

Enhancing Spiritual Intelligence Among Adolescence

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Abstract

Spiritual intelligence may be described in terms of ultimate belonging or connection to the transcendental ground of being. Some people define spirituality in terms of relationship to God, to fellow humans, or to the earth. Others define it in terms of devotion and commitment to a particular faith or form of practice. Spiritual intelligence has a significant influence on the quality of life and it goes without saying that adolescence is a sensitive period which requires specific training to make a brighter future and be exposed to the difficulties. The adolescence period is the best time to develop positive emotions and training skills, because adolescents are seeking to find their identity and their future personality at this period. Thus it becomes the need of an hour is to understand the prerequisite of spiritual intelligence among adolescence and to transform the quality information into practice. Therefore, present paper focuses on the concept of spiritual intelligence and its enhancement techniques among adolescence. Some of them include; developing inspiration and practice, personal meaning production and developing spiritual path etc. These techniques would not only provide intervention for growth to the adolescence but would have a collective impact on the youth.

Keywords: *Spiritual intelligence, Spiritual maturity, Quality of life, Stress, Well-being*

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“Spiritual intelligence is the expression of innate spiritual qualities through your thoughts, actions and attitude”.

————— ***Brahmakumari.***

Introduction to the Concept

The term spiritual intelligence was coined by **Zohar (1997)**. Spiritual intelligence is concerned with the inner life of mind along with spirit and its relationship to being in the world. Spiritual intelligence implies a capacity for a deep understanding of existential questions and insight into multiple levels of consciousness. As quoted by **Vaughan (2002)** “Spiritual intelligence is the awareness of spirit as the ground of being or as the creative life force of evolution”. Spiritual intelligence is concerned with the inner life of mind and spirit and its relationship to being in the world.

Spiritual intelligence emerges as consciousness evolves into an ever-deepening awareness of matter, life, body, mind, soul, and spirit. Spiritual intelligence goes beyond conventional psychological development. In addition to self-awareness, it implies awareness of our relationship to the transcendent, to each other, to the earth and all beings.

Spiritual intelligence is related to emotional intelligence insofar as spiritual practice includes developing intrapersonal and interpersonal sensitivity. Paying attention to subjective thoughts and cultivating empathy is part of increasing awareness of the inner spiritual life. Spiritual intelligence depends on the capacity to see things from more than one perspective and to recognize the relationships between perception, belief and behavior. In a survey of grassroots spirituality, **Forman (1997) reported that “people from many different traditions tend to view spirituality today as being experiential rather than conceptual, and clearly trans-rational”.**

Spiritual intelligence implies facing existential realities such as freedom, suffering and death and grappling with the perennial quest for meaning. For many people, spiritual intelligence also implies aesthetic sensitivity and appreciation of beauty. Interestingly, spiritual intelligence is sometimes associated with sensitivity to subtle energy currents in the body. Practices such as meditation, yoga and martial arts that claims the mind can expand awareness and refine perceptual sensitivity to energy, sound, light and subtle levels of consciousness. **Zohar and Marshall (2000)** drawing on evidence from psychology, neurology and religious tradition, argue that spiritual intelligence is an integrating intelligence because of its role within individuals. **Zohar and Marshall (2000)** stated “*indicators of high spiritual intelligence: the capacity to be flexible, a high degree of self-awareness, a capacity to face and transcend pain, the quality of being inspired by vision and values and tendency*

to see the connections between diverse things”.

Since ancient times, spirituality has been an integral part of human life. “*I believe everyone has the potential for developing spiritual intelligence, just as everyone has a capacity for intuition, thinking, sensing, and feeling”*. (Vaughan, 1979). However, these capacities develop and become more reliable when we pay attention to them. Whereas some people try to ignore spiritual issues, others choose to cultivate spiritual sensitivity. Because people now have access to a wide variety of spiritual teachings, intelligent discernment is needed to make wise choices and avoid some of the entrapping seductions of spiritual illusions (Anthony, Ecker, & Wilber, 1987; Deikman, 1990; Vaughan, 1995).

