



A Spirituality Exploration by Masterpiece Living™

Facilitator Guidebook

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Dear Inspire Facilitators,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to *Inspire*, a five-session spirituality exploration by Masterpiece Living that addresses the themes of mindfulness, peacefulness, compassion, acceptance and purpose through engaging discussions, prayers, meditations and guided activities. The program was designed to promote spiritual growth and help define what it means to be spiritual in both religious and non-religious contexts. Developed with both residents and staff in mind, participants are encouraged to utilize the concepts provided in the program and apply them to their own spirituality and personal practices.

Why be spiritual? Research suggests that spiritual people are happier, healthier and experience better relationships and a greater sense of purpose.

As facilitators of *Inspire*, you will be introducing each topic with a brief PowerPoint presentation followed by several group activities related to the session theme. You are encouraged to utilize as many of the prayers, meditations and activities as you see fit. Likewise, we encourage you to adapt the talking points and exercises as appropriate for the group. Please provide each participant with an *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook* for personal use throughout the program and for future reflection.

Inspire is intended to provide participants with a safe spiritual space to explore, grow and embrace diversity of thought and conversation. Please keep in mind that you may hear opinions that differ from your own. As facilitators, we ask that you remain respectful of people's beliefs, keep an open mind and an open heart, and encourage participants to do the same. You are also part of the spiritual journey!

We also ask that facilitators recognize that spirituality can be a private matter for some people. Certain participants may not feel comfortable sharing their opinions on particular topics. Please make sure that each participant understands that choosing NOT to share is perfectly acceptable as well.

To begin, we encourage you to refer to the Facilitator Preparation pages for each session found within this *Facilitator's Guidebook* as you plan and prepare for facilitating the program.

It is with deepest gratitude that we thank you for fostering spiritual growth with this Masterpiece Living program. Once again, we welcome you to the exciting world of *Inspire*!

Best wishes,

The Masterpiece Living Team

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A Spirituality Exploration by Masterpiece Living™

Session 1: Spirituality Overview & Mindfulness

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”

~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

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Session 1: Facilitator Preparation

Objectives:

- Define spirituality
- Discuss research related to the health benefits of spirituality and spiritual practice
- Discuss activities of spiritual and practice
- Define and experience *mindfulness* as a theme of spirituality and spiritual expression
- Encourage discussion of spirituality and mindfulness

Materials:

- Session 1 Power Point presentation and projector
- Print copy of Session 1 presentation for Facilitator to utilize speaker's notes
- Participants' *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook*
- Mindfulness Devotional (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Moving to the Music exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- CD player and selection of music (see Moving to the Music exercise)
- Nature Walk exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Flip chart and marker/dry erase board and markers (Optional)

Before Class:

- Print *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook* for each participant
- Print Facilitator Guidebook & Power Point presentation with speaker's notes for facilitator use
- Gather music needed for Moving to the Music exercise
- Set up room with tables and chairs
- Set up room in a way that allows for discussion and makes it easy for everyone to see and hear the presentation
- Identify location (trail, walking path, park, beach) for Nature Walk Exercise
- Encourage residents to wear appropriate footwear for Nature Walk Exercise
- Arrange transportation for Nature Walk Exercise (if needed)

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Mindfulness Devotional

Dear One,

There is a time for everything, and I have made everything beautiful in its time. Be mindful of the rewards of being in the present. Living in the moment is truly living, being mindful of my Presence in everything. Mindfulness is about trust—trust that putting aside anxious thoughts about the future, even the next moment, is receiving.

Open your heart and mind to receive what is now there for you. When you let the thing you are unmindful of become full in your consciousness you are blessed with its own beauty. Savor every moment, there's no hurry. Even in the most hectic schedule, if you live mindful of each moment, there is confidence, there is accomplishment, there is joy. Everything has a place. Each moment builds on the next. Be in the moment and do it well; the next will become easier. Time and energy are limited. Use them wisely. Be mindful, for there is a time for everything. Be mindful, for everything is made beautiful in its time.

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11

*Special thanks to Reverend Ardean Brock-VanderWall for her contribution in writing this devotional on mindfulness.

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Mindfulness Exercise: Moving with the Music



Introduction: For this activity, please prepare to have a selection of music as suggested below. There are four songs to be played, one immediately following another. If you are providing your own recorded music, make sure they are diverse in sound and tempo. The sequence should be something such as this:

Song #1: An **up-tempo Standard** from the 20s, 30s or 40s (instrumental or with vocals).
Examples: *Sing, Sing, Sing* (Benny Goodman); *In the Mood* (Glenn Miller); *Sway* (various); *Fly Me to the Moon* (various)

Song #2: A **slow, melodic instrumental** or **World Music**. Examples: Music from Enya; Jim Brickman, "IZ" (Israel Kamakawiwo'ole); Yani

Song #3: A **Classical piece of music** that inspires movement. Examples: *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik: Allegro* (Mozart); *Canon In D* (Pachelbel); *Ode to Joy* (Beethoven)

Song #4: A **modern "feel good" pop song** or another **Standard**. Examples: *One Love* (Bob Marley); *What a Wonderful World* (Louis Armstrong); *Pennies from Heaven* (various); *Steppin' Out With My Baby* (various)

Instructions: Participants can stand and move to the music or "chair" dance. Encourage people to forget about "how" to dance and simply be in the moment. Move their feet, swing their arms and sing if they'd like. For those sitting, they can close their eyes as they move.

The rules are simple: a) Try not to bump into anyone. b) Don't think c) Follow your body's natural rhythm (which will change dramatically from song to song).

After the exercise: Offer refreshments such as Sangria or a pleasant-tasting fruity beverage that engages the senses. Have cheese and fruit plates available for snacking. As a party discussion, ask participants what feelings or images the music invoked.

Alternative Exercise: Instead of dancing, have participants remain seated and refer them to the Moving with the Music page in the Session 1 section of *their Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook*. Play only two instrumental selections and have everyone write down what images and feelings come to mind. Perhaps the song brings back a memory. They may choose to write as the song is playing or listen with their eyes closed and write after each song.



Mindfulness Exercise: Nature Walk / Day at the Beach

Introduction: Facilitators, pack a picnic lunch or snack and head to the park or – if you’re near one – the beach. Invite participants to move slowly, taking in the sights, sounds and smells with the activity outlined below. If you’re in a park or botanical garden, you could take a group tour. If on the beach, collect a few shells and try building a sand castle.

To Begin: There are two exercises below, with specific dialog for each. Remember that these are only guidelines. Because you will be moving for both exercises, you will need to paraphrase. Speak slowly and pause often.

