

Why This Booklet?

THE PURPOSE OF this little booklet is to help us understand how we can attain greater peace and wholeness, perhaps improving our health and peace of mind, by showing us how to do a simple, easy meditation that has been taught for hundreds of years. It's called centering prayer.

NO MATTER WHO we are now, we have the opportunity and the capacity to grow, or become more the person we would like to be. Through centering prayer we can learn to let go of the problems in our lives, find peace and healing, and a closer communication with the ultimate source of life, love and goodness. That is true whether we call that source God, Allah, Grandfather, Brahman, another name or no name.

THIS PROCESS WORKS for anyone willing to put forth the effort to practice it. Those who don't believe in a supreme being may simply go into the silence. The intent is to let go, to free ourselves from attachment to thoughts and feelings, and simply *be*.

EVERY SYSTEM OF belief in the world, including eastern beliefs as well as western religions, know this simple and powerful practice by some name. It is recognized and supported by the Torah, the Koran, the Bible and in the teachings of the Buddha and the enlightened Ones of ancient India; it is a part of the common ground of our being.

What is Centering Prayer?

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN doing centering prayer for hundreds of years, but it is different from what we may think of as prayer. It is not like the type of prayer we are used to, like praying out loud or asking for something or even giving thanks. It is moving deep within ourselves, in silence, saying nothing, asking nothing .. just intending to be in the presence of the ultimate ground of being and allowing it to be with us.

In Silence: How Do I Do That?

IN CENTERING PRAYER our goal is to let go and just *BE* in the silence, way deep within us – not only not saying anything, but also not actively thinking about anything. When we close our eyes to meditate, it is natural for all kinds of thoughts and feelings to fill out minds. Expect this – it's natural. Let them come and let them go. Pretend they are like cars passing by; just don't stop them and get in! We have thoughts, but we are not our thoughts. Remember that we are letting go of our thoughts, not thinking about them or analyzing them.

HERE IS THE secret to being able to do this: Before we begin, we choose a word, a simple word of one or two syllables. This becomes our sacred word .. not in a religious way, but sacred in its meaning to us. Words like *peace, love, joy, trust, and listen* are good; or one might prefer *breath, life, yes, mercy*, or any word that helps us let go of our thoughts. Then, when thoughts engage us, we just repeat our sacred word silently a few times and let them go.

How to Do Centering Prayer

1. Set aside 20 minutes for your practice, twice a day if possible. One time is better than none. (It helps to have a timer to avoid having to wonder how much time has passed.)
2. Sit comfortably on a chair or on the floor with your back against the wall.
3. Close your eyes and begin to settle down into that deepest center of your being. A few slow, deep breaths can help you to relax, to stay loose. Silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent and surrender to the Presence within you.
4. As thoughts and feelings rush in, silently and gently repeat your sacred word until they go by. Remember this is not a forced or pushy process. Thoughts are normal. Let them come, accept them, and let them go. Do this every time thoughts grab your attention. Don't give up if this is hard at first. It will get easier with practice.

This is centering prayer, silently releasing yourself into the Presence deep within you and allowing that restful state to become a part of you. Remember, it is **DOING** this meditation, not how well you think you have succeeded, that is important.

Effects of Centering Prayer

CENTERING PRAYER PUTS us in a place to find peace and healing.

ON THAT INWARD journey, however, we may find ourselves getting in touch with feelings of discouragement, anger, grief, pain, lust, fear .. maybe even remembering feelings or events we forgot about long ago. This kind of "emotional dumping" is a sign that the process is working, so stick with it!

SOMETIMES THE EFFECTS of centering prayer are barely seen. Remember that we and others have taken many years to shape our lives to this point and results probably won't happen right away. Eventually, a sense of peace will begin to come. We will achieve better control of our emotions and reactions. We will learn how to let go and let others be themselves, and accept ourselves and others for who they are and as they are.

SOON WE WILL BEGIN to sense changes in the ordinary activities we do every day.

That means we will be different. Our outlooks, attitudes and reactions can become more like the ones we would prefer. The changes through this practice can become permanent and bring lasting peace in everyday life.

EVERYONE MOVES AT their own pace in centering prayer .. finding that "closer communication" and peace that comes from letting go and remaining "open" to our true self. The growth that occurs can't be set by any timetable. There is no way to change or repair habits of a lifetime EASILY OR QUICKLY, but the results will encourage us to keep going.

For more information, please visit:
www.contemplative.net

The Contemplative Network
(713) 729-6019
info@contemplative.net

CENTERING PRAYER