

Practical Spirituality

While TIA is about integrating all of who we are and revealing our deepest empowerment, this aspect - Practical Spirituality - is about accessing our deepest Self (Source, intuition, divine inspiration, inner guidance, Spirit, godforce) toward practical, rubber-to-the-road results.

What do you mean by “Spirituality”?

The term “spirituality” has such a wide range of definitions. For our purposes, and for now, we’ll use the term “spirituality” to refer to experiences, practices and concepts related to expanded states of consciousness.

Practices we refer to as spiritual in TIA, then, include state shift practices, practices cultivating witness consciousness, and practices that tap that unconventional entity we sometimes refer to as Divine Inspiration or Deep Knowing or intuition.

What is it like to experience an expanded state of consciousness? What is “intuition”? How can these be useful to me in generating concrete, tangible outcomes? What “greater than the sum of the parts” results can I get if I supplement my intellectual strengths with “deep Source” information?

Applications for Practical Spirituality include:

- decision making
- relationship building
- information gathering
- strategizing from the resourceful state beyond mere cognition
- generating an immediate state of inner peace
- ongoing practices that sustain a sense of well-being
- beyond action “reality” transformations

First we’ll talk about practices that yield the experience of “an expanded state” (peak/peek experiences), then we’ll explore some direct applications that include other practices.

Spirituality 101 – the Witness, aka self to Self

Who are you? Are you your thoughts? Many meditation practices concentrate on noticing that thoughts arise within a greater container of awareness that each of us is capable of.

Try to still your mental chatter, clear mental images.
Ah. There we are. Oh, wait, there’s another thought! Did you just see it show up?

If I can observe my thoughts, who is the “I” who is doing the observing?

Once we begin to become aware of the Witness, we can expand our witness consciousness to realize that *all* things we experience are arisings that show up in our field of awareness. Who is this that is observing? What is the quality of this observer?

This distinction, sometimes referred to as Witness practices, gives us an experiential separation between the bodymind (ego, personality, self with a small ‘s’) and something larger, which we will refer to as Self with a capital ‘S’.

Practices to cultivate witness consciousness include:

- some forms of meditation
- TIA “expanded subtle body” practices
- big mind practices
- some philosophical thought experiments on the question, “who am I”

Along with a peacefulness that seems to come from these practices, the capacity to objectify reality that comes from cultivating a strong witness enables us greater choice, power, and clarity about events we believe are “reality”.

Spirituality 102 – 4 methods for accessing expanded states of consciousness

What is an expanded state of consciousness? For now, we’ll express the expanded state experience as characterized by:

- trans-personal consciousness (temporary releasing bodymind habits, sometimes with experiences of communion and/or infinite clarity)
- deep relaxation (stillness, joy, euphoria, inner peace)
- altered state of “am”ness (perception of mySelf as infinitely large, or as unified with All) or some other unconventional perceptual experience)

How can we reach an expanded state of consciousness? What are these “peak/peek experiences” and how can I have one? TIA categorizes many state-shift practices into four possible categories. With surrender, gratitude, or appreciation, we can choose to focus inward or outward, and we can choose to focus on the bodymind experience or on the expanded consciousness experience. The following diagram overviews this description of paths to expanded states of consciousness:

Four Methods for Experiencing Expanded States

Surrender, Reverence, and/or Gratitude applied to:		FIELD	
		local field – personal / bodymind	expanded field – transpersonal / non-dual / Spirit
FOCUS	inward (my own)	<p>How: Focus deeply on some aspect of my own bodymind experience, surrender into it, surrender it over</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TIA “deepening needs consciousness” - TIA “release work”, surrendering open to and/or mourning a yearning until it shifts - TIA “7-chakra descent” within myself - Sitting meditations where arisings are observed and allowed to pass without attachment to or grasping 	<p>How: Focus deeply on some aspect of my own capacity to expand beyond the bodymind experience, and/or my connection with the interconnected fabric and/or the Divine</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TIA self to Self, dual to non-dual practice - TIA subtle-body expansion exercises - Thought experiments with quantum mechanics and our infinite interconnectedness (non-separation)
	outward (one outside me)	<p>How: Focus deeply on some aspect of the bodymind of another, in deep gratitude and/or appreciation</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tantric sacred-touch practices - open-eye meditations basking in deep reverence / gratitude / appreciation (ex: of another’s form) - TIA “7-chakra descent” in observing other; deep appreciation of and gratitude for other along with acknowledgement of their mortality 	<p>How: Focus deeply on some aspect of the expanded field, or the interconnected fabric, external to myself</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - nature mysticism; shamanic awareness as a source of information; revering nature - TIA breathing in power of nature (sun, trees, plants, held by mother earth) - TIA “non-physical advisory board” - grokking the “Holographic Universe”

With witness consciousness and a cultivated capacity to reach expanded states, let's talk about some of the practical, rubber-to-the road applications for tapping into this transpersonal information source.

