

Spirituality Handout for Support Group or Individual Use

(Meditations based on the teachings of Nan Geffen.)

Meditation Exercise One - Shema

SHHHHH – Quieting – White noise - chaos

MMMMM – hum, tuning fork - harmony

Take a few minutes to focus on the breath.

- Inhale deeply and slowly through your nose. Let your breath fill you. Allow your chest to expand to its fullest capacity.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth. Hear the sound of air as it exits your mouth. Draw this sound out as long as you can as you deflate your lungs.
- Feel your body releasing tension you are holding. Let your breath carry it away. Relax the muscles in your feet, legs, body, arms, neck, head.
- Watch your breath as it fills your lungs.
- Watch as your body expands to receive it.
- Then notice your chest contract as your breath begins to depart.
- Notice your body release it.
- Keep your mind on your breath.
- To help stop your mind from wandering, add the Shema.
- Personal to community
 - INHALE - *Shema* – Listen (personal, I need to listen)
 - EXHALE - *Yisrael* – All of us (community)
 - INHALE - *Adonai* – (my God)
 - EXHALE - *Eloheinu* – (our God)
 - INHALE – *Adonai* (my God)
 - EXHALE - *Echad* – One – Unity with God - unity with all souls
- Pay attention.
- The breath flows in. The breath flows out.
- Continue for a few minutes.
- Sit quietly for a few moments.

Meditation Exercise Two – Focused Meditation - Hineini

The Hebrew word, *hineini*, (hee-nay-nee), means “Here I am.” It was recited by Abraham when God called to him at Mt. Moriah. It was spoken by Moses as God called to him from the Burning Bush. This meditation helps us to focus on being “here,” rather than in the past or the future. *Hineini* means being physically present, emotionally ready and spiritually opened to the Divine. It means being open to the possibility of a spiritual connection.

- Inhale deeply through your nose. Let your breath fill you. Allow your chest to expand to its fullest capacity.
- Exhale through your mouth. Hear the sound of air as it exits your mouth. Draw this sound out as long as you can as you deflate your lungs.

- Feel your body releasing tension you are holding. Let your breath carry it away.
- Repeat several times.
- Notice your mind as it begins to quiet down and your body relaxes.
- Move your attention to the word *hineini* – *Here I am*.
- Focus on *hineini*
- Repeat it silently to yourself.
- *Hineini* – *here I am*.
 - Let the word become filled with your breath. Merge with it so that you experience being fully present.
- *Hineini. Here I am*.
 - Not thinking
 - Not accomplishing
 - Not doing.
 - Just being.
- *Hineini* – *Here I am*
 - Full presence
 - Readiness to receive
 - In body
 - In heart
 - In mind
 - In spirit
- *Hineini* – *Here I am*
- When your mind wanders, do not judge yourself. Simply notice where you have gone and return to *hineini*.
- If you are distracted by the sounds around you, notice them and return to *hineini*.
- *Hineini* – *Here I am*.
- To end the meditation, sit quietly for a few minutes.

PSALMS

Throughout humanity, people have had to deal with difficult and challenging situations. Psalms are a record of people pouring their hearts out to God. Some of the following Psalms have been edited slightly to make the Psalm more personal for an Alzheimer's family member. (Note: Adonai is the Hebrew word for God or Lord. I purposely did not use the name "God" in these Psalms but changed them to a different name for God such as "The Eternal One." Each person has his or her own understanding of God. Sometimes it comes with "baggage" attached. The idea is to free you from specific theology and just feel the cries of the Psalmists.)

Psalm 13 – Feeling Alone or Abandoned

How long, Adonai; will You ignore me forever?

How long will You hide Your face from me?

How long will I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day?

How long will my enemy (this disease) have the upper hand?

Look at me, answer me, Eternal One!
Restore the luster to my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of despair;
Lest my enemy (this disease) say, "I have overcome him," my foes exult when I totter.
But I trust in Your faithfulness, my heart will exult in Your deliverance.
I will sing to Adonai, for the Source of Healing has been good to me.

Psalm 23 – Wanting/Feeling Support

The Eternal is my shepherd; I lack nothing.
You help me lie down in green pastures; You leads me to water in places of repose;
You renew my life; You guide me in right paths as befits Your name.
Though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness, I fear no harm, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff — they comfort me.
You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies (this disease);
You anoint my head with oil; my drink is abundant.
Let goodness and steadfast love pursue me all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of Adonai forever.

