Leading with Spirit is a unique training program for professionals and organizations seeking to infuse their work with inspiration and transformative practices from the world’s spiritual and wisdom traditions. The premise of Satyana’s Leading with Spirit programs is that new forms of leadership in social, business, and political arenas are urgently needed for the 21st century. Spiritual life is no longer limited to the quiet seduction of mystics or seekers living in isolation from society. Now more than ever, we need leaders who truly combine the deep inner work of the heart with active outer service in the world.

Practical workshops are drawn from the world’s spiritual traditions to foster the sea change in human consciousness that is our only hope for bringing peace into the world. Practices that inspire the soul and transform the heart—whether characterized as “contemplative” or “spiritual” or “mystical”—are as fundamental to today’s leaders as traditional practical and organizational skills. Otherwise—as Thomas Merton cautioned—if we attempt to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening our own self-understanding, our own freedom, integrity and capacity to love, we will not have anything to give to others. We will communicate nothing but the contagion of our own obsessions, our aggressiveness, our ego-centered ambitions.

The choice between an outer life of activism and an inner life of contemplation has become a false dichotomy. Activism without spirituality is blind, and spirituality without activism is lame. What we need now is a new form of “spiritual activism” that combines both spiritual and social transformation. Nothing less can marry the heart’s longing to the world’s need, and give birth to a truly compassionate society.

Who are these programs for? Leading with Spirit programs are designed for activists, professionals, and organizations who genuinely seek to tap inner yearnings of spirit in their work. The program is ideal for those seeking to lead from their hearts in daily professional service, and find supportive camaraderie among peers who share a commitment to integrating spiritual wisdom into their professional lives.

Action follows being. The real pioneers of social and cultural innovation are those who infuse spiritual wisdom into practical activism. Leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Aung San Suu Kyi, Martin Luther King, and Mother Teresa always emphasized this integration of spirit and action—and their unprecedented social contributions are the direct result of a deep commitment to spiritual life. Whether rooted in Eastern or Western traditions, these pioneers all share a profound commitment to spiritual discipline at the very core of their worldly service. It is no small irony that social change activists universally revere these pioneers, yet relatively few follow their example of cultivating a spiritual discipline, and leading with spirit in every action and project. Nothing less is required if we are to become the instruments for the world’s larger wisdom and grace.

The way of spirit. Drawing on an eclectic range of traditions—ancient and modern, East and West—Leading with Spirit emphasizes practical skills and hands-on learning, rather than theory or philosophies. In practice, leading with spirit means awakening and following the silent wisdom of our own hearts. We are led by spirit. Participants learn how to draw on their inner resources and the collective power of the group for supporting the changes they wish to manifest in their professional and personal lives.

Leading with Spirit programs in a range of different venues and formats. Past events have included day-long or weekend introductory events, week-long seminars and retreats, and special long-term programs that met for multiple weekends spread over a year’s time. Training programs are tailored to suit the particular needs of specific organizations or individuals.

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—Meister Eckhart
1. Transformation of motivation from anger/ fear/death to compassion/forgiveness. This is a vital challenge for today’s social change movement. This is not to deny the noble emotion of appropriate anger or outrage in the face of social injustice. Rather, this entails a crucial shift from fighting against evil to working for love, and the long-term results are very different, even if the outer activities appear virtually identical. Action follows Being, as the Suffi saying goes. Thus “a positive future cannot emerge from the mind of anger and despair.” (Dalai Lama)

2. Non-attachment to outcome. This is difficult to put into practice, yet to the extent that we are attached to the results of our work, we rise and fall with our successes and failures—a sure path to burnout. Hold a clear intention, and let go of the outcome—recognizing that a leader’s wisdom is always operating in situations and people we are not doing,” the results. Also, remain flexible in the face of changing circumstances: “Planning is invaluable, but plans are useless.” (Churchill)

3. Integrity in means and ends. Integrity in means integrates vitality in the fruit of one’s work. A noble goal cannot be achieved utilizing means that abuse the people or are based on self-interest. If your work has integrity, this will tend to protect you from negative energy and circumstances. You can often sidestep negative energy from others by becoming “transparent” to it, allowing it to pass through you with no adverse effect upon your own heart and spirit. This is a consciousness practice that might be called “psychic immunization.”

4. Intensity in means and ends. Integrity in means integrates vitality in the fruit of one’s work. A noble goal cannot be achieved utilizing means that abuse the people or are based on self-interest. If your work has integrity, this will tend to protect you from negative energy and circumstances. You can often sidestep negative energy from others by becoming “transparent” to it, allowing it to pass through you with no adverse effect upon your own heart and spirit. This is a consciousness practice that might be called “psychic immunization.”

5. Don’t downvote your own role. It makes them more defensive and less receptive to your views. People respond to arrogance with hostility or corruption. It means moving from “us/them” thinking to “we” consciousness, from separation to cooperation, from marginalizing others in situations with people whose views are radically opposed to yours. Be hard on the issues, soft on the people.

6. You are unique. Find and fulfill your true calling. “It is better to try your own path, however humbly, than that of another, however successfully.” (Bhagavad Gita)

7. Be a perpetual learner. “It is in giving that we receive.” We are sustained by those who let their hearts break open, and learn to move in the world with a broken heart. As Gibran says, “Your pain is the medicine by which the physician heals himself.” When we open ourselves to the pain of the world, we become the medicine that heals that world. This is what Gandhi understood so deeply in his principles of ahimsa and satya-graha. A broken heart becomes an open heart, and genuine transformation begins.

8. Your work is for the world, not for you. In doing service work, you are working for others. The full harvest of your work may not take place in your lifetime, yet your efforts now are making possible a better life for future generations. Let your fulfillment come in gratitude for being called to do this work, and from doing it with as much compassion, authenticity, fortitude, and forgiveness as you can muster.

9. Selfless service is a work. In serving others, we serve our true selves. “It is in giving that we receive.” We are sustained by those we serve, just as we are blessed when we forgive others. As Gandhi wrote, “The universe of truth” (or truth) “confers a ‘matchless and universal power’ upon those who practice it. Service work is enlightened self-interest, because it cultivates an expanded sense of self that includes all others.

10. Do not insulate yourself from the pain of the world. Shielding yourself from heartbreak prevents transformation. Let your heart break open, and learn to move in the world with a broken heart. As Gibran says, “Your pain is the medicine by which the physician heals himself.” When we open ourselves to the pain of the world, we become the medicine that heals that world. This is what Gandhi understood so deeply in his principles of ahimsa and satya-graha. A broken heart becomes an open heart, and genuine transformation begins.

11. What you attend to, you become. Your essence is palpable, and ultimately you become that which you most deeply focus your attention upon. You reap what you sow, so choose your cares accordingly. If you constantly engage in battles, you become embattled yourself. If you cultivate love lives, you will love itself.

12. Rely on faith, and let go of having to figure it all out. “Faith is the light that makes your path visible when you can’t see the next step.” (Jesus of Nazareth)

13. Love creates the form. Not the other way around. “Go out into the world and make of it what you desire.” (Rumi)

14. Love thy enemy. “Love is the medicine by which the physician heals himself. When we open ourselves to the pain of the world, we become the medicine that heals that world.” (Gandhi)

15. Let your heart love you, and your heart will love itself.

It is possible that the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual. The next Buddha may take the form of a community—a community practicing understanding and loving kindness, a community practicing mindful living. This may be the most important thing we can do for the survival of the Earth.

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