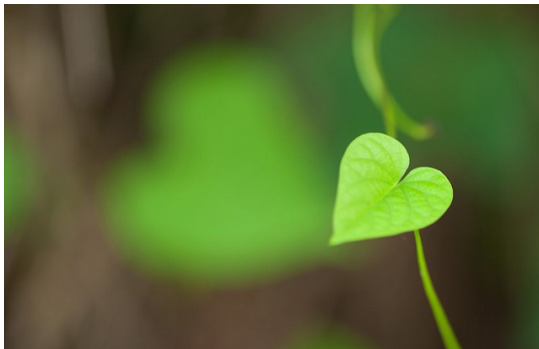


## WAYS TO PRACTICE LOVE AND GRATITUDE

Slow Down: *"Besides the noble art of getting things done, there is the noble art of leaving things undone...the wisdom of life consists in the elimination of non essentials."* ~ Lin Yutang.

Instead of striving to do more, resolve to do at least 10% less. There is always tomorrow! Take the extra time to notice. Feel the breeze, listen to the birds, observe a child in play. Remember, *"Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans"*. ~ John Lennon.

Unclutter: "Spring clean" often. Look around and clear your space. Donate clothing, books or other non-essentials. Open the window. Clear your outer and inner vision. Rid yourself of old patterns that no longer serve you.



Breathe: There are many breathing exercises that research shows can reduce stress. For example, inhale deeply to the count of three and exhale to the count of three. Sit quietly and repeat for several minutes. You can try to inhale for 4 counts, retain your breath for 7 counts and

exhale for eight counts. Repeat these practices several times throughout the day and notice the calming effects. Yogis have reaped the benefits of *pranayama* (breathing exercises) for centuries.

Meditate: Start by sitting quietly where you cannot be distracted for 5-10 minutes. Focus on your breath, a sound or a repeated word (mantra) A specific object of attention will keep you in the present moment as you witness your thoughts passing by. There are many types of meditation such as sitting, walking or chanting. Meditation has numerous health benefits. Reducing stress, slowing the heart

rate and lowering blood pressure, just to name a few. There are many audio guides to help you get started. Better still, join a group or take a mindfulness-based stress reduction program. For detailed information-see: [peace mountain learning: meditation](#).

**Visualization:** Either sitting or reclining, close your eyes, progressively relax your muscles, settle down and picture yourself for example on a soft, sandy beach as you gaze at the glistening tide and feel the warm sun. Picture yourself walking through a field of lush wildflowers or watching a majestic sunset behind a golden mountain. This may be difficult at first but again there are many audio guides available that offer body scans and or visualization practices. Yoga nidra is a powerful relaxation tool . Many yoga teachers offer this practice. It is said that 10 minutes of yoga nidra is equal to two hours of restful sleep.

**Take a walk in Nature.**

Take a yoga class, dance class, ta chi lesson, art class, knitting class or engage in any activity that enriches and enlivens you.

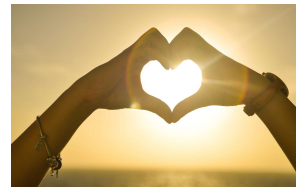
**Volunteer:** You do not need a lot of time. This can be done in small ways. Offer to drive a neighbor to a doctor's appointment. Take another neighbor who lives alone to the park, or out to lunch. Donate time if you can to a food pantry, homeless shelter or an animal shelter. Better still, rescue a cat or a dog. Simply reach out to others in any small way you can and offer support.

**Self Care:** Practicing any or all of the above are ways to take care of yourself. Allow these practices to replace ones that do not serve you well. Try to avoid alcohol drugs, sugar, over-eating, social media and toxic relationship. Follow your own heart. Avoid watching the news at least some of the time. Limit screen time as much as you can. Unplug completely when possible. Avoid violent movies. Get adequate, restful sleep (see my website for more information on improving sleep.)

Get a massage. Take a sauna or steam bath. Use essential oils. Sing. Dance. Hug. Play. All of the following are also ways to care for yourself.

Water: Of course we need pure water to live. *(Please see the blog posts on my website on the importance of drinking enough water.)*

Food: Try to prepare much of your own food. Avoid all processed foods, artificial ingredients, sweeteners and additives. A Mediterranean diet, sometimes referred to as the Heart-Brain diet, emphasizes eating mainly plant-based foods such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts. Olive oil (extra-virgin) is used in place of butter. Other healthy oils include avocado and grape seed oil. Fish is included as well as smaller amounts of poultry, eggs, cheese and yogurt. Red meat should be eaten rarely. Some newer studies agree that a totally plant based diet is the best for overall health however. Go organic. Many yogis eat according to Ayurvedic Medicine (knowledge of life). Ayurvedic diets are customized depending on one's specific body type or constitution. Foods in this diet vary throughout the year, in tune with the changing seasons. (suggested reading: *What to eat for how you Feel* by Divya Alter.)



Try to eat no later than 6 PM and make sure your evening meal is easy to digest. If you have a heavy meal in the late evening your body spends a lot of its energy digesting . When this happens you may wake up feeling depleted because your body has not had the time and space to renew itself.

Practice Gratitude: Before you get out of bed think of at least three things that you are grateful for such as a person, place, past experience or a pet.

Throughout the day, notice the many things in your environment that make your life better. Make a commitment to write down what you are

grateful for each day in a journal. You can begin your meditation practice in this way. Take a moment of silent gratitude before each meal; grateful for your food and all of the people who are responsible for creating it. Express your gratitude to others in an authentic way. Express your gratitude to your parents and loved ones. Practice gratitude towards yourself. Practice kindness and compassion for yourself and radiate this to others. Forgive yourself and others. Accept yourself. Do not fear change. "Pay it forward"

LOVE: The ability to love others depends on the ability to love yourself. A spiritual path such as Yoga is a path towards self-acceptance and awareness. When your heart is opened you become genuine and can live your life with ease and gratitude. Practice loving-kindness meditation or *metta* for yourself and others. For more information see peace mountain learning: Opening your Heart.

Let your love unfold to encompass the world. Replace fear with love. Spread this to others, especially those that are less fortunate than you are.

Visualize healing, clarity and love for yourself and picture it flowing through all of the world leaders as to foster positive change in the world.

*Peace in your thoughts.*

*Peace in your words.*

*Peace in your heart.*

*Peace in the world.*