

## Grace and Grit: Spiritual Preparation for Creativity

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Sometimes we find ourselves in creative modes, welcoming ideas or insights in the middle of doing other things. Sometimes, however, carrying out a ritual right before designated creative time can help us be more present, open, vulnerable, grateful, or otherwise ready for the mix of perspiration and inspiration that so often is creativity.

Below are some sample spiritual preparation exercises for those times when you want to begin your creative time with a ritual. Please modify these exercises so that you can engage in them comfortably, safely, and with integrity. *If any of these exercises trigger prior experiences of trauma, do not do them without support and guidance from a trauma professional such as a therapist.*

### 1. Grounding in silence

Sit comfortably in a posture that connects your feet to the ground and pulls your head up toward the ceiling or sky. Close your eyes if you prefer. Wait in silence for a period of time, as long or as short as you like. You can focus on your breath, listen to the silence, listen to the sounds of the world outside, or engage the silence in some other way. Find a way to bring closure to this exercise, such as ringing a bell, saying a word aloud, or otherwise ending the silence.

### 2. Grounding in sense awareness

Sit comfortably in a posture that connects your feet to the ground and pulls your head up toward the ceiling or sky.

Put your hands together so that your palms are touching and your fingers are extended. Spend a minute feeling what it is like for your hands to touch each other. Notice pressure, stress, heat or coolness. When you are done, rest your hands in your lap or in another position of ease.

Look forward, exploring anything you can see without moving your head. When you have done as much looking as you want in this position, turn your head to the left and continue exploring with your eyes. Turn your head to the right and do the same. If it is comfortable, you may wish to look up or down in the same way. When you are done, return your gaze to your starting position so that you are looking forward.

Close your eyes, breathe quietly, and listen. Identify the sounds you hear and notice how loud or soft they are, how subtle or intrusive. When you are done, open your eyes.

Close your eyes, roll your tongue around in your mouth, and notice any tastes. When you are done, open your eyes.

Close your eyes and inhale deeply and slowly through your nose, noticing any scents or smells. When you are done, open your eyes.

Find a way to bring closure to this exercise, such as a brief prayer.

### 3. Grounding in prayer

Sit or stand comfortably in a posture that you would normally use for prayer, eyes open or closed as you are inspired. Offer any prayer that feels appropriate to the situation, either a traditional prayer or one that you create on the spot. For ritual completeness, end with an “amen” or other equivalent closing.

#### 3a. Grounding in prayer: breath prayer

Sit or stand comfortably in a posture that you would normally use for prayer, eyes open or closed as you are inspired. Begin to breathe in a slow, deep pattern, with equally long inhalations and exhalations. As you inhale, say silently, “Your blessings enrich me;” as you exhale, say silently, “and I bless the world.” Breathe this prayer for a couple of minutes (or longer if you wish). End with an “amen” or other equivalent closing, spoken aloud.

We will use this breath prayer at our first session.

#### 3b. Grounding in prayer: body prayer

Julian of Norwich developed this prayer, to the best of my knowledge; Julie Payne Britton and I have added descriptive text.

This prayer involves moving your arms and hands into four postures. Please modify the movements in any way that you need to in order to be able to participate safely, comfortably and with integrity. If you wish to read the prayer text while carrying out the movements, engage in the prayer where you can either see a computer screen or a printed page. You can practice the postures without reading the prayer text by moving in silence or by coming up with your own equivalent language. Sit or stand in a comfortable posture.

First posture: Await. Cup your hands and hold them open with your arms in front of your waist. Holding this posture, we await the presence of the sacred, expressing our openness to being moved and nourished by the Spirit of Creativity.

Second posture: Allow. Raise your arms in the air as high as they will go with your hands open and your palms facing forward. Holding this posture, we allow the world to be exactly as it is, just for this moment. We allow ourselves to be exactly as we are, just for this moment. Our hands are open in gratitude and receptiveness. We allow the Spirit of Creativity to move in, through, between, and among us.

Third posture: Accept. Bring your hands to your chest and cradle your heart. Holding this posture, we accept that we are each a beloved part of a beloved universe and that creativity is our birthright, a sacred spark burning within us.

Fourth posture: Attend. Reach your arms out in front of you, with hands open and palms facing up. Holding this posture, we attend to the sacred invitation to be and become our best selves, to live lives of love, flourishing, and creativity, and to offer our gifts, including our creative gifts, to a beautiful and broken world.

We will use this body prayer at our second session.

#### 4. Grounding in affirmation

If you find affirmations useful in your life, you may wish to develop some affirmations specific to your creative life. While you will know what kinds of affirmations are most appropriate for you, I encourage you to consider affirmations that include some or all of the following:

- Acknowledgement of the challenges of creativity and affirmation that you are ready for those challenges
- Releasing of any emotional or spiritual blocks that interfere with your creativity
- An invitation or offering of welcome to the spirit of inspiration
- A commitment to do the work involved in creativity and an indication of your preparation for that work
- A statement of willingness to offer your creativity for the well-being of others and the world