

## Our inner spirit is essential to who we are

by Mark Pavilons

They say our spirit is indomitable.

It takes a beating, almost daily, and yet still musters up a smile, or fills you with warmth, like a hot cup of tea.

Saint Francis de Sales urged us not to lose our inner peace for anything, "even if your whole world seems upset."

I've always been the one with a smile, a quick retort and a joke. Some say such a person "who can bring the spirit of laughter into a room" is indeed blessed.

I don't feel blessed. In fact, I hate the current version of myself.

I've approached my treatment over the past two years with a practical lens. Taking aim at this demon inside me is a process, one made of up steps.

Nothing "not the treatments nor the cancer itself" are what I have to say about it.

So, I play the game, take my place in the lineup and keep swinging.

Since my last chemo session, I've felt sluggish, not myself. It's so easy to get sucked into the vortex of depression and anxiety.

Cancer is a thief, a cold-hearted killer that steals, absorbs and destroys memories. That's the reality of the disease. It doesn't just invade cells, tissues and bones, but it takes over our minds, our memories our emotions. It seizes goodness.

I don't feel like myself. I used to be full of life, energy and laughter, but now a lot of things feel heavy and tiring.

I'm just trying to survive each day and keep going, even when it feels hard.

I'm likely not alone. And it's not just cancer patients who feel like they're walking through mud.

Many of my brethren suffer from physically painful conditions and mental health issues. All task our spirits and suck the goodness from the sweetest fruits.

And so, we draw upon our strengths and our spirit to carry on.

Just what is this spirit we talk about? Well, it can be described as the very breath God gave us when we were created. The human spirit includes our intellect, emotions, fears, passions and creativity. It is this spirit that gives us the ability to comprehend and understand.

Whoa. So, our spirit is everything inside us? It's our driving force?

Merriam-Webster defines spirit as: "An animating or vital principle held to give life to physical organisms. The activating or essential principle influencing a person."

Wait a minute. Given the above, our "spirit" is our most important aspect, so why aren't we stoking the embers and making everyone's essence glow?

Maybe because it's intangible. We can't grasp it, dissect it and explain it for all to hear.

There's no question we humans like to complicate things. We see hurdles where none exist.

Perhaps our spirit is the quiet resilience when faced with challenges. Maybe it's the unassuming acts of kindness that we give.

Some tie our spirit to empathy and maybe it's a clarity unlike anything else.

Some psychologists believe there's a robust synergy of spirituality and one's character strengths and virtues. It seems to be connected to the search for purpose and has a divine connotation.

Character strengths and spirituality sit within the domains of virtue ? what people hold sacred, the fulfilled life, meaning and purpose, wisdom, the pursuit of moral goodness, and the enhancement of what matters most to people such as cultivating good relationships and making a positive impact on the world. In this regard, the integration of spirituality with character strengths and virtues creates an opportunity to make these positive outcomes, aspirations, and pursuits more deliberate, conscious, and a more likely reality for individuals and groups (Sandage and Hill, 2001).

?The role of the spirit in life not optional; it is a response to the need for human wholeness. To ignore the spirit is to miss an essential part of the person,? said John T. Chirban, *What Is the Spirit*, 2013.

Regardless of one's viewpoint, I think we can all agree that there are many aspects of human life that are incorporeal and mysterious.

I wonder how our distant ancestors viewed the spirit or the soul, when they predated any sort of religious doctrine. Thousands of years ago, there were no texts or stories on everlasting life.

And yet, our prehistoric forefathers believed in an aspect distinct from the body. We have mounds of evidence of early man's burial practices and respect for the dearly departed.

I find this fascinating, since their knowledge was so limited. They had no idea about weather patterns, tides and the stars above. At best, they could build a simple hovel, catch and eat food.

Granted, they did have a concept of family.

Christian theology says the soul represents the true person and is the motivating principles of the body.

I really don't know where the soul ends and the spirit beings, or vice versa. I don't have enough information to make a case either way.

I see the spirit as the ball of energy, the joy within us that is capable of motivating us and leading us to greatness. Of course, it's intangible, but how can something so powerful, so warm and fuzzy, be just a ?concept??

No, my friends, there is no way this thing inside us isn't real. While it may not show up on any CT-Scan, it's there, plain as day, as bright as the sun that shines above us.

Maybe it's an energy that runs throughout our bodies and travels through our veins. Perhaps it's hidden in one of those weird, noodle-like parts of our brain.

Dare I say it's the ?battery?? that carries our charge, and gives us the power to get out of bed each day and face the world? Is the soul

a super-interface that is linked to everything and everyone in the cosmos?

Man never made anything as resilient as the human spirit. Maybe our inner 'pilot' is a power way beyond our comprehension.

And where it guides us is the ultimate journey, don't you think?