Need of Enhancing Spiritual Intelligence Among Adolescence

Spiritual intelligence is essential for every age keeping in mind the storm and stress one witnesses in all ages and all walks of life. This goes very much with the adolescence as it is the age of curiosity, energy, zeal and enthusiasm which if not properly channelized would lead adolescence prone to anti-social elements, HIV, STI etc. There are significant changes in the emergence of various forms of psychopathology during adolescence such as: depression, hopelessness, low self-esteem, negative evaluation of things giving rise to suicide ideation. Data documenting increases during adolescence in rates both of completed suicide and major depression during the last half of the 20th century suggest that rates of psychopathology among adolescents have genuinely increased (Costello, et al., 2002).

Surprisingly, adolescent development has increased the risk for special problems which may be observed in patterns of risk-taking behaviors, affective disturbance, eating disorders and substance abuse. These historical changes imply that, in spite of the vital significance of biological change as a defining feature of adolescence and a potential contributor to psychopathology, contextual factors are proved to be very important in the development of behavioral and emotional problems within this period (Hosseini, Elias, Krauss and Aishah 2008).

As witnessed adolescents face many psychological and psychopathological problems because they are not able to cope with the challenges and situations which the life offers to them. Thus, making adolescents inclined towards spiritual intelligence would help them in attaining their claim, cognitive affect, meaningful reasoning, it would help them in handling peer pressure effectively and not to revolt against parents educators and authority figures. This would in turn facilitates them towards meaningful life and move them in the process of “becoming”.

Historical Evedence of Spiritual Intelligence

Although the notion of spiritual intelligence is relatively recent, the concept draws heavily from the work done on spirituality in the fields of psychology, neurology and philosophy particularly that is associated with eastern mysticism and indigenous beliefs. The work of Jung has been particularly influential in shaping the writings of contemporary scholars on spirituality (**Campbell, 1991; Sisk & Torrance, 2001; Zohar & Marshall, 2000**). Other psychological theories relevant to spiritual intelligence include **Dabrowski's (1967)** theory of positive disintegration which describes the individual's ability to abandon habitual ways of thinking and behaving in favor of compassion, integrity and altruism. **Maslow's (1968)** theory of self-actualization emphasized on values such as justice, beauty, truth, wholeness and uniqueness. **Rogers's (1980)** humanist psychology that emphasized the centrality of the individual's innate drive to become a better person through values such as openness, caring for others, and desire for wholeness of life, body, mind and spirit. Whereas, **Csikszentmihalyi's (1996)** theory of flow states that a person's entire being is stretched in the full functioning of body and mind, whatever one does becomes worth doing for its own sake. (**Csikszentmihalyi, 1996**).

Zohar and Marshall (2000) mentioned that Spiritual Intelligence becomes the fundamental basis of effective usage of EQ and IQ as being argued by people. It is also been denoted by people as the intelligence of the soul. One's IQ comes from the reasonable and logical thinking while emotional quotient or EQ derives from the associated habit-bound and pattern awareness emotional thinking. SQ permits an individual to include a greater, profound and more affluent context to the present just like the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts. There is no such essential connection with organized religion as to the term "spiritual" relative to intelligence. A person may not have religious faith or belief of any kind even he has a high sense of SQ. In the same way, person with low in SQ could be very religious.

Spiritual Intelligence and Psychological Health

Spiritual intelligence can generally be associated with psychological health, although some forms of spirituality may be dysfunctional or pathogenic (**Deikman, 1990**). When spiritual beliefs foster denial and projection and contribute to fear and conflict they can be destructive and seriously problematic. For example, when a cult leader exerts control over people through manipulation of fear and guilt, the community may exhibit the characteristics of a dysfunctional family. It can sometimes take person years to recover from having made a spiritual commitment without discernment.

