



SOME CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES

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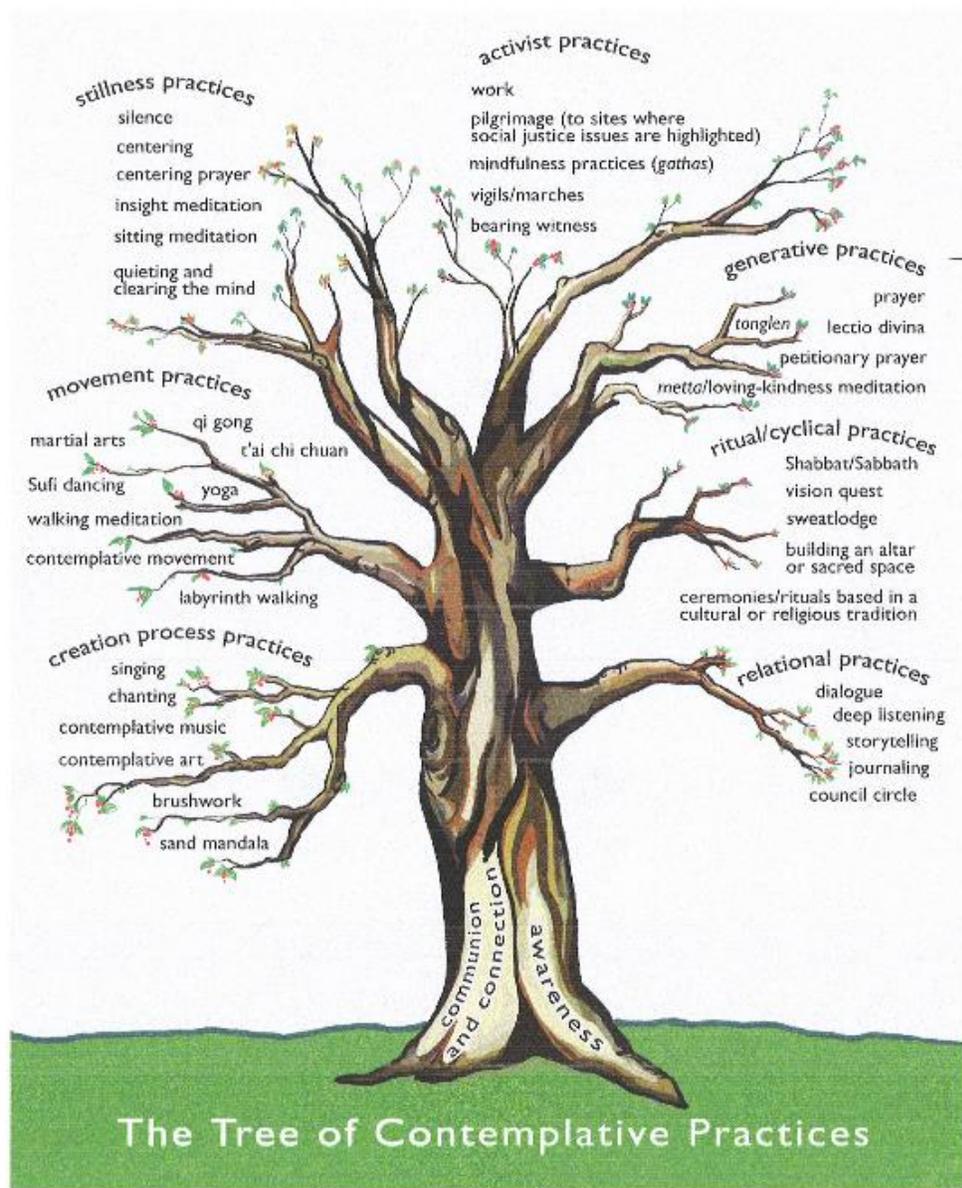
Introduction

The idea for this manual was prompted by a series of three workshops led by Mimi Weaver and the Pastoral Care Committee of Grace and Holy Trinity Church on “Finding Peace in the Daily Madness”. These were offered in the fall of 2014 at Grace & Holy Trinity Church. This manual is designed to expand upon the many varieties of contemplative practice which were introduced during this series.

Some of the selections are from the [Tree of Contemplative Practices](#). Leaves organize this booklet, with each section highlighting one or more practices. Interspersed throughout are poems, commentaries, and reflections. Since there is a profusion of material on these techniques, the challenge was what to leave in and what to leave out. Throughout, there are references to only some of the many books, web sites, and small groups available.

There are many ways to be Present to the Presence. Perhaps one of these practices will inspire you. Hopefully you will experience joy and rest, and have a little taste of the Kingdom.

The Pastoral Care Committee
Grace and Holy Trinity Church Richmond VA
Lent 2015



the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society
www.contemplativemind.org



Returning to God

On Spiritual Discipline

Many spiritual teachers and theologians point out that for much of our lives we are spiritually asleep. Jesus urged his followers to stay awake, and be watchful. Mystics remind us of the sacrament of the present moment. Buddhists speak of the importance of mindfulness. The colloquial admonition that we should come to our senses is yet another way of pointing out that we human beings have a way of missing out on our own lives.

Setting aside certain times of each day for prayer is a time-honored way of returning to God, returning to what truly matters, returning to your life. God is always with us, always loving and encouraging and guiding us, but we are often far away. Before you know it, we are wondering where all the time went. The simple act of stopping at certain points in your day to be still and to turn your attention to God is one of the most powerful and profound things you can do in your life. It can return you to yourself, to your soul, where God is always present and always offering you everything you need.

One of the effects of this stopping and returning to God, if only for a moment, is that you start to see the people and situations in your life differently. You remember that your child has a big game that day, or your neighbor is supposed to hear from her doctor about a test, or the checkout person at the store is celebrating that he just got a promotion. It makes you more present not only to yourself and your true life, but more present to the people around you, as well.

Jesus urged his followers to “stay awake and be watchful”. Mystics remind us of “the sacrament of the present moment”. Buddhists speak of the importance of “mindfulness”. And the colloquial admonition that we should “come to our senses” is yet another way of pointing out that we human beings have a way of missing out on our own lives.

And interestingly, after stopping to pray like this every day, you start to realize that you are much more productive. My friend, Phyllis Tickle, says, “ I can't explain it, but when I started setting the alarm on my little Casio wristwatch to go off at certain times of the day so that I could close my office door and be still with God for a moment, I ended up getting so much more done in my life”. It's counter-intuitive, that doing one more thing ends up giving you more time, but I believe her. Phyllis has had seven children, written over 30 books, and is one of the most popular lecturers in the nation. I trust her.

When she first started praying four times a day, Phyllis tried to keep it a secret. So, when her Casio beeped, she would just find an appropriate moment to slip out of a meeting. Sometimes, she would excuse herself to go to the ladies' room. The point was just to stop for four or five minutes, and just about every activity in our day can be interrupted for that period of time.

The discipline of punctuating our days with set times of prayer is an ancient Christian tradition with roots in our Jewish heritage (“Seven times a day do I praise you”, Psalm 119:164). Our Book of Common Prayer has Daily Offices (*offices*, from the Latin word, *officium*, which means duty or service) for morning, noonday, evening, and finally Compline at bedtime.

Our circumstances and temperaments are all so different that there's probably no one-size-fits-all way of going about this. And I think it's really important not to start off trying to do too much. But many of

you might find it helpful to start by setting aside four or five minutes once a day — in the morning over coffee, or at noon before lunch, or at some point in the evening after work. The world is not going to support you in this, so you'll probably need to fail a few times. Don't beat yourself up about it when you do, just keep returning to your practice of prayer, and see if, over time, it doesn't become an important part of your life.

Gary Jones, Rector, Saint Stephens Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA

Resources

Links:

www.meaningtopause.com

Angel of the Hour (Sacred time with bells and chants) www.gratefulness.org

[“The Path of Pausing “](#) Heart Advice from Pema Chodron, September 24,2014

Books:

Strength for the Journey, Renee Miller (p. 131-134: “ A Process for Beginning a Spiritual Practice “)

Hour by Hour, Forward Movement Publications, 2002

How to Train a Wild Elephant (See Chapter 16, “Just Three Short Breaths “)

The Power of Now, A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment, Eckhart Tolle

The Naked Now, Learning to See as the Mystics See, Richard Rohr

Jesus Calling, Enjoying Peace in His Presence, Sarah Young

A Book of Hours, Thomas Merton

Pamphlet

Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Forward Movement Publications

The Space Between: A Meditation

Recently, our nine-year-old daughter came home from school and proclaimed that she was learning to play Mary Had a Little Lamb on the piano in music class. She plunked out each note with a precision reserved for launching a nuclear weapon or signing your first mortgage. Our five and three year old children had their own musical compositions to show us. Suffice it to say, their renditions had a cacophony of notes with unique harmonies and uncertain meter. They were free-form to the extreme. But for our oldest daughter, and in our lives, it is the spaces between the notes that come to take on as much, if not more, meaning.

We need to carve out space in our busy, hectic lives. Our identity is not bound to our ability to make, acquire, produce, consume, or develop. Sometimes we think that making or consuming whether that means products, connections or experiences will fill in the gaps in our souls. But when we let those gaps become places where we meet God, amazing things happen. It's the space in between the notes that matter.

Recently, I've been talking with a friend about the uncertain, in-between place that she's been in. She's living with a good deal of ambiguity and unknowingness. It's a place that we all find ourselves in from time to time. We enter into this in-between space and time holding one set of assumptions and ideas, and we exit it in a different way. To truly enter the cauldron of transformation, metanoia, repentance, and rebirth is to enter the space between where we meet God and are changed.

Because it is the space in-between that counts.

Adam Klinefelter, *A Year of Meditations*, Forward Movement Publications, 2015



Ritual/Cyclical Practices



St. Teresa of Avila

There is a secret place. A radiant sanctuary. As real as your own kitchen. More real than that. Constructed of the purest elements. Overflowing with the ten thousand beautiful things. Worlds within worlds. Forests, rivers. Velvet coverlets thrown over featherbeds, fountains bubbling beneath a canopy of stars. Bountiful forests, universal libraries. A wine cellar offering an intoxication so sweet you will never be sober again. A clarity so complete you will never again forget. This magnificent refuge is inside you. Enter. Shatter the darkness that shrouds the doorway. Believe the incredible truth that the Beloved has chosen for his dwelling place the core of your own being because that is the single most beautiful place in all of creation.

