

Having faith in a greater source of love, support and protection reduces your underlying levels of stress, fear, doubt and uncertainty. When these negative states are diminished, every other aspect of your life is touched in a more beneficial way. You're able to experience a greater level of optimism, confidence, clarity, peace-of-mind, sense of control, independence, belonging, positive self-perception, prevention of and recovery from illness, problem-solving, and general ability to cope with life's challenges. All these areas are enhanced when you have some kind of spiritual identity, or simply the faith that you are supported by something greater than your own limited resources.

Research explorations into spiritual faith, and its effects on life & health, show that it doesn't matter what exactly you believe in, as long as those beliefs are not destructive. Whether your faith stems from an organised religious belief system (which is life-affirming), or simply from the belief that there is 'more to life than this', it is the faith in being supported which nourishes you and makes it easier to deal with life.

The evidence reveals that individuals who have a positive spiritual identity feel connected to a greater love, feel more self-worth, have meaning and purpose in life, and are better able to fulfil their greatest potential. They cope more efficiently on an interpersonal, emotional, and spiritual level, heal at a faster rate, and are able to establish healthier lifestyles. On the other hand, distress, fear, doubt, and uncertainty, are all more likely when you have no faith in anything more than the physical life you see before you. The belief that this physical life is 'all there is', and that you only have yourself to rely on, appears to increase the possibility of experiencing all kinds of negative states, such as feelings of loneliness, feelings of pessimism, negative perceptions of yourself and the world, greater susceptibility to and poor recovery from illness, victim attitudes, feeling that you have no control over life, feeling that life has no meaning, and a tendency to depressive states.

From the perspective of developing a more positive and nourishing life experience, I encourage you to consider your own relationship with 'the spiritual'. Explore your own belief systems and see where your faith lies. Ask yourself what kind of relationship with the universe / spirit / god / the great unknown, you can comfortably engage in.

What possible kind of spiritual story can you give your benefit-of-the-doubt to?

This may be something well-defined and specific, such as the spiritual teachings of a particular religious tradition or a new-age spiritual view. Or it may be very undefined and general, such as the simple acceptance that you are nurtured by a greater unconditional source of universal love.

Explore and develop your own spiritual identity, not in the context of organised belief systems or other people's ideas about what 'god' is, but simply in the context of your own personal journey. Take the theories that work for you and fit them into your own world view. Create your own story to define your personal spiritual experience.

Once you have created some kind of framework, no matter how broad and undefined, find ways to engage with it consciously. Don't simply say "I believe this. I don't believe that." Whatever it is that you believe, let it become real, in its own way, in your everyday life. Observe the ways that your practical life experiences relate to your spiritual view, and find ways to bring your spiritual perspective into your daily life experiences.

This will enable you to develop a level of faith in 'your version of spirit' and will allow you to access those feelings of greater support which can have such a life-affirming impact on your human existence.

## Opportunity for a Relationship with Spirit

This book offers one avenue for engaging, in a practical way, with the spiritual realm. It explores a range of individual spiritual beings (or consciousness patterns), described in both ancient and modern cultural traditions, which exist in support of humanity. By simply allowing the possibility of their existence in your life or, better yet, engaging with these energy patterns in a practical way, you can access support, comfort, and guidance, or just the wonderful feeling that you never have to deal with any life challenge alone.

I offer this information from the perspective that, in my personal spiritual belief system, the physical realm is just a tiny portion of the wider energetic multidimensional cosmos; that these consciousness patterns exist beyond the visible physical realm; and that humanity can access them for healing and support. But, as I've said, relationship with the spiritual is an individual and very personal thing. Your own views may differ slightly, or even a great deal. My purpose here is not to convince you that my beliefs represent the true reality. They work for me, but I don't expect them to necessarily work for others. My purpose is simply to present this possibility to you, as one of the many possibilities offered to you in life. If some of these suggestions fit neatly into your own personal spiritual framework, then you may choose to engage with them. Alternately, if you find that this is not the way for you to engage with your spirituality, then, at the very least, you have expanded your intellectual horizons!