

## **Chapter 4: Accessing Special Services – The Spiritual Emergency Hot Line**

*Do not try to call 911 and ask someone if you can speak to God.*

*The reader is reminded that the following discussion represents an analogy. There is no actual physical phone one can use to make the emergency call to God. There is no person on the other end of an actual phone who can contact God for you.*

*The steps outlined here should not be used when facing a true physical or psychological emergency. In that case you should dial 911.*

The phone booth and the operator may not be available to you all the time – largely because of your problems with sitting in the phone booth and problems with finding the right operator. What is available to all of us, at any time, is the spiritual emergency hot line (like calling 911). When you call this number it is because you are in an emergency. It is not because you want to make a collect call to God. There are no “charges” attached to this phone call. The operator does not need to ask God to “accept the charges” and the operator doesn’t have to be your operator. In addition the operator, like when you call 911, will almost instantly route your call to the appropriate services. It is like if there was a fire it would be routed to the fire station and if someone had had a heart attack it would be routed to the ambulance, but in this case it is routed to spiritual services. In some instances you may use your human operator (the guru, mystic, healer, etc.) to help place the emergency call and in other instances you may need to place the emergency call yourself.

When you make a spiritual emergency call you are using the power of prayer to ask for intervention. I will not discuss here the evidence supporting the influence of prayer in people’s lives as other authors have done this.<sup>1</sup> Rather this chapter focuses on distinguishing the difference between a spiritual emergency call and making the collect call or using the direct line.

The first important point to emphasize is that spiritual emergency lines are available to everyone who has access to a phone. That is the only criteria. The phone in this case is not the special phone described earlier that is needed when making a collect call or when seeking to use the direct line. That special phone was located in the phone booth of the sacred healing relationship. In spiritual emergency situations sometimes there is not time to enter this phone booth, or to seek one out if you don’t know where one is at that moment. The spiritual emergency must be dealt with immediately. All you need to be able to do is to genuinely ask God to help you in this spiritual emergency situation.

In this analogy you are the phone booth, or more appropriately your soul’s relationship with God is the phone booth. The emergency number is called through

prayer. This can happen anytime, anyplace by any person. You do not have to be a mystic/healer to place a spiritual emergency phone call.

There are several points to consider when using the spiritual emergency phone services:

1. When to use the spiritual emergency hot line
2. How to communicate on the spiritual emergency hot line.
3. Knowing how your call went through.
4. Waiting for the emergency services to arrive.
5. Gratitude after the spiritual emergency is over.
6. Providing spiritual emergency services.

The following points apply only to one's need for spiritual emergency services. They do not apply to making a collect call, or to accessing a direct line.

### **When to Use the Emergency Hot Line**

In understanding the definition of a spiritual emergency we need to understand that we are speaking of a "soul emergency". Over the decades I have been doing this spiritual work I have never been able to put any specific limiting criteria on what is a soul emergency and what is not. It is something that is known within the moment of oneness. I am just the operator and when the call comes in it is my job to direct the call. In most cases, except for the obvious (like some asking to get high on drugs or to win the lottery), have never been able to say to someone making a reasonable request for emergency services, "I'm sorry that doesn't seem like an emergency to me." Instead I listen to the requests, process with people what types of services they need, and then help them to those services.

Although I do not have limiting criteria to apply for defining the boundaries of a soul emergency I have noticed some general patterns in the types of emergencies that seem to receive successful responses most frequently. This is not the same as saying that these are the only types of spiritual emergencies that receive successful responses.

The patterns of successful responses appear to fall into three broad, and overlapping, categories of soul emergencies: 1) the lost soul headed for unseen, and unnecessary, harm, 2) the lost soul needing healing where healing will benefit the soul, and 3) the soul about to face death. Although I have seen these emergencies in other peoples' lives, I will describe these categories using examples from my own life. In addition I will briefly address conflicting models that create static in the phone lines and inhibit the person's hearing an answer to an emergency request.

### The lost soul headed for unseen and unnecessary harm

In the mid 1970's my wife's father died and we moved in with her mother. At first this seemed like the compassionate thing to do. But as time passed her mother, through the effects of alcohol and pills (and poor self care), her mother became abusive to me and our marital relationship. She became possessive of my wife, demanding more and more of her time every day. Slowly my wife was drifting away from me into some form of distant "zombie like state". We barely communicated.

I knew that I wanted to leave that place but I didn't have a job and I had no prospects. The mid-1970s were slow economic times. Moving required money and I had none. I felt stuck and trapped as I watched my wife disappear into the nightly brain washing from her mother. We had a small child, Andrea, who she also was neglecting in favor of her demanding mother. I kept running over the options in my mind and never arriving at any decision that made sense. If I left where would I go? I had asked Darcy to leave with me but she echoed her mother's concern of how would I support the family. Darcy was not just going to leave with nothing. How could I expect her to leave? Yet, how could I expect her to continue listening to the nightly verbal abuse her mother gave to me and to our relationship?

This seemed like an impossible trap. I had no answer. So I prayed for God to show me the answer if there was one. I did not pray to have my answer come true but rather for God's answer to be revealed to me. Then it came, like a bolt of lightning. A voice as clear as if someone was standing right beside me said, "Take Andrea and leave. Ask your wife to join you. If she comes then she will be with you."

I got my keys, some personal effects, got the car ready, and then went back for Andrea. I picked up my child and then called upstairs to my wife telling her I was leaving. She came down and saw I had Andrea in my arms. She tried to argue with me, tried to stop me. I said I was leaving and she could come with me or stay, it was her choice. She chose to leave with me. We are still together and we have never looked back.

