

# **Spiritual practices for walking the 'ROPE'**

## **An Invitation to Intimacy with God\***

An Experiential Exploration of Relaxation, Meditation, Prayer and Worship  
and its Benefits to Soul, Heart, Mind and Body

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### **INTRODUCTION**

All formal religions and individual spiritual pilgrims have, at their heart, a basic desire to connect or become one with a greater good. It lies somewhere at the core of their belief system, perhaps smothered by a greater or lesser amount of superficial ritualistic practices.

Western religions appeal to the intellect and promote desirable moral practices through examples given in the scriptures. Outsiders, and members of the church, often complain that, try as they may, it really doesn't seem if there is anyone listening 'up there' as the realities and stresses of day-to-day living become increasingly complex and difficult to manage.

Eastern traditions take their adherents by the hand, sit them down and teach practical techniques for clearing the mind, being present and aware, and simply 'listening'. These highly effective techniques have made their way to the West and developed into various forms meditation that have continued to evolve into practices to meet specific needs, and they have been scientifically demonstrated to achieve results<sup>1</sup>.

Philosophy speaks of everybody being an individual 'Self' making up a part of a greater whole. It is a concept much akin to the Holy Spirit of the Bible<sup>2</sup> or that of the evolving Supreme Being of the Urantia Book<sup>3</sup>. Philosophy calls the Self 'Atman' and the Supreme Self 'Param Atman' of which every individual is a part<sup>4</sup>.

Supreme or Universal is a good name to use, particularly as such a name does not align itself, or show preference for, one religion's terminology over another, yet embodies the concept that each religion's preferred name for its own deity also implies universality and supremacy. The fundamental premise that we are all part of the Supreme and that the Supreme resides within us, and that we all seek permanent and infinite union with this Supreme.

### **TOOLS TO ENJOY A RELIGION OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

Most religions have volumes of scriptures, and secondary writings by their most respected masters, adherents or disciples, but, at the very heart of their core teachings, it is about cultivating a relationship of love, respect, or worship for a Universal Supreme who resides within, or permeates and binds, all of humanity, the entire world, as one. However, adherents of particular traditional religions are usually required to believe in their specific scriptures, often to the exclusion of others, and to faithfully follow their creed usually requires a belief in the unseen or the unprovable. Many intelligent individual spiritual seekers

find this off-putting, and really desire nothing more than to discover and participate in a religion of personal experience.

Blind faith can be hard for some, for example scientists who prefer factual observations and concrete theories, however a religion based on personal experience goes far beyond that. It is something that is actually felt or experienced within the self. It is based on actual feelings of happiness, joy or love that are personally experienced when one acts or thinks in a particular way, or interacts with others in a particular way, or, perhaps, interacts the Universal Supreme in a particular way. It is a relationship in which you don't have to believe, you simply have to feel and experience it personally. The Universal Supreme is known by many different names, depending on the religion that is followed, be it Allah, Yahweh, Almighty, God or simply Father, but any thoughtful person knows them to be one and the same, and a religion of personal experience allows direct access to the vast storehouse of love emanating from that Source who, in fact, resides within each of us, waiting to be discovered, tapped and shared.

Communication with the Universal Supreme is not experienced in the mind, which is the usual space in which we operate on a day-to-day basis, but instead it must be personally felt within the heart and soul. That is why the technique is not so easy to capture at first. It requires a little practice and patience to attain focus; a sense of stillness and equanimity within. The mind must first become stilled and calm; it must be present in your body, it must be there in the room or place where you are, attentive to your needs, and not wandering about aimlessly in the past or the future—not thinking about where you were and what you did yesterday, neither in the future plotting and planning for things to come, nor worrying about the trials and tribulations of life. Once the mind is calm and still, the heart and soul are free to communicate directly with the Universal Supreme that is found within and all around. Communication is not done via words or thoughts, but by feelings and emotions which, unlike a specific language, are universal and common to everyone. Feelings of joy and bliss and thankfulness can then emanate from the inner self shooting into the heavens like searchlight beams. Once the feelings and emotions are completely expended, freely given up to the Supreme, there comes a profound and deep silence within. This silence may last for a shorter or longer time, or perhaps only for a brief moment, but it is a moment of communion, complete oneness of the individual Self with the Supreme Self.

Appreciating these ideas is one thing, but putting them into practice requires some discipline and practice each day, morning and evening. Familiar religious practices or social rituals in the company of like-minded souls can help, like comfortable, well-known acquaintances; be it slipping the shiny well-worn beads of the Rosary between your fingers to the melodic chant of the Hail Mary, or perhaps the familiar calls to prayer in the coolness of the pre-dawn in eager anticipation of the coming day, or perhaps the rhythmic rocking of the body to the Torahic verses, or the congregational singing of full-voiced hymns of adoration and praise.

A Religion of Personal Experience, as the name suggests, is an even more intimate experiential relationship and there are a set of established spiritual tools or practices, tried and tested over the millennia of human existence on this planet, on which countless books have been written, and which I have distilled here for your immediate practical use. From here onwards you are asked not to believe what you are reading here, but to try for yourself, and feel through experience if such an approach has merit. If you do experience hints of calmness, oneness with all, joy, happiness, or the slightest glimpse of universal understanding, you are invited to continue to practice these techniques on a daily basis. Like exercising your physical body for good health, you must continue to hone and develop your heart and soul's ability to express themselves—to give and receive freely.

## WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES IN *The Urantia Book*

The *Urantia Book*<sup>3</sup> describes traditional religion, with its ritual, sacrifice and outward displays of piety as hollow and empty compared to the religion of personal experience. Spiritual practices in *the Urantia Book* place high importance on practices described as relaxation, meditation, prayer, or worship.

Although these terms all fall within today's sphere of meditation with their objectives being similar, *the Urantia Book* specifically defines these terms and places them in a hierarchy from 'relaxation', 'meditation', 'prayer', and reaching a crescendo in 'worship'.