For the beach walk, the sound of the surf will make it difficult to be heard. The text is a sample of instructions that can be used before undertaking the activity.

On a Nature Walk*:

*Please use the speaking lines below to guide the exercise.

Line 1: For the purpose of this exercise, I am going to request that everyone refrain from conversation for the next 15 minutes, so that we can practice being mindful for the entire activity.

The first thing I’d like everyone to do is find a spot where you can stand comfortably for about a minute...In a moment, I’m going to ask you to close your eyes. This could affect your balance, so if you are concerned about falling, you’ll want to pick a spot where you can rest your hand on a tree or bench for support...Good.

Now, close your eyes. Out in nature, there are amazing fragrances. We’re going to pause here, with our eyes closed, and take in a few of the smells...I can tell you that at this moment, I can smell the...(fresh-cut grass...I can smell the “woodsiness” from the trees...I smell scents from

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the flowers...) What do you smell? Take note of these scents...Enjoy them...If you're not sure what they are, let it go. You don't have to identify anything with a name to experience them...

Line 2: Now, open your eyes. For the next minute, look around you and take in the sights. Memorize each color and detail as if you were going to go home and paint a picture of this scene from memory. Enjoy the beauty of your surroundings.

Line 3: As we begin our walk, move slowly, feeling the earth beneath your feet as you methodically place one foot in front of the other...Feel free to stop on occasion to touch the bark on a tree or run your fingers over one of the leaves. The only caution here is to avoid touching any unfamiliar vine. Allow yourself to be completely aware of your surroundings.

Continue your walk for about five to ten minutes.

Line 4: Let's pause here for a moment. Take a deep breath of fresh air. We're going to keep moving in a moment. You've probably already begun to notice the sounds of nature, the wind blowing through the trees, birds chirping...See if you can keep your attention on what you see, what you smell and – now – what you hear, all while consciously feeling the ground beneath your feet as you walk.

When you reach your designated picnic area, the activity has reached its conclusion. While everyone is eating, encourage dialog about what participants experienced. If it's an area in which they are familiar, did they notice anything that they've never noticed before? Did any feelings arise (such as feelings of peacefulness or clarity)?

At the Beach*:

*Please use the dialog notes below to guide the exercise.

Dialog: For the purpose of this exercise, I am going to request that everyone refrain from conversation for the next 15 minutes so that we can practice being mindful for the entire activity.

The first thing I'd like everyone to do is find a spot where you can stand or sit comfortably for a minute or two. For those comfortable doing so, feel free to take your shoes off so that you can feel the sand beneath your toes.

Because you may not be able to hear me over the sound of the ocean waves, I'm going to give you brief instructions ahead of time.

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We are going to take a short walk from here down to the water. As we do so, try to keep your attention only on what you notice around you and not let your mind wander. Be aware of the smell of the salty sea air. Hear the sounds of the waves crashing against the surf and seagulls calling overhead. Observe everything you see around you as if you were trying to memorize each detail. Feel the sand beneath your feet, and be mindful of your steps – particularly when we reach the water. When you get to the water, you can choose to dip your toes in for a minute or two before walking back. When everyone is back here – in about 10 to 15 minutes – we'll have our picnic lunch or snack.

When everyone has returned, facilitators will have set up a picnic area either on a beach blanket or at a few picnic tables (if available). As an addition to this exercise, facilitators may choose to pass around a few shells for people to observe how they look and feel in their hands. While everyone is eating, encourage dialog about what participants experienced. If it's an area in which they are familiar, did they notice anything that they've never noticed before? Did any feelings arise (such as feelings of peacefulness or clarity)?



Session 2: Peacefulness

“There are only two ways of looking at the world: as if nothing is a miracle or as if everything is a miracle.”

~ Albert Einstein

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Session 2: Facilitator Preparation

Objectives:

- Review definition of spirituality
- Discuss research related to the health benefits of spirituality and spiritual practice
- Define and experience *peacefulness* as a theme of spirituality and spiritual expression
- Encourage discussion of spirituality and peacefulness

Materials:

- Session 2 Power Point presentation and projector
- Print copy of Session 2 presentation for Facilitator to utilize speaker's notes
- Participants' *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook*
- Peacefulness Prayer & Devotional (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Kindness Meditation (Facilitator Guidebook)
- 5-Minute Calming Stretch (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Family Heirloom exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Gratitude Stone exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Small pebble or ornamental gemstone for Gratitude Stone Exercise
- Flip chart and marker/dry erase board and markers (Optional)

Before Class:

- Refer to participant *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook*
- Refer to Facilitator Guidebook & Power Point presentation with speaker's notes for facilitator use
- Gather small pebble or ornamental gemstone needed for exercise
- Set up room with tables and chairs
- Set up room in a way that allows for discussion and makes it easy for everyone to see and hear the presentation

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Peacefulness Prayer & Devotional

Spirit of Life, Source of all that is good, our hearts overflow with gratitude for the many ways in which we have been blessed by your sustaining care. As you assure us of your abiding love, may our gratitude for all your many blessings move us to share that love more freely with those around us, and to move more tenderly through our days. Live in us, and through us, and with us. Amen.

PEACEFULNESS

Living in peace and peacefulness reflects more than the absence of war, anxieties, problems or fears. True inner peace can happen most powerfully *in the midst of* those life events and challenges that threaten to undo us.

In this sense, peacefulness is not a goal to pursue, but rather the result of two attitudes of heart that create and sustain a sense of peacefulness. These are attitudes that we would do well to cultivate and allow to flourish within our souls.

The first attitude is a deep and abiding sense of *trust* – trust in the goodness of life, in the goodness of humanity, and the goodness that undergirds our world. This basic trust allows us to face life’s uncertainties as a temporary state. Certainly we are meant to engage those challenges but not out of fear. Rather, we confront whatever challenges us with confidence that all will work together for good if we remain true to our foundational trust in the goodness of life.

The second attitude of heart that keeps us in peace in the midst of challenge is the attitude of gratitude. Learning to become increasingly mindful of the myriad of ways we are sustained and nurtured on a daily basis opens us to an awareness of the goodness that flows our way that we often take for granted. Too often we only focus on our efforts to care for our needs and improve our lives. An awareness and sense of gratitude for all the goodness that comes to us unbidden allows us to see the gifts of people and circumstances in our lives with sharper clarity and satisfaction.

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A sense of peacefulness in the midst of challenge isn't something we can pull out of our hats in time of need. Rather, living in trust and gratitude on a daily basis fills the deep reservoir of our souls with the sustenance we can draw on when challenges come our way.

