

Exploring Spiritual & Soulful Practice

Overview:

**Class One: Introduction to Spiritual Practice
& Meditation**

Class Two: Journaling and the Journey of the Heart

Class Three: Forgiveness: The Art of Letting Go

Class Four: The Artist's Date: Creativity and Soulfulness

Class One: Introduction to Spiritual Practice & Meditation

Welcome/Nametags (5 minutes)

Light Chalice

Ground Rules (5 minutes)

- **Everyone has the right to participate**
- **Everyone has the right to pass or be silent**
- **We respect one another here**
- **We aim to converse with – not convert**
- **Confidentiality**
- **No plops (generosity with religious language)**

Introduction to Spiritual Practice:

- **Story of the Wandering Teacher (5 minutes)¹**
- **Centering [Loving Kindness] (2 minutes)**
- **Discussion: Four Questions (15 minutes)**
- **UU affirms many definitions of spirituality (5 minutes)**

What is Meditation? Thich Nhat Hanh Being Peace pp. 4-7 (5 minutes)

Your Present: a Half-Hour of Peace (30 minutes)

- **Discussion of this experience (5 minutes)**

Closing: “I put my hand in yours so that we might do together what we cannot do alone.”

For Next Time:

- **See Homework handout**

¹ From UU Curriculum “Spirit in Practice, Workshop 1 – available on UUA website.

Homework:

Take some time to reflect on your lifelong spiritual journey. When you were a child, what (if anything) were you taught or shown about practicing spirituality? What practices have you engaged in as a child, youth, and adult? How have your spiritual ideas and needs changed throughout your life? What kind of soulful practices do you have in your life now? What practices might speak to those ideas and address those needs today?

Have a conversation with at least one other person about what “spirituality” or “spiritual practice” means to both of you. What is “soulfulness” to you? If you have children at home, this is a great conversation to have with them.²

Bring a journal next week.

Try meditating for 3-5 minutes each day. If you need further suggestions for techniques or guided meditations, try www.learningmeditation.com.

² From “Spirit in Practice” Curriculum available on UUA Website, Workshop 1

Class Two: Journaling and the Journey of the Heart

Chalice Lighting – (2 minutes)

Words from Anne Lamott

Breathing Meditation (In/Out) (3 minutes)

Going Over the Homework (30 minutes)

- 1. What practices have you engaged in as a child, youth and adult?**
- 2. How have your spiritual ideas and needs changed throughout your life?**
- 3. What practices might speak to those ideas and address those ideas today?**

Journaling as a Spiritual Practice

- **Reading from Natalie Goldberg (Writing Down the Bones, pp. 9-10)(5 minutes)**
- **Types of Journals (5 minutes)**
 - **Guided journals**
 - **Diary style journals**
 - **Gratitude journals**
 - **Nature Journals**
 - **Others?**
- **Journaling exercise (30 minutes)**
 - **Make Your “Bucket List” with at least 10 things you want to do before you die.**
 - **Sharing: Are you surprised at anything on your list? What does your list tell you about how you might want to live right now?**

Closing: We are all in the middle of our stories

start with Suzuki Roshi’s story, Golberg pp. 167-168) & talk about being present to our life now so that we don’t find ourselves with regrets at the end.

Homework:

In two weeks we will be working on a Forgiveness Practice. In the meantime:

- **Set aside at least 5-10 minutes each day for meditation, journaling, or another practice of your choice.**
- **As you go through your days notice when you are holding back or concerned in your interactions. Say it or don't say it, but just notice.**
- **Note in your journal people or groups of people you resent. Think about whether you would be willing to forgive one of these individuals or groups and put a star next to that name.**

Class Three: Forgiveness as a Spiritual Practice

Light Chalice “The Invitation” by Oriah Mountain Dancer – 3 minutes

Breathing Meditation – 3 minutes

Viewing “The Power of Forgiveness” (45 minutes) by Kenneth briggs

The Forgiveness Practice 60 minutes³

- **Introduce – 20 minutes**
- **Split into pairs and work on “resents” section – 15 minutes each (30 minutes)**
- **Wrap up and homework – 10 minutes**

³ copyrighted material by Eileen Epperson. See www.forgivenesscoaching.com for information/permission

“The Invitation” by Oriah Mountain Dreamer

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain! I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it or fade it, or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own, if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, to be realistic, to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself; if you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul; if you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see beauty even when it's not pretty, every day, and if you can source your own life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand on the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, “Yes!”