The following quotes from *The Urantia Book* shed light on the meaning of these terms:

*144:4:5 (1621.4) Prayer and its associated worship is a technique of detachment from the daily routine of life, from the monotonous grind of material existence*

*91:7:1 (1000.2) The contact of the mortal mind with its indwelling Adjuster, while often favoured by devoted meditation, is more frequently facilitated by wholehearted and loving service in unselfish ministry to one's fellow creatures.*

Paragraphs 91:7:2 and 125:4.4 show us that meditation is considered distinctly from prayer:

*91:7:2 (1000.3) Jesus often took his apostles away by themselves for short periods to engage in meditation and prayer, but for the most part he kept them in service-contact with the multitudes.*

*125:4.4 (1382.2) When this, his second day in the temple, was finished, again he went to Bethany for the night. And again he went out in the garden to meditate and pray. It was apparent that his mind was concerned with the contemplation of weighty problems.*

The word, 'pray' or 'prayer' is used more frequently in *The Urantia Book*, appearing 107 times. It is used in the sense of asking for something, and it is used distinctly from the word 'worship'

*91:2:3 (996.1) When man learned that prayer could not coerce the gods, then it became more of a petition, favor seeking. But the truest prayer is in reality a communion between man and his Maker*

*91:4:3 (998.1) When the prayer seeks nothing for the one who prays nor anything for his fellows, then such attitudes of the soul tend to the levels of true worship.*

*143:7:4 (1616.6) prayer is designed to make man less thinking but more realizing; it is not designed to increase knowledge but rather to expand insight.*

Worship on the other hand is used 419 times in *The Urantia Book*. Worship is the highest note in the escalating musical scale of devotional activities beneficial to all individuals—beginning with rest and relaxation, then through reflection and meditation, then prayer, and finally worship, with worship being the ultimate act of devotion to the Father and the 'ideal soul rest'.

*142:3:8 (1598.9) At all times and during all ages the true worship of any human being—as concerns individual spiritual progress—is recognized by the indwelling spirit as homage rendered to the Father in heaven.*

The distinction between prayer and worship is emphasised on numerous occasions.

*143:7:5 (1616.7) prayer is spiritually sustaining, but worship is divinely creative.*

*143:7:7 (1616.9) Prayer is self-reminding—sublime thinking; worship is self-forgetting—superthinking. Worship is effortless attention, true and ideal soul rest, a form of restful spiritual exertion.*

*144:4.8 (1621.7) As prayer may be likened to recharging the spiritual batteries of the soul, so worship may be compared to the act of tuning in the soul to catch the universe broadcasts of the infinite spirit of the Universal Father.*

And consider the extraordinary reach of worship over that of simple prayer in the following paragraph in Paper 5 - God's Relation to the Individual

*5:3:2 (65.4) Prayers, all formal communications, everything except adoration and worship of the Universal Father, are matters that concern a local universe; they do not ordinarily proceed out of the realm of the jurisdiction of a Creator Son. But worship is undoubtedly encircuited and dispatched to the person of the Creator by the function of the Father's personality circuit.*

In the Bible<sup>2</sup> meditation is also describes as a focus for keeping one whole steady and centred. It is referred to some 23 times, for example:

*Isaiah 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*

*Matthew 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

Worship is mentioned over 180 times in the Bible and also considered the highest form of devotion, that is the giving of one's entire self, thoughts and emotions for God's use:

*Romans 12:1 I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

## **MEDITATION AS A SPIRITUAL TOOL FOR WALKING THE 'ROPE'**

Popular types of meditation practices today are used to build stability of mind over time and the different approaches can be blended naturally until the perfect combination is found that suits your individual needs.

Below I order the modern meditation techniques into a progressive series of exercises according to the practices of rest, relaxation, meditation, prayer and worship.

- Mindfulness meditation
- Focused meditation
- Mantra meditation
- Progressive relaxation meditation
- Transcendental meditation
- Spiritual meditation
- Loving-kindness meditation
- Pure worship

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

Now we briefly explore each of the meditative styles as a series of practical exercise that flow naturally into one another, merging into one enlightening experience. Each word and sentence (excluding the headings) is spoken slowly and deliberately, with the ellipses (...) indicating where a contemplative pause of several seconds is allowed. Lengthen and shorten the spaces where preferred, perhaps reading into your phone's *Voice Memos* app and replaying it to yourself. The whole below experience should take approximately 20 minutes to half an hour:

### **Mindfulness Meditation/ Awareness**

Now, sitting balanced and upright, comfortably in your chair with eyes closed, mind aware and focused, let the shoulders body relax... Keep your back straight and allow your spine to stretch as if your head is being suspended by a piece of string...

Become aware of your presence in your surroundings... Feel the weight of your body in the chair and feel your feet firmly on the floor. Feel the weight of your clothes on your body...

Notice the gentle play of the air on the skin of your hands and face...

Now become aware of the sense of smell... and focus on the sense of taste...

Become aware of the sense of sight... of what the eyes are experiencing behind their closed lids... or if they are open, note colour, shapes and form before you, but without interpretation or comment...

Now become aware of the sense of hearing... focus on the sounds in the room, the sounds of the others in your home... Listen without comment to the sounds of family going about their daily routine... Extend your hearing out as far as it can go—to pick up the faintest, most distant sound—birds, wind, cars, trains...

### **Focused Meditation/ Breathing**

Now become aware of your breathing... Focus on your breath... on each breath as you inhale and exhale...

Note the sensation of cool air being drawn into your nostrils, deep down into your lungs... then the sensation of your warm breath leaving the body... Count the breaths (perhaps 10 exhalations and inhalations) ...

Keep your focus on the breath... If your mind starts to wander, simply return awareness to the breath. Note the thought or emotion distracting your focus... Acknowledge its presence and simply let it go, before returning to the breath...

### **Mantra Meditation**

Now focus on the sound of the breath...on each inhalation and each exhalation...from the very first breath you ever took... Now turn the sound of the breath into a mantra (one of your own choice or perhaps that taught by Richard Rohr...breath in...Yah...breathe out...weh... Yah...weh... Yah... weh...

### **Progressive Relaxation Meditation/ Body Scan**

With the mind completely clear of thought, imagine a photocopier, its focused line of light scanning a page... Imagine the beam at the crown of the head... Focus your attention there relaxing the scalp, and noting any sensations let them go... Move the bright line of awareness downwards over the forehead, scanning, relaxing, the bridge of the nose, eyes and lips... Feel the muscles of the face relax and let any tension go... the chin... the neck... the chest... let the muscles relax as you go... The abdomen... stomach... pelvis... and the top of the thighs... The knees... shins... ankles... and feet... Feel the soles of the feet grounded on the floor... Now moving up the back of the body, scan the ankles... the calves... and the buttocks... Feel the weight of your body in the chair... Scan up the spine... along the back... and the neck... around the back of the head... and finally returning to the crown of the head...

