

A New Freedom

Are you searching for emotional and spiritual sobriety? Whether you have been in recovery for a long time or are just beginning, you have probably experienced many 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 regardless of our addiction or time in recovery. But we don't have to let emotions rule our lives.

The 11th Step offers us a solution!

Through the simple method of Centering Prayer, we can improve our relationship with our Higher Power by simply consenting to our Higher Power's presence and action within us.



Centering Prayer

Centering Prayer is an ancient meditation practice that 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, by letting go of our thoughts and allowing our Higher Power to be with us. The practice of Centering Prayer has parallels with other traditional practices and is simple and easy to do.

About 12 Step Outreach

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.

Many people are already practicing Centering Prayer and find it to be transformative to 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.cp12stepoutreach.org

or at

www.contemplativeoutreach.org

Check out the website for groups in your geographic area or for information on starting an 11th Step meeting that follows the traditions of our 12 Step programs.

Whether you're new to the 12 Steps or you have years of recovery, this daily practice can help you improve your conscious contact with your Higher Power.

“Exposure to silence on a regular basis offers a kind of universal healing for everybody no matter what their religion—or if they are of no religion.”

THOMAS KEATING

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

Centering Prayer Guidelines

I. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.

- The sacred word expresses our intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
- The sacred word is chosen during a brief period of prayer. Use a word of one or two syllables, such as: Love, Yes, Listen, Peace, Mercy, Let Go, Silence, Stillness, Faith, Trust, Thank You, Shalom.
- Instead of a sacred word, a simple inward glance toward the Divine Presence, or noticing one's breath may be more suitable for some persons. The same guidelines apply to these symbols as to the sacred word.
- 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 to consent.
- Having chosen a sacred word, we do not change it during the prayer period because that would be engaging thoughts.

II. 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.

- “Sitting comfortably” means relatively comfortably so as not to encourage sleep during the time of prayer.
- Whatever sitting position we choose, we keep the back straight.

- We close our eyes as a symbol of letting go of what is going on around and within us.
- We introduce the sacred word inwardly as gently as laying a feather on a pillow.
- If we fall sleep, we simply continue the prayer upon awakening.

III. When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.

- “Thoughts” is an umbrella term for every perception, including body sensations, sense perceptions, feelings, images, memories, plans, reflections, concepts, commentaries, and spiritual experiences.
- Thoughts are an inevitable, integral and normal part of Centering Prayer.
- 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.
- During the course of Centering Prayer, the sacred word may become vague or disappear.

IV. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

- The additional two minutes enables us to bring the atmosphere of silence into everyday life.
- If this prayer is done in a group, the leader may slowly recite a prayer, such as the Serenity Prayer or the 3rd step prayer, while the others listen.



Benefits of Centering Prayer

The positive effects of the prayer are experienced in daily life and not necessarily during the prayer period itself. Growth happens when we practice Centering Prayer in the context of the 12 Steps. Some benefits are:

- We enhance our ability to “Let Go and Let God.”
- We develop a nonjudgmental attitude of ourselves & others.
- We become more comfortable in our own skin.
- We grow in our capacity to listen and serve others.
- We nurture our ability to live in the present moment.

There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation, and prayer. Taken separately, these practices can bring much relief and benefit. But when they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an unshakable foundation for life.

12 & 12



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” fosters 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 method is intended to support and supplement the instructions given in the Big Book, not modify or replace them in any way. It’s all about you and your God “as you understand God.”



**12 STEP
OUTREACH**

*Centering
Prayer*

**A service team of
Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.**

For information and resources:
**cp12stepoutreach.org
contemplativeoutreach.org**



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