

As I read through the workbook for Spiritual Practices 101 recently, it struck me how dense and directive it appears. There's a lot to do and think about and prepare for and how to sit and figure out what kind of practice you're doing and whether it's the right practice and ... as Charlie Brown would say....

AAAAUUUUGGGGGHHHHHHH!!! If you're a seasoned practitioner, it might feel fine. But, if this is early in your spiritual explorations, reading the workbook might feel a bit overwhelming.

Tom and I took 6 hours originally to teach this workshop. Now you can read all the information we offered there in about 15 minutes. No wonder it's dense!

Part of the effect I experienced as I read it was a feeling that there were a lot of "shoulds" in spiritual practice. What you should do to prepare, how you should sit, what you should think about.

One of my teachers, Lawrence Conlan, has said that "Awakening is, at its core, a process of relaxation". Taking on a bunch of "shoulds" does not sound relaxing to me. Quite the opposite.

So, I'm offering this prelude to the course.

Here are a few suggestions on how to approach the workbook.

1. **Skip it entirely.** No, really. Just listen to the guided meditations. (Except for the Archetype Practice, that one you might want to read a bit about first. I'll give more direction about that below.) Honestly, the most powerful part of spiritual practices are experiential. We need enough buy in from the rational mind to allow us to relax and soak in the power of how the practices change and heal us, but really, it's not the rational mind that benefits. So, don't worry about the words.
2. **Or, delay reading the workbook for a few days or weeks,** just listen to the concentration or meditation on the breath recordings for awhile. Then, with your experience of those under your belt, read the workbook one section at a time, with at least a day, preferably a week, between reading sessions. Let the information of each section settle in for awhile.

3. If you read the workbook, at whatever rate you read it, hold the words lightly. As one of my teachers, Adyashanti, has said, “Listen with a soft mind.” We have these powerful brains that are designed to grab onto words and images and “make sense” of them. Spiritual practice, through various means, is really designed to allow the mind to take it’s proper place in the order of things. Particularly here in the US and other

white dominant cultures, the rational mind is put on a pedestal, to the detriment of much of our humanness. So, notice how your mind might want to either grab onto the information in the workbook, or perhaps push it away. See if you can find a way to be soft with it, let the words trickle through your mind and leave as easily as they come. Trust that what is useful will come back at the proper time, or you can go back and read that section again if you want to remember something.

4. Remember, all the instructions and descriptions in the workbook are just a few ways to interpret and approach spiritual practices. We offer a few different approaches precisely because we are all unique, and a technique that may work splendidly for one person, might just feel wrong to someone else. So, if you read the workbook and something doesn’t make sense, or feels too rigid, or too loose, feel free to move on, to not utilize that detail in your practice. It might feel right later on, or it might just not work for how your psyche is built. There is space for all of us to be the unique individuals we are. Spiritual practice is designed to be supportive and freeing, not confining and limiting.

5. Lastly, if you decide you’d like to do the Archetype Practice and you don’t want to read the rest of the workbook at that point, just scroll down to the bottom third of page 7, to the paragraph right above the two images. Read from there to the end of the document, and enjoy the recording.

Okay, now feel free to dive in, in whatever way feels right. If you decide to just read it all immediately, I hope you’ll come back and read it more slowly at a later time. It’s a lot to take in, especially if you’re fairly new to spiritual practice.

Many
blessings!
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