This is an example of an emergency phone call placed on behalf of a lost soul. I placed the call and it was answered.

### The lost soul in need of healing where the healing is a soul's response

In the mid 1990's, while working on my Ph.D. my wife saw a poster for a weekend retreat with a Tibetan guru. This retreat was to be held in my town. We scrounged up the money and I attended. I had hoped for two things; 1) to get an answer to my burning inner question, and 2) to find out what a retreat was like.

I presented my burning question to the guru. Paraphrased it was, "How do I live with such intense healing energies?" His answer was to advise me to develop infinite

compassion. In a broad sense this is true, but in a specific sense it was not helpful to me at that time. The wiser answer then would have been “You need to find that inner gentle space that comes with the intense healing energy and practice sitting in that.” Nearly ten years later I am starting to become this as a daily way of being.

The retreat had an overnight, meditation time, time for walks in the garden, and times to mingle with the other people there. What surprised me were all the spiritually hungry, and fairly open, people. I suppose this spiritual oasis was more obvious because I was living in the academic desert. At this retreat I experienced the highest frequency of healing events in my entire life. One story stands out.

After a morning of sitting and meditating we broke for a stretch break and then lunch. I had been watching a young man during the meditation who clearly had difficulty getting comfortable. As he walked into the garden I could see that his back was very tight. He could not stand straight. I walked over to him and commented on how hard it was to sit for long periods of time. He agreed. I then mentioned that I could see his back was hurting and he acknowledged this. I told him that I did some healing work and with his permission I asked if I could touch his back. He agreed and upon getting ready to touch him I asked (prayed) for healing to occur. Normally I would center myself before doing this healing work, but because of the hours of meditation that had already occurred.

I immediately felt a flow of energy that seemed to come through me, and my hands, and into his body. His body visibly reacted to this as he became less rigid and seemed to “melt” into my hands. He developed a bright glow and a big smile. He stood almost fully erect and said, “I have MS and I have been through all types of treatment. This is the best I have ever felt. I feel a deep sense of peace.”

I responded by saying, “This is the direction your meditation should take you. Seek this and well being will always be nearby.”

The man did not know me and I did not know him. He did not come prepared to enter into a healing relationship with me, but was in considerable pain, and had been for years. I believe he did come to the retreat seeking help. This is an example of a soul seeking the healing experience using an emergency phone call.

He left me and I went on to offer healing to another person at the retreat. I never saw the man again. He had placed the emergency call and I was there to hear the call and answer it. This is the way God works with skilled phone operators – they are put where they need to be to help others.

### The soul about to face death

In the mid 1980’s I was working in human service job helping others get well. I was also learning about my abilities to “touch people’s souls” although I didn’t frame it

that way back then. There were responsibilities - bills, and family, and school. It was a very busy time in my life and there wasn't much time for meditating on other issues.

The year previously I had seen my father in the hospital following a coronary event. He did not look well, but most of all he did not like could stay, or want to stay, in the hospital. Although my father and I never had a good relationship I could still feel his discomfort. I recommended to my mother that he be given care at home. I was not to see him again until I received an "emergency call".

I can still remember where I was when that call came in. It was at a lunch break during my human service work. Sitting on a hilltop enjoying the view I was hit by this strong urge to call my father. This seemed strange because it was something I had never done in my entire life. The urge was so strong that I could barely concentrate on my job. I tried to pass it off as imagination but I couldn't.

That night I called and my mother answered. I asked how he was doing and she said not good, but stable. I said that I wanted to come and visit him and she refused to allow it. I said goodbye and when hanging up the phone I got the deep ache in my gut like if someone had tied a rope around my insides and was pulling on them. I called her back and told her that I was on my way to see him and would be there in about 3 hours. Then without waiting for her response I hung up the phone.

Upon arriving I was greeted coldly by both my mother and my sister. They had been the caretakers for my father during his illness. My father came out of the bedroom to sit with me. He had an ashen paleness about him that I had never seen on anyone before, but later came to know it as the "grey of death". Somehow I knew then that he was there to say his farewell. I also knew that I had to be there for him in a way I had not done before. With intense sorrow in his voice he asked me if he had accomplished anything in his life. Again somehow I knew he was reflecting on the meaning of his existence. I told him that he had left me behind and that he had given me both the fire of persistence and the eyes of a skilled observer. I told him that with these tools I promised him I was going to leave this world with something positive and healing before I left. He smiled and said he knew I was going to do this. We hugged and I left. He died several days later.

This was a spiritual emergency call to help a soul who was facing death. My father had placed the call and it "rang" within me. I answered.

In some sense you facing your own death each time you seek to make that collect call to God.<sup>1</sup> You face the death of "self", the death of static in the phone, and the death to your perceptions about relationship. You face how you have grown in your relationship to the self, to others and to God, that is, how you have learned to sit in the between. Hopefully you don't have to face all of this upon your deathbed. That can be an overwhelming experience. Hopefully you have made some progress before facing that event of "seeing your life before your eyes". This is the nature of mystic seekers journey and why they need to experience sitting with the mystic. Sitting with the

mystic/healer helps you to face “death” even when you are so afraid to do so. Sitting with the mystic/healer also helps to decrease the frequency of personal emergencies because you are learning how to become more spiritually sensitive – to open those direct lines of communication with God.

There are many other emergency stories I could recount from what others have told me and from my personal encounters with people and life. Once on the path of the operator the spiritual emergency line is always open and the operator is often asked to respond. It is like God “puts you” where you can do what you need to be. Then sends to you the people you need (and who need you) as part of becoming a skilled phone operator.

