



*Nurture*

YOUR DIVINE SPIRIT

★ SPIRITUAL **TOOLS** ★  
AND PRACTICES



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When Unity was founded more than 130 years ago, it was not to establish a church or to convert anyone to a new belief system. Instead, founders Charles and Myrtle Fillmore wanted to share what they were learning about spiritual principles in the hope they could supplement and enhance others' understanding.

To disseminate their discoveries, they started a magazine, then another. Soon they were publishing books, then innumerable pamphlets, and eventually Unity created booklets like this one.

Our intention with this booklet is exactly the same as the Fillmores'—to share with you the tools we have discovered and are using on our own spiritual journeys, hoping they will serve you too.

Tools are not exactly the same as teachings. Teachings are ideas, and tools put them into action. Here we have assembled down-to-earth, how-to steps you can practice in daily life to become more aware of your oneness with God, to awaken to your spiritual essence, and to nourish your soul.

We hope this booklet will help you create spiritual practices that will serve you in new ways or expand those you already have. Change them, tweak them, and make them your own, and no doubt you will think of others. Practicing the presence is the most effective way you can integrate your spiritual being into your human experience.

*Your Friends in Unity*



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# AFFIRMATIONS

## WHAT IS AN AFFIRMATION?

An affirmation is a declaration of spiritual Truth, supporting us in the same way an anchor holds a boat steady in its position on the water. An affirmation is a claim on Truth, our demand on Truth to establish itself in mind and heart.

Affirmations are often partnered with denials (described in the following section) as a practice of first clearing away or releasing a false belief and then affirming a statement of our divine nature. Together they are a valuable and rewarding tool.

## EXAMPLES OF AFFIRMATIONS

If you're in bed with the flu, you can affirm:

- *Divine life is my true state of being.*
- *Every cell in my body is thrumming with divine life.*



## HOW AFFIRMATIONS WORK

An effective affirmation is not wishful or magical thinking, and—this is important—it is not a prediction of how things will turn out. Rather, it is a statement of what is true here and now.

Affirmations remind us of the spiritual principles behind life's events, like the sun shining behind the clouds.

An example might be about money. We don't affirm we'll be rich someday. Instead, we affirm what is true now and always.

- *The key to prosperity lies within me.*
- *I claim and affirm there is plenty of time and money, plenty of possibilities for me to thrive.*
- *I open my mind in abundance. I open my heart in appreciation.*
- *I cultivate a plenty consciousness.*

Affirmations state the truth of the good that is always ours.

**—Rev. Linda Martella-Whitsett**

# AFFIRMATIONS

## THINKING AND SPEAKING THE TRUTH

Rev. Karen R. Shepherd

I was going through a difficult transition in my life. I had no self-esteem and minimal self-confidence, accompanied by a severe lack of self-worth. I was in search of an anchor. I found myself in a Unity church, where my spiritual journey began 39 years ago.

The first class I took was based on H. Emilie Cady's book from 1903, *Lessons in Truth*, considered to be a Unity foundational course.

The early lessons emphasized the need to lift our thinking to a higher level and explained the simple concept of affirmations and denials. Denials encourage us to turn away from negative thinking. Affirmative statements replace our negative thoughts and beliefs with Truth.

I began to use denials and affirmations in my daily life. Cady wrote that denials have an erosive or dissolving tendency. I definitely needed to dissolve the negative image I had of myself. Affirmations build up strength, courage, and power—just what I needed to rebuild my life.

I developed a mental file of short, easy-to-remember statements of Truth that I could draw on whenever I reverted to negative thinking that did not honor and support my innate divinity. The ability to change my thinking released me from the grip of despair.

I have collected many affirmations throughout the years. One I invoke regularly is in the area of relationships. I learned it from Rev. Tom Thorpe, one of my early instructors:

*Let divine love and wisdom speak through me.*

I use it most often in difficult conversations before responding to the other person.

I also gathered many of my go-to affirmations in those early years from the work of longtime Unity minister Dr. Catherine Ponder. I found them particularly helpful in the area of prosperity.

*God is my Source.* It's a simple but profound statement of Truth about myself and the infinite abundance of the universe.

You don't have to undertake serious spiritual study to use this technique. Affirmations can be gleaned from anywhere. For example, I like the recent book title *You Are Enough* (HarperOne, 2020) by Panache Desai, and it translates easily into a personal affirmation: *I am enough.*

Short, simple, to the point, and above all, *true!*

This is not simply positive thinking. Our ability to vocalize is vital to our use of affirmations. We must speak them as often as we can because words bring thoughts into existence. Through repetition, and aloud whenever possible, we internalize our affirmations and make them our own.



# DENIALS

## WHAT IS A DENIAL?

Eliminating thoughts and beliefs we have come to regard as false, limiting, or negative. True denial releases the energy expended in holding on to nonproductive ideas.

Denials are often partnered with affirmations. First, we clear away or release a false belief, then we affirm an important truth.

## EXAMPLES OF DENIALS

These are denials about money:

- *I release the idea that there is not enough, that I could run out of time or money.*
- *I am not subject to the mass consciousness of fear and insecurity with every turn of the market.*
- *False notions of lack and limitation have no hold on me.*
- *My value is not defined by my present net worth.*



## UNDERSTANDING DENIALS

Spiritual *denial* is not the same as the psychological term that means “refusing to face reality.” We never suggest denying the facts or glossing over feelings.

This spiritual form of denial—a term coined more than a century ago—means “to release or renounce.” It is disidentifying with and eliminating thoughts and beliefs we have come to regard as false, limiting, or negative.

