



Unitarian Universalist
Small Group Ministry
Network Website



Wednesday Evening Small Group
Centering and Grounding on the Road to Mindfulness
22 January 2020, 7:15 PM

CHALICE LIGHTING

1 min

For the person with attention, every day becomes the very day upon which all the world depends.

Rabbi Rami M Shapiro

SILENT MEDITATION / CENTERING

2 min

The first sound of the gong brings us to silence. Please take time to center yourself, and temporarily push aside whatever might be preventing you from participating fully in tonight's session. The second sound of the gong returns us to each other's presence.

OPENING WORDS:

1 min

Now and again, it is necessary to seclude yourself among deep mountains and hidden valleys to restore your link to the source of life. Breathe in and let yourself soar to the ends of the universe; breathe out and bring the cosmos back inside. Next, breathe up all fecundity and vibrancy of the earth. Finally, blend the breath of heaven and the breath of earth with your own, becoming the Breath of Life itself.

Morihei Ueshiba

CHECK-IN (2 ROUNDS)

36 min

Please share some thing(s) about your life since last we met. If you feel comfortable about it, tell us about a time when you experienced hospitality, as a guest or a host, that was unexpected.

INTRODUCTION:

10 min

Adapted from the websites "Mystic Elements" and "Mojan.com":

When we have unique gifts, tuning out the psychic noise around us, day in, day out, can be overwhelming. Whether you do yoga, meditate, make stone grids, or practice some form of earth-based spirituality, physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual grounding and centering are very basic core practices in most systems of spiritual practice or personal development, and make an incredible foundation for personal mastery.

Grounding can be achieved by eating a healthy and balanced diet, drinking water, walking in natural surroundings, gardening, working with animals, being purposeful, visualizing roots (just imagine you have great long sturdy roots coming from the base of your feet or from the base of your spine--let these roots go right down in to the earth below and let them anchor you onto the earth) or color (imagine that a deep earthy color such as red, brown and terracotta surrounds you), and by carrying or working with crystals.

There are numerous ways to find your center. Make sure you find a quiet space. Taking a few clearing breaths, allow yourself to drift softly into the idea you hold of yourself. Imagine you are on a journey to your core. Seek out a memory or feeling that seems to be the most sacred to you. Explore that feeling. Often what lies at the base of that memory, will help you define your center as it is in this moment. Note that, as we grow on our spiritual path, our center space may also change

Mother Earth provides us with a variety of different crystals that can enhance our efforts as we are learning the arts of grounding and centering. When we bring a stone or crystal into the process of centering, we add that stone's energy to our own. Stones that can aid in grounding include red jasper, bloodstone, hematite, gold tigers eye, carnelian, garnet, pyrite, copper, amber, and unakite. Smoky quartz, petrified wood, and amethyst are examples of stones with properties that are conducive to helping us find our spiritual center.

Centering is a way to self awareness and owning yourself and your energy. You place your attention at your spiritual and personal center, call in your energies, and release any energy and programs that is not yours. To center yourself, bring your attention into the center of your head (you may visualize a sphere in the center of your head), or the hara (a spiritual energy center about an inch below the belly button), or the heart. Choose the place where you feel you are balanced and contained, wherever you are firm in your awareness of self.

In the Christian tradition, a centering prayer is a simple way of praying in which breath and a "prayer word" keep attention focused on God's presence. It is a listening prayer in which all thoughts and intentions other than openness to God are set aside. The instructions are quite similar to those from the Buddhist tradition, but involve breathing in God, and returning to God as the center of your attention.

QUOTES TO PONDER

10 min

Centering is a verb. It is an ongoing process ... Centering is not a model, but a way of balancing, a spiritual resource in times of conflict, an imagination. It seems in certain lights to be an alchemical vessel, a retort, which bears an integration of purposes, an integration of levels of consciousness. It can be called to, like a divine ear.

M.C. Richards

Centering ... is the discipline of bringing in (i.e., of sympathy or empathy) rather than of leaving out. Of saying "Yes, Yes" to what we behold. To what is holy and to what is unbearable. But my experience tells me now that there is an important crucial stage of saying "Yes" to a "No". For resistance also must be embraced. Not only accepting resistance but practicing it.

M.C. Richards

We have three centers: the emotional center, the intellectual center, and the physical body center. Each one of them has its own intelligence. How much better would we be if all three were working in unison?

Erin Gray

As I've grown as an artist, I've gotten more and more in touch with my center, and that center is voice and guitar.

Lindsey Buckingham

For a ballerina, the center of balance is everything--creating a strong center of balance begins with building strong abdominal muscles.

Mary Helen Bowers

Nature is an infinite sphere of which the center is everywhere and the circumference nowhere.

Blaise Pascal

The center that I cannot find is known to my unconscious mind.

W. H. Auden

I'm writing from a place of--a center of authenticity, somewhere that only I know how to write from.

K'naan

One of the values of centering prayer is that you are not thinking about God during the time of centering prayer so you are giving God a chance to manifest. In centering prayer there are moments of peace that give the psyche a chance to realize that God may not be so bad after all. God has a chance to be himself for a change.

Thomas Keating

Mindfulness helps you go home to the present. And every time you go there and recognize a condition of happiness that you have, happiness comes.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Buddhist mindfulness is about the present, but I also think it's about being real. Being awake to everything. Feeling like nothing can hurt you if you can look it straight on.

