

THE ALPHABET OF

Enrich your life with 37 practices from the world's religions.

Spiritual practices connect us with our true selves, our neighbors, our world, and our Source. This alphabet is a map of the paths we use to make those vital connections. Here we share 37 main routes — forms of practice that are markers of the spiritual life in all the world's religions. Under them, you'll find the tried-and-true practices such

as prayer (Devotion) and meditation (Attention), as well as things like optimism (Hope) that become spiritual practices through our intentions.

ATTENTION

Meditation, mindfulness, *gathas*, concentration exercises, walking meditation, descriptive writing, contemplative art, self-witnessing



BEAUTY

Living simply, clearing clutter, nature walks, ikebana, tea ceremony

BEING PRESENT

Living in the present moment, haiku, free intuitive writing, gardening



COMPASSION

Lovingkindness meditation, *tonglen*, empathy, visiting the sick, service to the poor and suffering

CONNECTIONS

Honoring ancestors and the communion of saints, home shrines, kinship with animals, dedication to all beings and future generations



DEVOTION

Prayer, prayer circles, mantras, *zikr* or remembrance of God, Bhakti yoga, chanting, prayer dancing, icons, prayer beads, altars, prayer flags and wheels, amulets, *milagros*



SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat,

ENTHUSIASM

Spiritual mentors, emulation of saints, singing hymns, praise and gospel music



FAITH

Talking to God, God box, prostration and surrender, trust exercises, personal creeds, examen of consciousness, participation in a religious community, sacraments, sharing sacred stories

FORGIVENESS

Letting go, confession of sins, repentance, reconciliation, "Passing the Peace"



GRACE

Acceptance of God's love, watching for gifts, reading spiritual memoirs and biographies, awareness of synchronicities, gift of tears, lighting candles

GRATITUDE

Gratitude journals, Naikan, blessings, greeting the dawn, mealtime graces, offerings

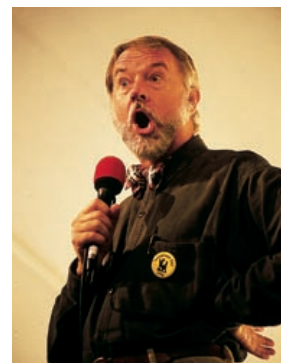
HOPE

Affirmations, patience, optimism, sacred activism



HOSPITALITY

Inter-religious dialogue, welcoming and affirming sacred spaces, embrace of strangers and minorities, table fellowship, greeting gestures



IMAGINATION

Creativity, storytelling, dream work, imagery exercises, music, brushwork, writing, divination to connect with inner wisdom

KINDNESS

Generosity, charity, *adab*, good manners, civility, doing no harm, right speech, encouraging others, avoiding ego attachments, the Giveaway

JOY

Celebrations, dancing, drumming, singing, laughter, smiling, rejoicing in another's good fortune



LISTENING

Discernment of God's messages, Lectio Divina, spiritual direction, deep listening, intuition, conscience, council circles, Clearness Committee



JUSTICE

Prophetic testimony, marches, vigils, petitions, community service, political action, money stewardship, socially responsible investing

LOVE

Heart-opening exercises, examen of consciousness and conscience, intimate relationships, family, parenthood, friendship

MEANING

Keeping journals, sacred text study, lifelong learning, study groups, Ethical Wills, personal prayer and quotation books



PLAY

Crazy wisdom and trickster storytelling, humor, improvisation, cooperative games, fools' festivals

NURTURING

Keeping the Sabbath, retreats, healing and body work, emotional intelligence, self-care, *mudras*, aromatherapy, martial arts, yoga, T'ai Chi, Qijong, Feng Shui

OPENNESS

Respecting differences, cross-cultural experiences, travel



PEACE

Bearing witness, nonviolence, conflict resolution, anti-war protests, serenity, equanimity



QUESTING

Pilgrimage, labyrinth walk, mandalas, living the questions

REVERENCE

Radical respect, awe, bowing, animal advocacy, environmental activism, recycling

SHADOW

Shadow and wholeness work, identifying and taking back projections, giving up addictions, embracing obstacles and failures