In this sense, we can deny:

- Any belief about the permanence of our circumstance or the length of time it is taking to resolve
- Negative interpretations of the circumstance, such as making it mean that something is broken, wrong, or missing in our lives
- Identification with the condition, such as naming it *my* disease, or making the condition a bigger part of our lives than it actually is
- Beliefs about what I have been told and what *everyone* knows about a condition, such as claiming seasonal allergies because *everyone* has them
- Self-punishing beliefs about God and about human nature

—Rev. Linda Martella-Whitsett

## HELP MY UNBELIEF

Rev. Joy Wyler

Thoughts have the power to shape our experience of life. I made this amazing discovery in my late twenties when I began attending a Unity church. A part of me had intuitively known the power of positive thinking, yet hearing it articulated felt empowering in a completely new way.

I joyfully claimed my good in affirmations but remained a little unclear about denials. They felt awkward, but affirmations alone didn't feel like a complete process.

Then I read the story in Mark 9 in which a father brings his son to Jesus for healing. In the text, "Jesus said to him ... 'All things can be done for the one who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out, 'I believe; help my unbelief!'"

What a moment of clarity this father had! I can easily state positive beliefs, but it can be difficult to discern the layers of unbelief accumulated throughout years of listening to limiting messages from family, the media, social peers, and even religion. Limitation and doubt arise when I give power to temporary conditions in my health, circumstance, or relationships. To clear the clutter of unbelief, I must first identify the thought and then withdraw the power of attention and focus from it. That is a denial.

Often my unbelief stems from doubt about the fullness of my divinity and access to my divine powers. I use two practices to "help my unbelief" and reveal the limited thought that is ready to be released.

First, I sit in the Silence and speak out loud the affirmation I am using. I ask Spirit, "What unbelief remains?" The buried doubt may pop up then or later as I wash dishes or shower or drive to work. I usually feel a moment of *aha* as the thought vibrates within me, letting me see what has been in my way.

Another practice is to write the affirmation I'm using on a clean piece of paper. Then I allow my mind to wander as I write every thought I have that is unlike my affirmation. As I write freely, one thought will again resonate as *the* unbelief that has been blocking my good.

Once I identify my unbelief, I craft a statement to deny it power, followed by a statement of Truth, like this: *Thoughts that I am less than enough have no power to diminish the Truth of my being. I am divine wisdom, love, and life in expression.*

Every time unbelief returns to my conscious thought, I deny it power. I speak the denial with the same persistent faith I hold when speaking the affirmation to claim my good. Once I stop feeding unbelief with my attention, it begins to fade. Denial opens the way, and affirmation brings my good into manifestation.





# CREATIVE WORK

## WHAT IS CREATIVE WORK?

Creative work is a manifestation of your creative spirit. The divine gift of creativity expresses uniquely through each of us. When our creativity has an outlet for conscious expression, we connect with divine inspiration and our own divine nature.

## EXAMPLES OF CREATIVE WORK

Creative work may include expressing the self through sculpture, painting, performance, dance, writing, filmmaking, music, or even gardening and cooking. The creative process may be solitary or a group effort.





## WHY CREATIVE WORK MATTERS TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

We can lose ourselves in the midst of creative work and touch something larger than we thought ourselves to be. Time spent immersed in creative work becomes a joyful and nurturing spiritual practice. We feel centered, renewed, and invigorated.

Creative expression invites us to touch inspiration—to be breathed by God. We can quiet our minds and not be attached to something looking a certain way. We can allow ourselves to be guided from within and see what emerges organically. When we step into the pure joy of creating, we can access an inner awareness of freedom and divine flow.

Whether you are cooking a delicious meal, painting from your heart, dancing in your living room, scrapbooking, or designing and building a new garden shed, allowing yourself to embrace and express your creativity is a powerful spiritual practice that supports every aspect of your life. When you trust inspiration and creativity in one aspect, you open yourself to inspiration in all that you do.

Take time to draw, cook, dance, write, sew, design, build, sing, and express your creativity in any way that emerges. Cultivate the freedom of pure creation. Embrace the process and let go of any attachment to a result. The joy of being fully present to that process is a powerful way to connect with the divinity you are.

—Rev. DeeAnn Weir Morency

## HOW TO COLLAGE YOUR DIVINE SPIRIT

Rev. Jeanmarie Eck

One of the ways I have learned to become more aware of my soul is to create spiritual collage cards. For years, I was drawn to using angel cards and spiritual card decks to facilitate my discernment process. In 2014, I attended a SoulCollage® workshop and was offered a creative process that gave me the tools to build my own spiritual card deck, reflecting my unique expression of my divine nature.

My personal deck has now grown to more than 40 cards, and I often consult with the cards when I am seeking divine guidance, consolation, or a path to greater meaning in my life. Each card consists of one or more images without any words, drawn from magazines or other print materials. Allowing the cards to contain images without words leaves them open to ongoing and deepening interpretation as I continue to work with them.

I have simplified the process so that anyone, regardless of artistic ability, can begin to create a card collection. SoulCollage materials can be purchased online, which include 8- by 5-inch mat boards for the base of the cards, card sleeves, a glue stick, and a frame to adjust your images before you glue them down. You will also need a pair of scissors.

Begin with a time of silent meditation to connect to the Truth within you. Ask yourself what wants to be revealed or known about your true nature today.



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# CREATIVE WORK

When you feel centered and ready, find images for your collage. This is an intuitive process, so allow yourself to be drawn to images that speak to you without attempting to figure out why. You may search through magazines or collect uncut images in advance and spread them out before you.

The first image you will choose is a foreground image of a person or animal. Then search for a background image that complements the energy of the primary image. Carefully cut out the primary image and move it around to see where it wants to be placed on your chosen background intuitively. Cards may be oriented vertically or horizontally.

Next, look for any additional images to support the energy of this card. After you have glued down your images, place the completed card in a sleeve.

