



Beyond the Work Place: the Family of Light

A family of light is woven with spiritual principles. Its members do what is right according to their spirit — they live from the heart. This lifestyle radiates love, openness, fun, and enjoyment, and reflects a transcendental yet grounded view of reality. Although a family of light is a moral unit, it's not necessarily moralistic in the traditional sense.

Mainstream culture deals with three moralistic possibilities: the moral, immoral, and amoral. The first usually offers black and white solutions to complex human problems, which often results in hypocrisy. For example, "Thou shalt not kill" is a common rule. Yet, leaders start wars that kill thousands of innocent people, receive support from their followers, and act righteous about what they've done. The second option, being immoral, means that we break moral rules and live in sin. Religious people expect, perhaps rightly at times, that sinners should feel guilty for what they've done. Guilt, at least on the surface, shows that the offender realizes that he has done wrong. The third option is to be amoral. Here, the person rejects both the moral rules and the guilt. Many fundamentalists portray this attitude as being socially irresponsible and indifferent to others. And people have used it as such.

Least mentioned is a fourth option: listening to your heart, inner voice, or spirit. Most of today's traditional moral codes sprang from the heart of some spiritual leader. However, those original codes eventually hardened into dogma and, for the most part, died. Moralists condemn following one's heart though. They say it's an outgrowth of relativism. Rationally, it can look that way. It's easy to abuse: people have used "Spirit told me" as an excuse to justify following their ego. But although no system is perfect, some are more alive than others. Aside from moralists, other forces oppose following one's spirit.

For instance, the workplace implements its own set of values that shape our moral perceptions and decisions. Corporate culture has replaced common considerations with a simple directive: increase short-term profits. That's the point at which concern for others and for the environment must end. If caring and compassion diminishes that directive, then we must overlook them in favor of profit.

In addition, popular culture warns us not to be foolish and to distrust others. We should get our money's worth. Unfortunately, these attitudes hinder relationships. Many people spend most of their day in the workplace environment, so it's natural that they bring home some of those views. As a result, both the family and society have suffered. At first, people blamed the system for this, but soon the experts turned it around. They said that blaming the system was a "cop out." Instead, we should take responsibility for our actions. In truth, both views were right: that system does promote disruptive values and philosophies, and we are responsible if we adopt them. Solid and loving unions are based on trust and aren't too concerned about shopping around for the best deal or the latest model. They don't treat the other person as an "item."

What follows are virtues that don't fit into the workplace mentality but promote healthy and loving relationships. You find these elements in a family of light. Virtues, by the way, are practices or attitudes that build relationships rather than degrade them. These relationships needn't be the traditional husband/wife/child units. They can be close partnerships or friendships of any kind. If love is at the foundation, then Life, the Universe, or the Great What-It-Is has blessed it.

Although each topic deserves at least a chapter for itself, I've kept it short, like a sketch. Everyone has experienced them before and is familiar with them to some extent.

Trust

People are often afraid to give first. Instead, if we receive something, then we trust (at least for that transaction) and give in return. This method is common when dealing with material goods: you pay money, and you receive a specific product or service. It's a clear-cut transaction. With relationships though, it's not that simple. We deal with ideas, emotions, and human flaws rather than material goods. You can't put a price on them. It's more the art of love than the business of trade.

A sure way to establish trust is to give first and keep giving. Critics condemn this approach, because they think it sets you up to be "taken" or to be a victim. Sure, caution is a good rule of thumb, especially in business. But if you are with someone and believe that the relationship has potential, then start building trust. You'll discover soon enough if that person is willing to reciprocate. Without trust, a relationship lacks a solid foundation. This approach can also deepen existing relationships.

Honesty

With trust comes honesty. To have someone with whom you can be open and not fear ridicule is very healing. Plus you can be honest yet kind. The saying, "The truth hurts," may be true. But sharing the truth in a loving way makes it hurt much less.

In contrast, the corporate media — another powerful social influence — has developed to where the truth isn't important: it treats "spin" (lying) as if it were a reputable practice. And in business, white lies are an everyday practice — buyer beware. Denying, distorting, and stretching the truth, though, are anti-spiritual behaviors. Openness is what allows spirit to flow through us, and that's what makes us real. Spirit is truth.

Depth

Relationships have two broad layers: the secular and the spiritual. A relationship founded strictly on materialistic principles can work, but relative to a spiritual union, it will lack depth. They can be deep and loving, but without the spiritual element they will remain two-dimensional. Yet, love is love and, in itself, can carry us beyond finite, existential boundaries, even if we have imposed those limits ourselves. Add the spiritual dimension, which incorporates and transcends the material world, and you have an infinite plane on which to play. With this additional dimension, together you can explore beyond the limits of the human animal.

Support

To support others, particularly psychologically, we need to see past our wants and needs. Of course we don't ignore our needs; we just don't allow them to hypnotize us. To be effective, we have to be present — live in the Now — and observe and hear others. When they are suffering or need help, we go to them. Support also means to accent their positive qualities and to deal positively with their weaknesses. Communicate. Don't hold back love & support.

