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3) Feature: The Kabbalah Connection  
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Why don't we talk more about spirituality, meaning, and fulfillment in the business world? Why do these topics feel like they're "off limits" for discussion?

Someone must've decided that businesses would function more efficiently if everything personal were checked at the door before entering the office. How could anyone believe that doing that would maximize potential if such an important part of each employee was left outside the office? I know that anytime you deny a part of who you are in order to fit in someplace, you also deny a corresponding portion of your power, effectiveness, and potential.

So consider this article an open invitation to join me in having conversations about spirituality in the workplace.

I consider myself a spiritual person, but not a religious one. My definition of spirituality is pretty simple. I believe that each of our lives has a purpose and a meaning that is somewhat beyond our complete understanding. I also believe that much, if not all of what we do in life - our relationships, our work, our hobbies, all our interests, thoughts and activities - is part of a larger picture designed to help us develop and reach our true potential.

In other words, I believe there's more to life than we can ever completely perceive or know. For those of us with lots of curiosity, this gives us endless opportunities for learning. And, taking a "student" perspective to life is a great way to consistently see problems and challenges as learning opportunities.

When I was practicing psychotherapy, working with people facing serious and painful life issues, I needed to remember that even when I did everything in my power to help, their situation might not improve. I could only do my best. I always took some comfort in knowing that there might be some greater purpose to my clients' struggles that I wasn't privileged to know about - a spiritual purpose.

Spirituality has been on my mind since I attended an Open House at the Kabbalah Center here in New York City last month. After an afternoon of sample classes and hearing some of what Kabbalah teaches, I was interested enough to buy two of their books. As soon

as I'd read a few pages in The Power of Kabbalah by Yehuda Berg, I knew why I was interested.

Kabbalah is reported to be the ancient spiritual mysticism that predated and formed the basis for three major world religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam. What was interesting was how much of Kabbalah agrees with what I believe about life and the world, and how much it reinforces the focus of The Inside Connection.

Here's my brief version of what both Kabbalah and The Inside Connection say:

The world you experience is largely a reflection of yourself. As you change who you are, the world reflects those changes back to you. What gives you the most effective and reliable source of power to create change in the world is your willingness to: 1) deeply know yourself, 2) accept responsibility for your thoughts, feelings and actions, and 3) change yourself.

Wayne Dyer tells a story about walking along the beach when he's recognized by a man who is surprised to discover that Dyer lives in that beach town. The man asks him what the people are like in the town as he's considering moving there. Before responding, Dyer asks: "What are the people like where you live now?" The man replies: "I live in a big city and everyone is mean and nasty. I don't have many friends and I really don't like it at all. I'm hoping that the people here in this beach town will be nicer and friendlier." Dyer then tells him that unfortunately the people here are very similar to the ones he's trying to get away from in the big city.

On that same walk, someone else approaches Dyer asking essentially the same question - What are the people like here? Dyer inquires about the people back home and this person says: "I have wonderful friends and neighbors. The people are warm and friendly and I've got lots of close relationships." Dyer says that the people in his town are very much like that too!

So Kabbalah, Dyer, and The Inside Connection all agree...

What you experience in the world is very much of your own creation. If you want to see a change when you look out into the world, the first change you need to make is an inner change - a change in the viewer, not the viewed. Rather than focusing on adjusting and fixing the world, first connect inside and make any needed inner adjustments. The starting place for effective, sustainable change is always an inner look.

When we look at our own inside connection - at what we think, feel, believe, and see as possibility or as limitation - we can most accurately assess how we have contributed to the problem or challenge that we see in front of us. Once we're clear about our contribution, it's much easier to know what to do. Anytime we forget to acknowledge or accept responsibility for the part we play in a situation, we lose the power to truly transform it.

If we believe that the world is a spiritual mirror, then any problem we face offers the opportunity for personal growth and development. In order to take advantage of the opportunity, we need to look inward before acting out.

Taking a look inside means examining what we think, feel, believe, and see as possible. What are the real or imagined limitations we see? What role does our anger and lack of acceptance play? Only after answering these kinds of questions for ourselves can we hope to create and see sustained change in the world around us.

Inner work is much more challenging for most people than running around trying to fix things, but ultimately it's much more effective and actually easier. If you've ever heard the saying: "No matter where you go, there you are," that's what we're talking about. No matter what you achieve in the world around you, you're still the same person dealing with the same issues. It's only when you change yourself that issues resolve forever.

So do the inner work. It may not feel as exciting or as productive as running around and fixing everything, but eventually you'll thank yourself.

