**Attention**

**Opening Mantra:**

 Breathing In: “Remain here, mind…”

 Breathing Out: “and keep awake with me.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Poem of Celebration:**

 FOUND, by [Frederick Buechner](http://www.frederickbuechner.com/)

Maybe it’s all utterly meaningless.

Maybe it’s all unutterably meaningful.

If you want to know which,

pay attention to

what it means to be truly human

in a world that half the time

we’re in love with

and half the time

scares the hell out of us…

The unexpected sound of your name on somebody’s lips.

The good dream.

The strange coincidence.

The moment that brings tears to your eyes.

The person who brings life to your life.

Even the smallest events hold the greatest clues.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Spiritual Wisdom:**

As you walk and eat and travel, be where you are. Otherwise you will miss most

of your life. -*Buddha*

**Reflections and Practices:**

1. Reflect on what or who you focus your time and attention. Capture an image of something or someone that has flourished because of the attention you have lavished upon it or them. Share this image and other photo results from the reflections below on social media using the two hashtags #SpiritualAlphabet and #SpiritualAttention.
2. Close your eyes. Try to imagine the room or space around you. Have you actually seen or attended to what is existing beside you?
3. As you eat, consider the larger world that is part of the food on your plate. The deep earth, the sun, the rain that falls from the sky, the hands that have picked or kneaded or arranged the food, each moment that nourished it. With every bite, feel gratitude for the constellation of events, things, and beings that gave rise to this moment. Savor this meal.
4. A bell is often used in Buddhist practice to signal the start and end of a period of meditation. Set alarms on your phone to mark time throughout your day to call your attention from the head to the body. What is your body telling you? What are its needs? Does it need a walk, stretch, drink of water, bite of nourishment, touch of comfort?
5. Who are the people with whom you share your space but who often go unnoticed? The cashier, the person walking past, the children who play noisily in your neighborhood? Focus your attention and truly see them today, if only for a few moments.

**Statement of Intention:**

May I be present to the world around me -- the simple, the complex, the sounds, the smells, the sights, the textures, the beings, the emotions, the exterior, and the interior. May I attend to all of this, as well as the deepest part of me.

**Going Forth:**

...We must return to the realities of our everyday lives. The path of practice is the ordinary way. It *is* daily life.[[3]](#footnote-3)

#SpiritualAlphabet #SpirtualAttention

**Beauty**

**Opening Mantra:**

 Breathing In: “Every moment...”

 Breathing Out: “a new beauty.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Poem of Celebration:**

*NAVAJO BLESSINGWAY PRAYER*

In beauty may I walk;

All day long may I walk;

Through the returning seasons may I walk.

Beautifully will I possess again

Beautifully birds

Beautifully butterflies…

On the trail marked with pollen may I walk;

With grasshoppers about my feet may I walk;

With dew around my feet may I walk.

With beauty may I walk.

With beauty before me, may I walk.

With beauty behind me, may I walk.

With beauty above me, may I walk.

With beauty below me, may I walk.

With beauty all around me, may I walk.

In old age, wandering on a trail of beauty, lively, may I walk.

In old age, wandering on a trail of beauty, living again, may I walk.

It is finished in beauty.

It is finished in beauty.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Spiritual Wisdom:**

Beauty does not linger; it only visits. Yet beauty's visitation affects us and invites us into its rhythm; it calls us to feel, think and act beautifully in the world: to create and live a life that awakens the Beautiful. A life without delight is only half a life.[[6]](#footnote-6) -John O’Donohue

**Reflections and Practices:**

1. In the video, Mary Hayes Grieco, found beauty within the crisp layers of a red onion. In what unexpected or ordinary places do you find extraordinary beauty? Share your sight and other photo results from the reflections below on social media using the two hashtags #SpiritualAlphabet and #SpiritualBeauty.
2. We are often collectors, surrounding ourselves with items intending to bring and remind us of meaning, yet this collection clutters more often than enhances our sense of beauty. Find one knick knack that no longer brings you delight. Can you let it go and make more room for beauty?
3. Add an element of beauty to your daily routine. Light a candle, bring in fresh flowers, listen to music, apply or diffuse essential oils, etc. How does this affect your mood, creativity, and presence?
4. That which we consider to be beautiful is often a result of cultural conditioning. To stretch our imaginations, try listening to music from another culture or study a piece of art from another culture. Does a new or fresh recognition of beauty arise for you?
5. Reflect on a time when beauty sustained you in the midst of difficulty. What emotions did the experience of beauty stir in you?