Conventional religion often provides a person with a sense of security and belonging, serving as a social support to its members. Among those who have been disillusioned by conventional religion, spirituality is more likely to be inner directed. A person may still belong to a group but with the development of spiritual intelligence the circle of empathic identification expands to all people and takes the well-being of the whole into account. When we recognize our interconnectedness and interdependence, it becomes possible to view the world from multiple perspectives. Developing spiritual intelligence includes and transcends personal growth, extending to the farther reaches of healthy psychological development. It begins with cultivating authenticity and self-awareness and develops with practice to a concern for all beings.

Some personal characteristics that could be associated with spiritual intelligence are the traditional virtues of veracity, humility and charity which could also be described as authenticity, respect for differences and the willingness to engage in service to others. Well-developed spiritual intelligence could also be associated with the absence of defensiveness and hostility as well as an inclination to kindness and generosity. *“These traits can also be found in psychologically healthy people who do not consider themselves particularly spiritual. In other words, they can be considered necessary but insufficient conditions for spiritual intelligence”* **Vaughan (2002)**. After having gone through the concept and historical background of spiritual intelligence, it becomes essential to cast a glance on the factors which affect spiritual intelligence among adolescents.

Factors Affecting Spiritual Intelligence Among Adolescence

“May all beings be happy, May all beings live in peace.”

————— **Anonymous**

Having gone through the exhaustive literature in terms of spiritual intelligence following factors have been emerged which mentioned as:

Personality

Personality is the most importance factor contributing to the development of spiritual intelligence. In words of **Emmons (2000)** *“there also appears to be a relationship between spiritual intelligence and personality processes”*. It is hence possible that characteristics of the personality are associated with personal differences in organizing and expressing spiritual intelligence **Emmons (2000) and Wolman (2001)**. Holding a different view **MacHovec (2002)**, suggested that *“spiritual intelligence may be regarded as a personality attribute that differs in strength and the nature of expressing which among individuals, much like any other personality characteristic. Its uniqueness is stated to be characterized by its*

distinct subjective experience and a broad transcending quality that is revealed in a cognitive and effective manner and that is contributory to creation and self-expansion” .

Self-Awareness

An individual may take spiritual intelligence to produce extra depth and passion in the daily actions. This, however, may be achieved through employing spiritual intelligence in directing and controlling the individual's own behavior and interplay in order for the subjective conception of incidents and experiences to be reinterpreted and for personal, meaningful targets to be reconsidered. Similar potentialities and capabilities forming the spiritual intelligence of the individual may additionally be used for practical solving of barriers and problems with which a person is faced in daily life. Hence, it can be concluded that spiritual intelligence is quite of use past certain existential or even spiritual settings (**Vaughan 2002**). Anyway, care ought to be practiced to make sure that the spiritual skills or resources will not be replaced or misapplied for extra context-specific intelligence or for problem-oriented strategic plans once they are required.

Empathy

Empathy is often regarded as having an emotional aspect to it, though when based on cerebral notions such as fairness, justice and interdependence, it may be considered rational. Empathy commonly gives rise to an active desire to alleviate another's suffering. It is one of the most important characteristic of spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence calls for multiple ways of knowing and for the integration of the inner life of mind and spirit with the outer life of work in the world. It can be cultivated through questing, inquiry, and practice. Spiritual experiences may also contribute to its development, depending on the context and means of integration. Spiritual maturity is expressed through wisdom and compassionate action in the world. Spiritual intelligence is necessary for discernment in making spiritual choices that contribute to psychological well-being and overall healthy human development.

IQ and EQ Levels

Spiritual intelligence is often interrelated with other forms of intelligence. In views of **Zohar & Marshall (2000)**, differences between individuals in the EQ and IQ levels affect enacting and utilizing the spiritual intelligence. Many intelligence facets expressed by measurements of the IQ are necessary to comprehend events in the individual's environment to identify dilemma on which spiritual resources and capacities may be practiced (**Sternberg, 1997**). In the sense of EQ, the extent of

emotional competence and control of an individual in assessing emotion of others potentially influence his or her revealing of feelings of association with others, self-awareness, and the capability to show righteous behaviors like compassion, humility, forgiveness, and gratitude (**Emmons, 2000; Sinetar, 2000**).