St. Teresa of Avila
Adapted from the Interior Castle

Ideas for Creating a Sacred Space to Replenish Your Spirit

Create a room or nook where you can reflect, be quiet, go inside, and get centered. In your daily life, you have so much to think about and to do. Between work, children, and errands, you hardly have a moment for yourself. This is why you must have a special place to renew your connection with your inner self and spirit. When you create a place in your home that encourages quietness, it will call out to your soul. Come, sit and listen. Below are some ideas for creating a sacred space:

Convert an attic or guest room or simply create a corner or window seat in your living area that is dedicated to self-nourishment. A space that you deem sacred immediately sets the tone for going inward. Hang a screen, beads, or billowy curtain to emphasize the importance of the environment as a place of solitude. This sacred space can be used to receive inner guidance and knowledge as well as to write, draw, paint, chant, play an instrument, or; simply listen to birds sing outside.

To set the mood for contemplation, meditation, or prayer, place pillows on the floor or find a comfortable chair that supports your back.

Set up an altar with spiritual objects to bring in the energy of spirituality. Each object can be placed with an intention for going deep within your heart and soul.



Creating an altar can be as simple as draping a small table with a special fabric. On top of the table, place items such as a scented candle, incense burner, essential oil diffuser, or natural objects like rocks and seashells that bring in the earth element. You can place a symbol of your religion or spiritual practice as well.

Add plants and flowers for energy, color and increased oxygen. Lavender and purple symbolize spirituality, pink opens the heart, green brings in nature's balance and yellow stimulates health.

Hang pictures of gardens, mountains, spiritual teachers, angels, or mentors to impart a feeling of peace and harmony.

Soft music and an insightful book will offer you inspiration. Spiritual poetry from mystics such as Rumi can be a gateway into divine contemplation.

Your special nook is a perfect place to ask for guidance, connect with the divine, do **yoga**, practice deep breathing and create a positive vision for your life. As you refocus on your inner life, you'll find yourself calmer, clearer, happier and more inspired to follow your heart.

Jayne Barrett www.mindbodygreen.com

Resources

Book

The Essential Rumi, Jalal al-Din Rumi and Coleman Barks

Poetry

Wendell Berry

Mary Oliver, especially "When I am Among the Trees"

Recognizing Holy Space: A Meditation

My elders talk about the *yo ania*, the place of mystery—not necessarily physical space, but sometimes a state of mind. The *sea ania* or *seyewailo* is described as a place of complete beauty and harmony. We say it is located beneath the dawn in a place filled with flowers, water, and natural abundance of all kinds. The *sea ania* is a spiritual place; a place to encounter God, *Itom Achi*. Place is a very important concept in the Pascua Yaqui tradition. It is the place of origin and begins to define our identity. From this perspective, land and creation are very specific places. However, there is a broader connection. We become aware of creation and Creator in diverse ways, but they all point to the same relationship. God made all of creation and no matter where we are, we can encounter God there. Why do we want to know where to find God? We associate sacred space as a place where God dwells. Sometimes that means we think we need to be in a church, synagogue, temple, or mosque in order to find God. When we recognize that God is in all places and in all times, we open up opportunities to be with God no matter where we are. With this in mind, stop for a moment and locate yourself in God's creation. God is there with you in that holy space.

Debbie Royals, *Seeking God Day by Day, A Year of Meditations*, Forward Movement Publications, 2013

Create Sacred Space in Your Home with an Altar



I live in a very small house.

Due to limited storage space and family life in general, I don't have the luxury of making every room feel like an oasis (although I try!). But I've found that having a small altar makes my home seem expansive, beautiful, inviting.

Even though it takes up only a tiny amount of space in my home (it's simply some meaningful items arranged on a wooden cutting board I re-purposed) I find the energy that comes off of it transforms my whole house, even on days when I feel like all the chores will never get done, or if I think I'll never have a moment of quiet to myself.

Although my altar is set up in my bedroom, it's portable enough that I can take it around the house with me if I so desire. Right now it sits atop some storage baskets I have against one wall, and it's the perfect height for me to sit in front of and meditate, ask questions or contemplate.

What I put on it changes through the seasons, but in general I like to have light (candles), spirit (Virgin Mary prayer card that sits in an orange bowl my son made in art class), family (the shells represent me, my husband, and my son; the long one shaped like an angel's wing represents my stillborn daughter) and nature (the swan feather) represented on my altar.

I think it's important to have a dedicated space for any kind of spiritual or meditative work one might want to do. If you've been wanting to set some space aside for an altar (you really don't need a lot!) but aren't sure where to start, here are some ideas for you.

1. What will it be used for?

Religious or spiritual practice? Prayer? Meditation? Simply a place to relax and unwind from your day? As a memorial of some sort? All of the above? These are questions you need to consider carefully. Once you've found an answer, it will help everything else fall into place more easily.

2. Choose where you'd like to place your altar.

This ties in closely to #1. Is this altar something only you will be using? Your family? Is it something you want visitors to see and appreciate or will it be for private admiration only?

I keep my altar in my bedroom because I can more easily get some privacy there than anywhere else in the house. But don't discount having an altar in your kitchen, in some extra closet space, even in your bathroom—having a bath with one nearby can be a very meditative, relaxing experience. And you don't need a huge space: a small table, the top of a dresser or even a shelf on a bookcase can be used.

3. Keep it simple.

When I first made my altar, I had a ton of things on it. Rocks, shells, cards, knick-knacks—everything had meaning for me, but I found it wasn't conducive to the meditative state I wished to achieve when I sat in front of it. So I started eliminating, sticking to the basics. Depending on what your purpose for the altar is, I highly recommend only keeping a few choice items on it at a time. I accomplish this by rotating what I put out, depending on the season or my mood

Keeping it simple will help you create the feeling of sacredness that will make your altar your own special escape from the everyday world. Don't try to fill all the space on your altar. Think of it this way: the extra space in front of you is its own tool. It will help you create room in your life for whatever it is you need to achieve—contemplation, prayer, meditation, and peace.

4. What do I put on my altar?

This is the trickiest question, and the simplest. The answer is: whatever has meaning for you, whatever moves you, whatever creates a feeling of sacredness in your heart when you look at it. These can be anything from religious icons to photographs of loved ones, crystals, pinecones, tarot cards, shells, your child's artwork, your own artwork—seriously, anything.

I didn't spend a ton of money on any of the items I put on my altar. The prayer card was a gift. So was the bowl my son made. So was the swan feather—a gift from nature that I came across while walking in a local park one day. The tealights are ridiculously cheap at IKEA. The votive holders were either passed down to me or purchased at a thrift store. Honestly, the incense I use is probably the costliest of all the items; I can't stress enough how important it is to use a high quality incense!

5. Set the mood.

Before I start my meditation practice, I usually light a stick of incense, but even a small tea light will work—what you want is something that signals that this moment is different from all the other moments in your day. It is your time to look inward, to ask questions, to figure things out. Music is also good for changing the tone of your meditative work. Silence is very distracting to me, personally, so some soothing music in the background helps me focus. Anything from mantra, to chill out, to medieval polyphonic music helps set the mood for me. Find the music that helps you look inward or sparks a connection to divinity.

I've found that having an altar in my bedroom produces a pleasing domino effect: the sacred space it creates extends outwards, giving the whole room a relaxing, peaceful feeling (a nice vibe to have in the room in which I sleep!). It only takes up a small amount of physical space but, because the symbols and signs I place on it are rich with meaning for me, it allows me to decompress at the end of a busy day. Entering that sacred space has become an important and uplifting part of my daily life.

Dejah Beauchamp www.elephantjournal.com

Resources

Book

An Altar in the World, Barbara Brown Taylor

Music

Sounds of the Eternal: Meditative Chants and Prayers, J. Phillip Newell

Chanting for Peace: Praying with the Earth, J. Phillip Newell

A Celtic Mass for Peace: Songs for the Earth, Composed by Samuel Guarnaccia, Lyrics by J. Phillip Newell

Please Do Not Disturb

Taking A Ten Minute Sabbath



National
Episcopal
HEALTH
MINISTRIES



www.EpiscopalHealthMinistries.org

Sabbath Practices: Let Us Remember What Matters in Modern Lives

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these. —Matthew 6:28-29

It goes without saying that many of us clergy, as for most of our parishioners, would find it impossible to neither toil nor spin. Our identity may be so attached to what we do, that we can't imagine who we are beyond our toiling and spinning selves.

Contemporary writers have sought to interpret Sabbath in ways that speak to the hectic lives of modern persons. Abraham Heschel, in his classic book, *The Sabbath*, speaks not just to his fellow Jews but to all of us caught up in a complex modern life and consciousness that cannot see any other way of being. In *The Sabbath*, Heschel advocates for the enduring value of Sabbath because of — and not in spite of — our modern lives. Heschel asserts:

The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time. We are called upon to share what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world.

Indeed, Heschel offers an antidote to our information driven society when he writes, *The higher goal of spiritual living is not to amass a wealth of information, but to face sacred moments.*

A contemporary writer, Wayne Muller, addresses the tradition of Sabbath for those who cannot schedule an entire day each week. Sabbath time can be a Sabbath afternoon, a Sabbath hour, or a Sabbath walk. By re-framing Sabbath in this-way, he makes it possible for many of us to discover the underlying significance of Sabbath — rather than dismissing it as an impossible practice.

