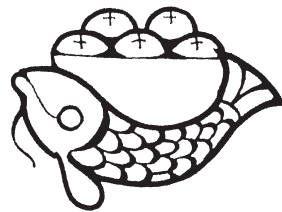


MONEY:

From Cultural Addiction to Spiritual Freedom

Spiritual Practices



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Introduction

Christina Feldman and Jack Kornfield, in *Stories of the Spirit*, *Stories of the Heart* from *Everyday Mind*, provide a beautiful context for the spiritual practices outlined in the following pages:

“The secret of beginning a life of deep awareness and sensitivity lies in our willingness to pay attention. Our growth as conscious, awake human beings is marked not so much by grand gestures and visible renunciations as by extending loving attention to the minutest particulars of our lives.

Every relationship, every thought, every gesture is blessed with meaning through the wholehearted attention we bring to it. In the complexities of our minds and lives we easily forget the power of attention, yet without attention we live only on the surface of existence.

It is just simple attention that allows us truly to listen to the song of a bird, to see deeply the glory of an autumn leaf, to touch the heart of another and be touched. We need to be fully present in order to love a single thing whole-

heartedly. We need to be fully awake in this moment if we are to receive and respond to the learning inherent in it.”

The following spiritual practices help us to slow down and pay attention to our everyday living with some particular examination of our life energy and money in our lives. These spiritual practices are practical suggestions whereby we are invited to shift from our normal cultural addiction of “not having enough” to the spiritual freedom of attending to the sufficiency of all that we have already in our lives. These practices on the issues of Simplicity, Slowing Down, Sabbath and Money are meant to be “played with” as each of us is at different points in our spiritual journeys. However, all of these spiritual practices invite us to clear our minds, open our hearts and become grounded in our bodies, as we become present to divine presence within and all around us always available in the present moment.

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The Practice of Presence

Adapted from Thich Nhat Hanh

Description

With three deep breaths, we intentionally come into the present moment with an understanding that the more Present we are to our own life and experience, the more awake and transparent we become to the Divine Presence always in our midst.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This practice can be used anytime but can be used before, during, and after a challenging encounter. Actually, it should be used as often as possible.

Sequence

A first deep breath, to consciously let go of the past, the residue of the day, whatever tension, fatigue or preoccupation you may be carrying with you.

A second deep breath, to arrive more fully in this present moment – to really land in the here and now and to be more fully present.

A third deep breath, to open to what comes next—to open body, heart and mind and Spirit to what God has for you in this moment.

We invite you to bring your attention to a kinesthetic awareness of your body, which is, of course, always conveniently located in the present moment. If seated, sit comfortably upright, feet on the floor. Close your eyes, if you are comfortable doing so. Or perhaps just a soft

downward gaze. Take a moment to really feel your body in the chair, here in the present moment. Let the weight of your body relax into the chair. Feel your feet on the floor, your legs and hips resting on the chair, back comfortably straight, shoulders and neck relaxed. And, for a few moments, pay attention to your breathing. Simply paying attention to your breathing usually will naturally tend to deepen it slightly. And, as you breathe, relax the muscles of your face and head, where most of us tend to hold a lot of tension. Relax the muscles of your neck and throat; your jaw muscles and mouth. Relax your eyes and the muscles around your eyes. Relax your forehead, your cheeks, all the small muscles of the face down to and including your chin. Relax your ears and the entire scalp.

And as you continue to breathe, just be simply and quietly present – present to this place, this room, the energy of the people around you, present to yourself, your experience, your life, present to this moment, the fullness of the here and now, and present to the Divine Presence in whom we are resting, living, moving and having our being.

When you open your eyes, try to maintain a sense of this presence.

Activating the Heart

Description

Drawing on the research of the HeartMath Institute, we understand that the human heart has its own intelligence and its own electromagnetic field thousands of times more powerful than that of the brain. This practice is oriented toward “illuminating the mind with the heart’s knowing.” Positive feelings – such as love, caring, gratitude and compassion – create orderly “coherent” frequency patterns in the heart’s electromagnetic signal which affect that person’s brain rhythms and can even affect the people around that person. We are increasingly coming to understand that such feelings are a creative force in our world.

Sequence

Following “The Practice of Presence,” with eyes still closed, focus your attention in the area of

the heart, the center of the chest. For a few minutes, breathe as if the breath is coming in through the heart and out through the heart. While breathing in this manner, focus your intention toward a sincere feeling of appreciation – appreciation for the good things in your life, for the people in your life, appreciation for life itself. Allow your heart to awaken and open to a sincere feeling of appreciation, gratitude, compassion, love. Lock on to that feeling through the breath. Let your breath carry and communicate that feeling, allowing it to radiate outward into the world. Gently allow your consciousness, the activity of your mind, to come into alignment with your heart’s rhythm and to rest in that alignment, in a coherent pattern of emotional energy and intelligence.