Let peace like a river flow in your heart each day.

*Special thanks to Reverend Janice R. Ledford for her contribution in writing this prayer and devotional on peacefulness.

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Kindness Meditation



Introduction to group: This Kindness Meditation is based on Buddhist Metta meditations. These meditations are used to encourage loving-kindness to ourselves, to those we love, to those we don't know and even to people with whom we may have a personal conflict. Today, we are sending a positive intention to all beings equally and without exception.

To begin: For this exercise, facilitators should read aloud the meditation below for participants. An alternative to these meditations are group-led prayer circles led by clergy, with a focus on peacefulness and a reflection on a biblical verse or spiritual quote.

Ask participants to sit comfortably in a chair with feet planted on the floor, legs uncrossed and hands resting on the tops of their thighs. Participants are also welcome to sit cross-legged on the floor or even lay down on a comfortable beach towel. Choose a quiet room or outdoor space with limited distractions. Read the following text slowly, softly and calmly, pausing for a few deep breaths after each repetition and between each line.

Meditation to be read aloud*: (*Approx. 10-12 minutes*) *Please use the speaking lines below to guide the meditation.

Line 1: Sitting comfortably, with your hands resting on the top of your thighs, take moment to breathe in slowly and exhale fully...If possible, breathe in and out through your nose throughout this meditation...Take a few more deep breaths, noticing the inhalation and exhalation. If you are comfortable doing so, close your eyes. Or, if you prefer, gaze softly at a space in front of you.

Line 2: In our Kindness meditation, we will begin by directing loving-kindness to ourselves, and we will do so by mentally repeating to ourselves the positive intentions of being safe, happy, healthy and peaceful. Take a deep breath in and out. As you exhale, allow yourself to relax, feeling completely supported by your chair.

Line 3: Repeat to yourself, silently, "*May I be safe.*" This means safety from physical harm as well as feeling emotionally safe..."May I be safe".

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Line 4: Next, mentally say to yourself, *“May I be happy”*. Everyone deserves to be happy...*“May I be happy.”*

Line 5: Repeat to yourself, silently, *“May I be healthy”*. It is everyone’s desire to live a healthy and pain-free life...*“May I be healthy”*.

Line 6: Lastly, say to yourself, *“May I be peaceful”*. Give yourself permission to put aside outside concerns and stress for this moment...*“May I be peaceful”*.

Line 7: Now, I’d like you to think of a friend, or someone you care deeply for, and set your meditation on that person. You may also choose someone you know of who is ill or dealing with a lot of stress in his or her life. Send loving-kindness to that person.

Line 8: Keeping this person’s name in mind, say to yourself, silently, *“May ___ be safe”*. Take a deep breath in and out and repeat in your mind, *“May they be happy...May they be healthy...May they be peaceful”*.

Line 9: Next, take a moment to think of someone with whom you would like to communicate with better or someone with whom you are in conflict. For this first Kindness meditation, avoid choosing someone who has caused you a great deal of suffering. Start with someone who simply bothers you. It’s okay to admit it to yourself. We’ll never know. Recognize that this person, like you, wants to be happy.

Line 10: Include yourself when you send loving-kindness to this person. Repeat to yourself, *“May we be safe...May we be happy...May we be healthy...May we be peaceful”*.

Line 11: Lastly, we want to send an intention for loving-kindness to the world, including everything and everyone in nature. Now, that “we” includes ourselves and every living being...*“May we be safe...May we be happy...May we be healthy...May we be peaceful.”*

Line 12: Allow yourself to relax here, in this peaceful moment. Take several more deep breaths; and, when you are ready, slowly open your eyes and smile.

Follow-up questions:

- How do you feel?
- Did you observe anything unusual or interesting during your meditation?
- How did you feel sending loving-kindness to someone you like vs. someone you may not be as fond of?
- Is there anything else you’d like to share about this experience?

Peacefulness Exercise: 5-Minute Calmness Stretch



Facilitator Note: This exercise should immediately follow the Kindness Meditation or prayer on peacefulness.

Introduction: *(Can be read or paraphrased)* While stretching can also be used to reinforce our work on being peaceful in our day-to-day activities, stretching is also a wonderful way to de-stress and promote feelings of well-being.

The added benefits of stretching include better circulation, greater joint mobility, less muscle soreness, better balance and a healthier immune system. Not only does stretching help tone the outside of the body, but it helps massage internal organs as well, so that everything on the inside (heart, lungs, liver, etc.) functions more efficiently.

While you may exercise regularly, see if you notice a difference when stretching immediately following your meditation. Set an intention for this experience to relax fully and breathe peacefully. If it helps you relax, mentally say to yourself, “inhale peace” or “breathe peace” every time to take a deep breath.

To Begin: Facilitators, have each participant slide to the edge of their chairs, making sure their sit bones are still on the chair and that their feet are planted firmly on the ground. Pay special attention that the chair itself will not slide backwards during the exercise. You may want to line chairs up against a wall as an added safety measure. This entire stretching sequence will be performed from a seated position. Alternatively, you may decide to bring in a yoga instructor to lead a yoga class that includes standing poses.

Instructions: (To be paraphrased and demonstrated)

1. **Neck Rolls** – Sitting on the edge of your chair with your feet planted firmly on the floor, separate your feet so that your legs are approximately hips’ width apart. Lengthen your spine as if there were a string pulling from the crown of your head, up through the sky. Slowly bring your chin to your chest and rotate your head as if to bring your right ear to

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your right shoulder. Continue to circle your head back and around, bringing your left ear to your left shoulder before returning to where you began – chin to chest. Repeat this neck roll three times in one direction, and then reverse it for three revolutions.