When you can incorporate the practice of a Sabbath day — do so. In the meantime the following practices that Muller offers can begin to bless our lives and ministries:

- **A Sabbath walk:** For 30 minutes' walk slowly and silently — without trying to get anywhere. Let your senses guide your walk. Follow your own timing and curiosity. When you are called to stop, stop and investigate. When you are called to begin again, move on. At the end of 30 minutes, notice what has happened to your body, your mind, your sense of time.
- **Prayer:** Prayer is like a portable Sabbath, when we close our eyes for just a moment and let the mind rest in the heart. Like the Muslims, who stop to pray five times a day, like the Angelus, a Roman Catholic practice of prayer at noon, we can be stopped by a bell, a sunset, a meal, and we can pray. We can begin slowly with a simple prayer, like a pebble dropped into the middle of our day, rippling out over the surface of our life.
- **Meditation with Scripture:** Choose a short piece of scripture for reflection. Read it a few times silently and then choose a phrase that speaks to you. Sit quietly or take a walk and allow the scripture to accompany you. Without grasping for meaning or answers, let the phrase live in the breath, using it to bring awareness back to this moment whenever the mind wanders.
- **An altar:** Create a space for an altar, nothing elaborate. You may want to light a candle, say a prayer. This can be a place you come to, a Sabbath in your home.

- **Reflections on what matters:** Make a list of some of the inviolable precepts that guide your life (e.g., To honor the earth, To love God.). Take Sabbath time to speak them aloud. Notice how you feel when you hear them and what resistance or what relief arises. Notice how the memory of these spoken precepts resonates in your body throughout the day.
- **Take off your shoes:** Stand still and quiet for a moment. Let your feet touch earth, soil, floor, and rock. Feel the visceral holiness rise up and kiss tender bare feet.
- **What can you let go of?** One thing, beginning with the smallest thing. A book unread — can it be given to a library? Old clothing, never worn, to the poor? A project that feels like a responsibility but brings joy to no one? Pick one thing this week, another the next, and discard something that has become unnecessary. Feel any release as you let it go?

Lawrence Peers www.faihandleadership.com

Resource

Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives. Wayne Muller

A Media Fast

The Exercise:

For one week, do not take in any media. This includes news media, social media, and entertainment. Do not listen to the radio, iPod, or CDs, don't watch TV, films, or videos, don't read newspapers, books, or magazines (whether online or in print form), don't surf the Internet, and don't check on social media sites such as Facebook and twitter.

You don't have to plug your ears if someone tells you about a news event, but do avoid being drawn into a conversation about the news. If people insist, tell them about your unusual fast. You may, of course, do reading that is necessary for work or school.

What to do instead? Part of this mindfulness practice is discovering alternatives to consuming media. Hint: do something with you own hands and your own body.

REMINDING YOURSELF

Cover the TV with a sheet, or put a sign on your car radio and computer screen reminding you No News or Entertainment This Week. Let magazines accumulate and consider putting any newspapers you subscribe to straight into the recycling bin. You would do this if you went on vacation.

DISCOVERIES

I invented this fast for a student who suffered from a very common problem-chronic, low-level anxiety. At the end of a six day silent retreat he shared with me his happiness over his calm state of mind. An hour later, at lunch, however' I heard him fuming, as usual, about the terrible state the world was in. An admitted news junkie who grew up in New York City, he undertook a media fast with great reluctance.

He discovered that his state of mind was good upon arising and while doing his early morning meditation. But as soon as the meditation ended, his habit was to grab a cup of coffee and turn on the morning news, "So I can see how the b*stards have messed up now". During the media fast he was surprised to find that if he wasn't up on the latest news, it didn't really matter, at home or at work. He was, however, experiencing a much calmer state of mind, as was his patient wife.

One difficulty during withdrawal is finding an activity to substitute for the time usually spent with the media. You can meditate, take a walk, play a game with your family, cook something from scratch, weed the garden, take photos, do artwork, and learn a new language or how to play a musical instrument, or just sit on the porch and relax.

DEEPER LESSONS

For the first two hundred thousand years of human history, we were only exposed to the news (and the suffering) of those immediately around us in our tribes and villages. We saw birth, sickness, death, and wars, but on a limited scale. Only in the last forty years or so has the news media poured the suffering of the entire world-wars, natural disasters, torture, starvation-into our ears and eyes every day, day after day. This suffering that we are helpless to fix accumulates in our mind and heart, and makes us suffer in turn. When the mind and heart become too full of pictures of violence, destruction, and pain, we must take time to empty ourselves.

A media fast is one way to do this. (A silent meditation retreat is even better).

People who work with trauma victims are known to suffer from something called secondary victimization. They are affected by the trauma too, even though they are only hearing about it and did not experience it firsthand. Since the invention of TV and the nightly news, all of us suffer to a certain degree from secondary victimization, caused by the incessant flow of vivid images out of the screen and into our minds- images of murder, genocide, earthquake, and deadly epidemics. This constant bombardment creates chronic anxiety and makes us heartsick. The world is flawed, millions of innocent people suffer, and we are unable to do much to change it.

If we can decrease our intake of these toxic images, we can more easily establish a heart that is open and a mind that is serene and clear. This is the best foundation we can have if we want to move out into the world of woe and make a positive difference.

Final Words: A steady diet of negative news makes the mind ill. Give the mind the good medicine of silence, beauty, and loving friendship.

Jan Chosen Bays

Resource

Book

How to Train a Wild Elephant, Jan Chosen Bays (p. 64-67)



Stillness Practices

Reflections on Dadirri

What I want to talk about is (a) special quality of my people.

I believe it is the most important.

It is our most unique gift. It is perhaps the greatest gift we can give.

In our language this quality is called dadirri.

It is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness ...

When I experience dadirri,

I am made whole again.

I can sit on the river bank or walk through the trees;

even if someone close to me has passed away,

I can find my peace in this silent awareness.

There is no need of words...

It is just being aware ...

Our Aboriginal culture has taught us to be still and to wait.

We do not try to hurry things up.

We let them follow their natural course—like the seasons.

We watch the moon in each of its phases.

We wait for the rain to fill our rivers and water the thirsty earth ...

We wait on God, too.

His time is the right time.

We wait for him to make his Word clear to us.

We don't worry.

We know that in time and in the spirit of dadirri

(that deep listening and quiet stillness)

his way will be clear.

Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann, Aboriginal Artist and Teacher. Excerpts from a presentation to the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions, Melbourne, AU

Resource

www.worldprayers.org
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Silence

When we refer to silence, we're not referring to a totally quiet environment. Rarely is it possible to create the conditions for perfect silence. There are always cars driving by, birds the trees, or old pipes clanking away in the office building. Rather, we think of something that we are *engaged in*. Silence is a quality of mind, a way of being, and a powerful type of presence in the world.

When we practice silence, there is a self-consciousness that we often ignore in daily life, we are compelled to express every thought, emotion, or idea that floats into our heads, only understanding the intention behind them or their repercussions. Embracing silence allows us to be with ourselves in a way that is simply observant—not judgmental. This quality of observation can make our appreciation for life more subtle and can transform a group experience into a richer and more nuanced experience.

As we share silence with each other, it is important to be careful that we are not silencing others or ourselves. For some people, this may seem like an unnecessary distinction. But for people who have been silenced in their lives due to racial, sexual, or political oppression, this distinction can be deeply important. The silent dynamic we are trying to embody here is not one of power over where we are not permitted to speak, but rather of power with coworkers and friends, with whom we have made a commitment to understanding the value of sharing space and time in a way that is supportive, meaningful, and infused with respect.

www.contemplativemind.org

A Meditation on Silence

Not too long ago, periods of reflection and stillness were woven into the fabric of our days as we washed dishes, prepared meals, chopped wood, mended clothing, and walked in contemplative silence. Technology has not only accelerated the pace of our lives, it has made our lives noisier and destroyed their peaceful rhythms.

Noise is a form of violence done to us, but we have become so accustomed to it that it barely registers, like a car alarm that blares on and on but which no one heeds. Sound systems have become part of our communal landscape, inescapable in supermarkets, shopping malls, ballparks, elevators, coffee shops and restaurants, office waiting rooms and hospitals. It's as if we have come to believe that silence is a void that must be filled....We no longer know how to be still. We no longer know how to be alone. We seem to require constant and relentless input....

But our spirit has an instinct for silence. Every soul innately yearns for stillness, for a space, a garden where we can till, sow, reap, and rest, and by doing so come to a deeper sense of self and our place in the universe. Silence is not an absence but a presence. Not an emptiness but repletion. A filling up.

Anne Le Claire

Resource

Listening Below the Noise: The Transformative Power of Silence, Anne Le Claire.

About Silence

Silence is not merely the absence of words. If you write a note, you break your silence.

Unless you are long practiced in the discipline, to quietly help in the kitchen will probably break your silence.

Reading certain books can break your silence. Because it is God before whom you are to be silent. If your mind is scurrying after business at hand, it is not silent before God.

Absence of words is one of the tools with which we create silence. Stillness of body, discipline of mental activity are among the several other tools.

Only if your own voice inside you is silent, can you hear God. He never forces Himself. We must love enough to put aside our daily interests and necessities (good though they may be) in order to give God ourselves without reserve or other priorities. If we are unable to do this, God will not speak loudly enough for us to hear. And every time we fail to hear, we die a little.

Be still and know that I am God

Original reference unknown

Some Gateways to Silence (a way to begin one's centering practice)

Show me your ways, teach me your paths (a good one for the labyrinth)

The gaze of God receives me exactly as I am.

Open me to Presence

Abide in the One who holds everything together

Let go and let God

All shall be well

I am who I am in the eyes of God

Be not afraid

You are precious in my eyes, you are honored, and I love you (Isaiah 43:4)

In Christ all things hold together (Colossians 1:17)

I am a hole in a flute that the Christ's breath moves through-listen to this music. (Hafitz)

May I see with eyes of compassion

Love is the presence of God within me

God is in this with us

Open me to grace upon grace upon grace

Christ shall give you light (Ephesians 5:14)

When I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:10)

I lose my life to find Life

I am Present to the Presence

Richard Rohr

Going into Silence: A Practice.

Evagrius Ponticus, the Syrian deacon (d. 399) who first wrote about eight of the sins that eventually became the Enneagram, saw them as ways in which our heart-presence is “suffocated.” Enneagram teacher G. I. Gurdjieff (1866-1949) saw each type as a way of “self-forgetting,” how we turn away from True Self. My fellow teacher in the Living School, Robert Sardello, offers a simple practice for attending to heart, which helps us remember True Self and return to full presence and authentic life.