Vice to Virtue Conversion

Description

To awaken your heart, notice how your personality (Enneagram type) keeps you in bondage or addicted to a way of being. When you have “personalized the map” of the Enneagram, begin to recognize the particular ways the negative aspects of your personality type affect your thoughts, feelings and body sensations. This practice invites you to gently dis-identify with the personality fixation (“passion” or “vice”) by first simply relaxing the categories of your type (via *negativa*). Then create a receptive inner space, and allow the natural arising of the corresponding “virtue,” bringing into consciousness (via *positiva*) the essential quality of your type which manifests when you are less fixated and more fully present. If you are not familiar with the Enneagram, you might still be able to relate to some of the various “passions” or “vices” and “virtues” listed below.

When this spiritual practice might be used

This practice can be used when you are aware of an ongoing sense of being “stuck” on your spiritual journey. Pray to release the vice and affirm the virtue.

Sequence

Via Negativa: As you recognize the increasingly familiar experience of the negative aspects of your personality type, the particular way you experience the “passion” or “vice” associated with your type, use this recognition as a cue to gently dis-identify with this fixated energy.

Simply begin to focus on your breathing, breathing in and breathing out. Relax into yourself. Bring your intention inward. Focus on the breath, and allow your awareness to be carried downward with the breath, dropping down through the throat, the chest, relax right through the solar plexus, to the center of your being, about an inch below the navel, the deepest place where breath and attention join.

Rest in that place, in simple receptivity, allowing your awareness to be carried by the movements of the breath as they naturally occur in the belly. Just allow your awareness to be carried there, in and down, to a simple awareness of sensation, to a place of unknowing, neither fleeing nor resisting, simply allowing your awareness to be carried by the breath that is always “now.”

Via Positiva: In this state of receptive awareness, allow the corresponding “virtue” of your type to arise into your consciousness. This is not something you have to manufacture, but an essential quality of your being. Allow the *thought* of this virtue to enter your *mind*. Allow the *energy* of this quality of being to enter your *body*. Allow the *feeling* of this virtue to enter your *heart*.

Allow all three centers to come into alignment with the *spiritual* quality of this virtue as a *coherent pattern of wholeness*, and allow yourself to rest in this liberated aspect of your essential nature.

Vice

- 1 **Anger:** repressed, leading to continual frustration and dissatisfaction with self and others.
- 2 **Pride:** inability or unwillingness to acknowledge one's own suffering.
- 3 **Deceit:** believing that we are only the ego self; our efforts put into developing our egos instead of our true nature.
- 4 **Envy:** feeling that something fundamental is missing; others possess qualities we lack.
- 5 **Avarice:** feel lack of inner resources; too much interaction may lead to depletion; hold on to resources, minimize needs.
- 6 **Fear:** anxiety; afraid of things that are not actually happening now; apprehension and worry about possible future events.
- 7 **Gluttony:** insatiable desire to "fill oneself up" with experiences; try to overcome feelings of inner emptiness by pursuing a variety of positive, stimulating ideas and activities.
- 8 **Lust:** driven by a constant need for intensity, control, self-extension; push everything in our lives to assert ourselves willfully.
- 9 **Sloth:** a desire to be unaffected by life; an unwillingness to arise with the fullness of one's vitality to fully engage with life.

Virtue

- Serenity:** acceptance; working with what is; peace of the heart with regard to the external world.
- Humility:** sense of benevolence for self and others; love I am participating in is free and real.
- Authenticity:** sense of appreciation, delight in our life; what's here is so precious, exquisite; God revealing God's self to us at all times.
- Equanimity:** inner calm; allowing the heart to accept the radical truth about what happening to arise without identification or rejection.
- Non-attachment:** recognize everything is always changing moment to moment; can only be conscious in the moment; faith and trust in the abundance and fullness of life itself.
- Courage:** dancing in the flow of reality; absolute faith that I am supported by Being itself; a knowing in the heart that Being is here for me.
- Sobriety:** a clarity of heart; appreciation for everything, down to the smallest thing; instead of seeking abundance, reveling in abundance.
- Innocence:** vulnerable, innocent heart; not rejecting of anything; tied into the whole fabric of life; playful, spontaneous, truthful heart.
- Engagement:** awake, engaged heart; engaged with reality as it is presenting itself now; want to be in this world now; aware of dynamism of universe; quality of action.

The Enneagram of Letting Go

Adapted from Don Riso and Russ Hudson

Description

To awaken your heart, take a few moments to move through each of these nine steps slowly in order to move more deeply into divine Presence. (The steps in this process are not directly related to the Nine Enneagram Personality types). The steps are cumulative and bring the qualities of the previous steps into the next one.

