

UU MEDITATION BEADS

A FRAMEWORK FOR DAILY PRACTICE

Many of us seek new ways to focus on our daily meditation and practice that is authentic and can be personalized to our own spiritual approach. Many UU's are finding the use of meditation or what some UU's are calling "*Prayer Beads*" has become an important tool in this search.

Clearly, every UU approaches belief and meditation from a different perspective. Some of us have incorporated different religious beliefs into our lives. Some come from a purely humanist perspective. Most have found that the beads work well in either approach. These beads can be personalized to enhance whatever practice or centering approach you use.

USING THE BEADS

First, set aside a time each day to use this practice. The beads can also be carried with you and used whenever the opportunity is available or you feel the need to focus and practice being present in your own life.

Second, be intentional about owning this process and making it your own. What is shared here is ONE approach. There are many. You may want to include specific phrases, mantras, chants, or prayers that speak to your journey.

A SUGGESTED MEDITATION

Centering Bead- Find the large or distinctive bead. There should be only one bead like this one. As you hold this bead in your fingers, calm your mind and through breathing and meditation center yourself to be as completely present in this moment as possible. Take as long as needed to still your mind and body.

Breathing Beads- There are five sets of three "breathing beads." Use these beads to take three deep and cleansing breaths as you work your way around the circle. Be mindful of your breaths and allow your body to relax with each of the three deep breaths.

THE NAMING BEAD- On this first of the four beads, name the need, emotion, or what it is that has brought you to this moment. It may be the beginning or end of the day. It could be a situation or specific need that caused you to pause and focus for a time. Be very specific in the naming and visualize the situation or time of the day that you are currently present within. Take as long as you need to become focused and very specific.

(Repeat the next set of three Breathing Beads)

THE COMPASSION BEAD- On this second bead reflect on the meaning of compassion in your life. Recall the ways in which you have been shown compassion. Think of ways you have shown compassion to others. Name areas where you desire to be shown compassion in the coming day or current situation or reflect on the day passed. Visualize how things might be if compassion were a normal practice for us all.

(Repeat the next set of three Breathing Beads)

THE BLESSING BEAD- When you reach the third bead, consider the inter-connectedness of all of our lives. Reflect on what it means to truly be connected to others and how living in this awareness both strengthens us and challenges us. Now consider the closest circle in your own life. Is this a partner or family members? Visualize the beloved that come to mind in this closest and most intimate circle and as you consider those that come to mind, bless each of them with your love and support. Now visualize the wider circle with whom you are connected; this may be your church family, members of some group that gives you passion and focus, or those with whom you work and play. Allow your own mind to call these persons forth and in the same way, visualize them and the needs they may have. Offer each your blessing and gift of your love. Now think about the greater community or world. Where is it that you long to see a greater awareness of our inter-connectedness? Visualize these persons, groups, or places. This can be a very broad picture. Offer your blessing and love as you work through each thought or image that comes to mind. Finally, call to mindfulness the places where the effects of forgetting our inter-connectedness cause the greatest strain. This can be the most challenging stage of this bead. Where do you struggle most in offering your blessing and perhaps, would rather not recall that indeed, we are connected to even those that cause us the most discomfort by their actions. Offer your blessing to these as well.

(Repeat the next set of three breathing beads)

THE GRATITUDE BEAD- On the fourth bead, we end with gratitude. Reflect on the meaning of gratitude. How does gratitude give you power and grace in your daily life? How might gratitude change situations you are currently facing or the day ahead or just completed? Call to mind persons, places, situations, and things for which you are grateful. Name them specifically and clearly and pause on each one intentionally.

(Repeat the final set of three breathing beads)

THE CENTRAL BEAD- You will have now returned to the bead where you began. Allow yourself to focus on the feeling and shape of the bead. Calm your mind and spirit as you prepare to finish this meditation. Some choose to close with a final meditation, mantra, chant or prayer. Below is an example of one possibility based loosely on the prayer of Christ.

*Spirit of life and of love, all that is holy and sacred in my life
flow from you. May things I have envisioned and meditated upon
come to pass in my life this day.*

*All that I need is already within me. May I also see that others
have within them these same gifts and possibilities.*

*May I refuse to yield to the negative or hurtful that I may encounter
this day.*

I commit myself to being the whole person I have envisioned in these moments.

So May it Be.

The options for modifying these beads are nearly limitless. Use them as a tool and make them distinctly your own. Spirituality is nothing more and nothing less than being fully present in our own lives and living each moment in the awareness of that moment and the reality of our connections with others.

BLESSED BE!