You may make as many cards as you like in one sitting, but it is important that each card reflect a single energy. Once you have enough, you may draw one each day for guidance and insight.

To do so, begin a dialogue with the card, gazing deeply into the image and asking, “Who are you?” Speaking from the perspective of the card, answer, “I am the one who ...” and continue to share what the card has to say.

As you create more cards, you will be amazed how each one will reveal your inner wisdom.



# FORGIVENESS

## WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

Forgiveness is the act of releasing ourselves from the bondage of an ongoing negative connection. Forgiveness resurrects our peace of mind from the perils of victimhood and releases our negative judgments.

## WHY DO WE FORGIVE?

We forgive to reclaim our equilibrium. It is a joy to forgive. It's also worthy to note that the "Lord's Prayer" says, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Jesus implored us to forgive anyone we are angry with. We will be released from bondage. Forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves.

## HOW DO WE FORGIVE?

We make up our minds and our hearts to let go, knowing that carrying around anger and judgment toward others or ourselves is a burden we no longer wish to bear.

## FORGIVENESS CAN BE INFINITE

Jesus was once asked how often one should forgive. Seven times? His response was, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22).

# FORGIVENESS

Seventy-seven is not a magic number. Earlier translations say seventy times seven, or 490. It was simply Jesus' way of saying forgiveness can be infinite.

Forgiveness is not about condoning bad behavior or saying we must trust those who have mistreated us. It does not mean there will be no justice for bad acts.

Consider this from H. Emilie Cady's *Lessons in Truth*, a Unity classic book written more than 100 years ago: "To forgive does not simply mean to arrive at a place of indifference to those who do personal injury to us; it means far more than this. To forgive is to *give for*—to give some actual, definite good in return for evil given."

This may seem like a tall order, but we can see the results straightaway. I have known parents who forgave the person who killed their child. When I asked why, they said if they had not, they would have been consumed with anger and bitterness. Forgiveness was the answer.

## FORGIVENESS AFFIRMATION

*I forgive myself for my mistakes,  
and I forgive others for their mistakes,  
knowing none of us is perfect.*

—Rev. Bill Englehart

# FORGIVING MY DAUGHTER, FORGIVING MYSELF

Rev. John Beerman

Forgiveness is the most powerful spiritual tool I know. Forgiving frees us to align with divine mind by opening any blocked spiritual and emotional channels. Simply said, forgiveness gives us a chance to think clearly without the roadblocks of resentment, anger, and ceaseless judgment of ourselves and others.

Forgiveness is a spiritual tool. It says, “Be for ... giving.” That is, opt for giving instead of holding on to old ideas that separate you from yourself and others.

Jesus saw it clearly when he said to forgive as often as “seventy times seven” (in other words, to infinity and beyond). Tireless forgiveness is a spiritual practice that opens the channels within you to receive Spirit and the consequential good that comes to you through Spirit.

I didn't think it was possible to forgive my daughter for taking her life. She was only 26 years old. My pain and hurt were far too deep. Even if I could forgive her, she was not here on earth to receive my forgiveness. I wrote to her anyway, prayed, wrote some more, and prayed some more. Ultimately, I realized I needed to forgive myself, too, for not being able to save her.

I still hurt and grieve her death, but I am no longer angry at her. I love her as much (maybe even more than) as I did when she was

# FORGIVENESS

physically alive. Our relationship continues as a healthy relationship between father and daughter because I forgave her, because I am working every day to forgive myself.

Forgiveness requires giving up something, and that something includes anger, fear, resentment, self-pity, and judgment. I choose to give up judging you. In exchange, I receive the blessing of knowing you as you are, not as I would like you to be. When I am with you just as you are—without my judgment of you—a miracle occurs: I can have a real relationship with you.

Herein is the great hope for our world today that we can finally live together in harmony and peace. This goal is possible when people and nations choose to utilize the spiritual tool of forgiveness.

A remarkable thing happens when you decide to forgive: You become enlightened. The truth is we are all one, and we never were separated by anything other than our judgments and unforgiveness.

Forgiveness is always available as a spiritual tool for you to choose. Choose it wisely and choose it often. The results will be nothing short of miraculous!



# JOURNALING ■

## WHAT IS JOURNALING?

Journaling as a spiritual writing practice allows you to connect internally and express yourself.

It is a powerful and practical way to increase awareness of the inner, spiritual self that resides at deeper levels of consciousness.

Journaling helps energize, uplift, and organize thoughts to create a life of one's imagining. An important spiritual tool, journaling allows creative ideas and subconscious attitudes to reveal themselves, accessing the unlimited power of divine presence as you.

## EXAMPLES OF JOURNALING

Journaling is traditionally a writing practice, although it can include typing on a tablet or laptop, speaking into a recorder, or sketching. You may choose to create a specific type of journal such as an intention journal, a gratitude journal, or a more general reflection journal.

# JOURNALING

## HOW JOURNALING ENHANCES YOUR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

The insights that come from journaling help us make choices aligned with Source, choices that throughout time and with greater self-knowledge can bring positive change.

As individual, creative expressions of God, each of us has unique, personal desires, dreams, interests, goals, bodily needs, and purposes in life. There may also be pain, fear, and grief that yearn to be healed.

Journaling slows down the brain, connecting heart and mind in a creative, spiritual process that clarifies thoughts and feelings of the whole self, allowing new awareness through self-reflection.

Journals also provide a record of achievements as well as a healthy way to stay motivated, work through setbacks and frustrations, and heal relationships, especially those with ourselves.

As with meditation and prayer, developing a habit of journaling grows with practice. There is no right or wrong way to journal.

