

Chapter 20

Ten Opportunities to See Your Life with Spiritual Eyes

Topics in this Chapter:

- * Finding blessings in all situations
- * Making your dreams a reality
- * Keeping good times good

Life brings a variety of pleasant and challenging experiences: One day everything goes smoothly, but another day is filled with obstacles. One time you are showered with good fortune, but another time you're dragged down by misfortune. You may feel constricted by your past, fearful for the future, or hopeful about a new possibility. You want to find true happiness, but you're not sure how to achieve your dreams. All these different kinds of experiences bring opportunities to see your life with spiritual eyes.

This chapter gives examples of how you can look at real-life challenges and blessings with a spiritual point of view.

When Obstacles Block Your Way

You know those times when you have a goal in mind, but every effort you make seems to meet with resistance from the world around you? Such times can provide an array of lessons for your soul.

For example, when you consider life as a conscious, benevolent experience rather than an unconscious series of events, you're able to look at challenges in a more productive way. You can approach obstacles with a positive spiritual viewpoint instead of getting angry or victimized when things don't seem to be going your way.

One way to approach obstacles with a positive spiritual viewpoint is to think of the universal Consciousness that creates everything in this world as a personally involved friend. Contemplate why God or the universe may have put these obstacles in front of you.

Maybe these obstacles mean that God is saying "No," or perhaps the benevolent universal teacher is using these obstacles to strengthen your resolve to help you achieve your goals. Here are some more explorations of these two possibilities:

When an obstacle is God saying “No”:

You may be taking a course of action that would move you away from your highest good, and the compassionate universe has set up roadblocks to alert you about your mistaken course of action. With this kind of obstacle, if you push past one roadblock, another may appear, and another, and another — if you’re lucky!

If you think your obstacles may have a message of “No, don’t do it,” here are some additional ideas to explore:

You can explore the nature of your obstacles by experimenting with surrendering to letting go of the actions they are blocking. Maybe you’ve decided to write a letter telling someone off, and every time you go to save the document, your computer crashes. Let this obstacle guide you to contemplate whether what you’re about to do is the best course of action.

When you experiment with letting go of a particular effort, how do you feel? Is the idea of letting go of this effort upsetting? Is it a relief? Do you feel freer inside when you let go of the desire to pursue this particular goal? Do other priorities naturally arise to take the place of the blocked effort? You can also look for a sign or omen after you do this trial surrender of the action. Sometimes the universe will do something to say, “Yes! You’re getting warmer!”

Obstacles are not always a warning from on high, but may also be a reflection of your own inner conflicts about the course of action that is being blocked. Perhaps you’ve made an offer to purchase a house, but a higher offer beats you out. In this case, you can consider whether somewhere inside you may not have been completely sold on buying this house. Were there elements of the location or deal that may have created a subconscious resistance inside yourself?

Remember that your inner thoughts and doubts express not only through your actions, such as how much you offered for the house, but can also reflect outwardly through the metaphysical connections between your thoughts and the universe. Therefore the obstacles in front of you may be outer reflections of an inner resistance or doubt that you may not even know you have. Once you determine that you do have some resistance to the goals you’re pursuing, then the next step is to contemplate whether your inner resistance is right or wrong.

Consider

When obstacles seem to be saying “No” to your efforts, consider that their benevolent purpose may be to get you to change some aspect of your approach to achieving the goal. In the example of wanting to write a letter telling someone off, the constant computer crashes may be the conscious universe’s way of suggesting — not that you totally abandon the idea of writing the letter — but that you wait and rewrite it when you’re feeling less angry and more diplomatic.

Sometimes obstacles may be guiding you to loosen your extreme attachment to accomplishing a particular goal while you continue to pursue the goal without as much passionate attachment. Letting go of attachments while still putting forth effort is a great way to allow things to unfold more naturally. Efforts that are full of intense desire, neediness, and attachment can actually block what you're hoping to accomplish!

When an obstacle is God's way to strengthen your conviction:

Obstacles aren't always messages that are saying "No," but may be gifts of a benevolent universe to make you strong enough to be able to bear the challenges and responsibilities of the goal you're seeking.

