



Multifaith Practice Group

A Model for Using the Spiritual Literacy DVDs with a Small Multifaith Community

Group Makeup: This group consisted of seven friends from different religious traditions: two Christian-Sufis, two Protestant Christians, one Hindu, one Jew, and one Twelve-Stepper. They met over a period of two years, usually every two weeks for two hours, in the home of two members.

Goal of Group: The group was interested in sharing their spiritual journeys and also exploring how to incorporate spiritual practices into their daily lives. They had all studied world religions and were open to the wisdom of different traditions. As New Yorkers, they often came in contact with people of different traditions. Some had participated in interfaith dialogue and study programs.

The group agreed that they wanted to explore how doing spiritual practices together and learning about each other's practices would enable people of different faiths to meet on the common ground of spirituality. They also agreed that covenanting and companioning with others is essential for spiritual growth and material. They set as their goal to encourage each other in daily spiritual practice.

Preparation: The group was chosen and invited by the hosts to participate. Each person had to commit to coming to biweekly meetings and doing daily practice between sessions.

Group Process: The group used the *Spiritual Literacy* DVDs as catalysts for practice. At the first session, members introduced themselves and talked about their spiritual path to date. They then watched the first DVD on attention. After viewing, they talked only briefly about a few images that spoke to them. Rather than discuss the ideas presented in the DVD, members were encouraged to think about what practices they could do in the spirit of the DVD.

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At the next session, the group sat in a circle and each person in turn shared what practice he or she had done for Attention and what had happened. They assessed how well they had done with the practice, what they learned from it, whether they would continue it, and how they might adjust it. This sharing proceeded without any crosstalk by other members. At the end of the sharing, if people wanted the support of the group in either understanding their experiences or developing them further, they could ask for it. The session ended with the viewing of the next DVD in the series.

Over time, members of this group introduced each other by their example to practices of their different traditions. For example, the Sufis did zikr (repetition of one of the names of God in Arabic) for Devotion, and the Hindu found that similar to her mantra practice. One woman taught a guided imagery practices for Forgiveness based on Jewish understandings of the process of repentance.

Often the practices chosen by the group turned out to be general ones that could not be specifically pegged to one tradition. The fact that group members often came up with very similar practices seemed to support the understanding that spirituality unifies rather than divides people of different traditions.