**Statement of Intention:**

May I notice, welcome, and celebrate beauty this day in the collage of life around

me that, being filled with awe and wonder, I may fall always and again in love with the world.

**Going Forth:**

...We must return to the realities of our everyday lives. The path of practice is the

ordinary way. It *is* daily life.[[7]](#footnote-7)

#SpiritualAlphabet #SpirtualBeauty

**Compassion**

**Opening Mantra:**

 Breathing In: “Be compassionate...”

 Breathing Out: “as God\* is compassionate.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

 \* “The Good” may be substituted here.

**Poem of Celebration:**

"… I saw that God was everything that is good

and encouraging …

God showed me in my palm

a little thing round as a ball

about the size of a hazelnut.

I looked at it with the eye of my understanding

and asked myself:

‘What is this thing?’

And I was answered:

‘It is everything that is created.’

I wondered how it could survive

since it seemed so little

it could suddenly disintegrate into nothing.

The answer came: ‘It endures and ever will endure,

because God loves it.’

And so everything has being

because of God’s love."[[9]](#footnote-9)

-St Julian of Norwich

**Spiritual Wisdom:**

Every single being, even those who are hostile to us, is just as afraid of suffering

as we are, and seeks happiness in the same way we do. Every person has the same right as we do to be happy and not to suffer. So let’s take care of others wholeheartedly, of both our friends and our enemies. This is the basis for true compassion.

-Dalai Lama XIV

**Reflections and Practices:**

1. Where do you receive compassion in your life? Capture this experience of loving kindness, share your sight, and post other photo results from the reflections below on social media using the two hashtags #SpiritualAlphabet and #SpiritualCompassion.
2. Visualize yourself holding the world in your palm, reminiscent of the hazelnut that Julian held. Contemplate its fragility. Imagine a concrete way to express compassion for this world in which we live, a world that, in turn, sustains and provides for us.
3. Identify a time when you experienced hostility from another person. Imagine a way of responding with compassion. Instead of responding defensively, how can you see the pain in the other and touch it gently? Perhaps with the response, “It's been a rough day, huh?” or “Oh, wow, I see that differently.”
4. Take a walk in your neighborhood, an area that you frequent, or gaze into a mirror. Identify the areas of great need that exists so close or, even, within you. Need does not only exist on the other side of the world, but within your reach. Where can you shower love this very day?
5. Think of “missed opportunities” -- times when you might have shown compassion to someone who was hungry, hurting, alone, or sick. Is there a pattern that you see? Can you identify a behavior, rationalization, or obstacle that prevents you from practicing compassion more fully?[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Statement of Intention:**

May I look upon the entire human family and all of creation with great

compassion; that walls may dissolve and wounds may be healed.

**Going Forth:**

...We must return to the realities of our everyday lives. The path of practice is the

ordinary way. It *is* daily life.[[11]](#footnote-11)

#SpiritualAlphabet #SpiritualCompassion

**Forgiveness**

**Opening Mantra:**

 Breathing In: “Forgive us our errors...”

 Breathing Out: “as we forgive those who error against us.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Poem of Celebration:**

FORGIVENESS by Emily Dickinson

My heart was heavy, for its trust had been

Abused, its kindness answered with foul wrong;

So, turning gloomily from my fellow-men,

One summer Sabbath day I strolled among

The green mounds of the village burial-place;

Where, pondering how all human love and hate

Find one sad level; and how, soon or late,

Wronged and wrongdoer, each with meekened face,

And cold hands folded over a still heart,

Pass the green threshold of our common grave,

Whither all footsteps tend, whence none depart,

Awed for myself, and pitying my race,

Our common sorrow, like a mighty wave,

Swept all my pride away, and trembling I forgave!

**Spiritual Wisdom:**

 We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the

power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies.