Just think — if your goal is to change from being a minimum wage worker to the CEO of a multi billion-dollar corporation, you'd have to go through a lot of effort and growth to be able to fulfill that role, even if the position were to fall right into your lap.

In the same way, if your goals are beyond your current abilities, the benevolent universe may create obstacles that make you work harder to grow, study, be more courageous, acquire more experience, and spend more time and effort to grow into what you want to be.

Look at your situation and contemplate what you may be learning from certain obstacles: Patience? Loyalty? Dedication? Conviction? Gratitude? Strength? Vulnerability?

Don't Forget

You can find guidance even in obstacles when you consider the universe as your friend.

When You Have a Dream but Don't Know How to Get There

The great thing about wanting something with your heart and soul is that a powerful, enthusiastic vision can help orchestrate whatever universal actions are necessary to achieve your dream.

It's like when you have a clear thought that you want to pick up a coffee mug. You don't have to orchestrate all the muscular and balancing movements of your hand and arm to do it — the mere clarity of intention is enough to set all the subconscious muscular processes into action. In the same way, a clear vision or dream for your life can set all kinds of processes into action — both inside and outside of yourself.

Chapter 15 explains the difference between the first cause (universal spirit) and second cause (material) levels of life. A powerful vision in your mind is able to tap directly into the creative first cause, because the essence of your mind is also the essence of the universal spiritual mind.

Consider

Here are some tips to help you achieve your dreams:

Be clear about what you're really looking for.

Instead of focusing only on specific outer elements, contemplate what you're really, truly looking for in seeking this dream. For example, you may think that your dream is to be happily married to a particular person. You think about her all the time and plan out your strategies for getting her to the altar. The actual essence of your dream is to be happily married, but you've decided that this woman and this woman alone is the one who can fulfill that dream. However, in this case, you're better off getting clear that your real goal is to be happily married to the right person and to focus on that aspiration more than just on "snagging" a specific person to whom you're currently feeling attracted.

It's fine to imagine details of how your hopes and aspirations may look when they take form. Just be sure to also surrender to letting the universe put together the best package deal for whatever essential goals you've ordered through your power of vision and intention.

Clarify your mind through spiritual practices.

A strong and clear mind gives more power to your vision, helps you choose and pursue good decisions, and also allows you to perceive the subtle universal guidance that's guiding your way. You can find spiritual practices to clarify your mind in Chapter 8.

Contemplate to see whether any part of you believes that you don't deserve your dream.

You may think you want something, but deep down, a little parental or childhood bully figure is saying, "You can't do it." Or you may be affected by discouraging words from people who don't have strong faith in your dreams.

Maybe you've heard someone express doubts about your goal, and you've subconsciously woven those doubts into the fabric of your subconscious mind. If you determine that the negative assessments of others have diminished your faith in your ability to achieve your goals, then you can choose to transform those negative ideas into the energy and motivation to be victorious in your endeavors in spite of other people's doubts.

Be clear that this goal is something you really, truly want to do.

Sometimes you think you want something, but really the desire has been sparked by the words of others — including, of course, all those advertising companies who get paid a lot of money to make you want what they're selling. Just ask any child or teenager who would practically give their lives to get that new toy or video game and then ask them again a few years later when they're lusting over an expensive handbag or a fancy new car.

Look at your own goals and question whether they come from your own mind, heart, and soul, or from outer sources such as the marketing efforts of advertising agencies.

Also, ask yourself what outcome you can likely expect if achieve the dream you have in mind. The clearer you are about your goals, the better you're able to work toward them with the empowerment of your own conviction.

Learn what you can about others who have achieved what you want to do.

Allow the successes of good examples to give you inspiration, hope, and strategy ideas. Talk to positive mentors in your field of interest. Read biographies of those who have achieved what you want to achieve. Look through the Internet for examples and lessons from those who have accomplished the kinds of goals you seek.

Remember times in your life when you've come through for yourself and accomplished challenging tasks.

Then move toward your current goal with confidence and remembrance of your strengths.

Don't Forget

Be sure that you're envisioning a great dream for yourself and the world. Don't forget that the life you're living is *your* life. Live it! Take chances! It's going to be over one day. How would you feel if you never went for your dreams?

