

## Practices That Foster a Spiritual Awakening

Spiritual awakening is not something we manufacture, rather it occurs as an act of grace. Though we cannot make it happen, we open to it by practicing a mindful focus on the present moment and an openness to exploring the life of the spirit. Here are some ways to do this.

1. **Learn what's happening and what needs to happen related to the awakening.** Start with these Web offerings: "Blessed Unrest" by Paul Hawken; "The Great Turning" by Joanna Macy; "The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community" by David Korten, "The One Thing" by Eckhart Tolle.
2. **Incorporate in your life nourishing practices for body, mind and spirit.** Examples abound: yoga, walking, running, being in nature, reading spiritual classics, learning and incorporating practices used by those who are more awakened than you are. Ask you body, mind and spirit what they hunger for and then give them that.
3. **Heal the past.** Most people and cultures have been hurt in one way or other. We can stay stuck in the way we first responded to the hurt, or do what it takes to heal the hurt and let it go. We are helped to do this by a variety of groups and processes: The Twelve Step process, HeartMath processes, confession and forgiveness, truth and reconciliation commissions. Paul Hawken writes: To salve the world's wounds demands a response from the heart. There is a world of hurt out there, and to heal the past requires apologies, reconciliation, reparation, and forgiveness." Joanna Macy offers processes to express but then move beyond "social despair", loss of the assumption that the human species will survive.
4. **Connect with nature.** Fall in love with the planet. Shamanic teacher Angeles Arrien points out that we are designed physiologically to be in nature. She recommends at a minimum that modern sedentary people spend one hour a day outdoors to rejuvenate spirit and body.
5. **Forswear addictions to what doesn't work or letting George do it.** Studies show that an accumulation of material goods does not result in increased happiness. Cutting down on consumption helps us stay physically and spiritually fit. Diving in and solving a civic problem gets our adrenaline flowing and is a wonderful antidote to passive complaining that our leaders are not doing a good job.
6. **Decide to take a creative not a reactive stance toward life.** *Creating* by Robert Fritz and *The Creative Habit* by Twyla Tharp can tell you how to create in every area of life. This is a source of joy and spiritual awakening.
7. **Be a prophet.** Walter Bruggeman in *The Prophetic Imagination* says that the prophet does three things: grieves for what is going wrong; envisions a better alternative; embodies that alternative in some way. We are all called to do this and to contribute to building a "new earth."
8. **Set an intention to contribute all you have.** The Intention Experiment website puts forward the power of a strong, clear intention and helps you make this a key part of life.

*"Compassion is the keen awareness of the interdependence of all things."*

Thomas Merton

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