

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Small Group Ministry  
**“Our Relationship with Spiritual and Physical Practices”**  
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR

**Chalice or candle lighting or sound a chime** (2 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

**Moment of silence**

**Opening words**

“.....may we grow to know and cherish that unity which in each moment warms our hearts, flowing from each to each, making us, part with part, a wholeness we could never be alone. Thus may we find a kinship with all life, reaching across all barriers of race, philosophies and creeds, making us one with everything that lives from the inmost atom to the brightest star.”

-adapted from Robert Weston

**Check-in** (up to 20 to 30 minutes, with 2 to 3 minutes each)

**Topic and sharing** (up to 70 minutes for reading, questions, a few minutes for reflection and making notes if desired, individual sharing , and optional discussion at the end, with an optional 5 minute break about midway in the session)

**Reading**

“A spiritual practice is any regular, intentional activity that serves to significantly deepen the quality and content of your relationship with the miracle of life.”

--Scott Alexander, from “Everyday Spiritual Practices”

"While washing the dishes one should only be washing the dishes, which means that while washing the dishes one should be completely aware of the fact that one is washing the dishes. At first glance, that might seem a little silly: why put so much stress on a simple thing? But that's precisely the point. The fact that that I am standing there and washing these bowls is a wondrous reality. I'm being completely myself, following my breath, conscious of my presence, and conscious of my thoughts and actions.

There's no way I can be tossed around mindlessly like a bottle slipped here and there on the waves.”

--Thicht Naht Han, from “Miracle of Mindfulness”

When we are in touch with being whole, we feel at one with everything. When we feel at one with everything, we feel whole ourselves. Wholeness is the root of everything that the words “health”, “healing”, and “holy” signify in our language and our culture.

--Jon Kabat-Zinn, from “Wherever You Go There You Are”.

Examples of what some may call spiritual and/or physical practices include: meditation; prayer; saying a mantra; religious and cultural rituals; chanting; yoga and breathing exercises; tai chi and other martial arts; other physical activities and exercises; healing touch; music; dance; art; guided imagery; writing, including about one’s experiences and poetry; expressing gratitudes orally, in writing, and in actions; humor; play; certain diets or eating patterns; doing anything with mindfulness; and others.

According to various writers and traditions, spiritual and/or physical practices may facilitate a number of responses including: a sense of calm, tranquility, comfort, and staying centered and grounded—the “relaxation response”; heightened awareness; increased presence to life; giving perspective; feeling connected to something larger than oneself; finding hope; deepening faith; feeling liberated; being grateful; and others.

--UUCE Small Group Ministry Steering Committee curriculum subcommittee 3-23-09

**Questions**

1. What spiritual and/or physical practices have you done and what effects have you experienced? Has this changed at different times in your life?
2. Are there certain spiritual and/or physical practices that you would like to be doing but have not yet started or you have stopped doing? What is preventing you from doing them?
3. Can you share what you would call a “spiritual” experience and what that was like? In what way, if at all, do you distinguish between “spiritual”, “emotional”, and “physical” experiences?

**Sharing** (up to 6 to 8 minutes each, depending on the time available, with time at the end for comment and discussion if the group wishes)

**Administrative matters (service project, future meeting dates and topics, etc.)** up to 5 to 10 minutes)

**Likes and wishes/check-out** (up to 5 minutes total)

**Closing words** (2 minutes for words and closing)

“And now we take our leave. Before we gather here again, may each of us bring happiness to another’s life; may we each be surprised by the gifts that surround us; may we each be enlivened by constant curiosity; and may we remain together in spirit ‘til the hour we meet again.”

--Barbara Cheatham

**Extinguish the chalice or candle or sound a chime (and optional closing ritual)**

(Preparation for facilitator: bring the SGM facilitator training manual, paper and writing implements, the lesson plan, and your date book.)

Lesson plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee curriculum subcommittee (Rev. Steve Landale, Dick Loescher, Leora White) 3-23-09