

# Compassion & Connection

## Developing Ourselves

## Transforming Our World



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## Contemporary Spirituality

### A Holistic Approach

Open mind? Open heart?

Care for the wellbeing of all life on Earth?

Connect with the wonder and energy of nature?

Personal development?

Celebrate the many different paths of faith,  
belief and spirituality?

## A Growing Community

Individually we can do great good

Together we can work wonders

# Contemporary Spirituality and the Global Village

Two hundred years ago the world's spiritual traditions existed in isolation from each other. Today their teachings and practices are available to everyone. A good example of this is school children learning about many different beliefs and faiths.

Many people today have moved away from belonging to a single faith community and have adopted a more general and inclusive approach.

One of the earliest examples of this was the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. There is now a World Parliament every five years. One of the significant moments of that first gathering was when the Hindu teacher, Swami Vivekananda, told the story about a frog who lived in a well. This frog met another frog who lived in the ocean. Vivekananda suggested that traditional religions were sometimes like that frog in the well. They needed to appreciate the greater ocean.

## The Difference Between Religion and Spirituality

Contemporary spirituality suggests that there is a difference between religion and spirituality. Religion can be described as an organised set of beliefs and customs. Spirituality on the other hand is an individual and personal experience.

Ofsted, the major government body concerned with children's education in England, describes spirituality:

**“It is characterised by reflection, the attribution of meaning to experience, valuing a non-material dimension to life and intimations of an enduring reality. ‘Spiritual’ is not synonymous with ‘religious’; all areas of the curriculum may contribute to pupils’ spiritual development.”**

## Spiritual Supermarket and Individual Choice

All the world's sacred texts are now available, as well as their practices and strategies. Yoga, prayer, song, meditation and being in nature are just a few examples. They come from all over the world, from every continent and culture.

At the same time, there is a growing understanding of the spiritual dimensions of ecology, psychology, feminism, science, medicine and so on. All these are often put under the umbrella term of Mind-Body-Spirit or a ‘holistic’ approach.

It may appear that there are too many choices, but contemporary spirituality is also imbued with the ideas of self-empowerment and self-management. So people can explore the different resources available and make their own decisions about how to conduct their development.

## Values and Ethics

Our contemporary situation makes it possible to take a holistic and inclusive approach to ethics. In this way, the core values of the major religions and philosophies can be entwined together to make an even stronger ethical statement; the golden rule of which is to care for others as we would have them care for us.

**“The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life and humility regarding the human place in nature.”** The Earth Charter

Today these classical core values also include the clear insights of green sustainability and developmental psychology. We need to live in harmony with nature. We also need to care for and support all people.

## Individuality and Community

A central idea of contemporary spiritual culture is the empowerment of individuals and that it is important for people to maintain their independence and freedom. It does not have a centralised organisation. It does, however, have many small groups and centres, and there is a general sense of a community or network of like-minded people.

**“Ongoing connection with the wonder and energy of nature and life is good for personal and community wellbeing. Our lives are not about material and social success. We are all on a path of life-long personal development moving towards greater compassion and wisdom.”** Foundation for Holistic Spirituality

## What You Could Do Next

Tell other people about contemporary spirituality. (If you want more leaflets, just ask us or download from our website.)

Join our online network of organisations, practitioners, traders, educators and individuals.

To support us more actively or donate, visit [www.holisticmap.org](http://www.holisticmap.org)

# Spirituality

A Contemporary and Holistic Approach

## **Nature and Community**

Recognises the connections between all life and our need to respect and care for nature and each other — serving the community of life.

## **Open Hearts and Minds**

Embraces spiritual diversity, appreciates the essence of all the world's faiths and resolves conflict.

## **Individual Exploration**

Encourages the exploration of many paths so that everyone without exception can deepen their connection with the wonder and energy of life.

## **Health, Wellbeing and Development**

Delivers practical strategies that support good health, happiness and fulfilling our potential.

## **Life's Journey**

Provides a fuller context so that everyone can better understand and explore the true nature of their journey through life.

## **Compassion and Inspiring Values**

Unites the core ethics of the world's great philosophical, religious, ecological and psychological traditions to create universal and inspiring values that promote justice, peace and sustainability.

## **Perfect Timing**

Gives hope and guidance to solve our global challenges, prioritising spiritual values and service over a purely materialist worldview; inspiring us to positively transform our local and global community.

## **Understandable, Practical and Holistic**

Provides a simple and clear definition of spirituality that people can adapt and re-write in any way that is authentic for them:

**Spirituality is everyone's natural connection with the wonder and energy of nature and life.**



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