

Morning Meditations—An Overview

Each day at Haden we make time to be together in the practice of spiritual contemplation. Whether we meditate, practice centering prayer, journal, draw, or walk the labyrinth, we create space in our day for the present moment. Beginning the morning with a contemplative practice allows us to fully arrive to ourselves and be alive to the mystery around us.

We will explore multiple contemplative practices this weekend. Each one shares a different method to pause and be open to deep wisdom and spirit. Curiosity about any of these practices, as well as any listed in these handouts, can expand our awareness of various tools we may bring to the art and practice of Spiritual Direction.

Mindfulness Meditation Session (Thursday afternoon):

Mindfulness has ancient roots, particularly in Buddhist contemplative traditions, but has become increasingly integrated into modern healthcare, psychology, education, and wellness. Today, people may encounter mindfulness through psychotherapy, yoga classes, meditation groups, self-help and wellness programs, books, podcasts, or smartphone meditation apps. Mindfulness-based approaches are also used to support stress management, emotional regulation, coping with pain, and overall well-being.

There are many ways to practice mindfulness and integrate it into your routine, including breath awareness, body scans, or grounding exercises that ask you to draw on one of your senses. As an introduction to a mindfulness practice, we have selected a loving kindness meditation that asks you to practice bringing loving awareness to yourself, and then to others.

By learning to slow down and meet each moment with greater awareness and openness, we may develop a deeper appreciation for ourselves, other people, nature, and the ordinary experiences of daily life—fostering a greater sense of connection with life as a whole.

Buddhist Meditation Session (Friday morning):

Buddhism began about 2,500 years ago with Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, or “Awakened One.” At its heart are the **Four Noble Truths**: suffering is part of life; attachment and craving contribute to suffering; freedom from suffering is possible; and the **Noble Eightfold Path** offers a way toward that freedom. Buddhist practice emphasizes **wisdom, ethical living, compassion, and meditation**. Meditation helps us become aware of our thoughts and emotions without automatically reacting to them.

Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk **Thích Nhất Hạnh** (1926–2022) became one of the world’s most influential teachers of mindfulness and peace. He taught that meditation does not have to be separated from everyday life. We can practice mindfulness while **breathing, walking, eating, listening, working, and interacting with others**. One of his central teachings was “**interbeing**”—the recognition that none of us exists independently. We are connected to other people, nature, and the world around us. This awareness encourages compassion, gratitude, and care for others.

Meditation does not require an hour of silence. Begin with **three mindful breaths**. Notice where you are. Pay attention to the person in front of you. Take a mindful walk. Eat one meal without distraction.

Further Reading: Thích Nhất Hạnh

- *The Miracle of Mindfulness* — an excellent introduction to meditation.
- *Peace Is Every Step* — bringing mindfulness into everyday life.
- *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching* — an accessible introduction to core Buddhist teachings.
- *Living Buddha, Living Christ* — particularly interesting for Christians exploring Buddhism.
- *How to Sit* — a short, practical introduction to meditation.

Online: Plum Village offers teachings, meditation resources, talks, and information about Thích Nhất Hạnh and his tradition.

Sufi Meditation Session (Saturday morning):

Sufism as defined in Neil Douglas-Klotz’s “The Sufi Book of Life” –

“Unlike some other traditions, Sufism cannot be made scientific, rational, or secular to fit modern tastes. In order to discover deep love, the kind that Sufis have expressed in poetry, one must be willing to love. So, paradoxically, Sufism is a devotional tradition with a very ancient lineage, yet devoid of any set dogma or ritual.”

Centering Prayer Meditation Session (Sunday morning):

Centering Prayer is a simple, ancient method of consenting to Divine presence. Rooted in the Christian contemplative tradition, it provides meaningful common ground with various religions and spiritual traditions anchored in a practice of silence. Though complementary with active forms of meditation, it differs from practices of mindful engagement or repeated mantras. Ultimately, the aim of Centering Prayer is attentive release of control, leading to resting in divine love.

How to practice: Find a comfortable seated position in a quiet place that allows your posture to remain alert. Gently close your eyes. Choose a sacred word (such as “Love” or “Peace”) that will serve as a reminder to return to your practice of consent; the sacred word is not a mantra to focus on, but an anchor to release everything else. Begin by silently repeating the word a few times until you notice your breath slowing and spirit settling and then repeat the word only when noticing you need to return attention from thoughts, feelings, or sensations. Attention will inevitably stray as we are enticed to engage with distractions; rather than failure, these are merely countless opportunities to return to the presence and action of the divine.