Whether in longhand in a special notebook or on a computer, journaling makes a space for more than just feelings or sorting out what happened. Make it your own with gratitude lists, sketches, mind maps, goals, ideas for projects, things to do, or places to go.

—Rev. Lesley Miller



# JOURNALING

## CLEANSE, CREATE, TRANSFORM

Rev. Elizabeth Longo

What would it be like if you had a friend you could trust and rely on anytime to reveal to you your most cherished thoughts, your aliveness, and your intentions? Wouldn't that be amazing!

This friend can be a journal and a pen. Once you establish a relationship with your new friend, you will be amazed at the depth of inner wisdom and inspiration you have access to on a daily basis. The practice of writing in a journal is healing, cleansing, revelatory, creative, and inspirational. I have found it to be life-transforming.

My love for journaling began when I was taking a self-awareness class at a Unity church. I received so much insight about my inner life that I made the commitment to journal every morning as soon as I woke up. The practice was healing and revealing, and I quickly saw results in all areas of my life. I was hooked!

Journaling is a powerful and transformational tool. Cleanse the mind from thoughts and beliefs that are not serving you. Open the way for the stream of creativity to flow through the pages. Dreams will come to life.

You can work through any situation that is weighing you down, lighten the load, and gain clarity on what is yours to do. If you are seeking inspiration, ideas, or a vision, you can rely on your friend the journal.

Before I start writing, I take the time to pray, taking a couple of deep breaths as I rest in my heart space. This simple preparation opens the door to a deeper dimension of being. Once I have bypassed my surface mind, I allow my stream of thoughts the freedom to express.

Here are some ways to journal with specific intentions:

**Gratitude:** Write three things in the morning and three things in the evening that you are grateful for. You might begin to focus your attention during the day on the richness of your life.

**Clarity:** If you are stressed, feeling down, or need better understanding of a situation, write all your concerns. Ask, *What would be the best outcome? What is in my control and what is not?* Write a few questions, then breathe into your heart space a few times and ask for a revelation. Start writing whatever comes to you. Remember Luke 11:9: “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find.”

**Inspiration:** Find a quote, scripture, poem, or affirmation that inspires you. Close your eyes for a few moments and allow the stream of thoughts to come forth. You might be amazed.

Enjoy your relationship with your journaling. It will always be a trustworthy friend.

START  
TODAY.

# MEDITATION AND THE SILENCE

## WHAT IS MEDITATION?

Meditation is the conscious direction of one's attention to the inner self. You begin by relaxing your body and then turning your mind inward to the Silence, resting in the beautiful sense of your oneness with God.

Meditation may be guided, in which a leader speaks positive, uplifting words or intones sound. Meditators let their minds flow with the sound or words in quiet repose. Other meditations are not guided, focusing on a mantra or simply clearing thoughts.

## SUGGESTED STEPS FOR MEDITATION

- Try to select a regular time for your meditation.
- Sit upright in a comfortable chair or cushion, wearing comfortable clothing.
- Begin by concentrating on your breathing.
- When you are ready to turn your attention inward, shift your attention to your special phrase, such as "I AM."
- Empty your mind of all thoughts except your special words. As thoughts come, observe them and allow them to pass through.
- Expect nothing. Don't worry about how you are doing.
- When finished, take time to savor the experience.



## MEDITATION LEADS TO THE SILENCE

Just as plants and flowers need sunshine, nutrients, and water to grow, meditation and the Silence are the fertile soil and water for spiritual growth.

Meditation is quiet thought, reflection, or contemplation. You can find reams of books and online sources to learn about different methods. Just be aware that no one meditates perfectly. We all sometimes have “monkey mind,” those busy thoughts that distract us.

The Silence is an even deeper state where thought ceases and oneness with the Divine is experienced. It is not necessarily an absence of noise but a state of consciousness. The Bible calls it a prayer closet or the secret place of the most high. This is where we might hear the still, small voice of God.

There is no shortcut to the Silence. The mind (ego, thoughts) may try to divert you from the Silence, but eventually the mind succumbs to the radiant power of Spirit and takes its natural place as servant.

Like a well-tended garden, time in meditation and the Silence yield a powerful harvest that will nourish you for a lifetime.

**—Rev. John Beerman**

# MEDITATION AND THE SILENCE

## MEDITATING MAY BE INSTINCTIVE

Rev. Toni Stephens Coleman

When I was young, my mother, a Unity minister, told me people often asked her how to meditate. She would tell them, "Just be still." I told her I didn't know how to meditate. She laughed and said, "I remember finding you sitting in your dark closet on the floor under all your clothes. Why were you doing that?"

"It was quiet," I said. My young artist-self replied, "I found light and peace and beautiful ideas and pictures."

"You were meditating," she said. "You cleared away all the chatter of the day and went into the holy place known as the Silence. You don't have to have language to meditate."

I didn't know that my young instincts had led me to meditation. In the closet with my flashlight, I would read my *Daily Word* then sit in the dark, filled with good thoughts. Breathing in the still air, I would focus my attention on the screen behind my eyes. I would go someplace ...

Eventually I didn't feel the need to be in my closet. I was able to become still at my school desk, on the bus, or wherever I wanted to find a peaceful moment. One amazing meditation experience was at a conclave of a thousand people watching a video of landscapes in the Australian outback. The beauty and rhythmic music led my soul into the allness. I felt my oneness with the One. The return was a bit of a jolt, but I wouldn't trade the experience for anything in the world.

Meditation is to still the mind. It is natural. We simply have to draw away from the noise around and within us. A Tibetan monk told me he softened his eyes. He said his eyes were barely open as he looked at the end of his nose and focused on each breath in and a longer breath out.

In the stress of today, small children are being taught mindfulness meditation in school. Colleges are meeting students' desperate need to defuse anxiety by teaching meditation techniques. Corporations have offered it as training for stress reduction.

