

Who are you? Where are you going?

Who are you and Where are you going ? These are the most fundamental questions in life. Once you have answered them, all other questions and answers flow naturally. There will be a "fitness", and "appropriateness" of your thoughts and actions, both in relationship to yourself, to other people and to your various activities in life. You will be aligned with spirit.

One of the assumptions I am making is that there is nothing in this world that stands in isolation. Not just in the sense that a brick is part of a wall; rather, that everything is inter-related and interdependent. Everything is part of a greater whole. There is a force that both creates and connects everything. The philosophies of the East call that force by various names: chi, ki, prana; meaning air, breath, energy, or life force.

When we focus on fitness in the physical body, one of the measurements of that fitness is our aerobic capacity - our ability to take in and fully utilise the breath. The physical body and its functions are sustained by breathing.

The correlation between physical health and a sense of mental and emotional well-being has been well documented. An awareness of how our mental and emotional state affects the way we breathe is an essential skill in stress management. Stress reduction can be achieved with specific breath techniques.

How does "spiritual " fitness relate to this and what does it mean ? Perhaps it is easier to answer that by looking at the symptoms of spiritual malaise — typically mid- life crisis or unfocused erratic behaviour. One manifestation of this is when, as an adult, we achieve the various goals we have set ourselves and have attained a standard of living we are satisfied with. Yet we say to ourselves, "is that all there is ?" When we can't answer questions about who we are, why we are here, and what the purpose of life is, we lose heart and part of our spirit begins to die.

One of the easiest ways of reconnecting to spirit is through mediation. The most basic mediation techniques involve a focusing on the breath. And it is through meditation that we are able to answer the question "Who am I?"

We begin to understand the complexity of our own body-mind, to see the inter-relationship of our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual states and understand that we are part of a greater whole — family, society, mankind — and the we are all living together on planet Earth.

We begin to understand that we have a physical body, but that we are not just a body. We realise that unhappiness comes when we equate our value as a person with the type of body we

have. Or conversely, disease comes when we do not take care of ourselves, when we do not realise that inter-relationship of the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual part of our being.

Through meditation, we realise that we are not our emotions. Our emotional states come and go — sometimes we are happy, sometimes sad. We can be angry one minute and laughing the next. If we become the emotion, we ride a roller coaster: Through meditation, we learn that we can experience emotions yet not be their victim. We have emotions, but we are more than those emotions.

As for our ideas, they change as we receive new information. At different times in history, science has asserted different truths. Our truth as a child is often different from our truth as an adult. Our ideas are just the best tools we have at any given time to operate successfully in the world. Disaster strikes when we try to apply inappropriate ideas to particular situations.

So who are we ? We are physical, emotional, mental and spiritual beings, and we live in a physical world. We relate to other people physically, emotionally and mentally. We are connected through spirit.

What does fitness mean in this context ? It means acting in a way that is governed by and is in alignment with the principle that everything within ourselves is inter-related and that there is an inter-relationship between ourselves, other human beings and the environment.

The ethical implication of this is that there must be a shift from a "me and them" attitude, a "win/lose" competitiveness, to an understanding that for me to win , others must also win; for me to be happy others must also be happy. for me to be safe and secure, the planet has to be safe and secure.

Every individual has to find their own answers about how to relate to the world - physical, emotionally, mentally and spiritually . The answers to a particular situation come when we have a vision of the complexity and inter-relatedness of the whole and understand the relationship between the many parts.

This vision and this knowledge is most easily achieved through meditation, the purpose of which is to allow us to experience our true self and our connections with all of creation.

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