When this spiritual practice might be used

This practice can be used when there is a need to let go of a situation or circumstance and come more clearly into the present moment with a compassionate heart. This practice is particularly helpful when you are in the “grip” of the less healthy aspects of your personality type.

Sequence

9 Presence: Allows us to see that we are in a state of identification with some negative or unwanted way of being. Presence ushers in increased awareness and the capacity to follow these nine steps for letting go.

1 See It: With the support of Presence, we are able to see that we are identified with something – a view, a reaction, the need to be right, a painful feeling, a fantasy – you describe it. We recognize that we are stuck in some aspect of our personality and have been in a trance. “Catching ourselves in the act” and coming to our senses.

2 Say It: We consciously name the state of being we have just recognized. We “Say It” – “I am angry,” “I am irritable,” “I’m bored,” “I’m

fed up with so-and-so.” We name this state of being without analyzing it or judging it.

3 Sense It: The process shifts from our mind to our body. We “Sense It.” Every intense emotional or mental state causes some kind of physical reaction. It might be a clenched jaw, a tightness in the stomach, a headache, tension in the neck, a holding of our breath (e.g., when I am angry with my spouse, I clench my teeth and feel tension in my neck). At this step, we do not think about it or visualize it, we simply sense what it feels like, right now.

4 Stay With It: We stay with the sensation of the tension or energy we have located in our body. If we do not stay with the tension, our state will not be released. If we are able to stay with it, underlying feelings of emotional pain or anxiety may begin to arise. If this occurs, we need compassion for ourselves so that we will be able to stay present to these feelings.

5 Relax: If we have gone through the first four steps, we will feel something opening in us and tensions dropping away. We “Relax.” We will feel lighter and more awake. We do not force this, rather by staying with our tensions and sensations in point four, we allow the process of relaxation to unfold in us. As we relax, we may uncover deeper layers in ourselves, and anxiety will often arise and create tension. To the degree that we can allow both relaxation and the sensation of our anxiety, the states that have been gripping us will continue to let go. The action of bringing both tensions and emotional patterns into the light of awareness dissolves them.

6 Respire: We remember to breathe. We “Respire.” It means being more aware of our

breath. We allow the relaxation of point Five to “touch” our breathing. This is important because the more we are engaged with the concerns of our personality, the more constricted and shallow our breathing is. Breathing grounds us and helps release blocked emotional energy. We do not try to escape from whatever comes up emotionally, but continue to breathe through it. As we do this, we may begin to feel the sense of ourselves expanding. We may feel more “real,” more centered.

7 Reconnect: We “Reconnect” with a fuller sense of ourselves and the world around us. We start letting our sensory impressions come into our awareness (e.g., notice the sunlight on the wall, the temperature or air quality, texture or color of clothing). Reconnecting means opening up to whatever part of our experience we were not previously allowing in. Our usual associations are not attached to our experiences. Our habitual goals, agendas, and internal scripts drop away. We see and we hear, and we sense, internally and externally, with greater clarity. We will not react to other people in the ways that our habits have previously compelled us to. When we are entranced by our personality, we believe that we know what the other person is “always like” and what they will do, but when we reconnect with them, we realize how much we do not know about them. We appreciate the mystery of their Being because we are more connected with our own Being.

8 Reframe: We “Reframe” the situation that we believed was causing our problems. We see

our entire situation in a more objective light, and from this place of balance and clarity, we discover a way to handle it more effectively. If, for example, we were angry with someone, we may be able to see the hurt and fear of that person so that we can speak to them with more compassion and acceptance. If we have felt overwhelmed by a problem or situation, reconnecting with something more real inside ourselves gives us the ability to see that we actually are up to the task. Or we may see that we have bitten off more than we can chew and that we need to ask for help. Reframing puts ourselves and our problems into a much broader perspective.

9 Presence: Finally, we return to point nine, where we open to more Presence and, with it, increased awareness and the capacity to go through these nine steps again as needed.

This “Process Model” works well with the Enneagram Passions and Virtues. As we become more aware of how our particular Enneagram Passion causes us to lose our center and become distorted in our thinking, feeling and doing, this process can remind us of the need to cultivate awareness through presence. Presence then allows us to observe ourselves, address our behaviors, and move to a healthier level in our consciousness. With practice, we may experience greater emergence of our Virtues manifested in a heart freed from our Passions.

Review of the Day

This exercise adapted from an Ignatian form of daily self-examination.

Thanksgiving

Look back over the day and notice where you need to be thankful. Do not simply choose what you think you “ought” to be thankful for, but by merely reflecting on the day see what emerges. Notice how you feel towards what is shown to you. Do you see a giftedness in your life? Do you sense your own poverty? Allow gratitude to take hold of you and express it to God.

