

A New Freedom

Whether you have been in recovery for a long time or are just beginning, you probably have experienced a lot of frustrated feelings that didn't just go away when you got abstinent or sober... problems with relationships, work, anxiety, depression, or feelings of emptiness. These feelings are natural for us no matter what our addiction and the amount of time in recovery we have. But we don't have to let them rule our lives. The 11th Step offers us a solution!

Through the simple method of Centering Prayer we can improve our relationship with the Ultimate Power of life. This is true whether we call that power God, Allah, Mother, another name or no name.

This type of prayer has been used over the centuries, but it is different from what we may think of as prayer. It is not the type of prayer we are used to, like praying for something we want. It is simply moving deep within ourselves, in silence, saying nothing, asking for nothing, just being and allowing our Higher Power to be with us.

For those who are working a recovery program, parallels can be found between the transformation that Centering Prayer brings and the process of growth facilitated as we work the 12 Steps.

The Guidelines

- 1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.**
- 2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly, and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.**
- 3. When engaged with your thoughts*, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.**
- 4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.**

***thoughts include body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections**

1. The "sacred word" is sacred not because of its inherent meaning, but because of the meaning we give it as the expression of our intention and consent. Examples: Love, Let Go, Serenity, Peace, Silence, Faith, Trust, Gentle, etc.

2. "Sitting comfortably" means relatively comfortably so as not to encourage sleep during the time of prayer.

3. By "returning ever-so-gently to the sacred word" a minimum of effort is indicated. This is the only activity we initiate during the time of Centering Prayer.

Effects of Centering Prayer

The positive effects of the prayer are experienced in daily life and not necessarily during the prayer period itself. During this prayer, avoid analyzing the experience, or having expectations such as: continuously repeating the sacred word; having no thoughts; achieving a spiritual experience. It is important not to judge the success of your prayer period. The only thing you can do wrong in this prayer is to get up and leave. You may find yourself getting in touch with feelings of pain, lust, or fear, even remembering feelings or events you forgot about long ago. There is no way to change or repair the damage of a lifetime EASILY or QUICKLY.

Everyone moves at his or her own pace in Centering Prayer. Just doing the prayer and opening our self to the presence of our Higher Power in silence will encourage you to keep going.

Growth will happen when we practice Centering Prayer in the context of the 12 Steps.

- Enhances our ability to "Let Go and Let God"
- Develops in us a nonjudgmental attitude of ourselves and others
- We grow in self knowledge which at times may be painful
- Emerging capacity to listen and serve others
- Nurtures our ability to live in the present moment and just for today

Some Practical Points

- 1) Twenty minutes of Centering Prayer twice a day is recommended.
- 2) If you notice slight physical or emotional pain arising during the prayer, pay no attention and return ever so gently to the sacred word.
- 3) It is suggested that you join a weekly Centering Prayer Group or find others in recovery willing to meet on a regular basis, to support one another in this practice.

About 12 Step Outreach

Many people are already practicing Centering Prayer and find it very helpful in their recovery. 12-Step Outreach offers retreats and introductory workshops that teach this method in more depth.

You can find information about workshops and retreats offered by the 12 Step Outreach at www.contemplativeoutreach.org or at www.cp12stepoutreach.org

The cp12stepoutreach website keeps a list of groups that are meeting and you may find one in your area. It also provides information for starting 11th Step meetings in various formats that follow the traditions of our 12 Step programs.

About Centering Prayer

Thomas Keating, OCSO is one of the founders of the Centering Prayer movement and Contemplative Outreach, a spiritual network that teaches Centering Prayer and provides a support system for those who practice it. He is the author of many books and recorded presentations on Contemplative Prayer.

In 2001, **The 12 Step Outreach** program of Contemplative Outreach was established to offer Centering Prayer to people in all 12 Step fellowships as an 11th Step prayer/meditation practice. We help individuals and groups establish contemplative prayer practices through workshops, retreats and formation programs.

The practice of Centering Prayer, and the spiritual, historical and psychological basis of it, are described and elaborated in several of Thomas Keating's works, including Open Mind, Open Heart and Invitation to Love. The practice of Centering Prayer has parallels with other traditional practices, and is simple and easy to do.

For those who live by the 12 Steps found in AA, Al-Anon, SCA, OA, DA, NA, GA, and other programs, a Centering Prayer practice can be a key support system in the process of recovery and transformation.

Centering Prayer can help deepen our application of the 12 Steps generally, and the 11th Step specifically, through daily immersion in prayer and meditation. We believe that, when applied as a daily supplement to the 12 Steps, Centering Prayer open us to the deepest dimension of spirituality.

An 11th Step Prayer Practice for those in 12 Step Programs



The Method of Centering Prayer

“Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him ...”

The 11th Step

This pamphlet was put together to help those searching for emotional and spiritual sobriety. Centering Prayer is a method for doing the 11th Step to improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power. “Sought through prayer and meditation” deals with our own personal effort to communicate with a Higher Power. Many people in 12-Step programs have deepened their relationship with their Higher Power with the method of Centering Prayer. This is about you and your God “as you understand God.” It is not an attempt to change the instructions given in the Big Book but to support and supplement them.