

The Happiest Toolkit, Vol. 3

The Two Wings of a Bird:

Finding
Happiness in
Balancing the
Spiritual with
the Material

by Amelie Yan-Gouffes

"Spirituality and materialism are like the two wings of a bird. You need both to fly."

—Choa Kok Sui

The quote above states that spirituality and materialism are two separate yet connected entities which only function in tandem, much like the wings of a bird. In this edition of the Happiness Toolkit, we will use Choa Kok Sui's piece of wisdom to discuss how we can (and why we should) strike a balance in our pursuit of both spiritual and material fulfillment.

Let's expand on Choa Kok Sui's metaphor by first thinking about spirituality and materialism as two separate animals. For the purposes of illustration, a free and peaceful butterfly can symbolize spirituality and a determined bull might reflect the drive required to attain material wealth. Which of the two animals are you?

Are you like the butterfly, with your head sometimes in the clouds, forever connected fully with nature and the universe? Do you have an immense ability to love and to be compassionate? Are you always caring for others and dedicated to your family? If these things sound familiar, then we can say your spiritual side is dominant.

But perhaps you're a grounded and action-oriented individual, not so much like the butterfly. Are you known for your skill at getting things planned and done? Then you're more like a bull—the one who is leading and pulling everyone and everything forward. You probably have clear goals and a defined budget in mind at all times. If these traits ring a bell, it's safe to assume your career and objectives towards material wealth and practical matters take precedence in your life.

Don't be mistaken, though. We all have both parts in us. The trouble is, when one side predominates—either the butterfly or the bull—we feel unbalanced, irritated or lost due to silencing the other part. Going back to Choa Kok Sui's quote, imagine a bird with one wing shorter than the other. The bird would not be able to fly straightly or easily. Compare this to how we humans feel when one aspect of our lives outweighs the others too heavily. Doesn't it feel a little like we are limping during these times of imbalance?

This is how I feel when the bull takes over the butterfly. When I rush to work early, I neglect my meditation practice.

Then I might finish late and not allow space for connection with myself, my family, or with the love part of my life. After a few days of this, I am excited and happy to have achieved so much workwise; but, at the same time, my heart tends to feel like it has been in a pressure cooker. It shouts to me for nurturing, expression, and stillness. And then I fall desperately into the arms of a meditation that heals my heart, my body, and my soul. One of my favorite things to do is to visit my favorite onsen (Japanese hot baths) for relaxation, and I program a weekend or a full-day activity with my boys and my man.

Some readers may be surprised that I include family in my spiritual practice. In fact, I find that my family provides me with the best incentive to work on myself. I am driven to inspire my children with what I would like to see more of in the world—patience, love, and giving. This journey of self-development is not always easy, but that's the way to give and get happiness.

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

I searched online for the definition of "spirituality," and what I read on the Google's first page is that spirituality means something different to everyone. My personal definition of spirituality is the connection of the self and others, both in deeper layers and beyond the physical. I refer to it as God or the universe, others call it Mother Nature or the cosmos, and some feel that spirituality lies in something "above" that is omnipresent but that no word can describe. For me, this includes a part of myself that is not my body, my mind, my thoughts, nor my emotions. It is my true self, my soul—that which commands the previously mentioned elements: body, mind, thoughts, and emotions. We tend to forget we are the bosses of all these entities! We should never lose sight of this great power that we have.

YOUR SPIRITUAL WING

Choose your best time for your connecting moment—in the morning or

evening—and start with 5 minutes every day no matter what, bringing it up to 10 when it feels right, gradually increasing until you have at least 30 minutes per day.

Meditate. Enjoy the flavor of your tea in silence. Focus on the sensations. Sit in silence on your balcony. Listen to the chirping of the birds. Pray. Sing your favorite song. Dance wildly, or go and run, or practice your favorite sport on your own. Take a mirror and look at yourself with love and celebrate this gift of a body that enables you to have the life you have. You will then consciously connect with a higher "You." Remember to schedule your connecting practice.

It should be at a fixed time for a fixed duration. Why? Because when we do not schedule it, what happens? We don't get around to doing it.

WHAT IS MATERIALISM?

In contrast to the definition of spirituality, the definition of materialism is consensual. Materialism relates to comfort, money, and possession. We need these things! We are not all yogis, nuns, and hermits. We have our lives to nurture. We want to progress and make our days interesting and exciting. We need shelter, food, and water.

YOUR MATERIAL WING

This might sound counterintuitive, but for material success, start with soul pampering. Clarity and calmness of mind will bring you the necessary intelligence and vision for your work or the decision you need to make. Connection with yourself and with the universe will enable you to grow materially. When you are connected to your life project, your activities, and are invested in your business with your life purpose (what is meaningful to you), you really materialize what you crave for at the practical level.

That sounds amazing, right? For materialism, we start first with spirituality. For more efficiency, for making sharper decisions, and for earning more money, we begin with the connecting practice. This important



Relationships



lesson was taught at Choa Kok Sui's school, and it has been transformative, almost revolutionary!

When I allow this part of me to thrive—the one I would call the spiritual—when I give time to my physical care and my rest, when I enjoy the connection with myself and with my loved ones, I progress much faster at work. I create more financial and business opportunities, I enjoy my professional activity more, because I am synchronized with my true beliefs and values.

Here is a bizarre truth: I get more clients,

partnerships, and interest in my work when I come back from a meditation retreat. (And I would not believe that until I had to observe it with my blue eyes!) When I go and meditate, I nourish my soul. I give a good cleansing to my behavior, a great detox to my emotions and thoughts, and when I am back to material life, I know where to go and how to get there. I am able to envision, develop, and achieve with increased ease and power.

Let me start the second tip for our material wings with a question: How much do you spend per month?

I am not a clairvoyant, but I can predict the response for many of you as being a long hesitation with rolling eyes! Grab a piece of paper and write down all your expenses and add them up with honesty, no cheating.

Next, clarify your average income per month and how much you save per month. We tend to think we need to earn a lot to save, but this is not true. If you want to be materially more comfortable one day, it starts by saving now, and it can be as little as 100 THB daily. Now you have totals for expenses, income, and savings;

in other words, you have created a budget! This is an important step because we cannot improve our wealth without clarifying where we are now.

It's common to hear people say, "I wish I had more money." I like asking people, "How much would that be?" and their answers are usually "I don't know." How do you want to get somewhere, if you don't know where your goal is? You cannot become richer if you do not define first how rich you want to become. You cannot get the physical abundance you'd like to have if you don't have a clear picture in your head. So, where do you want to go? You must fix a financial objective.

And here is the connecting point for both sides of the wings, where the butterfly and the bull overlap. For both your spirituality and your material goals be sure to set objectives. We will only strike balance and find success and fulfillment by tending equally to each wing and by deciding for ourselves what our goals are, and then focusing on taking each step on the ladder of success and happiness.

DISCOVER and UNLEASH the Butterfly and the Bull in You! Do not hesitate to write to us at happiness@wanderlustmag.com, if you want to share your experience or ask further questions.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

"Be The Greatest You" is Amelie's motto and commitment to support people and corporations in unleashing their inner diamonds to unlock their full potential. Amelie provides coaching, training and public speaking.

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