In a work cubicle, setting a reminder to meditate for a few minutes each hour can change the whole experience of the workday.

Use the *Daily Word* app or another on your cell phone to select guided meditations or relaxation music. These are great assets when traveling, waiting in a hospital, or in uncomfortable situations. They calm the mind and allow you to find the stillness.

Make it a habit to remind yourself *I relax and let go* or *I release and let God* to trigger an instant energy shift. Meditation techniques can be developed within any belief system—or none—to bring about peace and serenity. The world around you will become more manageable. Peace, be still.

# PRAYER

## WHAT IS AFFIRMATIVE PRAYER?

*Affirmative* means agreeing with a statement. In North America, some people say *affirmative* when they mean “yes.” To *affirm* is to make a positive statement, to be supportive, hopeful, or encouraging.

We call communication with God *prayer*. Many of us were taught to say “Dear God” in supplication to an entity outside ourselves, but our communication with God can change just as we do.

God is good, and therefore, we exist in a universe of good. God living in, through, and as us is good, affirmative, and positive. That means we meet God within ourselves, in the inner sanctuary, the heart temple. We can retreat to this inner sanctuary anytime, anywhere.

## EXAMPLE OF AFFIRMATIVE PRAYER

You will recognize affirmative prayer because it doesn’t ask God for anything. Rather, it affirms the good already here, whether we can see it yet or not. This example is from the Silent Unity prayer ministry:

*I live in an ever-present awareness of blessings. I see possibility within each circumstance. I see blessings within each possibility. In any moment of need, I gratefully receive abundant, divine ideas with which to prosper.*



## WHY POSITIVE PRAYER WORKS

In *Handbook of Positive Prayer* (Unity Books, 1984), author Hypatia Hasbrouck writes, “Positive [affirmative] prayer works because of the law of mind action—*thoughts held in mind produce after their kind*.” Another way of saying this is, “What we think about, we bring about.”

We don’t want to pray by focusing on our problems and restating all the difficulties and issues. We want to hold our thoughts on a higher plane.

Here is one way to pray affirmatively. First, form a positive statement to focus on. A positive statement is present tense, simple, and clear. A statement such as *I receive only good* or *Health is my nature* shifts your thoughts to an elevated, more positive outlook. Then:

- Become still. Breathe intentionally and slowly to calm yourself.
- With each breath out, release resistance.
- With each breath in, mentally move your thoughts to your heart.
- Repeat your positive statement at least three times.

—Rev. Toni Stephens Coleman

## CONNECTED TO ALL LIFE

Rev. Kelly Isola

A few years ago, I was gravely ill and wound up in the hospital for several weeks, spending one week on life support. As I lay in ICU, my sister would periodically read me the prayers people had written on CaringBridge or Facebook, and the minute she said the name of the person who wrote it, I was “gone.” What I mean by “gone” is that I was experiencing my connection with the person as though I was right there with them in the physical world. It wasn’t reliving memories or imagining something in the future. We were alive together, physically.

Since then my practice and experience of prayer has changed and expanded in unexpected ways that are almost impossible to explain. Most people have a cognitive idea that all life is interconnected, and what we think, do, or feel affects all life. But rarely do we experience it.

Every spiritual path asserts a belief that all life is sacred as well as connected through a network of energy, yet each path names those networks and connections differently. Our spiritual work is to be aware of these connections, these relationships, even though our human struggles make it difficult to hold on to them. When I ask myself or another how I am doing or how they are doing, what I am really asking is “How are your connections?” My existence, my world, my healing is embedded in these connections to everything, so my prayer practice is about being mindful and attentive to these connections.



# PRAYER

By giving my undivided attention to these relationships one at a time, I continually open myself to the experience of the true power of prayer. When I attend to just one thing and become fully present without distraction, I am more enlivened and every connection is more enlivened. Finally, that which I desire inside, which is the heart of my prayer, meets the world outside of me.

Prayer is one of the most powerful practices we have for creating beauty, healing, joy, and anything in life.

So the next time you desire a sense of belonging, just stop wherever you are, close your eyes, and breathe. Focus your attention on your breath and imagine how your breath is connected to the person nearest to you. Imagine how your breath mixes with the air and lands on the leaf of a tree nearby, and the tree absorbs the air you are a part of, and so on. Continue imagining your breath moving through the world around you until you can feel a connection. It doesn't have to be a specific connection to anything or anyone, just the realization, the feeling, of not being alone. This activity is the prayer.

If it opens you to an ever-increasing connection with life, with each other, with your Higher Self, then it is a living prayer. Our pains and suffering in life become softened by this opening, and healing leads us home to the divinity, the connections, within our human experiences.





# SABBATH

## WHAT IS A SABBATH?

A Sabbath is a time-out with purpose, going apart to make conscious contact with the Divine. It does not require a whole day. We may pause anytime, close our eyes, and turn within to align with Spirit. We return from these short Sabbaths renewed and refreshed with creative energy and the clarity needed to deal with any stress of modern life.

## CREATING YOUR OWN SABBATH

A Sabbath is resting the mind, not necessarily the physical body. A true Sabbath occurs when we become quiet and still within. It is necessary for the good of the whole person, as well as for the right outworking of the creative process.

We may observe a Sabbath anytime because it is a state of consciousness, a state of rest that we may enter when we choose. It does not need rules dictating when and where it may take place or how long it lasts.

# SABBATH

## SABBATH IS A STATE OF MIND

The Sabbath is a very certain, definite thing. It is a state of mind that [humankind] enters or acquires when they go into the Silence, into the realm of Spirit. There they find true rest and peace. The seventh day means the seventh or perfect stage of one's spiritual unfoldment.