Asking for Insight

Next pray for enlightenment, asking the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts. This is not simply a going back over your own analysis of the day but an opening of your heart to God with the willingness to see what God wants to reveal.

Looking for God in All Things

Again look back over the events of the day, this time be aware of when you experienced the presence of God in your life. It may be that you were conscious of God in yourself or in others. Notice your interior moods, feelings, urges, movements. Was there any joy, pain, turmoil, increase of love, anger, harmony, conscious prayer, isolation, or fulfillment present? In what general direction do you feel you are being drawn by God? How have you been responding to these experiences or situations?

Expressing Repentance and Gratitude

Seek forgiveness from God for the moments when you were unresponsive to the divine presence and love. Ask for a deepening sorrow for the things and attitudes that distance you from the Creator God who loves you. Praise God for those times when you have sensed your closeness and cooperation with God's purpose. Someone has written, “Life takes a lot of consecrating, but when it is lived thankfully it is well on the way to becoming a holy thing.” Reflect on the “holiness” of your life.

Receiving Help and Guidance for Tomorrow

Finally ask God for what you will need tomorrow. It may be that you want to pray to overcome something or to accept a “thorn in the flesh.” Perhaps there is a need for perseverance or for a greater sensitivity to God's presence in your life. Maybe also there are some things or attitudes to let go of or a sense that you need to love more. Remember that alone it is difficult to change old patterns but God the Holy Spirit is our strength and support as we try to grow more fully into God's image.

Simplicity:

Daily Noticing Simple Abundance

Description

Sarah Ban Breathnach in *Simple Abundance* suggests that we keep a journal to bear witness to the goodness and generosity already present in our lives. She suggests that at the heart of this journal is the awakening that we already possess all we need to be genuinely happy and peaceful. This journal helps us notice that all we need is the awareness of what we already have in our lives.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This spiritual practice might be particularly helpful if there is excessive fear and worry about the future. This practice pulls us back to this day and the blessings that are flowing right now in our lives. This spiritual practice might be of service if there is excessive anguish about the past as well. Again this spiritual practice helps us bring attention to the blessings present in each day.

Sequence

Each night or at the beginning of the day, reflect back on the last 24 hours and write down five gifts from the previous day. Each day, simply write down five different blessings from the past day. Some days the list will come easy and then other days the list may come only after some thought. The “need” for five gifts each day begins to change the way we live throughout the day. Breathnach claims that if you list out five distinct gifts each day, without repetition, in two months you will not look at your life in the same way you might now. She claims: “Gratitude can lead you, as it did me, away from the darkness of complicated need into the light of Simple Abundance.”

Simplicity:

Seeing Anew

Description

This is a practice which helps us “see” with new eyes that which is right before us. With focused attention, we can notice something new or see a familiar sight in a new way. This spiritual practice allows us to develop our attention and curiosity about the beauty and sacredness already existent in our lives.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This practice might be used when we find ourselves “wanting” new things in our lives. As we notice our yearning for a new car or a new kitchen or book, we might pause and consider what is already in our lives and “look again” by practicing this way of seeing.

Sequence

You might want to carry a small notepad around with you during the day and simply list “Things I noticed today that I’ve missed until today.”

Poet and doctor William Carlos Williams did this on a regular basis. Make notes about what you see in the morning or in your home or on your walk that you are seeing anew. In the morning, remind yourself that during the day you are going to notice something new or see something very familiar to you with a new curiosity. You might want to engage your family in this activity and share discoveries in the evening or at the dinner table. What did you notice today that you’ve missed until today?

Simplicity:

Ordinary Creativity

Description

Picasso said that every child is creative. The problem, he suggested, is how to remain an artist as the child grows up into adulthood. What if, asked Gay Hendricks in *A Year of Living Consciously*, we invested every action with creativity and love? What if “sweeping the sidewalks, reading to a child, cooking a meal, writing a report, and even sleeping were conscious actions filled from the well of your creativity?”

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This practice might be used if you find yourself bored or looking for some outside stimulation. Perhaps you are tired of a routine in your life (washing the dishes or vacuuming the living room) or even resentful of a particular task or duty in your life.

This may be useful if you find yourself not looking forward to a day of chores or errands or even to an outing to visit relatives.

Sequence

Identify one activity that is boring or repetitive or that has some “resentment” around it for you – such as preparing daily meals, doing the laundry or sitting through meetings at work. Before the activity, pause and consider: “What might I do so this is more creative or even fun?” Allow yourself a few minutes to become open to divine presence and to consider several possibilities. You might even ask yourself: “What would it look like if Love entered this situation?” Choose one simple change, in the direction of fun or creativity, for the chosen repetitive activity and notice how this experience shifts for you.

