

JOURNEYING TROUGH LIFE WITH JESUS, THE SON OF GOD

SELECTED EXCERPTS FOR PRAYER AND RELAXATION
A COURSE IN LIFE SKILLS FOR CATHOLIC YOUTH AND ADULTS
FOR PAX IN FAMILIA'S WORKSHOPS IN AFRICA
©CHRISTAURIA WELLAND, 2018

For further information contact drchristauriawelland@gmail.com or text +18589228555

1) I AM THE TRUE VINE. John 15

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE OF THE DAY

Deep Breathing

Learning how to breathe for relaxation is probably the most important way to calm ourselves down that there is!

“Breathing is the only bodily function that we do both voluntarily and involuntarily. We can consciously use breathing to influence the involuntary (sympathetic nervous system) that regulates blood pressure, heart rate, circulation, digestion and many other bodily functions. Breathing exercises can act as a bridge into those functions of the body, over which we generally do not have conscious control.

During times of emotional stress, our sympathetic nervous system is stimulated and effects a number of physical responses. Our heart rate rises, we perspire, our muscles tense and our breathing becomes rapid and shallow. If this process happens over a long period of time, the sympathetic nervous system becomes over-stimulated leading to an imbalance that can affect our physical health. This can result in inflammation, high blood pressure and muscle pain.”¹

Deep breathing will help us to relax, calm down, get control of our emotions, including fear, anger and sadness, and to become aware of our true self which lives in communion with God.

STEPS TO TAKE:

1. Sit with your spine straight and your feet flat in the ground. Close your eyes if you wish.
2. Place one hand on your chest and one on your abdomen (belly). Relax. Let your shoulders relax.
3. Begin to breathe in fully and slowly through your nose, and to exhale gently and fully through your mouth. Imagine you could feel the air blowing out if you were to put your hand there.
4. Aim to breathe deeply so you can feel your belly expand under your hand as you inhale and your lungs fill up. (If you can feel your shoulders go up with your other hand, you are doing shallow breathing, which will not relax you as well.)

¹ <https://psychcentral.com/lib/learning-deep-breathing/>

5. Once you have learned how to breathe fully, try to breathe in slowly for 4 counts, and exhale slowly for 4 counts. When you have mastered abdominal breathing, you no longer need to use your hands to guide you.
6. You can do this anywhere at any time to help you calm down and send more oxygen to your brain!

2) I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

READING: JOHN 10: 11 - 15.

I know my own and mine know me. I give my life for my sheep.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. **I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me**, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

PRAYER FOR TODAY:

THE SACRAMENT OF THE PRESENT MOMENT.^{2 3}

Jesus comes to us in a new and living way every day, and in every moment of every day. We should be aware of the events that occur minute-by-minute, from the smallest to the greatest, because this is how God speaks to us. In **the sacrament of the present moment** we dwell in a state of abandonment to the will of God, focused on what God is doing in the present moment. Mary and Joseph were the holiest people in the world, because their lives were guided by a pure and simple commitment to the will of God in every moment of the day. On the surface they were like ordinary people, but in their hearts and minds they reached the heights of sanctity **through complete trust in God's grace and obedience to his Will**. They found the treasure that Jesus speaks of in the gospel.

What is the secret of how to find this treasure? **There is none! It is available to us always, everywhere.** Like God, every creature pours it out generously, making it flow through every part of our bodies and souls, to the very center of our being... How simple is this **perfect and total surrender of self to the world of God!**

PRAYER METHOD FOR TODAY

I can relax in the loving arms of Jesus my Good Shepherd at every moment. He is caring for me and carrying me.

² De Caussade, Jean-Pierre, S. J., (ed. 2009) *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco

³ Brinkmann, Susan, OCDS. (2017). *A Catholic guide to mindfulness*. Bessemer, Alabama. Avila Institute for Spiritual formation

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE:

I will practice deep breathing to relax my body and mind. Wherever I am, I will take slow, deep breaths, allowing the air to fill my lungs, while I let go of all tension and stress.

This will help me to surrender to Jesus, the Good Shepherd. I can visualize myself in his arms, being carried lovingly and feeling safe, happy, and loved. Maybe if I listen closely I can even hear his heart beating.

3) I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. JOHN 8, 9

THE JESUS PRAYER

- 1) Silent meditation for a moment.
- 2) Now say quietly in your heart, "Lord, I want to see."
- 3) Ask the Lord to help you to see and love yourself and others as he sees you and them.
- 4) Begin to pray **THE JESUS PRAYER**⁴:

"Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner."

