

5S and Becoming More Spiritual

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5S is a technique used to organize a space (usually work). It is most typically used in manufacturing – as it came over from Japan and was part of the JIT (just in time) philosophy as opposed to huge warehouses of inventory (\$) for just in case. Its use has expanded to offices and to healthcare to again organize the space for more efficient use of the space and to make for a more productive environment – since only what you need is in front of you and you know where it is instantaneously. It is an organized method for maintaining a neat, clean and efficient workspace. Items needed are easily found and it creates (through cleanliness) a greater pride in the workspace.

As I mentioned, it came to the US from Japan and the Japanese words for the process to create this organization all started with an ‘S’ sound so the English translations were derived to all have an ‘S’ sound as well – thus it is called 5 ‘S’ because the process has 5 steps (some companies use 6 ‘S’ because they also incorporate safety into one of the steps). The 5 Steps are:

- Seiri – Sort
- Seiton – Set in Order
- Seiso – Shine
- Seiketsu – Standardize
- Shitsuke – Sustain

If anyone has – or has seen – a garage that is really in order: Tools hung from hooks designed for that purpose with possibly cutouts of the tool underneath so that it is easy to put back = then you have seen 5S in action. If someone has a kitchen drawer with the insert for utensils – with slots for

the forks, teaspoons, tablespoons, etc – they have also seen an example of this.

The process is not complicated but it takes a dedicated effort to make the start, get to the end and then discipline to maintain it. I’ll go over the steps in a bit more detail and then we’ll move off the manufacturing platform to the life platform.

- Sort – This step is used to get everything out of the workspace that shouldn’t be there. Remove all of the clutter of unnecessary items.
- Set in Order (Straighten) – This step is used to find a home for everything that is left/belongs in the workspace. Focus on improving the flow, eliminating waste, storing items together if they are used together.
- Shine – This step is used to clean and make neat. World class standard. A sense of high quality and discipline.
- Standardize – This step is used once the workspace is working. It creates standards so that this is the way it will always be kept. It standardizes methods and many times the set-up is extended to other similar workplaces. It is also used to set up standards for how you will maintain the improved condition.
- Sustain – This step is used to keep it up. Do not let things slip back to their original condition.

Now moving on to the life platform – what does being more spiritual mean?

- An inner path enabling a person to discover the essence of their being
- Deepest values and meanings by which people live
- Perfection on one’s own being, wisdom, or communication with G-d or creation
- Find meaning, hope, comfort and inner peace in your life

How can these things happen – they can happen by thinking or meditating on all the good things in your life. What is meditation?

- In the Old Testament ‘Hagah’ means to sigh or murmur, but also to meditate. When the Hebrew bible was translated to Greek, Hagah became ‘Melete’ then the Latin bible translated it to ‘Meditatio’.
- It is the capacity for focused attention and dates back to older civilizations which used repetitive and rhythmic chants. It is also believed that this capacity for focused attention may have contributed to the final phases of human biological evolution.
- Walsh & Shapiro: Meditation refers to a family of self-regulated practices that focus on training attention and awareness in order to bring mental processes under greater voluntary control and thereby foster general mental well-being and development and/or specific capacities such as calm, clarity and concentration.
- Goleman: The need for the meditator to retrain his attention, whether through concentration or mindfulness, is the single invariant ingredient in every....meditation system.

Now back to meditating about the good things that are in your life – many people only speak or think about giving thanks at ‘Thanksgiving’. But there are good things all year long – how can we get to the point where we recognize and appreciate them all year long?

The method could be to use the 5S tools to prepare your own internal workspace. To make our inner selves more productive, we need to:

1. Sort out all of the stuff that we carry around inside of us. There are worries about things, there is anger over things, there are thoughts about our jobs, thoughts about our parents, thoughts about our siblings, thoughts about our children, and thoughts about the things we are thankful for in our lives. They are all just jumbled together and

the last one – the thankful piece is buried down there pretty deep. Everyone of these thoughts does belong in a special place but not all thrown together – all at the same time and all in the same place. If you remember Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 – ‘There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven.....’

2. Set in order – now put everything in the right spot for when and where you need it. Story of the young man I interviewed with who had a very successful career and had recently gotten married. He wondered how he could continue to be successful in his career and not have it have a negative impact on his marriage or possibly children in the future. I told him that wherever he was at – he needed to be there fully etc. etc.
3. Shine – when it is time to do your meditation, clean your mind out of all the extra stuff – it is not the time or place for it. Open your mind – apply concentration and mindfulness and let the thoughts of the things that you need to be thankful for come to the forefront. When does this meditation time take place? When you want it to. Will you do it when you are in a religious place, or will you do it when you find a moment in your day – everyday? This is the time to shine up and get to the clean mind phase
4. Set this up so that you do this on a regular basis. As mentioned above – the frequency is up to you. Long commute, before you go to bed, weekly at church, on big important holidays? Whatever works for you – but set it up as you need it to be.
5. Sustain – Keep it Up. Don’t go back to not doing it. Don’t go back to having a mixed up jumbled mind and all the guilt that goes along with it.

Use the manufacturing technique to make yourself a more spiritual person by being in the moment and not forgetting to be thankful.