

Here are some grounding prayers and contemplative practices that a spiritual director can use when a directee is experiencing a trauma response:

1. Breath Prayer (*Anchors the nervous system through rhythmic breathing and repetition*)

◆ Example:

- Inhale: *Jesus, you are here.*
- Exhale: *I am safe in your love.*

◆ **Guidance:** Encourage slow, deep breathing (inhaling for 4 seconds, exhaling for 6 seconds) to help regulate the vagus nerve and bring the directee back to the present moment.

2. The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Prayer (*Engages the senses to help reconnect with the body and surroundings*)

◆ Guidance: Ask the directee to slowly name:

- **5 things** they can see (*the light from a candle, a plant, their hands*)
- **4 things** they can touch (*the texture of a chair, their clothing, a warm drink*)
- **3 things** they can hear (*birds outside, the hum of a fan, their own breath*)
- **2 things** they can smell (*essential oils, coffee, fresh air*)
- **1 thing** they can taste (*tea, mint, or simply their own saliva*)

End with a brief **prayer of presence**, such as:

"God, you are in this place. You are with me now. I am here."

3. The Jesus Prayer (or Centering Prayer) (*A simple, repetitive prayer to calm the mind and body*)

◆ Example:

- Slowly repeat: *"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me."*
- Or modify for a gentler version: *"Peace of Christ, fill me."*

◆ **Guidance:** Invite the directee to close their eyes, gently hold a cross or prayer beads, and say the prayer in sync with slow breathing.

4. Embodied Prayer (Using Movement to Reconnect with Safety)

◆ **Guidance:**

- Encourage the directee to **stand or stretch** if they feel stuck in freeze mode.
 - Offer a simple **hand-over-heart prayer**:
 - Place one hand over the heart and one on the belly.
 - Slowly breathe and say: *"God, hold me in your love. I am safe."*
 - Invite **gentle rocking or swaying** to soothe the nervous system.
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5. Nature Prayer (Grounding Through Creation)

◆ **Guidance:** If possible, invite the directee to step outside, touch the ground, or focus on a natural element (tree, water, sunlight).

- Use a simple reflection: *"As the trees are rooted in the earth, I am rooted in God's love."*
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Would you like help adapting these to different spiritual traditions or specific needs?

Here are more **grounding spiritual practices** to help a directee regulate their nervous system when experiencing a trauma response in a spiritual direction session. These practices integrate breath, body, prayer, and awareness to promote a sense of safety and connection.

6. The Hand Prayer (Tactile Grounding with God's Presence)

◆ **Guidance:**

- Invite the directee to slowly trace the fingers of one hand with the index finger of the other hand.
- As they trace each finger, they can pray:
 - **Thumb** – *God, you are with me.*
 - **Index** – *You created me.*
 - **Middle** – *You hold me in love.*
 - **Ring** – *You give me peace.*

- **Pinky** – *I am safe in you.*

◆ **Why it Works:** The combination of touch and prayer helps engage the vagus nerve and brings awareness back to the present moment.

7. Rocking Prayer (Engaging the Body in Comforting Motion)

◆ Guidance:

- If the directee is experiencing a freeze response, invite them to gently **rock back and forth** while seated or standing.
- As they do, they can repeat a **short prayer or scripture**, such as:
 - *“Be still and know that I am God.”* (Psalm 46:10)
 - *“I am held in perfect love.”*
- Alternatively, they can hum or sing a simple spiritual chant.

◆ **Why it Works:** Rocking activates the parasympathetic nervous system, helping the body move from a frozen or overwhelmed state into calmness.

8. The Candle Prayer (Soft Gaze for Centering and Peace)

◆ Guidance:

- Light a candle (or invite the directee to visualize one).
- Invite them to breathe slowly while gazing at the flame.
- With each inhale, pray: *“God’s light fills me.”*
- With each exhale, pray: *“I release all fear.”*

◆ **Why it Works:** Candle gazing helps bring a gentle, steady focus, calming the nervous system while reinforcing the presence of divine light and peace.

9. Weighted Prayer (Creating a Sense of Safety and Containment)

◆ Guidance:

- Invite the directee to place a weighted object (a pillow, blanket, or even their own hands) on their lap or shoulders.
- As they feel the pressure, they can pray:
 - *“God, your love is a shelter.”*

- *"I am held and safe."*

◆ **Why it Works:** Weighted pressure signals safety to the nervous system, helping regulate overwhelm and bringing a sense of grounding.

10. The Walking Prayer (Connecting Breath, Movement, and Presence)

◆ **Guidance:**

- If possible, take a **slow, intentional walk** (even if it's just pacing in place).
- With each step, offer a prayer:
 - Step 1: *"God is with me."*
 - Step 2: *"I am not alone."*
 - Step 3: *"My body is safe."*

◆ **Why it Works:** Walking while praying helps shift the nervous system from a stress response to a state of peace and presence.

11. The Name Prayer (Reclaiming Identity and Safety in God)

◆ **Guidance:**

- Invite the directee to softly **speak their name in prayer**, affirming their belovedness:
 - *"[Name], you are God's beloved."*
 - *"[Name], you are safe."*
 - *"[Name], you are held in love."*

◆ **Why it Works:** Hearing one's own name in a loving, sacred context can be deeply healing, especially for those who feel unseen or disconnected.

12. The Holding Cross Prayer (Using Sacred Objects for Comfort)

◆ **Guidance:**

- Offer the directee a small wooden cross, a rosary, a stone, or another sacred object to hold.
- As they hold it, invite them to breathe deeply and pray:
 - *"Jesus, hold me as I hold this cross."*
 - *"God, you are my refuge."*

◆ **Why it Works:** Tactile engagement with sacred objects can provide a tangible reminder of divine presence, helping to regulate anxiety and dissociation.

13. Lament and Release Prayer (Expressing and Letting Go)

◆ **Guidance:**

- If the directee is overwhelmed by emotion, encourage them to pray aloud or write a **prayer of lament**:
 - *“God, I bring you my pain...”*
 - *“I feel...”* (allow space for honest expression)
 - *“Hold me in my sorrow.”*
- Follow with a **release gesture**, such as:
 - Opening hands to symbolize surrender.
 - Writing worries on paper and tearing them up.

◆ **Why it Works:** Lament allows the directee to acknowledge their pain in God’s presence, while the release gesture helps shift the nervous system toward healing.

14. Sound Prayer (Using Humming or Chanting for Vagus Nerve Activation)

◆ **Guidance:**

- Invite the directee to **hum, chant, or softly sing** a sacred word or phrase:
 - *“Kyrie Eleison” (Lord, have mercy).*
 - *“Yahweh” (Inhale on ‘Yah,’ exhale on ‘weh’).*
 - *“Peace, be still.”*

◆ **Why it Works:** Humming and chanting stimulate the vagus nerve, slowing the heart rate and promoting relaxation.

15. The Sacred Hug Prayer (Self-Compassion & Divine Embrace)

◆ **Guidance:**

- Invite the directee to **gently hug themselves** or place their hands on their heart.
- Pray:
 - *“God, wrap me in your love.”*
 - *“I am not alone.”*

- *“I am safe in your arms.”*

◆ **Why it Works:** Hugging releases oxytocin, a calming hormone, and reinforces a felt sense of divine presence.

Final Thoughts

Each directee may respond differently to these practices. Encourage them to notice what feels helpful and empowering