When You're Afraid of Losing Something or Someone

Fear of losing something or someone is an inevitable effect of having people, places, and things in your life that you love. Even while you're enjoying these contacts to the fullest — such as delighting in the company of your family and friends — you may also feel an underlying note of concern that one day you may lose what you're enjoying so much right now.

Don't Forget

If you're experiencing fears over one day losing what you love, this is a good time to remember one of the great universal laws of life: "This, too, will pass." Good times will pass, and bad times will pass. Easy times will pass, and difficult times will pass.

The bad times passing is something you don't mind at all, right? But what about that "good times will pass" part of the equation? How can you enjoy, love, and relish all the great people and things in your life without being fearful of losing them?

The secret of enjoying good times without fear is to:

Stay focused in the present moment.

When you're focused in the present moment, you're enjoying what you have today rather than spending today worrying about what may or may not happen tomorrow.

Live in a higher vision that inspires a sense of detachment.

With a higher vision, you know that all beings and things are made of one supreme spirit that can never die and doesn't really come and go, except in external appearance.

With a higher vision, you free your mind from outer worries and come to experience life through the spiritual heart, which beats with contentment and peace just beneath the waves of your mind, during times of gain and loss.

When You're in Love

Love is life. And if you miss love, you miss life.

—Leo Buscaglia

Being in love is one of the greatest experiences you can have, but it also opens the door for all kinds of tagalongs, such as attachment, jealousy, desire, and anger — and maybe even eventually hatred and the unwrapping of that old prenuptial agreement.

Here's the thing: If you keep your love on the levels of attachment and desire, you'll probably also end up hopping over to their housemates of distress and anger one day. The way around this predicament is to take the love you're feeling and to uplift it into a higher spiritual love that doesn't rest with such unsavory bedfellows.

When your heartfelt love resonates with a higher spiritual love, your love becomes a ray of God's unconditional, divine love. Can you imagine how cool it would be to be totally in love with everything and everyone in life? That's the power of true unconditional love.

Here is a method to help uplift your experience of mundane love into an all-pervasive, universal love. When you're feeling deep love for someone or something:

- 1. Pay attention to the loving feelings arising within you.**
- 2. Focus on the love, separating it from the image of whatever or whoever is evoking this love in your heart.**
- 3. Expand that unattached, free feeling of love so that it begins to pervade everything.**

Don't Forget

Any form of heartfelt love is a good start to opening to higher forms of love.

When You're Under Ongoing Pressures

When you're feeling weighed down by outer pressures, such as health concerns, legal matters, or financial troubles, your attitude can help turn a curse into a blessing. For example, you can use such times to take refuge in God or to train yourself to see beyond outer events and into a deeper awareness of life.

Don't Forget

Times of outer difficulty can give you incentive to look beyond the façade of this world into the precious spiritual realms. When things are difficult on the outside, the inner realms start to look much more enticing!

You can also contemplate why these ongoing pressures may be falling upon your shoulders. For example, if you've been indulging too much in pride or attachment to being in control of everything, the benevolent universe may be creating certain troublesome situations to bring you down a notch or to teach you surrender, compassion, simplicity, honesty, humility, faith, or one of the many other virtuous qualities that come from well-digested troubles.

Think of those daytime TV shows where parents discuss their bad, "out-of-control" teens. I happened to see two of these shows in a row while skimming TV stations a few years ago. The misbehaving teens came into the studio with their blurred middle fingers up, cursing at the booing audience and bragging about how bad they were, while showing no remorse or concern for the pain they'd been causing to their parents and others. Then the prison guards came out and began yelling and screaming into the teens' faces. All the teens were marched offstage and sent to boot camp, where each one was put through a day of physical and emotional challenge where they had no choice but to surrender to the commands of the barking officers.

Somehow, being forced to submit to this traumatic experience broke through the spoiled and shameless exterior shells of these teens. At the end of the show, the teens came back from their ordeal completely transformed! They walked onstage and hugged the prison guards, the host, and their parents, as the audience cheered. It was as though some demonic force had been exorcised from them, leaving behind good, fairly well-behaved teens — at least during the show!