Social Skills

Social skills ideally linked with emotional intelligence are appropriate for employment by the spiritual one as well. These skills, however, are reflexed by Rogers's therapeutic notion of unconditioned positive consideration of the others (**MacHovec, 2002**). Spiritual intelligence provides general basis for individuals to be able to consider their quest for goals and meaning in their lives, and to move toward the goals which are personally meaningful. It aids individuals to direct their attentions to the 'bigger picture' and to focus, consciously, their activities within a broader context. Although spiritual intelligence does not necessarily have to include belief of the individual in a higher power, it surely directs people to the superior scope of the experience they develop and to the spiritual dimension of each one's self.

Steps to Enhance Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual Intelligence refers to various skills and abilities that empower you to live in harmony with your highest values. Spiritual intelligence involves moving unswervingly towards the life goals with a heart that is open and flexible, with Enthusiasm, with Awareness of one's present experience and of the presence of the divine, with Respect for and service to others and the world, and guided by the Traditions of your highest values and ethics. Some of the essential steps to enhance spiritual intelligence are mentioned below:

1. By Developing Different Ways of Knowing

The first step towards developing spiritual intelligence begins with the development of different ways of knowing, by opening the horizons of our knowing. The contemplative practices, such as meditation, seem particularly relevant for refining spiritual intelligence because it depends on familiarity with at least three distinct ways of knowing: sensory, rational, and contemplative. These ways of knowing appear to be an integral part of the spiritual intelligence that some people demonstrate. The Dalai Lama, for instance, is evidently very familiar with different ways of knowing and seems to be continuously aware of multiple levels of consciousness. I have heard him give extraordinarily complex and sophisticated lectures on the nature of consciousness, and I have seen him respond to hostile questions with grace and dignity. His demeanor of friendliness and compassion never wavers. He seems to

practice what he preaches when he says, *“I consider human affection, or compassion, to be the universal religion. Whether a believer or a nonbeliever, everyone needs human affection and compassion, because compassion gives us inner strength, hope and mental peace. Thus, it is indispensable for everyone”* (as cited in Grey, 1998, p. 177).

Descriptions of various levels of consciousness provide useful maps for differentiating spiritual intelligence. *Wilber (1999) pointed out that “although many of us have had peak experiences that access expanded states of transpersonal consciousness, we can, with practice, evolve into having constant access to the witness or pure awareness that is aware of all levels. This awareness can be maintained through waking, dreaming, and sleeping states because it is always already present in all three states.”*

By Developing Inspiration and Practice

Second step starts by developing inspiration and practice within the individual. Spiritual experience, like inspiration (**Hart, 1998**), is commonly associated with feelings of clarity, connection, opening, and energy. In art or other creative work, seeking inspiration can be a spiritual endeavor. To be inspired is to be in the spirit; to be dispirited is to feel separated and discouraged. When one is inspired by a work of art, a spiritual teacher, or a new insight, one feels refreshed, revitalized, and renewed. Spiritual growth often begins with inspiration. In Sufi teachings, for example, it is the inspired self that first tastes the joys of spiritual experience and begins to take genuine pleasure in prayer, meditation, and other spiritual activities (**Fadiman & Frager, 1997**).

A taste of creative inspiration can often encourage spiritual practice. Practice then becomes more attractive and compelling than worldly distractions. By enhancing awareness and cultivating sensitivity to inner realms of experience, practices such as yoga, meditation, psychotherapy, vision quests, journaling, music, and movement contribute to the development of spiritual intelligence. Some practices focus on the exploration of subtle realms of consciousness, as in the Christian “discernment of spirits.” Others aim for clarity that transcends form, whereas others reach for transcendence of form and formlessness in a non-dual perception of reality as a whole.

3. By Developing Personal Meaning Production

Further, by developing personal meaning one is able to purpose in life from all physical and mental experiences. Every person has a meaning in life the need is to identify it. This identification of meaning in life comes from self -acceptance. The

easier one accepts all the positives and negatives of life the faster he is able to drive meaning in his life.

