

## Daily Life As Spiritual Practice

One hears “Oh, I’d love to give more to my practices, but I just don’t have the time. Maybe someday, once \_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank) happens...”

It is certainly the case that more and more demands are being placed on our limited time, and that our tendency is to let the important things take a back seat to that which is more pressing. Since there seems to be no respite from the pressing things and there’s always something in the way when \_\_\_\_ comes, the dedicated spiritual aspirant must be increasingly creative in finding ways to do spiritual practice “in life” and not waste valuable time. Without daily spiritual practice to stay “tuned up,” we lose the momentum we get from retreats and workshops, we are more subject to mental fog, upsets, and crappy moods, and our progress on the path is in general very slow.

This is actually unnecessary. There is really quite a lot we can do to engage the basic principles of spiritual-practice-in-life. In this article, we will look at the habits and attitudes that can make daily life one’s spiritual practice, to be “in the world but not of the world.” There are many devices and little rituals that we can fold into our day that can help us greatly. These are not “shoulds,” not something with which to further beat ourselves up for not having done them. These techniques, when engaged in a spirit of experiment and inquiry, can bring awareness and aliveness to even the most mundane activities. There are some things which also have an effect at a subtle-energy level and help us to keep ourselves tuned up and to plug “energy leaks.”

Don’t try to remember or do all the hints and techniques in this article all at once; take one at a time and integrate it into your life, then another. Revisit this piece from time-to-time to remind yourself and try new things. In the process, you may discover other things that are useful. Share them.

“Things that are around you in the house, the clothes you wear, the food you eat, the people you meet, all these things have an effect upon your life.

—Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan, **Githa I**, *Sadhana* #5

“We ought to turn every day of life into meditation. Whatever our work may be, we must do it, but at the same time we should meditate. Then we will get to know the secret meaning of our work, and in this way we will turn life from a worldly life into a spiritual one. This applies to everyone, whether we work in a garden or in a factory, or elsewhere. As soon as we know the appropriate meditation for the work we are doing we will develop, and all our work will become a meditation for us. And if we achieve this, the wages we earn will be nothing compared with the reward we will gain. When the mind is concentrated, one does one’s work well, and even better than others. In a station in Rajputana I once saw a telegraph clerk accepting telegrams. While he was doing his work he was meditating at the same time. When it was my turn I said to him, “I have come to give you this telegram, but I marvel at you, it is wonderful how you are keeping up your meditation during your work.” He looked at me and smiled; and we became friends.”

“If it were not for the spirit, work would be a nuisance at a time when life’s needs are so great and when people have so little rest. Thus the best thing for us is to meditate in everyday life. If it is done properly we will reap the benefit of it not only from the earth, but also from heaven. Meditation means the soul’s endeavor towards spiritual unfoldment, and this endeavor may be practiced in different ways in order to suit one’s profession and work.”

—Hazrat Inayat Khan, *Volume IV — Mental Purification and Healing*

Making daily life a spiritual practice mostly entails:

- Keeping your attunement spacious, fluid, and refined under all circumstances
- Subtle-energy management, including plugging “energy leaks” and not taking-on disharmonious impressions from others.

These support each other. The key is a certain mindfulness and precision that we call *impeccability*.

“For the spiritual warrior, every moment is a challenge to be genuine, and each challenge is delightful.

“When you let go properly, you can relax and enjoy the challenge.”

—Chögyam Trungpa Rimpoche

A spacious, refined attunement is not necessarily dwelling in the angelic spheres while at your desk at work. “Fixed on God” (see page 20, *Breath*) does not mean becoming otherworldly; God is not other than inside everything you see, feel, touch, and think. It is not wise to become otherworldly, or you can become “split” in a way that actually inhibits your spiritual unfoldment. One can observe people on the spiritual path who make a fetish of their sensitivity, and it becomes an avoidance of engaging the issues and thus developing the Qualities that would make them more refined and elevated spiritually but also less distressed by life itself and having greater power to accomplish in the world. Daily life is *the means by which the Divine Qualities are drawn into manifestation*, through us/as us. “Fixed on God” allows you to discern the movement of the Qualities “between the worlds” with your life as the conduit, because the inner and outer are really one.

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## 1. STATES

What we call “altered states” are actually of many kinds. Some are a view<sup>and/or</sup> absorption into Consciousness-in-transcendence, such as the *samadhi* states of classical yoga; these take us away from body consciousness and from our focus on the material world, and can be very “ungrounding,” but also liberating from our enmeshment in the limitation of embodiment. (This is different from dissociation, the distinction being that in *samadhi*, you are no longer captured in time and space, where in dissociation there is a narrowing of the focus of consciousness, not an expansion.)