Be Careful

Don't make God send you to boot camp! Be good on your own!

If God or universal Consciousness has given you certain intense challenges to deal with, you can help the process by allowing these ongoing challenges to transform, humble, and uplift you. The key to turning troubles into blessings is to surrender deeply to them through faith and higher spiritual understanding while still making steady efforts to surmount the challenges. Instead of always fighting the waves that are crashing down on you, you can let go and let the same waves carry you to the shore.

When You Don't Like Your Job

If you find yourself unhappy with the job you're doing, this is a good time to contemplate whether certain challenges mean you're in the wrong place, or if you're meant to become stronger by meeting the difficulties head on. In some cases, the challenge may stem from being in not-so-good company at work. After all, like your family, you can't always choose the people you work with — although unlike your family, you can always consider changing jobs!

Don't Forget

Your outer world often reflects your inner feelings. If your job is unpleasant, look inside to see whether you have some hidden conflicts about doing that job: Does doing this job mean that you've given up on a greater dream? Do you feel that you are contributing to the greater good of the world through your position, or is the job focused on taking advantage of others or creating something that is harmful?

Considering whether your job is helpful to the world is a difficult contemplation for some. After all, if everyone who did a job that wasn't truly helpful to the world decided to quit, can you imagine how much of the world would stop?

When I first moved to Hollywood after spending a decade of monastic life in an Indian-based ashram, my goal was to use all the skills I had nurtured there — including video production, editing, and scriptwriting — to serve humanity. However, having had no experience with editing or producing videos in the professional world, I also felt that part of my challenge was to accept whatever work God sent my way.

My first television job in Hollywood was editing *Hard Copy* shows on salacious tabloid topics. Then came some fun work while editing a *Candid Camera* show with Allen Funt, followed by a long stint with Disney's *Prime Nine News*, where I was actually able to produce some positive pieces amidst all the intense news stories.

After these jobs came a fairly violent but innocuous low-budget film produced by Arnold Schwarzenegger's best friend, and on the heels of that came editing and associate producing jobs with the television shows *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* and *X-MEN*. Sprinkled throughout these jobs were other video-related projects, many of which were charitable in nature and beneficial to the world.

All these projects gave me a chance to hone my skills and work with some very talented folks. However, while working on some of these shows, my desire to serve the world with positive creations had to be shifted to the back of my mind.

One day, I picked up a magazine with an article about childhood violence. The article mentioned both shows I was working on as being detrimental in terms of teaching violence to children. I knew that our writers and producers always tried to include good morals and positive teachings in each episode, but the basic storylines still boiled down to some sort of violent confrontation and fight scene. That's part of what made them the top two children's shows of their time!

Reading this magazine article about the negative social impact of these shows brought together many thoughts and feelings I had buried and not fully dealt with. I knew deep down that I couldn't continue doing that work. This realization was part of a life transition that led to a change in career, through which I would be able to share more helpful offerings with the world in works like this book.

Was it easy to make the transition? No. Did I lose much in terms of material acquisitions and wealth? Yes. Was it worth it? Absolutely.

Consider

Even if you can't change your job into something you love, you can still do what you love and contribute positively to the world on your own time.

When You've Experienced a Difficult Childhood

Childhood is inherently difficult. After all, growth involves a constant process of destruction and creation: destruction of old worldviews and creation of new ones.

As a young child, you realize at some point that you're not the center of the universe. Then you find out that Mommy and Daddy aren't all-powerful gods. You have to work hard to learn how to print and then write letters and memorize how to spell words. You discover that life isn't always fair, and that you're sometimes on your own. And these challenges all happen in a *good* childhood! Nevertheless, whether you had the best or most horrific childhood, what you can do as an adult is to be the best and happiest of who you are today. Here are some ways that focusing on who you are now can help free you from the harmful effects of a difficult childhood:

- **Focus on who you are now and see how your challenges have come together to create your particular combinations of strength and vulnerability.** For example, in my situation, a lack of parental nurturing during childhood created certain benefits along with the drawbacks, such as a greater sense of inner dependence above outer dependence. Being focused on who you are now helps you to have compassion for your "inner child." You can nourish the vulnerable parts of yourself with maturity and gentle kindness.
- **Being focused on who you are now allows you to be more present and able to help heal others** — and by healing others, you also heal yourself.
- **Being focused on who you are now helps you remember your spiritual nature.** Remember that you are a great and divine soul who took birth on this planet in your specific circumstances because they were the best conditions to help you learn the lessons and have the experiences that will fulfill your soul's destiny.