-Martin Luther King Jr

**Reflections and Practices:**

1. When we forgive, we let go of the our resentments and our desire for vengeance. For the one who forgives (and often the one who is forgiven), this usually results in a feeling of freedom and peace. Have you experienced this in your own life? Take a picture of something that reminds you of the freedom and peace that comes from forgiveness. Share this and post other photo results from the reflections below on social media using the two hashtags #SpiritualAlphabet and #SpiritualForgiveness.
2. As children, we forgave readily and easily; we chose happiness over self-righteousness. Think of someone with whom you currently have a conflict. Is a strong sense of rightness, judgment, or self-righteousness keeping you from moving forward? If so, what might it look like to choose happiness instead?
3. Forgiving ourselves can be just as difficult as forgiving others. In your journal or on a piece of paper, write down a confession -- things you have done or failed to do for which you feel the need for forgiveness. At the end of your list, write a prayer of forgiveness.[[13]](#footnote-13)
4. We learn from all our experiences, even (maybe especially) those that cause us pain. Think of a hurt you have found it difficult to forgive. Can you identify what you have learned from the situation and how you have grown? Can you be grateful for what the experience taught you?
5. “People are illogical and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.” -*Mother Teresa*

Barbara Crafton (a Christian minister) tells the story of two men in her congregation who had been angry and estranged from one another for a very long time. She asked each one to just say the name of the other during their daily prayers. No more specific intention than just saying the other’s name during prayer. After a time the anger in their hearts melted, and they reconciled. Think of someone who has hurt you, someone you are having difficulty forgiving. Each day during prayer, or in a moment of quiet, peaceful reflection, consider simply saying that person’s name aloud. After several days of this practice, do you notice any softening of your heart toward that person?

**Statement of Intention:**

May I participate this day in the ongoing process of forgiveness that, when night comes, I may be more at peace with myself, others, and the world around me.

**Going Forth:**

...We must return to the realities of our everyday lives. The path of practice is the

ordinary way. It *is* daily life.[[14]](#footnote-14)

#SpiritualAlphabet #SpiritualForgiveness

**Gratitude**

**Opening Mantra:**

 Breathing In: “To praise...”

 Breathing Out: “is the whole thing.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

**Poem of Celebration:**

A LIST OF PRAISES by Anne Porter

Give praise with psalms that tell the trees to sing,
 Give praise with Gospel choirs in storefront churches,
 Mad with the joy of the Sabbath,
 Give praise with the babble of infants, who wake with the sun,
 Give praise with children chanting their skip-rope rhymes,
 A poetry not in books, a vagrant mischievous poetry
 living wild on the Streets through generations of children.

 Give praise with the sound of the milk-train far away
 With its mutter of wheels and long-drawn-out sweet whistle
 As it speeds through the fields of sleep at three in the morning,
 Give praise with the immense and peaceful sigh
 Of the wind in the pinewoods,
 At night give praise with starry silences.

 Give praise with the skirling of seagulls
 And the rattle and flap of sails
 And gongs of buoys rocked by the sea-swell
 Out in the shipping-lanes beyond the harbor.
 Give praise with the humpback whales,
 Huge in the ocean they sing to one another.

 Give praise with the rasp and sizzle of crickets, katydids and cicadas,
 Give praise with hum of bees,
 Give praise with the little peepers who live near water.
 When they fill the marsh with a shimmer of bell-like cries
 We know that the winter is over. …...

 And with this poem, a leaf on the vast flood,
 And with the angels in that other country.

**Spiritual Wisdom:**

 Can you see the holiness in those things you take for granted–a paved road or a

washing machine? If you concentrate on finding what is good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul.

-Rabbi Harold Kushner

**Reflections and Practices:**

1. One of the most recommended spiritual practices is that of a gratitude journal. Try writing down something you are thankful for each and every day. It doesn’t have to be something large; the little things add joy to our lives as well. Take a photo of the things for which you are grateful, and post these and other photos from the reflections below on social media using the two hashtags #SpiritualAlphabet and #SpiritualGratitude.
2. Write a letter or email today to someone for whom or to whom you are grateful.
3. Expressing gratitude produces joy. Swami Satchidananda wrote*, “*If we smile at someone, he or she will smile back. And a smile costs nothing. We should plague everyone with joy.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Springing up from a place of gratitude within you, practice plaguing the world, one person at a time, with the gift of your smile today.
4. Take a twenty minute gratitude walk today, paying careful attention to the world around you and giving thanks for what you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste.
5. Comparing ourselves to others can lead to one of two things: 1) feeling gratitude because we are “luckier” than others, or 2) wanting more than we already have because we have “less” than others. Avoid both of these temptations today by not making comparisons.

