

Reader Views

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Interview with Jeff Maziareck Author of “Spirituality Simplified”

Today we are pleased to have Jeff Maziareck with us. Jeff, after much study and research into the subject of spirituality has written a book that is not like any other book on the topic. Jeff, welcome to Reader Views.

Irene: “Spirituality Simplified” - seems like a book that gives a novice understanding of the basics of spirituality. What inspired you to write such a book?

Jeff: In the late 1980s when I first discovered the subject of “spirituality”, it didn’t take very long for me to become thoroughly engrossed in it. In fact, over a period of ten years I ultimately purchased and read nearly 200 books in this category. In that process it occurred to me one day in early 1999 there really wasn’t, at least to my knowledge, an existing book that could be described as the ideal “first book” for a person who was new to the spiritual path—a book that could effectively introduce the subject, and at the same time serve as a “road map” to other content that I felt could assist them in their process of self-discovery.

While I thought the idea had some merit, it wasn’t until I visited a friend of mine in Florida by the name of Kaye O’Bara that I was actually inspired to move forward and begin to write the book. Kaye and her daughter, Edwarda, were the subject of a book by Wayne Dyer called “A Promise is a Promise.” I had initially met her in 1998 after reading that book and then stopping by her home in N. Miami for a visit. During February of 1999 on a return trip to see her, we spent an entire afternoon together, and that is when the subject of my idea for the book arose. After hearing me speak about it, Kaye immediately voiced her opinion on the matter; namely, that I need to write the book because it was obvious I had great passion for the subject. I decided to take her advice, and began work on the book promptly upon my return home. At the beginning of the project I didn’t really expect to ever publish a book, but proceeded anyway because I felt it would be an excellent way for me to crystallize my philosophy to that point, and come to better understand myself.

Irene: What is spirituality in your terms?

Jeff: In my terms spirituality is coming to the awareness that each and every person has within them a “spark” of the Creator, or God if you prefer. In essence, we are all connected to the very force that created us, and each of us therefore has the innate potential to be deeply compassionate and unconditionally loving. Spirituality also requires each of us to accept that our connection to the Creator/God also means, by default, that at some level we are connected to all other people as

well. In addition, the path of spirituality requires an individual be willing to leave no stone unturned in the process of coming to truly know themselves. That means being ready to question literally everything they have been taught about spirituality, and for that matter, religion as well.

Irene: Some people would disagree with you that we are all connected. They believe that their path to God is the only way and feel that they have been chosen to convince others of the same. How do you justify your belief?

Jeff: To answer the question first, I don't really feel that I must justify my belief to anyone. I have come to believe what I believe based on my own research and study, and my objective in writing the book was not to persuade anyone to believe exactly the same way. The purpose of writing the book was to share information, ideas, and experiences that hopefully would be of some value to spiritual seekers. If people profit from it great, they are responsible for that; if they are annoyed by it that is their responsibility as well. As for people who would disagree that we are all connected, I would recommend they spend some time reading about what quantum physicists have known for quite sometime, which is the raw material of creation is, in reality, a field of energy that permeates every square inch of the Universe, and as such, connects everything, including people. Finally, for those who feel that their way to God is the only way, it's not my business to convince them otherwise, and I wouldn't ever make an effort to do so.

Irene: Many people interchange the terms spirituality and religion. What is the difference?

Jeff: In my view spirituality and religion are not equivalent terms. As I say in the final chapter of the book, spiritual growth is a lot like walking a high wire without a safety net, because unlike traditional religious practice there is no rigid dogma that exists to provide one with all of the 'answers'. Instead, on this path an individual takes on the responsibility for finding his or her own answers to serious questions such as: Who or what is God? What is the purpose of my life? What is the meaning of life in general? With religion, one simply has to accept the dogma is the truth because someone says that it is; questioning of the dogma is typically frowned upon, and particularly so in sects that are firmly attached to particular teachings. Spiritual growth is a never-ending process that requires the individual to continually refine their philosophy based on their personal process of discovery. As such, it requires a commitment to do the work, to dig and dig for answers that resonate positively within. It's really not about "getting somewhere," it's about "being" fully with the process of self-discovery.

