me" --- or better yet, "I don't need self-pity." Self-pity is a downward spiral; I need to climb up and out and into the realm of self-empowerment.

- [ ] The way out of selfishness and into selflessness is not boredom and martyrdom; it's through becoming genuinely interested in something or someone else --- even reading fiction is a good first step.

- [ ] Hell is made up of those trying to help themselves only. Heaven is made up of those trying to help others. Next time I feel really bad or self-pitying, remember that a change of attitude can convert Hell to Heaven.

- [ ] Am I feeling threatened by dire circumstances? Is something threatening to become so horribly dark and terrible that ... that who knows what? Remember, God and I together can handle it --- or whatever. And haven't I already withstood a *lot* of crap in my lifetime?

- [ ] Am I filled with fear about something I can't do much about at the moment? A name-able threat and fear? Well, not only can God and I together handle it, but I should not forget to seek to see, and trust, and love, God --- especially at this time when I most need it, and least feel like doing it! God isn't the one threatening with fear. God is the one offering the long-term, long-run hope!

- [ ] Am I surrounded by malicious people, hypocrites, and selfish power-mongers? I must stop cursing them; bless them instead. Wish for them good --- but don't bend to their ways. Try to help the innocent victims these people mangle and hurt and maim; worry first for others, not myself. Maintain inner calm as much as possible, and pray, pray, pray. Have the courage to name evil as what it is --- but have the compassion to see the hidden light of the soul.

- [ ] Am I expecting some sort of reward for what I'm trying to do? I need to get rid of expectations, whether good or bad. Doing a good deed may yield negative effects for me; I can't let that stop me. But I should be aware of the possible bad effects, and

prepare for them or try to make sure they won't happen. And remember a desire for feedback (so as to know how to improve one's performance) in and of itself is not bad. Just don't get bummed if you get none, or get negative feedback.

- [ ] Am I being dragged down by worries and anxieties? I need to cut off those things, and drop them like ballast. I can visualize cutting off the dark chains that are trying to pull me down. What is really important?

- [ ] Am I just plain tired and irritable? Does the thought of doing more work right now jangle warning nerves? Do I feel like a candle burning at both ends? Then stop, rest, relax, refresh ... take it easy! When a motor starts smelling of smoke, only an idiot --- or a truly desperate person --- keeps it running instead of shutting it off and letting it cool down

- [ ] Am I trying to get something exciting or sensual: food, drink, money, a big house, some time spent with a really cute person? Well, I need to remember moderation, and to remember what is more important than the physical world.

- [ ] Am I being fretful and unsettled? I need to draw in a deep breath, relax, and remember that "this too shall pass; have patience and do not despair!" And then I need to ask: Why am I being unsettled? And if it's not worth concern, then I should remember that I can simply will myself to be calm and at peace, and do so.

- [ ] Is dogma starting to weigh me down? Well, I can read counter-dogma that refutes the first set of dogma, or I can just let it go entirely.

- [ ] Am I generally depressed? I need to be active and pull myself out; I need to listen to non-depressing music, read non-depressing books, and go out and actively help other people.

- [ ] Am I feeling weak and apathetic and unenergetic? There may be an energy-drain of some sort, since apathy is a symptom of low spiritual energy. I need to make sure I get food and sleep; I need to gather energy by appreciating the true, beautiful, joyous things in life. I need to envision any dark drains dissipating and detaching. I need to re-examine my situation and be brutally honest about myself (too many dark ones seize upon flaws like hypocrisy, and use them to suck all one's energy away). Pray for the rescue of those that promote spiritual flaws.

- [ ] Am I feeling apathetic about Truth, and more tuned into the material world? There may be a need to step into "the world" and deal with it; perhaps I need to play a role in something worldly; but if I cannot turn it off and honestly face God, then I must drop the ballast, banish the fears, and turn to God and seek to know God, truth and compassion. Get some eternal perspective on my own problems!

- [ ] Am I angry at someone? I need to remember to look at the situation from that person's point of view. If even that fails, then I need to let go of the irritation from my end, so that an obnoxious person doesn't wind up ruining my day or my life.

- [ ] Am I exceedingly disappointed in myself, or in something that didn't happen as it should have? I need to remember to not cultivate expectations but to cultivate hope instead; I need to remember that even what seems like wasted effort is not necessarily wasted; I need to remember that the best way to turn a disappointment into success is to stop feeling wretched and get back to doing things --- doing them right. No matter how many times I fail to get something done that I should have, it shouldn't stop me from trying the next time, if the job is truly worth doing.

- [ ] Am I confused beyond words? I need to stop and look at what I'm doing, and remember that I am the ultimate authority on my own actions. If I really don't know what to believe any more, I will simply have to formulate a best-guess plan and act on that. Plan, act, review; make hypotheses and work from those assumptions, remembering they may be wrong.