Other states are the experience of Divine-Essence-*in-manifestation*, what we have come to call “Essential” states and which are the experience of the Divine Qualities as they form the underlying matrix of manifestation itself. In an Essential state, the body and physical world do not fall out of focus, but rather, their nature as a concretization of the fluid living Presence of the Divine is disclosed. Essential states are not ungrounding, but their fluidity and dynamicity may be unsettling to the rigid parts (identifications) of our ego structure, because of a certain “erosive” effect the presence of an Essential Quality has on those parts of our identity.

By our thought (especially by unconscious thought), speech, and action we support or block the expression of the various Divine Qualities in/through/as the various facets of our human personality.

*The most powerful altered state you will experience is the one you have named “myself.”*

## 2. ARISING IN THE MORNING

### 2.1. The Invocation<sup>1</sup>

Say the Invocation or “Bismillāh” before your feet hit the floor.

### 2.2. Aims

Upon arising, remind yourself of any “aims” you have set to change a behavior or feeling

### 2.3. Washing

Make sure to clean your ears thoroughly each morning. This is not only for aesthetics but also for subtle-energy uptake. Use a neti pot or nasal irrigator to wash the nasal passages, for the same reason. There is a certain *prānā* that enters our system through these channels, and it’s good to keep them degunked.

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<sup>1</sup> The Invocation given by Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan:

*Toward the One  
The Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,  
The Only Being  
United with All the Illuminated Souls  
Who form the Embodiment of the Master,  
the Spirit of Guidance*

## **2.4. Dressing**

### **2.4.1. Colors & Patterns**

As in music and food, what you like is not necessarily what you need. Feel what colors *do*, then feel what you need and choose colors and patterns accordingly, instead of relying on fashion, preference, or habit.

### **2.4.2. Energy & Impressions**

Avoid wearing clothing that you were ill, upset, or depressed in yesterday, especially clothing that touches your skin. Wash before wearing again or hang in the open air (& sunlight) for at least a day.

## **3. DAILY PRACTICES**

### **3.1. The best times; attitude; preparation**

The best time of day is between first light and actual sun-up, but anytime before about 10:00 am is OK. The later in the day you begin your practices, the more difficult it will be to concentrate deeply and refine your attunement, and the basic breath practices of Purification and Qāsab are better with the subtle-energy “ramp” of sunrise.

Better to do fewer practices deeply than lots of practices; doing too many practices in a sitting can make your attunement and atmosphere muddy.

Some practices are better done just before bed. Ask your spiritual guide.

Remind yourself of your aim(s) when you sit down to do your practice.

### **3.2. Carrying your state into the day**

Concentrate on how your state feels *bodily*. That’s your “anchor.” When arising from meditation, move slowly at first, keeping a tendril of your awareness on how your body and subtle bodies feel. Endeavor to stay aware of these sensations and breathe into them as you move.

Make a note of when and what was transpiring when you lost the thread of your attunement after your practices, so that you can prepare yourself to be more vigilant the next time.

### **3.3. “Time-outs” during the day**

Take five minutes an hour to gather and clear yourself; Pir Vilayat recommended setting your electronic watch to beep once an hour as a reminder.

### **3.4. The Prayers**

The formal Islamic prayers, the Christian Orthodox prayers, and the prayers given by Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan have stipulated or suggested times of the day in which they are done. Having set prayer times is a great way to interrupt the usual automaticity that we can get into during a busy day and give some attention to our attunement and our open heart.

Morning:

Invocation

Saum

Pir

11x: "May the Message of God spread far and wide."

Noon:

Invocation

Salat

Nabī

11x: "Pour upon us Thy Love and Thy Light."

Evening:

Invocation

Khātm

Rasūl

11x: "Disclose to us Thy Divine Light."

## **4. EATING**

### **4.1. Prayers**

Say the Invocation first, and then the prayer *Nāzr*:

*O Thou, the Sustainer of our bodies, hearts, and souls:*

*Bless all that we receive in thankfulness.*

*Ameen*

### **4.2. Eat slowly and mindfully**

Be present to each mouthful as you chew & swallow.

Better not to eat while watching television or working at the computer.

#### **4.2.1. Abdūl-‘Azīz Saīd**

He always began eating at the bottom of the plate, and went clockwise around the edges and then to the center. "It gathers the energy of the food so that little is lost."

### **4.3. Eating in public places**

Don't eat in a public place that's not a restaurant, e.g., don't walk down the city sidewalk while eating: Thoughts have substance, and it's better not to attract onlookers' projections onto what goes into your body and field. It's also much better to sit rather than walk while eating, as walking has an undesirable effect on digestion and assimilation.

### **4.4. The effect of food**

Try eating just one food at a meal and note its effect.

## **5. DRIVING**

### **5.1. Attunement while driving**

ALWAYS make the Invocation or a Fatiḥa before turning the ignition key. There is great protection in it, and the echo of it in your heart-mind will help heighten concentration & reduce stress.

