

Circle of Mercy Sermon
John 14:1
5/14/17

Practices on the Run
Mahan Siler

The context: leading with Nancy Sehested a spiritual writing group at Women's Prison involving six women. Knowing that they live day to day in a highly anxious, reactive, fearful environment, I was searching for practical practices that invite the shift from feeling fearfully anxious to an inner place of presence, centeredness, calm, confidence, trust --- even for a brief time. These are practices that can be called on any time, at any place.

1. Feel your **feet**, feel them as fully as possible. Wiggle your toes. Note the floor or the soil that "grounds" you. If walking feel your feet meeting the ground, hear its sound. If sitting, feel held, supported by the chair. Stay focused for two minutes. Be present with the feeling of your feet. Be grateful for your feet, the pleasure and utility they give to you. ***You can do this any time and any place.***

2. Tend to your **breathing**. Feel the air coming into your lungs; feel the exhaling of your breath. When your mind wanders, come back to noticing your breathing, in and out. Allow your breathing to go deeper, taking air into your stomach and slowing exhaling. Feel the life energy coming in and through you. Stay focused on your breathing for two minutes.

You can connect your breathing with God by knowing the Hebrew word, "**ruach**." The word means --- the creative energy of life, spirit, and wind. As you breath in and out, you are connecting with the very life force of God, Spirit. God is breathing in you, through you. See yourself as a flute being breathed through you by God, making unique music for the world around you. The Hebrews, so reluctant to pin down the mystery of God with a name, chose a non-name --- YHW or yahweh. Its a breath word: yah (breathing in) and "weh" (breathing out). As you breath in and out, realize the love of God coming into you and going out from you as love. ***You can do this any time and any place.***

3. Call to your mind an **Ally**. You are full of relationships in your life, many that helped form who you are. Many of these --- a mother, father, grandparent, friend, teacher, minister, etc. --- are positive voices. They stand available for support and wisdom See them "in your balcony" standing up, cheering you own. Call on them in your imagination. Ask for their wisdom. Ask for their supportive love. Feel them along side, just as Jesus invited us to be yoked with him. We are not alone. We have allies. ***You can call on them any time and any place.***

4. Shift to **wonder** over the gifts before you. If you look carefully, deeply at what is before you, you will come to a sense of wonder. Look carefully at a flower, a tree, the building you are in or the person across from you. Focus. Imagine that thing or person's history, unpack what you see until you begin to feel the marvel of that person or thing. If you ponder deep enough, you will start feeling the wonder of that creation and then the wonder of your creation, the

marvel of you being able to shift to the wonderous mystery of life and love all around you. You are always receiving what you didn't create, all gift, all grace --- for eyes that see carefully. Hold to this exploration for two minutes. ***This shift to wonder and gratitude you can do any time and any place.***