**Ways to Use VIA Character Strengths**

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**CORE VIRTUE: TRANSCENDANCE**

**forging connections to the larger universe and providing meaning**

**V. Spirituality [religiousness, faith, purpose]:** Spirituality is a universal part of human experience involving knowledge of one’s place within the larger scheme of things. It can include but is not limited to religious belief and practice. Spirituality affords us an awareness of the sacred in everyday life, a sense of comfort in the face of adversity, and the experience of transcending the ordinary to reach something fundamental.

**Too much:** fanaticism

**Too little:** anomie

**Movies:**

1. *Contact* (1997) – Dr. Eleanor Arroway is a scientist working for the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence. When she discovers a signal from a faraway star, it throws society into turmoil as the age-old conflict between reason and belief erupts. Dr. Arroway must reconcile her commitment to science with her rocky relationship to spirituality and with the pain of her past.

2. *The Apostle* (1997) – When a God-fearing preacher from Texas discovers that his wife is having an affair, he responds by assaulting the interloper and plunging him into a coma. His run from the law takes him on a journey to Louisiana and forces him to confront his own spiritual problems. The director steadfastly refuses to condemn or vindicate his character, leaving it up to the audience to decide the true depth of his faith and the true significance of his actions.

3. *Priest* (1994—British) – Fr. Greg Plinkington lives two lives, one as a conservative Catholic priest and the other as a gay man with a lover. When a girl in his confessional tells him of sexual abuse at the hands of her father, his frustration with the laws of the Catholic Church boils over and he must reconcile his inner beliefs with the tenants of his doctrinal faith.

4. *What the Bleep Do We Know!? (2004)-* A documentary-style film which integrates interviews, computer-animated graphics, and a narrative that links spirituality with quantum physics and consciousness. The documentary surrounds a deaf female photographer who encounters emotional and existential obstructions in her life. She gradually comes to nourish the idea that individual and group consciousness can influence the material world.

***Suggested Actions***

1. Spend some time every day in at least one activity that connects you with a higher power or reminds you where you fit in the large scheme of things. Be mindful of your place in the larger context of life.

2. Spend ten minutes daily in breathing deeply, relaxing, and meditating (emptying the mind of thoughts by focusing on breathing). Observe how you feel afterward.

3. Mindfully worship and/or pray for five to ten minutes a day. Remove all distractions from your environment during this time.

4. Read a spiritual or religious book every day for half an hour. Discuss the ideas in it with someone you trust and respect.

5. Explore different religions – take a class, research over the internet, meet a person of different religion, or attend the congregation of a different religion. Speak to people who practice this faith and get to know them as people.

6. Note whether your everyday actions have any spiritual significance. If not, think ways of connecting the two.

7. Explore a fundamental purpose of your life and link your actions to it. Each day, ask yourself if you accomplished anything toward fulfilling this purpose.

8. Reflect how your spiritual beliefs and practices connect you with others authentically. Find spiritual similarities with those you love.

9. Make a weekly list of experiences that forge strong connections in your life. Be mindful of how you fit into the lives of others.

10. Write your eulogy or ask your loved ones how they would like to remember you. Do they mention your signature strengths?

11. Build relationships with people who appreciate your ability to help them identify and solve problems. Rely on them and let them rely on you. Be aware of the level of trust in your relationships.

12. Connect with people and organizations that enhance your signature strengths. Think of ways to use your strengths to make people more aware of their own spirituality.