Let the car do the hard parts, i.e., spinning the wheels fast — do not hurry mentally, even if you are late, i.e., be in the moment with your driving instead of projecting yourself ahead and working yourself into an angry/frustrated (and unclear) mental state in the name of “hurrying.” Stay centered in the heart. You’ll get there when you get there.

Do not bother yourself with judging others’ driving, and if you get upset/judgmental, resist looking at the other driver’s face; don’t give your ego more fuel for its smallness, even if it’s just momentary and seems fully justified. You can’t change stupid drivers with your judgment and irritation — and those things do not change *you* in a good way.

See Page 9, “Hurrying.”

### **5.2. Spiritual Practices while driving**

I do not recommend doing practices while driving, but for some of us, it’s the only time we have to ourselves. Learn to function smoothly in an altered state *before* you try it behind the wheel, OK?

## **6. THE GLANCE**

### **6.1. “Sipping light:”**

Find a texture of physical light that is entrancing or beautiful, such as the morning sun on dewy grass, the afternoon sun reflecting from conifer needles, or the sun on the water. On the physical inhale, draw that light into your eyes, your heart, your aura. Exhale any confusion, muddiness, density that you may feel; these impressions can be discharged through the exhale itself, also through the hands and feet, especially if you are standing on the earth.

Locate some live plants: “Drink” leaf-green into the eyes to restore the them after working at the computer or if in an agitated state.

### **6.2. Soft Focus**

Let the eyes hold a *soft focus*; become aware of how you grab the environment with your glance. Soften it, *allow* the glance and what passively occurs to your vision.

### **6.3. Keep the eyes clean.**

Keep the eyes from straining. Practice control of the glance by concentration; control of the glance helps retain your life force and helps the development of your inner sight. The eyes are indicators of the psychic power one has developed as well as instruments for healing. They are also expressions of one’s emotional state. The steadiness of the glance that we can see in infants, and the control of the glance as adults, are lost by the constant activity of the eyes, being drawn to every object that invites attention. There-



fore the mystic takes great care of the eyes, preserving the psychic power of the eyesight.

## 7. WALKING

### 7.1. Hurrying

“As the mechanism of the body depends upon the breath for its subsistence as well as for its health, so the breath is important in sustaining the mind and keeping its work regular. Mostly confusion, depression, or any other disorder of the mind arises from the disorder of breathing. All such diseases as hallucinations and delusions are caused by wrong breathing. For instance, if a person comes running or is hurried for a moment, he loses the regularity of his breath for that moment, and at that moment he is incapable of thinking rightly. If science and the State knew this, they could surely cause some change to be made in the present law. Many who are put in prison for some crime caused by them during moments of irregular breathing, the State would send to be cured and taught how to breathe, instead of sending them to prison, for neither does the prison cure them nor does it benefit by their presence there.”

—Hazrat Inayat Khan, **Gatha II Pas-i Ānfas #2**

Mentally hurrying is a tremendous waste of energy and only leaves you weakened when you finally arrive. A lot of mental hurrying and arriving flustered is really “image management,” i.e., trying to demonstrate that you really do care about arriving on time (even though you may not have planned well-enough in advance to actually accomplish it).

### 7.2. Being on time

...is respectful of yourself and of others; getting your life arranged so that you are on time (and all the implications and ancillaries of what that takes) is a step in “living strategically,” i.e., in mastery.

### 7.3. Walking in rhythm to heartbeat and breath

Most people walk too fast, and their step is too heavy.

A heavy step is often the ego asserting its existence and of an “attitude” one has about life, e.g., of “determination,” or of “life-is-burdening,” or just a general denseness in one’s attunement/felt-identity. Retrain your gait so that it is fluid, *your arms swing opposite your legs*, and that you **set** your feet on the earth or floor rather than falling onto the foot with each step.

Learn to walk noiselessly, even when walking fast.

#### 7.3.1. Breath-Rhythm Practice

Start by finding a pulse, either by hearing your heartbeat, feeling your heartbeat, or by finding a pulse in wrist or neck.

Inhale fully to the rhythm of four heartbeats, and exhale by four heartbeats.

Do this four times.

Inhale to the rhythm of two heartbeats and exhale to the rhythm of two heartbeats.

Do this eight times.

Inhale to the rhythm of one breath per heartbeat, inhaling and exhaling 16 times.

Return to the rhythm of 2/2x8

Return to the rhythm of 4/4x4.

Inhale to the rhythm of eight heartbeats to the inhale, eight heartbeats to the exhale.

Do this twice.

Inhale to the rhythm of 16 heartbeats to the inhale, 16 heartbeats to the exhale.

Do this once.

Return to the rhythm of 8/8x2.

Return to the rhythm of 4/4x4.

Go do something else.