Psalm 25 - Hope

Adonai, I set my hope on You; Eternal One, in You I trust;
May I not be disappointed, may my enemies (the disease) not exult over me.
Guide me in Your true way and teach me, or You are Adonai, my deliverer;
It is You I look to at all times.
Adonai, be mindful of Your compassion and Your faithfulness.
Be not mindful of my youthful sins and transgressions;
In keeping with Your faithfulness consider what is in my favor,
As befits Your goodness, Adonai.
My eyes are ever toward You, for You will loosen my feet from the net.
Turn to me, have mercy on me, for I am afflicted.
My deep distress increases; deliver me from my straits.
Look at my affliction and suffering.
May integrity and uprightness watch over me, for I look to You.
Eternal Source of Healing, redeem Israel (my family) from all its distress.

Psalm 30 - Giving Thanks

I extol You, Adonai, for You have lifted me up,
and not let my enemies rejoice over me.
Eternal One, I cried out to You, and You healed me.
ADONAI, You brought me up from Sheol (the dark place),
Preserved me from going down into the Pit.
O you faithful of the Holy One, sing to Adonai, and praise the holy name.
One may lie down weeping at nightfall; but at dawn there are shouts of joy.
When I was untroubled, I thought, "I shall never be shaken,"
When You hid Your face, I was terrified.

I called to You, Adonai; to the One I made appeal,
“What is to be gained from my descent into the Pit?
Hear, Adonai, and have mercy on me; Adonai, be my help!”
Turn my mourning into dancing, and girded me with joy,
That my whole being might sing hymns to You endlessly;
Eternal One, I will praise You forever.

Psalm 38 – Feeling Burdened

Adonai, do not punish me in wrath; do not chastise me in fury.
For my iniquities (challenges) have overwhelmed me;
They are like a heavy burden, more than I can bear.
I am all bent and bowed; I walk about in gloom all day long.
I roar because of the turmoil in my mind.
Eternal One, You are aware of all my entreaties; my groaning is not hidden from You.
My mind reels; my strength fails me; my eyes too have lost their luster.
My friends and companions stand back from my affliction; my kinsmen stand far off.
I am like a deaf man, unhearing, like a dumb man who cannot speak up;
I am like one who does not hear, who has no retort on his lips.
But I wait for You, Adonai; You will answer, Source of Healing.
For I am on the verge of collapse; my pain is always with me.
Do not abandon me, Adonai, be not far from me;
Hasten to my aid, Source of Healing.

Psalm 88 – Feeling Down – Hear My Cries

O Adonai of my deliverance, when I cry out in the night before You,
Let my prayer reach You; incline Your ear to my cry.
For my soul is sated with misfortune;
I am at the brink of Sheol (this dark place).
I am numbered with those who go down to the Pit;
I feel helpless, and abandoned,
Like have put me at the bottom of the Pit, in the darkest places, in the depths.
My companions shun me; I am shut in and do not go out.
My eyes pine away from affliction; I call to You, Adonai, each day;
I stretch out my hands to You. I cry out to You, Adonai;
Each morning my prayer greets You.
Do You reject me? Do You hide Your face from me?
I cry out to You, Adonai.

Psalm 121 – Finding Strength

I lift my eyes to the mountains; from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Eternal, maker of heaven and earth.
Adonai will not let your foot give way your guardian will not slumber;
See, the guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps!

The Eternal is your guardian, Adonai is your protection at your right hand.
By day the sun will not strike you, nor the moon by night.
I call to you Adonai, guard me from all harm; guard my life.
Guard my going and coming now and forever.

TRADITIONAL PRAYERS

MORNING BLESSINGS

Modeh Ani - The Talmudic rabbis believed that when you slept, your soul visited God. God would return your soul to you when you awoke so you could continue living.

מוֹדֵה/מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ, מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם, שֶׁהִחְזַרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחֶמְלָה רַבָּה
אֲמוּנָתְךָ.

*Modeh(Men)/Modah (women) ani l'fanecha melech chai v'kayam,
she-he-che-zarta bi nishmati b'chemla rabah emunatecha.*

I offer thanks to You, ever-living God,
that You have given my soul to me in mercy.
How great is Your trust.