The Sabbath as an institution was established by [humankind]. God does not rest from His work every seventh day, and there is no evidence that there has ever been a moment's cessation in the activity of the universe.

Not only do we do God's service in praise, song, and thanksgiving on the seventh day and the first day, but every day. In the true Sabbath our minds are turned to God every moment, and we are ever ready to acknowledge His holy presence in our hearts and lives. "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

—Charles Fillmore, *Keep a True Lent*

# REFRESH YOUR SOUL

Rev. Kathy Beasley

Our lives seem to grow busier with every breath we take. There is always one more task to complete, one more email to send, and one more conversation to have. Taking time to settle into the Truth of our being is perhaps one of the richest activities of the soul. Therein is enough space, time, solace, joy, and grace.

It is easy to be consumed by thoughts of what not to do and when not to do it in our efforts to observe the Sabbath properly. The beauty of observing a Sabbath is the experience of the practice itself. What we notice, feel, and discover can be rich with enough sound, beauty, texture, and vibrancy to enliven us in new and exciting ways.

Whether you dedicate a day, an hour, or a few moments of each waking hour as your Sabbath, it is an opportunity to hear the depth of the Silence, to recover fragments of thought long forgotten, and to dance to harmonies only your soul can hear. Your willingness to reach for life in this way is the way of holiness, truth, and love.

Take time to connect with the feeling that a Sabbath moment stirs in you. Allow your feeling to become a touchstone, a space that you return to often for renewal and clarity. Embrace your experience and release any attachment to a specific outcome. Allow yourself to be warmed by the fire of love and inspired by the whispers of joy that show up in the world both through and as you.

As you take the time to cultivate your beautifully unique Sabbath experience, may the light that is you shine brighter than ever before, and may your many Sabbath moments always be a time that refreshes your soul.

# SELF-CARE

## WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

Self-care is being willing and committed to rejuvenate your soul and find your center—the place of unshakable peace and stability where you can weather the storms of life. Being intentional in our self-care practice is the greatest act of love we can give to ourselves.

## SELF-CARE CAN TAKE MANY FORMS

- Listen more to your heart and give your head a rest every so often.
- Be mindful when brushing your teeth, doing the dishes, walking, and so on.
- Simplify your life.
- Spend time with people who uplift your soul.
- Do something different.
- Unplug your phone and take a rest from all technology for at least one hour a day. Instead, plug in to Spirit—pray, meditate, and write.
- Listen to the still, small voice within.
- Move your body more, stretch, get plenty of rest, laugh, play, and eat more veggies.



## THE ONE-MINUTE, FOUR-STEP SELF-CARE PRACTICE

It is crucial to our well-being that self-care be part of our daily routine, especially during our busiest times. It does not have to take much time or money.

Here is a practice that can be done many times during the day:

- **Pause.** Take a moment to disconnect from the world of time and space and simply be.
- **Notice.** Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations. Be a loving witness. Relax. Accept the moment as it is.
- **Breathe.** Take a couple of deep breaths. This will take the attention away from worry thoughts as you allow yourself to relax into your natural state, centered and aligned with your Spirit.
- **Be Grateful.** Bring your attention to your heart. You might want to place your hand on your heart, feel the heartbeat, and thank yourself for taking a minute to care for your soul. Then find one thing you are grateful for in that moment.

—Rev. Elizabeth Longo

# SELF-CARE

## A GIFT TO YOURSELF

Rev. DeeAnn Weir Morency

Life is so busy. There is so much to do, so much that needs doing, and all too often so little time to get it done.

In my thirties, I was going full out. I was caught up in the belief that the harder and longer I worked, the more I would accomplish. And yet I knew that my “go, go, go” attitude wasn’t working anymore. I worked all the time and was accomplishing less. Burnout was on the horizon. Something had to shift.

I started small by carving out time once a week to do something enjoyable and fun. The only rule was that it couldn’t be connected to my to-do list or my work in any way.

At first, it was a struggle to come up with ideas for what to do outside of work, which I loved. Then I had to navigate my guilt for even contemplating taking time off and not being 110 percent focused on achieving my dreams and goals.

With some trepidation, I finally decided on something simple. I would go to Kate’s Paperie, a store that sells eye-popping gift paper and gift cards, journals, notebooks, colored pens, and decorative boxes, all displayed in eye-catching ways. If I felt silly and awkward there, it would be easy enough to leave and quickly return to work.



# SELF-CARE

I walked in, took a deep breath, and said, “You are here to enjoy yourself.” The next thing I knew, an hour had passed. I didn’t buy a thing. I just looked, touched, and wandered, letting myself enjoy. When I left, I was feeling oddly uplifted and energized. I was hooked on the restorative power of self-care.

Taking time to be with myself in loving, playful, and creative ways transformed my life. When I take time for self-care, I have found I am more productive. I have energy, ideas, and inspiration. I feel more focused, centered, and grounded. A half-hour of yoga in the morning improves my day more than sitting at my desk for an extra 30 minutes. Time spent in the bath with a lit candle letting my mind wander ultimately yields more creative solutions than simply brainstorming at work. Taking time to talk to friends. Spending time with my cats. Pulling out my paints and easel. Reading a good book. All of these self-care activities support me in feeling renewed and resourced. When I practice self-care, I refill my well and have something to draw upon. Self-care supports my living a balanced, compassionate, inspired life.

Take some time and do something fun and enjoyable. Listen to what you need. Be gentle. Be adventurous. Be committed. It will be the greatest gift you give to yourself and to those around you.



# SELF-REFLECTION

## WHAT IS SELF-REFLECTION?

“The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight.”—Proverbs 4:7

To gain wisdom and insight, one must be willing to turn within. Self-reflection means taking a personal inventory of where you are now and looking back on how far you’ve come in gaining wisdom and understanding.

