

Learning How to Practice the Principles



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BY PETRA WELDES

When I came into the Science of Mind at 18 years old, I was a hot mess. I desperately needed help. I was directed by a boss, who became both my mentor and friend, to a man she thought could help me. He was the minister in Seattle and, boy, did he make sense to me. After three months of counseling, I started slipping into the back row on Sunday mornings, being sure to leave before the service was over. I cried for the first six months I attended and didn't miss a Sunday for 2½ years. I took every class I could.

In those first three or four years, I learned how to manifest through various tools. I learned that both meditation and spiritual mind treatment were important, and I could teach what I was learning to others. It was all exciting and fulfilling; however, I finally noticed that whenever I went in for a session with the minister,

all my problems were still the same — relationships, money, self-worth — and I still used all the same old reasons and excuses. Oh yes, I knew and loved all that I was learning, but I realized I wasn't actually practicing living from this new understanding. I was a living example of Ernest Holmes's lament, "One of the great difficulties in the new order of thought is that we are likely to indulge in too much theory and too little practice."

What does it mean to practice the Science of Mind? What does it mean to practice the principles? Unless we learn to apply them, consistently and regularly, we are not truly transforming our lives in Spirit-based, joy-filled expressions of love, peace, abundance and creativity. I discovered that learning to build consciousness meant practicing these principles in an entirely new way.

Marrying Principles and Practices

Last month we explored the Science of Mind principles and their updated descriptions. If we don't want to be some of those that Holmes lamented about, then we'd better get busy practicing them. How do principles and practices go together? Let's begin with their definitions.

Principle: a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning.

Practice: the actual application or use of an idea or belief, as opposed to theories relating to it.

What we are really looking at is the "actual application or use" of the Science of Mind principles or, in other words, how to live according to or in alignment with the principles we say we believe.

Take the principles of oneness and love. They sound good, right? And I loved to espouse them in my own life when I talked about humanity or world peace, but what about the fact that I was estranged from my father and couldn't get along with the man my mother married?

Similarly, the principles of the creative process and spiritual laws sounded great in theory, but I still wasn't manifesting healthy relationships. I loved the idea of creation being the manifest body of God and that we are actually about creating heaven on Earth, but it still seemed to me that most people were busy creating hell.

All this came to a head for me when I was exposed to the idea of "practicing the Presence." Somewhere along the line this was



described as another way to “pray without ceasing.” I had no idea what that actually meant and even less idea how to do it. I pondered this for quite a while and kept coming back to my teacher’s explanation that this was about experiencing oneness.

Well, I definitely experienced oneness in the mountains and the woods — but never in the city and seldom with most people. How was I supposed to experience oneness when the world was filled with terrible people, horrible experiences and the hard edges of the man-made world?

One day I simply decided that everything I looked at I would silently name “God.” Coffee cup — God. Table — God. Partner — God. Air — God. City street — God. Book — God. Ideas in the book — God. Person who wrote the book — God.

At first it felt silly. Then it felt stupid. Then somewhere along the line it felt curious. What is it about this thing or person that is God? I continued like this for days. Weeks went by. All of sudden my curiosity turned to surprise. And over the months my surprise turned to awe. Over the years my awe turned to a profound realization that oneness was real and that I was absolutely in love with everything I looked at because I could see God.

One day I remembered my teacher trying to explain to me the practice of the Presence. With tears rolling down my face, I discovered that I had learned how to pray without ceasing. I believe this is what it means to practice — to take any one of our principles and begin to try to experience it as an embodied reality.

As I began to examine myself and become aware of the overall tendency of my thinking and my words, I realized that I was not very good at expressing gratitude or praise, but, boy, could I assess and diagnose what was wrong with someone else. As I began to listen to my words outside of my spiritual mind treatments and affirmations, I noticed that I tended to make everything dependent on something outside of myself. I also realized how easily I rationalized, exaggerated and sometimes downright lied simply to make myself look good or feel better. I was stunned at how my words were entirely incongruent with the words I spoke in my affirmations or spiritual mind treatments.

My practice became to speak only something that I would be willing to affirm or say in my spiritual mind treatment. I practiced



the adage “If you can’t say anything kind, don’t say anything at all,” only I changed it to “If you can’t say something that is in alignment with spiritual truth, don’t say anything at all.”