“First, we learn to enter the heart. It is best to initiate this learning when calmness rules. Then, with practice—sometimes taking years to develop, sometimes occurring right away—we can find our way into heart-presence even in the midst of greatest turbulence. It is simple. We enter the Silence by simply going to a quiet place and sitting, eyes closed, until we feel the embrace of the Silence. It is an ‘inner region,’ one to which we have to yield in order to experience. The practice of Silence is also ongoing, nothing to be mastered, for She is endless.

“When we have, at least, entered the Silence, we place our attention at the center of the heart. Heart-attention differs, radically, from thinking about the heart. Try this: look at your foot and pay attention to your foot; it appears to be ‘over there’; you are really thinking about your foot. Then, instead, place your attention within your foot. Notice that this is suddenly something like, ‘Hmmm, the whole world now unfolds from this place of my foot.’ Wherever attention is, there you are.

“What is heart interiority? Become a researcher into your own heart. Just observe, notice, sense the qualities. It is as if you are within a vast, spherical space. Within this space, you cannot find a boundary, an ending. The feeling is one of intimate infinity and infinite intimacy, both at once. There is warmth, all warmth. You feel encompassed, held, embraced; you find that you are within heart rather than heart being ‘inside’ you. It is deep, and when there, you do not want to leave. . . .

“When we find, say, that we have fallen into anger, or any of the other transgressions, particularly when we struggle, over and over, with the recurring occurrence, we approach courage by going into Silence and then entering the heart. From within the center of the heart, the place of inviolability, the ‘not I but Christ in me’ (Galatians 2:20) feels the heart’s ardor, that is the strong, strong, strong love of the heart. When that warmth is felt, we can let it resonate through the body until perfect calm comes. We feel the inherent, always present, blessing return. It never went away; we went away from it.”

Richard Rohr

Adapted from *Transgression and the Return of the Mystical Heart*
by Robert Sardello, in *Oneing, “Transgression”*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 80-81

Resources

For more on Richard Rohr, including a daily meditation and spiritual practices, see: www.cac.org
The Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE) has a daily word. To subscribe: www.ssje.org/word



Centering

Centering is one of the simplest and most common forms of contemplative practice. The center refers to a relaxed yet focused state of mind. Centering practice is especially helpful in the midst of strong emotional states such as excitement or anxiety, and is often used by athletes, public speakers, actors, and anyone who wants to feel stable and prepared before a potentially stressful event.

Anything that helps you feel tranquil and aware can become your centering practice.

Common Centering Methods:

- Count numbers, such as counting down from 10 to dissipate anger
- Repeat a word or phrase, such as a prayer or affirmation
- Smile and relax your body
- Go for a walk; get out into a different environment
- Stretch
- Close your eyes and breathe deeply
- Concentrate on breathing, such as breathing out for a count of 8 and in for a count of 4
- Count your breaths
- Doodle or write
- Carry or place near yourself a visual reminder to stay centered, such as a quote or image
- Use sound to bring yourself back to your center. Periodically ring a bell, chime, or other gentle reminder.

Persistence is an important aspect of centering practice. Purposefully centering yourself many times throughout the day, even when you are not feeling particularly emotional or in need of centering, will help to deepen your practice.

Resources

The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, www.contemplativemind.org

The Chrysalis Institute offers a variety of classes, one of which is on Contemplative Prayer. For more information about other offerings see www.chrysalisinstitute.org.

Phone Apps

iTunes Apple App

i-Qi timer

Centering Prayer

Google Play

A Centering Practice: Boats Floating Downstream

In Centering Prayer, a contemplative practice taught by Thomas Keating, we choose a sacred word to help us return to our intention of awareness to God's presence. The word might be Peace or Be or Love—something simple. Don't spend too much time analyzing the word. Hold it lightly and let it go when it is no longer needed, but come back to it any time your thoughts interrupt the stillness.

Keating uses the imagery of a river in Centering Prayer to help compartmentalize our thinking mind. He says our ordinary thoughts are like boats on a river so closely packed together that we cannot experience the river that flows underneath them. The river is the Presence of God holding us up. When we find ourselves getting distracted or hooked by a thought or feeling, we are to return ever so gently to our sacred word, letting the boat (thought or feeling) float on downstream. Gradually, the mind is quieted, with fewer thoughts/feelings and more space between boats.

Be patient with this practice. We all have ingrained patterns. Sometimes the same thought or feeling will circle by again and again, saying Think me! Think me! Feel me! Feel me! as it tries harder to be noticed. Just keep returning to the sacred word and letting the boats float downstream.

Richard Rohr

Resource

Richard Rohr, Daily Meditations, www.cac.org

A Centering Practice: Breathing Out

A person will suffocate if she just keeps breathing in! To breathe means to both breathe in and breathe out—to receive and to give. I'm afraid we are much more adept at receiving than giving. It takes some practice to come to know that infinite, abundant grace abides within, so there's no need to be stingy with our forgiveness, generosity, and compassion. Perhaps practicing lengthening the outbound breath might teach us to let go even further. Slowing the exhale also lowers stress and relaxes the mind and body.

You're already breathing as you read this, without thinking about it! Now turn your attention to observe your breath. Just notice the natural rhythm of breath for a few minutes, feeling the rise and fall of your abdomen and shoulders.

Count through your next natural inhalation. Pause, holding the fullness in your belly for just a moment. Then exhale slowly, counting twice as long as for your inhalation. (For example, inhale for four counts, pause for two counts, and exhale for eight counts.) Continue breathing in this slowed, gradual way as long as you wish. Then rest again in the uncontrived beauty of your instinctual breathing.

Richard Rohr

Resources

Meditation taking various forms, Sunday at 4:00 p.m.(academic year) at Grace and Holy Trinity Church. [Contact the Rev. Kimberly Reinholz.](#)

First Friday Retreats at Richmond Hill. To learn more, contact: retreats@richmondhillva.org or call: 804-783-7903. www.richmondhillva.org

Richmond Hill also offers a weekly Centering Prayer group.

For retreats and classes contact Mimi Weaver at: mimi@gracemoves.com. Mimi leads the First Friday Retreats at Richmond Hill.

The Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE) leads silent weekend retreats (Boston). For more information contact: www.ssje.org

Shalom House Retreat Center. For more information contact: www.shalomhouseretreatcenter.com

St. Stephen's Centering Prayer Group. This group meets at St. Stephen's the second Saturday of each month. For more information contact: www.ststephensrichmond.net, or call: 804-288-2867.

Contemplative Outreach/Silence, Solitude, Solidarity, Service www.contemplativeoutreach.org

Books

Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation, Martin Laird

How to Meditate, A Practical Guide to Making Friends with Your Mind.

Pema Chodron

Open Mind, Open Heart and Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer Thomas Keating

Contemplative Prayer. Thomas Merton and Thich Nhat Hanh

A Presence so Immense

This Presence is so
immense, yet so
humble;
awe-inspiring yet so
gentle;
limitless, yet so
intimate, tender and
personal.



I know that I am
known.

Everything in my life is transparent in this Presence.

It knows everything about me

- all my weaknesses, brokenness, sinfulness
- and still loves me infinitely.

This Presence is healing, strengthening, refreshing

- just by its Presence.

It is nonjudgmental, self-giving,

seeking no reward,

boundless in compassion.

It is like coming home to a place I should never have left,

to an awareness that was somehow always there,

but which I did not recognize.

Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*



Movement Practices

Practice Walking Meditation

Walking meditation is a wonderful way of transforming something that we do every day into a deeply healing, deeply nourishing and enjoyable tool for our awakening. It is a practice found both in Taoist and Buddhist traditions. When we practice walking meditation, each step of our journey becomes the destination - becomes peace and joy. I first learned walking meditation from Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, at a retreat that I attended in Plum Village, in the spring of 1992 - and have been enjoying it ever since!

Difficulty: Easy

Time Required: ten to thirty minutes, or longer if you'd like

Here's How:

It's wonderful to practice walking meditation any time that we are walking. When we're first learning the practice, however, it's best to set aside a particular time for it - say, first thing in the morning, or during your lunch break, or right before bed at night.

Walking meditation can be practiced indoors or outside. When the weather is nice, I like to practice outside, where I can be energized by the trees and sky. It's good to either go bare-foot (especially if you are inside) or wear shoes that give your feet and toes plenty of room to spread out.

Now, simply stand with your spine upright and your shoulders relaxed, letting your arms hang naturally by your sides. Take a couple of long, slow and deep breaths. As you exhale, let go of any unnecessary tension, smile gently, and let your attention flow deep into your belly, hips, legs and feet. Relax your pelvis, as though you had just mounted a horse. Feel your connection to the earth.

Next, begin to coordinate your breathing with taking small steps: as you inhale, step forward with your left foot; as you exhale, step forward with your right foot; and continue in this way. Let your gaze be focused gently on the ground in front of you. You can also experiment with taking several steps with the inhale, and several with the exhale. But keep the pace quite slow (slower than your habitual walking) and relaxed.

As you become comfortable coordinating breath with walking, try adding this beautiful visualization: Each time you place one of your feet down, imagine that you are kissing the earth, through the sole of your foot. Each time you pick up one of your feet, imagine that a beautiful pink/white lotus is now blossoming in the place that your foot just was. In this way, our walking becomes a way of expressing our love for the earth, and of creating beauty with each step.

Walk this way - slowly, enjoying each step, with no thought of getting somewhere other than right where you are, here and now - for ten minutes or longer. Notice how you feel.

Little by little, incorporate this practice into your daily life - taking three or four slow, mindful steps, kissing the earth, whenever you think of it. Notice how this changes the quality of your day.

Tips:

Don't worry if this kind of walking feels awkward at first. We're learning to pay close attention to something that we're not used to paying close attention to. Little by little, it will start to feel quite natural.

When you stretch out your feet and toes completely, and let the entire bottom of your foot be in contact with the ground, nerves, arteries and meridians connected to the entire body are stimulated - which is very beneficial for our health.

Let your mind be focused and relaxed. If it wanders into thoughts of past or future, simply come back to the practice.

Elizabeth Reninger www.taoism.about.com

Resource

Internet Video Link

Thich Nhat Hanh's video: "The Long Road Turns To Joy: A Guide To Walking Meditation" on [YouTube](#)



Walking the Path Together

There is a labyrinth in the stone of the floor of Chartres Cathedral. Installed as the cathedral was built, it offers a way for the faithful to make a pilgrimage without leaving home.