Remember that the spiritual emergency is an emergency of the soul. Sometimes we are not aware of the soul’s relationship to life, or of the type of response needed at that given moment. We may pray for something we desire simply to ease suffering. But this is not the nature of the emergency call. The spiritual emergency call may help to ease suffering as a consequence of the call but that is not the nature of the service. The nature of the service is to communicate something to the soul.

#### Conflicting models creating static in the lines

There are several ideas one encounters in the helping profession about the nature of an “emergency” which often provide conflict when trying to identify a soul emergency and then identify how to respond to the soul’s needs. These conflicting concepts are as follows: 1) the “medical model”, 2) the autonomy model and 3) the perfect attainment model.

The medical model is largely a mechanical model focused on fixing something that is “broken” with the body. It is an approach that starts with identifying the diagnosis of what is wrong and then follows with matching the best treatment to that diagnosis. In that realm it has been of great service to humanity. Unfortunately it has been extended beyond physical sickness to all forms of illness, including those connected to mental health and thus to soul health. The arguments for the necessity of creating a balanced approach for treatment of mental illness that includes spirituality exceed the confines of this text, but it can be stated that people with a healthy spiritual life are also more healthy in general.<sup>2</sup> Psychotherapist Micheal Gellert stated,

“Everybody has a personal religion of “mythology” insofar as they have a worldview that affects how they see the world and their place or destiny in it. How to find happiness or deal with suffering is as much a religious question as it is a psychological one.”<sup>3</sup>

The process of moving from suffering to well being is fundamental to both disciplines.

In my earlier publications I spoke to the problem with respect to the definition of healing, as opposed to the definition of curing.<sup>4</sup> I offered the idea that skilled healers have a working definition of healing that differs from the strict application of the medical model, but is not necessarily in conflict with medical model if that model is applied in a holistic manner. The same is true when we are faced with assessing the nature of a soul emergency. We should attempt a holistic assessment and one focused on the process of returning to well being as opposed to only “fixing the problem”. If we focus on only fixing the problem, which is often the demand placed on us by others (including large established organizations that administer care), then we can easily miss the opportunity for spiritual healing and growth. If our focus is only on “making the pain go away” then we may miss the opportunity for understanding the nature of the pain in connection to the stated emergency and our soul’s development (which is not the same as saying we should avoid the pain or not seek medical treatment). The medical model has its usefulness when applied properly.

Like the medical model, the model of autonomy has its usefulness when applied appropriately. The model of autonomy is particular strong in Western civilized cultures. It is a model of rugged individualism and the pioneering spirit.<sup>5</sup> It is the idea that an individual can “stand on their own two feet”, that “they just need to set their mind to doing it”, or that “it is just a matter of will power”. It is not the model itself that creates problems, but rather it’s over application.

Underlying the autonomy model is the premise that we can, and perhaps should as often as possible, be autonomous in facing life’s emergencies. Whatever the challenge in front of us we simply need to pull from deep within our being to find that pioneer spirit, that warrior strength, and that ancient wisdom. It is all there within us and all we need to do is have the will power to stay the course until we find it. But this model, strictly adhered to, is self-centered and unrealistic. It is not a real representation of how people grow and develop from facing emergency situations. People grow and develop from emergency situations because the emergency brings about a deeper awareness of relationships. We discover a deeper relationship with the inner self, with those closest to us, and with God. We move closer to knowing the between. It is not about autonomy but rather it is about synonymy. If we use the autonomy model strictly when addressing emergency situations it is likely to result in missing one of the most important components of emergency management – support!

Extreme caution should be taken when saying to someone “you can do this on your own” or “you just need enough faith” without also offering the appropriate level of support. It is like teaching someone to swim. Yes, it is absolutely true that eventually they have to jump in the water and do it on their own. But you don’t take a person with little swimming experience to the middle of the ocean, and say, “I know you can do it. I’ll meet you back at home.” There are numerous supports that can be given before this happens so that the person, when faced with a long ocean swim, will be prepared and more self-assured. We need each other for support along the way. It makes going through any emergency much easier.

In my years of helping people in crisis I have found that the most frequent single common theme was relationship turmoil. One way of addressing this common denominator of relationship distress is to promote autonomy. The belief is if you can live on your own then the problem of relationships doesn't happen. This is an illusion because most people want social company, and some want even more. They want intimacy. There is so much loneliness and relationship distress in this country because we have not yet learned how to be in successful relationships with each other. Autonomy may not be the answer to this distress.

Another way to address the distress is to promote relationship healing. This second approach has been the focus of my past writings and continues to be within this book. Relationship development is the basis for improved communication with God. One cannot be autonomous, separate and distant from others, and be genuinely compassionate and connected with the divine compassion of God. This does not mean that we do not at times feel separate (this was discussed in connection to the idea of "darkness"). It means that we seek to be less separate and that this seeking is a developmental process lasting an entire lifetime (see Appendix). There is no perfect relationship.

The model of perfect attainment is one that is contained in both psychology and religion, and is, in part, connected to the model of autonomy. It is the idea that if we fully commit ourselves to "self-actualization", to "union with the divine", then we will find eternal happiness and never have to face suffering again. Hidden in this idea is the implication that "if we have enough faith it will happen". Like the first two models presented it is not the model itself that creates problems, but rather it's over application.

The model of perfect attainment is one that is frequently connected to defining a better life, one that has no emergencies. The paths described vary across cultures and disciplines, but in general they offer the possible elimination of suffering and the attainment of divine union. In many ways this book has done the same, with some small but important exceptions. The exceptions to the perfect attainment model are based on two ideas. First that the between offers union and not union but still offers oneness. And second that there is never an end to the journey of improving our relationship with God.