Irene: Spiritual people often call themselves "enlightened." What is your view in this area?

Jeff: There is an old saying I heard a while back, the origin of which I cannot recall, that essentially states the following: 'he who speaks does not know, he who doesn't speak, knows.' For someone to outwardly claim they are enlightened suggests to me they are trying to somehow distinguish themselves as being ahead of the pack, so to speak. Rhetorically speaking, what is the standard by which to judge whether someone is truly enlightened? In my experience it is all an individual process and looking to put one's self on some kind of grading scale of progress is a desire rooted in ego, not in Spirit.

Irene: What spiritual teachers have you used as a basis of your information?

Jeff: Within the book there are nearly 80 quotations from about 40 different books. That translates into a wealth of content from a number of different authors. The intent was to use the "best of the best" content that I had uncovered over the various books I read. In that process, I've come to feel that there are a handful of teachers that have had the most impact on my continually

evolving spiritual philosophy, they are: Fr. Anthony DeMello, because I greatly enjoy his very practical, no-nonsense approach to the topic; Stuart Wilde, because he never tries to appear like he has it all solved, and honestly his irreverent approach makes me laugh; and Wayne Dyer, because the very first book I read was his title “You’ll See It When You Believe It”, and it truly was a life-changing work for me.

Irene: Wayne Dyer certainly brought a message in that book. Would you tell our reading audience a little more about what the title really means? The adage is reversed.

Jeff: The essence of what Mr. Dyer is saying is this: our thoughts are real “things” or energy impulses if you will, that go out into the world and serve as attractors to experience(s). Or to say it another way, we become what we think about all day long. If we focus our thoughts (and feelings) on that which we want to manifest in our lives, then over time that manifestation will come to pass; the same applies to focusing our thoughts on what we don’t want. This is by no means a concept that originated with Dyer, as centuries ago the Buddha reportedly said the following: “We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world.” With that said, the meaning of the title of Dyer’s book is therefore the more accurate way of presenting how things work—since our thoughts create our world, we will only see things arrive up in our life when we think (or believe) that they will.

Irene: There are many spiritual concepts that seem to overlap into the metaphysical realm. What are some of them and how do you view the overlap?

Jeff: There clearly is some overlap between spiritual and metaphysical concepts. The primary difference in my experience is that pure metaphysics doesn’t seem to have as much focus on the Creator/God itself; instead it appears to concentrate more on the human being’s place in the universe, while also describing so-called universal principles or laws. In addition, it incorporates things like astrology, channeling, and other paranormal phenomena, whereas spirituality is typically less concerned with these subjects. The area of universal principles or laws is one in which the overlap can be seen. For example, both talk about the existence of the principle (or law) of cause and effect, as well as others including oneness, detachment, and abundance. I think the key for spiritual seekers is not to get caught up in labels and categorizations, but instead to be willing to consider information from all kinds of sources as they traverse their path of self-discovery.

Irene: You talk about “spiritual principles” in your book. What are some of them?

Jeff: Within the book I specifically address six principles I felt were most important for the novice spiritual seeker in particular. The principles described in the book are the following: Cause & Effect, Present Moment Awareness, Oneness, Abundance, Non-attachment (or Detachment), and Forgiveness. At the end of each chapter I also include a “related reading list” driven down to the chapter level to assist the reader in learning more about these principles, and in turn, others as well depending on the book they reference.

Irene: Some of them seem so mystical, especially when people are encouraged to connect with their Higher Self. Tell us about the Higher Self.

