



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

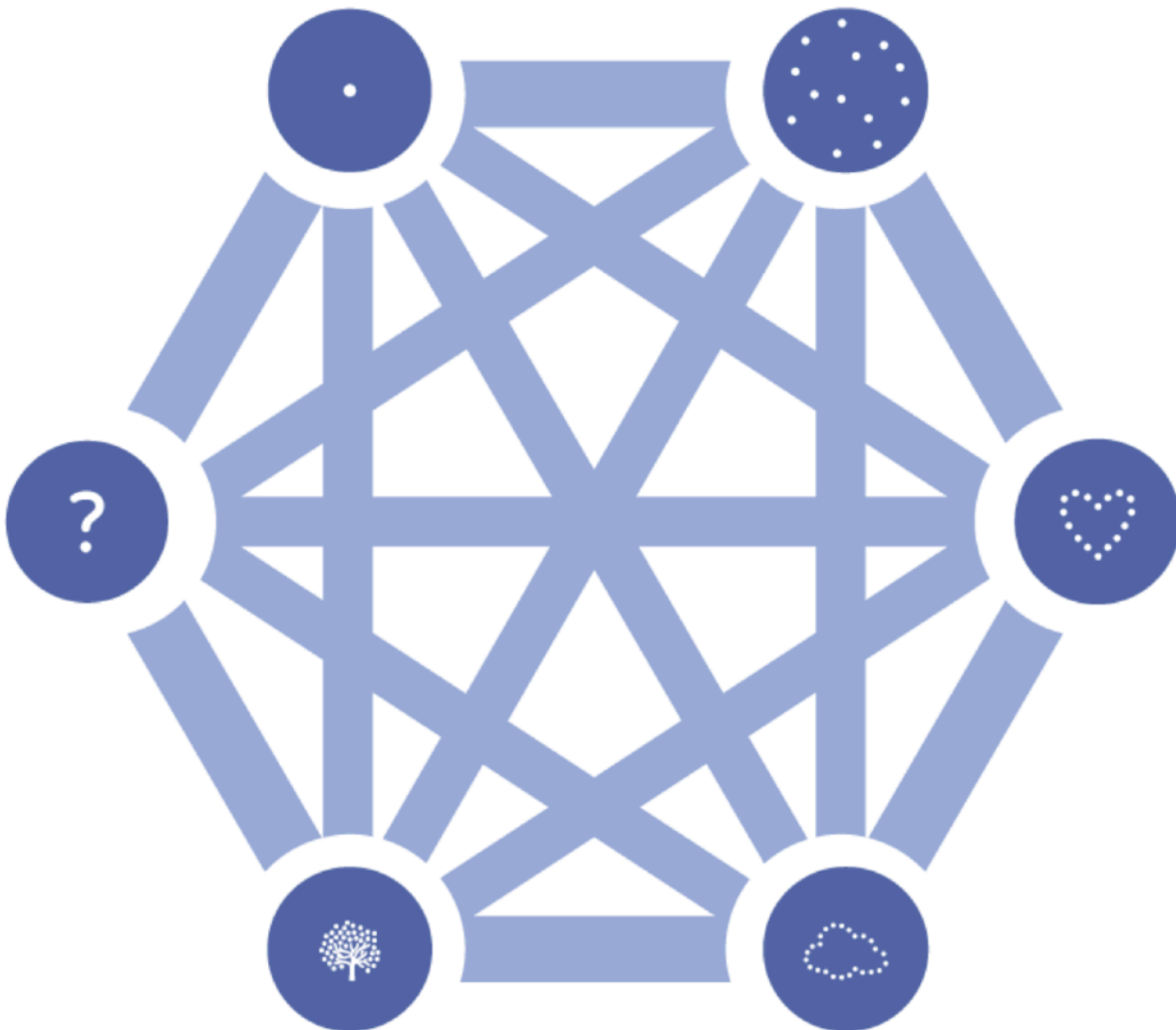
CONGREGATION OF FREDERICK
Spirituality · Community · Justice

Contemplative Cross-training: 6 Ways to Meditate Or, How Do You Know If You Are Making Progress in Meditation?

The Rev. Dr. J. Carl Gregg

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frederickuu.org



Graphic : guide.buddhistgeeks.org/meditation/ways

For Further Study: frederickuu.org/meditation

Note: This sermon was preached from an outline, which is available below.