The problem with the perfect attainment model that offers the prospect of no emergencies is it is not realistic. Again I emphasize the point of not representing common sense reality. At no time in recorded history has there been a person who possessed the characteristics of the mystic/healer, representing to us a life closer to God, who also did not suffer in real human terms. If we think that living a life closer to God will remove us from all emergencies while we remain in human form then we are mistaken. Again it is not the model that has flaws but rather our application of the model. We will face emergencies, others and ours. How we face them, and their effects, is a testimony to our relationship with the divine.

The misapplication of these three models (medical model, model of autonomy, and the perfect attainment model) is a problem for not only those seeking to understand and assist people with a soul emergency but also for those seeking to get emergency help. These three models can effect how the community responds to people making emergency requests. The three models can also effect how the phone operator communicates and how the mystic seeker enters into that sacred communication when the emergency call is made. Understanding the ramification of one's mental models on communication and the delivery of services in the helping profession is something I have addressed in my earlier writings.<sup>6</sup>

### **How to Communicate on the Spiritual Emergency Hot Line**

The spiritual emergency phone call starts with your ability to enter into the sacred healing relationship and to then use genuine prayer (or Divine asking). Emergency phone call reception is also affected by the phone operator reception of the spiritual emergency request. Imagine it is like dialing 911. The first thing that the operator asks is "What is the nature of the emergency?" Then the phone operator tries to get some clarification about the nature of the emergency so that proper services can be sent. These are the basic principles behind a successful spiritual emergency phone call. Is it an emergency? Is the nature of the emergency is spoken and clarified? What type of help should be sent and how will we know when it arrives?

It is not hard to imagine that in some peoples' lives there is no person to hear the spiritual emergency request, and no person to help with a response. Divine intervention is always possible, but often it is human intervention through Divine inspiration is a testimony to human salvation. We are here to help each other. We are each "our brother's keeper" and we are here to answer the spiritual emergency phone call requests of others when it is possible for us to do so. This is the responsibility we all have to our communities.

How we provide an answer to a spiritual emergency request depends on the situation. There is no simple "cook book" formula that could be stated here, except that sometimes we are divinely asked to help. An example of this was given in this chapter (responding to my father's emergency). There is no shortage of spiritual emergencies. All one needs to do is look around the community and plenty will be visible. Do you have the desire to respond? Will you take the time? Will you process your response with a skilled operator in order to improve how you respond?

The start of the spiritual emergency call is through prayer, or Divine request. Many brilliant theologians have written about the sacred nature of prayer, and or, the quiet meditative mind, as the door that opens to the Divine request.<sup>7</sup> I am not going to attempt to review all the literature on this subject, but rather simply to state that this is where the emergency phone call begins.

“True prayer is not saying the words in a prayer book. True prayer is the moment things appear with their true names – that is, when they appear as they are.”<sup>8</sup>

Prayer as a mindful, sacred, state establishes a relationship in the between. The prayer life is about learning to “sanctify the moment”.<sup>9</sup> Prayer is about speaking through, and to, an intimate relationship with God.<sup>10</sup> It is a relationship with unique characteristics that have been described elsewhere.

It may seem strange to speak of a mindful state when we are called into spiritual emergency service or when we are seeking such services. But the spiritual emergency must be placed in the hands of God and we can only do that from a place of sacredness. It cannot be done from a place of panic, fear, depression, loneliness, anger, or burning desire. We sit in the moment of the spiritual emergency phone call, not to satisfy self, not to satisfy another, and not simply to glorify some religious conception of God. Instead we sit in moment of the spiritual emergency phone call, as we also sit in a mindful state, for the purpose of acquiring discernment.

The spiritual emergency call is made not so much to find a solution to a problem, although the problem may become solved, but rather to offer the situation into the hands of God. We hope, through the spiritual emergency phone call that we will be given discernment – not to meet our selfish desire but hear God’s response. We enter a sacred place so that we can hear that response. It is a place separate but connected to self, separate but connected to others, and that is oneness with God’s nature. It is in this sacred between that we can see things as they truly appear and then discern answers to the spiritual emergency phone call.

Understanding the nature of successful spiritual emergency phone call conversation is hinged on this concept of letting go of the self and allowing the answer to be heard. But the self has a myriad of ways to interfere with the call, and our hearing the response.

### **Knowing How Your Spiritual Emergency Call Went Through**

It takes considerable skill to learn to discern how your spiritual emergency call went through. This is similar to the skill of knowing the “sacred message” or the *soul’s response*. Most people have not been trained in this type of soul’s listening. But it is in our nature to do this type of listening. It is a type of listening that can continue to improve as we continue to improve our communication with God.

There are many ways that the soul’s response can be recognized in relation to the spiritual emergency phone call. But to understand these varied responses one needs to understand the nature of the soul’s relationship. It is important know that there a soul’s response when the spiritual emergency call has been answered (and not answered). The

soul's response can be heard in connection to the spiritual emergency phone call and that this is one way of knowing how the call went through. Discernment of the soul's response is a difficult skill to develop and it is one reason why people often turn to the phone operators. They are familiar with using the phone line and knowing how to discern how the call went through.

