

# WHAT IS: SPIRITUAL BYPASSING?



Adapted from *Sacred Medicine*,  
by Lissa Rankin, MD

"In its essence, spiritual bypassing refers to any way in which we use our spirituality to bypass painful emotions, like despair, anger, disappointment, jealousy, or loneliness."

-Lissa Rankin, MD *Sacred Medicine*

## HOW DO I RECOGNIZE SPIRITUAL BYPASSING?

Avoidance of all judgement, to the point of being unable to discern abuse.

Immersing oneself in spiritual practices while ignoring social justice issues or even practicalities such as earning a living or parenting.

Tendency to lose empathy in the face of other people's legitimate distress if others are expressing emotions the spiritual bypasser has repressed.

Failure to extend compassionate care to people suffering from legitimate victimhood, bypassing with aphorisms like... "Everything happens for a reason."

Emotional numbing and repression

Prioritizing transcendence over presence and feeling normal emotions-responding to painful life experiences with aphorisms such as... "We are beyond this reality."

# COMMON SPIRITUAL BYPASSING TENDENCIES

- Aversion to any emotion not deemed "spiritual"
- Anger-phobia that resists calling for a clear and firm intolerance of hurtful behavior
- Difficulty expressing a firm, clear "no"
- Toxic positivity to the point of fakeness in situations where grief, anger, sadness, jealousy, or disappointment would be natural
- Premature forgiveness rather than expecting others to be held accountable for harmful behavior with a healthy process of making apologies, amends, or other measures to ensure that harmful behavior ceases
- Exaggerated tolerance of abusive people and behaviors
- Weak or porous boundaries
- Spiritualizing boundarylessness mistaking unhealthy fusion as a mystical experience
- Excessive niceness to the point of being unable to take a firm stand or protect oneself from abusive relationships
- Trouble staying firmly grounded in earthly reality

