

Chapter Eighteen

Ten Small Things You Can Do to Uplift Your Life

Topics in this Chapter:

- * Enlivening every day with spiritual awareness
- * Bringing goodness to the world
- * Appreciating the beauty around you

From a spiritual perspective, small efforts can be as significant as larger ones. Whether you're cleaning up a piece of garbage from the park, selecting a spiritual book to read, or picking up your child from school, your level of spiritual awareness and intention determines the spiritual significance of your actions. Increasing your spiritual focus brings greater significance to all that you do.

This chapter gives you ten simple efforts that can increase your spiritual awareness and intention.

Add Conscious Pauses to Your Day

Practice drawing your attention into a conscious awareness of yourself and the divine nature of this world. Sit quietly and allow your breath and mind to become calm. Bring spiritual thoughts into your mind by remembering or reading them and then allow those thoughts to dissolve into a peaceful awareness of the presence of spirit.

You can add this simple practice to the beginning, middle, or end of your day, or anytime you find a good space to turn down the outer "noise" and absorb your attention into the peaceful vibration of spirit. Even a few minutes of this practice can infuse spiritual awareness into your day.

Centering yourself in the present moment helps to bring your awareness in alignment with your eternal nature, which opens the door for greater blessings to flow into your life. After following this practice for a while, you may be able to settle into a peaceful awareness of spirit even in the midst of a noisy crowd.

Consider

One good time to take a conscious pause is when you're about to eat a meal. You have the power to turn regular food into blessed food through your vibration and intention. Before you begin to eat, take a few moments to close your eyes and make the meal sacred:

- Offer your meal to the universal fire of creative consciousness, within whose flames one form of life sacrifices itself to become nourishment for another
- Repeat a prayer or purifying mantra to bless and give thanks for the meal
- Thank all the farmers and other workers whose efforts brought this nourishing sustenance to your plate. Some nonvegetarian Tibetan Buddhist practitioners also thank the animal for giving its body as food, as they pray for it to have a better rebirth.

Along with short, spontaneous pauses, you can also schedule time in your day to sit quietly and alone, without the television set on, without the computer humming, without reading anything — just sitting quietly for however long feels right, with the intention of opening up to spirit. Taking time each day for spiritual remembrance helps to keep your connection with spirit clear and strong.

Read Uplifting Words

Many wonderful ideas and heartfelt spiritual expressions are available to read today. Sure, some spiritual writings come mixed with certain less helpful words and ideas; however, you can train yourself to be a good editor of what goes into your mind (see Chapter 5).

Consider

Reading uplifting words before going to sleep can help give you good dreams and can also color and brighten your day ahead. You don't have to read for a long time. Just open any page of a powerful and positive book and read a few lines or paragraphs. Then close your eyes and allow those uplifting thoughts to come with you into your nighttime adventures.

During the day, you can also take positive thought pauses and fill your mind with uplifting spiritual words and ideas. You can even post favorite quotes around your work or home space to remind you to spiritualize every aspect of your life.

Consider

One of the great modern tools for finding uplifting words to read is the Internet. Along with all the gossip, news, politics, and distasteful elements that pervade the worldwide Web are gems from spiritual teachers, scholars, saints, and sages of all traditions — including spiritual scriptures, poetry, questions and answers, articles, videos and audios of lectures and music, photos of exquisite nature and holy shrines, and the writings of all kinds of great and somewhat-great beings.

Just go to a search engine, type spirituality-related words that are of interest to you, and surf through worlds of spiritual information and inspiration. If one Web site doesn't interest you, just click your mouse and go somewhere else. This modern resource of the Internet brings instantaneous entrance to amazing online treasures of interesting and uplifting words and ideas.

Bless Your Day When You Wake Up

Offering a moment of gratitude when you first wake up gives an empowered framework on which to hang all the events of your day. This initial offering of blessings for the day can be as elaborate as long meditations, prayers, and rituals or as simple as bowing your head and thanking God for another beautiful day. What matters more than the outer form of any spiritual practice is the depth and clarity of your feeling.

Every day is like a new birth into your world, and the transition between sleep and wakefulness is a powerful moment for blessing the day that lies ahead. If you have an altar or sacred space, you can stand before it and say a prayer to bless whatever activities will take place for you in this fresh new day.

You may also want to set your alarm for a few minutes before you have to get up and sit or lie quietly in bed for a while before rising. Rest in communion with yourself and with spirit. Feel the divine universal presence surrounding you as you prepare to enter the light of wakefulness and begin your day. This practice also applies to those who work night shifts and would be waking up and blessing your nighttime day.