If I couldn’t believe the truth in my words, how would my subconsciousness ever believe the words I spoke to use the creative process in my spiritual mind treatment?

Finally, the practice that created a felt and lived experience of the principles of our teachings for me is years of consistent, out-loud spiritual mind treatment, with myself, with my prayer partners and with my sangha (community).

Every day having to create an experience of each step of treatment, working to make the words real in my consciousness over and over again, made them real, both in the formal act of spiritual mind treatment and in my everyday life.

Practices to Apply Science of Mind Principles

Centers for Spiritual Living has identified practices that most significantly help us “actually apply and use” our principles. We can learn all kinds of ways and processes to engage in these practices from our CSL courses, from spiritual books and teachings, from philosophy, psychology and science.

I believe each of us takes up these practices in our own unique ways. Each practice listed here may help us apply all the principles, but each is associated with the principle(s) on which it is primarily based.

SPIRITUAL MIND TREATMENT

Spiritual mind treatment is the single most important Science of Mind practice. It is a specific methodology that puts all the principles into practice in a systematic and intentional manner.

We consciously use the creative process to direct spiritual laws to heal or change real-life conditions. Regularly used and applied to every area of life, the practice develops a deeper awareness, expanded consciousness and greater experience of the One Infinite Reality.



PRACTICING THE PRESENCE

Practicing the Presence is the practice of the principles of oneness, love and creation to become aware of and experience the One Infinite Reality. The practice of the Presence is engaging in formal, disciplined methodologies that quiet the mind/body and open awareness. It is living in alignment with our Science of Mind principles, making these principles evident in the way we engage in the present moment, thereby being congruent in thought, word and behavior.

DIRECT REVELATION

Direct revelation is the practice of the principles of spiritual being, freedom and heaven. As individualized expressions of the One Infinite Reality, we have access to the infinite wisdom and intelligence of the Ultimate Reality. It flows through us, as us, to the degree that we set aside our previous ideas and become aware and conscious of the impress of universal Spirit. Direct revelation is available to us through our intuition and can be intentionally cultivated.

SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is the practice that illuminates our alignment with each of the Science of Mind principles. It is the practice of being conscious of our motivations, internal dialogue and hidden beliefs. It is a willingness to observe and take responsibility for our internal and external choices. Self-awareness is the foundation for conscious choice.

GRATITUDE

Gratitude is both a principle and a practice. It is also the practice of the principle of creation — seeing creation as life-affirming, looking for and focusing on the good. Gratitude is more than an emotion; it is an attitude that carries us beyond doubt, attracting and magnifying the good. Gratitude accepts with perfect faith that which has not yet manifested, as if it were already here.

COMPASSION

Compassion is the practice of the principles of oneness, spiritual beings, heaven and immortality. Compassion respects and honors the true nature of others, all life and ourselves. Compassion is claiming



the same good for others that we accept for ourselves. Active compassion is the practice of joining personal responsibility with social conscience for the good of all.

INTENTIONAL MANIFESTATION

Intentional manifestation is the practice of the threefold nature: the creative process, spiritual laws and freedom. It is consciously producing a definite outcome by using Science of Mind principles to bring about a greater good, a more abundant life, a better condition. Intentional manifestation invites us to exercise our freedom to create the life we desire.

SACRED STUDY

Sacred study is the practice of expanding our knowledge and understanding of the nature of the One Infinite Reality, who we are and a deeper understanding and use of each of the Science of Mind principles.

Spiritual study deepens our awareness of spiritual truths and provides the framework for spiritual practice. Through spiritual study, we gain wisdom and a deep appreciation for the wisdom of those who have walked a spiritual path throughout the ages.

OTHER PRACTICES AND METHODS TO FURTHER EMBODY SCIENCE OF MIND PRINCIPLES

The purpose of these practices is to embody our spiritual principles. This embodiment is a natural and spontaneous response to life, which is in alignment with Science of Mind principles.

Ongoing proficiency and expansion of spiritual practices nurtures the application and embodiment of our spiritual principles. Exploring additional methods to deepen our understanding and practice that are in alignment with our spiritual principles is valued and encouraged. ❀



If you're looking for a welcoming spiritual community where you can practice what you've learned here, Centers for Spiritual Living has locations across the globe. Find one near you at CSL.org/Connect.