Simplicity:

Checking in with Our Family Life

Description

This practice allows you to look at your family life using a set of questions, which might be of service to you at this point in the life of your family. These inquiries are meant to be “invitations” towards simplicity and not “judgments” about current complexities. These questions might invite more simplicity or less stressful living into the life of your family.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This might be helpful to review when you are entering a new church season such as Advent or Lent or as a way to mark any time as spiritual time with family. This practice may be helpful if the family seems to be in “overwhelm” on a constant basis and you sense a need to slow down in order to bring more peace into the family environment.

Sequence

You might want to find some private time to review these questions alone, taking your time, without judgment, but with the attitude of possibility. You might want to read through these questions with your spouse or children. Perhaps you can decide on one question, which has the most energy for you, and then take small steps toward living a less stressful and more joyful life together.

How Is Your Family Life?

From Simple Living, no.15, pg.11

- Do we eat together as a family?
- Do we have family traditions that occur weekly, monthly, annually or seasonally that our children can look forward to?
- Do we let our children experience cold, fatigue, adventure, injury, risk, challenge, experimentation, failure, frustration, discouragement?
- What kind of example are we as parents setting for our children? Do what I say, not what I do?
- When confronted by a choice of spending money or time on a material pursuit or on a family activity, do we choose the family?
- Is winning or getting an A the most important goal we set for our children?
- Do we teach our children that they have an obligation for the welfare of others?
- Do we give our children the opportunities to grow by letting them manage their own money?
- Who is in control of our home – parents or television? (If we aren’t taking the time to educate our children, the television will definitely be a factor in communicating ideas, morals, standards and lifestyles to our children.)

Sabbath:

Remember the Sabbath

Description

Wayne Muller in his introduction to the book *Sabbath*, writes: “Sabbath time can be a revolutionary challenge to the violence of overwork, mindless accumulation, and the endless multiplication of desires, responsibilities, and accomplishments. Sabbath is a way of being in time where we remember who we are, remember what we know, and taste the gifts of spirit and eternity.”

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This spiritual practice might be used on Sundays or on any day of the week dedicated to Sabbath. For ministers, or others who work on Sunday, an alternative day can be chosen for the purposes of keeping one day of the seven set apart for Sabbath time.

Sequence

“Remembering the Sabbath” is setting apart one day during the week in which we “lie fallow” and restore our souls. In Sabbath time, we remember to celebrate the sacred and the beautiful in our lives. You may want to use some of the other Sabbath suggestions (such as preparing a Sabbath Meal) or simply allow your body, heart and mind to be still or slow down for most of one day. This is a day for sacred rest and a time whereby we “honor those quiet forces of grace” given to us by God to enjoy. Muller reminds us that Jesus said: “Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.” This reminds us that God’s presence is alive and active within us at this very moment. We do not have to be productive or work for God’s grace. We remember the Sabbath to remember God’s divine presence and love always with us.

Sabbath:

One-Minute Sabbaths Throughout the Day

Introduction

The tradition of Sabbath, millennia ago, created an oasis of sacred space within a life of unceasing labor. Wayne Muller, in *Sabbath*, writes about ways for us to create Sabbath, or a sacred refuge, in the midst of our modern busy lives. We might schedule an entire day of the week for Sabbath, half-day, Sabbath hour, or Sabbath walk or even one-minute Sabbaths throughout the day.

Description

This practice of one-minute, or mini-Sabbaths, throughout the day encourages spaces in the day to stop and to be still, take a minute to pause, breathe, and notice. These moments of stopping and pausing bring us back to divine presence in the present moment. The focus for the minute might be facilitated by using Psalm 46:10 with pausing after each line:

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Be.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This practice could be used throughout a Sabbath day as a way to intentionally honor “rest” on that one day. Alternatively, this practice could be used if there is a particularly stressful event or circumstance or even relationship in your life right now.

Sequence

In the beginning of the day, set the intention to incorporate minutes of silence or Sabbath into your ordinary routine. You might observe one minute of silence, or Sabbath, before you eat your breakfast or before you turn the key in your car or before you watch the news at night. You may want to observe one minute of Sabbath after you leave a meeting, or walk away from a conversation, or park your car in the driveway.

Sabbath:

Sabbath Walk

Description

In Wayne Muller's book *Sabbath*, he tells a story of an African tribe which went on a long march and frequently they would sit down and rest for a time. They explained that they needed that time of rest so that their souls could catch up to them.

Sabbath walking is going on a walk without any purpose. It is not to lose weight, put more steps on the pedometer, exercise the dog, or have some insight. It is to allow your soul to catch up with you.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This spiritual practice might be particularly helpful if there has been a lot of hurried activity during the week or during the day. This may be a practice to use on a Sabbath day or actually anytime to break a frenetic pace in life.