- ✦ Use deep breathing, slowly and fully
- ✦ As you pray "Lord Jesus Christ"
 - Breathe in peace
- ✦ As you pray "Have mercy on me a sinner"
 - Breathe out tension, anxiety, and anger.
- ✦ Pray the Jesus prayer for a while in silence.
- ✦ Try it many times this week, until you get used to praying all the time.

Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18

The Jesus Prayer is especially good to pray when we are walking, travelling, or engaged in any activity that does not require active thought (any manual work, housework, gardening, cooking, etc.). The prayer becomes a constant rhythm that comes naturally, and keeps us enfolded in the presence of God our Heavenly Father.

⁴ Writings from the Philokalia: On Prayer of the Heart (1992). [E. Kadloubovsky](#) & [G. E.H. Palmer](#), Translators of the Eastern Church Fathers text

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE:

Breathing with conscious intention

- ✦ Use deep breathing, slowly and fully
 - Breathe in peace
 - Breathe out tension, anxiety, and anger.

- ✦ Ideally, you will become experienced at blending this technique with the Jesus Prayer.

4) I AM THE DOOR, JOHN 10.

7 WAYS TO CALM DOWN AND AVOID EXPLODING⁵

1. **Prayer:** Praying unites us with God, the source of peace. It also helps us to become physically, emotionally, and mentally calm.
2. **Deep breathing.** Stop for a moment when you feel tense, and take a deep breath. This increases the oxygen in your body and helps you to think more clearly, to calm down, and to change your focus in the situation.
3. **Run or Walk Energetically.** This is good for both stress reduction and general health. In addition, physical activity helps divert our attention from the stress in our environment that produces tension.
4. **Physical Work.** Physical work can release energy in the same way as running, while at the same time achieving something concrete.
5. **Quiet time.** This means looking for solitude for a while. Listen to music, sit quietly, walk alone in a restful place, like a park, or next to a lake, river, or forest, or anywhere you feel at peace.
6. **Talk.** Talking about stress with another person can also help you. Talk about what's worrying you with someone you trust.
7. **Relaxation exercises.** Tense up your muscle groups, and then relax them, or use a relaxation exercise from Youtube, an app, etc.⁶

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3, 14

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE:

BREATHE AND RELAX.

Imagine: I am going through a very beautiful doorway into a green pasture. This is Jesus, the Door of the sheepfold. Imagine he is keeping harmful things and people away from me, like a strong gate that keeps me safe. He is my refuge.

⁵ cf. Welland, C. & Wexler, D. (2007). *Sin Golpes: Como Transformar la Respuesta Violenta de los Hombres en la Pareja y la Familia*. Mexico City: Editorial Pax

⁶ Quick Relaxation: A Relaxation Technique for Stress Relief/ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVHOKq91Uh4>

Breathe and relax and say the “Jesus Prayer” quietly in my heart. Breathe in on “Lord Jesus Christ”, breathe out on “Have mercy on me, a sinner.”

“Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner. “

5) I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. JOHN 11

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE:

Stand straight with your arms at your side and your feet apart at shoulder width.

- ✦ Raise both your arms straight in front of you all the way up over your head, as you breathe in slowly. Let your whole body expand.
- ✦ Pause there for 2 seconds.
- ✦ Then breathe out slowly as you lower your arms to your sides. Imagine that you are gently pushing the air down with your hands.
- ✦ Repeat 3 times.
- ✦ You can do this anytime you need to relax and refocus

6) I AM NOT ALONE/ I AM. JOHN 18.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE:

THE SAFE PLACE: A CALMING TECHNIQUE TO USE IN TIME OF NEED

I can choose any calm and beautiful place in nature, and practice going there in my imagination when I am upset, or feeling afraid, sad, and lonely. It doesn't have to be a place I have actually been. It can be a place I have seen in a photo or video, somewhere that I think is beautiful and relaxing. Or based on today's prayer, I can choose the Heart of Jesus, or the Heart of Mary. **I will call this my Safe Place.** There I will breathe deeply and relax, and find a safe refuge. I can spend a lot or a little time in my Safe Place, where my heart rate will go down, my muscles will relax, and my racing thoughts will slow down and be replaced by peace and calm.

7) I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE:

Take a brief, contemplative walk for 5 – 10 minutes outside in nature, or in a garden. Breathe slowly and deeply and pay attention exclusively to the present moment. When you get distracted, gently bring your mind back to your breathing and being in the now.

8) I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE. JOHN 14

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE:

Breathe deeply for a while, relax your muscles, and close your eyes. Imagine that you are walking with Jesus on the Way. Maybe he is holding your hand or has his arm around you. Feel the peace that he is giving you. Go to your Safe Place together and let him comfort and protect you. **Ask him to help you always remain in his love, and to help you stay on his path every day.**