## CREATING A SELF-REFLECTION HABIT

Every day presents opportunities to examine ourselves and determine where we’ve come from and how far we have to go to fulfill our true purpose.

We often reserve such opportunities for looking back on the past year to determine what we want to leave behind and what we desire to bring forward. However, there is no need to wait for the calendar to change to evaluate changes within.

In the words of Socrates, recorded by Plato, “The unexamined life is not worth living.”

# SELF-REFLECTION

## USING SELF-REFLECTION TO BUILD A LIFE

As we assess where we are in comparison to where we've been, it is important to recognize that every experience—good, bad, or ugly—has brought us to the here and now. In looking back, we see all that we have to be grateful for and recognize any need to change direction or change our attitude going forward. The wisdom and understanding we gain from experience enable us to make the adjustments necessary to arrive at our next destination.

In his article “The Power of Self-Reflection,” author Michael Woronko invites us to ask ourselves 10 questions to assess our inner state and to stay focused on our purpose:

- Am I using my time wisely?
- Am I taking anything for granted?
- Am I employing a healthy perspective?
- Am I living true to myself?
- Am I waking up in the morning ready to take on the day?
- Am I thinking negative thoughts before I fall asleep?
- Am I putting enough effort into my relationships?
- Am I taking care of myself physically?
- Am I letting matters that are out of my control stress me out?
- Am I achieving the goals I set for myself?

—Rev. Sandra Campbell



# SELF-REFLECTION

## LESSONS IN LIVING

Rev. Elizabeth Mora

Sometimes I wonder whether there is a self-help book on the market I haven't read. I devour articles, books, classes, and any kind of insight on how I can improve myself. For all my adult life, I have been an explorer of the inner world.

At times, I've probably been *too* self-reflective. The moment something stressful occurs, I consider how I got to this point and how to learn and grow from it. It's not self-flagellation. I am gentle and use self-compassion. Yet sometimes all the inner reflection keeps me from factoring in the external responsibilities of others. I have to remember it's not all about me.

I became a devoted student of how to maneuver through life because I seem to have missed those classes when I was in school. I studied math, science, and all that, but where were the classes on how to handle emotions, relationships, or the work world?

Perhaps I was supposed to get that at church. Unfortunately, I managed to miss those classes as well. When my family went to church (which was rare), I only remember hearing that if I were bad, God would punish me. Possibly with a flood, which seemed totally unfair. Maybe they covered how to deal with school bullies on the Sundays I missed.

Maybe I was supposed to get my abilities from my parents. They did teach me a few things. For instance, I remember my mom telling

me not to play with two girls at once, because one of us would end up on the outs and it would probably be me. Once, as I pouted because I had nothing fun coming up, my dad said I needed to find a way to be happy when nothing exciting was on the horizon. Good advice to be sure, but that was about it. They were still figuring out how to manage the world themselves, since no one had given them directions either. How could they teach me?

So when I reached young adulthood, I became a researcher of the inner landscape and a lover of self-help books. I would stand in the aisles of a store for hours, soaking up the literary wisdom and buying just the right book. It was so empowering. I discovered I had some control over how I felt, and I gained tools to address life's challenges. I dove into cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and rewired messages of inadequacy into messages of self-love.

At the same time, I began my journey in Unity. Denials and affirmations were the spiritual version of CBT. Basic teachings from a book and class called *The Quest* gave me the spiritual foundation to move from wanting to fix myself to letting more of my Christ light shine.

I will always be fascinated by spiritual principles and how to be more effective in living. But the real success of self-reflection has been learning to turn it off for a while and enjoy myself exactly as I am.



# SOCIAL ACTION

## WHAT IS SOCIAL ACTION?

Social action is practical activity by individuals or groups of people working together to help serve others to improve their community. It may be done to bring about social change.

Social action puts feet on our prayers. Even as we hold a vision of the best for all people, we can take steps to address the challenges before us. We are careful not to oppose or resist people and things as they are but, as Gandhi said, to be the change we wish to see in the world.

## WHAT IS AN EXAMPLE OF SOCIAL ACTION?

Social action takes many forms. At Unity, we join in community interfaith work. We celebrate Pride Month and affirm the inherent worth of all people, ordaining LGBTQ ministers and licensed Unity teachers. We give away *Daily Word* and other publications to prisons and hospitals.

Many of our churches have EarthCare teams that focus on the environment. Various Unity centers have special programs to shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, support children in need, or help and serve in other ways.



## **SOCIAL ACTION OR SPIRITUAL ACTION?**

Social action requires that we engage with the conditions of our community or world. Something within us prods us to take action, to make things better. This divine discontent brings with it a personal recognition that we have the power to transform the world—or at least our little corner of it.

At its highest, social action becomes spiritual action. We acknowledge the worst of times in the world and hold a vision for the best of times.

Social action becomes spiritual action when we pour our light into the darkness. When we pour our light into any condition or situation, we begin to see clearly what action we are to take. When our light illumines the darkness, we bring a spirit of transformation to our communities and our world.

**—Rev. Ric Schumacher**

# SOCIAL ACTION

## BLESSING OF THE HIGHEST KIND

Rev. Kathy Beasley

Social action is a call to love in ways that stoke the fire of our shared commitment. Social action has an invitational element of radical hospitality that makes room for people to influence and inspire one another.

Its key ingredients are willingness, availability, and openness. A few of the outcomes are helping people find their way, being a space of both information and inspiration, raising a new standard in the public square, and making an impact on the way systems operate.

