



Spiritual Practice Week 1

Theme: Practice Paying Attention - Be Still

3 Wondering Questions

I wonder what happens when you are still?

I wonder what you notice around (and inside you) you when you slow down?

I wonder where you notice God (or love, or beauty, or kindness) when you are quiet and still?

Reverend Emily Meyer, Director of [The Ministry Lab](#), invites you to wonder through meditation and movement. Please note, this content is also available as an audio recording on the website: www.uccmn.org.



Tips for this week's Spiritual Practice:

*You may listen or read.

*There is no "wrong" way to participate: whatever is appropriate for you in your context is "right".

*Non-judgmentalism is key: be kind and forgiving to yourself and others. This is called a "practice" because it is never "perfect".

*If safety and health protocols allow, let this be an excuse to get out of the house, away from screens, and into the out-of-doors.

*in this practice, each "directive" is followed by silence, during which you are invited to "take as long as you like..." Recorded silences last 15-30 seconds. To stretch the silences, push pause on your player; push play when you are ready to proceed. There is no "proper" length to this: what is right for you and/or any Littles who may be practicing with you, is right.

*That being said, don't be afraid to stretch the silences a bit further over time: extended time can help deepen our connection with the Divine and has the delightful side-effects of developing patience, non-judgmentalism, creativity, compassion, and attention spans!

*This practice concludes with an invitation to journal and reflect. Both are highly beneficial and are highly recommended. You may want to bring paper and writing/drawing materials with you so reflection can follow as part of the practice. If this is not possible, you might return home in mindfulness and journal and reflect there.

*If circumstances prevent all forms of reflection, please be kind to yourself and others by moving slowly from the practice back into "normal" life: the jump from silence to normal-volume life can be jarring.

*Take your time. Be still. And notice....

Work out the Wiggles: Take a walk: around the block, to a nearby park, through the woods - walk to a place where you can sit for a while (a park bench, your front porch, a fallen tree). Let your walk be fairly brisk. The young at heart might even skip, hop or dance a little on the way. Let your body be busy as you walk - and pay attention to how that feels.

Stretch: When you've found a good place to sit for a bit, take a moment to stretch. This might feel awkward if you're in a public space, but even a quick stretch of the arms to the sky and forward bend can relax your body and help it know that you are about to do something different.



Sit: Take a seat!

Name Your Intent: Today, we are going to use a short phrase and a word to tell ourselves why we are sitting right here, right now. Naming what we are doing - and why - can help our body, heart, mind and soul know that this is different from just “sitting” and remind us to be alert and focused (rather than sleepy). Naming our intent also helps us remember what it is! Our intent today is to BE STILL AND NOTICE.

Let’s say these words to ourselves as we breathe:

Breathe in: Be still...

Breath out: Notice.

Breathe in: Be still...

Breath out: Notice.

Breathe in: Be still...

Breath out: Notice.

Practice: You are now invited to sit still and notice:

Notice how your body feels as it settles down from its vigorous walk/skip/dance. Pay attention to your muscles as they relax; to your heartbeat as it slows; to your breathing as it lengthens and deepens.

Take as long as you like - from 1-5 or more minutes.

When your body feels settled and quiet, notice what’s happening around you. Notice any busy-ness you see, hear, feel, taste or smell. This might be people and vehicles, bugs and animals, wind and water: notice all the movement, sounds, aromas that bustle around you.

Take as long as you like - from 1-5 or more minutes.

Take a deep breath... and let it out.

Let your focus shift, now, to noticing stillness: where is the calm or total silence around you: a chipmunk pausing, a halt in the breeze, a door closing: notice what is quiet and still in your surroundings.

Take as long as you like - from 1-5 or more minutes.

Take another deep breath... and let it out.

Close your eyes for just a moment. Let your focus shift, now, to noticing stillness within you. You might keep your eyes closed (if that feels comfortable and safe where you are sitting), to let your focus be within you. Notice stillness in your own body. Notice the weight of your bottom on your bench/log/rock. Notice how your hands are resting. Notice the pause between your in-breath and out-breath; between the out-breath and in-breath. Notice, if you can, the stillness of your thoughts.

Take as long as you like - from 1-5 or more minutes.

I invite you to wiggle your toes and fingers; gently roll your head or shoulders...

Take a few deep breaths: in and out...

And rest for a moment.

Take as long as you like - from 10-30 seconds or more.



It can be really helpful and fun to reflect a little bit on what you experienced while sitting quietly. You can do this by writing in a journal, drawing a picture, doodling, or talking with someone who sat quietly with you.

To help you start writing, drawing and/or talking (because some people find it helpful to do all three!), here are some questions to consider:

Where did you notice God in the busy-ness of your body and mind?

Where did you notice God in the busy-ness that surrounds you?

Where did you notice God in the quiet that surrounds you?

Where did you notice God in the quiet of your own body, mind, heart and soul?

Some people like to keep all of their writing or drawing in one book or place. After many days, weeks or even years, looking back over these writings and drawings helps people see where God has been in their lives and in the world, and helps them notice God in new ways. It's a way to write or draw your own personal story of God.

You might end your writing/drawing/chatting time by taking a final deep breath in, letting it out slowly, and saying a single word or phrase of closure or blessing, like "Amen"; "Blessed Be"; "Thank you"; or "We walk in peace"; etc.

Then, walk, skip, jump, run or hop yourself home or into the rest of your day!