### **7.3.2. Walking Breath-Rhythm Practice**

Find a pulse, and begin to walk. Begin on your right foot; time your gait so that each time your heart beats, a foot touches down. Time your breath so that you are inhaling on the rhythm of four heartbeats/steps to the inhale and four heartbeats/steps to the exhale. If that is too fast, use 8/8.

Walk several blocks without breaking this rhythm.

Work up to doing it for the rest of your life. Syncing the basic rhythms of heartbeat, breath, and gait reduces the stress on our bodies and helps in our interior harmonization.

### **7.4. Climbing Hills and Stairs**

Keep your pelvis, trunk, shoulders and head over your knees, as you would standing on a level surface, rather than bending forward at the waist. Look more forward than down. This engages both the skeleton and the breath in a more-aligned way. Start by raising the sternum and dropping the shoulders back before you take the first step.

### **7.5. Watch Your Wake**

Be present to all entryways, exits, and spaces you transit. Pause for just an instant before going through a doorway and gather yourself so that you can step across the threshold with awareness and being present to the atmosphere of the space you are entering. Hold doors for those behind you, and don't let an autoclosing door slam behind you — catch it and let it close gently before proceeding.

And if you live in community, do your dishes immediately and any others that are parked in the sink.

## 7.6. The Attitude of a Master

Exercise: Take a sardonic physical posture, e.g., arms folded. What do you feel? Take an open, receptive posture and observe what you feel.

Then, look at a picture of an illumined being such as Inayat Khan or Ramana Maharshi or Anandamayi Ma. What can you feel of how your body would be if you “felt like” what the photo conveys of the being it portrays?

Our attunement is affected by our physical posture, as well as being a reflection of it. We can shape our attunement by how we hold ourselves physically. The practice of donning the consciousness of a master is a traditional one in the Sufi “way.” Emulating a master’s walk can attune us to the Qualities s/he carries, and according to our capacity we can find and develop those Qualities in ourselves as well, by this concentration. With practice, it goes deeper, and one establishes a living relationship with the being and the Qualities s/he embodied in life and holds now, i.e., not only what s/he was in life but how s/he has developed beyond physical life.

## 8. SLEEPING

Sufis recommend drinking water before bed & upon arising.

### 8.1. Body alignment

Aligning the body to magnetic north helps dream sleep and restfulness. Sleeping with head to the East is said to help with *Nidra Yoga* (meditative awareness in deep sleep).

### 8.2. Body posture; sitting up vs. laying down

Sitting up is better for naps, because we’re less likely to go into dream sleep. Going into the dream state may leave us feeling muddy and “wasted” instead of refreshed.

### 8.3. Your Aims

Review of the day: did you do anything that was beneath your integrity or against your aim? Can you perceive the egoic identification (self-image) or attitude about life that is involved? How would you do it differently next time?

Then:

“Finish every day and be done with it. You have done what you could; some blunders and absurdities crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; you shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

## 9. FURNISHINGS

### 9.1. Colors and Patterns

#### 9.1.1. Oriental rugs

As in clothing & music, what we like is not necessarily what we need. Avoid chaotic patterns or clashing colors in textiles or wall art. (there are, of course, exceptions.)

In “oriental” (e.g., Turkish, Persian) rugs, look neutrally at the pattern and “animate” it in your mind; if it turns into a “garden” or remains mostly geometrical, good. If it turns into bugs and faces, these will speak to you subliminally and the item will give you no peace, regardless of its conventional monetary value or emotional appeal.

### **9.1.2. “White” as a predominant color**

Rooms that have too much white are not conducive to a settled mind. It indicates (impresses the mind with) “no direction.”

Don’t have white flowers in a dying person’s room, for the same reason.

There is no color that is necessarily more “spiritual” than another. Understand, rather, how specific colors affect *you*.

## **9.2. Clutter**

Clutter impresses the mind with a chaotic rhythm, so it’s best to clean it up. If this is difficult, there are Internet articles, books, and even coaches that can help you with it. On the other hand, it is also good to develop a tolerance for chaotic energies, lest one become too “determined” by them. Avoid making a fetish of sensitivity.

## **9.3. “Magnetized” Objects**

...can be useful. Ritual objects such as prayerbeads, sheepskins, or clothing (robes, headgear, prayer shawls) are used in the tradition, can become “magnetized” through use or blessing, and can give our attunement a boost when we need it from their stored energy. Shaikhs will bless a student’s tasbeeh, cloak, or robe when bestowing an investiture such as a particular rank/title, and using or wearing it can have a powerful effect on consciousness.

The same is true of an altar or sacred space.

On the other hand, we can also become preoccupied with them, spending an inordinate amount of energy collecting or maintaining them, or somehow feel that we can’t get by without them, and so they become a form of spiritual materialism.

