

## Your Spiritual Toolbox

A riddle: Everyone has one. It has taken your entire life to create. Yet you don't always use it when you most need it. What is it? Your spiritual toolbox.

What is a spiritual toolbox? It is a set of activities that you use to bring comfort and motivation. For some people, reading a spiritual book or exercising always lifts their spirits. For others going shopping or chopping wood is all that's needed to take them from their doldrums. Creating your own personal list of ways to feel better is a great method to start feeling better now. Notice it is not about doing something *once* you feel better but doing something *in order* to feel better. Grief can paralyze you and create such inertia that taking even small steps can take a big effort. However, when the action required is something that you already enjoy, then it becomes easier to begin.

In my programs we brainstorm lists of activities that people want to put in their spiritual toolbox. Here is a list of the ten most popular steps (not in any particular order):

- Exercise
- Reading uplifting books, including the Bible
- Listening to music
- Prayer
- Going out with friends and being with family
- Journaling
- Shopping
- Watching a funny movie or television show
- Knitting or other crafts
- Playing with their dog or cat

Each of these activities helps to take you from the pain of grief and redirects your energy. It brings comfort and sometimes even fun again into your day. You may find that some of these ideas appeal to you or you may be thinking of other things that you want to add to your toolbox. Take a moment and write down your personal list.

Once your list is completed, there is a step to take that helps to set it in your mind. Close your eyes and take three deep breaths. Begin to visualize what your toolbox looks like. Do not put limits on it or think it "should" look a certain way. I have had people tell me that they have seen Craftsman toolboxes, wicker baskets, shopping bags, even an upside down hat! Let your toolbox come to you without judgment. Once you see your toolbox, begin to mentally visualize placing each of the items on your list into it. You may need to have someone read to you the list or you can put it on a tape recorder and play it at this point or even peek at your list, close your eyes again and continue with the process. Once everything is in the toolbox, impress upon your heart that these things are there for you whenever you need them.

The final step is one of preparation and action. Download or purchase your favorite music so it is available when you need it. Go to the library or bookstore and have books and movies at the ready. Make plans to go out with your friends. Record



your favorite funny television shows so that you can always play them when you need a good laugh.

Every day choose something on your list and find the time to do it. There may be times when tears begin to flow as you read a favorite passage or watch a movie that you enjoyed seeing with your loved one. Honor these tears as they allow you to remember the good times. Your spiritual toolbox is a tool for healing, not forgetting. It allows you to connect with your loved one, your Higher Power and, most important of all, with yourself.

*This article is offered as part of our funeral home's grief support program. The author, Nancy Weil, serves on the staff at the International Order of the Golden Rule (OGR) of which our funeral home is a proud member. She is a Certified Grief Management Specialist who has run grief support programs for over 13 years. You are invited to join our monthly telephone grief support group that Nancy facilitates. Please call our funeral home for more information.*