Application: Decision Making and Gathering Info – Icon Work

A TIA process called “icon work” can be used for decision making. Selecting the better response in a yes/no or do it / don't do it question, choosing between 2 or more options, and trying to understand rational aspects to why this choice/decision is appropriate are but a few of the ways you can use icon work for practical results.

Icon work is a process that elicits metaphoric images from the subconscious (or possibly the collective unconscious?) and extracts information from the metaphor that can be translated into logical, linear answers.

In 2004 I had a choice to make, to take a trip to D.C. to participate in a gathering I was committed to attend or to choose to stay home and tend to other pressing work I had on my plate. I spent four hours virtually pulling my hair out trying to decide what to do. I had made a list of pros and cons. I had asked for advice from friends. Nothing I did seemed to make the picture any clearer. Then I decided to try some icon work.

Through the process I saw two images – on the left (the “go to DC” door) I saw a room full of flames, burning down. The energy of the room was violent, harsh, repulsive. On the right (the “stay home” door), I saw a white room, a wizard in the room dressed in a white robe, and fingers of white paint creating possibilities even outside the room. Interpreting the flavors of the two rooms, the answer was for me NOT to go to DC.

However, this was not all the information I wanted. I wanted to be able to understand clearly and unequivocally *why* I should go or not go. Through the process I adialogued with various aspects of the icons. I spoke as the flames, talking about my intension to consume, and my prickly attitude. I spoke as the white paint, with a deep desire to create, to expand, to illuminate.

After emerging from the icon work, I looked at the responses. Suddenly, connections happened for me and I got clear. Yes, the person in D.C. that I was meant to work with, I *could* name observations that seemed to indicate an intention “to consume”, and it was true that I didn't enjoy the gut-level ick that I felt about what I'd be doing there. And it was true that, as best as I could see, staying home would contribute *far* more to me being able to create and expand my work in the world.

My answer was clear to me, but more significantly, I could clearly articulate *why* the answer was clear to me, and why I was making the choice I made. With utter clarity, inner peace, and satisfaction, I stayed home and worked.

Somehow in this exercise, the icon work brought to cognitive awareness information that I had not had access to before the exercise. Able to make sense of this information, and liberated from the confusion I'd experienced earlier in the day, the decision was a simple one.

Another colleague used icon work to pull a part of his personal mythology. When he wants to make a decision, as “himself” he often feels confused. But as Himself (as the desert-walking Arab with sandles and strong legs in the desert) his answers come immediately and clearly.

I've also been able to use icon work and personal mythology for myself and clients toward personal development; for quite some time I explored the aspect of me

named Maya, a shape-shifter with exquisite capacity, yet without fierce energy. Her counterpart was Athena, radiating love through a kind of fierce goddess energy. Cultivating Maya and Athena together helped me cultivate parts of me that benefited from growth.

Ethan's personal mythology yielded a "consulting monk", a part of Himself that, when he steps into it, yields unwavering answers to any questions posed of him.

For some, icon work may parallel shamanic practices with "spirit guides" or "animals guides". The icon work yields clear information beyond the confines and habits of personality, which often can feel muddled and clouded.

Intuition has also been used in the workplace for gathering information about others who we have not yet before.

- Related TIA practices - state work w/icon translation for information gathering, decision-making, transpersonal information (intuition)

Application: Relationship Building – Viewing From the Witness

Expanded state practice can also serve relationship building. Imagine approaching your lover as "that idiot who forgot to take out the garbage". Now imagine approaching your lover as "the Divine Infinite Energy of the Universe in the body of this human being". Of course this is a stark contrast. But can you detect a difference in how you relate to the other when you are approaching them with reverent awe and appreciation? How will your words, actions, and choices look?

Approaching the other *seeing them as the Divine* has huge impact on the interpersonal system. It changes how I interact with them. It changes how I perceive their motives. Instead of seeing the other as static, or as an enemy, or as "limited" or "lacking", I feel appreciation, gratitude, inspiration, awe. Instead of responding with defensiveness, I'm more likely to approach challenges with curiosity and a desire to generate possibilities.

The other very subtly feels the shift in how I relate to them, and this can influence how they choose to interact with me. As they detect, unconsciously, subtle differences in facial expression, subtle shifts in my body posture, and subtle differences in the kinds of words I'll use and questions I'll ask, the non-verbal totality communicates a deep respect and honoring of the other. In response (what we focus on we attract more of) the other is far more likely to express the relaxed ("I am accepted."), benevolent ("I am seen as innocent."), kind, loving side of themselves.