### **Transcendental Meditation/ Awareness of Awareness**

Now become aware of your whole self, your whole body sitting meditating on the chair... Imagine pulling yourself gently away from your material body... as if you are now an outsider observing the scene from above... You are now no longer immersed in your own body with its senses, thought streams and emotions, but sitting above as a separate viewer, aware and looking on impassively without judgement... As the viewer of the passing emotions, you are not emotional but just a neutral observer... You may notice sensations of detachment, bliss, happiness... Maintain this perspective for a minute or two...

### **Spiritual Meditation/ Prayer**

Now, with the mind still clear, we offer our unselfish, sincere and trusting prayer of thanksgiving in the manner that Jesus (or any Master of our preference) taught us:

Focus on the meaning and intent of the prayer and follow the words in your mind...

- 144:5.12 (1622.10) Our creative Parent, who is in the center of the universe...<sup>3</sup>
- 144:5.13 (1622.11) Bestow upon us your nature and give to us your character...
- 144:5.14 (1622.12) Make us sons and daughters of yours by grace...
- 144:5.15 (1622.13) And glorify your name through our eternal achievement...
- 144:5.16 (1622.14) Your adjusting and controlling spirit give to live and dwell within us...
- 144:5.17 (1622.15) That we may do your will on this sphere as angels do your bidding in light...
- 144:5.18 (1622.16) Sustain us this day in our progress along the path of truth...
- 144:5.19 (1622.17) Deliver us from inertia, evil, and all sinful transgression...
- 144:5.20 (1622.18) Be patient with us as we show loving-kindness to our fellows...
- 144:5.21 (1622.19) Shed abroad the spirit of your mercy in our creature hearts...
- 144:5.22 (1622.20) Lead us by your own hand, step by step, through the uncertain maze of life...

- 144:5.23 (1622.21) And when our end shall come, receive into your own bosom our faithful spirits...
- 144:5.29 (1622.26) Ever lead us in the ways of eternal progress...
- 144:5.30 (1622.27) Fill us with wisdom to the fullness of power.
- 144:5.31 (1622.28) And vitalize us with your infinite energy...
- 144:5.34 (1622.31) Guide us ever upward in the pathway of light...
- 144:5.36 (1622.33) Make us like yourself in eternal glory...
- 144:5.37 (1622.34) And receive us into your endless service on high...

### **Focused Meditation/ Visualisation**

Now visualize the face of Jesus, or whichever master you so respect and love—the human, smiling, friendly face, warm and welcoming to all, yet deeply interested in you personally as a dear friend... You may maintain your own image with your eyes closed or stare at an image you have at hand... Now imagine the master with the children, or as a child himself together with his own parents... Imagine yourself with your own children—playing, teaching, sharing time together... or perhaps you as a child with your own loving parents, grandparents—a repeating endless cycle of family love and caring from the beginning of humankind to the present moment... perhaps now with a tinge of nostalgia if they are no longer still with us... Visualise the faces of your family and friends and those within your circle of care and warmth...

### **Loving Kindness Meditation**

Now feel and experience your emotions of loving-kindness as you remember your family—not just as abstract thoughts but as real emotions... Allow them grow in intensity as sensations within your body... Now extend your feelings of love out beyond those you know... and encompass the whole of humanity... including even those you don't like... Now project those feelings out as far as they can go... even to the very borders of the space-time universe... encompassing all of the living souls, spirits and beings you know to be out there...

### **Spiritual Meditation/ Pure Worship**

Now direct your loving kindness towards the Universal Father, creator of all life, together with thanks for your own precious moment of existence—here and now... Yes, you are real and alive, and destined for a grand adventure through the mansion worlds<sup>2,3</sup> and on into the infinite... We, all of humanity, are all together on the same journey of learning and growth...

Crescendo your feelings now by focusing and holding your selfless worship on the Creator Father—he who resides at the centre of all things and yet lives within us all... He from whom all goodness flows and to whom all goodness returns...

Once the feelings and emotions are completely expended, freely given up, there comes a profound and deep silence within... Hold onto this silence for as long as you can.....

The inner silence may last for a shorter or longer time, perhaps only for a brief moment, but it is a moment of communion, complete oneness of the individual Self with the Supreme Self.

## **MORE THEORETICAL DETAIL ON THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MEDITATION**

The popular types of meditation practice you have now experienced for yourselves, are used to build stability of mind over time. Experts have many different ideas about what style to use and how frequently a person should meditate. As every human being is unique, it is best to blend types or to test different approaches until the perfect combination for you is found:

- Mindfulness meditation
- Focused meditation
- Progressive relaxation meditation
- Mantra meditation
- Transcendental meditation
- Spiritual meditation
- Loving-kindness meditation
- Movement meditation

### **1. Mindfulness Meditation.**

Mindfulness meditation is something people can do almost anywhere. While waiting in line at the bus stop or in a store, say, a person might calmly notice their surroundings, including the sights, sounds, and smells they experience. In this form of meditation practitioners try to remain aware and present in the moment.

That is to say, rather than dwelling on past regrets or worrying about the future, mindfulness encourages awareness of the richness of the present moment. A lack of judgment or emotion is crucial. So, rather than reflecting on the annoyance of a traffic jam or a long line up, a practitioner will simply note the wait without judgment.

Resting awareness involves letting the mind truly rest. Rather than focusing on the breath or the senses, or an image, thoughts are just allowed to enter, but instead of distracting and pulling your experience away from the present moment, you simply allow those thoughts to drift away.

Mindfulness Technique often begins with a focus on one thing—perhaps a mantra or the breathing. If the mind wanders off, then it is gently returned to the point of focus by restarting the mantra or concentrating on the breathing.

Practice of mindfulness results in a momentary awareness of everything happening around us, our ability to observe a passing train of thought, without judgement or reaction.

Practice of mindfulness is common to many forms of meditation, and research has shown that mindfulness improves health, reduces fixation on negative emotions, improves focus, improves memory, and lessens impulsive emotional reactions. Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction uses mindfulness to achieve stress reduction, such as management of PTSD etc<sup>1</sup>. The original aim of mindfulness is a focus on a deep exploration of the mind toward the goal of profound alteration of our very being.



## **2. Focused Meditation**

Focused meditation is where the mind's active focus is brought onto anything for the purpose of practicing awareness. Focused meditation includes breath awareness where the focus is on the breath or visualisation where you picture something or someone in your mind.

