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## Spirit Smarts

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## Spirit Smarts

“Street smarts” describes a quality of those who have learned from practical experiences, and so are better able to negotiate the realities of local interactions in the neighborhood, at school, or at work than those who have had perhaps more formal education but no direct experience. Also, those who consciously reflect on their experiences of the spirit, who thereby develop “spirit smarts,” tend to relate more readily with the lived realities of spirituality than those who have only learned about matters of spirit from reading and studying.

The kind of learning that leads to the acquisition of “street smarts” might involve some unpleasant experiences of conflict and rather forceful incidents of behavior-modification at the hands of those living or working in the area – which is why some people avoid getting involved locally, and make their judgments and decisions based on what they can learn from the experiences of others. Those who learn about their interior lives by attending consciously and reflectively to their own spiritual experiences might encounter some conflicting thoughts and feelings, but there is only one “street” inside us, and no unruly neighbors who could threaten us. Fear about acknowledging one’s own religious experiences cannot be reasonably connected to what others might think or do, because they cannot know unless or until we tell them.

“Spirit smarts” is wholly advantageous for those who either find themselves pondering one or other personal interior event, or who decide that they want to integrate their interior experiences with all else that has been, and continues to be, part of their busy, active lives. I can recall being puzzled as to how to understand an unmistakable deep sense of peace and contentment with myself and everyone around me that occurred after making a significant decision. Not until after I spoke with someone I trusted was I able to acknowledge that there was a direct and positive connection between the firm decision I had made in the practical order and the felt movements within my spirit. From that time on, it has seemed to me well worth the small effort of reflecting on day-to-day experiences to recognize where my decisions are affirmed and confirmed with peace (or a variation thereof) or else called into question by the opposite (disturbance, dissatisfaction, or confusion.)

Most of us have some “spirit smarts,” but some of us have so far only noticed a few, though significant, interior events that abide within us as secure pointers when we are trying to decide which is the better of the options we are considering. Any of us, if we wish, can decide to look within ourselves a bit more carefully to observe some of the supportive,

encouraging, and enlightening thoughts that have occurred in the past day, as well as the negative and opposite kinds of thoughts. We can ask ourselves which of our thoughts seemed connected with the direction and focus of our lives, such as being be more loving or honest with ourselves and others, as well as responsive to God. We are indeed "smart" to acknowledge such information; how wise, too, if we observe carefully the thoughts that disturb us, even if they appear to be reasonable at one level, but diverge from the heartfelt focal point of our lives.

We do not have to go out of the house, but rather, into our minds and hearts, to gain "street smarts."