

Deepening Your Spiritual Practice

Your spiritual practice brings you back home to a realization of the presence and the power of God [Love]. Today, be sure to allow 'practice' time.
Mary Manin Morrissey

Inner peace is our birthright and is experienced as we practice quieting and centering our minds. However, in our attention-diverting society, this is a big challenge. Amidst the noise and confusion of the world, the voice of our deepest self is easily drowned out. It's akin to listening for a songbird's harmonious melody against the backdrop of a busy highway. Most of us humanoids have what Buddhists call Monkey Mind; our thoughts swing from limb to limb, day in and day out.

Meditation and prayer provide a gateway to calm our minds and access answers beyond the level of the problem. Just as our bodies require regular workouts to maintain its strength, our minds need consistent practice in order to quiet erratic thoughts and feelings. Silencing our minds through prayer and meditation allows us to connect with our core being so we may experience the peace and fulfillment that comes from within.

Prayer is most useful for communicating with our Source, for expressing ourselves. A *Course in Miracles* teaches, "Prayer is the medium of miracles. It is a means of communication of the created with the Creator. Through prayer love is received, and through miracles love is expressed." Prayer allows us to talk, to ask that we be aligned with a Divine Will and be used by a Divine Instrument. Ideally, it's a time to ask for clarity about a situation, or for sending light and love to someone in need.

In *Illuminata*, Marianne Williamson explains, "*We can learn to speak to God as we*

would speak to a combination therapist/lover/teacher/best friend/One-we-trust-more-than-anything/One-who-loves-us-no-matter-what/One-with-all-the-power-to-heal/One-with-the-power-and-desire-to-help, for that's what God is."

Meditation, on the other hand, involves quieting the mind so we can receive inner-guidance. Sogyal Rinpoche, in *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, teaches meditation by emphasizing, "Bring your mind home," and clarifies, "In its deepest sense, to bring your mind home is to turn inward and to rest in the nature of mind. This itself is the highest meditation."

People often get confused about the "right" way to meditate. However, there is no scientific approach for silencing the mind. Too often, we feel guilty for not taking the time to meditate "properly." Yet it's important to recognize that meditation can occur in various ways: listening to music, walking in nature, sitting in silence—whatever causes you to move into the center of your heart and disregard the clamoring of your intellect.

If we have been doing our spiritual practice regularly—prayer, meditation, developing our gifts, spending time in nature, nurturing our relationships—we can look back over our lives and see how much we have changed. Look not only at the outward changes in your life, but at the inward changes that have occurred: negative patterns have been released, ineffective reactions and responses no longer exist, your heart is more open, judgments have lessened and you are closer to your true nature. It is these profound inward shifts that our spiritual practice is really all about.

Finally, meditation and prayer enable us to elevate our thoughts by attuning to the highest voice within. So make a commitment to some form of spiritual practice on a daily basis, and watch as your deepest guidance becomes your guiding light. Some tips on silencing your mind include:

- (1) **ALLOW** yourself to sink inward. "In," unlike "ascent," implies that all wisdom is already within you, rather than something outside of you that needs to be sought or earned.
- (2) **MAINTAIN** a sense of importance and sacredness during your attempt. Affirm its benefits to yourself and others.
- (3) **PRACTICE** approaching meditation as you would a holy altar dedicated to Love and Its' Creation.
- (4) **TRUST** and have faith. Know that a "bubbling up" of insight sometimes occurs and you will receive the results when you are ready.
- (5) **SURRENDER** to your inner guide, knowing that it will do *its'* part now that you have done *yours*.