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FUEL FOR THE JOURNEY

Tired of the pandemic? Join the club because most of us are. Living in a state of uncertainty for the past year has worn us down and not knowing when an end is in sight doesn't help matters. It's been a marathon laced with numerous circumstances and events that has wreaked havoc on our souls.

For those of you who have lost loved ones to the pandemic, know that you are lovingly held by

people all over the world. Not only have you suffered, but we have suffered with you and all of us may continue to grieve for the rest of our lives. Such sorrow is too deep to push aside or turn away from. We must face it and embrace it because it's now a part of us. And with God's grace we'll run this race and live to see better and brighter days.

In the meantime, you're going to need some fuel for the journey.

How often have you been reminded in this past year to make sure you kick it up a notch and do your spiritual practice(s)? If you've heard it more times than you can remember, there's a reason for that. It's because, more than anything else, they will help you navigate the darkness and get through difficult times. And this is a very difficult time.

I recently attended a workshop led by Victoria Price, author of [Living Love](#), "... a spiritual self-help book that demonstrates how to turn aside the fears that stand between you and self-fulfillment to embrace the healing power of love."

Over the years, I've attended many workshops that helped me to grow personally and to mature spiritually. Some resonated with me more than others and what seemed to make the difference is my level of consciousness and how much I could take in and retain and put to good use.

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Inner Evolution • A Quiet Revolution

You can go to the most dynamic church service, prayer group, workshop, sacred circle, and any number of spiritually oriented endeavors and, no matter how great the collective consciousness and your personal experience, you're only going to take away what you were able to digest and absorb based on your level of awareness.

That is why you can read a passage of scripture, watch a movie, attend a service, meditate daily, and approach that same thing 6 months later, 6 years later, 16 years later, and see it for the first time and experience it's momentum in a much deeper way.

So, back to Victoria and her workshop, **Living Love** ... It was definitely one of the most inspirational workshops I've attended in many years. Since I became aware that I'm not inclined to become a member of any particular religious denomination and understand that love is my religion, I'm drawn to that which helps me to understand more and more about how to live love and that's what led me to her workshop.

So often we are of the mindset that love is simply a concept but I believe it's more than that—much more. Concepts tend to hang out in the mind whereas truth abides in the heart. Love is truth. Love is real. Love is Joy. When you practice love daily you will “be it, feel it, and see it” consistently.

One of the ways in which that can happen is through spiritual practice.

When you commit to a spiritual practice, you move from problem to practice. Too often we try to solve our problems with the same mindset in which it was created. We hold on to old axioms like “give it enough time and things will change” and that's not always true.

If you don't have a daily practice that gets you out

of your head, negative thoughts tend to take over. These are the four elements of a spiritual practice:

- **Daily:** It is something that you make time for and you commit to it daily.
- **Deliberate:** Set a time and try to stick to it.
- **Conscious:** You have intentionally chosen it to get you out of your mind. You practice with a high level of integrity and if it becomes stale, you let it go.
- **Committed:** You make a covenant with yourself and your higher power to get out of your head and into your heart.



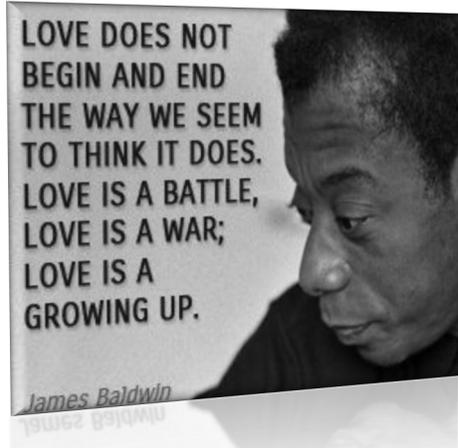
The heaviness of the pandemic has challenged our ability to maintain a sense of joy. We've been stretched to the limit and to think that we've been living in this state of complexity for a year now is rather daunting. All of us can use a little fuel for the fire to help us continue on.

In the **Living Love** workshop we were invited to start a Daily Practice of Joy which is to **make time to acknowledge the pure and simple delight of being alive**. How difficult is that? It's not difficult at all. Think about what brings you joy and then commit to 20 minutes a day of feeling joy.

It doesn't have to be a big stretch. Victoria's practice is walking her dog every morning and noticing things in her neighborhood.

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She talked about one house that she passes every day that has a confederate flag on the property along with a whole lot of clutter in the yard. Her practice is to pause when she gets to that house and look for something to love about it. She says that, invariably, she finds something to love.