Children live up to our expectations of them, and we all have "inner children" that want to be seen innocent and beautiful and accepted. Seeing client / lover / parent / political leader / other as a manifestation of the Divine, they are more likely to show up far greater than they realize themselves to be. I've received many a feedback in the form of, "Gail, I don't know what it is; around you I feel more powerful and more capable."

Step into your Witness, and greet someone else from this expanded state. Hug a friend while holding a full cherishing for the very essence of who they are. It changes how they experience you. Feedback I've received in this practice include, "You give the

most amazing hugs.” and “I feel so seen by you.” When I see them beautiful, they experience me as more “trustable”.

It seems an immediate bond or affinity is opened when we realize each other’s True Nature.

Application: Increased Resourceful States – The Expanded Self

In a previous exercise we talked about the expansion from the consciousness of self to the consciousness of Self. This awareness can be used to serve us in brainstorming, strategy creation, and decision-making.

When we make decisions or take actions or try to create from an inner state that includes fear, anger, or contraction, we are choosing and creating from our least resourceful state.

When we make decisions / take actions from cognitive, linear, intellectual processes, we are choosing and creating from a more resourceful state, but not the most powerful state.

When we make decisions / take actions / create from an expanded state that is fully vibrationally congruent, a resonant match to our desire, an already-there fullness of that experience, including an expanded consciousness, it yields a greater empowerment, a kind of creative force, an attractor field (in some mysterious way; “what we focus on we attract more of”) – things start to happen without me doing anything.

When I strategize in service to / from within the expanded Self, my choices are more likely to be more satisfying and to hold their satisfaction longer.

When I make a decision or strategize from within the expanded Self, “Providence aligns to match”. Apparently miraculously, “things happen” that are exactly what I desired.

Marsha wanted a job at 20K/year doing mediation. After an expanded-state visioning, a job “just happened” to fall into her lap.

Marshall Rosenberg says, “if we sit deeply enough with the needs, problems will fix us.” When we connect with a greater-than cognition resourceful state, spontaneously, “perfect solutions” often occur to us.

Our minds get cloudy when we’re angry or in stress. From the normal state of consciousness, we have access to conventional, average strategy and problem-solving capacities. But when we open our consciousness to an expanded state, we experience a realm of creativity that transcends brainstorming into an effortless space of emergent perfection greater than what occurs in the linear time of efforting and “trying to figure it out”

- Related TIA practices –
 - asking questions of the intuitive mind states (“bingo”, 9, Deep Self) and reporting what arises (sound, phrase, image, gesture, word...)

- discerning Mental vs/ State Shift as a foundation for creativity - tapping divine inspiration - step in, ask a question, report what emerges

Application: Immediate States of Inner Peace – Love and Trust

Can an expanded state practice give us an immediate sense of inner peace?

What happens when we open our awareness to the possibility that the bodymind and manifest realm is an absolutely perfect manifestation of consciousness evolving?

Here are some of the principles underlying a practice called Open Space:

- Whoever comes, is the right people.
- Whatever happens, is the only thing that could have happened.
- Whenever it starts, is the right time.
- When it's over, it's over.
- Law of two feet, if you're not contributing or getting anything out the moment, it's time to move on, go where your energy and passion IS.

How can you imagine these to be true? Is there a parallel “reality” that is also true?

If this list of statements reflects a consciousness of absolute acceptance as well as choicefulness, how would our lives be different if we lived this way 24/7? What would the world be like if you lived embodying a consciousness of absolute love and absolute trust in everything that manifests?

Application: Ongoing Practices to Cultivate “Well-Being”

Well-being, in part, is said to be a “state of mind”. Yet as we discussed in the 6 Portals chapter, the emotional, physical, and mental parts of us are an interconnected fabric. Consciously pull on one corner of the fabric and you can play with modifying the shape of the entire tapestry.

For whatever psychological, biochemical, or other reasons, it seems that people who practice cultivating expanded states also experience more frequent peacefulness, groundedness, relaxation.

One way we can understand this is through simple biology. Call it increased serotonin levels, call it increased oxygen in the blood, call it what you will. Simple breath work is known to biochemically impact our system, thus our emotional states. Sufficient oxygen contributes to an experience of well-being.

Three-part breath practices (also used in TIA) stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system and induces relaxation.

In certain yogic traditions, a physical pelvic tilt exercise combined with a circulated breath is said to conduct spinal fluids up the spine thus inducing states of euphoria and well-being.

Conversely, tipping the head back, which breaks the line of the spine, is said to contribute to feelings of desperation.