Another way of knowing how the call went through is when you immediately receive a message that cannot be denied – a spiritual message. I have offered several examples of this in this text. A message is received and it is so clear, and unmistakably divine in origin, that you unmistakably know how your call went through. When I asked for help for my family I received such a message (to take my daughter while asking my wife to join me). Many times when I request help for others, assisting the collect call to go through on their behalf, I will also receive a spiritual message on their behalf. The message is often accompanied by all the features of the mystical experience (as outlined in Chapter 2). Other people in the room may also feel these features and they can serve as witnesses to the Divine nature of the message. This is one way to know how that the message went through.

Sometimes you don't know how the call went through and you have to wait to see if the services arrive.

### **Waiting for the Services to Arrive**

*Remember if this is a true physical or psychological emergency **DO NOT WAIT**. Dial 911 immediately and ask for help.*

After the spiritual emergency call is placed, in many instances, we need to wait for the services to arrive. It is much like waiting for the ambulance to get to the house. Waiting is not an easy thing to do when in the middle of a spiritual emergency. Waiting, particularly in our fast paced “doing”, technique oriented, culture, is hard to do under any conditions.

In this text I have mentioned the importance of waiting. Successful placing of the collect call through the phone operator contains four parts: 1) intent, 2) doing 3) waiting and 4) processing. Waiting to hear the response to “This is a collect call from. ... Will you accept the charges?” Waiting while being put on “hold”. Waiting while facing the darkness and waiting while sitting in suffering (our own and the other's). Waiting is a part of the mystic seeker's journey and a part of the communication process with God. But we are not good at sacred waiting and until we can become better we are likely to miss out on much of the “answers” to our phone call requests because we are too busy “doing” to be “hearing”.

Sacred waiting is a one of the skills learned by the phone operator, who in the service of others often must wait to hear an answer. There is a certain “personality” associated with the mystic/healer who understands the importance of sacred waiting.

“In Mohammedan mysticism it is prayer that supplies the best evidence of personality – not the ritual prayer (salat) but the free prayer (du’la’) and in particular the loving converse with God (munajat).”<sup>11</sup>

The mindful state of sacred waiting is an important part of the mystic’s contemplative life and involves an intimate union beyond ritual. St. Teresa of Avila referred to this sacred waiting as “the prayer of quiet”:

“Teresa’s deeper prayer had little or no “taking” in it. It was a receptive kind of thing. One simply sat and waited like waiting for a train or a bus...It is very empty and very vulnerable to distraction.”<sup>12</sup>

“One of the progressive characteristics of mental prayer, a quality which grows in strength and pervasiveness as a person advances in prayer, is a receptiveness that is very still.”<sup>13</sup>

The reason we seek this quiet mind is to be able to hear what speaks in that deep stillness.

Learning this business of successful sacred waiting requires a discipline that is difficult to master, and made even more difficult without guidance.

“It is a truism in the literature of contemplation that one must have a director, guide or guru in order to avoid getting lost.”<sup>14</sup>

But this guidance should be the level of your personal needs. If it is not then you might be forced to endure suffering at the hands of the ignorant, as did St. Teresa of Avila.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps no other situation is more challenging, and more significant, to our learning about sacred waiting than the time following a spiritual emergency phone call. We can place the call without discussions with the operator. There are times when an operator will not be present when we are faced with that emergency. Initially we will have to face it with the resources available. But we can seek the phone operator afterwards to discuss the process of discernment, of waiting for the answer, and of learning about sacred waiting.

Contemplation is a constant component of the mystic/healer’s life across all cultures and religions and the skilled phone operator will have knowledge of this.

“By contemplation here we mean ... the direct intuition of reality, the *simplex intuitus veritatis*, the pure awareness which is and must be the ground not only of all genuine metaphysical speculation, but also of

mature and sapiential religious experience. This direct awareness is a gift, but it also presupposes the knowledge and practice of certain traditional disciplines.”<sup>16</sup>

The art of skilled contemplation can be facilitated through a wide variety of approaches. There are many books addressing mindfulness, focusing on the here-and-now, meditation, contemplation and prayer.<sup>17</sup> It is not the intention of this text to provide a review of this voluminous material. It is simply enough, at this point, for the reader to understand the importance of sacred waiting as part of the phone call process. Any skilled operator, from any discipline, should also know this and be able to offer personal guidance. The guidance you receive should be directed at helping you to personally develop your abilities with sacred waiting. You should come to know that these abilities are developing by the observing the results of discernment (hearing the answer to your request) during the phone call process.

Before I started writing this book I was faced with time alone. I had time between jobs, and time because my children were grown and out of the house. Then I had time because I was working part time, a choice I made so I could write – initially to finish my first publications. I lived in a small, quite modest, country home, with two cats, some tropical fish, a large garden of remarkable beauty, and a hard working wife whose support made this alone time possible.

Initially the alone time was difficult. I was so used to having to “do” all the time that I felt it necessary to fill my day running around doing. I could not find that still place when I was alone. I was able to find it when I was helping another with sacred communication. It is not like I didn’t know how to get there and it is not like I didn’t have many years of spending times alone. I knew the journey but for some reason couldn’t take the trip. I was stuck in the state of running around, both physically and mentally.

Reflecting on this I could see that this life of being stuck in running around started when I started my Ph.D. in 1995. The pursuit of the doctorate was a grueling process for one who hated school and had a high level of anxiety regarding all aspects of the academic performance review process (grades!). It seemed like it was always about doing, publish or perish, and rationalizing. This is the mind set one needed to have in order to “fit in” to the academic culture and engage in conversations with peers. But it seemed to me to be a spiritual desert. It was one that I endured over four years. At the end I was very drained, felt sick, and lost. Quiet had been a part of my being. I knew I had to return to it or stay lost and sick. Returning to it was not easy. Perhaps I chose to write books as a way to help me with the transition.

