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### Proem

We visited my sister this week, traveling between cool, sunny San Diego and very hot Indio, CA. Not the same here since my mom died in 2014. My sister, Jessica, and I reminisced. What did Ruth, my mom, believe happened after death? She thought her body died and her spirit lived. She hoped her spirit would come back in a Monarch butterfly. My mom, born Jewish, rejected organized religion after surviving the Holocaust. My other sister thinks our mom was atheist. An atheist is someone who does not believe in the existence of a god or any gods. Our parents wanted us to have a religious education and brought us up Unitarian. In later years Ruth described herself as a Jew-nitarian – a cross between Jewish and Unitarian. Growing up Unitarian, I appreciated the wonder of the different ways people feel spiritual, whether or not they recognize a God.

### Wonder and mystery 02:09

I don't believe in a personified God. She doesn't *want, prefer, or demand* anything. They are a power I can't conceive of, can't really know. I find comfort in the mystery of the unknown. I'm not religious, but I feel spiritual. If God is the name for spirit, then I believe in God. If God rules and judges us, I don't believe in God. I've never felt that I had to judge someone else's belief. My intuition finds deep suspicion of anyone or any religion that uses their religion to divide, who thinks their way is the only way and find others wrong or evil. How can they know? The wonder and the mystery of life, non-life calms me. Awe energizes me. Connection, not division, for me. I don't know if I'll come back as something when I go, but I'm sure there's more to life than cells and the physical.

### Conscious of spirit 03:25

The first time I felt spirit at eight or nine, my Opa, a survivor of the Bergen-Belson Concentration Camp, put his hands on my head in prayer during a Seder. The energy I felt through his hands awoke me and calmed me as I'd never experienced. Meeting my children for the first time, at their birth, they appeared fully formed with distinct personalities. My younger son seemed immediately an old soul. When we first started reading to him, he insisted we read back to front – Hebrew-style. Personality infused with an old spirit. Birth and death begin and end corporeal (physical) life. Perhaps spirit exists separately, differently.



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We traveled to Indio in the desert to visit my dear friend, Luc Pelletier, on this vacation. Twenty years ago Luc took me to the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Western Mass, after our son, Mike Funk died. Death, dying, and grief had drained my spiritual, emotional, and physical reserves. I felt sucked dry. The week of silent mornings, macrobiotic diet, and meditation quickly began to heal my soul, my spirit. My mental and physical health would take longer to begin healing.

Mike's incredible spiritual strength while dying showed me the power of spiritual health. As his body decayed before our eyes, his spirit grew stronger and more vibrant. As you've heard me say before, spiritual health trumps physical health any day. Mike died well.

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### My soul, the internal fire of spirit 06:30

Why bring this up and share in a podcast? I'm on vacation, it's on my mind. I'm wired to share what's on my mind. Here, on vacation, I feel acutely aware of bone tiredness, cellular fatigue, my steady state with Multiple Sclerosis. What gets me up and moving through the day? Spirit, I think. It's extra corporeal, beyond physical, a different existence. The closest I can come to a sensation of spirit is a fire, an internal fire, that warms me, provides light, and peace. I can call that fire God. Perhaps when that spirit fire resides in me I call that my soul. Yet, spirit requires care, just as cells do. Spiritual health needs nurturing, appreciating, routines, just as mental and physical health. For me, connecting with positive, warm, supporting people nurtures my spirit, as do music, art, mindfulness, and gratitude.

### Reflection 07:50

So, put all this together. I'm a spiritual, not religious person. I care for my spiritual health and feel grateful that spiritual strength allows me to often operate at peak mental and physical performance. Gratefulness strengthens my spirit. Gratefulness could be considered prayer. I sense spirit. I can receive God with meditation, intuition, and gratefulness.

Goodness, I didn't expect to deliver this rambling spacey rant. What was I thinking? Well, why not? When I pause, I can reflect, and create space for that spiritual health. Next week begins a two part series in conversation with a family, the Tomoffs, living together through 25 years of son, brother Ryan's five bouts with cancer. The whole family shows incredible spiritual strength. 'Till next week. Onward.



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