Unlike a maze, labyrinths have only one path. We are free to pray and not worry about choosing the way. We simply place one foot in front of the other and offer ourselves.

Labyrinths exist in a variety of patterns and materials. I walked one painted onto canvas. Set up in a hall during the day, I walked it alone. As I did so, I offered prayer for the evening that was to come, to which others would walk it.

Later, candles were lit round the room. Music played as one by one, those who had come for the evening stood at the labyrinth's threshold, with their own prayerful intentions, ready to walk this holy path.

I waited until almost everyone had started their walk and then decided to walk the labyrinth again. My intentions were similar to the first time. There was a crucial difference, however. This time I was not alone.

Others were behind me, in front of me, next to me, and even coming toward me. We were all on the same canvas, on the same path, together. Rather than being distracted by all of the other people, I felt joy.

Walking with others lifted my focus from myself to the God in whom we live and move and have our being. We are all on a pilgrimage together, seeking God, one foot in front of another, following the path s it reveals itself.

Rachel Thomas, *Meeting God Day by Day, A Year of Meditations*. Forward Movement Publications, 2014

Labyrinths



Labyrinths are found in different forms on all continents, within many cultures and mythologies, carved or painted on ancient caves and church walls, and set in floors at sacred sites such as Gothic cathedrals. These circular paths are a way of learning and praying through movement instead of through thinking. Labyrinths seem to have emerged from the collective unconscious, representing a clear path to center, to the Divine. A classical labyrinth has seven cycles, one for each stage of life.

Many labyrinths exist today in churches and parks to provide people with a meditative way to relieve stress. Labyrinths can now also be found in retreat centers, hospitals, prisons, parks, airports and community centers. There are at least 2,000 permanent labyrinths in the United States alone.

Find a labyrinth (on the ground or printed on paper) for your feet or fingers to traverse in the company of God's presence. Walk the labyrinth as if on a pilgrimage, but without a goal beyond the experience of walking itself. Step consciously and slowly, allowing the Divine to guide and teach. Let the walk teach its own lessons. There is no one correct message. The turning circuits of a labyrinth remind us that life is change and transformation and repentance (i.e. metanoia or turning around).

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation, August 30, 2014 www.cac.org

Resources

Links

The Labyrinth Society www.labyrinthsociety.org

World-Wide Labyrinth Locator www.labyrinthlocator.com

Enter Labyrinth, an Interactive meditation www.gratefulness.org

Finger Labyrinths (See Google for shopping)

Locate a Local Labyrinth

Permanent Labyrinths

Richmond Hill, The Jerusalem Mile

Founded in 1987, Richmond Hill is an ecumenical Christian fellowship and residential community who serve as stewards of an urban retreat center within the setting of a historic monastery.

2209 E. Grace Street, Richmond, VA 23223

Phone: 804-783-7903

www.richmondhillva.org

An outdoor labyrinth is located in the park on the corner of Westwood Avenue and Loxley Road in North Richmond.

Shrine Mont

To provide a place apart for rest, devotion, fellowship, learning and education, where all may grow in the grace of God.

Orkney Springs, VA about 13 miles west of Mt. Jackson, VA.

Phone: 540-856-2141 -

www.shrinemont.com

Portable Labyrinth

Grace and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church,

8 North Laurel Street, Richmond, VA

Phone: 804-359-5628

www.ghc.org/



The Labyrinth in the Parish Hall at Grace and Holy Trinity Church

It is known as a portable labyrinth which means that it can be used in various locations. It is a seven-circuit labyrinth 20 feet across. The labyrinth at Grace and Holy Trinity Church was painted by a group of parishioners. It has a cruciform design and is patterned after the labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral in France.

For information about using the labyrinth, scheduling instruction or a retreat please contact Carolyn Chilton in the church office, 804-359-5628, ext. 16 or Carolyn@ghtc.org



The Labyrinth and Christianity

The labyrinth became a part of the Christian tradition out of necessity. Early Christians took a vow to visit the Holy City of Jerusalem at some point in their lives. Over the centuries, particularly as Christianity grew in Western Europe, this pledge became increasingly difficult to fulfill. Practices began to emerge which enabled Christians to honor their sacred commitment to pilgrimage. One of these was the labyrinth. They were created on the floors of many European cathedrals to be walked as a substitute for the great pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The most famous and earliest of these is on the floor of the Chartres Cathedral in France (circa 1200). In the late 20th century the labyrinth was rediscovered by Christianity as a tool for spiritual pilgrimage.

What is a Labyrinth?

The labyrinth became a part of the Christian tradition out of necessity. Early Christians took a vow to visit the Holy City of Jerusalem at some point in their lives. Over the centuries, particularly as Christianity grew in Western Europe, this pledge became increasingly difficult to fulfill. Practices began to emerge which enabled Christians to honor their sacred commitment to pilgrimage. One of these was the labyrinth. They were created on the floors of many European cathedrals to be walked as a substitute for the great pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The most famous and earliest of these is on the floor of the Chartres Cathedral in France (circa 1200). In the late 20th century the labyrinth was rediscovered by Christianity as a tool for spiritual

The History of Labyrinths

Labyrinths date back thousands of years and are not limited to any single culture or religious tradition. The earliest examples are more than 3,000 years old. They have been found in many cultures in various designs. Archeology suggests that these designs were often connected with holy places of worship. The winding path of most labyrinths creates a circular pattern. The circle is a universal symbol representing unity, wholeness and infinity.

How do I Walk a Labyrinth?

As you enter the Labyrinth area, look for an opening in the outside ring of the circle. This is the entrance. Remove your shoes. The path will lead you to the center and then back out. It is not a maze so you will not get lost. Stand at the entrance and quiet your mind and become aware of your breath. When you are ready, begin to walk slowly down the path. Allow yourself to find the pace your body wants to go. Pay attention to your breathing and your walking letting them calm and carry your thoughts. You may pause along the way being mindful of leaving space for others to walk past you. You may also pause or sit in the center for prayer. The path is two way. Those going in will meet those coming out. When you meet another person, one of you should quietly step aside, then proceed on your way. There is no right or wrong way to walk the labyrinth. Your attitude can be joyous, somber, reflective or prayerful.

A Beginning Prayer

Awaken me to your presence,
Alert me to your love,
Affirm me in your peace,
Open me to your way,
Reveal to me your joy,
Enfold me in your light,
For my heart is ready, Lord,
My heart is ready.

An Ending Prayer

Send me out, aware of your Presence, O Lord,
That my heart may be renewed,
My mind refreshed,
My soul restored,
That I may reveal you to others,
And you know you myself,
As Creator, Sustained and Redeemer.



Activist Practices

What is Mindfulness and why is it Important?

Mindfulness is deliberately paying full attention to what is happening around you and within you-in your body, heart, and mind. It is awareness without criticism or judgment. If we can learn to be present with things just as they are, much of our dissatisfaction with life will disappear, and many simple joys will emerge.

The practice of mindfulness helps us wake up and be present, instead of going unconscious and checking out from huge chunks of life. It is a practice, which closes the gap, the invisible shield that seems to exist between others and ourselves. It also helps us to stay present with experiences that aren't pleasant. If we can stay present and be open, we will no longer run from people and experiences that aren't comfortable. No longer will they have the power to frighten us and make us flee.

Jan Chozen Bays, in her book *How to Train a Wild Elephant*, draws a parallel between our mind and a wild elephant. When our mind senses danger, it runs away from the present. It might run to pleasant fantasies, to thoughts of future revenge, or just go numb. If it is frightened, it may attack other people, or it may attack inwardly, in silent and corrosive self-criticism. This untamed mind can cause harm to us and to those around us.

Once our mind is tamed, we can remain calm and stable as we encounter the inevitable difficulties the world brings to us. We no longer chose to run away from problems but see them as an opportunity to test and strengthen our physical and mental stability.

Mindfulness allows us to try an alternative way of being in the world. That alternative is resting our awareness in the actual events of the present moment, the sounds heard by the ear, the sensations felt by the skin, the colors and shapes taken in by the eyes. Mindfulness helps stabilize the heart and mind so they are not so badly tossed around by the unexpected things that arrive in our life. If we practice patiently and long enough, eventually we become interested in everything that happens, curious about what we can learn even from adversity and, eventually, even from our own death.

When we are mindful, we are appreciating each moment of the particular life we have been given. It is a way of expressing our gratitude for a gift that we can never repay. Mindfulness can become a constant prayer of gratitude. We are receptive to what has been given to us, moment by moment, by the Great Presence. They are simple gifts; warmth spreading through our hands as we hold a cup of tea, thousands of tiny caresses as clothing touches our skin, the complex music of raindrops, one more breath. When we are able to give full attention to the living truth of each moment we enter the gate to a life of continuous prayer.

Adapted from *How to Train a Wild Elephant*, Jan Chozen Bays

Some Mindful Exercises

Mindful Driving

Bring mindful attention to driving. Notice all the body movements, car movements, sounds, habit patterns, and thoughts involved in driving. (If you do not drive a car, you can bring attention to riding a bike or being a passenger in a car, bus, or train.)

Final Word: True transformation is difficult. It begins with small changes, changes in how we breathe, eat, walk, and drive.

One Bite at a Time

This is a mindfulness practice to do whenever you are eating. After you take a bite, put the spoon or fork back down in the bowl or on the plate. Place your awareness in your mouth until that one bite has been enjoyed and swallowed. Only then pick up the utensil and take another bite. If you are eating with your hands, put the sandwich, apple, or cookie down between bites.

Final Word: There can be no party in the mouth if the mind is not invited to attend.

The Telephone Rings

Each time you hear a telephone ring, chime, or buzz, stop what you are doing and take three mindful breaths to settle the mind before answering. (If you are a receptionist, you may need to shorten this to one or two breaths. The point is to pause and take at least one deep, cleaning breath before answering the call of the bell).

If you get very few calls a day on your telephone, set an alarm to ring several times a day using a long but unusual interval, such as every fifty-three minutes. When the alarm rings, stop and breath.

Final Words: Taking three breaths when the phone rings is like a time-out for adults. It's a pause that refreshes.