**Statement of Intention:**

May I live this day with open eyes, an attentive mind, and a grateful heart.

**Going Forth:**

...We must return to the realities of our everyday lives. The path of practice is the

ordinary way. It *is* daily life.[[17]](#footnote-17)

#SpiritualAlphabet #SpiritualGratitude

**Hospitality**

**Opening Mantra:**

 Breathing In: “How shall I live?”

 Breathing Out: “Be welcoming to all.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

**Poem of Celebration:**

LOVE (III), by George Herbert

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew back

 Guilty of dust and sin.

But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack

 From my first entrance in,

Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,

 If I lacked any thing.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:

 Love said, You shall be he.

I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,

 I cannot look on thee.

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,

 Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame

 Go where it doth deserve.

And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?

 My dear, then I will serve.

You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:

 So I did sit and eat.

**Spiritual Wisdom:**

Hospitality means primarily the creation of free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines.[[19]](#footnote-19)

-Henri Nouwen

**Reflections and Practices:**

1. Think of something you have welcomed into your life, something that has brought greater blessings than you ever imagined. Capture this experience in a photo, share your sight, and post other photo results from the reflections below on social media using the two hashtags #SpiritualAlphabet and #SpiritualHospitality.
2. To be hospitable is to welcome someone or something without the need to change him, her, or it; to be hospitable is to be present without judgment. Today take a few minutes to listen to someone or read an article written by someone who holds political beliefs different from your own. Can you suspend judgment while you truly open your understanding to their point of view?
3. When have you felt welcomed by another person? Invite someone to your home for a meal or out to coffee, paying attention to what it means to be both the welcomed and a welcoming host.
4. Spend some time today learning about another religion by reading an article, watching a film, or visiting a house of worship other than your own.
5. Many of the world religions equate hospitality to strangers with virtue or holiness. For example, the following is a verse from Christian scriptures: Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it“ (Hebrews 13:2). Consider donating food, clothes, or your time and energy to a homeless shelter, food pantry, or school in your area.

**Statement of Intention:**

May I greet the world on its own terms this day, welcoming the people, feelings, and events that come my way.

**Going Forth:**

...We must return to the realities of our everyday lives. The path of practice is the

ordinary way. It *is* daily life.[[20]](#footnote-20)

#SpiritualAlphabet #SpiritualHospitality

**Imagination**

**Opening Mantra:**

 Breathing In: “You must...”

 Breathing Out: “go beyond.”[[21]](#footnote-21)

**Poem of Celebration:**

#### LISTEN TO THE MUSTN'TS, by Shel Silverstein

Listen to the MUSTN'TS, child,

 Listen to the DON'TS

 Listen to the SHOULDN'TS

The IMPOSSIBLES, the WON’TS

 Listen to the NEVER HAVES

Then listen close to me-

 Anything can happen, child,

ANYTHING can be.

**Spiritual Wisdom:**

Our minds are finite, and yet even in these circumstances of finitude we are

surrounded by possibilities that are infinite, and the purpose of human life is to grasp as much as we can out of the infinitude.