The full sermon *video* is available at youtube.com/watch?v=d4KTtd4GhFQ

What I would like to invite us to do this morning:

- **Clear-up:** common confusions about what meditation is (*it's not just 1 thing*)
- **Share:** tips I wish I had know many years ago
- **Answer:** “How do I know if I’m making progress in meditation?” (*it's not just 1 thing*)
- **Parallels:** Contemplative cross-training & *physical* cross-training

Story

- College: William James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience*, planted seed— “first hand vs. 2nd hand”
- Divinity School: weeks at monasteries and intentional communities: Abbey of Gethsemane (Merton), Koinonia Farms, Monastery of Christ in the Desert, Osage Monastery, Desert House of Prayer
- San Francisco Theological Seminary: Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction
- 2009: listening to “Buddhist Geeks” podcast, reading Daniel Ingram’s *Mastering the Core Teachings of the Buddha: An Unusually Hardcore Dharma Book*
- Anti-“mushroom culture”: “Keeping you in the dark and feeding you [crap].”
- Wish I had known: 6 ways to meditate vs. trying to replicate Ingram’s experience
- meditation like medication: dosage matters
- *Right Concentration: A Practical Guide to the Jhanas* by Leigh Brasington
- Reggie Ray’s *Mahamudra for the Modern World*

Shift

- College: Japanese Philosophy — “non-self” seemed like ‘self-evident’ b.s.
- Now: “non-self” seems existentially true; nothing is a noun and everything is a *verb* — “process/relational” all the way down
- Chögyam Trungpa: “The bad news is you're falling through the air, nothing to hang on to, no parachute. The good news is, there's no ground.”

Concentration

- Graphic: one dot
- Progress/Metric: Indistractibility
- Wish I'd known: breath can become very light, very pleasurable
- Alternatives to breath: *kasinas* — fire (candle), earth (statue), air (wind), water (bowl)
- Wish I'd known: noticing distraction is a moment of *mindfulness*
- Tip: be gentle with yourself (not practicing being mean to yourself)
- Practice: socialmeditation.guide/intermediate/social-breath-counting
- insighttimer.com app to keep track of time

Mindfulness

- Graphic: many dots
- Jon Kabat-Zinn: “paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally”
- Practice: socialmeditation.guide/basic/basic-noting
- Progress/Metric: “sensory clarity” / NPMs (“noting per minute”)
- Compare: concentration (stabilizing) / Noting *destabilizing*
- 3 Characteristics: impermanence, non-self, unsatisfactoriness
- “You don't have to believe everything you think”
- Wording: “There is (anxiety)” can make more workable, compared to “I am (anxious)”: socialmeditation.guide/basic/there-is-noting

Heartfulness

- Graphic: heart
- Four *Brahma* (“sublime/divine”) + *viharas* (“abode/dwelling”)
- Progress/Metric: practice ≠ perfect; practice = more permanent (most second nature)

1. *Metta* (“loving-kindness/friendliness”)

- Far enemy: hate/ill-will
- Near enemy: attachment/greed

2. *Karuna* (“compassion”)

- Far enemy: cruelty
- Near enemy: altruistic narcissism
- Self-compassion Break: self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#

3. *Mudita* (“empathetic joy”)

- Far enemy: jealousy/schadenfreude
- Near enemy: grasping out of insufficiency/lack
- Practice: Social media, open heart to joy of others

4. *Upekha* (“equanimity”)

- Far enemy: greed/resentment
- Near enemy: indifference/apathy
- Brené Brown / Joan Halifax: “Strong back, soft front, wild heart”

Bodyfulness

- Graphic: tree
- Progress/Metric: embodiment vs. “neck up” meditation
- What I wish I’d known: meditating sitting, walking, standing, or *lying down*
- Important: Relaxing body (“relaxed, yet alert”) and relaxing your expectations about what meditation “should be like”; instead, open to what meditation *is like*.
- dharmaocean.org/guided-practices

Awareness

- Graphic: cloud
- Progress/Metric: experience *essential* nature of your mind — always/already vast, spacious, open Loving-Awareness
- Metaphor: “Sun always out on the other side of clouds”
- Michael Taft: “drop the ball,” deconstructingyourself.com/the-one-real-miracle.html
- No figuring this out with the cognitive mind. No academic degree to achieve. No efforting or striving your way there. You are already there. Releasing. Relaxing. Letting go into timelessness, stillness. Resting in vast spacious open awareness.
- The Matrix: What if I told you...you are already a Buddha. You are already Awakened. Try embodying. Take that for a test drive.
- Thich Nhat Hanh: “Be a business-less person.... Nothing to do. Nowhere to go.”

Vince Horn:

- Logic of Samsara: “if this, then that” (*quid pro quo*)
- Logic of Nirvana: just this

Inquiry

- Graphic: ?
- Practice: Drop question into consciousness periodically with real curiosity, *like looking for your keys* and you really don't know where they are.
 - What is meditation?
 - Who am I? Who are you? Who are we?
 - Who would I be without my stories?
 - Since death alone is certain and the time of death uncertain, what should I do?
 - What is mine to do?
 - What wants to emerge?
- Ramana Maharshi: “[Over time, continuing to ask the inquiry question in meditation] will destroy all other thoughts, and like the stick used for stirring the burning pyre, it will itself in the end get destroyed. Then, there will arise Self-realization.”

For Further Study: frederickuu.org/meditation — section on “How to Meditate (Intermediate to Advanced)” has list of resources related to each of the six ways.

Dedication of Merit (Dharma Ocean): “Whatever goodness our practice has brought, may we dedicate it to all those who suffer. Whatever insight and joy we have found, may we willingly share with all beings. Whatever merit our practice has generated, may it be multiplied...for the happiness and welfare of all.”