
Spiritual Practice Journal

To some people it might seem odd to track our spiritual practice - but why? We track all sorts of things: our investments, spending, diet, exercise... Businesses track every metric they can to gauge their progress and also to see what's deficient, what needs changing. So does the government.

Our spiritual life should not be considered so pure it's beyond measurement. That somehow we're tainting it by looking at how much we're doing.

I would argue because of how important our spiritual life is that it's absolutely what we should be tracking. What could be better than to consistently be conscious of our efforts to stay true to our practice and also to become aware of areas that need some attention?

On the following pages are a couple of different things for you.

First, I have listed a variety of different spiritual practices, that we're going to use as our roadmap to evaluate what we are doing each day. Most are common practices that are important to any spiritual path. But it is by no means complete, please add anything else that is important to your practice.

I've added a worksheet to this pdf that you can print out to use, or you can take this into a personal journal (which is what I do).

Completing the Worksheet

In the beginning, don't overdo it. It's easy to get excited and want to do everything on the list. That tends to overwhelm us and then we just give up. So start with a commitment to a few practices - maybe its meditation and journaling. That's a great start!

At the end of each day review your list and evaluate how you did with your practice - using a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

If your goal is to meditate 20 minutes a day and you did 20 minutes give yourself a 5. If you did 5 minutes give yourself a 2 - it's not an exact science but it gives us an idea. If you realize it's now the end of the day

and you haven't meditated at all - you can close your eyes for a one minute meditation and then give yourself a 1. That's one of the benefits of doing this exercise every day - if you didn't get to it you can do something now - however small it is.

Not everything is as easily quantifiable as meditation or journaling. Mindfulness, for example, is kind of tricky. Just do your best to assess how mindful you were. It is a very rare day that I give myself a 5 and even that's probably quite generous!

The same is true for compassion, kindness, generosity... just do your best to gauge how much compassionate or kind you were.

There will be times when your practice is more robust than others - I have to think it's that way for everybody. So please try not to judge or be unkind to yourself on days you didn't do as much as you would have liked. Of course we want continuity but we also have to be realistic that there will be some days where there doesn't appear to be as much as others - it's fine. In fact, it's normal.

Each week add up the numbers and take stock of your practices for that week. Take some time to reflect on how you benefited by staying on top of your practice, how you felt during the week, how you handled certain situations?

Then recommit to your practices for the following week. You might add to the list, take some out or stay the same. This is for you to decide.

One last thing. Even though each week you are committing to certain practices on the list, you should still refer to the entire list of spiritual practices because you'll find you are doing more than you realize. We aren't committing to a few at the exclusion of others. So even though you've committed to say meditating and journaling, most likely you're also being generous, ethical, and compassionate. If you did it add it to the list.

In the following section I'll give some guidelines on a couple of the practices. I won't go through every practice, but I'll add a few comments on some that I think might offer some help with your spiritual practice.

Spiritual Practices

Gratitude

This is a big part of every spiritual path, but I often find it gets compartmentalized - relegated to one specific time at the end of the day. Any amount of gratitude is great but if you've made it this far into the workbook you are serious about your spiritual practice so let's take your gratitude practice up a notch. The reality is we can practice gratitude in the simplest of acts all day long.

Having a computer, I can have gratitude as I type for this amazing machine that makes my life so much easier. When I go to make a cup of tea, I can be grateful for being lucky enough to have everything I need to make the tea. Every time we go to turn on the tap for some water, we should be grateful that it's so easy to have clean water on demand - not

everyone in the world has this luxury and barring the last couple of generations, all of our ancestors before did not have this convenience.

This is how we stay connected spiritually all day - not just ten minutes at the end of the day.

So when you do something, no matter how simple, think about how fortunate you are to have whatever it is that you need in that moment.

Compassion

Like gratitude it's wonderful to have a formal practice of compassion, a time of day when we practice it, but we also want to look for ways to integrate it more into our daily lives. As we go about our day we can look at other people and silently offer them words of compassion:

- *May you be free from suffering*
- *May your sorrow be eased*
- *I care about your suffering*
- *I'm here for you*

We know that most people in this world are suffering in some way. Everyone puts on a good front, but when you get to know them how often are we surprised to hear the troubles they are having? Their fears and concerns. We think it's just us, but it's not. Everyone is experiencing this.