2. **Side Bend** – Reach your right arm overhead as if you'd like to touch the ceiling. Remember that imaginary string suspending from the crown of your head to the sky? Gently arc your arm as if to touch that string and gaze up at your right hand. Feel the stretch along the right side of your body. Hold for 2-3 deep breaths and repeat on the left. Repeat both the right and left arm side bends once more on each side.
3. **Spinal Flexes** – Energize your body and create a more supple spine with spinal flexes. Put your hands on your knees and sit tall. As you inhale, draw your shoulder blades back as if you'd like to touch them together behind your back. Meanwhile, pull your chest forward in an exaggerated movement, arching your back. On the exhale, reverse the movement by drawing the shoulders forward as if to touch them in front of your chest. Tuck your chin and round your spine, hollowing out your belly as you exhale fully. Continue this back and forth breathing and movement about 6-8 times.
4. **Seated Spinal Twist** – Remember to lengthen your spine (by sitting tall) and inhale deeply. Place your left hand on your right knee as you exhale, twist and look over your right shoulder. Your right hand can hold onto the arm, the back or the seat of your chair to take the twist deeper. See if you can take 2-3 deep breaths even while in a seated twist. Inhale back to center and repeat the exercise on the left. Repeat this entire sequence, right and left, one more time.
5. **Forward Bends** – Keeping your left foot planted on the floor for support, stretch your right leg straight out in front of you with the heel on the floor, foot flexed. Inhale as you reach your arms overhead. Exhale and hinge at the hips, bringing your arms down to your extended leg and hold onto that leg (anywhere that is comfortable for you) with both hands. Take 2-3 deep breaths as you feel that stretch behind your hamstring. Slowly round the spine and roll up to sitting. Repeat with the left leg. Then, repeat this entire sequence on each side, one more time.
6. **Hip Opener** – Once again, separate your feet and knees about hips' distance apart. Lift your right ankle and place it on top of the left thigh, just behind your left knee. Allow your right leg to open outward so that your ankle, shin and knee are parallel to the floor. Hold on to your right knee with your right hand, and your ankle with your left hand as you inhale. Exhale slowly as you hinge your hip and bend forward just until you can feel a stretch in your right hip. Hold for 2-3 deep breaths and repeat on the opposite side. Repeat the entire sequence one more time on each side.

***Contraindication:** People who have a hip injury or have had a hip replacement should not perform this exercise. Alternatively, participants can cross one leg over the other, place both hands on their knee and gently bend forward on each side.

7. **Knee Hug** – Draw your knees and ankles together so that your legs are touching. Slowly bend forward and wrap your arms around your shins and rest your head (if possible) on your knees. Feel the gentle stretch of your low back. Take 2-3 deep breaths and roll back up to sitting.

Conclusion: Close your eyes and silently thank your body (or the Universe/God) for your ability to perform these stretches and for the peacefulness that you enjoy.

Peacefulness Exercise: Family Heirlooms



Introduction: When people think of family heirlooms, they usually think of expensive jewels that have been passed down from generation to generation or a valuable antique. But what about that theater stub that you saved from the time you and your sister went to see your favorite play or a foreign coin you kept from the time you took a family trip overseas?

To Begin: Ask participants to prepare for this exercise by bringing to the group one of their “heirlooms” - any item that reminds them of a time where they had a wonderful experience in which they are grateful. It should be something small enough to carry, and be of sentimental value (not a financial one).

The Activity: Sitting together as a group, invite participants to hold up their heirloom and briefly take a minute or two to explain why that piece is so treasured by them. They are welcome to pass the item around – if they are comfortable doing so – or simply walk around the room and show their prized possession to other members of the group.

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Peacefulness Exercise: The Gratitude Stone



Introduction: Expressing gratitude and retelling favorite memories help evoke feelings of well-being. Recalling places and experiences where one has felt peaceful will begin to positively affect one's body and mind. For example, notice when someone talks about a recent vacation or a serene walk in the park – their shoulders relax, their face softens and they may even let out a sigh. Sharing these ideas as a group enhances positive intentions and encourages participants to appreciate experiences around them that they may otherwise not have noticed.

The Activity: For this exercise, facilitators will pass around a small pebble or ornamental gemstone. When the stone is handed to a participant, he or she will tell the group something in which they are grateful...or several "somethings!" Alternatively, the facilitator may choose to begin a sentence and ask each participant to answer when the gratitude stone reaches them.

Here are some sentences that could be used:

- "I can remember a time when I was so happy because _____."
- "Today, I am very grateful because _____."
- "I feel the most peaceful when _____."

After this exercise is complete, give each person a gratitude stone of their very own. Every time they come across it in the future, have them say (out loud or to themselves) something in which they are grateful.

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Session 3: Compassion

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy,
practice compassion.”

~ *Dalai Lama*

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Session 3: Facilitator Preparation

Objectives:

- Discuss research related to the health benefits of spirituality and spiritual practice
- Define and experience *compassion* as a theme of spirituality and spiritual expression
- Encourage discussion of spirituality and compassion

Materials:

- Session 3 Power Point presentation and projector
- Print copy of Session 3 presentation for Facilitator to utilize speaker's notes
- Participants' *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook*
- Compassion Prayer/Devotional (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Pen Pal exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Helping Those In Need exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Become a Poet Laureate exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- A few poetry books for Poet Laureate Exercise, either from a local library or from your own collection.
- Flip chart and marker/dry erase board and markers (Optional)

Before Class:

- Refer to participant *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook*
- Refer to Facilitator Guidebook & Power Point presentation with speaker's notes for facilitator use
- Arrange for Helping Those in Need Exercise
- Set up room with tables and chairs
- Set up room in a way that allows for discussion and makes it easy for everyone to see and hear the presentation

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Compassion Prayer

In compassion lies the world's true strength.

~ Buddha

Compassion cannot exist in a vacuum; it always includes an “other”. The very word (*com* = with, *passion* = to suffer or feel) suggests not only an awareness of the sorrows and joys of the other, but also a willingness to enter into the life of the other, to be *with* them. Practicing this kind of compassion serves the dual purpose of bringing healing to the life of another *and* enhancing our own sense of well-being. It's the ultimate win-win situation! Trappist monk Thomas Merton says, “*The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another.*”

The prayer of St. Francis of Assisi reminds us how the practice of compassion changes our world:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.*

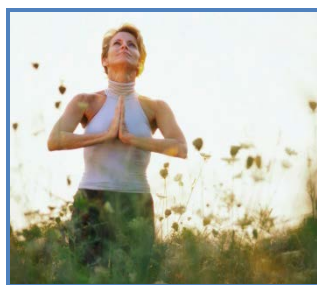
*Special thanks to Jim Kok for his contribution in writing this prayer on compassion.

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Compassion Exercise: Self-Compassion Meditation



Introduction: Compassion involves more than just caring about others. We also need to show compassion to ourselves. Learning to forgive, love and accept ourselves frees us from guilt over past mistakes and opens us up to a more positive future.

To begin: For this exercise, facilitators should read aloud the meditation below for participants. An alternative to these meditations are group-led prayer circles led by clergy, with a focus on compassion and a reflection on a biblical verse or spiritual quote.

