



## *Connecting with Your Spirituality*

An excerpt from the book *The Necktie and the Jaguar: A Memoir to Help You Change Your Story and Find Fulfillment* by Carl Greer, PhD, PsyD

**W**hen I was not yet old enough for kindergarten, I would often leave behind my baby brother, who was still in diapers and in need of my mother's watchful eye, and wander off by myself to explore the town and countryside near my home in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania. Neither of my parents realized that my sense of adventure bordered on the foolhardy. Oblivious to the possibility of being hit by a speeding streetcar or falling onto the road below, I played on a dangerous trestle that spanned a nearby road. Confident I could navigate using only my homing sense, I didn't announce when I was going out for a walk that might take me far from our house. Since I always showed up in time for lunch or supper, my distracted mother apparently didn't worry about whether I was somewhere in the woods or upstairs in my room.

Among my discoveries was a stream that ran through a valley about a mile away. Thickets lined its banks, and I picked my way through them to stand and watch the water leaping and lifting over stones in its path. The trunks of the trees were covered in lichen that to my eyes seemed like maps from an ancient world. The buckeyes yielded a prized harvest of nuts that I would collect and carry home.

I also felt the urge to investigate the small farm that bordered the hillside at the end of our street.

One day when I was five, I stepped onto the property and suddenly, a glowing, ethereal light appeared to encircle the apple tree in front of me. Time seemed to be suspended as my mind struggled to grasp what was happening. The tree, the sky, the land, and I were one, connected by the light. Was I alive? In

a world of dreams? The light seemed to weave together everything in the field, including me, unifying all that existed. There was no separation, no aloneness. All were intermingled in a field of energy, every tree aware of its every leaf and every leaf aware of every insect, bird, and ray of sunlight. I had never felt anything like this before.

Then, just as abruptly, the light around the tree faded, and I was back in the ordinary world. Before me was just a tree like any other. The magic and sense of safety, comfort, and love had completely evaporated. Where had it gone? How could I get it to return?

I had no idea what had just happened or why, but to this day, I can recall that undeniable feeling of being interconnected with all living things. This awakening would be the first of many such experiences, whether invited or spontaneous, that would break through into my ordinary, everyday life and remind me that there is so much more to our existence than what the eye can see.

In a traditional culture, the elders might regard a child who consistently wanders alone into nature as receiving a call to the shaman's way. They might start such a child's training at an early age. But how does someone today hear a shamanic calling and respond to it if they do not live in a culture that has a tradition of shamanic training and lineages? Where can one find opportunities to learn more about the mystical? It's difficult, but not impossible, to have what you need show up for you—as my story shows. And I think it often happens more easily when we're immersed in nature. A Jungian would say that when we are ready, our unconscious will help us to see a path forward. It might be that time in nature is one way to cue our unconscious to awaken us to our interconnectedness and spiritual nature.

As you think about your own life, you might want to answer the following questions to learn more about how to get in touch with your spirituality.

*As you look back on your life, do you remember having any mystical experiences, and if so, what were they and what do you make of them?*

*Connecting with Spirit in nature is an experience many have had. Do you feel closer to Spirit when you are outdoors in a natural space, and if so, why do you think that is?*

*Many people seek out nature as a refuge and a place for restoration. Are there particular places in nature where you have felt that you are being healed simply by being in them, and if so, what are they, and why do you think they have been such healing places for you?*

*If you are not inclined to seek out nature as a refuge, how do you seek solace, and what spiritual practices help you connect with your spiritual self?*

You might want to consider spending time in nature to see how it affects your mood and sense of well-being—and later, write about your experience. Why not visit nature intending to experience an awakening to the interconnectedness of all things and see what unfolds? You might want to go there with the intention of feeling unity with all that exists and see if that affects what happens there while you are alone in the woods, by a lake, or in the desert.

Open to the possibility of an awakening.

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*To learn more about Carl Greer and his award-winning, best-selling books The Necktie and the Jaguar, Change Your Story, Change Your Life, and Change the Story of Your Health, visit [www.CarlGreer.com](http://www.CarlGreer.com).*