

Spiritual Lifeline: An integrative exercise
By Judi Neal

This exercise allows you to reflect on significant events in your spiritual life and in your career life. Often we keep these two parts of our lives separate. By creating lifelines for our spiritual paths and for our career paths, we can begin to examine how these parts of our life may actually overlap.

Materials Required:

One large sheet of flip chart paper per person.
At least 5-6 different colored magic markers or crayons for each person.

Time Required:

1-2 hours, depending on the size of the group and the amount of time allowed for processing.

The Process:

1. 10 mins - Brief lecturette on the stages of the spiritual journey at work:
2. 25 mins. - Each person symbolically portray on a lifeline the critical spiritual events and the critical work events in their lives. Do not use words, only symbols. Artistic ability is actually a hindrance in this exercise, because artists spend too much time on the aesthetics instead of their own unfolding life story. Keep the symbols simple, but make them identifiable enough so that you know what significant event they stand for. If there is time, you may want to also portray where you think your spiritual path and your career path may be going in the future. (Note: this part of the exercise works best when people can go to someplace where they can be quietly reflective and alone, ideally in or near nature.)
3. 25 mins - 1 hour, 25 minutes - Group sharing.
If the group is small, have everyone share their drawings with the entire group. Create an environment of deeply respectful listening, for this is sacred work. If the group is large, ask people to form groups of 2 - 3 people and allow them at least 20-25 minutes to share their drawings. At the end of this time, ask for 2 or 3 volunteers to share their drawings with the whole group.

I have used this exercise in undergraduate and graduate business classes, in church groups, at business conferences, and with executive groups at strategic planning retreats. It seems to work well with any group, although it is a little more difficult with those who have not had much life or work experience.