In the physical world that we inhabit, there's a huge difference in believing you are the center of the universe (egotism) versus recognizing the full power you have to influence the world around you.

The first time I remember flying in a plane as a child, I couldn't comprehend how something that big and heavy could actually fly in the sky (sometimes I still find it hard to believe!). Since we must've visited one of the TV or movie studios on that trip to California, I imagined that whenever I flew in a plane, someone was really scrolling scenery by my window and rearranging everything outside the plane (changing the set) so I'd think we'd actually traveled somewhere. Essentially I imagined the entire world as if it revolved around me and my view. I was Truman in The Truman Show.

Eventually I changed my belief about what was going on. I realized that not everything revolved around me. That I was actually flying when in a plane. But I'm not so sure my shift in beliefs and perspective was accurate from a spiritual perspective. Kabbalah suggests that my childlike view of a world that instantly reacts to me and my every action, is an accurate spiritual perspective. That every action you take and every thought you have has a real and tangible impact on the material world we live in. We just don't know exactly how, or when, that impact will occur.

From a spiritual perspective, what goes around always comes around... you just never know exactly when.

In the business world, there's a lot of resistance to talking publicly about spirituality. Using words like soul, meaning, love, decency, life purpose, fulfillment, and human kindness make many business people uncomfortable in public. What always amazes and delights me, though, is how many of those same people want to talk about just these topics when they're behind closed doors in a confidential coaching session.

What will it take to bring these important conversations out from behind closed office doors?

If these topics are important to you, I hope you'll take a risk and start talking about them at work. When you do, you'll stop leaving some of your best self "outside the office door" and you'll open the door for others to do the same.

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4) Action Tip  
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Do an INSIDE CONNECTION CHECK-IN when you realize it's time to take a look in the mirror of your life. Whenever you notice you're not feeling or doing your best, consider these questions:

- § What are you thinking... feeling... judging?
- § What triggered those thoughts, feelings and judgments?
- § Are you seeing possibilities or limitations?
- § What is your situation showing you about yourself?
- § What role did you play in creating the situation you now face?
- § What do you have the power to change?
- § What resources do you need to be at your best right now?
- § Do you need to talk with anyone for counsel or to help you examine the situation?

§ What can you learn from this experience?

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5) Related Resources  
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ONLINE

The Kabbalah Center  
<http://www.kabbalah.com>

Dr. Wayne Dyer  
<http://www.drwaynedyer.com>

BOOKS

The first two books are two easy to read, easy to understand summaries of the ancient spiritual tradition of Kabbalah. Whether you believe the information is true or not, it's still challenging and useful.

The Power of Kabbalah  
by Yehuda Berg

An easy to digest introduction to the wisdom of Kabbalah and its teachings.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/158872008X/kesslinassociate>

The Way: Using the Wisdom of Kabbalah for Spiritual Transformation and Fulfillment

by Michael Berg

Covers much of the same information as The Power of Kabbalah, with a focus on applying its principles to daily life.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0471083003/kesslinassociate>

When Bad Things Happen to Good People

by Harold S. Kushner

From Amazon.com review: Rarely does a book come along that tackles a perennially difficult human issue with such clarity and intelligence. Harold Kushner, a Jewish rabbi facing his own child's fatal illness, deftly guides us through the inadequacies of the traditional answers to the problem of evil, then provides a uniquely practical and compassionate answer that has appealed to millions of readers across all religious creeds. Remarkable for its intensely relevant real-life examples and its fluid prose, this

book cannot go unread by anyone who has ever been troubled by the question, "Why me?"

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0380603926/kesslinassociate>

There's a Spiritual Solution to Every Problem

by Wayne W. Dyer

From Amazon.com review: With his usual mix of enthusiasm, optimism, and anecdote, Dr. Wayne Dyer is back again to emphasize that we are in control of our life experiences. Quoting everything from the Bible to The Tao of Pooh, he returns continually to his central point: with truth and self-awareness, all things are possible, including physical healing, improved relationships, and great personal accomplishment. There's a Spiritual Solution to Every Problem dissects what is meant by the word problem and shows us how to achieve our deepest wishes with surprisingly simple suggestions.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0060192305/kesslinassociate>

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Kesslin Associates is a success coaching and training company dedicated to helping you become an extraordinarily effective leader. We help you strengthen your inside connection to values, passion, vision, and soul--so you can deliver extraordinary results with far less effort. For lasting success, we also work with you to discover how you, your work, and the rest of your life can support each other, rather than cause conflict. For more information about our work, visit our website at <http://www.kesslin.com>

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