SILENCE

Contemplation, solitude, silent retreats, quieting the mind, centering prayer



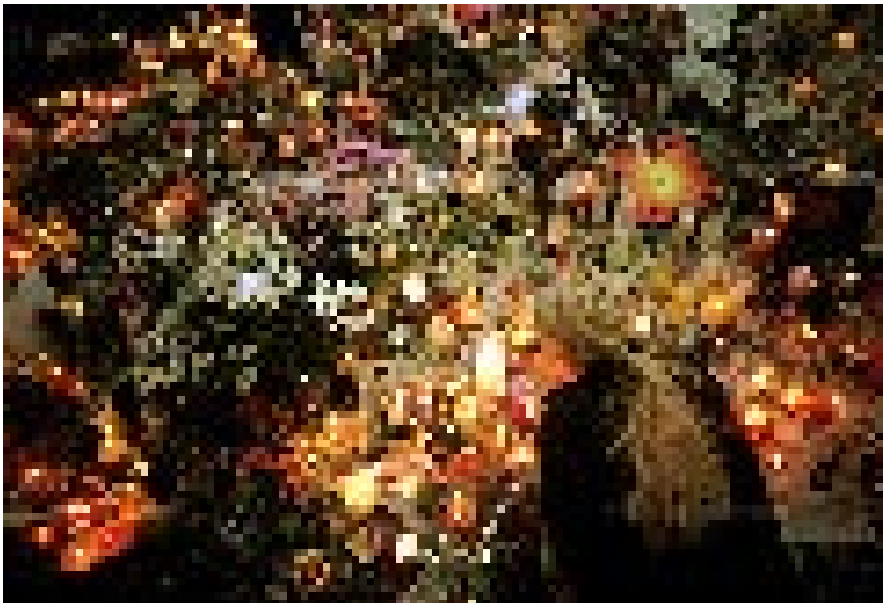
TRANSFORMATION

Healing self and relationships, purification, fasting, mind training, self-inquiry, rituals for change, seasonal festivals, the Medicine Wheel



TEACHERS

Studying with a teacher, sitting with elders, receiving *darshan*, mentoring, reflecting on quotations, reading spiritual books, interpreting signs from the natural world, totems



UNITY

Affirming commonalities, solidarity actions, building community, humanitarian outreach

VISION

Vision quest, right livelihood, leadership, mission statements, ethical decision-making

WONDER

Awareness of senses, curiosity, seeing with the eyes of a child, reading nature poetry, curiosity, recognizing aha! moments

X - THE MYSTERY

Not knowing, attending the dying, mysticism



YOU

Humility, self-esteem, therapy, finding own wisdom and purpose

ZEAL

Intention, wholeheartedness, vows, passionate commitments, zest for life



YEARNING

Reading mystical poetry, wishing rituals, expressing desires, Tantric sex

How to Practice the Alphabet

1. Recite the alphabet to remind yourself of all the different ways you can enrich your spiritual life.
2. Write the alphabet words on little cards or stones and keep them in a bowl. Choose a practice to work with each week or month. You can find instructions for the specific practices under each alphabet word in books or online.
3. Read the alphabet slowly until one practice "calls" to you. It might be something you used to do and need to practice again, or it might be something you never thought could be a spiritual practice.
4. Whenever you finish a book or see a movie, ask yourself, "What practice in the alphabet does this illustrate?" Use the alphabet as a template through which you see life from a spiritual perspective.

Books

- *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life*
- *Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life*

Websites

SpiritualityHealth.com and SpiritualityandPractice.com

DVDs

Spiritual Literacy, 26 half-hour alphabet episodes on six DVDs, plus discussion guides and models for using the series. Purchase at SpiritualLiteracy.com

Chart of Alphabet and Practices © 2006 by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat. Based on the books *Spiritual Literacy* and *Spiritual Rx* and the practice home pages at SpiritualityandPractice.com.