The Bottoms of Your Feet

As often as possible during the day, place your awareness in the bottoms of your feet. Become aware of the sensations on the bottoms of the feet such as the pressure of the floor or ground beneath the feet, or the warmth or coolness of the feet. It is particularly important to do so whenever you notice yourself becoming anxious or upset.

Final Word: Placing your awareness in the bottoms of your feet will lead to mental stability and emotional serenity, if you practice it diligently.

The Color Blue

Become aware of the color blue whenever it appears in your environment. Look not just for the obvious instances, such as the sky, but also for subtle appearances and for all variations of blue.

Final Words: We can break out of the dark and narrow prison of self-absorbed mind and find freedom in the luminous sky mind.

Jan Chozen Bays, *How to Train a Wild Elephant* (p. 99-107)

Resources

A Mindfulness Class is offered at St. Stephens Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA. For more information see www.saintstephensrichmond.net , or call 804-288-2867.

Web Site:

www.mindful.org

Books

How to Train a Wild Elephant & Other Adventures in Mindfulness, Jan Chozen Bays, MD
Buddha's Book of Sleep. Sleep Better in Seven Weeks with Mindfulness Meditation. Joseph Emet

My Stroke of Insight. Jill Bolte Taylor, PhD

Mindfulness in Action. Chogyam Trungpa



Generative Practices



Tonglen

Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Pema Chödrön, shares the practice of tonglen as a way of holding suffering and awakening compassion:

In order to have compassion for others, we have to have compassion for ourselves.

In particular, to care about other people who are fearful, angry, jealous, overpowered by addictions of all kinds, arrogant, proud, miserly, selfish, mean—you name it—to have compassion and to care for these people, means not to run from the pain of finding these things in ourselves Instead of fending it off and hiding from it, one could open one's heart and allow oneself to feel that pain, feel it as something that will soften and purify us and make us far more loving and kind.

The tonglen practice is a method for connecting with suffering—ours and that which is all around us—everywhere we go. It is a method for overcoming fear of suffering and for dissolving the tightness of our heart. Primarily it is a method for awakening the compassion that is inherent in all of us, no matter how cruel or cold we might seem to be.

We begin the practice by taking on the suffering of a person we know to be hurting and who we wish to help. For instance, if you know of a child who is being hurt, you breathe in the wish to take away all the pain and fear of that child. Then, as you breathe out, you send the child happiness, joy, or whatever would relieve their pain. This is the core of the practice: breathing in others' pain so they can be well and have more space to relax and open, and breathing out, sending them relaxation or whatever you feel would bring them relief and happiness. However, we often cannot do this practice because we come face to face with our own fear, our own resistance, anger, or whatever our personal pain, our personal stuckness, happens to be at that moment.

At that point you can change the focus and begin to do tonglen for what you are feeling and for millions of others just like you who at that very moment of time are feeling exactly the same stuckness and misery. Maybe you are able to name your pain. You recognize it clearly as terror or revulsion or anger or wanting to get revenge. So you breathe in for all the people who are caught with that same emotion and you send out relief or whatever opens up the space for yourself and all those countless others. Maybe you can't name what you're feeling. But you can feel it—a tightness in the stomach, a heavy darkness, or whatever. Just contact what you are feeling and breathe in, take it in—for all of us and send out relief to all of us.

[You] can do tonglen for all the people who are just like you, for everyone who wishes to be compassionate but instead is afraid, for everyone who wishes to be brave but instead is a coward.

Breathe in for all of us and breathe out for all of us.
Use what seems like poison as medicine. Use your personal suffering as the path to
compassion for all beings.

Adapted from "The Practice of Tonglen" Pema Chodron, www.shambala.org

Resource

Weekly Quotes from Pema Chodron, www.shambala.org/heartadvice

Loving-Kindness Meditation (2,500 Years Old)

Begin with taking 5 abdominal breaths.

- Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen. When you take a deep breath, the hand on the abdomen should rise higher than the one on the chest. This insures that the diaphragm is expanding, pulling air into the bases of the lungs.
- Take a slow deep breath in through your nose imaging that you are sucking in all the air in the room and hold it for account of 7 (or s long as you are able, not exceeding 7)
- Slowly exhale through your mouth for a count of 6-8. The exhalation should be twice as long as inhalation.
- Repeat the cycle four more times for a total of 5 deep breaths.
- Try and reduce your breathing rate to 6 breaths per minute (one breath every 10 seconds)

Then direct the Loving-Kindness Meditation to yourself

**May I be filled with loving kindness
May I be well
May I be peaceful and at ease
May I be happy**

Then direct it towards someone or something that may be causing you discomfort or negative emotions...

**May you be filled with loving kindness
May you be well
May you be peaceful and at ease
May you be happy**

Finish with 5 more deep abdominal breaths.

Prayer of Loving Kindness

May I dwell in the Heart
May I be at Peace
May I be free from Suffering
May I be Healed

May you dwell in the Heart
May you be at Peace
May you be free from Suffering
May you be Healed

-For your family
-For all you meet weekly
-For all you meet weekly –
-For those you do not like –
-For All Beings

This is a great “pray as you go” prayer. It is very helpful when you are feeling anxious about yourself or another. It is useful too when you are feeling angry or unforgiving. Simply substitute their name for the “you” in the prayer. Always begin by praying for yourself, then expand it to your family, all you meet weekly, for those you do not like, and finally for all beings.

The original source of this prayer is unknown, but is rooted in the Buddhist Metta Bhavana Practice.

Resting in Love: A Meditation

How do we come to know love so that we can live from its depths? Love cannot be understood by the mind. And if God is love, God will never be subject to the mind as we know it. God and love can only be experienced. This simple practice is an invitation to encounter love in its very physical, connective reality.

Place the palm of one of your hands on your heart. Feel your heart beating, letting its rhythm bring you into the present moment and into the awareness of God's blessing on your life, beat after beat after beat.

Bring to your conscious mind a loved one, a favorite place or animal, or anything that makes you smile with undeniable, spontaneous, unconditional love and joy.

Bring that particular beloved being or thing down from your mind and place it right under your palm into your heart space. Relax your mind and let your heart relax at the same time, feeling the sensation of blood vessels, muscles, and chest cavity opening in warmth and love for that particular loved thing. Smile.

Now humbly place a challenging person, issue, or problem directly under your palm, within your heart space that is wide open. Silently continue to smile and hold this challenging thing in the warmth of your heart.

With closed eyes, look at the thing that causes you pain, visualizing the detail that bothers you the most, all the while smiling. Consider that there may be reasons why this thing brings hurt. Smile at the fragility, suffering, or misunderstanding that makes it this way.

Finally, give the person or problem to your heart and ask that your heart's wisdom and love take over. Rest in the Love that loves you and the other and wants to transform all into its loving image.

Adapted from *The Heart Math Solution: The Institute of Heart Math's Revolutionary Program for Engaging the Power of the Heart Intelligence*
by Doc Childress and Howard Martin





Relational Practices

Journaling as a Spiritual Practice

God wants to hear from us. He wants to spend time with us, know how our day went, what we're thinking, what's on our mind. He wants to get to know us and wants us to know Him better too.

One way to develop and strengthen that bond with God is to spend time together in prayer, in Bible study, in quiet time or in writing in a journal. Yes, journal writing is like having a date with the most important Person in your life...God.

A journal can hold many things: the events of your day; your concerns; your prayers; your list of things to be thankful for; your praises of God; your musings about people you love, strangers you meet, surprises in your day, a beautiful moment in nature, antics from your favorite animal, an illuminating Scripture, an inspiring quote.

You can record your sadness or gladness, a disappointment or pleasure, a failure or a success, good times and tough times. It might be a long season of illness and recovery or a broken relationship or lost employment. But with faith as your polestar, your words can be building blocks to rejuvenation and renewal, helping sweep you upward to the next summit of spiritual growth.

You may write a few lines or pages upon pages, or maybe just a single word: *love, scared, trust*. Maybe when words don't come or the pen won't move, there will be a splattering of color: crayons drawing a sun, tree or flower, or an abstract painting of red, yellow and blue splashes, or a collage of paper cutouts glued to the page.

Maybe it will be a poem that unfolds from a feeling, or some notes to music your heart hears, or a dream that is a doorway to a new understanding of yourself. Each mark, whether words or image, song or story, is a prayer—an offering, a gift, a stepping-stone toward wholeness, healing or rebirth. Maybe it will appear as a stream of joy and laughter bursting forth as surprise, revealing newfound boldness and bubbling confidence.

Whatever goes into your journal and however you choose to express it, it's yours. Everything you write in your journal helps you to grow deeper in your walk with God, to strengthen your faith, to grow hope, to become more of who you were created to be: a precious child made in God's image; someone God created with love and said, It is good.

How to Begin

1. Set aside a certain time each day.

Is the morning, before you get ready for work or the family awakens, a good time? Is there a free moment or break in your day that's better? Is just before bedtime best, when the house is quiet and so are you?

2. Where is your prayer closet?

Find a calm and quiet place where you can be free from distractions. Many times we read that Jesus went away to pray—in the wilderness, on a mountain, at a lake, on a boat. He knew the importance of a certain place and a time apart. So will you.

3. Date your page.

This is a record of your life-moments and all its seasons—the smooth, the winding, the low, the heights, the bumps and starts along the road. The timeline will always reveal God who directs our path and never leaves us comfortless.

4. Start writing.

A word, a thought, a sentence and more will tumble forth. What is in your heart? Maybe it's nice; maybe not. Say it anyway. Tell your story. Don't judge, don't censure, trust yourself to God's ever-present, compassionate care. And close with, Thy will be done. It leaves every outcome in the hands of God for whom nothing is impossible.

5. Listen.

Take time to pause and listen to God bringing you an answer, an idea or guidance. Be still, and know that I am God.... (Psalm 46:10)

6. Put away your journal in a private place.

Protect your journal writing by keeping it safe. You may wish to share it with another person, if you choose. It's up to you.

7. Read your journal from time to time.

Whether it's weekly, monthly, several times a year or on special occasions like birthdays or New Year's, rejoice in how much you've grown and how much you've overcome. Mark your answered prayers; you'll be amazed. And most of all, see the good gifts of God all around you.