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up, after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone, and do what needs to be done to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you, from the inside, when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

by
Oriah Mountain Dreamer
copyright © 1999 by Oriah Mountain Dreamer.

Homework

- Set aside at least 10-20 minutes a day for your chosen practice.
- Go on an “Artist’s Date” ~ a concept from Julia Cameron’s The Artist’s Way:

The Artist Date is a once-weekly, festive, solo expedition to explore something that interests you. The Artist Date need not be overtly "artistic"-- think mischief more than mastery. Some ideas:

- Spend some time outdoors with your journal, sketchbook, craft supplies, etc.
- Go for a walk, and take your camera with you to document the experience.
- Stop by the library, and check out some CDs.
- See an Oscar-nominated movie or a foreign film.
- Visit a “creative” shop that has nothing to do with what you actually do—an art supply store, a fabric shop, a music store.
- Support the local arts scene. Go to a local festival, music event, art show, play, museum exhibit, etc.
- Plant something. Start your own herb garden. Butterfly garden. Plant a tomato or some bulbs. Try a “guerilla garden,” and scatter seeds randomly somewhere to see what grows.
- Spend an hour going through your books. Pick ten to read or re-read and ten to donate to charity.
- Go sit at the pond and play in your sketchbook.
- Send a care package to your best friend or to a family member... just because. Take time and care to put loving and thoughtful things into it. Be creative. Make things. Be as careful with the packaging as you are with what you actually put into it. Include notes and loving sentiments. Get as much from it as they will in receiving it.
- Go cloud watching.
- Take yourself on a culinary artist date, and try a new cuisine, recipe, restaurant, fruit, vegetable, etc.
- Take a walk with someone else’s iPod. Expose yourself to new music.
- Move your body. Try Tai Chi, Pilates, yoga, bellydancing, etc.

Class Four: The Artist's Date: Creativity and Soulfulness

Opening:

- Chalice Lighting: “The Teaching Bean “ by Elizabeth Tarbox (Evening Tide p. 16 – a Skinner House meditation manual 1998.)
- Centering – 5 minute loving kindness meditation
 - *May I feel safe, May I feel happy, May I feel strong, May I live with ease.*

Sharing: What happened during the Artist Date?

Collaging: What would it look like if you felt at peace or at home in your self? [Create and Share Collages]

Closing: Blessing Stones: A basket of small polished stones are passed around and each person selects one. Then one at a time the stones are passed around the circle and each person offers a blessing for the individual represented by that stone.

Course Evaluation: Exploring Spiritual Practice

Thank you for participating in “Exploring Spiritual Practice.” I really enjoyed working with you all and appreciated your openness to trying new things! I’d appreciate your feedback so that I can make the course stronger.

- 1. Overall, the main thing I enjoyed about the course was:**
- 2. I found the length of the course: (just right, too long, too short):**
- 3. Do you have suggestions about the particular sessions? Using the outline below, please let me know what worked for you, what you might eliminate, and what you’d like more of:**

Class One: Introduction & Meditation

- Story of the Wandering teacher, centering meditation (in/out), discussion of “spirituality” and practice, Thich Naht Hanh techniques, guided meditation “A Half-Hour of Peace”**

Class Two: Journaling and the Journey of the Heart

- Discussion of practices we engaged in as children and adults, and how our spiritual ideas and needs have changed throughout our lives, Readings from Natalie Goldberg & Anne Lamott, discussion of types of journals, Bucket List exercise.**

Class Three: Forgiveness: The Art of Letting Go

- “The Invitation” by Oriah Mountain Dance, viewing “The Power of Forgiveness, Forgiveness Practice in pairs.**

Class 4: The Artist’s Date: Creativity and Spirituality

- “The Teaching Bean” by Elizabeth Tarbox, Discussion of Artist’s Date exercise, Collages about being spiritually free and at home within ourselves, blessing stones.**