Jeff: To me the Higher Self is the aspect of ourselves that is Divine in nature, the part of us that looks out upon our life as a “witness” of all that is occurring here in the physical world, and which always knows the most appropriate choice for us in any given moment. Our primary challenge is to learn to consistently and consciously connect with this higher aspect by

developing the ability to truly quiet our mind and be open to its advice and counsel. Clearly, this is not easy given all of the distractions of daily life combined with the effects of all the emotional and intellectual programming we have been exposed to since our arrival on earth in a physical body. Nonetheless, as my favorite musical artist Todd Rundgren once said, “If you want different choices, you’ve got to hear the quiet voices.”

Irene: In your book you talk about “cause and effect.” Do you believe this is Karmic?

Jeff: As I say in the book, the principle of cause & effect essentially serves as our personal boomerang, bringing back to us at some point, and in some form, whatever we put out into the world. According to this principle, every effect one experiences had to have a cause. In my view, the primary lesson to be learned is that in order to progress in life we simply must do our best to become more conscious of the choices we are making, for they are causes that in turn create effects. This includes choices about what we think about as well. The challenge we face in this area is that over time so much of our decision-making/choice-making, and our thoughts themselves for that matter, emerge from subconscious programs that operate in the background, so to speak.

As for “karma”, as I say in the book, it is a bit unnerving when one stops to think about all the causes one may have initiated in the past (i.e., from this lifetime and perhaps even past lifetimes), that could ultimately emerge as some type of negative effect. Rather than getting all caught up in that, in my experience the most constructive approach is to 1. Focus on creating new causes in each present moment (i.e., thoughts, feelings, actions) that will ultimately lead to positive effects, and 2. Make best efforts to “reframe” negative circumstances into positive ones by looking for the lesson embedded within the experience (i.e., what is the Universe/Spirit trying to teach me here?). From my perspective, accepting cause & effect as a working principle in one’s life is very empowering, because it compels you to acknowledge your role as an active creator of life circumstances rather than as a helpless roulette ball on the wheel of life.

Irene: You quote Tamura “We may fool ourselves into believing that we are fundamentally different from the person we are judging, but, in truth, we can never recognize in another what we don’t have in ourselves.” That’s a pretty scary thought. Explain this to our reading audience.

Jeff: According to the theory, each of us consciously and subconsciously “project” ourselves energetically out into the world, and other people then “mirror” these projections back to us. I don’t feel it’s frightening at all; it’s just another piece of the puzzle of self-discovery. For example, if we judge someone for being intolerant, then at some level we ourselves are intolerant, and the message is that we need to acknowledge that “shadow” aspect so that can completely accept ourselves exactly as we are, even with our hidden/repressed aspects.

Since learning about this “mirroring” process years ago, I make it a regular practice to carefully consider what my judgments are saying about me, and the result has been very educational. As a case in point, last year I announced to one of my clients that I would be taking an extended vacation, and the response was not very supportive. I was of course displeased and began having negative feelings about it, wondering how this individual could feel that way given that I hadn’t taken any time off in two years. In the midst of my “stewing” about the matter, this thought came to me, “all this person is showing you, is that part of you that doesn’t feel you deserve the time off.” I knew immediately this insight was completely accurate, and I promptly stopped running the negative thoughts about the client, and instead affirmed to myself that I did indeed deserve the break.

Irene: You talk about detaching in your book. Why is it so important to “detach from the outcome”?

Jeff: Detachment is key to manifesting desires, because it all comes down to the point of focus. Whenever we are attached to a particular result, meaning that we really, really want to have some item, or to have something occur, the focus is on what we don't have rather than on what we intend to have. In essence, we are subconsciously focused on the wanting, and not the having. We simply need to get to a point where we get in the feeling space of actually having what we desire, and let the universe take care of the details. This goes against the traditional “make it happen” approach that is so prevalent in business, but that approach takes so much energy, and once one realizes that there is indeed an unseen “force” that is there to assist us in our creative efforts, it's unnecessary to resort to that approach. This doesn't mean that one doesn't “do” anything, not at all; one follows their inspiration and still puts energy out into the world to manifest desires. However, the difference is that the actions are supported by an attitude of trust that “this, or something better will manifest.” This is one other critical advantage of detachment, namely that being detached from a specific outcome opens the door for something even better to arrive or occur.

