



Portrait of a Spiritual Director

Spiritual directors or companions support the unique spiritual journey of every individual. They are welcoming and present with those they companion, listening and responding without being judgmental. They are contemplative and honor silence as a spiritual practice. They are intuitive spiritual friends—accountable and compassionate, hospitable and open, loving yet independent.

Spiritual direction or companionship inspires people to experience authenticity in their lives as they connect with and explore the ground of all being, that deepest of truths which is beyond life and death and goes by many names, including God, and no name at all.

*Inclusive - Genuine - Listening -
Accepting - Contemplative - Wise*

Abilities and Gifts

A spiritual director is called

- ❖ *The natural gifts of a spiritual director* may include discernment; guiding others in prayer and silence; ability to note and draw attention to the significant insights and sensed movements arising in the directee; capacity for depth and breadth; acknowledgement of spiritual freedom; grounding in stability; interpersonal rapport; the ability to meet a directee where they are and hold a safe space for them and their spiritual exploration.
- ❖ *Others recognize the director's inherent qualities*, such as accountability; wisdom; gentleness; compassion; maturity; caring; prayerfulness; traveling a recognizable spiritual journey; personal integration; openness to self, others, and the transcendent. A spiritual director is sought out and confirmed by others.
- ❖ *Honors contemplative connection*: Directors seek to connect others with the deepest of truths; to support the spiritual transformation of self, others and the world; to embrace holism by integrating mind, body, will, and spirit.

Skills and Knowledge

A spiritual director has training or experience

- ❖ *Listens deeply*: noticing, tracking, distinguishing, prioritizing, paraphrasing, waiting, probing, challenging, and disclosing—always to serve the directee and the spiritual direction relationship.
- ❖ *Maintains an inner life practice*: including prayer or other contemplative practice, reflection, deepening self-awareness, and familiarity with personal gifts, limitations, and wounds, recognizing that all these affect the spiritual direction relationship.
- ❖ *Honors healthy interpersonal boundaries*: understanding when and how to make appropriate referrals; acknowledging assumptions and personal biases, and recognizing when those get in the way of the spiritual direction; recognizes and avoids dual relationships.
- ❖ *Exhibits habits of self-care and care for others*, including careful attention to SDI's *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct*.

Terms of Reverence

Spiritual directors may name the deepest of truths in diverse ways. They also honor the names that others revere. Here are some of those terms of reverence:

Universe, God, Lord, Allah, YHWH, Great Spirit, Higher Power, Mystery, Sunyata, Brahman, Tao, Divine, Sacred, Holy, Almighty, Ultimate, the Beyond, Intimate, Abba, Nirvana, Wisdom, Source, Vishnu, Creator, Enlightenment, Interconnection, Holy One, All

A spiritual director may identify by many different names:

Director, Companion, Elder, Guide, Teacher, Master, Friend, Anam Cara, Guru, Hashpa'ah, Mashpia, Murshid



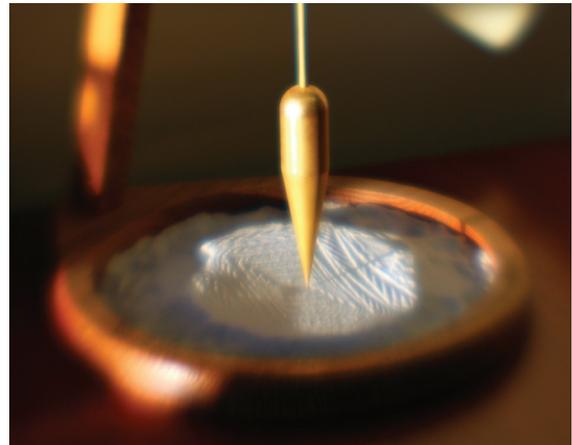
A spiritual director is competent

- ❖ *Honors confidentiality* of directees in accordance with the *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct*.
- ❖ *Distinguishes between psychology and spirituality* and recognizes the limits of personal knowledge and experience which might indicate the need to refer to another professional.
- ❖ *Recognizes varied states in directees*, including mental, emotional, physical, spiritual states; noticing shifts in spiritual movements, affective moods, cognitive states; naming personal triggers, hooks, wounds.
- ❖ *Considers ongoing learning part of the calling*, including study of various faith or wisdom traditions and orientations, sacred texts, and exemplars of faith; a spiritual director is open to insights from other professional disciplines, and to the dynamics in psycho-socio-cultural integration.

Accountability and Integrity

A spiritual director is authentic

- ❖ Attends regular spiritual direction for self
- ❖ Receives supervision by peers and teachers—and is responsible for her or his work through that direct supervision
- ❖ Shows respect for the agency of directees—that is, the capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own free choices
- ❖ Follows universal ethical guidelines, summarized as “Do no harm”
- ❖ Finds support and is accountable in a community setting.
- ❖ Inspires others to explore and embrace: trustworthiness; vulnerability; openness; courage; faith; integrity; transformation
- ❖ Integrates values into daily life, such as: nonjudgment, inclusion, contemplation, compassion, and service for the common good ■



Pendulum

A silver coin sails across
the black sky making everyone
who sees it rich.

I know too what it is to feel
my poverty when the bowl
of night rolls down over me
with its ceramic thunk.

Some days I am swollen with
possibility, a ripe plum,
fingers sticky with sweetness,
while others I am hollowed out,
a bone scraped clean,
gleaming under the
weight of midday sun.

Many evenings my dreams
extend only as far as the garden gate,
desperate to unlatch the
red and rusted hook,

while others I throw away
the compass and cast myself
into sleep's blue boat and
see where I wash ashore. ■

Christine Valters Paintner