

UU Wellspring: Spiritual Practices

Revised June 2020



Background

We believe that spiritual practice is essential to spiritual living and to our spiritual development as Unitarian Universalists. Spiritual practices are activities that we approach with intentionality and regularity that allow us to connect with our deepest selves and with the larger wholeness of which we are a part. Spiritual practice helps cultivate aspects of ourselves, such as compassion and kindness, and helps us achieve states of consciousness, such as awe or stillness. Through spiritual practice, we begin to experience our interconnectedness and by going deeper, we touch a sense of deep peace, yearning and a call to be of service in the world.

We see spiritual practice not just as a means of waking up ourselves, but as our foundation for being in the world and being of service to others in times of pain and joy. These deep roots of truth connect us with others and with the earth. Committing to a daily spiritual practice is the foundation of UU Wellspring and especially of this program, which offers the opportunity for members of a small group to support one another in making and keeping that commitment.

Structure

We think about *Spiritual Practices* using the image of a tree as a metaphor for the spiritual life: the trunk of the tree for presence, the roots of the tree going deep into our hearts and souls, and the branches reaching out to the sky and the world. The sessions in this program are roughly divided into four sections, with an “intermezzo” around the New Year to reflect and begin again.

1. **Opening** includes a reconnecting ritual, a session on soul listening, and a session on creating sacred time and space.
2. **Being Present** focuses on becoming more fully present in the world — present to ourselves and to the holy. This section is represented by the trunk of the tree.
3. **Going Deeper** explores ways of deepening our connections with the holy and of going to our Unitarian Universalist roots through spiritual practices. This section is represented by the root structure of the tree.
4. **Reaching Out** finds ways to make connections with others and the world as a result of spiritual practices. It is represented by the branches of the tree.

This program offers material for eighteen *Spiritual Practices* sessions, with a few suggestions in each session for practice and discussion. Because participants (and facilitators) are UU Wellspring veterans, the expectation is that they will choose which questions and practices to focus on in each session, based on the content and discussion that arise in previous sessions and on their own needs and experiences. We will engage in spiritual practices that help us move toward these states of consciousness, among others: wakefulness, gratitude, compassion, awe, stillness, presence, connection, and wholeness, and an ability to hold the travails of life in a larger container. We see spiritual practice as our foundation for being in the world and being of service to others in times of pain and joy.

UU Wellspring: Spiritual Practices Topics



Session 1
Reconnecting and Opening Ritual

Session 2
Soul Listening as a Spiritual Practice

Session 3
Finding Refuge in Turbulent Times

Session 4
The Paradox of Stillness

Session 5
Joy as an Act of Resistance

Session 6
Spirit in the Body

Session 7.
The Monkey Mind

Session 8
Beginning Again

Session 9
Gratitude

Session 10
Prayer

Session 11
The Transcendentalists' Way

Session 12
Suspending Judgment

Session 13
Generosity

Session 14
Melting into the Warmth of Compassion

Session 15
Practical Acts of Compassion

Session 16
Yearning for What, for Whom?

Session 17
Service as a Path

Session 18
Pulling It All Together



Books for Spiritual Practices

There is one primary book for this program:

- [*Awakening Together: The Spiritual Practices of Inclusivity and Community* by Larry Yang](#). This book speaks primarily to creating community within Buddhist practices, yet the concepts relate to the community we are building in our UU Wellspring group and in our congregations.

Previously used in *Sources*:

- *Everyday Spiritual Practice*, edited by Scott Alexander
- *A Hidden Wholeness*, by Parker Palmer (or video links below)

[Chapter 1](#): The Primacy of Wholeness

[Chapter 2](#): The Great Divide

[Chapter 3](#): Journey Toward an Undivided Life

[Chapter 4](#): Circles of Trust

[Chapter 5](#): Establishing the Conditions of Circles of Trust

[Chapter 6](#): Characteristics of a Circle of Trust

[Chapter 7](#): Common Ground and Third Things