Breath awareness is a straightforward type of mindfulness meditation that encourages mindful breathing. Begin by breathing slowly and deeply, counting your breaths or otherwise focusing attention on the breaths as each comes into being and trails away into nothingness. The goal is to focus only on breathing and to ignore all other thoughts that enter the mind, to anchor the mind and maintain awareness.

Visualization replaces the breath with a mental image as the object of focus. It can feel challenging, but is really no different than vividly recalling the face of an old friend naturally, without effort. By conjuring a specific visualization, we can observe the reactions of our mind, and also focus on any physical sensations.

Notice your mind starting to wander? Simply return to the breath or other visualisation. This technique involves specifically "noting" what's distracting the mind—the thought or emotion we've become caught up in causing us to lose awareness of our focus—acknowledging its presence and simply letting it go before returning to the breath or other visualisation.

Focused meditation offers many of the same benefits as mindfulness, including reduced anxiety, improved concentration, and greater emotional flexibility.

### **Mantra meditation**

Mantra meditation perhaps could be considered as another form of focused meditation, where the focus in this case is on the mantra which is a repeated word or series of words.

## **3. Progressive Relaxation or Body Scan Meditation.**

As our body is often occupied with one thing while our mind is elsewhere, the body scan meditation was designed to synchronise body and mind. A mental scan is performed down the front of the body, from the top of the head to the tip of the toes, then returning to the head via the back of the body. Imagine a photocopier beam slowly scanning your body, or a wave washing over it, bringing attention to any discomfort, sensations, tensions, or aches that exist. The goal is to note tension in the body and to release it via relaxation as the wave passes.

Progressive relaxation promotes feelings of calmness and relaxation, helps with chronic pain, and can help relieve sleeplessness as it slowly and steadily relaxes the body.

## **4. Transcendental Meditation**

Transcendental Meditation is a spiritual form of meditation where we remain seated and breathe slowly. We begin the meditation by focusing on a mantra and distancing ourselves from our emotions. The goal is to transcend or rise above our current state of being. We attempt to rise above the mere awareness of a thing (which our mind ordinarily gives us) up to the next level of knowing we are aware of that thing—recognising

awareness itself without judgement or other emotional reactions. That is we become 'aware of being aware', which is also known as metacognition.

It does not matter where we focus our attention but rather that we recognise awareness itself. It allows us to track our own attention, noticing immediately when the mind wanders, or drifts away from our point of focus on, or when unwanted emotions arise. This ability to monitor the mind without getting swept away allows us to choose. When we find our mind has wandered, we can bring it back to the task at hand.

Engage with your Manas (Sanskrit for that faculty of mind or thought which coordinates sensory impressions before they are presented to the consciousness) and treat it with respect for the helpful servant that it is—Manas (Mind) is the presenter of information to the self. Engage it and consider its ideas and questions posed. Make a note to act upon those that are important and reject those that are out of place or time. Be friendly but firm with Manas, much like the family pet which has to know who is master and what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. Be thankful for its presence and assistance in steering practical conversations with the self—respectful banter and dialogue. During meditative practice, Manas need not be something to be feared, or something that must be banished on first sight, but more like a faithful overenthusiastic companion and servant that must be respectfully put in its place from time to time. This simple mental skill has the potential to make us hugely effective in the world—everything from focus and learning to realizing we have had a creative insight and managing our projects through to their conclusion. People who practice Transcendental Meditation report both spiritual experiences and heightened mindfulness<sup>1</sup>.

#### Zen meditation

Zen meditation forms an integral part of Buddhist practice for those seeking both relaxation and a new spiritual path. Many Zen meditation practitioners study specific skills (such as archery<sup>5</sup>) under a master who teaches the specific forms and postures<sup>5</sup>. Zen meditation is included here under Transcendental Meditation as it is based on achieving presence of mind and general awareness, while dismissing any thoughts that come to mind.

#### Zen Meditation by Leo Babauta<sup>6</sup>

- Sit for just two minutes...
- Do it first thing each morning...
- Don't get caught up in the how — just do...
- Check in with how you're feeling...
- Count your breaths...
- Come back when you wander...
- Develop a loving attitude...
- Don't worry too much that you're doing it wrong...

### 5. Spiritual Meditation

Spiritual meditation is a common base to the many seemingly-different religions on our planet, where it is often termed reflective contemplation of the scriptures, prayer or worship—examples include devotional Hail Mary chants, Gregorian hymns, Jewish Mishna recitals and Islamic muraqabah or simply being mindful of Allah at all times.

The reflective worship technique invites you to ask yourself a question: perhaps something such as, “What am I most grateful for?” Become aware of the feelings, not the thoughts, which arise when you focus on the question.

*144:3.14 (1620.12) Jesus taught the twelve always to pray in secret; to go off by themselves amidst the quiet surroundings of nature or to go in their rooms and shut the doors when they engaged in prayer<sup>3</sup>.*

*144:3.17 (1620.15) Jesus taught that effective prayer must be:*

- 1. Unselfish—not alone for oneself.*
- 2. Believing—according to faith.*
- 3. Sincere—honest of heart.*
- 4. Intelligent—according to light.*
- 5. Trustful—in submission to the Father’s all-wise will.*

*100:5.10 (1100.1) The more healthful attitude of spiritual meditation is to be found in reflective worship and in the prayer of thanksgiving.*

*91:6.7 (1000.1) But the efficacy of prayer in the personal spiritual experience of the one who prays is in no way dependent on such a worshiper’s intellectual understanding, philosophic acumen, social level, cultural status, or other mortal acquirements. The psychic and spiritual concomitants of the prayer of faith are immediate, personal, and experiential. There is no other technique whereby every man, regardless of all other mortal accomplishments, can so effectively and immediately approach the threshold of that realm wherein he can communicate with his Maker, where the creature contacts with the reality of the Creator, with the indwelling Thought Adjuster<sup>3</sup>.*

## **6. Loving-Kindness Meditation**

The goal of loving kindness meditation is to cultivate an attitude of love and kindness toward everything, by firstly directing positive energy and goodwill to ourselves, and then, as a ripple effect, to others, our close loved-ones, our friends, and on to encompass the whole of humankind—even to those we are not fond of and might be the sources of our stress. This practice helps us let go of unhappy feelings we may be experiencing and move into gratitude, thankfulness and even spiritual meditation.