Sequence

Adapted from Wayne Muller's Sabbath

Allow 20–30 minutes. You may go outside, but this can be done inside as well. Start by taking some deep breaths and giving yourself permission to move without a plan to “get anywhere or accomplish anything.” Let your senses be your guide as you walk. If you see an interesting flower, you may want to move closer and be present to the shape or the color or the fragrance. You may want to allow the various sounds in the atmosphere to draw you in a certain direction. The main idea is to move gracefully, without any rushing or destination. Be present to divine presence within you and within all you notice. At the end of your 20–30 minutes, you may want to notice your sense of time or how this has felt in your body or in your heart and your mind. You may want to journal about your experience.

Sabbath:

Sabbath Silence

Description

Mother Teresa said: “God is the friend of silence.” In our busy and noisy lives, we rarely have spaces of silence. Sometimes even in our conversations, we fear or avoid the silences between us. When we enter a room, we turn on the television or radio or computer and the sounds fill the air and compete for our attention. Silence gives us a space to get quiet and to listen and to be present to God within us and between us.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This spiritual practice might be particularly helpful if you are trying to discern a new direction in your life or if you have a lot of external noise in your routine. This can be useful if you want to intentionally extend a time of silence in a relationship or if you want to eliminate some environmental noise or regular din in your life.

Sequence

Adapted from Wayne Muller’s Sabbath

You may want to consider how you could increase silence in your life by turning off the sources of noise. For example, you might consider not turning on your radio or music while driving in the car. Simply drive in silence. You might consider turning off the television when you are not watching a specific program. You can turn off or turn down the sound on your computer. Notice what arises in the silence. Notice when you have an impulse to fill the silence with noise. Be present to the discomfort and also to the “newness” of the silence. Also, you can invite silence into a relationship. Eugene Peterson, a minister, and his wife took Sabbath on Mondays. They would pack a lunch and go to a nearby park. They agreed not to speak until lunch when they would share what they had experienced in the silence of the morning. These moments of intentional silence bring us back to the present moment, which is always full of God’s welcoming presence.

Sabbath:

Sabbath Meal

Description

One way to honor a Sabbath time is through a meal, either alone or with family and friends. This is a meal whereby the quality of the eating is slow and appreciative. If partaking with others, the pace of the meal is spacious and allows for conversation and leisurely engagement with one another.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This spiritual practice might be used on Sundays, after religious services, or on another day of the week that has been identified and communicated to others as a Sabbath meal. This kind of meal may be used as a celebration of a “job well done” or as a marker in the life of a family or community. Sabbath meals are times “set apart” from the normal eating pattern in order to invite appreciation of the food and of the company gathered.

Sequence

Adapted from Wayne Muller’s Sabbath

You may want to prepare a Sabbath meal alone or share the activity with family and friends.

You may want to get out the finer china or the special glassware and set the table with an intention to have a beautiful table for this meal. You may want to bring in flowers or use lovely placemats or a tablecloth and cloth napkins. When you shop for ingredients, you may want to choose those that look freshest and most pleasurable to you. This food is not so much for survival as it is for delighting and savoring. Take time to be as present as possible as you wash and cut the vegetables, smell the ingredients cooking, and finally as you serve the food to the table. You may want to say a prayer of thanks for all the people who grew, harvested, packed, shipped and then sold the food to you. You might want to invite the fellow table members into a slower pace for this Sabbath meal. You may want to leisurely taste each bite of food after noticing all the colors and the textures on your plate. Allow space between each bite and be present to the delicious banquet before you.

Sabbath:

Sabbath Bathing

Description

Sabbath has a rich tradition of ritual bathing as a symbol of washing away the old and cleansing the body to receive the new. Water is used in most sacred traditions of baptism to welcome a new member into the faith community. Bathing or cleansing, a daily activity for most of us, can be a cue to pause, be aware of God's presence within us, and to become aware of the deeper truths imbedded in our faith.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This spiritual practice might be particularly helpful if you think you cannot "fit" anything else into your life. As this activity is already part of your cleansing routine, either by taking a shower or a bath on a regular basis, you can shift this existing activity to one of spiritual practice rather than habitual necessity.

Sequence

Adapted from Wayne Muller's Sabbath

Before stepping into the shower or the bath, take a moment to pause and breathe and be

present to this sacred moment. As the water touches your skin, you may want to allow that sensation as an "entrance" into a Sabbath cleansing moment. Being mindful of the temperature of the water on your skin, you allow yourself to sink into the moment and enjoy the full-bodied experience. With your mind clear, heart open and body aware of the water, you might wash yourself in a more slow and deliberate manner. Pay attention to your body as if you were bathing a beloved child. You may want to gently slough off the residue of the day (if bathing in the evening) or you may want to prepare your body for the newness of the day (if bathing in the morning). Be present to God's presence in this bathing routine. You may want to extend this awareness as you wash your hands throughout the day. This is another moment, to pause, or to take a moment of Sabbath, and to become open to what God might have next for you.