Ask participants to sit comfortably in a chair with feet planted on the floor, legs uncrossed and hands resting on the tops of their thighs. Participants are also welcome to sit cross-legged on the floor or even lay down on a comfortable beach towel. Choose a quiet room or outdoor space with limited distractions. Read the following text slowly, softly and calmly, pausing for a few deep breaths between each line.

Meditation to be read aloud*: (Approx. 10-12 minutes). *Please use the speaking lines below to guide the exercise.

Line 1: Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, in and out, through your nose. With each exhale, allow yourself to sink into your chair, feeling completely supported.

Line 2: Take a moment to scan your body from head to toe. If you notice any areas of tension, see if you can soften those muscles with each exhale.

Line 3: You may notice thoughts going through your mind. Gently acknowledge these thoughts without judgment and then return to your breath. If they come back again, simply acknowledge them once again and again return to your breath.

Line 4: Now, begin to tune in to your emotions. Without judging them as good or bad, and without trying to change them in any way, simply become aware of them.

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Line 5: Notice how becoming aware of these thoughts may have affected how your body feels. Once again, if you notice any areas of discomfort, see if you can gently soften those muscles with each exhale. If necessary, shift your body in a way that is more comfortable.

Line 6: Slowly bring your hands to rest over your heart and continue to breathe deeply.

Line 7: Repeat silently to yourself, "I forgive myself for past mistakes." If you find yourself cringing at those words, pause, and try again. "I forgive myself for past mistakes."

Line 8: Next, say to yourself, "I accept myself as I am." If you find yourself disagreeing with this statement, try to avoid analyzing why you resist this statement. Simply notice what thoughts and emotions arise, acknowledge them and return to your breath.

Line 9: Repeat one more time, "I accept myself as I am."

Line 10: Lastly, silently tell yourself, "I like who I am." Repeat this one more time. "I like who I am." Rest your hands in your lap and take a few more deep breaths before opening your eyes.

Follow-up questions:

How do you feel?

Did you have trouble letting go of thoughts?

Were you surprised by emotions that surfaced?

Did you find yourself resisting one or more of these statements?

Did you observe anything unusual or interesting during your meditation?

Is there anything else you'd like to share about this experience?



Compassion Exercise: Become a Poet Laureate

Introduction: Poetry is a great way of expressing emotions, either by reading poems or writing them. This exercise will explore compassion through poetry. Participants may find a passage they wish to read or write their own literary masterpiece.

To Begin: Facilitators, please bring a few poetry books, either from a local library or from your own collection. Invite participants to bring books to share as well, along with a pen and notebook.

Instructions: Encourage everyone to become a poet laureate by tapping into their creative genius. The topic is “compassion” in any way someone wishes to express it through words. For those who choose not to write a poem, ask them to peruse the books available and choose a poem to read while others construct a short poem. Make sure that writers are aware that this is a “first draft” and that no one expects perfection of themselves or others.

Starter Exercise for Writers: Ask the writers, “When you think of the word ‘compassion’ what does it bring to mind?” Have them take about five minutes in a stream of consciousness exercise, where they list all the things that represent compassion in the world. It can be anything from seeing a grandparent holding the hand of their grandchild or someone opening the door for a stranger to the rain after a draught (even the universe can exhibit compassion). Stop them after five minutes and suggest they use those thoughts in their poem.

Have participants take about ten to fifteen minutes to create their poem – whether it is three lines or thirty. Bring the group of readers and writers back together and ask that each person read a passage, or their work, to the group.

Guidelines:

- It is okay for someone to choose not to read a poem.
- Participants should be respectful of those presenting original works as well as readers presenting published works.

Compassion Exercise: Helping Those in Need



Introduction: Practice compassion by taking time to help those in need. As a group, plan to spend about 1-2 hours at the volunteer location that has been chosen.

To Begin: Facilitators, you will need to make arrangements with a local food kitchen, animal shelter, hospital, community garden or other volunteer location of choice in advance. There may also be an in-house volunteer opportunity to do as a group. If you're not sure where to begin, try visiting VolunteerMatch.org or FeedAmerica.org. Some places will allow you to walk right in with as many volunteers as you have. Others will schedule a time for your group to offer assistance.

Suggested Activities:

- Help out at a food kitchen by packing food boxes or serving in a soup line.
- Volunteer at a local animal shelter by petting playful puppies and kittens to help socialize them for adoption.
- Visit a local children's hospital and read to children who are sick or volunteer to read at a local library.
- Participate in a community garden project.
- Arrange opportunities to visit with or help residents who live in a higher level of living.
- Set up bins to collect canned food or clothing. Then, make a donation to a local homeless shelter, Salvation Army or Goodwill.

Helping at a Distance: If someone wishes to volunteer, but is unable to visit in person, they can practice "distance compassion." For example, depending on where the group is volunteering, they might donate a can of food, a pet toy, a children's book or a packet of seeds.



Compassion Exercise: Pen Pals

Introduction: Have you ever gotten angry with someone who you felt was rude to you, only to find out later that something bad happened to them earlier that day? Did you go from angry to sympathetic with the flip of a switch? Did you feel bad for making a snap judgment about that person?

Everyone experiences difficult situations in their lives, and a compassionate person recognizes this, even if those situations are not readily apparent.

To Begin: Facilitators will supply participants with a pen and a few sheets of paper, or have participants bring their own.

Instructions: Ask each participant to think of a time in their life, or a present situation, where they felt emotionally challenged. Perhaps they felt embarrassed, sad, angry or uncomfortable. Recommend that they choose a situation of moderate severity vs. something that has caused them great trauma.

After they have chosen this experience, they will spend about 10 minutes writing a short letter. This letter will be addressed “Dear friend.” In it, they will write about the experience as if they were going to mail this short note to their friend.

Once the letters are written, invite a few people who feel comfortable to read their letters out loud. Or, if the group is comfortable doing so, pair off and have people only share with a “buddy.”

Guidelines: Before the first letter is read, please establish the following “rules” for participants:

- DO NOT give advice.
- DO NOT “one up” their story.
- DO NOT judge.
- DO thank them for sharing.
- DO be supportive.

Alternative: If someone is unable to physically write a note, they can verbally tell their story, by beginning with “Dear Friend” and recounting the tale. For example, “Dear Friend, Last week I

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was feeling a little under-the-weather. I seemed to have caught a cold and spent the day wrapped in a blanket with tissues in one hand and a cup of tea in the other. I'm better today..."

Facilitators Can Share Too! Don't be afraid to write your own letter and share with the group – just avoid talking about the staff or members/residents within your organizations. Pick a personal story, one that may even be humorous, to close the session.