Play Spiritual Music to Soothe Your Spirit

You can play uplifting music while you work, relax, drive, clean your house, cook, bathe, pay bills, or go to sleep. Harmonious sound vibrations are absolutely magical. Why? Because this entire universe is made up of vibrations. Beautiful music can strum the strings of your soul and the world around you.

Do Your Work with an Attitude of Service

You may want to consider adding an official volunteer or service-oriented practice to your life to help you get into an attitude of service. Maybe you'd like to mentor a child, serve food to the homeless, offer service at your place of worship, or help a friend in need.

Even in the midst of your current work situation, you can find opportunities to serve and benefit others, although you may sometimes have to reflect creatively to find ways to do so. (Not eating your fellow worker's yogurt from the company fridge is a good start!)

Serving others not only brings the joy of kindness to their lives, but also helps to open your heart and soothe your pain. Service takes you out of the dissatisfied lower mind that is always thinking about your own comforts and discomforts, and shifts your focus into the higher intention of being a vehicle of grace and blessings for others.

Consider

One way to transform work into service is to consider every action you perform as an offering to divine spirit.

Surround Yourself with Things that Evoke Positive Feelings

Your subconscious mind is like the Energizer bunny that keeps going and going. Just as your breath continues to flow whether you watch it or not, so your subconscious mind keeps working even when you aren't aware of it.

Even when you think you're doing other things, your subconscious mind is taking in all the information around you like a chef gathering ingredients to use in cooking up your experience of life.

Your choices of what to place in your environment not only represent the contents of your thoughts, but these outer objects also reflect back into your thoughts and back out into your world — like a big feedback loop.

This feedback loop of “positive in, positive out” gives you a way to bring more good energy into your life by choosing to surround yourself with things that inspire and uplift you.

Depending on your personal preferences, you may want to put up photos of breathtaking nature or of one of the many beautiful images that represent spiritual or religious qualities that are meaningful for you (See Chapter 9).

Don't Forget

Outer works of spiritual beauty reflect as more spiritual beauty within yourself, which then expresses positively in other areas of your life. Your thoughts create your reality. Therefore, feed your mind with good images and watch your life improve!

Be Friendly to the People Around You

Friendliness is a form of divine love. It's an uncomplicated openness of the heart, a feeling of generosity, and an appreciation for whomever God has placed before you.

Along with following general good manners and being courteous to others, you can also go beyond efforts to be polite by also making efforts to connect with their beautiful inner soul. Find joy in greeting others on a soul level with genuine respect and appreciation. See yourself as a vehicle for blessing others (as well as an open heart to receive blessings) and act in harmony with this vision wherever you go.

Don't Forget

When you buy groceries, don't forget that the checkout clerk is a divine flame of God! When you're eating in a restaurant, give your friendliness and gratitude to those who are serving you. Don't forget that divine spirit exists — though sometimes well-disguised — in and as all beings.

Add Symbolic Contemplations to Your Actions

When you understand the symbolic nature of life, you can use your imagination to spiritualize everything you do, including housework:

- As you sweep your floor, contemplate that you're also sweeping your heart clean of old emotional dust and debris, such as anger or fear.
- As you polish your furniture, windows, or mirrors, imagine that you're also polishing your mind so that it will shine more brightly.
- As you tend your lawn or grass, consider that you're also pruning the unending growths of worldly desires.

Applying the power of your imagination and positive symbolic intentions to even mundane efforts can bring surprisingly powerful transformations to your life!

Watch Your Breath

Watching your breath is something you can do anytime and anywhere. Just pay attention to your breathing — to the feeling of the air as it comes in and goes out of your body.

Watching your breath encourages you to take more deep, long breaths. These deeper breaths invigorate your body and bring calmness and nourishment to your thoughts and feelings. Breath is an important part of your connection with life itself, so whenever you can, take a deep, full, conscious breath of life. (Come on, do it now!)

Use Rituals and Affirmations to Invoke Spirit

Rituals and affirmations give you ways to invoke and connect with the supreme spirit that creates and maintains the whole universe.

Invoke spirit by lighting a candle, burning fragrant incense, feeding the birds, creating spiritual artwork, or folding your hands in prayer.

Use positive words that bring you into greater harmony with your own great spirit, and share your positive words with others as well. Positive words can be the strongest medicine for healing whatever ails you — with no long list of scary-sounding side-effects! Choose and create your own personal rituals and affirmations to acknowledge and strengthen the blessings in your life (see Chapters 9 and 15).

Don't Forget

Your intention is the key to turning words into affirmations and actions into spiritually energized rituals.