When You Feel Spiritually Lost

Many people feel lost because they haven't found the right spiritual community or teachings that resonate with their wants and needs. If you're feeling spiritually lost at sea, you can take steps to begin a new road:

- **Clarify inside yourself what you're looking for.** Clarity of intention brings great power to those intentions and can help draw to you exactly the right people, places, and things to keep your spiritual journey vibrant and nourishing.
- **Check out what spiritual paths, communities, teachers, and teachings are available.** Go shopping for spirituality. Visit different places, and read different kinds of spirituality-based books. Check out various houses of worship or spiritual discussions and find out what is available. Notice what you do or don't like about different communities, teachers, and teachings.

By actively seeking the right path and teachings, you're making a statement to the universe through your efforts that you want to find the right path and community for you. And while you're looking for the perfect path, you'll still be learning and growing from wherever you go. You can find more tips on finding the right path for you in Chapter 5.

Consider

Reading spiritual books about seekers who have found the right teachers and communities for them can help you to imagine what the right community or teacher could look like for you and can guide you to recognize the right path when it comes along.

When Something Awful Happens

What do you do when you lose a child, or when a big tornado comes along and destroys everything you own? How can you see such times through spiritual eyes? Certainly, the answer isn't to be unfeeling or numb about the loss. That's just a common defense mechanism that your mind may use to cover up your overwhelming grief and pain.

Instead, you must allow your feelings to arise, completely uncensored. Don't act on the angry or vengeful ones, but allow the feelings to arise nevertheless. Even if you feel angry with God, that's okay. At least you're thinking of God! In fact, some people communicate with God only when they're angry about one tragedy or another. Maybe getting these people angry over unfair tragedies is the only way God can get them to relate to Him as real!

Be Careful

Some people use spiritual ideas of personal responsibility to feel guilty about their own tragedies or callous about the traumas of others. Spiritual awareness is not meant to take away your compassion for yourself or others, but rather to add to that compassion a note of faith and higher awareness that gives solace and hope in even the darkest of times.

Terrible disasters can transform your entire relationship to the world around you. These extreme tragedies may rip you out of the roots of materialistic, illusory thinking, forcing you to shed a false sense of security. That sense of security wasn't right; it was too limited. You may fear that after the false sense of security is gone, you'll fall into some horrible state of nothingness, but that's not necessarily the case.

With spiritual eyes, you can see beneath the experience of insecurity to a real security that you may not have known was there. God! Reality! Spirit! Eternality! Nobody dies! Nothing is destroyed! Hallelujah!

Don't Forget

To your deepest soul, even painful experiences are worth undergoing if they lead to a greater unfolding of your small sense of self into the greater divine Self. This is why terrible disasters can actually become great blessings on your soul's journey. An old worldview must crumble before a new one can blossom forth. If it takes a big kick in the butt to get you there, so be it!

When Good Fortune Comes Your Way

Receiving good fortune is one of the more pleasant lessons your soul gets to go through during its life journey. An unexpected blessing showers down upon your head. Something really great happens. You win the lottery of life. You get the job. You get the girl of your dreams. You meet a great spiritual being. You find the home you've always wanted. Good fortune can enter through many avenues.

One good spiritual response to such times is gratitude. Why? Because gratitude is the perfect companion to good fortune. The two nourish one another and come together to create something even greater than occasional moments of good fortune: the state of grace. When you're in the state of grace, good fortune becomes a natural part of your life.

Another excellent response to times of good fortune is the other "g" word: generosity. Open your heart and ask God to guide you on how to share this great abundance of good fortune. With a smile? With kind words? By sharing what you have or what you've learned? By looking for ways to help the people around you and benefit the world?

Don't Forget

Good fortune gives you a unique chance to practice the gems of gratitude and generosity, so take advantage of the opportunity while you can!