Applying this to children isn't that easy. Take the two popular approaches: "Spare the rod, spoil the child" and "Give the child everything." While the former is often repressive, the latter lacks limits — something inherent in all nature. When taken to extremes, both can be damaging. As an analogy, imagine life as a river. Without banks to guide and contain it, the water spreads out, becomes weak, and stagnates. On the other hand, if the banks are too narrow, the energy of the river can become too pent up. It will turn violent when it's stressed. The middle way — some boundaries, some freedom — is the best we can do.

Compromise

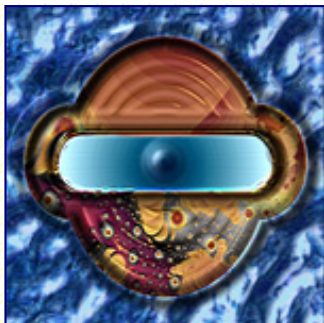
For a relationship to develop, compromise is necessary. At some point, what you want (or don't want) will clash with what the other person wants (or doesn't want). To keep a union healthy we sacrifice to some extent our less important likes or dislikes, and we take a stand on the more important ones. ("Important" is whatever we make it.) Even if we disagree on important issues, we can usually find a compromise if both parties have the patience to work through it.

Patience

Impatience is often the ego saying, "I'm very important, and you're slowing me down." It shows that we aren't living in the Now. With patience, we solve problems. We keep a clear head, reduce friction, and, with a little wisdom, find the most balanced solution.

Repentance and Forgiveness

Everyone acts poorly from time to time. The easiest way to heal this is to say, "I'm sorry," and mean it. The more stubborn the ego, though, the more difficult it is to say. The other side of this is forgiveness: if someone asks for it, give it freely. Only the ego holds grudges. Ego, by the way, differs from natural pride. Ego is a vision of how one is better than another. Pride is appreciating how beautiful we are inside — unique and beyond compare.



Wholeness

The scientific slant of our culture encourages us to analyze the details of whatever we're looking at and to draw a conclusion. This works well with mechanical and scientific projects, but if we apply this to relationships, we can create a distorted picture of that person. We can always pick out negative traits, but what's necessary for a strong relationship is to see the partner holistically. See what's inside the person and know his or her heart. That way, when you deal with particulars, you'll have the big picture in mind, and you won't blow the little things out of proportion. If our judgment is balanced, we can be generous and give them plenty of slack.

Intimacy

In post-modern culture, some see intimacy as an anachronistic refugee from stringent Victorian times. You don't have to be a prude to value it, though, as it enhances relationships. Sexual unions have the potential to be fun, intense, ecstatic, and bonding. They can trigger transcendental experiences. But we call intimate relationships "intimate" for a reason: they are about our private lives. You've probably seen someone on TV talking about how great he is in bed. Once someone goes public with that information, then that relationship is no longer intimate. It strips away a delicate closeness. We've lost some dignity and talked our way into an ego trap. Intimacy, like poetry, exquisite music, or fine painting, is an art. If we are sensitive, we can create a beautiful work, and the result is romance.

Faithfulness/Loyalty

Faithfulness adds an element of security to the relationship. Some have downplayed the security aspect, saying that it has a deadening effect. This might be true if that's the basis of the union. Psychologically, though, people need a sense of security. It brings peace. Faithfulness also is a cornerstone of trust and is strongly tied to intimacy and honesty. Without it, suspicion and jealousy grow. With it, confidence grows and you can allow others to be more independent.

Independent, Dependent, Codependent

The independent/dependent polarity creates instability. If partners become too dependent on each other, then the relationship becomes "codependent." We're told that this drains us, so we avoid this by acting more independently. Yet, too much independence — radical self-reliance — weakens the union too. The truth is, we need others and we need freedom.

A family of light offers another option: a *cofree* relationship. This is not the opposite of a codependent relationship. Here, each party expresses his or her need for the other while granting the other whatever freedom they need. It's a flexible and dynamic state that supports and empowers one another.

Marriage

Marriage is an ancient institution that provides a legal foundation for a union. It bestows obvious social, economic, psychological, and religious advantages. A "marriage made in Heaven," though, doesn't need the formal legal or religious format to be strong and lasting. A commitment from the heart has more bonding power than any piece of paper or vow.

Children

Children are a blessing. If both parties don't love each other, though, then having children will likely create suffering for everyone involved. Conversely, a loving couple that produces a child will treat him or her with love. The child will experience love firsthand, will have an excellent chance to be happy, and will probably make the world a better place.

Conclusion

A family of light applies dynamic, spiritual principles that incorporate yet transcend the wisdom of the physical world. They are at once spiritual and practical. This isn't some idealistic, archaic, or fantasy state. Neither is it perfect. It is, however, real. It provides a sound basis for lasting personal happiness and growth and, in a small way, uplifts society as well.