Terri Castillo www.guideposts.org

Resources

The Chrysalis Gathering Space sponsors a journaling group the first Wednesday of each month. For more information contact: www.info@chrysalisinstitute.org or call 804-359-0384.

Writing for Spiritual Growth by Richard H. Schmidt, a pamphlet published by Forward Movement Publications.

St. Stephen's periodically offers a group on spiritual journaling. For more information contact www.saintstephensrichmond.net/

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual Direction is the simple gift of offering to another the gentle but tenacious encouragement to open fully to God's loving presence, and to discern the action of the Spirit in every aspect of life. This encouragement comes from a spiritual director, a person who has long and deep experience in living a spiritual life. Spiritual direction is available for individuals and groups. Both are designed to help you ask questions about your spiritual life and to help you discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of your life.

Carolyn's tips on spiritual direction:

To find a spiritual director ask friends and colleagues for recommendations. Perhaps your diocese or synod can make recommendations. Monasteries and convents are good sources for directors, as are retreat centers, seminaries, and very large churches/cathedrals.

I recommend that you look outside your own networks of work and denomination, especially if you are very connected in your denomination locally. I find that staying too close within your network can result in the conversations becoming work and gossip oriented.

I do not recommend that it be your parish priest or pastor.

A spiritual director should have their own spiritual director and/or be involved in a peer group. It is absolutely okay to ask them if they do.

It is absolutely okay to interview a potential director, asking them about their direction style (how directive are they; do they give homework?); their recommendation on how often to meet, their theology...

Set a trial period of 4-6 months and then do a mutual evaluation of how the direction is working for both of you. This will give you a graceful way out if the chemistry just doesn't click.

Some directors do charge a fee.

Carolyn M. Chilton

Resources

Spiritual Direction Resources

Richmond Hill www.richmondhillva.org

Grace Moves (Midlife Transition Coaching) Mimi Weaver: mimi@gracemoves.com



Creative Practices

How to Make a Vision Board

A vision board is a collage of images, pictures and affirmations of your dreams and all of the things that make you happy. It can also be called a dream board, treasure map or vision map. Vision boards will help you feel positive in reaching and accomplishing your goals.

Decide the main theme of your board. It may be based on something specific you wish to accomplish or obtain, or it may be a general idea of everything that makes you happy.

Find pictures that correspond with your theme, either from old magazines, photographs, or from the Internet.



1. Print (if necessary) and cut out your pictures.
2. Type or write some affirmations that correspond with your theme.
3. Glue your pictures and affirmations to your poster board and pin them to your cork board.
4. Hang your vision board in a place you will see every day.
5. View your board at least once a day, and focus on the objects, sayings and theme of your board.

Things You Will Need

- Cork board
- Poster Board
- Pictures
- Glue
- Scissors

Tips

You may wish to place a picture of yourself in the center as it shows you being surrounded by the things you desire.

Don't be afraid to change your board to reflect more specific thoughts, or a new theme.

Warnings

Only attach pictures that pertain to your theme. You should even pay attention to small unwanted items in the background of pictures.

www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Vision-Board



Making a Mandala

Mandala, the Sanskrit word for circle, is a Hindu and Buddhist symbol for the universe. It represents the Whole of which we are a part. In Carl Jung's words, a mandala is a safe refuge of inner reconciliation and wholeness.

There are many ways to make your own mandala; the following is just one idea. Begin by gathering all the materials you'll need (a large sheet of blank paper, extra paper, scissors, pencil, compass, coloring pencils, markers, paints, etc.). Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed for the next hour.

You might start with silence or by journaling, setting an intention for this time and practice. Bring to heart and mind four areas in your life or the world for which you desire healing. Record them on a spare piece of paper using words, symbols, or colors.

Cut the large piece of paper into a square. Mark the center of the page with a small dot and use a compass to draw a circle a couple of inches from the edge of the paper (if you don't have a compass, trace a small plate or bowl). Within the circle, draw a square and divide it into four quadrants. In each section, draw an image or design that represents each desire. Beginning at the corners of the squares, create concentric circles with repeating shapes or curving lines. Work meditatively, gradually moving toward the edge of the circle and beyond. Add color if you wish, filling in the design methodically and slowly.

When you have finished creating your mandala, consecrate the time, energy, and focus you've given to the healing and wholing of self and world. Spend some time simply gazing with non-judgmental eyes at the mandala and surrendering your desires and expectations.

Tibetan and Navajo rituals involve ceremonially destroying their intricate sand mandalas after completion. When your mandalas has served its purpose, you might choose to intentionally burn, bury, or somehow let go of it.

Richard Rohr The Center for Action and Contemplation. www.cac.org

Resources

Books

Creating Mandalas: For Insight, Healing, and Self-Expression and The Mandala Workbook: A Creative Guide for Self-Exploration, Balance, and Well-Being, Susanne F. Fincher

Using a Scrapbook as an aid to Contemplation

Create a collection of personally meaningful images, quotes, prayers and poems. Place them in a scrapbook. This action will serve as your inspiration guide, and you can refer to it when you need a little push. Feel free to add and remove from it as you wish; it can represent an ever- evolving record of what is interesting and significant to you.

Use this scrapbook as a reference to engage in open-ended and self-reflective creative work. Sit silently to relax and focus your mind. Gently breathe in and gently breathe out. After a few minutes, refer to your scrapbook. Browse it quietly for a few minutes, lingering over the images you have collected. You may find that a question or response arises naturally in your mind.

Contemplative Mind in Society

From the Contemplative Mind in Society www.contemplativemind.org

Resources

Internet Link

<http://dmax8507.blogspot.com/> for an example of her journal.



Other Practices

A Process for Beginning a Spiritual Practice

The following preparation process is a general and simple way to ready ourselves for practice. It may need to be modified or adapted to fit a particular practice, but the pattern lends itself to such personal adaptation.

- Quiet yourself
- Breathe attentively
- Pray
- Make an intention

At the end of the practice, it is helpful to reverse the process with a few changes. Just as there needs to be an internal shift when beginning practice, there needs to be another internal shift as you transition back into the regular round of responsibilities and activities of your day. Again, a simple process will suffice.

- Offer gratitude to God
- Breathe attentively
- Gather together a nosegay
- Create a record

From: *Strength for the Journey* by Renee Miller (pages 131-134)

Centering Prayer Before a Meeting

Instructions for Centering Prayer:

Close your eyes and totally relax. Rest your hands in your lap.

Be receptive to God's presence and direction.

Breathe in a slow deep breath...Hold it. Breathe out slowly emptying all of the air.

Breathe in

Breathe out

Breathe in

Breathe out

Prayerfully ponder anything that may block you from participating fully in this joyful day
Pass it now, over to God's loving care

Stop

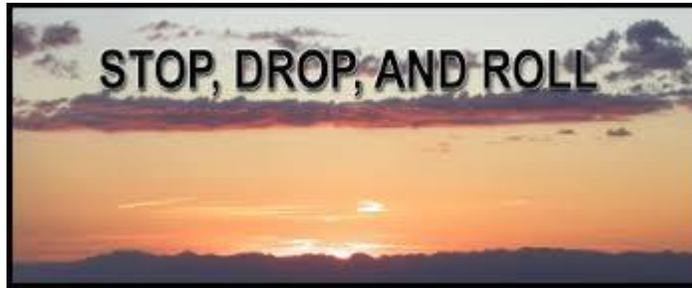
Breathe in

Breathe out

Heavenly Father, we ask for your presence, as we gather together in your Name. Help us Lord, to recognize each unique gift that you have most graciously given every one of us. Provide us with strength and guidance to fully use these gifts and talents to thy service. We pray in Christ's name.

Amen

By Jody Pully, Grace and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA



Many of us have heard the directions...if you catch on fire, what you must do is, STOP, DROP AND ROLL. If you are on fire and you run, you only give the fire more oxygen so the natural reaction only exacerbates the problem. Metaphorically, the advice to Stop, Drop and Roll can be applied to times in our lives when we are not literally on fire, but when we are caught in emotional or spiritual conflagrations. In this event, stop means... don't give a knee jerk reaction...take a moment...collect yourself. Drop means, pay attention to your breathing...which tends to get very shallow when we are tense...pay attention to any muscles that might be tensed and relax...pay attention to your heart rate and breathe deeply and fully...let everything drop to a calmer place. Then...you are ready to roll with it...do what needs to be done...but do it thoughtfully and calmly.

The Reverend Bollin Millner, Jr. Rector, Grace and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church,
Richmond, VA

Keep a Gratitude Journal

As you go through the day, keep a little notebook handy and date it. Pay attention to the many good things which take place, all the connections with people, pets, beauty, bird song, wind and sky. So many things to notice. So very much for which to be grateful. Just before bed, record the day's entries in a journal. Take time to remember, and ponder, God's nearness to you throughout your day.

Here are just a few examples:

- a warm bath on such a cold and dreary day
- my dog nestled so close to me
- Mike, always a big hug when he sees me
- for the sparrows who shelter for the night in the vine beneath my bedroom window
- Mr. Cardinal with a song for me, high atop the electric pole in the alley
- a loving talk with my cousin Ann
- the hibiscus is laden with huge red blossoms the size of dinner plates
- a Halloween beetle, black and orange, came to visit the window screen
- the quality of the light this mid -day. It's luminosity
- first to see the archer, both feet firmly planted, straddling the clear night sky
- the tree, so golden, it's leaves spinning and twisting and dropping

To quote Brother Curtis Almquist, (Society of Saint John the Evangelist www.ssje.org/word)
“How can you thank the Lord for all the good things he has done for you? I don't know the answer for you, but it's already in your heart. Try to find the words today, and tomorrow, and the next to give testimony to the deepest love of your life.”

Resource

Internet

www.greatfullness.org

Going to God in Prayer

A Meditation based on the Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
What do you want to make possible in my life today?

hallowed be your Name,
What ordinary things in my life do you want me to see as holy (extra-ordinary)?
your kingdom come,

How can your kingdom be present in and through me today?
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Where do I need your guidance? For what in my life do I need to say, YOUR will be done?
Give us today our daily bread.

What nourishment for mind, body and spirit do I need today?
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

I ask for forgiveness for:
I want to forgive:

Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.
Where do I need your protection?