While breathing deeply, practitioners open their minds to receiving loving kindness, concentrating on as many positive thoughts as possible. They then project messages of loving kindness to the world, to specific people, or to their loved ones. Repeating these messages over and over, the practitioner cultivates an attitude of loving kindness.

This practice helps those affected by anger, frustration, resentment or interpersonal conflict to be happy and free from suffering, opening their hearts and minds with the determination to act accordingly for the benefit of others.

## Skilful Compassion

Skilful compassion is very similar to the loving kindness meditation technique, providing, through compassion for our fellows, the opportunity to foster feelings of happiness in our own mind.

The Dali Lama's personal strategy recognises the oneness of humankind, recognising that they, like everyone, do not want suffering, but instead happiness<sup>7</sup>. The Dali Lama has worked on achieving compassion, growing it, developing it on higher and higher levels, such that he now considers it a stable and ongoing force, not one just arising from time to time. The Dali Lama has often said, the first person to benefit from compassion is the one who feels it, and, as such, this type of meditation increases experience of positive emotions while reducing depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress.

## 7. Movement Meditation.

Movement meditation is any physically active form of meditation. It may involve any of your favourite activities such as walking, running, swimming, tai chi or yoga—anything that blends form, movement or exercise with deep breathing, mantras or any of the above meditation styles.

For example, meditative yoga is known to improve physical strength, increase energy and reduce pain. It can also improve mental health by reducing anxiety and depression. The yogic poses can be learnt in a class which helps impose a discipline or habit, and the movements practiced at home.

The ultimate aim is to impose a meditative attitude or state of being to every aspect of one's life.

## WHY MIGHT WE WANT TO LEARN TO MEDITATE

### To Better Oneself

Essentially if you have a goal to achieve, or if you want to better yourself in some area, then focus on that. For example, do you want to be able to concentrate better? Then practice that—focusing your attention on your body or on your breath or on a mantra—a simple meaningless one, two or three syllable word or your own choosing—it doesn't matter. The practice is in keeping the mind focused and attentive because the mind naturally wanders. So, keeping the mind in focus on essentially nothing is the practice itself. Focusing on the different parts of the body, focusing on the breathing or a mantra, focusing on the self, this strengthens the control of the pre-frontal cortex, which is the executive part of the brain, over the amygdala which is the reactive part of the brain<sup>1</sup>.

### To Slow Down and Relax

We may want to slow the hectic passage of our lives—the passing of days and nights flickering before our eyes like a stroboscope, as the years click on ever faster towards our ultimate demise—Hey didn't I just have my birthday a few weeks ago, or is it really that time of year again? Then perhaps we should practice awareness, grounding ourselves in the present moment and our surroundings. That is focusing on our body and activating the five senses, paying attention to each of them and what they are telling us about where we are here and now. You will notice that you will have remembered that moment with keen acuity—it will not

just become one of those moments that pass you by without you even noticing it. Have you ever noticed what you can fit into a day or a week, say, when you are on a holiday doing this or that new thing? It seems when compared with the same week just sitting at home or at work, memories of the holidays abound, and was it really only three days long? Yet the week at home passes in a flash because nothing new has happened and the mind is effectively rationalizing that memory as nothing out of the ordinary, and storing the week in the 'brain files' as 'nothing out of the usual'.

### **To Embrace Spirituality**

Or perhaps you want to strengthen your spirituality, your connection with the Supreme Self, the Creator or Father of all, or the Son, he who became flesh and joined us here on our planet? In that case you can practice gratitude or worship by reflecting on how grateful you are for your life, for the new day given to you, for the beautiful rising sun, the morning chorus of the birds. Give thanks for your family, your friends, all enjoying their lives around you, and for the little things—the meal that you are enjoying, the fellowship with your family and friends, the blue sky, the sun, the wind drying the clothes on the line, the rain watering your garden, the amazing power of the thunderclouds. You may become so grateful that you move into active service for your fellow humans. “Lord I am so blessed with your bounteous love that I wish to go and serve others in your name”. Then you cultivate and practice that thought, holding it and focusing on it.

If you maintain your focus on that thought then, at that moment, you are open to suggestions and advice—undistracted and focused, you have now placed yourself in the best state of mind to communicate with the subtle spiritual forces surrounding you.

### **To Control Stress**

Do you suffer from stress, panic attacks or anxiety? If a savage beast comes springing out of the bush, naturally you should be happy for your amygdala to pump you full of stress hormones to prepare you for that urgent flight from danger or the fight or your life! But in our modern daily lives, no such physical dangers exist, our stressors are only the aggressive boss, noisy co-workers in the open plan office, financial worries etc. Often you can feel them surge into your system to ready it when you exclaim or realize, “Oh, I think I forgot to do that...” Or, “Did I complete that task I was supposed to?” or, “Oh I missed that important meeting. The reaction may start in the pit of the stomach, flooding through the body from there, causing a sinking feeling, a tingling of the skin of the forehead, flushing of the face, even prickly sweat and a tightening of the chest, with the constant flickering of the mind back to that thought—Did it write it down? Where was I? Why didn't I do that?

Emergency action is now needed as we don't want to react on gut instinct but instead maintain full control and solve our problems calmly without flooding our system with health-threatening hormones each time. Perhaps a deep breath or two—Inhale to completely fill the lungs and then exhale slowly. Take your time, enjoy the calming sensation the action brings. Repeat it several times. Stretch your arms and legs and neck and back to allow the hormones to work themselves out of your system—they have been released now and there is nothing you can do about it—there is nothing to worry about; the 'flight or fight' response is a perfectly natural reaction, but it is a reaction that you don't want to reoccur multiple times a day. Let the hormones dissipate and disappear from your system. Perhaps take a brisk stroll or move on to something else physical to help them disperse. I call to focus the words: “What's done is done. It's not worth worrying about it now. This time they caught me by surprise, but next time they won't!”

On one level it is nothing more than mastery over your physio-chemical system—your body, you brain and its circuitry which can be reduced to the old adage of mind over matter, rather than the other way around where we make ourselves sick in our high-paced modern society where our bodily systems and functions and reactions dominate our minds<sup>1</sup>. Always remember that you are the master. You are the infinite unchanging personality, I AM, self, mind, spirit, whoever you wish to call yourself. Yet the body you inhabit at the present time, and the brain circuitry which you use is constantly changing, ageing, but it is only a temporary home during your brief sojourn on this planet. It must work for you efficiently in your service of others and for your planet, and ultimately yourself. To our divine selves we must be true. We must worship our divine source and centre, that who created us—the Supreme Self, or Being, or Body of Knowledge, to whom we are contributing and becoming. Here we can use broadly spiritual, but non-sectarian religious terminology, upon which everyone can agree—except the most atheistic, purely materialistic personality.