Altars and meditation spaces are best kept simple, perhaps with fresh flowers and/or a bowl of water. A picture of a master or saint can be helpful for the inspiration or the practice of Taṣawwūr. Replace flowers in a sacred space as soon as they are past their prime; wilted flowers do not give a good impression to the mind. The exception is the flower petals from the shrine of a saint.

Note that Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan stipulated that his picture NOT be placed on an altar.

## **10. MUSIC**

### **10.1. What we like**

...is not necessarily what’s good for our minds and/or subtle bodies.

For example, “Heavy Metal” invariably muscle-tests as deeply weakening on everyone, regardless of their musical taste, while much of Mozart and Gregorian Chant is strengthening.

Using music with a fast and heavy beat to “energize” yourself (e.g., for housecleaning) is rather like putting lots of hot pepper on your food; the energizing effect is really from irritation, and can leave you weaker at the end. Better to engage the Will to get things done, and accomplish your tasks in a state of harmony.

Much of New Age “spiritual music” is not really very elevated, evoking mostly the astral plane. Devotional music (i.e., kirtan, qawwali, and the Turkish dervish hymns) aside, the “wisdom music” of India & Turkey can seem very abstract and even boring, but that’s because they give the ego little traction. Music for meditation is not necessarily stimulating to the mind or emotions, but can nonetheless tune consciousness to some very exalted levels. Of Western music, Gregorian Chant or medieval/Renaissance choral church music is most-strongly evocative and resonant to the higher planes.

## **11. SPEAKING**

### **11.1. The Invocation**

The Invocation has great power to harmonize and gives great protection from disharmonious (or outright evil) influences, including psychic influences. The great faith traditions all have their version of this, such as the Basmala (*Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Raheem*) for Muslims. Say the Invocation at every node or juncture of your day, such as meals, starting your car’s engine, walking in the door to work, etc.

### **11.2. Keeping your agreements**

The most powerful breath practice may be that keeping the agreements you have made. So do not make agreements lightly, and strive mightily to keep the ones you do make. It is not useful to impress your mind with your unreliability, not to mention that of your friends and co-workers. Acknowledge broken agreements openly, to promote clarity.

### **11.3. Gossip**

Gossip is deeply toxic to oneself and to your community. Know that the feeling you have of being “better” than the one gossiped-about is your ego asserting itself and reinforcing your “story.” Don’t traffic in gossip.

“Venting” to someone in your support system is different, and distinguish the two by saying, “I need to vent” so that there is less likelihood of your egos colluding.

### **11.4. Verbal attacks**

“People often say: ‘I said it, but I did not mean it.’ That is never true. If you said it, you thought it, and if you thought it, you felt it. You may be in a hurry, and say ‘cat,’ for instance, instead of ‘hat,’ or you may not know the language very well, but to say a thing you have not thought, is not possible.”

—Hazrat Inayat Khan, **Supplementary Papers**, “Collective Interviews” 1926

When in an emotionally-charged “negotiation,” speak only in terms of your own experience; avoid saying “you” (e.g., describing the other person’s condition or motivation to them) and speak only about “I.” It is empowering to oneself in a real way, and helps keep the atmosphere of a discussion clear. Read about “Non-Violent Communication” to learn more about this.

### **11.5. Sharing Spiritual Experiences**

In general, it’s better to not tell others about your experiences. For one thing, the real experiences need time to do their work and integrate; talking about them is a *huge* energy leak, and retaining the energy helps build magnetism & “presence.” Sharing them can also evoke envy on the part of others, and that is not a kindness. In general, no one except your guide needs to know about them, the important ones are indescribable, and your guide will perceive their real effects anyway.

## **12. THINKING**

Handout: *Mental Purification* by Hazrat Inayat Khan

Consider the possibility that you are in precisely the right life situation necessary to fulfill your spiritual potential — especially if you have set the aim to empty yourself of yourself in order to become a suitable instrument of the world’s transformation.

You do not have to know “why” an untoward event happens. It may be completely random and not “bad karma” or “limiting beliefs.” Randomness is necessary in the universe for there to be free will & creativity, and “why” can lead to a paralyzing over-thinking. All you need to know is how you can make productive use of a bad situation, even if your ego is convinced that what’s happening should not be. That’s the road to mastery.

### **12.1. Impress the mind with “progression”**

Find ways to impress the mind with “forward progression.” For example: Park your car “front out.” Reset clocks by *forwarding* to the desired time and noting the effect on your mind.

### **12.2. Demeaning/Negative Self-Talk**

Notice all the ways you think of yourself as small, deficient, incapable, weak, needy, vulnerable. We ARE living in a realm of limitation, but we let that limitation shape us far more than is necessary by how we envision and regard ourselves.

Exercise: make a list of those ways you diminish yourself through identifying with smallness. You may need several sheets...