Session 4: Acceptance

*I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.
~ Martin Luther King Jr.*

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Session 4: Facilitator Preparation

Objectives:

- Define and experience *acceptance* as a theme of spirituality and spiritual expression
- Discuss research related to the health benefits of spirituality and spiritual practice
- Encourage discussion of spirituality and acceptance

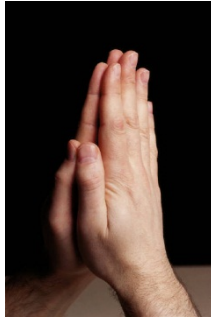
Materials:

- Session 4 Power Point presentation and projector
- Print copy of Session 4 presentation for Facilitator to utilize speaker's notes
- Participants' *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook*
- Acceptance Prayers (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Drop In The Bucket exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Paper cut into teardrop shapes for Drop in the Bucket exercise
- Morning Affirmation on Acceptance (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Sharing Traditions exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Hot Topic exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Flip chart and marker/dry erase board and markers (Optional)

Before Class:

- Refer to participant *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook*
- Refer to Facilitator Guidebook & Power Point presentation with speaker's notes for facilitator use
- Gather current newspaper clippings for Hot Topic Exercise
- Set up room with tables and chairs
- Set up room in a way that allows for discussion and makes it easy for everyone to see and hear the presentation

Prayers of Acceptance



God of My Heart, help me to see and to know things for what they are, both inside me and outside of me. Help me to allow things to be as they are, even when I wish them to be different.

Help me to experience the importance of acceptance: that things as they are hold many gifts, and that if my eyes and heart are open I can learn from what things and people teach me.

Help me to remember that to be in the state of acceptance means that I can truly move through the world knowing what I can and cannot change.

Amen

God of My Heart, help me to see with acceptance today. Help me to see people for who they are, to see and accept the lightness and darkness of their souls. Help me not to judge others, and to understand in my acceptance what I must do to support what is healthy and to avoid what is not. Help me to use the same gift for myself, and to see myself without judgment but with complete acceptance.

Amen

*Special thanks to Mike Ballinger for his contribution in writing these prayers of acceptance.

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Acceptance Exercise: Morning Affirmation

Introduction: Have you ever attended a motivational seminar or religious service and left determined to be kinder, stay positive or make a difference in the world? If you're like many people, without regular reinforcement and repetition, life may cause you to lose sight of those goals. That's why many people make it a daily practice to pray, meditate or use affirmations to set the intention for each day. Many also "re-charge" through regular attendance at a church or spiritual center.

Today, we're going to try a brief morning affirmation on acceptance. We invite you to try practicing it daily, for at least one week, and write down a few notes about how you feel and what you observe.

To Begin: Facilitators, refer participants to the *Affirmation on Acceptance* in their *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebooks*. Have participants choose a comfortable place to sit. Once everyone has "settled in" ask them to close their eyes and take a few deep breaths. Taking a few breaths prior to beginning the exercise will help participants relax and begin to "center" (or, focus their attention inward) and prepare them for the affirmation that will follow. It does so by drawing attention away from outer distractions and toward internal breath, the "center" of our being.

Read through the affirmation one time, slowly, letting the words resonate with each person.

Next, ask participants to open their eyes. While looking at the print version in front of them, and as you read each line out loud, invite the group to repeat each phrase back – either out loud or quietly to themselves. When completed, have the group close their eyes once again and take a few more deep breaths while they hold this intention in their hearts. You may choose to read the affirmation out loud one more time.

Affirmation on Acceptance: *Please use the speaking lines below to guide the affirmation.

Line 1: Today, I will treat everyone I meet with loving-kindness.

Line 2: I will try to make this day positive for myself and others.

Line 3: I will accept the things in which I cannot change.

Line 4: Today, I will accept everyone as he or she is, including myself.

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Points to Consider:

- There are many interactions throughout the day where this affirmation can apply: People you meet in person, emails, phone calls and even how you leave the condition of a room you've visited. Consider, "How can I make this experience better for those around me?"
- This affirmation can be applied to all life, including a respect for animals, nature and one's environment.

Acceptance Exercise: A Drop in Your Bucket



Introduction: In *How Full is Your Bucket*, by Tom Rath and Donald Clifton, Ph.D., the authors explain how every interaction we have with one another translates into a positive or negative experience. Positive experiences put a “drop in our bucket,” while negative ones “dip” from our bucket, stealing precious water. If your bucket is full, it’s because of a host of positive interactions which promote a happier and healthier life.

To Begin: Facilitators, please pass out three drop-shaped pieces of paper (they can be simple cut-outs from construction paper) to each participant, along with a writing utensil.

Activity: Step One: Ask each participant to look to the person sitting to the left of them. They may or may not know that person. For the next few minutes, have them write a “drop” that will go in their friend’s bucket. To a well-known person, one might say, “I remember that time you went grocery shopping for me when I was sick. I really appreciate your help and your friendship.” To a stranger they may write, “While we’ve never met, it makes me happy that you smile when we pass each other in the hallway and say ‘hello’. Your kindness is appreciated.”

When everyone is done, pass the drops to the person next to them. Participants have the option of sharing what was written about them if they choose to.

Step Two: Sometime during the week, ask each participant to think of two people whom they would like to give a drop to, write a note and leave it in the person’s mailbox or under their door. If they want to take it further, they may create a few more drops and continue spreading the good will.

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Acceptance Exercise: Hot Topics

Introduction: In the practice of acceptance, instead of hiding from issues that make us uncomfortable, we will discuss them. This exercise will look at current events that are potentially controversial. While it is not expected that participants and facilitators will agree with everything presented, they should approach this exercise from a place of understanding.

To Begin: Facilitators will arrive with a newspaper clipping or information surrounding a current, and potentially controversial, event for discussion. Participants are also welcome to bring in an article to pass to the facilitator for consideration. Limit the selection to talking about one or two current themes. Please refer participants to the Hot Topics exercise in their *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook*.

Activity: The facilitator will present the topics open for discussion, limiting the time to no more than 5 minutes on each topic. **Participants will be asked to try to view the topic from a perspective in which they may disagree.** After each topic is presented, participants will be asked to write down a few thoughts they have about the topic. **Please make the group aware that their specific thoughts are personal and will not be shared with the group.**

For example, if the topic is gay marriage, and the participant disagrees with legalizing marriage among homosexuals, instead of writing "I think it's wrong," they will be encouraged to consider topic from the perspective of the people involved. Instead, they may write, "While this topic makes me uncomfortable, I can understand how it would feel to me if I wanted to marry someone and was told that I was not allowed to do so. It would make me angry."