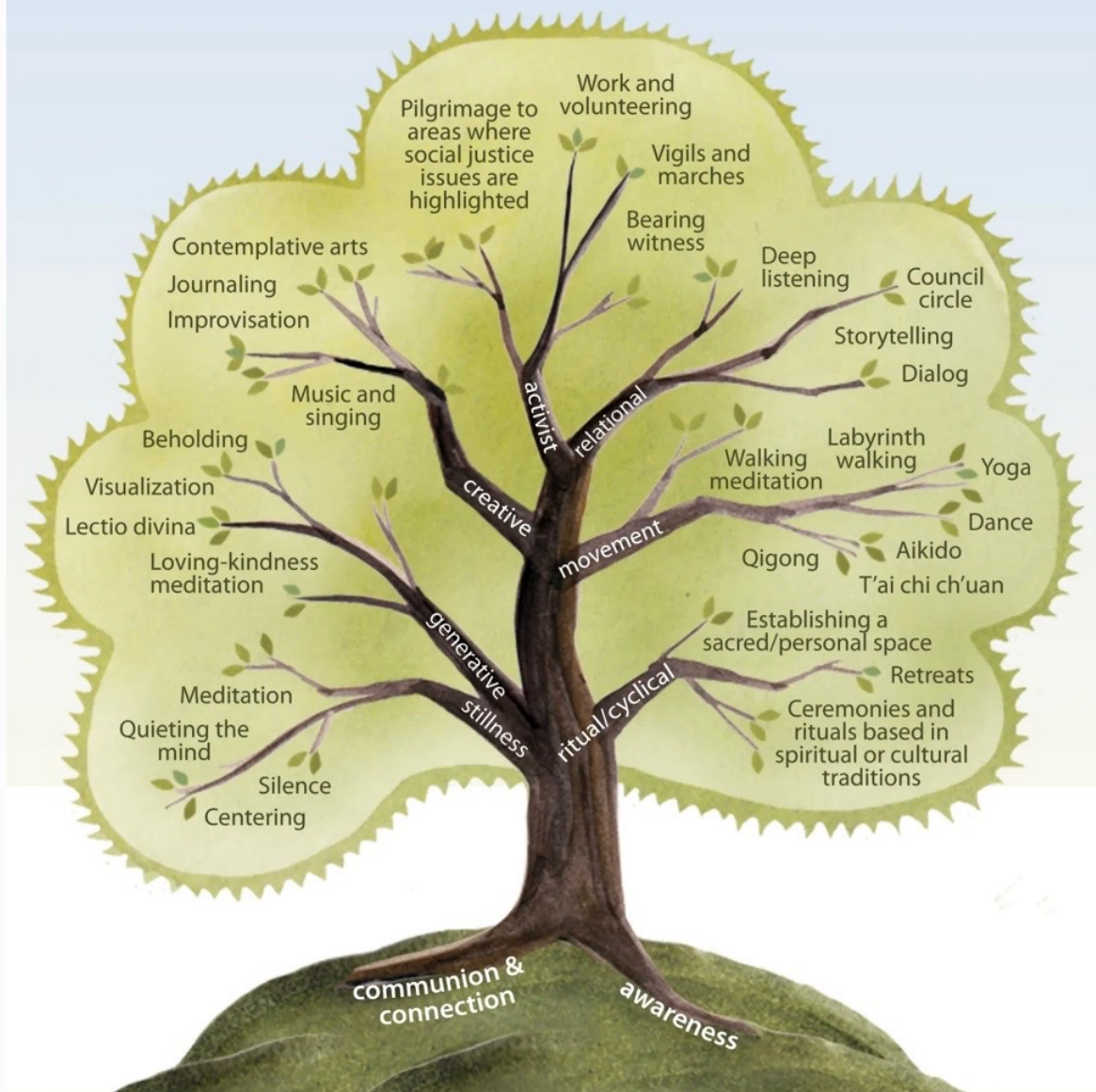
At the end of the prayer period (typically marked by setting a timer for 20 minutes), remain in silence for a few moments, then gently end with a short prayer or simply open your eyes. As Centering Prayer deepens our relationship with God, the Indwelling Presence, you may choose to offer a prayer of gratitude for time to abide in Love.

Interspirituality Meditation Session (Sunday evening):

Interspirituality as defined by Mirabai Starr –

To walk an interspiritual path is to travel through the wilderness with open hands and a courageous spirit. It is to navigate with the heart and a book of prayers from every faith tradition that ever uttered a sacred phrase in any language. To travel an interspiritual path is to drop to our knees in the presence of Love wherever we encounter it, and to disarm our hearts the minute we have the impulse to otherize a faith we do not understand. To take an interspiritual journey is to circle ever inward, to a place of holy silence and vibrant stillness, and then to surge back outward with the contemplative fruits we have gathered to feed a hungry world. An interspiritual life invites us to take our rightful place at the table of the Divine in many Holy Houses and asks that we kneel at the altars of multiple traditions and drink from the goblet we are offered, and allow it to transform us. Interspirituality is about saying YES to the sacred in every form and no form, about moving beyond intellectual orientation to active engagement with various religions, about seeking and finding the Love that unifies all paths and affirms our essential interconnectedness.

The Tree of Contemplative Practices



The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society
www.contemplativemind.org