If you are aware that you are hyper-selfcritical, try talking to yourself the way you talk to your dog or cat.

### **12.3. “You become what you think about all day long.”**

“The first lesson to learn is to resign oneself to the little difficulties in life, not to hit out at everything one comes up against. If one were able to manage this one would not need to cultivate great power; even one’s presence would be

healing. Such a person is more precious than the branch of the rose, for that has many thorns but only a few flowers.”

“To the Sufi, pure meditation includes more than going into one’s room only; any act of life which is done with dependence upon Allāh or which makes us aware of Allāh, whether in reading or studying or working or contemplation or prayer or meditation or any duty of everyday life, all may become part of a universal meditation which marks every breath and every heartbeat in life. The momentary obstacle which may have appeared like a great cliff becomes as a tiny step through our growth and understanding, and by taking this step, what was once a hindrance becomes an aid to our development.

“The *nafs* turns us from the One to the many, enticing us with the things of this world. Then one attaches oneself to one thing after another, which brings, at best, momentary satisfaction. Through the spiritual practices the Sufi learns to restrain the *nafs*, perceiving that it is only a shadow of reality. Finding the sun of truth within one’s own being, looking upon it, one is no longer aware of the shadow.

“Then the *nafs* is not destroyed, but harnessed. The whole of one’s being is attuned to God and everything within oneself serves God. This is the work of all on the path of illumination, of whatever school they may be. There is no other obstacle than this false self, and there is no better means of controlling it than by meditation and by practicing the presence of Allāh.”

—Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan, *Githa II Dhyana #2*

#### **12.4. Pride, envy, resentment, self-pity, judgmentalism, fear, guilt**

“Self-pity is our worst enemy. Although sometimes it gives a tender sensation in the heart to say, ‘Oh, how poorly I am,’ and it is soothing to hear from someone, ‘Oh, I am so sorry you are not well,’ yet I should think that one would prefer if another thing were said in sympathy, namely, ‘I am so happy to see you are so well.’ In order to create that tender sensation one need not be ill. What is needed is to be thankful. We can never be too thankful. If we can appreciate the privileges of life there are endless gifts from above which we never think about and we never value. If we think of them thankfully, naturally a tenderness is felt. And it is that tenderness which is worth having.

“Life is a continual battle. One struggles with things that are outside oneself, and so gives a chance to the foes who exist in one’s own being. Therefore the first thing necessary in life is to make peace for the time being with the outside world, in order to prepare for the war which is to be fought within oneself. Once peace is made within, one will gain by that sufficient strength and power to be used through the struggle of life within and without. Self-pity is the worst poverty. When a person says, ‘I am...’ with pity, before he has said anything more he has diminished himself to half of what he is; and what is said further, diminishes him totally; nothing more of him is left afterwards. There is so much in the world that we can pity and which it would be right for us to take pity

upon, but if we have no time free from our own self we cannot give our mind to others in the world. Life is one long journey, and the further behind we have left our self, the further we have progressed toward the goal.

“Verily when the false self is lost the true self is discovered.”

—Inayat Khan

“Self-pity is the worst poverty; it overwhelms us until we see nothing but illness, trouble and pain.”

—Inayat Khan

*Commentary by Samuel L. Lewis:*

“Self-pity is a concentration upon *nafs*, the cause of all disharmony. When one concentrates upon God, nothing but love will be found, but when the attention is centered around the thought of self, all ugliness, pain and illness will rise.

“Of course in a certain sense they were always there, but this concentration gives them more life. It deprives the body and mind of the usual life which is naturally bestowed upon them by the Grace of God. It feeds the entities who derive their potency from the excrescences of people, and these elementals in turn increase one’s trouble. Concentration upon darkness does not increase the darkness, but it does impede the opportunity for light and health to reach the place of sickness.”

***In place of self-pity, develop compassion. You will become much stronger.***

#### **12.4.1. Judgmentalness**

The problem is usually the judgment itself, not the target of the judgment (i.e., a certain behavior or quality). Although the “internal judge” is really trying to help, the actual effect is debilitating.

“Purification of the mind therefore means to purify it from all undesirable impressions. Not only of the shortcomings of others, but one must arrive at the stage where one forgets one’s own shortcomings. I have some righteous people who have accused themselves of their errors until they became error themselves. Concentrating all the time on error means engraving the error upon the mind. The best principle is to forget others and to forget ourselves and to set our minds upon accumulating all that is good and beautiful.”

—Inayat Khan, *Healing & Mental Purification*

#### **12.4.2. Guilt**

“Guilt” is our experience of the gap between our actual observed behavior and our internal (egoic) standard of behavior. The standard is usually impossible to achieve, hence the gap. So instead of meeting the standard, we feel guilty about not meeting it, i.e., basically a buy-off of our own toxic super-ego. “I do X but I feel really guilty about it.” The cure is to clearly acknowledge that you do or did an action — *without defending, explaining, or justifying it, as all those things are just distraction from the power of the acknowledgement.* “I am the kind of person who \_\_\_\_.” This is usually very difficult.