I knew I had to make the commitment to move back into the quiet space, and to practice being there more frequently. I could not let myself remain lost. That was the first step, making that genuine commitment. The second step was to be the constant observer for a while, to take notes on why the inner quiet was absent.<sup>18</sup> I noticed that I had worries. I was worried about money, about my career, about my relationship with

family and friends. I would spend many hours each day in worry. I also noticed that I was sometimes angry. I was angry at the people around me who lacked compassion. I was angry at the suffering in the world. I was angry at my failings. I watched as this worry and anger would quickly turn into sadness. I could stay sad for hours. These emotions were too difficult for me to sit with when I was alone. I needed some way to deal with them. That is why I stayed busy doing and the more I repeated using busy doing to deal with these emotions the more it became a difficult habit to change. I knew this, but it seemed easier to “keep busy” than to deal with the emotional turmoil in my own mind.

As I observed I also say that there were other people’s voices in my head. More correctly there were the memories of other people’s voices – my parents, siblings, school officials, and other authority figures. Their voices were behind the worry, the emotion. I was responding to them in my hurry to do it faster and more abundantly. There was the feeling that if I wasn’t doing then I was “a good person”. I carried this “not a good person” into every action I did. It was there when I was gardening, reading, writing, going to work, driving, and eating diner. My mind was far from being at peace. It was obvious to me that my life was in need of some serious changes.

Because it was so hard for me to stop doing I decided to work on changing my mind’s outlook, or orientation, while I was doing. Instead of having the busy, confused, mind that was paying attention to emotions and old voices, I would work on having a serene mind that focused on the peacefulness of the moment while I was doing. It was practicing the path of serenity over the path of confusion. This was not easy to do, as it took concentration and persistent mindfulness. I did not achieve perfection either, but I did notice myself getting quiet.

That might sound great, but there were some initial side effects. Because my life had been so busy, moving into quiet, with a slowing down of the mind and body (but not doing less), was accompanied by a physiologically depression. I wanted to make this physical depression quickly go away by taking some stimulant, like a big cup of coffee. I also had the urge to do something stimulating. But I had made this commitment to return to a place of inner peace that I had known. I also knew that this depression was just a temporary “rebound effect” related to the busy minded life I was leading. I was patient. I waited and watched, and continued to practice the serenity path. I kept telling myself that I knew there was a healthier way to live and that I had to do what was needed to live that way.

As I continued to take notes I noticed that in the solitude of my humble abode I would keep the music on all the time. Sometimes I would have the television on. This was to keep me from having to hear the silence. As I listened to the silence I had to listen to how I filled up that silence. I didn’t want to do that. It was easier to listen to the music and add it to my serenity path by remarking how it was so peaceful. Yet, I knew that I had to face the quiet. It was the commitment I had made. The music was turned off and I faced even deeper levels of my own inner noise.

Even though I was making progress on finding that quiet still place I noticed that I couldn't stay there very long. There would be these sharp spikes of emotional surges that would disrupt the quiet. Some would be so intense that returning to the quiet became impossible. These surges could send me on a whirlwind spin of feeling-thought-feeling. Stuck in this whirlwind it would take hours, and with super surges 24 hours, before the quiet returned. I needed to add something to the practice of the serenity path that helped me address these surges. This addition was the practice of deep meditative breathing at the onset of the surge accompanied by a personally designed mantra (a centering chant). The hardest part of this practice was being mindful of the surge onset and then immediately putting the breathing practice in place.

After all this work I was beginning to feel quiet. People around me were remarking on how calm I seemed to be no matter what was happening around me. But there seemed to be something missing. All these "exercises", although helpful, were still forms of doing. I was doing to help me address my habits of doing.

Before I entered the Ph.D. program I had experienced 14 days straight of spiritual quiet and bliss. This was the result of years of practice, study, and sacred communication. It wasn't that I wasn't doing during those 14 days. It was that I wasn't trying to do anything. I was still getting things accomplished, but I wasn't in a busy frame of mind. This was more than 8 years ago and I knew that my life had not yet approached that zenith. There was still something missing, something beyond doing. This something was the idea that my being needed to be prepared for quiet.

This is probably a difficult concept to understand in connection to entering a place of internal quiet. The idea of preparing being means that our inner nature "let's go" and shifts into a perception of the moment that is one of sacredness and humble gratitude. This preparing of being is not about doing. It is more about not doing. It is entering a sacred state of perception where all life is blessed and given thanks. It is an immersion into the grace and beauty of the moment, "It is beautiful to be alive and to embrace every facet of my existence." In this state I hear myself saying: "I am not feeling like I have to do anything. I know the moment and I live in that moment knowing it contains all that I need to know. I am breathing quietly and my mind is simply in this moment without need to be elsewhere. I know myself of this world but I am also detached from suffering's terror. I experience my being while doing instead of my doing while doing. It is a place of immovable peace." This addition to my quest for quiet made a significant difference in my life. I started moving toward having hours of quiet, then a whole day, and on occasion two days. During one of those two days I received the sacred message to write this book. It appeared in my mind, completed, as if I was reading the table of contents. Now, while in the solitude of writing this book, I have returned to a regular practice of sacred waiting.

Meister Eckhart recommended one practice as the most critical in developing communication with God – detachment.<sup>19</sup> About the art of detachment he said that detachment is "nothing else than the spirit to stand immovable against whatever may chance to it... You must know that to be empty of all created things is to be full of

God.”<sup>20</sup> This does not mean that we are detached from the healing relationship, from the phone booth. Meister Eckhart clarifies the concept by saying that it is not about societal withdrawal but that it is about a relationship with God that is present in daily life – “on the streets and among the people, just as much as in church, or a desert place, or a cell [referring to a hermitage].”<sup>21</sup> It is a detachment from the noise of our worldly life but not from the compassion for all living beings. It is a detachment we can learn something about from skilled phone operators while making a short visit to a retreat (and then hopefully put in place back at home).