Irene: Your explanation gives meaning to “showing up.” Would you tell us some experiences you've had when you were detached from the outcome but showed up.

Jeff: In 1994 I started a business that was originally intended to one offering marketing consulting services for high-tech firms. I began marketing the firm through various means, and made little progress for three months. At this point, I decided to step away from taking physical “action”, and instead begin using affirmations and prayer as techniques to generate connections that would lead to work. In doing this, I made best efforts to put the energy out there and then detach from the outcome as best as I could. I kept myself busy with reading and household projects. Then, one day the phone rang and it was some woman from a high technology public relations firm who had heard about my high-tech background from a friend of a friend. She asked if I would drive up to meet her for lunch to discuss the concept of my writing draft press releases for the firm. The lunch meeting went well and I began work the next week. By the time 5 years had passed, I had written nearly 1,200 releases for that firm.

Approximately six months after I began writing for that firm, I received a letter in the mail from an ex-girlfriend who had just moved back to the area from the West Coast, within which she indicated that she felt I could very well be a great writing resource for her firm. I then phoned her and arranged to have lunch with her in April of 1995; six months later I began working as a freelance writer for her company. Today, more than 10 years later, I continue to work for that firm on a freelance basis as a senior technical writer. Clearly, I did nothing to make either of these situations happen; I simply put some energy out there and in time something good manifested all on its own.

Irene: What is a simple test to find out if one is spiritually inclined?

Jeff: I am not really certain there is a simple test in this regard. From my experience, at the root of an orientation towards spirituality is a deeply-held desire to truly come to an understanding of the purpose of life, and willingness to explore any and all avenues available to reach that understanding. The path of spiritual growth is not one that lends itself to the “quick fix,” yet once it is embarked upon this path will yield rewards that are more than commensurate with the effort.

Irene: There is much buzz around find the purpose of life, and many different beliefs of what that means. What is your understanding of “purpose of life”?

Jeff: To me, the purpose of life is a fairly esoteric subject, and it can be interpreted in various ways. There’s the purpose of life in general, and then there’s the purpose of an individual’s life. As for the former, I’ve personally come to believe that one reason each of us is here is to come to understand who we really are, namely (as stated earlier) “sparks” of the Divine that have the innate potential to be as compassionate and unconditionally loving as the very force that created us.. As for individual purpose, I feel that each person was created to bring some form of service to the world, and that purpose will ultimately reveal itself to each individual who is sincerely dedicated to learning about, and meeting that purpose. The purpose may not always be easily discovered or understood, and perhaps at times it may turn out that the purpose requires the individual to face significant life challenges. In addition, because each living soul has freewill choice a given purpose may not always be realized. When it is not, then one can only hope that the infinite intelligence of the Creator provided for backup plans. Seriously, though, this is a very complex subject.

Irene: Jeff, it has been a real pleasure talking with you. I know our reading audience would like to know more about you and your book. Do you have a website where people can learn more?

Jeff: Thank you and it really was wonderful to have this opportunity to dialog with Readerviews.com about the subject of spirituality.

To learn more about ““Spirituality Simplified””, which in addition to being a solid “spiritual starter book” is likewise a handy reference guide for those who have been on “the path of self discovery” for some time, readers are invited to visit our Website at <http://www.spiritsimple.com>. The site includes the complete Table of Contents from the book, and a section that features “Excerpts” from each of the various chapters. Spiritsimple.com also includes information regarding the source material used in the creation of the book, and other content as well. Finally, I warmly invite readers to contact me via email at jam@spiritsimple.com with any questions they may have regarding ““Spirituality Simplified””.