However, the truth shall set you free (though in the process may make ye miserable). “Shatter your ideals on the rock of truth.” (Inayat Khan) It’s usually easier to give up the unrealistic internal standard than to continue to try to meet it. If judging yourself into meeting the standard was going to work, you’d already have met it.

### 12.5. Tiredness

Don’t think, “I am tired.” Rather, “I would like to rest.”

“Every activity takes away some energy, but the thought of being tired takes away even more energy. The spiritual way to prevent tiredness is to absorb more energy from the life within and without, around and about than one loses through activity.”

—Inayat Khan, *Githa I, Shafayat 4a*

The practices of Qāṣab and Shāghal help a great deal in absorbing more life force.

### 12.6. “Pulling oneself together.”

“There is a part of one’s life which only could be called life; there is no other name appropriate for it, and the English phrase “to pull oneself together” means to set that part of life to work. This part of life may be called “spirit.” This part is intelligence and power both in itself. It is intelligence because any part of the body and mind, or every part of both in which it dwells, it makes sensitive; and it is powerful because whichever part of the body and mind it touches it strengthens.

“In games and sports, when people jump down from a great height, what is it that protects them from hurt? It is this spirit, and they have in their habit to call this spirit to their aid. When people throw balls at each other, and even in boxing, the receiver of the blow awakens this spirit in that part on which he receives the blow. The sportsman does not know what this spirit is, though he takes refuge in this. The mystic understands it by meditation, also by research into metaphysics. When a person awakes from a deep sleep, the first thing that rises through the mind to the body, when the tendency of stretching and contracting comes, and twisting and turning, and the tendency of opening eyes, is the spirit; it rises, so to speak, and spreads.

“By the mastery of this spirit, diseases are cured, age is mastered, even death is conquered. When this spirit is lacking, energy is lacking, intelligence is lacking, joy is lacking, rest is lacking; and when there is this spirit, there is hope, there is joy, there is rest; because the nature of this spirit is to hold intact the body of atoms and vibrations. Comfort lies in its being held; discomfort comes when that spirit is not sufficient to hold the body intact. Therefore, it is the lack of this spirit, in many cases, that is the cause of a great many diseases. By the development of this spirit in himself, the healer can give a part of his spirit to another, and that becomes the best source of healing.”

—Inayat Khan, *Githa I Shafāyat #8: The Psychological Nature of Diseases*

This is a function of the true will — as distinguished from the false will, which is all about force, striving, and effort. When true will (*al-Qadr*, acting in harmony with the universal will) is present, there is little effort and no forcing; things unfold smoothly, in accordance with the intrinsic wisdom of all of the unfolding of all manifestation.

### 12.7. Difficult life situations

**The inquiry:** “What quality/qualities do I need in order to handle this situation with aplomb? Always ask this when confronting difficulties and setbacks.

Hint: If you want to change the other person or anything outside of you, your ego is wanting to control the situation.

Another hint: The real test (and task) is almost always other than what it seems to be from inside the situation or inside the ego’s perspective.

### 12.8. The Qualities we admire in others are in ourselves as well

What we are attracted to, especially in our sexual preference, is the Universe mirroring our nascent Qualities to us. What attracts us is a clue to the conversation the soul is having with God about her relationship to God. God says, “Here I am” — and is also saying, “Here YOU are.”

“Sometimes  
(according to me)  
a window opens between two hearts  
and one soul  
sees the other soul  
the way God sees that soul  
and goes a little nuts  
with joy.”  
(—hafizullah)

“The Sufis have therefore considered spiritual growth to be the development of the heart. It consists of the tuning of the heart. “Tuning” means the changing of pitch of the vibration. The tuning of the heart means the changing of the vibrations, in order that one may reach a certain pitch which is the natural pitch; then one feels the joy and ecstasy of life, which enables one to give pleasure to others even by one’s presence because one is tuned. When an instrument is properly tuned one does not need to play music on it; just by striking it one will feel great magnetism coming from it. If a well-tuned instrument can have that magnetism, how much greater should be the magnetism of the heart which is tuned! Rumi says, ‘Whether you have loved a human being or whether you have loved God, if you have loved enough you will be brought in the end into the presence of the supreme Love itself.’”