How can I protect others?
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

I give you praise and thanksgiving for:

Carolyn M. Chilton, carolynmoomawchilton@gmail.com.
adapted from the writings of John Westerhoff.

Daily Examen

Sit comfortably in your chair or you may move to the floor. Close your eyes. Notice your feet. Plant them firmly on the floor. Relax them. Uncurl your toes. Notice your legs and knees. Relax your back and hips so that your legs are relaxed. Notice your arms. Let them fall loosely. Rest your hands, unclench them. Put your shoulders down, stretch out your neck and release the tensions. Close your eyes gently. Let your tongue drop to the bottom of your mouth. Unclench your teeth. Notice your breathing. Take a deep breath in through your mouth, let it out through your nose. Do this two more times.

Now, in your mind, go back to yesterday. Take a few moments to review the day with thanksgiving. Walk through yesterday's 24 hours, hour by hour, place to place, person to person, thanking God for everything you encounter.

Notice your feelings-positive and negative- as you re-play the day. Simply pay attention to the feelings as they surface. Feelings are the liveliest index to what is happening in our lives.

Now, choose one of the remembered feelings that most caught your attention. This feeling is a sign that something important is going on. Now simply express spontaneously the prayer that surfaces as you attend to this feeling-maybe it is a prayer of Thanksgiving, or a petition for help, sorrow for a wrong done or a cry for help or healing.

Now, move ahead to tomorrow. What does tomorrow hold for you? How would you like to live tomorrow? Out of your earlier feelings in prayer, what would you like to do differently tomorrow?

Finally, give thanks for your life. Name all the qualities of your life for which you are grateful. breath, body, people, colors, home, food, work...Speak a word of thanksgiving for each.

Speak a word of thanksgiving for yourself and all that you are to the world.

You may open your eyes when you are ready, and allow a few minutes to write down any thoughts or feelings that arose for you.

Close with the Lord's Prayer

adapted from Ignatius Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises

Resource

For more on The Daily Examen see: www.ignationspirituality.com

Lectio Divina Instructions



Lectio Divina is Latin for spiritual reading or holy reading. It is the ancient prayer practice that allows us to encounter the Living God through His written Word.

When we practice Lectio Divina, we are saying to God... Here I am. I am listening. I want You to speak into my life, for I know that when You do, I will be helped, healed and changed. In Lectio Divina, we come with an open heart and without an agenda... this allows God to do His work in us, as He chooses.

We begin by quieting our heart and mind and turning our focus to God. It helps me to remember that I am entering into the presence of the Living God who is HERE... present with me in this place, this holy space. I let everything else go, as best as I can, and set the time aside for being with God and hearing His voice.

Choose a short passage- just a few verses. We recommend the Book of Psalms in the Bible, or a story from one of the Gospels.

Make yourself comfortable in a place that is as free from interruptions as possible. Begin with silence for a few minutes, humbly asking God to quiet your heart and make you aware that you are in His loving presence.

When you are ready, begin reading and praying through the four movements, described below with both the Latin and English word that summarizes each one. With time and

practice, these movements will become so simple and easy, because they flow naturally from one to the other:

Lectio (READ): On the first reading, simply open yourself to the presence of God. Read the passage slowly and prayerfully, allowing short pauses between sentences. (Over time you will discover whether it is more helpful for you to read silently or out loud- try them both...) As you read, take in the words and the overall flow of the passage. Then allow a time of silence following the reading- continue to open yourself to the Spirit of God.

Meditation (REFLECT): On the second prayerful reading of the passage, listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God wants to speak to you. You will notice your attention being drawn to something (or if this doesn't happen, just choose a word). Once you have received the word or phrase, begin to silently meditate on that. Reflect on why God would highlight this for you today, ask Him any questions that come to mind, and note things that seem important as you meditate on what He has given you. Remember that the focus is on listening to what God has to say to you.

Oratio (RESPOND): On the third prayerful reading of the passage, listen now for God's invitation, and respond from your heart. The Living God is always inviting us in some way... to let go of something, or to take up something; to do something or be something... the invitation can take innumerable forms. Following the reading, continue to listen for His invitation and then respond silently or out loud from an honest heart.

Contemplatio (REST): The focus of the fourth prayerful reading of the passage is to simply rest now in the love that God has for you. Let the words wash over you- there is no further need to reflect or respond- allow God's Spirit to draw you close and fill you with His love, grace and peace. Linger in this place of deep connection, for you are being filled and refreshed for your continuing journey.

We encourage you to take a word, phrase or image with you when it is time to return to the day... something to which you can return throughout the day... something that will remind you of the love of God for you, and the special message He had for you today.

by. Macrina Wiederkehr www.journeycenter.org

<i>Resources</i>

Reading the Bible with Your Heart Felecia W. Smith, pamphlet from Forward Movement Publications.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA has a group, which meets weekly on Tuesday mornings. The group uses a similar format. For more information contact: 804-643-3589.



The Meaning to Pause Bracelet

This is a device designed to interrupt our day. It is a bracelet that vibrates at set intervals (every sixty or ninety minutes) reminding us to Pause. The concept is very similar to Phyllis Tickle's Casio watch (see Gary Jones's article "On Spiritual Discipline"). It is not unlike the monastery bells which chime five times a day calling everyone to prayer, or the Muslim call to prayer which even summons the street vendors in NYC to stop and pause for prayer.

It is a wakeup call that brings us out of our trance and back to the present moment.

Here are a few suggestions on how to pause:

- Take a few deep cleansing breaths
- Reflect on the abundance in your life
- Text a family member with an uplifting message
- Be still and know that God is with you...right now
- Forgive someone for something they have done
- Recite your favorite prayer
- Pray for someone who is ill or suffering
- Stop and be grateful for the beauty around you
- Give thanks for all the blessings in your life
- Drop your shoulders, breathe, and relax
- Look in the mirror and SMILE

"Living in the moment brings you a sense of reverence for all of life's blessings."(Oprah Winfrey)

To order a bracelet: www.meaningtopause.com



The Jesus Prayer

Let's look closely at the familiar Eastern Orthodox prayer, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner. These words hold rich meaning. Let's look at the words.

Lord—While the word can connote dominion and hierarchical authority (the Greek, *kurios*, means master), remember the authority with which Jesus taught was an inner authority, born of his awareness that he was God's own child. And we have inherited this power!

Jesus Christ—He is both human and divine, personal and infinite. Jesus was a common name (Joshua in Hebrew); Christ means anointed, chosen. We need both to ground us in the ordinary, suffering world and to draw us toward the heaven of union.

Sinner—Remember that sin is simply that which keeps us from knowing and living out of our True Self. We are forgetful of our inherent belovedness. Don't think of sin as just individual nastiness, which is largely shame-based thinking and in itself does not get you to a good place. We settle for moralism when we do not get to mysticism.

Mercy—We need the salvation of Love to overcome our fear-based disconnection, to return us to wholeness. Abundant, never-withheld, restorative grace brings us back into intimacy with self, God, and others. Pope Francis says that mercy is the highest virtue in the hierarchy of Christian truths.

Using this prayer as a focal point, say the words repeatedly until the prayer moves from your head into your heart and you connect with the Presence already praying ceaselessly within.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner. Richard Rohr www.cac.org

Resource

Pamphlet *Using the Jesus Prayer* Forward Movement Publications
www.forwardmovement.org

Self-Compassion Break

The self-compassion break involves using a set of memorized phrases that are repeated silently whenever you want to give yourself compassion. They are most useful in the heat of the moment, whenever strong feelings of distress arise. Perhaps when you are caught in a traffic jam, when you are arguing with a loved one, when you are worrying about your health, when you feel like you've failed in some way or perhaps when you are feeling physical pain. The point is to validate your own pain and soothe and comfort yourself with compassion.

1. Put both hands on your heart, pause, and feel their warmth. You can also put your hand on any other place on your body that feels soothing and comforting like your belly or your face. If you're in public you can even fold your arms and squeeze them gently - no one needs to know what you're doing!
2. Breathe deeply in and out
3. Speak these words to yourself (out loud or silently) in a warm tone:

This is a moment of suffering
Suffering in a part of life
May I be kind to myself
May I give myself the compassion I need

The first phrase, *This is a moment of suffering* is designed to bring mindfulness to the fact that you're in pain. Other possible wordings for this phrase are *I'm having a really hard time right now*, *It's painful for me to feel this now*, etc.

The second phrase, *Suffering is part of life* is designed to remind you that imperfection is part of the shared human experience. Other possible wordings are *Everyone feels this way sometimes*, *This is part of being human*, etc.

The third phrase *May I be kind to myself in this moment* is designed to help bring a sense of caring concern to your present moment experience. Other possible wordings are *May I support myself like a good friend*, *May I be gentle and understanding with myself*, etc.

The final phrase, *May I give myself the compassion I need*, firmly sets your intention to be self-compassionate. Other possible wordings are *I am worthy of receiving self-compassion*, *I will try to be as compassionate as possible*, etc.

Find the four phrases that seem most comfortable for you, and repeat until they're memorized. Then, the next time you judge yourself or have a difficult experience you can

use your self-compassion mantra as a way of reminding yourself to be self-compassionate.
It's a handy tool to help soothe and calm troubled states of mind.

From Mindful Magazine, December 2014, www.mindful.org



Light a Candle

Lighting candles has long been a sacred ritual in all traditions, creating precious moments in our own and other people's lives.

Link hearts with friends and loved ones, punctuate a prayer, ask for or give support, mark an anniversary... a death... a birth... a birthday... healing...friendship...or just to affirm this moment.

Resources

Virtual candles

www.thecenterforhealingarts.com/light-a-candle/

Actual candles, Richmond, VA

Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, during services

St. Stephen's Celtic Service, 5:30 PM, Sundays. During one portion of the service you may go to a bank of candles and light one or more candles for intercession.



Children's castles, lovers' footprints

The agony of drying starfish

All gone

As the surf wipes clean the beach

With fresh waves coming from the vastness of the ocean

Let the breath wipe away yesterday's words this morning's thoughts

and the tightness that remains of them until there is only this moment's freshness

Joseph Emet, *Buddha's Book of SI*

