

Soul Care Exercises

Here are some exercises that may help you find happiness, support and relaxation...

PRAYER

Prayers can help us feel more relaxed and connected to our soul. There are many sources of prayer as there are people - and you can create you own prayers.

Prayers and meditation practices transcend religion. While there are standard spiritual practices for most faith traditions, prayers and/or meditation can also be helpful for people with no religious affiliation. They can help you relax and find a sense of peace.

Sources of prayers. People can find sacred texts and liturgies from their own and others' traditions. You can also create your own prayers. These can be as simple as thinking of five things for which you are grateful. There are also prayers for people who do not hold to a particular faith tradition -- or any at all.

Here is a small sample:

Examples of prayers:

May the One who brings comfort surround you with goodness and strength.

May your Spirit be calmed and renewed.

May you find wisdom to guide you in your journey.

May you and your loved ones know hope and peace.

Source of all life and healing,

Be with me in this time of physical, emotional and spiritual need.

Help me cope with the challenges I am facing.

Comfort and encourage those who love and care and whose lives have been unsettled and disrupted by illness.

I pray for patience and for understanding.

I pray for strength and wisdom.

I pray for healing and for inner peace.

The light of God surrounds us;

The love of God enfolds us;

The power of God protects us;

The presence of God watches over us

Wherever we are, God is.

And all is well.

MEDITATION AND BREATHING

Healthcare research is finding that longtime Eastern spiritual practices, like meditation and breathing exercises, promote better health outcomes. These practices can reduce pain, tension and anxiety. They help patients prepare for surgery, better tolerate procedures, and recover more quickly.

The goal of meditation is to quiet the mind. It's characterized by concentration and mindfulness. A disciplined meditation practice can help you to achieve peace of mind.

Meditation can take many forms. You can sit quietly. You can close your eyes (or leave them open) and gently chant or be aware of your breathing. Eastern tradition often focuses on the word "Ommmmm." Jewish meditation can use the word "Shema" from the Hebrew prayer. Christians can meditate on Christ or a Bible verse. Muslims might use a phrase from the Koran. What you say or do or don't do is less important than your focus, which can help clear your mind.

A meditation practice is ongoing. It takes time to establish helpful habits. Even five minutes a day can be helpful, as long as you meditate regularly. Quieting your mind and cultivating mindfulness can bring a sense of inner peace and spiritual wholeness.

Breath is spiritual. People can live days without water and months without food, but we die quickly without breath. In Biblical Hebrew, the word nefesh means two things: breath and soul. Breathing is spiritual.

How you breathe makes a difference. Simple breathing practices can reduce blood pressure and heart rate. Do you notice how people pant and gasp for breath when they feel anxious or nervous? The opposite is also true. Breathing deeply and slowly is calming.

Example: Try "three-part yoga breathing." Sit straight in a chair, or upright on your bed. Relax your body. Breathe in through your nose. Fill your abdomen with air as you breathe. Then let the air fill your middle chest, and then your upper chest. Try to breathe in on the count of six, and then out again on the count of six. Repeat. As you get comfortable, expand your breath more. Try breathing in on 10 and out on 10.

GUIDED IMAGERY

Many people find guided imagery helps them to calm their body and mind.

Researchers are finding that guided imagery is helpful. People find that it can reduce anxiety and depression, promote relaxation, help prepare patients for surgery and accompany healing. Visualization and suggestion may work because they speak directly to our experiences of the world before we had words to describe it.

Guided imagery is based on our "mind-body" connection. This connection lets us have experiences by thinking about them. Concentrating on an image, engaging all your senses, helps us experience what we're thinking about.

Example: 'Visit' a beach or river side. Use all five senses. Visualize the water. See the white caps in the distance, the green waves gently rolling toward you. Hear the waves breaking on the shore. Smell the air. Feel the wind on your face, the sun on your skin, the grains of sand running through your hands. Smell the freshness of the water. The wet smell of the plant life. Feel the water at your ankles as you walk along.

Example: Take yourself in your mind to sit quietly in a wooded area. Look at the trees surrounding you and the sunlight glinting through the leaves. Listen to the sounds of the birds rustling through the branches or wheeling through the air, singing and chirping, the sounds of squirrels running up and down trees. Smell the freshness of the pines, the mossy scents of the plants growing on the rocks. Feel the hardness of the rocks, the jaggedness of the bark of the tree trunks. Sit quietly and let a sense of peace pervade your surroundings.

MUSIC, ART, NATURE

Spending time with music, nature or the arts may help to reduce your stress and anxiety.

Spending time with music, nature or the arts may help to reduce your stress and anxiety. While these may not seem like “soulful practices,” they are if they bring you comfort, hope, joy, or soothe your soul.

RELATIONSHIPS

Being around people who fill our lives with joy and love can help us to cope, physically and emotionally.

Being together. Being with people who fill our lives with joy and love can help us cope, physically and emotionally. Remember that spirituality is what brings meaning, comfort, and joy to your life. When we let others care for us, do an activity or simply be together, we nurture our spirituality and sense of wellness.

Settle hurtful relationships. Sometimes illness opens a door to settling relationships that have been hurtful and didn't seem to have a way out of the hurt before. Settling hurtful relationships can be satisfying and healing – one of the silver linings of illness. It's not always possible but some people feel more satisfied to have at least tried even if it doesn't work so well.

Avoid damaging relationships. At the same time, some relationships are damaging and can't get better. Accepting that and avoiding further hurt can be a good idea for your emotional and spiritual well-being.

GOD/HIGHER POWER/UNIVERSE

Look at your experience about what is holy in your life and how you define God/ Higher Power/the force of the Universe – whatever you call that which is greater than us.

What is sacred in your life? Look at your beliefs about what is holy in your life. How do you define God/ Higher Power/the force of the Universe – whatever you call that which is greater than us? Thinking that God (as an all-encompassing word) wants us to find comfort and meaning might help you cope.

Illness is not punishment. *If your beliefs tell you that you are being punished by God/the Universe, explore that belief with the help of someone you trust to understand and perhaps change it.*

Emotional anguish, spiritual distress, and physical pain can be part of illness. But you don't have to go through these things alone. Consider talking to a counselor. Counselors at Soul Care Project accept without judgment your faith and practice as well as your doubts and misgivings. Consider contacting a counselor through our [Chat with Counselor service](#).

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<http://soulcareproject.org/resources/spiritual-exercises.html>