

**Detaching the concept of spirituality being tied to religion; using mindfulness and meditation practices to connect with the universe.**

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## **Personal Statement**

I have never been a religious person and from a young age I remember thinking “I don’t think there is a ‘God(s)’ but I do think something else is happening.” In the Fall of 2019 I took a course called Astrosociology instructed by Dr. Chrys Ingraham; and the information provided changed my perspective and expanded my mind. Through the semester the major topics we discussed were the quantum field, collective consciousness, ancient civilizations, extraterrestrial life and meditation. I have furthered my own research to dissect the entanglement that is created by religion and spirituality.

## **Research**

When discussing spirituality, there is a notion that it has to be tied to religion or to a higher unknown “Divine” power; what if that wasn’t the case? Spirituality should bring a connection within yourself and the universe that creates our reality. Throughout this piece we will discuss what makes the act of being spiritual different from being religious. We will dive into how to become mindful and implement those thought processes into your everyday life. And how meditation can ground you, connect you to the universe and your higher-self.

Spirituality is the state of being self-aware and growing an understanding of your mind, body and spirit over time (Zweiback et al., 2015). In a study done by Dorothy Sisk, she stated that spiritual intelligence is the expansion of inner understanding, higher intuition, awareness of the universe and nature and your connection to it (Zweiback et al., 2015). In the most basic of definitions by the Oxford Dictionary, religion is “the belief in and worship of a superhuman

controlling power, especially a personal God or gods”, at the core of religion is worship, which is not what spirituality has a foundation in. While a person can be both spiritual and religious, spirituality should not anchor a person into institutionalized religion, making a case to separate the idea of spirituality from religion as a whole.

A form of expression in religion is through prayer, giving thanks to a god and showing appreciation. Prayer centers around the idea that “God” whoever that might be, gives love and joy and that is not something that we possess natural (Zweiback et al., 2015). Later on, Zweiback states “When we thank God for the gift of study, we declare that learning is a supreme value and that wisdom and its pursuit are connected to the Divine” which further supports the claim worship in religion. Let’s dissect what prayer is without the idea of a god, it is putting energy towards an idea, which sounds like manifestation at the core. To manifest you need to focus your energy and get connected to your higher-self. When we manifest, we can express our true self and meet our full potential (Bullard, 2020). If you start to think of prayer as a daily mindful practice but instead of thanking a god, you thank the universe or your-higher self, you put yourself on similar playing field.

Mindfulness, is the practice of being aware and it originates from eastern introspective practices, such as Buddhism (Grecucci et al., 2015). To be mindful is to pay attention to yourself and the world around you, not to rush and focus on the present moment. This can be nourished through meditation, and staying present (Grecucci et al., 2015). Meditation is the key to connecting to the universe, and to quieting our mind and thoughts (Watts, 1972). Grecucci et al, stated that a part of mindfulness is having the ability to be aware and stay in the “present moment” without recalling your past or divulging into the future. They defined it as “sustained attention” which is to focus on a thought or object for a long period of time (Grecucci et al.,

2015). Throughout the findings, mindfulness was found to be a powerful tool to raise the awareness to internal and external stimuli. The practice of mindfulness aids in an “adaptive observational stance toward inner experience” and to prepare your mind to be calm in stimulating situations, where fear or anger might hide (Grecucci et al., 2015). Implementing mindfulness into our everyday lives connects us to a universal consciousness. When we can focus on the present and not on “the what if” or “what might” we appreciate what it means to enjoy living.

Meditation is a great tool to gain mindfulness and inner-connection; the problem is, how do we meditate correctly? In The essential lectures of Alan Watts, he states that meditation should be rooted in the now “mediation is the discovery that the point of life is always arrived at in the immediate moment”. Throughout the video he states that if you are meditating for any reason besides being present you are missing the point of meditation (Watts, 1972). Alan compares dancing and playing music to meditation which is a beautiful comparison. The point of dance or music, is to express yourself and enjoy the journey to the finish, but to be present in the execution; he stated, “when we dance the dancing itself is the point” this translates over to meditation and being mindful (Watts, 1972).

Joe Dispenza works on “demystifying meditation” the study of teaching how to meditate from a neuropsychology perspective. We are constantly thinking, and those thoughts can be negative, and meditation is the practice of clearing our mind. People become discouraged when they meditate and all they can think about are the negative thoughts and conclude that they are not good at meditating (Dispenza, 2019). A common phrase heard is “yeah, I tried meditation but it’s not for me” but Dispenza would state that is untrue, you are just doing it wrong. Look at meditation from a different perspective, when your conscious mind meets your unconscious

mind, Dispenza would say that if you “decide not to put your attention or energy behind them, that’s a victory” which simply means if you just observe your emotions instead of acting on them, you are on the journey to know your true self (Dispenza, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

On the pathway to enjoying life and understanding a deeper meaning of the universe, we can implement mindfulness and mediation in our lifestyle. Whether it is rethinking a negative thought or sitting down 30 minutes a day to meditate, we have the ability to improve our outlook on life and what it means to be connected. If we disconnect the institutionalism of religion and the religious ties to spirituality, we can raise our collective vibration and have a similar mindset on what it means to enjoy life.

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