Slowing Down:

Do One Thing at a Time

Introduction

The “Slow Movement” is about making connections – to ourselves, to the people we love, to strangers, to nature, to God. These are ways we become self-aware and fully present to our lives throughout the day, and perhaps find ourselves gifted by connectedness to others.

Description

One of the greatest accelerators of life is trying to do several things at once – e.g. drive, talk on the phone, and drink coffee; doing a household chore while helping your child with homework; reading or watching TV while eating. This practice will help you begin to slow down, as you give full attention to one task at a time.

When This Practice Might be Used

As your day progresses, notice when you are present to the people involved or the task at hand. Be aware of trying to short-cut tasks by multi-tasking or adding tasks to your lunch hour or time with your family.

Sequence

At the beginning of each day or the night before, look over your schedule to see where you might be tempted to try to do more than one thing at a time. Recognize your feelings and behaviors when you feel stressed. Take time to breathe and prioritize your list of tasks. Then do one thing at a time, giving it and those involved, your full attention.

Slowing Down:

Drive More Slowly

Introduction

The “Slow Movement” is about making connections – to ourselves, to the people we love, to strangers, to nature, to God. These are ways we become self-aware and fully present to our lives throughout the day, and perhaps find ourselves gifted by connectedness to others, as well as our environment.

Description

Have you ever been passed by a driver in a great hurry only to find them sitting one or two cars ahead of you at the next traffic light? Sometimes efforts to beat the traffic or taking chances to be on time turn out to be wasted efforts. This practice is meant to keep you mindful of driving patterns that increase stress and create undue risk for yourself and others. Slowing down to the speed limit or keeping pace with the flow of traffic is a conscious practice of mindfulness while driving.

When This Practice Might be Used

Any time you are driving, but especially when you feel impatient or pressed for time. Being present and mindful to your feelings and state of being behind the wheel may help you make safe choices, avoiding the automatic reaction to speed up or take unnecessary chances. Remind yourself, before you drive off, that a safe arrival is far more important than being on time.

Sequence

When you enter your car, give yourself a moment to breathe and check in with yourself. What is your state of mind? Recognize stress and impatience. Bring yourself to the present moment and be willing to slow down as a way to reduce stress and tension. Remember that there is nothing more important than arriving safely at your destination.

Slowing Down:

Taking a Leisurely Walk

Introduction

The “Slow Movement” is about making connections – to ourselves, to the people we love, to strangers, to nature, to God. These are ways we become self-aware and fully present to our lives throughout the day, and perhaps find ourselves gifted by connectedness to others, as well as our environment.

Description

Sometimes, because we walk for exercise, our pace is fast and not leisurely. This practice will help you to slow down and literally “smell the flowers.” A slow, leisurely, mindful pace allows you to notice the plants, trees, birds and other wildlife, as well as the clouds, feel of the air on your skin, scents, sounds and the presence of other people.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

First thing in the morning to begin your day, on your lunch hour at work, or at the end of a particularly stressful day. Use it as a way to unwind and be fully present to yourself and the simple joy of a walk in the park or neighborhood.

Sequence

Gradually introduce this practice into your life. You might begin by making time once a week to try it out as a stress reducer. The time may be varied, but the walk needs to be leisurely. It may be nice to do it with a friend or loved one, as a way to reduce stress together. Share your observations, but not heavy conversation.

Money:

Tracking Your Life Energy

Description

Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin in the book *Your Money or Your Life* make the compelling case that money equals life energy and that we unconsciously exchange many hours of our lives for each dollar. They suggest that we need to become aware of the movement of that form of life energy called money in our everyday lives. They suggest the quickest (yet not easiest) way to become aware of this “energy movement” is through simply keeping track of our money.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This spiritual practice might be particularly helpful if there is a lot of confusion and suffering around the issue of money in your life. This can be useful if you are puzzled about the amount of money which comes and goes in your life or if you think you are ready to take a clearer look at the realities of money in your life.

Sequence

Joe and Vicki suggest that the key to this practice is to keep track of every cent that comes

into or goes out of your life. They recommend keeping a pocket sized memo book with you at all times and write down every cent that comes into or goes out of your life. They explain: “This is the best way to become conscious of how money actually comes and goes in your life as opposed to how you think it comes and goes.”