You probably do not sit in the phone booth all the time. When you are in the phone booth you may need help learning about the consequences. One of these consequences is that you can feel the desire to change how you engage with daily life. Whether at a retreat, or during a single meeting, the skilled phone operator should be able to help you with this life integration process.

### **After the Emergency is Over**

After the emergency is over, the ambulance has come and gone, and you have “received” an answer, then the spiritual emergency is over. When there is no longer a spiritual emergency it is time to show humble gratitude. What this means is that once it is clear that your spiritual emergency call has been answered, that something did happen as an answer to your spiritual emergency call, then you should take the time to give praise.

In addition to giving praise you should take the time to process the event and to integrate insights gained into daily life. You can access the three types of helping relationships<sup>22</sup> when seeking assistance with this. Get the help with this. Do not let the event pass by without realizing its deep significance and the opportunity it offers for improved quality of life and relationships.

### **Providing Emergency Services**

For some people spiritual emergency calls are not placed, but instead received. If we decide that we want to improve our communication with God then we should also consider that we may be “called”. We would be “called” to respond to a spiritual emergency situation to help another in need. I offered two examples of this with the call to help my father and the call to help my wife deal with a flooded basement. I have worked in the community providing emergency services and could offer numerous additional stories of people in crisis situations seeking help and receiving divine intervention through the spiritual emergency request. These services all have common features 1) the person is in a spiritual emergency, a crisis, 2) the person is able to

receive the help offered by the operator, and 3) the operator is able, and willing, to provide the help at that spiritual emergency moment.

There are many times when I have seen people present themselves as if they were in a spiritual emergency when it was fairly easy to discern they had different, somewhat hidden, agendas. People present as if they were in a state of crisis in order to achieve some agenda different than a greater discernment of their path toward well being. These different agenda can be to “get the problem fixed” or “to be cured”, to be “nurtured” and to escape the consequences.

People may present themselves in a true crisis but not be ready to receive the services of the operator. Example: A young person with a history of life threatening health problems comes to the emergency room. There was evidence of light razor cuts to the body because of being “emotionally overwhelmed”. Two weeks earlier all pain medication had been stopped because of overuse. Frantic, angry, and oppositional the person demanded proper treatment “or else”. This “or else” meant engaging in serious self harm, stating, “Do not try to make me feel better, just give me what I want.” The demands were clearly stated – hospitalization and medication. There was no desire for compassion or exploring a spiritual answer to her distress.

I have witnessed so many examples of this that I have begun to think of it as a systemic problem. Perhaps people are trained by our system of health care to think of “help” in a certain way. Perhaps the medical model has yielded some side effects of misplaced expectation resulting in people not taking legitimate responsibility for accepting the help they truly need. Instead they come in seeking the “pill” to “fix – it” or the hospital to “cure – it”. I have addressed some of these problems of misplaced expectations in my earlier writings.<sup>23</sup>

There are other agendas that occur besides misplaced expectations. Sometimes people seek emergency help because they wish to be nurtured. They would rather have someone “tuck them in at night” then face the difficulties of sickness, loneliness, and poverty (sometimes compounded by substance abuse and abusive relationships). But there is no life-threatening crisis. One could discern that there is a soul-threatening crisis, but the person would need to be able to discern this in order to receive help to address such a crisis. Often people are not willing (able at that moment) to learn such a message. They simply want to receive nurturing.

There are also times when the crisis is purposefully fabricated in order to escape from a perceived authority (real or not). This authority can be parents, mate, or legal. People sometimes make mistakes for which there are consequences. Facing those consequences is difficult and sometimes it is perceived better to “get help for an emergency” than it is to face the consequences. This may, or may not, be a true emergency. Often it is not. And after the help is given the person still must face the consequences. Seldom is there room for spiritual intervention when such an agenda is presented.

These different agendas of “getting the problem fixed” or “getting cured”, finding “nurturing” and “escaping the consequences” are often not true emergencies even though they are presented that way. They are also not perceived as soul emergencies. The person presents the emergency but already has, set in their mind, exactly what the solution should be. Let me provide another example:

A person with a history of “mental illness”, living at home with a partner, presents saying “I have to go into the hospital” and that “it is an emergency”. The person has been to the hospital before, but not in a long time. Involvement in spirituality and church, along with clinical treatment, has prevented hospital revisits. But now the complaint is that “my mind is chemically unbalanced” and “I need to get it fixed by going into the hospital”. Through discussions with phone operator it is discovered that there was no presenting risk of harm other than seeking chemicals to solve the problem. The discussion shifts to how spirituality helped in the past and then to how it could be used at the present moment. An agreement is made to revisit spirituality in the present moment and the person experiences a shift into well being. The meeting ends as the person leaves with a feeling of peace saying promising to reconnect to church and spiritual mentors. All seems well. But later in the evening there is another emergency call. Unable to stay with the spiritual path the person returned to the idea that something was “broken” and that the hospital could “fix –it”.

