

CLEAN CATBOX, CARRY GROCERIES

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How much time do you set aside daily for your spiritual practices? Can't do it daily? How about the weekend? Can you meditate before you mow the lawn? Or what about your plans to do a Shamanic Journey but then the phone rings? Do you get frustrated with all the things that seem to intrude upon your well-made spiritual plans?

Recently, I decided to create a daily, weekly, and monthly agenda to help myself be better organized and thereby accomplish more of the tasks I need to do, thereby freeing to to meditate, read and contemplate. I felt pleased when I completed the first week's worth of planning and was about to begin that day's work when the phone rang and I was offered an opportunity to write an editorial for a local newspaper. There was not a moment of hesitation on my part - I truly wanted to write it - BUT how was I going to write the piece, whose deadline was the next day, as well as completing work on EarthSpirit Center's latest Schedule of Events, writing ad copy for several magazines, and doing my counseling work. THEN I realized I hadn't even cleaned the catbox, nor did I see my way clear to running down to the local Trader Joe's to restock my dwindling food supplies. I began to feel totally overwhelmed, fuming that I don't have a secretary or office manager, that my personal errands will never get done, etc. I began pouting that my "spiritual" work would have to be put on the back burner while I dealt with these annoying little duties.

Then I stopped, looked at what I was doing, and began to chuckle. My higher self was reminding me that *nothing I do could be considered not spiritual*. I remembered that it is only my sluggish self that chooses to believe that certain things aren't worthwhile, that only those things bright with light and heavenly voices are valuable to my growth. I laughed because I know from much experience that I wouldn't grow at all if I waited for those kinds of experiences to the exclusion of the ones that are true grist for our sacred mills.

As I calmed myself, took a break for a cup of tea, then set about my tasks once more with a different attitude. I gave thanks for the so-called "unimportant" things - like cleaning the catbox or changing bedsheets. They serve the same purpose as a walking meditation in that they help me to regain my focus. When my work is interrupted by a call from one of my daughters asking for my advice, I can choose to be annoyed or I can remind myself that *that's exactly what I'm here for!* The daily chores or intrusions

offer me a grand opportunity to make changes in my attitude or actions. This contributes strongly to my overall growth and awareness, as well as to my capacity for understanding, compassion, and service to others.

The most humbling, and thereby effective, part of all of this is that it gives me a clear look at the ego's expectations of spiritual experience - cleaning the catbox needn't be accompanied by a snarling expletive unless my ego believes I shouldn't have to do such a demeaning task. If I can view it as a sacred act, I increase my willingness to deal with all aspects of life, and therefore experience more joy, understanding, and most importantly, the cosmic joke on me! Thich Nhat Hanh teaches that in order for a rose to become its beautiful self, it needs fertilizer! Enough said - the catbox is calling!