

Spiritually developed -- but not necessarily mature

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A person can reach a high level of spiritual development without being emotionally and psychologically mature. This has been shown in a new study presented by Prof. Ofra Mayseless at the 2nd Conference on the Study of Contemporary Spirituality that was held at the University of Haifa.

According to Prof. Mayseless, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Haifa and conference co-organizer, psychological maturity is defined as the capacity to control impulses and acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of one's action. This study, a first in its field, examined the interplay between the two developmental domains. It addressed a central conceptual question: If these developmental domains are related, how do they converge and mutually interact? For example, is a certain level of emotional maturity required before an individual develops to be highly spiritual? What might be the ramifications of having transcendental experiences when an individual is not emotionally mature?

A sample group of 215 college students aged 19-30 revealed that the two developmental domains (psychological maturity and spiritual development) were moderately correlated, yet that each seemed to have different antecedents (e.g., social support and having firm ethnic identity was especially significant for achieving spiritual development).

Prof. Mayseless added that the findings also confirmed a link between psychological and spiritual maturity and an individual's set of values.

This raised the question of whether both developmental domains contribute to the development of a particular attribute or whether only one domain alone contributes to that attribute. "For example," Prof. Mayseless explained, "psychological maturity can contribute to a person's level of generosity, while spiritual development may not add unique contribution after taking into account the person's psychological maturity. However, this was not the case. This study has shown that both psychological maturity and being spiritually developed each contributes to an individual's generosity and pro-social actions, independently. "

"The truth is, that I wanted to find that an individual reaching both types of maturity has an added value; that someone who is both psychologically and spiritually developed would demonstrate a higher set of values, such as [generosity](#), endurance, pluralism. But this was not what we found," Prof. Mayseless said.

While this study has shown that each developmental domain contributes independently of the other, the contribution that each makes to a particular attribute are similar. There is probably some connection between them, but this might only be identified by a longitudinal study where we would follow individuals for some time to learn about changes in each domain," concluded Prof. Mayseless.

Provided by University of Haifa

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