Kabbalah teaches that there are different parts of the soul. Using this concept, I wrote a modified version of the *Modeh Ani* prayer imagining that when my father seemed distant or not really all “there,” that the part of his soul which was his personality, was visiting God. When my father had moments of clarity it was as if God returned that part of my father’s soul to him, and to us. Adapted by Rabbi Michele Medwin (Changes are in capital letters.)

FOR A MAN WHO HAS ALZHEIMER’S DEMENTIA

*Modeh/Modah ani l'fanecha, melech chai v'kayam. She-hechezarta BO
NISHMATO BA-Z'MAN HAZEH, b'chemla, Rabah emunatecha.*

I offer thanks to You, ever-living Sovereign, that you have restored HIS *n'shamah*
to HIM, AT THIS MOMENT, with mercy. How great is Your trust.

FOR A WOMAN WHO HAS ALZHEIMER'S DEMENTIA

Modeh/Modah ani l'fanecha, melech chai v'kayam. She-hechezarta BA NISHMATA BA-Z'MAN HAZEH, b'chemla, Rabah emunatecha.

I offer thanks to You, ever-living Sovereign, that you have restored HER *n'shamah* to HER, AT THIS MOMENT, with mercy. How great is Your trust.

Elohai Neshama – A Pure Soul (We give thanks for the wonder and uniqueness of our souls. We remember that our loved one's soul is still present.)

The soul that you have given me, O God, is a pure one. You have created and formed it, breathed it into me, and within me you sustain it. So long as I have breath, therefore I will give thanks to You, Eternal God and God of all ages, Master of all creation, God of every human spirit. Blessed is the Eternal, in whose hands are the souls of all the living and the spirits of all flesh.

Creative Prayer based on Traditional Jewish Liturgy

Mi Sheberach for Chronic Illness

by Rabbi Michele Brand Medwin

Eternal God, I ask for mercy and compassion
for me and my family, burdened with chronic illness.
Give us the strength and courage to face the daily challenges in our lives.
Compassionate One, give us hope for the future
and at the same time, acceptance of the present.
Help us to find a path towards spiritual wholeness. Be by our side.
Help us to know that You are with us at all times, even in times of doubt.
Source of Healing, comfort us and bring healing to our souls. Amen

A Caregiver's Prayer

Sustainer of the Universe, help me to care for my loved one, with hope, courage and sensitivity. Grant me insight, resourcefulness and the ability to ask for help
And to accept help when it is needed. May I find the patience to overcome difficult moments and to find meaning and purpose in the smallest task.
O Eternal God, help me to remember to take care of myself
So that I may have the strength to help others.
Be with me and my loved one, as we journey on this path together.
May the One who makes peace in the Heavens,
Bring peace to me, to my family and loved ones, and to us all.

One Line Verses for Meditation Mantra or Reading Throughout the Day

Be strong and of good courage; have no fear . . . for the Eternal One, your God, is the One who goes with you, never failing you or forsaking you.

Deuteronomy 31:5

Those who hope in God will renew their strength and soar on wings like eagles.

Isaiah 40:31

I see your journey, and I bring healing. I will guide you and bring solace to you.

Says the Eternal God: I will heal you!

Isaiah 57:18-19

Do not despair because of suffering, for life is suffering. Suffering and also joy. When life brings you suffering, hurt. When life brings you joy, laugh.

Mishnah Avot 1:7

The prayer of a sick person is answered not by having his disease disappear but by his gaining the sense of God's nearness, the assurance that his illness is not a punishment from God and that God has not abandoned him.

Harold Kushner

It may be difficult to believe that we can learn from adversity, yet it is our best teacher. It can open our eyes to things we couldn't see before; It can make us grow in ways we never knew; It can give us the precious gift of compassion; It can teach us a universal truth: Life is not fair; And if we are very thoughtful, it can lead us to God.

Maurice Lamm

When you need a place to turn, turn to God. Even if you never thought to do so, it is easy. Here's how:

- Talk in your own language, the way you would to a friend.
- Do this when no one else is around to hear.
- Don't feel guilty for neglecting to do it up to now. God has been waiting to hear from you and is delighted.
- If it is hard at first, keep trying. Practice makes perfect.
- Ask for God's help - that is what God is there for.
- Tell God everything, God knows it all anyway.

Maurice Lam