We also shouldn't forget self-compassion as part of our compassion practice. When we have a moment of frustration, sadness or being overwhelmed to remember to be kind to ourselves, choosing words that nurture us and keep us in reality - not words that work us up and making things worse:

- *Sweetheart it's OK, we'll get through this.*
- *Oh sweetheart this is really tough isn't it?*
- *Just a little bit more to go and then we can go home and have a nice nap.*

Self-compassion is critical to our practice. I don't think we can fully have compassion for others until we're able to be there for ourselves. When practicing self-compassion it's important to refer to yourself in the

second or third person. It's also really helpful to use an affectionate term like sweetheart or honey. Your first name will do as well!

Morality/Ethics/Virtue

I've included ethics because this is the foundation of our well-being.

We simply can't lie, gossip, cheat and/or steal and then pretend to be on a spiritual path.

Keeping watch of what we say is a good place for us to start. Our mouths can get us into a lot of trouble! So we make sure that whatever words we choose are not only true but that they don't cause harm. Our words should never be divisive, slanderous, hurtful or untrue. In other words, they should be kind, harmonious, meaningful, and truthful.

I find it really helpful to make a note every day that I'm being ethical - we forget how easy it is to slide in this area. To let someone believe something that isn't quite true, mislead someone in some small way or to spread gossip - however minor it is. It's a slippery slope and it starts with one little unethical action.

Study

If we're serious about our path, then we need to dedicate a portion of our time to study. This doesn't have to be daily - weekly is fine - remember it's about making this work for you.

But each of us should be taking some time to study spiritual books. Although I read a lot, I also take one spiritual book (and it's always a physical book) and it sits on the table where I have my breakfast. After breakfast I read one or two pages and then contemplate what I've just read. It can take six months or longer at this pace, but that's fine. It's quality not quantity. Plus I do read a lot of other texts as well. So this isn't to limit you to one book, but one that you really give a lot of attention to.

And keep in mind this is just what I do - I'm trying to offer some tips but this is your practice so do what works best for you.

Forgiveness

We all know forgiveness is a huge part of having a happy life. And yet, it's something we rarely practice. I have a forgiveness prayer I do several times a day (it's part of my prayers before meditation) - I'll put the prayer at the end of this document in case you'd like to use it.

The more I say this prayer the more easily I'm able to genuinely forgive someone if they've let me down or disappointed me in some way. Because you'll notice in the first two sentences of the prayer we are acknowledging that we have caused harm too. Even though it's not my intention to cause harm, I know over my lifetime I've let people down so if I need to ask for someone else's forgiveness the least I can do is forgive others (without them even needing to ask me).

One of the last bits of advice I'll offer here is if you get to the end of the day and you really don't have anything to write down, that's OK. Take just a minute or two to do a few of the practices (just like we can do with a quick meditation).

For example, think of someone who is struggling and send them some compassionate thoughts.

Maybe you had a brutal day, if so, spend a minute giving yourself some self-compassion. *Oh sweetheart, what a tough day, but you made it through and now you can relax, well done!*

Do a generosity visualization where you imagine giving things to people: a home to someone who doesn't have one, a car to someone who needs one or you're walking down a street and every homeless person you see you hand them \$10,000 (I love this practice! - you can get really creative and generous in your mind!).

Anything you do in your mind leaves an imprint (for better or worse) - so this counts too.

This is why checking in at the end of the day is so helpful, it gives us the opportunity to take a few minutes and do more practices. All of this builds up and it starts to seep into your everyday moments. Which is exactly what we are trying to do!

I hope this workbook practice helps you to be happier, kinder to yourself and others and wise! 😊

Spiritual Practices

MEDITATION PRAYER MINDFULNESS

ETHICS COMPASSION KINDNESS

SURRENDER EQUANIMITY GRATITUDE

FORGIVENESS STUDY MANTRAS

JOURNALING CONTEMPLATION

GENEROSITY RENUNCIATION

SELF-COMPASSION SERVICE

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE
WORKSHEET
Scale of 1-5

Date:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Weekly Total
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	=	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	=	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	=	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	=	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	=	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	=	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	=	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	=	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	=	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	=	_____

Prayer of Forgiveness

*"If I have harmed anyone in any way
either knowingly or unknowingly
through my own confusion, fear, and desire
I ask their forgiveness.
If anyone has harmed me in any way
either knowingly or unknowingly
through their own confusion, fear, and desire
I forgive them.
And if there is a situation
I am not yet ready to forgive,
I forgive myself for that.
And for all the little ways
that I harm myself: negate, doubt, belittle,
judge or be unkind to myself
through my own confusion, fear, and desire
I forgive myself."*