-Alfred North Whitehead

**Reflections and Practices:**

1. How have you experienced imagination through the arts -- such as painting, photography, music, and writing? Capture this experience by taking a picture of a book, photo, artwork, or piece of music that has stirred your imagination; share it and post other photo results from the reflections below on social media using the two hashtags #SpiritualAlphabet and #SpiritualImagination.
2. The Brussats point out the bias in our society against imagination: “Unfortunately, many people associate imagination with ‘imaginary’ and its connotation of ‘unreal.’ [Imagination] is a difficult spiritual practice for those who think that everything has to be verified by sensory perception and empirical evidence. Reason also gets in the way of imagination, especially when it is codified into rationalism, which regards only logic and analytical thought as valid routes to truth.”[[22]](#footnote-22) What messages about the role of imagination did you receive growing up? What messages about imagination do you receive today? How can you engage in greater imagination in your day to day life?[[23]](#footnote-23)
3. The anxiety, stress, and busyness of modern life can limit our creativity and our capacity for imagination. Where in your life can you make room for unstructured time? Try to spend twenty minutes today daydreaming with no agenda.
4. Choose a photo, a painting, or a piece of music. After a short time spent looking or listening, write an accompanying story that you feel captures its essence.
5. Imagination can be prophetic in several ways: 1) through imagination we can envision a society different from our own (more just, compassionate, and beautiful), 2) through imagination the arts can bear witness to such a society, and 3) through imagination we can explore possible ways of arriving at this kind of community. Can you recall an experience in which imagination has played a key role in social justice?

**Statement of Intention:**

May I live this day open to the hope, responsibility, and joy of new possibilities.

**Going Forth:**

...We must return to the realities of our everyday lives. The path of practice is the

ordinary way. It *is* daily life.[[24]](#footnote-24)

#SpiritualAlphabet #SpiritualImagination

**Justice**

**Opening Mantra:**

 Breathing In: “Justice Here....”

 Breathing Out: “Justice Now.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

**Poem of Celebration:**

The spirit of the Lord God\* is upon me,

 because the Lord\* has anointed me;

[God]\* has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,

 to bind up the brokenhearted,

to proclaim liberty to the captives,

 and release to the prisoners;

to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor,

 and the day of vengeance of our God;\*

to comfort all who mourn;

to provide for those who mourn in Zion—

 to give them a garland instead of ashes,

the oil of gladness instead of mourning,

 the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

They will be called oaks of righteousness.[[26]](#footnote-26)

-Isaiah 61:1-3a

\* “The Good” may be substituted here.

**Spiritual Wisdom:**

Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a [person] stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he [or she] sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

-John F. Kennedy

**Reflections and Practices:**

1. Identify your core values and where they intersect with a particular need for justice. How can you be more faithful and active in this issue? Capture this intersection and/or your efforts with an image, share your sight, and post other photo results from the reflections below on social media using the two hashtags #SpiritualAlphabet and #SpiritualJustice.
2. Education is an important and often initial element in seeking justice. Digest a documentary, an article from a newspaper, or a television news story dedicated to a social justice issue to which you are drawn. For example, *Before the Flood*, *13th*, and *Living on One Dollar* are examples of documentaries you may wish to view.
3. Identify agencies in your area that work on particular social justice issues, and educate yourself about them. How can you contribute to their goals in some way? Through volunteer action or financial support?
4. It has been said before that a budget is a moral document. Take time today to review your finances. Where is your money going? Does this reflect your core values?
5. 850 million people worldwide suffer from hunger. Two-thirds of crop land in our world is used to grow food for livestock, significantly reducing the crop land available to feed people directly.[[27]](#footnote-27) Consider participating in Meatless Mondays (see MeatlessMonday.com) as a step toward equitable distribution of food in our world.

**Statement of Intention:**

May I recognize the common humanity in each person and the hallowed space between us. May this recognition lead me to actively engage in works of justice.

**Going Forth:**

...We must return to the realities of our everyday lives. The path of practice is the

ordinary way. It *is* daily life.[[28]](#footnote-28)

#SpiritualAlphabet #SpiritualJustice

**Play**

**Opening Mantra:**

 Breathing In: “Eh...”

 Breathing Out: “what’s up, Doc?”[[29]](#footnote-29)

**Poem of Celebration:**

THE VACATION, by Wendell Berry

Once there was a man who filmed his vacation.

He went flying down the river in his boat

with his video camera to his eye, making

a moving picture of the moving river

upon which his sleek boat moved swiftly

toward the end of his vacation. He showed

his vacation to his camera, which pictured it,

preserving it forever: the river, the trees,

the sky, the light, the bow of his rushing boat

behind which he stood with his camera

preserving his vacation even as he was having it

so that after he had had it he would still

have it. It would be there. With a flick

of a switch, there it would be. But he

would not be in it. He would never be in it.

**Spiritual Wisdom:**

I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells. Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in

living, it’s a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope. Which is what I do, and that enables you to laugh at life’s realities.