—Inayat Khan

### 12.9. Trusting God

— not because God is has a fragile ego and will be pissed if you don’t — but because it’s a way (albeit a theistic one) of staying open to the rich potentials inherent in any situa-

tion. Life really moves in  $n$  dimensions, and *when we become contracted through anger, judgment, self-pity or anxiety/fear, we shrink our availability to the Universe's movement through us and thereby narrow our choices and cut ourselves off from our own power.*

Many of us feel cut-off (due to trauma) from the inherent benignity of the universe — *an awareness that is inborn and part of our "divine inheritance"* — and it makes us contracted and often hyper-vigilant. It is an initiation of sorts when we remake/heal this internal connection to our own deep substance and begin to feel the universe as an inherently friendly place.

You do not need to personalize "God" or pray to a deity you don't believe in to recapture this awareness.

### 12.10. Toxic Situations

**"Question:** How can we overcome the disagreeable vibrations of people in our immediate surroundings with whom we daily have to live?"

**"Answer:** By being positive. It is true that one cannot always be positive. At such times, one may retire from one's associates. However, as one evolves, so one's contact becomes more powerful than the influence of the other person. Therefore, the other person receives more benefit from you, while the harm you receive is less. If, by receiving a little harm, you are able to do more good for the other person, it is just as well. It is only a matter of self-discipline, and love can conquer all things. In every person, however wicked, there is a good string somewhere, and you must know where to find it. If one always thought about it, one could always touch the best point of the other person and overlook the other points. Nevertheless, it is a struggle."

—Inayat Khan, **The Mysticism of Sound**, *Cosmic Language*, Ch. III

There are two meanings to "being positive." One is to hold a loving attitude and not let yourself become involved in others' hateful negativity. The other meaning is to *become radiant*, to work with light and to become so radiant that others' ignorance and "low vibration" does not penetrate your space/state. This is not "surrounding oneself with light," which implies that you are still small and vulnerable, it is *becoming Light*.

Practice: **The Zikr of Light**, *Nūr-Munawwir* — *becoming Light*.

## 13. BREATH

### 13.1. Qualities/Impressions on the Breath

Inquiry: What Qualities/Impressions are on my Breath in this moment?

Hint: "What do you *feel*?" Much of what we commonly feel and identify with as "myself" is *external* to the clear light of the soul and does not properly belong to us at all, but being aware of it, we assume it belongs to us.

"When the breath is kept in proper harmony and is refined, the magnetism which is ordinarily consumed in the activities of mind and body is preserved. In

whatever we do and in all our thinking and imagining we consume energy. This consumption of energy brings on old age and weakness. Contrariwise it may be that meditation of itself may cure man's evils, whatsoever they be. For all arise out of *nafs*, and meditation is the best means to subdue the *nafs*.

"Meditation is not only far more important than study, it is true study. When one completely relaxes the body and mind, and becomes receptive to God, then the Voice of God will speak in the language of the soul. This is true Sufism which can never be explained, yet can clearly be understood. One can never meditate too much. This does not mean going into one's closet, but it means keeping the heart fixed on God, to keep the mind fixed on the Invocation, every moment day and night, so the very breath will keep on calling, "Towards the One." Then the hour will arrive some time when one will realize one's true being. And what is that true being? It is God, the Only Being."  
—Inayat Khan

Until the answer to the inquiry "Who Are You" is in the silence, *what comes to consciousness is mostly a record of or thread to the impressions carried on your Breath*. These will never truly leave you as long as you are hitched to physicality, but you can learn to discern their nature and their secret and not be "run" by them.

### **13.2. 'Urūj/Nuzūl — cycles of rising and settling.**

Much in life — not just the sun and moon — has a rising, zenith, and settling rhythm if left to its own devices. Learn to recognize the sensation of these so that you can adjust your activities and schedules to them where possible, and take them into account where there is less flexibility to let them inform your actions.

Handout: 'Urūj & Nuzūl from the Gathas

## **14. THE IRON, COPPER, SILVER, & GOLDEN "RULES"**

"Rule" can mean a rigid injunction, and we usually don't like to hear about those... but "rule" can also mean a measurement — or it can mean a straight line connecting two points. Inayat Khan's Golden, Silver, Copper, and Iron "Rules" are not meant as rigid injunctions and certainly not something to measure yourself against and come up short; they are a way of connecting things. Use them as meditations, and they will slowly disclose their deeper meaning.

Pir Zia's commentaries can be found at <https://inayatiorder.org/chivalric-rules/> and are most-highly recommended.

"It is the awakening of the soul which is mentioned in the Bible: unless the soul is born again it will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. For the soul to be born again means that it is awakened after having come on earth, and entering the kingdom of heaven means entering this world in which we are now standing, the kingdom which turns into heaven as soon as the point of view has changed. Is it not interesting and most wonderful to think that the same earth that we walk on is earth to one person and heaven to another? And it is still

more interesting to notice that it is we who change it from earth to heaven. This change comes not by study nor by anything else but by the changing of our point of view.”

—***A Meditation Theme for Each Day*** From the Teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan, Selected & Arranged by Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan