

# Essential Energy with Cyndi Dale

by Cyndi Dale

## Service with a Smile

I remember the first time I learned about the concept of service, usually defined as giving without expecting anything in return. I was in fifth grade and my mom volunteered that I wash dishes at the church potluck. The duty consisted of scraping out casserole pans coated with leftover “hot dishes” - before scrubbing them clean.

The thing about Minnesota hot dishes is that no matter what the featured meat or vegetable is, the primary “glue” is always the same - cream of mushroom soup. If there was one thing I hated as a child, it was cream of mushroom soup—especially COOKED cream of mushroom soup, which left the same film in your mouth as it did on a pot.

Valiantly protesting, I was eventually lectured at the kitchen table by both my mother and father. (I considered myself lucky that the pastor was not present as well.)

With disappointed looks on their faces, they said, “Cyndi, God put us here to be servants. It’s the least we can do, as Jesus gave his life for us.”

I told them that I had not been alive 2,000 years ago and that slavery was illegal, but nothing I said made a difference. A few days later there I was, scraping pots and pans in the church.

Well into adulthood, I struggled with the idea of service. Oh I GAVE. Early in my career I clocked many hours serving on several local Boards of Directors, organizing non-profit galas, and volunteering at soup kitchens. As a mother I have lost count of the time spent on forcing friends to place fundraising orders

for everything from potato peelers to stale cookies. (I finally decided to buy everything myself just to spare my friends the purchase of yet more wrapping paper or car washes.) I did not fully appreciate the true meaning of service, however, until an especially heart-wrenching event occurred.

While sitting on a bench near a store, a woman arrived and sat next to me. She was tall and dark-haired and her coat had seen better days. Her shoes were covered with salt from the slushy streets and she had a huge run in her nylons. I have to confess, I remarked to myself that the run was unsightly.

We started to converse and I found her intelligent and interesting. At one point, I asked her what she did for a living.

With tears in her eyes, she confessed that she was unemployed, but that she was excited about a job interview she was to have later that day. She proudly showed me her resume and said that she was perfect for the job. Almost under her breath, she added that she was scared, however, because she had just enough change for bus money, but not enough to buy new nylons.

My mother’s cautionary voice whispered in my head. “*She’s just trying to get money out of you.*” My father’s warnings whipped in as well. “*If it’s not your business, don’t do it.*” But then I remembered the lecture I received prior to my pot scrubbing service at church and I started to understand something.

Service cannot be forced or it is a form of slavery, nor can it be motivated out of guilt or we will become resentful. Having said that -- we are here to serve.

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One definition of service is to “cover another.” It is to do for others what they cannot do for themselves but that we can and are called to do for them. If I do my son’s homework for him, I am not performing a service. I am interfering in his life. In fact, I am debilitating him. I can show him how to write a fraction or spell a certain word if he requires that help, but ultimately he is not going to pass a math or composition test if I am the only one who knows the material.

I used to think that service had to be labeled with a title or assigned a role, like “PTA Mom” or “Chief Church Bottle Washer” or “Really Important Board of Management Committee Head.” Now I think that service is a mentality rather than an assignment, an attitude rather than an act. Even working with a client is a service. We are giving what we are called to give and what the other person desires to receive. If we go too far, however, we might undercut a client’s growth. We can offer guidance and healing, but we cannot sit in a client’s house and force them to eat correctly or go to work on time. Every service must be delivered with a willingness to surrender.

I gave the woman money for nylons. I have no idea if she spent the money on nylons, but I believe that she did. I would like to think that she arrived at the job interview and was wildly and quickly hired - but I do not know. We give—and let go. We give—and let go.

As Mohandas Gandhi once said, *“That service is the noblest which is rendered for its own sake.”*

May we embrace our own call to serve as joyfully as did Gandhi, although I vote that the deed never again includes hot dishes.

About the author:



Cyndi Dale is the author of *The Subtle Body: An Encyclopedia of Your Energetic Anatomy*, and eight other bestselling books on energy healing, including *The Complete Book of Chakra Healing*. She has worked with over

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