-Dr. Seuss

Play is the highest form of research.

-Albert Einstein

**Reflections and Practices:**

1. Reflect on what play looks like for you. Where is your playground? Do you use your body in action or, stationary, is your mind released? Capture your play with an image, share your sight, and post other photo results from the reflections below on social media using the two hashtags #SpiritualAlphabet and #SpiritualPlay.
2. Spend twenty minutes today dancing to your favorite music, all by yourself or with a friend/partner. If you don’t enjoy dancing, just listen and tap your foot.
3. Schedule a “play-date” with a friend, someone with whom you can laugh and with whom there is no hidden agenda.
4. Keep an easily accessible container of pencils, crayons, and markers easily available. Whenever you have a break, take a sheet of paper and draw whatever brings you joy -- faces, squiggly lines, spirals, bold and double-lined letters.
5. Laughter is a holy emotion. Watch a comedy, attend an improv show, or watch a baby play.

**Statement of Intention:**

May I so trust in life’s abundance that I make space this day for the practice of play.

**Going Forth:**

...We must return to the realities of our everyday lives. The path of practice is the

ordinary way. It *is* daily life.[[30]](#footnote-30)

#SpiritualAlphabet #SpiritualPlay

**Shadow**

**Opening Mantra:**

 Breathing In: “I love...”

 Breathing Out: “my inner enemies.”[[31]](#footnote-31)

**Poem of Celebration:**

A MINOR BIRD by Robert Frost

 I have wished a bird would fly away,

 And not sing by my house all day;

 Have clapped my hands at him from the door

 When it seemed as if I could bear no more.

 The fault must partly have been in me.

 The bird was not to blame for his key.

 And of course there must be something wrong

In wanting to silence any song.

**Spiritual Wisdom:**

How can I be substantial if I do not cast a shadow? I must have a dark side also if I am to be whole. -Carl Jung

**Reflections and Practices:**

1. Shadows can be beautiful, elongated versions of ourselves cast across walls and floors and furniture. Capture the beauty of your physical shadow in a photo. Share this and post other photo results from the reflections below on social media using the two hashtags #SpiritualAlphabet and #SpiritualShadow.
2. In Hebrew scripture, Jacob’s encounter with God left him with both a blessing and a limp. Sometimes our gifts have shadow sides that go unnoticed. List your gifts. Beside each one, write a darker characteristic that is part and parcel of the gift itself.
3. Give names to the shadow characters of yourself - for example, Picky Patrick, Whiny Winifred, Solemn Sara, Angry Aaron, or Temperamental Terrance. Notice today when one of these characters is speaking in and through you.
4. What are the forgotten or ignored stories of the self that you carry in your body? Interview your toe. Can it remind you of a time you stubbed it in childhood? What about your throat? Does it speak, raspy with weariness, of a long day of attempts or croak from unuse? Are there scars that ask to be read?
5. Have you ever experienced a “dark night of the soul?” What did you learn about yourself during this period?[[32]](#footnote-32)

**Statement of Intention:**

May I understand the shadow that exists in the world is also the shadow in me, without which our story is not complete.

**Going Forth:**

...We must return to the realities of our everyday lives. The path of practice is the

ordinary way. It *is* daily life.[[33]](#footnote-33)

#SpiritualAlphabet #SpiritualShadow

**You**

**Opening Mantra:**

 Breathing In: “May I be true to myself...”

 Breathing Out: “and useful to the journey.”[[34]](#footnote-34)

**Poem of Celebration:**

FAMOUS by Naomi Shihab Nye

The river is famous to the fish.

The loud voice is famous to silence,

which knew it would inherit the earth

before anybody said so.

The cat sleeping on the fence is famous to the birds

watching him from the birdhouse.

The tear is famous, briefly, to the cheek.

The idea you carry close to your bosom

is famous to your bosom.

The boot is famous to the earth,

more famous than the dress shoe,

which is famous only to floors.

The bent photograph is famous to the one who carries it

and not at all famous to the one who is pictured.

I want to be famous to shuffling men

who smile while crossing streets,

sticky children in grocery lines,

famous as the one who smiled back.