The DNA of social action contains a restorative element that comes to life in movements and moments that revive the spirit of shalom—nothing/no one broken and nothing/no one forgotten. The light of social action falls upon the path of humanity for the sake of itself, as we are reborn and revived in the moments where the *missio Dei* (mission of God) is our soul's point of connection to one another.

In that space, we are one! Blessed are those moments of realization of this Truth. May social action become both your will and your way in the world.

**Blessed are you who** dare to take every opportunity to create space for others to join the journey.

**Blessed are you who** open your hearts to hear the lifting of every voice.

**Blessed are you who** boldly celebrate the many names and understandings of the Divine in human form.

**Blessed are you who** paint with broad enough strokes to allow the influence of culture to inform the intergenerational spirit of community.

**Blessed are you who** lovingly weave and knit together our shared narrative.

**Blessed are the hands and hearts** that bridge all the spaces that used to divide us.

**Blessed are you who** are called to action, for you shall know the momentum, purpose, and impact of Spirit and Truth.



# VISIONING

## WHAT IS VISIONING?

Visioning is a mental picturing process in which we allow ourselves to hear, feel, and imagine a plan for our life or a particular area of life. Visioning allows us to get clarity and guidance regarding the subject or topic we are imagining.

## YOU ALREADY KNOW HOW

Whenever you are picturing how you want your day to go or daydreaming about an upcoming vacation, you are combining two important aspects of the powerful spiritual tool called visioning: positive imagination and intention.

Visioning is similar to the physical process of cutting out pictures of what you'd like to see in your life then pasting them onto vision boards. Mentally picturing what we wish to experience helps us focus and attract positive energy to create our desires.

Visioning may be done alone or with others. There are many styles and techniques.



## FIVE BASIC STEPS FOR VISIONING

**Focus on what you'd like to experience or create in your life.**

Rather than thinking about what you don't want, ask yourself: *What do I want? What would I love?* Whether it's something physical or intangible, allow yourself to think big, to add delightful details.

**Ask: *How will having this make me feel?*** That feeling defines the important essence of your desire. What would that career success, or your perfect health, or a harmonious relationship—whatever you are envisioning—*feel* like?

**Get comfortable, centering yourself in mind and body.** Close your eyes; connect with the rhythm of your breath. Choose a desire to focus on and picture yourself in the details. Bring in the feeling you noted above. Feel the joy in doing work you love. Or see yourself smiling in the loving relationship, the energetic body, or whatever you are visioning.

**If random thoughts wander in, sweep them aside.** Breathe easily and accept your worthiness to receive. Affirm your power to create. Know that what you want is at hand—or something even better. Expect it. Watch for it.

**Give thanks.** Consider keeping a journal of your successes, a positive reminder of your visioning power!

—Rev. Bronte Colbert

## THE POWER OF VISION

Rev. Sandra Campbell

In my late twenties, I had an epiphany to go back to college. With a young family, we had little disposable income, but this desire was so strong that I refused to let a little thing like money stop me. In practicing spiritual principles, I was determined not to entertain thoughts of lack or limitation.

So I decided to draw upon the power of imagination. Beginning with the end in mind, I envisioned myself walking across the stage to receive my diploma. I drew a picture of exactly what I'd look like that day wearing full graduation regalia adorned with a gold honors stole and cord. Then I outlined the steps I needed to take to make this vision a reality.

I finally built up the courage to take the first step. At the college admissions office, I explained that I didn't have a dime to pay for even one class. The patient and understanding woman behind the desk encouraged me to show up for classes and cautioned that I would be dropped if I hadn't paid by the second week. Within a few days, I was approved for tuition assistance that would pay for classes and books.

Two and a half years later, I earned my degree *cum laude* and was inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. I proudly walked across the stage at commencement wearing the gold stole and cord, just as I had pictured from the beginning.

In setting my intention, I demonstrated an ancient spiritual principle. In Unity, we describe it like this: “Thoughts held in mind produce after their kind.”

Holding a vision is one of the most powerful tools we have. Had I not engaged the power of a vision, my dreams might not have come true. Knowing this law and how it works, I continue to practice this principle.

Visioning through the years has enabled me to advance through and complete a successful career in government, earn a bachelor’s and master’s degree, earn accolades as a playwright and storyteller, complete ministerial school, and become an ordained Unity minister.

If there’s any advice I would give to those wishing to pursue their dreams, it would be to set your intentions and begin with the end in mind. Visualize exactly what you want. Be specific. Write it down. Draw a picture. Create a vision board. Then take the steps necessary to achieve your goals.

On my office wall is a plaque with words attributed to poet William Arthur Ward, and I live my life by them: “If you can imagine it, you can achieve it; if you can dream it, you can become it.”

Never underestimate the power of vision. I am living proof.



# How May We Serve You?

Through prayer, publishing, and events, Unity is always here to support you in expressing your divine potential for a healthy, prosperous, and meaningful life:

## PRAYER SUPPORT

Reach out to Silent Unity® for personal prayer anytime, day or night, at [silentunity.org](http://silentunity.org). You may also call Silent Unity at 816-969-2000.

## INSPIRATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

Call 816-969-2069, Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (CT), or visit [unity.org](http://unity.org).

- *Daily Word*® in regular, large type, digital, or Spanish (*La Palabra Diaria*)
- *Unity Magazine*®
- Books, both in print and e-books
- CDs and DVDs

## UNITY RETREATS AND EVENTS

Call 816-251-3540, Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (CT), or visit [unityvillage.org](http://unityvillage.org) to see detailed information for workshops, retreats, and special events.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

- Articles, prayers, meditation, news, and information at [unity.org](http://unity.org).
- Spiritual programming 24/7 at [unityonlineradio.org](http://unityonlineradio.org).
- *Daily Word* messages and related content at [dailyword.com](http://dailyword.com).

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—Your Friends in Unity



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