### **A Desire for Oneness with Humanity**

I once met someone in passing, and upon speaking with them I recognized a connection—perhaps a certain warmth—a similarity of attitude and experience. I knew we were only meeting for the purpose of one task, but it seemed apparent to both of us that if we had met under different circumstances, say we had kids in the same school, or lived close by, then we could have become firm friends. It was a brief window for a brief task, but as that window closed, we both realized it—exchanging pleasantries and cards to stave the inevitable goodbye—that we would likely never meet again.

At that moment I realised that in the houses around, in all for the streets, in all of the suburbs, in all of the cities, in all of the countries of the world there were living billions of amazing people, and that—given the present limitations of my physical body—in time, space and physicality—that I would never have the opportunity to know even a small fraction of them all. That sad limiting thought concept somehow felt wrong and universally unjust, and the insight came to me in a moment of blinding clarity that it couldn't be true. It was enlightening to experience that realization and know that one day in the distant future, when the Supreme Being<sup>3</sup> or Supreme Self<sup>4</sup> composed of all individual selves becomes fully realised<sup>3</sup>, and in infinity when time no longer exists, or perhaps glimpsed during meditation, that oneness with all those individual personalities will be possible.

### **To Give Thanks**

In the morning, while they wait for my main being to become awake and alert enough to organise them appropriately to function and best achieve on my behalf, as they desire to do, they cannot be held responsible for working away while I, myself, lie idle, attempting to prolong the restful pleasures of the night. I do however allow myself the luxury of lying for a few moments and giving thanks for the various elements of what I have learnt and experienced in the previous day or so. It, again, brings me back to, and makes me aware of, the present moment, and sets my mind into a positive, thankful frame as I prepare to meet the day ahead.

At this point I have to say that I am kind to my inner workings. Angrily exclaiming “Not this, not this<sup>4</sup>,” is a last resort. Instead, I employ kindness and forgiveness as my main modus operandi, with the ultimate goal of attaining bliss—full presence of mind, in a state of awareness of the present moment, in order to achieve the happiness to be found there. “Not this, not this” is a last resort to cure an overactive mind (manus<sup>4</sup>) under difficult circumstances when one's self control, organisational ability or consciousness is lessened or weakened. The danger points are when one is close to sleep, on either end of it, particularly on the waking

side, where one's physical and mental facilities are still tired and waking, and lack the control or supervisory ability. My own internal mental componentry, which indeed is fully awake, goes off on all manner of tangents analysing all manner of fictional problems, and arriving at solutions. Perhaps it is part of my general analytical function and solution solving ability, so despite its annoyance, I won't criticize it unduly or force it into line in an authoritative manner. Rather than that, I will simply organise myself to begin to wake up properly and work towards useful things and put my inner facilities (manus) properly to work towards useful ends. Robert Baden-Powell leader of the Scout movement once said, "Rather than lie in bed in the morning thinking about what needs to be done, one must rise and begin working on what needs to be done." This philosophy is what I apply to my own life—it avoids the anxiety of managing and thinking about a growing list of matters needing attention and relieves my internal workings of their plotting and planning

## **MOVING MEDITATION FROM THEORY INTO EVERYDAY PRACTICE**

Now, to give you an idea how to achieve what you want, but as long as you bear in mind that these circumstances and examples can be as many and as varied as the people that exist on this planet, I shall attempt to delve into my own mind for a few examples that may appeal, and hopefully you can extend those to suit your own needs.

So, let's move the above meditation practices from being separate exercises slotted into our daily regimen and turn them into a permanent state of being incorporated into every living, waking moment of our very lives. Focus on the images and emotions developed above and maintain them whilst moving, as a prelude to developing this meditative awareness as a permanent state of being.

Daniel Coleman and Richard Davidson, two of the most mindful scientists of this age, describe proven benefits attributed to meditation, some emerging even after only weeks of practice<sup>1</sup>. These include:

- increased attention
- better focus
- less mind wandering
- improved working memory
- increased empathy and generosity towards others
- lower markers for inflammation
- enhanced immune system
- slower breathing rate
- lowered reactivity to stress
- less attachment and fewer self-obsessed thoughts

First let's begin with the right attitude, which also comes with practice—it's all your choice really and practice becomes easier with time. Paying attention to your body, and being mindful is key.

As you throw back the covers and get up in the morning, be mindful of the sensations as you breathe deeply, stretch and loosen the muscles. Pull your knees towards your chest, and then surely you might be able to do one or two sit-ups, then roll over onto your stomach and perhaps manage one or two leg raises or push-ups. Focus on your body at this time and feel your muscles working, enjoy the fact that you are waking to a brand-new day, whether the sun is streaming in through your window or not, and acknowledge the fact that

a bright new day lies ahead. Go to the bathroom and pull the brush through your hair, feeling the pleasant sensation of its bristles massaging your scalp and let your mind focus on the enjoyment of that pleasure. Feel present in yourself as you prepare a healthy breakfast and move onto the tasks of the day.

Consider now how one might incorporate meditation into the flow of everyday life. It requires a bit of practice, and perhaps some frustration, but will become easier over time. Firstly, list some special places where you really enjoy being, and you'll note that often your ideas of a special place aren't too different from everybody else's. I'll discuss a few examples out of the many thousands that might sound familiar:

What about a quiet coffee shop, café or restaurant? Imagine you're seated in a cosy corner at a little table, or perhaps on one of the high chairs at the polished wooden bench facing the window. You can hear the murmur of other people chatting, coming and going, enjoying their lives amid the clinking of cups and saucers and the hiss of the espresso machine. Sunlight streams in illuminating the scene and feels warm on the skin of your hands and face, but not too warm in the air-conditioned environment. You take a breath, pause for a moment and focus on all of those sights, sounds, smells and tastes. You clear your mind of all thoughts of things past and things yet to come, and give thanks for the day of which you are part and the fact that you are alive in the moment surrounding you. Maintaining this attitude, you return to the task on the table in front of you, be it your professional work, reading a book, or writing your next novel.