I want to be famous in the way a pulley is famous,

or a buttonhole, not because it did anything spectacular,

but because it never forgot what it could do.[[35]](#footnote-35)

**Spiritual Wisdom:**

Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself. -Rumi

**Reflections and Practices:**

1. Arrange meaningful objects from your life into a still life. Capture an image of this as a type of self portrait. Use this as a way to share parts of you that often remain hidden from the public. Share this and post other photo results from the reflections below on social media using the two hashtags #SpiritualAlphabet and #SpiritualYou.
2. There is a Hindu ritual in which each family member is led to a mirror and reminded that, in that mirror, they see the face of God.[[36]](#footnote-36) Spend some time looking into a mirror. Reflect on the fact that you are made in the image of Goodness. As you search your face, is there something that you recognize or notice for the first time?
3. Draw or photograph a series of self portraits where you express the masks that you tend to wear in public. Capture the self that tends to remain hidden. Capture the self that you most wish to share with the world. Meditate on how these masks may distance the self from our neighbor.
4. Write a letter to someone who brings out the best in you, someone around whom you can be open and vulnerable, or someone who has taught you something important in life. Thank them for helping make you “you.”
5. Maya Angelou once said that, “there is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.” Invite a friend to coffee with the intention of holding space for stories.

**Statement of Intention:**

May I have the courage to see myself honestly, both the things I love about myself and the things I find challenging. May this awareness be the seed from which transformation grows.

**Going Forth:**

...We must return to the realities of our everyday lives. The path of practice is the

ordinary way. It *is* daily life.[[37]](#footnote-37)

#SpiritualAlphabet #SpiritualYou

**Zeal**

**Opening Mantra:**

 Breathing In: “Through zeal, knowledge is gotten.”

 Breathing Out: “Without zeal, knowledge is lost.”

-*The Buddha*

**Poem of Celebration:**

## THE SUMMER DAY by Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
 Who made the swan, and the black bear?
 Who made the grasshopper?
 This grasshopper, I mean-
 the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
 the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
 who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down-
 who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
 Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
 Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
 I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
 I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
 into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
 how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
 which is what I have been doing all day.
 Tell me, what else should I have done?
 Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
 Tell me, what is it you plan to do
 with your one wild and precious life?[[38]](#footnote-38)

**Spiritual Wisdom:**

You are what your deep driving desire is. As your desire is, so is your will. As

your will is, so is your deed. As your deed is, so is your destiny.

-The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad IV.4.5

**Reflections and Practices:**

1. What makes you feel most alive and attentive? Where or in what do you find your zest for life? Share this and post other photo results from the reflections below on social media using the two hashtags #SpiritualAlphabet and #SpiritualZeal.
2. Theodore Roosevelt once said: “It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.” Reflect on when you have dared greatly, whether the endeavor was “successful” or not. What did you learn?
3. What song makes you feel most alive? Feel free to move and be moved.
4. Who are the most vibrantly alive people you know?[[39]](#footnote-39) Express to them what you noticed and ask them about what enlivens their spirit.
5. A well-worn routine can sometimes lead to lives driven by default rather than by choice. Given that spontaneity and change often generate the stories of our lives, what might you change in your routine to feel more alive and active in crafting the story of your life?

**Statement of Intention:**

May I abandon the frantic pace of modern life so to notice, experience, and celebrate - passionately - the fullness and gifts of my life with an open heart.

**Going Forth:**

...We must return to the realities of our everyday lives. The path of practice is the

ordinary way. It *is* daily life.[[40]](#footnote-40)

#SpiritualAlphabet #SpiritualZeal

1. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Lecture to a Book of the Month Club.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Poemofthedayblog.wordpress.com/2012/09/14/september-13-2012-in-beauty-may-i-walk-navajo-prayer/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Beauty: The Invisible Embrace*, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Revelations of Divine Love*. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat,93. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *The Yoga Sutras* by Swami Satchidananda, 136-137. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* by Henri Nouwen. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Isaiah 61:1-3a, New Revised Standard Version. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Sara Farr, “Why Reducing Meat Consumption Is the Easiest Step Everyone Can Take to Fix Our Broken Food System,” One Green Planet website, July 2, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47993/famous [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. From *New and Selected Poems,* Vol. 1 by Mary Oliver [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 303. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)