- [ ] Am I being wishy-washy, unfocused, distracted by fear? I need to remember that unfocused people are targets for predators of all sorts. I need to extend Ki and act with determination, confidence, relaxation, benevolence, and intelligence. A focused, relaxed, benevolent mind will tend to do the Right Thing, or will tend to recognize the Right Thing when it happens to come by.

- [ ] Am I being selfish? I need to remember that I need to work on learning true compassion and benevolence and selflessness. "Love thy neighbor as thou lovest thyself." I need to remember that selfish motives draw the darker elements, and ultimately lead to destruction. Short-term self-gratification --- long-term unhappiness.

- [ ] Am I being jealous? I need to remember that I don't know the whole story behind anyone's success; I need to remember that surface success may have nothing to do with long-term anything. I need to remember that, in the long run, it probably doesn't matter one iota. I need to remember how to appreciate another's work, if it is something that is truly good. Jealousy

is not pleasant and is actually fairly pathetic.

- [ ] Am I frustrated with another's inability to hear what I'm trying to convey? I need to know that the other may simply not have reached the point of comprehending what I'm saying; I need to realize that I may be wrong, and the other person right. I need to realize I shouldn't expect everyone to understand or appreciate what I'm trying to say. I need to realize that maybe it's simply a matter of rephrasing it. And if all else fails ... Oh well! If I'm right, God knows it.

- [ ] Am I really in deep, deep kimchi? Then I need to have the courage to ask for help from those who will truly and sincerely try to help: friends, family, truly caring spirits.

- [ ] Are negative thoughts popping in and disrupting me? Then I need to practice blocking them out. I need to fill myself with the positive; I need to focus on the good. I need to remember to say "God bless you" each time something not good shows up. And then I need to remember that this process --- of even remembered to do all this consistently --- takes a lot of time and patience.

- [ ] Do I feel utterly alone, forgotten, and ill-used? I need to reach out to others and seek their help; I need to strengthen my own independence; I need to imagine reaching, rising up to the realm of the caring, to feel it, to practically see it --- and then I shall be there. Read the uplifting, listen to the elevating --- such things that were born of a connection to God, and which will lead the willing back up there.

- [ ] Do I feel burdened by guilt, failure; do I feel unacceptable, and Who Cares Anymore, and Why Do I Bother? Well, all right, God likely won't come swooping down to pick me up and babysit me. I should be outgrowing that, anyway. But look --- look up, and remember: Light is above all those wretched notions and feelings of failure and guilt. How alien and how beautiful that Light can be ... patient and accepting beyond human understanding. What is the Source of the alephs (starting from aleph-null) must be truly amazing indeed.

- [ ] Do I feel like Death would be a great thing, an opportunity to escape the sordid affairs of this world? The one way out, to be free, to be able to seek God? Well, several things to remember: 1. What better place to practice than in a really tough school? 2. The world is not all ugly; appreciate the good parts (think of them as free! gifts! no obligation to buy!), and try to contribute to making things better. 3. Death will come eventually to everyone anyway. It's a guaranteed deal; no sense in rushing it. 4. Choosing death because one is too lazy to deal with life isn't exactly the best way to enter the next stage; in fact, it's one of the worst. It's likely very much not worth rushing. 5. Hey, being alive means opportunities; why waste them?

- [ ] Am I totally and utterly disgusted with (not just myself, but) the people around me, disgusted at all the stupid petty idiotic things and all the vast and horrific and revolting things they do? Is my patience worn thin by cruelty and ignorance and suffering and pain? Do I wonder where the heck God is in all these mindless or heartless or just plain painful events? Am I to the point of completely losing my temper at all the stupidity, at the sheer wrongness of the world? No, I don't know what the solution to this one is yet. I'm working on it. Any suggestions beyond "More patience!" are welcome. "Love them" is the answer that finally came....

- [ ] Am I angry at people in general, and so ticked off that spirituality seems unappetizing? Does destruction, retaliation, and generally expressing discontent sound best ("screw the patience and joy stuff" "who cares")? Don't go there. Limit the effects; if I must be depressed, at least try to keep it in check. Pray! Make the *choice* to listen to something not depressing. Recall that at the root of this anger is sadness, and the cure for sadness is....

- [ ] And in my utter disgust and disappointment at the nature of the world, am I starting to lose all hope and all faith and all belief? Maybe I need to reread this. And then I need to review all the other pieces of this checklist, and see where the frustration is coming from, and work at that.

- [ ] Tool phrases. "I don't need self-pity." "I don't need to show off." "I don't need to be a martyr." "Don't mind what others think --- it's what God thinks that's important." "God and I can handle whatever comes." "I don't need that connection." And not least: "God bless you!"

- [ ] Then I need to stop remembering all this stuff, and actually set out to do it. Read.

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