

Balance with Grace

A monthly newsletter by Grace Durfee, personal coach

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A sense of peace, hope, perspective, connection, relaxation, and uplifted spirits—these are among the reasons that people attend religious services. These are some of the same benefits that can be reaped from having a spiritual practice—and they can be enjoyed anywhere, not just in a house of worship. So why doesn't everyone engage in a regular spiritual practice? Many may have given up on it because they haven't found an approach that really works for them. Life is challenging enough without forcing ourselves to regularly engage in a practice feels like a struggle. In hopes of empowering you to create, sustain, or deepen a spiritual practice, I'd like to offer a few perspectives that I shared this summer during a lay-led church service.

People have different learning styles, making certain routes better than others for taking in information. I have a theory that the same may hold true for engaging with Spirit. One size does not fit all when it comes to spiritual practice. To get you thinking about various possibilities, here are a few practices that could resonant with each of the three major learning styles—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. You could be a combination of learning styles, (I'm primarily auditory with some kinesthetic) so a practice that blends styles may be most effective. If you aren't sure which is your preferred learning style there are a number of quick, free, on-line questionnaires that can help you pinpoint your style.

VISUAL	KINESTHETIC	AUDITORY
Reading	Yoga	Meditation tapes
Visualizing	Labyrinths	Guided relaxation
Meditation software such as Journey to Wild Divine	Focusing on your breath	Alpha sound/Theta Metronome
Gazing at candle flame or flower	Using prayer beads or a rosary	Listening to or playing music
Meditating on a mandala	Walking meditation	Chanting or singing
Creating or experiencing art	Tending a garden	Tibetan bowls or bells
Observing Nature	Mindfulness-engaging all senses in whatever you are doing"	Praying out loud

Some techniques may work right away for you, some may take lots of practice (that is why they refer to it as a spiritual practice, after all) and some may not work for you at all. It helps to be open, curious, and not set on "getting it right" as you explore practices to find what works for you.

Another theory of mine is that your spiritual practice may need to change over time. I know that mine has. In my teenage years, while I didn't call it such, my late afternoon jog followed by a walk on the pier to watch the sun set reflecting on the river was a spiritual practice. So was my daily piano practice when my sons were young. Back then, the time after dinner when my husband would give the boys a bath was about the only

time I sat down in peace. I would choose flowing New Age or classical music and my complete concentration felt like a type of meditation. After getting into yoga about six years ago, I felt ready to give meditation another try. I'd attempted it before, but never felt like I was doing it right. It wasn't until I was on a call with a coaching colleague named Tom Stone that I ever felt I could meditate. My thoughts always raced whenever I tried to clear my mind. He taught a simple technique, called "pure awareness" in which you focus your awareness into the gap or space in between your thoughts. What I discovered was that space grew, became expansive, and felt wonderful. For Christmas that year, I asked for a set of mala beads. I chose a mantra and combined using it with mala beads and breath work. I'd read on the Internet that it takes 40 consecutive days of using malas to "charge" the beads and I was determined to stick with it for this length of time. This discipline went a long way to helping me create a habit of meditation. Now I only rarely use my mala beads, instead, after doing yoga to relax my body, I sit and simply listening to the sound of silence, which to me makes a faint and comforting hum.

Even after developing a spiritual practice, there are often challenges in sustaining it. A change in routine, an illness, or a vacation may make it difficult to practice. It can also be hard to consistently make the time for it, because even with the best intentions, things can get in the way—phone calls, hungry kids, or noisy neighbors.

Some strategies that can help are to:

Engage in the practice at the same time every day—early morning is often recommended. I've found that late afternoon, which is a time my energy naturally ebbs, works for me. If you opt for a meditative practice, it's best to choose a time when you won't fall asleep.

Create a sacred space at home. Maybe there's a room or a corner of a room that you can set up with an altar, a pillow or cushion, and light blanket. Make yourself comfortable to minimize physical distractions. (There are usually enough mental ones!)

Adopt a "power hour" in the morning to set the course of the day. Some of my clients have successfully made a habit of using this time to read inspiration texts, pray, meditate, and do yoga or Tai Chi. Others like to "bookend" their day and begin and end their day in some form of spiritual or nurturing practice.

However you choose to engage with Spirit, may your practice enrich your life and bring you peace and joy.

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Recommended Reading:

Ping Li's newest book, *AWAKENING: Fulfilling Your Soul's Purpose on Earth*, is an amazing guidebook to uncovering, exploring, and achieving your Higher Purpose in Life, and the nourishment your soul needs.

Ping Li has laid out a 22-day process of daily mental exercises, journaling, and meditative journeys. Each day, you explore another aspect of spiritual development

together...And as you progress through these simple steps, you can feel your Spirit lifting, your daily burden lightening, confusion and depression dissipating... And nature's Universal Laws of Attraction, Giving & Receiving, and Manifestation beginning to work in your favor, as God always intended, to create the life you dream of.

You can learn more about Ping, her book AND the promise it holds for YOUR life at her website, here [www.awakeningbooklaunch.com/bookpromo.html](http://www.awakeningbooklaunch.com/bookpromo.html)

PLUS...

you'll receive over \$8400 in bonus gifts when you place your order before the launch cut-off of midnight, September 15.

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Reader Feedback

If you'd like to share what spiritual practice(s) work for you and how you came to this discovery, I'll share responses in an upcoming newsletter. (I may need to edit for length.) Please let me know if you prefer to remain anonymous.

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### Upcoming programs:

#### Finding Balance in Turbulent Times

Does your life feel satisfying or stressful? Do you enjoy a comfortable mix of work and play? Are you tired of living for the weekend and ready to start living now? Would you like to move out of overwhelm and into balance? This one-day workshop invites you to take time out from your busy schedule to reflect upon the life you are creating. Designed to put you on a path toward a more fulfilling life, this highly interactive workshop provides tools, introspective exercises, and hands-on activities to help you:

- assess your quality of life from a holistic perspective
- create a clear vision of what's possible
- develop strategies for facilitating positive change
- select next steps
- sustain a commitment to nurturing practices

The day will offer opportunities for private reverie, centering practice, prayer, creative visualization, group brainstorming, nourishing food and conversation. Each participant will create a vision board to take home to help lock in new awareness and manifest desired change.

Rolling Ridge Retreat and Conference Center  
660 Great Pond Road, North Andover, MA  
October 28  
9:30 a.m. -3:30 p.m.  
Early registration fee: \$48 after October 1: \$55

Register online at <http://www.rollingridge.org/adultprograms.html#anchor34>

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