The purpose is not to influence anyone's beliefs, but rather, to develop an understanding of someone else's perspective.

After the topics have been introduced and the group is finished writing, go around the room and invite each participant to share **in general terms** their personal outcome to this experience of practicing acceptance. For example, someone might say, "Today, I found that I had an easier time being understanding about a topic that is usually touchy for me." Or, "I was able to put

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aside my own opinions and be much more accepting today, even with topics that typically makes me feel uncomfortable.”

Potential Topics:

- Prayer in school
- Gay Marriage
- Capital Punishment
- Corporal Punishment
- Abortion
- Carnivore or Vegan?
- Tattoos and body piercings
- Additional taxes for cigarettes or ‘junk food’



Acceptance Exercise: Sharing Traditions

Introduction: While we may not be able to “walk a mile in another person’s shoes” we still can experience some of the cultural and spiritual traditions that many of our neighbors practice. We do so by dressing in traditional garb and sharing personal holiday stories or sharing brief readings taken from a spiritual or native text.

To Begin: 1) Ask participants to arrive wearing something related to their heritage OR something they would wear during one of their favorite holidays or spiritual gatherings. For one person, this could mean arriving in a kimono or wearing a turban. For another person, this may be wearing a peace mala or cross.

2) Ask participants to also bring a short poem, scripture or story that resonates with them or relates to their personal upbringing. Some people may also choose to tell a story vs. reading a text. Options include sharing a children’s story unique to a particular country, a passage from a favorite book or a glimpse at how one person’s family likes to spend Christmas Eve.

Activity: Participants will take turns explaining the meaning of their clothing/accessory of choice and will then share their short story with the group.

Taking it Further: To expand on this exercise, try one of these options:

- 1) Host a Multi-Cultural Day where people bring food in from their native land or childhood and have a feast.
- 2) Ask participants to find a passage about or from a culture they know nothing about and share what they’ve learned.
- 3) Have participants arrive prepared to teach something to the group from their cultural experience: a dance, an affirmation or simply how to say, “Have a nice day,” in their native tongue.

Follow-Up Questions:

What did you learn today that you didn’t know before?

What were some of the similarities between the various experiences shared today? How were they different?

Was there something from today’s discussion that surprised you? If so, what was it?

Did sharing your traditions with others cause you to look at your own beliefs in a new way? If so, how?

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Session 5: Purpose

*The purpose of life is to discover your gift. The meaning of life is to
give your gift away. ~ David Viscott*

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Session 5: Facilitator Preparation

Objectives:

- Define and experience *purpose* as a theme of spirituality and spiritual expression
- Discuss research related to the health benefits of spirituality and spiritual practice
- Encourage discussion of spirituality and purpose

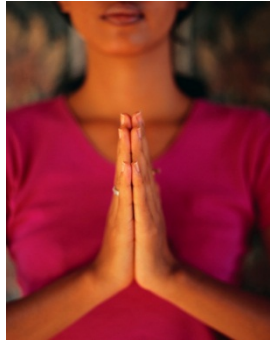
Materials:

- Session 5 Power Point presentation and projector
- Print copy of Session 5 presentation for Facilitator to utilize speaker's notes
- Participants' *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook*
- Purpose Prayer (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Mission Statement exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Visualization for Removing Obstacles exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Stories of Enlightenment exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Vision Board exercise (Facilitator Guidebook)
- Magazines, scissors, glue sticks, small pieces of poster board for each participant for us in the Vision Board exercise
- Flip chart and marker/dry erase board and markers (Optional)

Before Class:

- Refer to participant *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook*
- Refer to Facilitator Guidebook & Power Point presentation with speaker's notes for facilitator use
- Set up room with tables and chairs
- Set up room in a way that allows for discussion and makes it easy for everyone to see and hear the presentation

Purpose Prayer & Devotional



I ask you to consider a quote I've always liked from Robert Byrne, "*The purpose of life is a life of purpose.*" The trick, of course, is to discover that purpose. A friend of mine, who had experienced many losses and health challenges in his life, was always positive and seemed so engaged in life. One day I asked him how he had been able to cope with these difficulties and still stay so positive. He said, "No matter what happens or where I end up in this life, I have always felt called, and I've always believed that I have a purpose." Perhaps the secret of finding your purpose in life is to believe that there is such a purpose, and keep your spirit open to the possibilities.

A prayer from Edward Everett Hale sums it up very well:

*I am only one,
But still I am one.
I cannot do everything,
But still I can do something;
And because I cannot do everything
I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.*

*Special thanks to Jim Kok for his contribution in writing this devotional on purpose.

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Purpose Exercise: Writing Your Mission Statement

Introduction: In this session's presentation, we explored finding our life's purpose(s). As an affirmation of that purpose, we're going to try and develop our own personal mission statement. This statement is one we encourage you to revisit and reflect on often.

To Begin: Facilitators, please direct participants to their Writing Your Mission Statement page in the Session 5 section of their *Expressions of Spirituality Guidebook*. Either verbally or by referencing these questions on a whiteboard or other display, pose the following questions:

1. *Who am I? (Or, who do I want to be?)*
2. *What do I want to accomplish? (Or, who do I want to help?)*
3. *What do I believe in? (Or, what are my values?)*

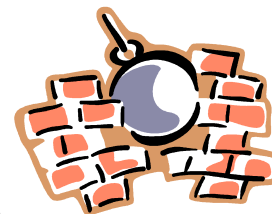
Dialog for Writing Your Mission Statement ... Please use the speaking lines below to guide the exercise.

Step 1: For the first part of this exercise, I am going to ask you a series of questions. Try to write the first things that come to your mind. Take no more than a moment or two to consider your answers. Just make note of what instinctively comes to you. [Facilitator reads the questions above out loud.]

Step 2: Take a look at your answers to the questions I just asked. From what you have written, I'd like you to develop the first draft of your personal mission statement. It can be a few short sentences or a one longer paragraph. Don't worry if you don't get it just the way you want it today. You can always revise this later.

Conclusion: After everyone has finished their personal mission statement, invite anyone who would like to share their purpose to do so.

Note: Don't be surprised if someone's "mission" is not yet defined. For example, if someone happens to have a sick cat that week, the first thing that may come to mind is helping Kitty. That's okay! Later, they may review these questions and realize that they do have a related calling – helping animals!



Purpose Exercise: Visualization for Removing Obstacles

Introduction: This session, we explored finding meaning and purpose in our lives. This visualization is designed with the intention of removing obstacles that hinder us from finding and achieving our purpose – whatever that purpose is or will become (as our purpose may change or evolve with time).