Krista Tippett

One of the great things about children is that they have no other concern than to be simply interested in things. It is considered by some the height of mindfulness to approach the world afresh like a child.

John Dickerson

Self-compassion encourages mindfulness, or noticing your feelings without judgment; self-kindness, or talking to yourself in a soothing way; and common humanity, or thinking about how others might be suffering similarly.

Rachel Simmons

I have great respect for the past. If you don't know where you've come from, you don't know where you're going. I have respect for the past, but I'm a person of the moment. I'm here, and I do my best to be completely centered at the place I'm at, then I go forward to the next place.

Maya Angelou

Rajneeshism is creating a Noah's Ark of consciousness, remaining centered exactly in the middle of the cyclone. You can only escape within, and that's what I teach. I do not teach worship of God or any other ritual but only a scientific way of coming to your innermost core.

Rajneesh

Quotes About Mindfulness

The key to creating the mental space before responding is mindfulness. Mindfulness is a way of being present: paying attention to and accepting what is happening in our lives. It helps us to be aware of and step away from our automatic and habitual reactions to our everyday experiences.

Elizabeth Thornton

Mindfulness helps us freeze the frame so that we can become aware of our sensations and experiences as they are, without the distorting coloration of socially conditioned responses or habitual reactions.

Henepola Gunaratana

Mindfulness has helped me succeed in almost every dimension of my life. By stopping regularly to look inward and become aware of my mental state, I stay connected to the source of my actions and thoughts and can guide them with considerably more intention. *Dustin Moskovitz*

In Asian languages, the word for “mind” and the word for “heart” are the same. So if you're not hearing mindfulness in some deep way as heartfulness, you're not really understanding it. Compassion and kindness towards oneself are intrinsically woven into it. You could think of mindfulness as wise and affectionate attention. *Jon Kabat-Zinn*

Mindfulness is about love and loving life. When you cultivate this love, it gives you clarity and compassion for life, and your actions happen in accordance with that. *Jon Kabat-Zinn*

Mindfulness is often spoken of as the heart of Buddhist meditation. It's not about Buddhism, but about paying attention. That's what all meditation is, no matter what tradition or particular technique is used. *Jon Kabat-Zinn*

To drop into being means to recognize your interconnectedness with all life, and with being itself. Your very nature is being part of larger and larger spheres of wholeness. *Jon Kabat-Zinn*

Most people don't realize that the mind constantly chatters. And yet, that chatter winds up being the force that drives us much of the day in terms of what we do, what we react to, and how we feel. *Jon Kabat-Zinn*

When you look at the sun during your walking meditation, the mindfulness of the body helps you to see that the sun is in you; without the sun there is no life at all and suddenly you get in touch with the sun in a different way. *Thich Nhat Hanh*

If every day you practice walking and sitting meditation and generate the energy of mindfulness and concentration and peace, you are a cell in the body of the new Buddha. This is not a dream but is possible today and tomorrow. *Thich Nhat Hanh*

SONG: BREATHING (Joe Reilly)

7 min

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggMMLZZDFKc>

PREPARATION FOR GROUP REFLECTION

1 min

BREAK

10 min

GROUP REFLECTION / FEEDBACK

36 min

Two rounds. Take a moment of silence and consider your response to one or more of these questions:

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON CENTERING, GROUNDING, AND MINDFULNESS

- ☺ Tell us about how you try to practice mindfulness in your daily life.
- ☺ How do you help your mind turn off the background noise and focus on the present?
- ☺ What spiritual practices do you use to help you ground, center, or be mindful.
- ☺ Unitarian Universalism's Fourth Principle affirms the value of a "free and responsible search for truth and meaning." Do you see meditation and other types of mindfulness as a means to finding "truth and meaning?"
- ☺ Did any of the quotes cause you to react in an unexpected way? Talk about that experience.

SONG: SERENITY by Godsmack (written by Sully Ema, Tony Rombola) 4.5 min

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6OLUNB993Dw&app=desktop>

ANNOUNCEMENTS, FUTURE SESSIONS, SERVICE PROJECT 1 min

SESSION FEEDBACK 2 min

What worked for you, didn't work for you, might require revisiting our covenant?

EXTINGUISH CHALICE / CLOSING WORDS 1 min

Each place is the right place--the place where I now am can be a sacred space.

Ravi Ravindra



SONG LYRICS

Sorry, I was unable to find a source for the lyrics to Joe Reilly's song "Breathing," and didn't have time to transcribe it. Despite several requests for the lyrics in the Comments section of the video, they weren't there, and neither were they found on the mudcat.org site (Digital Tradition or Forum).

SERENITY Sully Ema, Tony Rombola

As I sit here and slowly close my eyes
 I take another deep breath
 And feel the wind pass through my body
 I'm the one in your soul
 Reflecting in the light
 Protect the ones who hold you
 Cradling your inner child

I need serenity
 In a place where I can hide
 I need serenity
 Nothing changes, days go by

Where do we go when we just don't know?
 And how do we relight the flame when
 it's cold?
 Why do we dream when our thoughts mean
 nothing?
 And when will we learn to control?

Tragic visions slowly stole my life
 Tore away everything
 Cheating me out of my time
 I'm the one who loves you
 No matter wrong or right

And every day I hold you
 I hold you with my inner child
 I need serenity
 In a place where I can hide
 I need serenity
 Nothing changes, days go by

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