Have you ever heard of the psychology experiments with “biting a pencil”? When facial muscles imitate the same gesture as a smile, the shift in facial blood flow to the brain induces emotional states identical to when we are actually smiling.

Mentally, the Witness practice (which increases the frequency in our ability to objectify experience – thus to more choicefully respond to it) gives us distance from events we’d otherwise get tied up in (and potentially emotionally hijacked by).

- Related TIA practice: State work as a living practice - Step into expanded self with increasingly frequency; states, repeated frequently enough, become traits.

Application: Beyond Action “Reality Transformations”

Have you seen the movie “Sphere”? Is it possible for us to align our energies such that, “miraculously”, events seem to line up to suit our dreams *without* any direct effort on our part?

More simply approached, what we experience externally is a manifestation of the dynamics, habits, and vibrations we carry internally. Self-fulfilling prophesies are real – if we carry a fear of cats, and walk into a room with one, the cat may sense the fear and panic in response, scratching us unintentionally, verifying our fear of cats.

What experiences have you had, where after a complete surrender, events occur that were exactly what you’d wanted?

About two months ago I made an ultimatum to God. I told Him I was tired of breaking my neck to get my dreams to come true. I told Him I wasn’t going to lift a finger anymore, not for income, not for community, not to meet a man. I did the proverbial “let go, let God”, but really. I had had it.

Two weeks later, I met an exquisite young man, someone more perfect for me than I could have imagined creating. I landed a new client, taking care of my finances. My new friend offered me a place to live, taking care of my lodging situation.

Was this a miracle?

What is the power of our intention? If we use only 10% of our brain, what would we be capable of if we were fully accessing all of our resources?

In some circles, it’s believed that internal vibrational state (expanded or contracted) impacts the globe at a much greater level. If we are an ultimately interconnected fabric, what does this mean?

Do any of these sound familiar?

- the beating of a butterfly’s wings in China creating a hurricane in America
- the movie “I Heart Huckabees”
- the documentary “What the Bleep?”
- 100th monkey story – evolution of consciousness happening even across spans not permitting direct communication
- the Holographic Universe theory – a shift in the paradigm of one single person is an actual shift in the whole system

- quantum mechanics evidence that – since electrons are in all places at all times simultaneously but then “appear” in the location where the observer expects it to be – what we “vibrate” (expect, intend) we “create”

What is the full power of our attention and intentional focus? Do we have the power to literally create worlds simply through our intention and desire?

What if all of our challenges and upsets are AFGOs (another f#\$%ing growth opportunity), where the “upset” we face is an illusion symptomatic of some psychological residue within us seeking release? If this is true, and we continue to go along our habits unconsciously, the same circumstances will keep showing up. If my experience of reality is an illusion, reproducing the same dramas over and over with different individuals until I “get it” and change the hardwiring within me, then what life would be possible to me if I actually *look* at the circuitry and choose it?

Wherever you go, there you are.

Skills and practices toward “expanded states”

- suspension of the critical mind
- accessing the mind’s eye for images
- felt sense
- expansion from self to expanded subtle body
- 4 types of practices to access “expanded states”
- objectifying reality - Witness practices
- capacity to unpack metaphors + ability to pattern match to literal information
- capacity to recognize information inherent in each moment, ex: to match current observations to previously posed questions

intermediate Topics for Further Conversation

- trusting “universal messages”; coincidence, synchronicity, there is no such thing as coincidences. shamanic paying attention to all “arising” as information
- what is the causal? st. Thomas Aquinas use of the word “causal”; references to definitions / traditions that attempt to describe it, including book “Holographic Universe” (5/23 4pm teleclass notes re: holographic universe)
- ; relationship between causal definitions and quantum mechanics (electrons are in all places at once);
- include the nature of duality – while we’re talking about it, we’re not talking about it (the nature of describing it is that we’re separate from it, and that words do not / cannot express it; the nature of describing it is that, each time we use a word, that word carries with it the un-ness of that word which is contrary to the nature of ‘causal’, which is all including the nothing – zen, if you’re talking about it you’re not talking about it.)

- faith vs/ trust -- “am I making it up or is it real?” – faith is belief without inner experience; trust is allowing yourself to OWN your experience, even though it defies conventional education – your truth is your truth, and while there are thousands of years of others also experiencing this phenomena, SOMETHING is trustable here. faith = surrender to not knowing and believing it anyway. trust = allowing yourself to own your reality. Next -- questions of trust and faith cannot be externally addressed. Try it and you decide.

Recap

By PRACTICAL spirituality we mean:

- tapping into this shifted state of consciousness for practical, tangible, bodymind purposes (decision making, info gathering, trans-ego understanding) OR
- living from this shifted state of consciousness, perceiving this Truth in others