Do this for a week (or one month) and then pause and notice what is actually happening. This is a specific practice that helps to see the actual dollars spent and then allows you to consider the number of hours of life energy this represents. You might ask: “Did I receive fulfillment, satisfaction and value in proportion to life energy spent? Is this expenditure of life energy in alignment with my values and life purpose?” This practice helps to break the confusion and the denial about money and to consider the possibility of examining money from a different and more life-giving perspective.

Money:

Pay in Full

Description

As many of us are aware, the average American is about \$10,000 in credit card debt. Credit card companies are aggressively soliciting our business each day. Many financial advisers recommend that we emancipate ourselves from the “slavery” of this unsecured debt. This kind of debt produces a heavy psychological and spiritual cost in our everyday lives. Not adding any new unsecured debt to our lives is essential to making peace with money.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This spiritual practice might be particularly helpful if you know you are getting deeper and deeper into credit card debt or if you suspect that you might have some issues around the use of credit cards in your life. While this practice is not about getting you out of the debt you might already have incurred in your life, it is a daily practice to prevent you from accumulating any further debt. When you buy anything, or receive any kind of service, you pay for it in full when you purchase or receive the service. Most financial advisers as well as spiritual advisers tell us that we cannot make peace with money by repeatedly borrowing money.

Sequence

Adapted from Jerrold Mundis’ *Making Peace with Money*

You might want to try this for a week or for a month and gently introduce this as a daily practice. Here is the daily practice:

In the beginning of the day, and throughout the day as needed, say the following to yourself:

*Just for today, one day at a time,
Do not incur any new unsecured debt.*

This is a daily practice which brings awareness to the moment. According to Mundis, in *Making Peace with Money*, “there is no reason for you to incur debt before this day ends. You can choose to, but you do not have to.” You may notice, with the use of this practice, how the easy use of credit cards facilitate you going into deeper and deeper debt without any hesitation. This is a daily spiritual practice and promotes our examination and awareness of the role and use of debt in our lives.

Money:

Quietly Giving Money Away

Description

Jerrold Mundis in *Making Peace with Money* suggests that practicing generosity with our money helps us to overcome that “mental siege” of a belief that there isn’t enough for us and that we must defend what little we have in life. Practicing generosity, says Mundis, “relaxes the spirit” and facilitates the healthy flow of money into and through the life of the whole community.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This spiritual practice might be particularly helpful if you hold an enormous amount of fear that there will not be enough for you in the future. Giving away some money anonymously is a powerful way to “loosen” the grip of fear around the issue of “not enough” money. This act of pure giving (without any expectation of reciprocity or the fulfillment of an agenda) is a tangible act of “letting go” of this fear.

Sequence

For 30 days, tithe. Give away ten percent of all the money you net (receive after taxes) during the month. Give to the church or to an organization or to individuals. Do this in such a way that the recipient does not know it was you who gave the money.

Alternatively, you might want to calculate ten percent of your grocery total each week and again give that amount to the organization or religious affiliation of your choice. Make a conscious effort to do this act anonymously.

Being generous with the money we possess can provide, in a rather visceral manner, an experience of how our beliefs about our supply of money limits us and how the practice of generosity can bring some freedom at the point of money.

Money:

Valuing Your Life Energy by Minimizing Spending

Description

In the book *Your Money or Your Life*, Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin make the case that money equals life energy and that often we unconsciously exchange many hours of our lives for each dollar earned. Therefore, they recommend the conscious lowering or eliminating of expenses. They suggest “creative frugality” or increasing consciousness around your spending as an expression of a respect for your life energy.

When This Spiritual Practice Might Be Used

This spiritual practice might be particularly helpful if you are interested in lowering expenses to get out of debt or if you want to make a change in jobs or to work part-time. In the creative use of saving money, you will have more conscious choices around the amount of life energy you must use to live.

Sequence

Joe and Vicki provide ten sure ways to save money (listed at right). They couch these suggestions as acts of creative freedom rather than punitive action. They are encouraging us to learn to choose quality of life over a certain standard of living. You might consider “trying on” one or two of the “life saving” suggestions for a few weeks and notice your awareness of your life energy.

Ten Sure Ways to Save Money

1. Don't go shopping.
2. Live within your means.
3. Take care of what you have.
4. Wear it out.
5. Do it yourself.
6. Anticipate your needs.
7. Research value, quality, durability and multiple use.
8. Get it for less.
9. Buy it used.
10. Follow the previous nine steps.

Here are three reflection questions they recommend to help you stay on track in this practice of reducing expenses:

- Am I likely to get real fulfillment from this money spent in proportion to the resources it represents?
- Is this purchase in alignment with the values that we all hold in common – the desire to survive and thrive?
- What would spending look like if I were working for the well-being of the whole world – instead of for my individual survival?