What about the beach? You've arisen extra early to be there for a jog or a bracing swim and cold shower before heading off to whatever the rest of the day holds. It's too early for the sea breeze and the sun's warmth is gently caressing your skin. Your body feels rosy and invigorated from the exercise and you are breathing steadily and deeply. Close your eyes and listen to the sounds around you—others, friends or strangers, doing their exercise, the rhythmic swoosh of the waves breaking on the shore, the broken fragments of conversation of the people passing by, the excited chatter and laughter of children, the smell and taste of the fresh salt air, or perhaps delicious wafts from others enjoying their breakfast.

Or the same scene could be taking place around the clear chlorinated waters of the shade-clothed local pool, or on the fresh green playing fields of a Saturday or Sunday sports match. Or perhaps it is the birdcalls and smell of the spring flowers, eucalypts, wattle or conifer as you hike or bike the forest trails. Or perhaps it could be the smell of powerful exertion, the taste of salty sweat on the lips, and the clank of the weights hitting the floor of the local gym as you savour this moment of your daily routine.

Or how about that magic hour as the late afternoon draws to a close; when all is quiet as the sun's orb touches down on the horizon casting an orangey-redness over the landscape, and the natural urge to relax and observe overcomes you.

Be it town or country, indoors or outdoors, the morning scene is slightly different for everyone although the elements are the same—the sights, the sounds, tastes and smells, the feelings of actually being there. Whatever it is, it is all in essence the same really. There is the present moment—before, during or after the exertion, or perhaps any time at all—in which you are there—fully present and aware. What you are experiencing is true wealth.

Whatever is your special place—riding the waves, strolling the warm golden sands, writing in the café, sitting in your car at a lookout, hiking in the forest, out to dinner with a special friend, or perhaps enjoying a movie night, or working in your garden—the rich texture of the earth between your fingers as you direct and orchestrate nature's amazing powers of creating new life and growth. Whatever it is, I'm not telling you



anything new, I'm merely hinting at a few things you can do to bring full realization to that moment. It's not as if you're not already doing that, but all I'm recommending is for you to focus on what you are doing and experiencing for just a moment longer—maybe only a few seconds longer than normal. You might take a deep breath and say, "I'm really enjoying what I am feeling now, so I might just hold this moment for a few seconds longer."

You will know exactly when enough is enough when your mind starts to drift onto the next job you've got to do, or that next person is needing your attention. Life is too short to be worrying about what happened last week or to be anxious about what might happen next week or next year. You are in the present moment, and you have important things to do there before stepping onto the next moment. Do not stretch out the present moment for longer than it should be but do not shorten it either. You must leave the moment with fondness and appreciation knowing that your special place will always be there and that you are moving to the next moment.

### **APPRECIATING THE UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY**

Sometimes you don't have much of a choice where you end up living and working—the random hand of fate you are dealt at birth—where you are born and into what family—but it doesn't matter really. What you are seeking is wisdom and freedom, and it is freely available to all.

We are more tied to our earth than you might imagine. Why is it that we get up as our sun rises and enjoy its beautiful warmth? Our eyes dance over the bright colours—the blues, greens and yellows—attuned to the sun's principal light radiation. Our muscles and bones carry us as we walk, work and play. The golden light of the late afternoon sun brings about a certain nostalgia, captured in many fine artworks, as the day draws to a close—a nostalgia for the coming evening which means campfires, a fine meal shared with friends, with tales told of the day's heroic deeds over the spoils of the day's hunt, stories that teach the next generation all about how it is done, followed by night, a warm comfortable place to lie, and the welcoming embrace of sleep.

The story is the same, and always has been, ever since humans first evolved and roamed the earth, and it always will be.

Take the human away from the embrace of the Mother Earth and there is not much left. The sleep-deprived person ceases to function very quickly. In space, without gravity, muscle and bone deteriorate and disappear rapidly. Deprived of social contact and life's balances for too long and the human descends into madness.

We function as the extremities, the living extension, of the immense creative power of our Gaia planet. We are at the cutting edge of the Earth's, indeed the Sun's and indeed the whole universe's powers of evolutionary growth. This essentially means that, given the elements of our planet—the Sun's fire, the atmosphere's oxygen, and life-giving water of the rivers, lakes and oceans—life spontaneously springs forth from the Earth—blooming over countless millennia from the first primitive cells to the abundance of life we see all around us. The important thing to realise is that Earth's creative power is yours, everyone's, to discover, tap into and wield. Your heart, mind, soul and body are the living extension of the powers that called them into existence. Your individual experiences combine with those of everyone else on this planet, because everyone, the whole Earth, was created to live and experience together with all of those lives and experiences summing together to make every imaginable living experience, with the most powerful and

positive emotion of love dominating and overwhelming the rest, and with the whole of humanity—past, present and future—evolving the awareness to embrace that fact.

*Truth is coherent, beauty attractive, goodness stabilizing. And when these values of that which is real are coordinated in personality experience, the result is a high order of love conditioned by wisdom and qualified by loyalty. [Paper 2:7.12, page 43.5]<sup>3</sup>*

Well, that message may sound very familiar when couched in other terms. But if everybody would care to put aside their cultural or traditional religious beliefs, their dogma, terminology, rituals, fasts, traditions and prejudices, temples, architectural styles and uniforms and symbols, and focus on the key fundamental objective buried beneath the superfluous outer robes, one arrives at this key central tenant; that love and the oneness of humanity is the single most and only important coherent fact—we are all one and we are all of equal importance, no one has less value and no one has more, we are all part of and embraced by this central love. As the furthest extensions of this creative force we must embrace, wield or apply this love to all of our fellows. And this central message is at the heart of every other major religion I can think of. Following the same argument, the creative force behind all this, our planet and us, cannot be some random impersonal scientific force that happened just by chance to accidentally create us; for then where would the love, central to very being, be arising from. The creative force itself, however you want to imagine it, or however it has been presented to you through your cultural traditions, must be love itself. We will obviously function at our best when we harness and apply this force at every moment of our lives. Despite this we are also personal individual beings. We are individuals and we have a personality therefore the creative force of love cannot be some non-personal force. This force must also manifest, or be the origins of, personality—it must be either an individual personality at the origins of personality, or the source or combination of all of the personalities at its extremities—or perhaps it might be the Supreme Self<sup>4</sup> made up of all our unique individual selves.

We each have mind and creative intelligence and so it is also our responsibility to take care of the Mother Earth that created us. She must be nurtured as the living, creative garden that she is, and not despoiled or turned into an environment so noxious and toxic that she is incapable of supporting human life. The movie *Avatar* (2009)<sup>8</sup> beautifully conveys this simple message.

