

What are the Hallmarks of a Good Spiritual Teacher?

by Paul Constant

The following hallmarks of a good spiritual teacher relate to someone who is grounded in direct realization of Truth and living sanely from that newfound perspective:

- Communicating with clarity, authenticity, honesty, and a good dose of humility.
- Teaching with reluctance but recognizing that many sincere spiritual seekers have a deep longing to know Truth and need help with their search.
- Asking insightful questions to challenge the seeker's thoughts, beliefs, and convictions.
- Providing advice but allowing seekers to independently follow their own path; encouraging the testing of advice without advocating blind belief.
- Encouraging healthy skepticism about everything except the seeker's own ability to become Truth.
- Discerning when to inspire and when to skillfully irritate the seeker.
- Having intuition and wisdom about human psychology and suffering.
- Having the seeker's best interest at heart.
- Knowing when to provide encouragement and when to provide tough love.
- Teaching with a strong air of friendship and desire for rapport.
- Discouraging dependency on the teacher and encouraging friendships with others who are exploring spiritual paths.
- Listening intently to get a clearer understanding of the seeker's perspective; knowing when to talk and when to remain silent.
- Willing to work with seekers at various levels of spiritual maturity and Being.
- Being transparent about his or her own life.
- Ensuring that seekers never cede their own authority.



Warning!

Lest the teacher do more harm than good, all seekers should use sharp discernment and remain wary of the following:

- Teachers who are dogmatic, narcissistic, controlling, or self-deluded.
- Emotional and physical abusers, bullies, charlatans, moneygrubbers, ego-flatterers, and sexual exploiters.

All of these behaviors and traits serve as the basis of a cult. Self-realization should never excuse a teacher for these behaviors, regardless of the seeker's tendency to minimize their importance. Caveat emptor!