This story is rich with important themes that I have not only witnessed in the lives of those around me, but also in my own life. These themes are made more visible when we perceive an emergency that really isn’t there. We can become stuck in certain patterns of how we respond to difficult time in our lives. The recurrent patterns are often not successful and we are left facing the same problem again and again, and it doesn’t seem any different. If we happen to be shown a different solution (like a spiritual one) we often don’t trust it enough to break our old patterns, so we again return to the same problem in the same way. Because we don’t take the time to trust that we have been shown, that it can work as a solution, then we don’t practice, and when we don’t practice we seem to be distant from God and distant from our ability to sit in the between.

There are times when an apparent emergency is not about calling for emergency services, nor is it about the operator giving those services in the manner requested, but rather it is about seeing the apparent emergency an opportunity to break out of a recurrent pattern. In the above example the apparent emergency was an opportunity to break out of a recurrent pattern. The person was shown, through direct experience, how to break out of that pattern, but for some reason was not able (or not willing) to do so at that time. Perhaps reminders from life were too strong to resist and the person couldn’t avoid returning to the old patterns. An opportunity to “heal” instead of “fix” was missed. This is probably what many emergencies are about.

Let me provide a different example with similar features but a different outcome. A person comes in saying that their partner just demanded them to leave the house. This happened because of anger and heated arguments. With little money and the

person had to sleep in a relative's garage. The whole family viewed this person as "having an anger problem". Drugs were being used to try to quiet the anger but with little success. Distraught, thinking that there is no hope it was time to place the emergency phone call. Through the conversation it was discovered that there was a very strong self loathing because of all these events. But also discovered, like in the previous story, was a history of church and bible study. The agreement was made to explore spirituality and by the end of the meeting with the phone operator the person left feeling well, transformed. There was an agreement to never use drugs again and to work on stopping the anger responses. Over weeks that followed every meeting was an affirmation that the relationship with God had been reestablished. The drugs were gone, money problems improved, and the anger outbursts stopped (replaced by an honest verbal expression of deeper feelings at that moment). This person used the phrase, "God has got me and this time I am not going to let go."

There are times when a person comes in seeking to make the emergency call when it works well and there are times when it doesn't. There are a wide variety of reasons behind this. There are times when a person comes in a state of distress, seeking help, and the operator is either not willing or not able to provide the service. Not able means that the service, for whatever reason, can't be provided. Not willing means the service could be provided but the operator has chosen not to. Clarification and emphasis is needed here. I am not referring to the types of medical, mental health, Red Cross, fire or police emergency services that may be available to a person in an emergency situation. I am referring to a spiritual emergency of the soul, a spiritual emergency that is an opportunity for personal growth and development and when encountered properly is testimony to one's spiritual relationships. With this clarification it is perhaps easier to understand that there are times when people present with a true soul emergency and "professional" people are not willing, or able, to answer the spiritual emergency call. This lack of available spiritual responses feeds further into the perpetuation of the alternative agendas people have attached to their emergency request because they are "expecting" other types of responses.

The main reason that there are professionals in the helping field that are not able, or not willing, to answer a genuine soul emergency request is because most are not trained to know how. But, if you are a person who has the opportunity to help others, and you are seeking improved communication with God, then the opportunity to sit with a soul emergency will probably occur. The question then is, "Will you be prepared to answer the emergency call?" The ability to answer the call is directly related to training. This will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Four Summary and Conclusions**

Spiritual emergency phone calls differ from collect calls and from using the direct line. The major difference is that you can access the spiritual emergency line at

anytime. There is no fee, no need for a special phone booth, and you don't have to use an operator (but you can, and it makes it easier). The similarities to making collect calls and using the direct line are 1) the operator can still be of assistance, 2) this is still about the soul's response – it is not like calling 911, and 3) you can improve your skill in discerning the response to the phone call request. The differences are that often the spiritual emergency just happens. There isn't an operator available. You then must begin the process alone. You may seek an operator soon after to process what took place, and it is advised that you do this.

Anyone can be put in the position of facing a spiritual emergency – their own or someone else's. Improving your skill in using the spiritual emergency services means that you come to know when something is an emergency of the soul and you learn more about the soul's response and the soul's relationship. This requires training that is usually beyond the training that most professional receive during their academic years. It is training that is needed to improve one's receptivity to hearing the answers following a spiritual emergency call and also to improve one's ability to hear, and respond to, the true nature of someone's soul emergency.

### **End Notes and References Cited**

To locate the reference go to the reference list and look up the authors name and the year of publication.

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<sup>1</sup> Nugent, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> See Koenig, et.al, 2001, for a discussion of spirituality and health. See the following for a discussion of mental health and spirituality: Epstein, 1995; Hoisington, 2002; Kakar, 1991; Kelsey, 1988; May, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> Gellert, 1991, p. xi.

<sup>4</sup> Hoisington, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> See Bellah, et.al., 1996, for a more detailed description of the effects of autonomy on society.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> For example see Poulan & Poulain, 1996; Hutchinson, 1982, 2003; Mundy, 1997; Gandhi, 2000; Williamson, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Kamenetz, 1997, p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 177.

<sup>10</sup> Rossetti, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, 2001, p.45, quoted from Nicholson, 1923, p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> Gross, 1993, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 187.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Merton, 1967, p. 203.

<sup>17</sup> For example see Goleman, 1988; Keating, 1996; Kelsey, 1997. Merton, 1967, has some very stimulating things to say about the average Western view of meditation as compared with the stillness of spiritual contemplation.

<sup>18</sup> This assumes one is familiar with the state of inner quiet in order to know when it is absent.

<sup>19</sup> Eckhart, 1985.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 47, from the introduction by Colledge & McGinn.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Borchert, 1994, p. 225.

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<sup>22</sup> See Hoisington, 2002 for a description of the three types.

<sup>23</sup> Hoisington, 2002.