Each of the distinct meditative practices we have considered here activate and strengthen subtly different circuitry in the brain and body<sup>1</sup>, therefore achieve different results. They need not be compartmentalized or rigorized by tradition or doctrine, or style or technique. In reality, for a multi-varied meditative experience that is interesting and enlightening, one can pass through all of those different experiences, one after the other, enjoying each of them as they revitalize the soul and stimulate your brain's circuitry, lingering and dwelling longer in those practices that appeal on the day, or starting wherever and ending wherever to suit the particular circumstances.

## References

1. Daniel Coleman and Richard J. Davidson 2017. *The Science of Meditation: How to Change Your Brain, Mind and Body*. Penguin Life 330pp.

Drawing on cutting-edge research, Daniel Coleman and Richard Davidson reveal what we can learn from world-class meditators. They share remarkable findings that show how meditation - without drugs or

expense - can cultivate qualities such as selflessness, equanimity, love and compassion, and redesign our neural circuitry. The Science of Meditation explains precisely how mind training benefits us. More than daily doses or sheer hours, we need smart practice. Coleman and Davidson sweep away the misconceptions around these practices and show how smart practice can change our personal traits and even our genome for the better. This is one of those rare books that has the power to change us at the deepest level.

## 2. The Bible. 1200pp approx..

The Bible is a collection of ancient writings bound into authoritative volume which Christians believe to be God's revelation to humanity. It consists of scriptures, books, personal accounts and letters arranged in chronological order and is divided into an Old Testament and New Testament depending on whether the writings predate or postdate the birth of Jesus.

## 3. The Urantia Book 1955 The Urantia Foundation, 2097pp.

The Urantia Book presents the origin, history, and destiny of humanity. It answers questions about God, life in the inhabited universe, the history and future of this world, and it includes an uplifting narrative of the life and teachings of Jesus. The Urantia Book portrays our relationship with God the Father. All human beings are the sons and daughters of a loving God and therefore brothers and sisters in the family of God. The book provides new spiritual truth for modern men and women and a pathway to a personal relationship with God. Building on the world's religious heritage, The Urantia Book describes an endless destiny for humankind, teaching that living faith is the key to personal spiritual progress and eternal survival. It also describes God's plan for the progressive evolution of individuals, human society, and the universe as a whole. Many people around the world have said that reading The Urantia Book has profoundly inspired them to reach deeper levels of spiritual growth. It has given them new meaning to life and the desire to be of service to humanity.

## 4. Shantanand Saraswati. 1992. Good Company: An Anthology Of Sayings, Stories And Answers To Questions By His Holiness Sri Shantanand Saraswati The Shankaracharya Of Jyotir Math. Thorsons; New edition (30 January 1992) 160pp

Unless one has rest in love and happiness one cannot survive, just as the body cannot survive without sleep. Meditation is to provide rest. To take people to bliss is simply to give them rest - rest with the Self - so that they may have new and fresh mornings of life" The aim of this anthology - drawn from audiences with His Holiness Shantanand Saraswati, Shankaracharya of Jyotir Math - is to provide refreshment, clarity of heart and mind, and the recollection of important ideas.

## 5. Eugen Herrigel 1988. Zen in the Art of Archery Training the Mind and Body to Become One. Penguin UK 112pp.

In the Zen tradition, archery (or swordsmanship) is not just a sport or a form of self-defence but an art, a religious ritual and one of the many possible paths to Enlightenment. Few Westerners have tried as hard as

Eugen Herrigel, a German professor who lived for many years in Japan, to learn Zen from a Master. In this classic text he gives an unsparingly honest account of how he was initiated, step by step, into the 'Great Doctrine' of archery. At first he was baffled by what he was taught - that art must become artless, that the archer must aim at himself - yet gradually he began to glimpse the depth of wisdom concealed in such paradoxes. While many Western writers on Zen serve up second-hand slogans, Herrigel's hard-won insights were his own discoveries. His fine book offers a beautifully lucid introduction to one of the most haunting and subtle spiritual traditions in the world. 'A wonderful little book.' D.T. Suzuki.

6. Leo Babauta 2011. Zen Habits - Handbook for Life. ISBN 9781434121622, 1434121623, Editorium 112pp.

The Zen Habits Handbook for Life is a compilation of Leo Babauta's best articles on living from a Zen Habits perspective. Zen Habits aims to teach you how to simplify your life, how to live a happier life, how to be more productive with less stress, how to achieve your dreams. The book includes chapters on decluttering, single-tasking, eliminating nonessentials, planning your day, clearing your inbox, getting motivated, cultivating compassion, boosting self-confidence, living consciously, and much more! It is a little handbook for a better life.

7. The 14th Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso) born: 6 July 1935, Taktser, Tibet (now People's Republic of China) Winner of The Nobel Peace Prize 1989

<https://www.dalailama.com/messages/compassion-and-human-values/compassion>

“One great question underlies our experience, whether we think about it consciously or not: What is the purpose of life? I have considered this question and would like to share my thoughts in the hope that they may be of direct, practical benefit to those who read them. I believe that the purpose of life is to be happy. From the moment of birth, every human being wants happiness and does not want suffering. Neither social conditioning nor education nor ideology affect this.

8. Avatar (2009 produced by 20th Century Fox; Lightstorm Entertainment; Dune Entertainment; Ingenious Film Partners)

The movie presents a cosmology that reflects contemporary spirituality including reverence for mother Earth (Gaia) as a living entity and the oneness and interconnectivity of all beings. The Na'vi way of life, symbolises a 'First Nations' belief system in which all are all in search of a sacred, creative, and meaningful existence as part of the web of life—alive and conscious and interconnected, and where having a good heart and being fearless are revered as being essential qualities, where each member, once trained and attuned to the spirit of nature, is respected, given a place within the community, and contributes to the whole.

\*Talk entitled *Spiritual Practices for Walking the ROPE*, presented at the 2022 ANZURA Annual Conference, *Walking the 'ROPE' Invitation to Intimacy with God*, held at Port Arthur, Tasmania, 21-24 October 2022.

This presentation about Religion of Personal Experience (ROPE) focuses on the practical techniques or tools for maintaining a state of mindful worship, a feeling of contentment and relaxation/calmness/oneness with one's physical surrounds and a feeling of love and tolerance for one's fellows, and developing a meaningful connection the God within.