

# Religious converts 'at peace'

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CONVERTING from one religion to another is for some a way to find greater meaning to life while for others it is an opportunity to acquire new skills.

Eastern and Southern Cape residents who went through such conversions shared their stories with Weekend Post – and for some the transition was easier than for others.

Port Elizabeth guesthouse owner Lisa Zauber converted to Judaism before she married her Jewish husband, Russell Zauber. The former Christian said for her the transition was not a difficult one. "I'd felt attracted to Judaism since I was a child."

However, she added she would not have considered converting had it not been for her marriage. She said a "very religious" colleague once told her she would "burn in hell" for changing her religion. "But I took it from whence it came and that it was just part of her belief."

Another Bay resident, Siraj

Qanqa, said he had converted from his traditional Xhosa ancestral beliefs to Islam.

"Islam is a way of life. No matter what suffering I go through, I won't change my mind. The religion has taught me to look after the elders, have strong faith, be honest and live in peace."

Qanqa, who converted 26 years ago, said he lived in a community where it was difficult for his neighbours to accept his religious choice, but "I pray for them too".

"In my family, my daughter, my wife and I are the only Muslims, but Islam has taught me to love all people," added Qanqa, who has learnt to read the Quran in Arabic.

Plettenberg Bay Buddhist Maurice Barker said Buddhism was about "practice" rather than "worship". "We practise investigating and calming the mind. I practise mindfulness at Sat Chit Anand, the Buddhist centre in Plettenberg Bay."

Barker said his conversion had been a gradual process. "When my Mom died in 1995 I realised I had no real faith or



**AT PEACE:** Siraj Qanqa, of Zwide, Port Elizabeth, says converting to Islam has taught him to live in peace.

spirituality. It was from that, that I started on a journey of searching for meaning in life.

"The search took me on a journey to India to sit with spiritual teachers from different traditions before deciding on Budd-

hism as a philosophy of life.

"Buddhism provides me with tools to manage my mind. It provides an everyday philosophy and psychology that leads me towards inner wisdom and helps me see the world afresh."



**INNER WISDOM:** Plettenberg Bay Buddhist Maurice Barker practises mindfulness at the Sat Chit Anand Buddhist centre in the town.