

This article appeared in the Fall issue of [Kindred Spirit](#) Magazine.

Conscious Living at the Supermarket

By Michael Alperstein

It's a hectic Monday afternoon and your Meditation-Yoga-Origami-Tai chi retreat ended yesterday and you are in line at the supermarket watching the hustle and bustle of life. As you unload your cart you notice you are starting to lose that wonderful sense of camaraderie you had over the weekend. You're in the "real world" and you wish the retreat could have lasted forever!

A flicker of loneliness calls your name, trying to take you over. Consciously you shake it off! "There is a way to be real in this world. There is a way to be me and be connected to everyone," you say to your self with an inner smile.

And there is.

Come on, let's do some exploring! How can we access the feelings of unity, community and sacredness in daily life?

Here are the ways I know:

1. We can find these feelings and qualities in ourselves. Don't look to others for what can only reside in your self. This requires deep self-honesty and self-acceptance. Connect to your self first, and then see if you still feel distant from others. Treat all of Life as the "workshop."

2. We can put ourselves, our true selves, out there. Strike up a conversation with the person behind you, smile at a child, make eye-contact with the clerk. Give of your self and you will feel more connected.

3. We can enjoy the façade, and endeavor to see beyond it. From one perspective, if you look about, you see a flurry of humans running around, making transactions and taking care of business. But always remember to look for what is underneath the facade. Look with soft and conscious eyes. See the pain. See the joy. See the common denominators that unite all of us and you will feel the unity again.

4. You can give something away. Not in a rush? Let someone go ahead of you! Feeling generous? Donate 5 cents to a good cause by bringing your own bag! And I am sure you always remember to place the divider on the conveyor belt for the person behind you. Right? And do you place it with as much presence and awareness as you felt during the retreat?

5. Treat everything you read or hear as a spiritual reminder. Suppose you glance over at a magazine cover and it has written on it: “Find Balance and Creativity.” Instead of thinking that those are qualities to be sought after within the magazine, intend to embody them now. Be balance and creativity, rather than being someone who is looking for them.

Every moment is an opportunity for conscious living, especially at the super market! What can you add to my list? Is there really a dividing line between the “retreat setting” and the hustle of “daily living?”

Gratefully, we won’t find any “lines” at the supermarket when we see there are no lines inside of us.

Michael Alperstein's writing has been featured in *Awakening Austin*, a healthy living resource magazine. His poetry has been published in *Catch da Flava*, a community magazine in Toronto, and his guidance to aspiring writers was published in the book *Getting Burned* (Twenty Twenty Publishing, 2005).

Michael teaches Self-awareness and intuitive camaraderie through path-free spirituality, employing anything from music, to silence, to the Zen of juggling. Since the death of his sister in 2004, Michael has devoted himself to caring for his nephew Nicholas. Together, Michael and Nicholas love to explore the secret waterfalls in Golden Gate Park.

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