Others in the workshop talked about jogging, swimming, Tai Chi, skiing, gardening, taking a nice drive, walking in the park or near a body of water, creating art, listening to music, etc. etc. When you think about starting your own spiritual joy practice, simply ask yourself “what brings me joy”?

I thought about my own practice that I cannot imagine being without and decided to add one more activity. We were invited to think of some music or a song that we really connect to. It should be something lively and passionate that makes you want to dance and/or it should be something to embrace when you have a need to turn within and quiet your soul. On some days it might be one or the other and on some days it might be both.

So I thought of something that makes me want to dance and I thought of a song that takes me into prayer. Sometimes I do one or the other and sometimes I do both. My new joyful activity is to move my body and dance so I'm now including it along with meditation/prayer, reflective reading,

and journaling, and I call it my **One-Half Hour of Power** and on days that are exceptional it is my **Hour of Power**.

Most of the time I can fit it in first thing in the morning but on days that I'm not able, I fit it in before bedtime.

I like to start with grounding myself and will sit still for about five minutes after having my morning coffee simply breathing and staring into space. Sometimes that leads to being silent for a longer period and meditating and/or praying for 15 minutes and then reading and reflecting on what I've read. After that, I dance or I listen to the music that feeds my soul.

That's the general approach but, as you might surmise, if I did it all everyday it would take two or three hours so I just mix it up according to how I'm led and get in at least a half-hour, or so, of a blend of the following.

- **Meditation** is a mixture of time sitting in the silence or time listening to one of my favorite YouTube stations. I love [Rev. Paulette Pipe](#) and also [Tara Brach](#) meditations.
- **Reflective reading** is from an assortment of spiritually nourishing books. Among the books on my altar are “[Opening Doors Within](#)” by Eileen Caddy, “[The Book of Awakening](#)” by Mark Nepo, and “[Every Day I Pray](#)” by Iyanla Vanzant.
- **My Prayers** are often for myself as well as other people and simply come from within. I pray for whomever is in my heart at the time that I know is dealing with a hardship. I tried keeping a prayer list but found that I couldn't keep up so now I pray as I'm led to do so.

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Continued from page 3 ...

- **Journaling** is one of the ways that I pray and this is done by writing out a prayer for myself or others. I also journal about my life, in general, and it's a thing that I do to keep up with myself. I also keep a gratitude journal and, as much as I'd love to write in it every day, I don't, so I do it as many times as I'm led.



- **Sacred Dance** is a spiritual practice that I started 10 or 15 years ago and had not done it for a while until recently. When I started thinking about what brings me joy, dance was the first thing that came to mind. I wouldn't necessarily call my spiritual joy dancing sacred because I simply do it for the sheer joy of dancing and moving my body and the music is mostly popular songs with a lot of rhythm—nothing too sacred about it. In the past couple of weeks I've danced to the following songs (and God knows there are many more to come!): "[Can't Stop the Feeling](#)" by Justin Timberlake, "[Happy](#)" by Pharrell Williams, "[I Love Myself](#)" by Chaka Khan, and "[Uptown Funk](#)" by Bruno Mars.
- **Inner Essence Music** is really hard to narrow down to just a few songs so I'll list what's currently at the top of my list: "[Sometimes a Prayer Will Do](#)" by Secret Garden with Tracy Campbell, "[Serenade](#)" by Michael Maxwell, and "[Ong Namo](#)" by Snatam Kaur.

Remember, we are in a marathon, not a race. We have to consider this as a long haul and not a short sprint. It requires resilience, grit, faith, and an ability to give ourselves and others a break knowing that we are all doing the best we can.

Astrologically speaking, it is believed by many that we have entered into the [Age of Aquarius](#)—known for harmony, understanding, peace, and love.

*"When the moon is in the Seventh House
And Jupiter aligns with Mars
Then peace will guide the planets
And love will steer the stars
This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius" –
[5th Dimension, 1969](#)*

I know very little about astrology and have no idea whether the above is fact, fiction, or fantasy but I sure do like the feel of it. We have no control over anyone other than ourselves. I hope that you will be the one in your household and your community who will let the sun shine in and be the peace and offer love instead of fear.

Until next time, here is a link to some rituals that help to build resilience that was written before the pandemic but so applicable today regardless of your religion. Stay Well. Stay Joy-Filled.

[SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS THAT CREATE RESILIENCE](#)

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More information to follow ...



Peace ♥ Shirley