In some cases, we may not know what our purpose is and, therefore, we seek to remove confusion or lack of clarity. For others, the obstacle may be fear. Fear can come in many forms: fear of failure, fear of success (and the responsibility that brings), fear of criticism, fear of taking a risk, fear of the unknown, fear of something new. Lastly, another common obstacle is doubt: self-doubt or doubt that circumstances will give us the support we need to accomplish our goals.

In our visualization, we are likely to find and confront our primary obstacle or we may find our greatest *tool* for overcoming that obstacle. We ask that you approach this exercise with an open mind and without expectations of any particular outcome.

To begin: For this exercise, facilitators please read aloud the meditation below for participants. An alternative to these meditations are group-led prayer circles led by clergy, with a focus on overcoming fear and doubt as well as a reflection on a biblical verse or spiritual quote.

Ask participants to sit comfortably in a chair with their feet planted on the floor, legs uncrossed and hands resting on the tops of their thighs. Participants are also welcome to sit cross-legged on the floor or even lay down on a comfortable beach towel. Choose a quiet room or outdoor space with limited distractions. Read the following text slowly, softly and calmly, pausing for a few deep breaths between each line.

Meditation to be read aloud*: (Approx. 15 minutes) *Please use the speaking lines below to guide the exercise.

Line 1: Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, in and out, through your nose. With each exhale, allow yourself to sink into your chair, feeling completely supported.

Line 2: Take a moment to scan your body from head to toe. If you notice any areas of tension, see if you can soften those muscles with each exhale.

Line 3: You may notice thoughts going through your mind. Gently acknowledge these thoughts without judgment and then return to your breath. If they come back again, simply acknowledge them once again and again return to your breath.

Line 4: Today, we begin by setting an intention. That intention is to overcome obstacles; in particular, obstacles that keep us from finding and achieving our purpose.

Line 5: Keeping your eyes closed, I'd like you to imagine that you are walking along a desolate sidewalk. There is no one else around, but you do not mind because it is a safe and comfortable place.

Line 6: As you walk, notice the landscape around you. Is it daytime? Evening? Are you in a city surrounded by tall buildings, a small suburb surrounded by houses or perhaps in a rural town with rolling hills or flat planes? Observe your environment and keep walking slowly along the sidewalk.

Line 7: Begin to take in any sounds associated with this place – birds singing, the sound of the wind blowing, a car driving in the distance. Or, you may hear nothing at all.

Line 8: Notice any smells around you, if there are any.

Line 9: As you continue your walk, you begin to see a tall object blocking the sidewalk far ahead of you. You cannot quite see what it is, but you can tell that it is large and it covers the sidewalk so that you are unable to see what's on the other side of it.

Line 10: Keep walking. As you near the object, you begin to realize that is actually a brick wall. The wall seems to reach up to the sky and far out from side-to-side. Going over it or around it is not an option.

Line 11: Getting closer, you see that there is something written on the wall. You can't quite make out what it is ... As you get closer, you begin to see that it is a word – a single word.

Line 12: Walk up to the wall and silently read the word to yourself.

Line 13: This word represents one of two things: your obstacle or your source to overcome it.

Line 14: Place your hands on the wall and notice what it feels like. Feel the texture of it. Is it smooth or rough? Notice if the wall is warm or cool.

Line 15: As you stand, with your hands placed against the wall, your fingertips begin to tingle. Next, you feel energy in your palms ... You realize that, on the count of three, you will be able to break through this wall.

Line 16: When we get to “three,” you will push against the wall and break through it. One ... two ... three.

Line 17: Break through the wall and watch it crumble to the ground, away from you and out of harms way.

Line 18: Look at the path in front of you. What do you see?

Line 19: Take a few deep breaths as you slowly return to our room. As you bring your presence back to the current moment, you may choose to stretch your arms overhead, loosen up your neck by turning your head from side to side, or even gently twist your body in one direction and then the other.

Line 20: Now that you are fully present ... open your eyes.

Follow-up questions:

- Would anyone like to share their word?
- If your word was something “negative” such as “fear,” “doubt,” “pride” or something else, how did you feel breaking down the wall?
- If your word was something “positive” such as “courage,” “strength,” or “confidence,” how did you feel breaking down the wall?
- Was there anything that surprised you about this visualization?

Purpose Exercise: Personal Stories of Enlightenment & Purpose



Introduction: Have you ever had an “aha” moment that changed your life? Maybe you’ve experienced several “enlightened” moments. Can you remember one or more times in your life where you found meaning in helping someone else reach their goals?

This discussion group will give participants the opportunity to each share a) an “aha” moment in their life or b) a story where they helped change someone’s life for the better. These reflections do not have to be about something big. You may not have saved someone’s life, but we’re pretty sure you made a significant impact in some meaningful way.

To Begin: Allow each participant the opportunity to take a few minutes (please limit it to no more than 3 minutes) to tell his or her story. Ask participants to refrain from commenting until everyone has had a chance to speak, though it is appropriate for the group to thank the person or applaud.

Once everyone (who wants to) has had the chance to share, follow up with a brief discussion.

A Few Guidelines: Remember, participants should never criticize or give advice. All comments should provide positive feedback.

Discussion Questions:

1. *Was there a story that particularly inspired or moved you?*
2. *Which story or stories could you relate to the most?*
3. *Did you hear anything mentioned that you could apply to your own life?*

Purpose Exercise: Creating Your Own Vision Board



Introduction: What brings meaning to your life? In this session, we've explored the answers to this question. For many, meaning is found through relationships, helping others, developing a hobby, etc. In addition to these elements, we'd also like you to consider the question, "what brings me joy?"

What You'll Need:

- Stacks of discarded magazines (that can be cut up)
- Several pairs of scissors
- Several glue sticks
- Enough small pieces of poster board so that each participant can have his or her own

To Begin: Pass out magazines for participants to leaf through (they may also bring their own). Have them tear out pictures that represent "meaning" and "joy." They can be anything from a sunset to a photo of a cute puppy.

Once each person has a sampling of at least a dozen or more pictures, have them trim up each photo using a pair of scissors (or, help those who may need assistance).

Give participants time to lay their pictures out on their poster board, passing around the glue sticks to secure the images to the board backing. If needed, participants can choose a few more photos to fill in any "gaps" on the page or keep them open to add to their masterpiece later.

Conclusion: Once everyone has completed their vision board, invite people to share their collage with the group, briefly explaining why they chose certain elements for inclusion.