

I find you spiritually attractive.

By [Teri McDowell Ott](#)

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I recently told a male rabbi about my age that I find him spiritually attractive. Actually, I didn't tell him. I posted it to his Facebook page. Immediately before adding this message to his feed, though, I hesitated over the following inner monologue:

*Is this creepy? Am I over-complimenting? Will this be misconstrued as some sort of strange clergy come on? Should I run this by my husband?*

I was in the mood to be bold, though. I wanted to share this compliment because it was true! I hit POST.

Then, I spent the next few hours scrolling, repeatedly (some may say obsessively) through my Facebook feed. I watched my comment linger and hang at the end of his post without one person validating it by hitting the cherished "Like." *Uh oh*, I thought to myself in a hot flash of regret. *Maybe I need to explain.*

So what makes a person spiritually attractive? Well, for me, a spiritually attractive person manifests a quiet confidence. He doesn't need to be the center of attention and would never put himself there, but others do because they want what he has. She gives off the sense (or maybe even the scent) that she is at peace within, she is comfortable in her own skin, and this translates into people feeling comfortable and at peace in her presence. He owns his wisdom that he communicates by the way he moves through the world. It's a kind of charisma, but it's NOT about her. In fact, it clearly comes from something or someone wholly *other* than her. All the spiritual greats have it.

Thomas Merton, Thich Nhat Hanh, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, and Mother Teresa all come to mind as people who possessed this quality—people we could not get enough of because they had that special spiritual something. But even us ordinary folks can have our moments.

About a month ago I wrote [a post about feeling magnetic through the practice of meditation](#). Here at my college, I've been leading a meditation group on Fridays at 4 p.m. for the past three years. The group never really took off, though, until this year when I became serious about my own practice. It fascinates me how the more I meditate, the more magnetic I feel, attracting ten to fifteen college students every Friday to this time of attentive stillness.

There are a number of religious groups here on my college campus clamoring for the attention of generation "none" (a.k.a. no designated religious affiliation.) These groups seek to attract students through all kinds of methods: invitations to free ice cream socials, volleyball tournaments, camps, and retreats; miniature New Testaments pressed in students' hands as they enter or exit the dining hall; adults who dress and act as if they are 18. Honestly, I've tried a few of these approaches myself—it's hard not to believe that free stuff wins in such a consumer-driven culture. How good for me to remember, then, that a deepening, personal meditation practice is attractive food for the hungry. Perhaps it is the spiritual authenticity of the practice, the understanding that it flows from my own time of mind-wrestling on the mat, that others feel like they can trust.

I felt this way when I met this rabbi—he was spiritually authentic, a person whose experience I felt I could trust. He sought me out later, by the way, to say thank you for my complimentary post. I was so relieved. I was also grateful for his ability to receive and own a genuine compliment—another trait of the spiritually attractive to which we all might aspire.

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