4. By Developing the Spiritual Path

Next step involves sincere efforts for developing the spiritual path for a person. The spiritual path is a metaphor for the development of spiritual qualities, including spiritual intelligence. Followed with commitment and integrity, a path can lead from the bondage of unconsciousness to spiritual freedom, from fear and defensiveness to love and compassion, and from ignorance and confusion to wisdom and understanding (Vaughan, 1995). The goal of the path may be described by terms such as enlightenment, awakening, inner peace, or self-realization. Whatever the goal, the process involves a transformation of consciousness. A spiritual path may emphasize ascent to higher states of consciousness and self-transcendence or descent into communion with nature and body awareness (Wilber, 1995). The integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo (1976), the 20th-century Indian sage, regarded the attainment of transcendental freedom as a necessary but insufficient goal of practice.

His philosophy holds that ascent to the divine is only the first step. A further goal is descent of the new consciousness for world transformation. The wisdom traditions all offer stories and metaphors of transformation that depict stages on the path, such as the soul's journey in Christianity, stages of the self in Sufism. The first stage of the path is usually self-centered. One may seek solace for pain and suffering or pray for help in times of terror or despair. At conventional levels, spiritual life is usually associated with a group. Attendance at church or synagogue and observance of religious holidays and rituals such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals are a major focus of religious life. At this stage, concern is extended to the wellbeing of the group, whether it be the immediate family, the community, or religious identification. At post-conventional levels of development, beyond the conventional observance of social customs, the unfolding of the spiritual path requires self-awareness and familiarity with different ways of perceiving reality.

Although the basic intuition of spirit can be discerned at any stage, this awareness is more easily integrated with rationality as a person grows into spiritual maturity (Wilber, 1997). Further stages of development depend on the capacity to coordinate different perspectives and to extend compassionate concern to all beings. As the relationship between subjective, objective, and inter-subjective modes of consciousness comes into focus, insightful interpretations of experience can contribute to deepening practice.

By Developing Spiritual Maturity

Last step towards spiritual intelligence is the development of spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity, as an expression of spiritual intelligence, subsumes a degree of emotional and moral maturity as well as ethical behavior. Spiritual maturity implies exercising wisdom and compassion in relationship to other people, regardless of gender, creed, age, or ethnic origin, as well as reverence and respect for all forms of life. Spiritual maturity also suggests a subjective sense of insight and understanding based on the willingness to recognize illusions, to love in the face of impermanence, and to come to terms with existential freedom and mortality. It implies a depth and breadth of vision that encompasses a whole spectrum of perspectives and multiple modes of knowing. Furthermore, spiritual maturity implies connecting the inner life of mind and spirit with the outer life of action and service in the world. Self-awareness is essential for developing spiritual maturity. When attention is directed inward, a person may begin by trying to attend to subjective sensations, feelings, and thoughts. At first, one is likely to be completely preoccupied with personal issues, unable to quiet the mind even for a minute. The mind seems to have a mind of its own and may be continuously engaged in reviewing the past or fantasizing plans for the future, despite the best intentions to stay in the moment and witness subjective processes.

Summary and Conclusion

Adolescence is an important period for the development of spiritual intelligence. Thus need of the hour is to provide proper intervention strategies to adolescence, their family members, teachers and society at large. However, apart from the above mentioned techniques spiritual intelligence among adolescence can be enhanced by including a curriculum which may offer a variety of educational services including classes and individual and group instruction via live meetings, teleconference and other electronic formats. It may include publication and distribution of course materials, articles, print and electronic books about spiritual intelligence and its application to various problems in human growth and development. Further a range of practices may be used that promote the human potential including mindfulness, spiritual meditation, study of spiritual texts and spiritual guidance.

These intervention strategies should be focused to channelize the energy and intelligence of adolescence. Further it helps in making the societies more sensitive towards adolescence needs and aims in life. The goal should be to make a proper balance between adolescence and society's expectations from them, doing this would in turn facilitate growth and make them empowered and responsible citizen in future.

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