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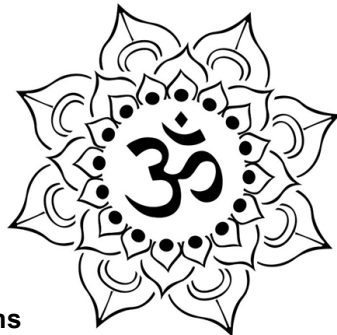
Eleven Spiritual Practices

1) "11:11 Amitabha Practice" – This is an ancient spiritual practice from Chinese Buddhism, and millions of practitioners, both past and present, can testify to its power. I have adapted it for our modern Western lifestyle. Here is the practice:

Chant a mantra at least 11 times during 11 periods of the day (or whenever you think of it). The mantra I recommend is the mantra "OM NAMO AMITABHA BUDDHAYA" (*Gratitude to the Infinite Light of Awakening*). You can also chant a shorter version of this mantra by simply chanting "AMITABHA" (*Infinite Light*) or "NAMO AMITABHA" (*Gratitude to the Infinite Light*). Other variations are "OM AMITABHA HRIH" or "OM AMIDEVA HRIH" (*Infinite Divine Reality*). If you prefer the Divine Feminine manifestation of the Buddha, then you may chant "NAMO AVALOKITESHVARAYA" or "NAMO GUAN SHI YIN PUSA" (*Quan Yin*) or "OM MANI PADME HUM" (*Enlightened Wisdom Compassion Activating*) which evokes the Buddha/Bodhisattva of Compassion, one of the major emanations of Amitabha.

Simply put, the practice is to chant "OM NAMO AMITABHA BUDDHAYA" (or "AMITABHA" etc.) at least 11 times during 11 periods of the day (or whenever you think of it, perhaps at 11:11 am or 11:11 pm too):

1. Upon waking
2. Before breakfast
3. After breakfast
4. Before work
5. Before lunch
6. After lunch
7. After work
8. Before dinner
9. After dinner
10. At bedtime
11. In your sleep/dreams



2) Daily Meditation – Sitting Meditation is a way of resting as "Being" in alert accepting awareness. Walking Meditation helps to prepare us for Sitting Meditation as well as to extend "Being" to the various "doings" of our human life in the Universe. Consistency is the key to meditation practice (*preferably at least 20 minutes twice a day, perhaps before breakfast and before dinner*).

3) Weekly Sangha – Attend group meditation every week. The minimum is once a month.

4) Meditation Retreat – Attend a meditation retreat sometime this month, this season, this year. It could be a weeklong retreat, or a weekend retreat, or even just a daylong retreat, but the minimum is a half-day retreat (*at least 3 or 4 hours*).

5) Nature – Spend time regularly in Nature (*preferably in silence*).

6) Gratitude – Practice reciting out loud for at least 3 minutes nonstop all that you feel grateful for, or all that is positive, or at least all that is not bad. If you do this every day alone or with a friend, you will notice a major shift in your energy. The minimum is to practice this once a week, preferably with a friend, taking turns.

7) Journal-writing – Buy a new journal and write in it every day or at least once a week. Express yourself on paper.

8) Dharma-reading – Read good spiritual Dharma books. Immerse your mind in positive teachings.

9) Yoga / Qigong – If you don't already practice Yoga or Qigong, then this is the best time to start. Take a gentle Yoga class or energizing Qigong class. There are several to choose from at the DALLAS MEDITATION CENTER and other places. You will be amazed at how much this supports your meditation practice and your spiritual growth.

10) Semi-Vegetarian Diet – Consciously cut back on your meat consumption. When eating meat, choose fish over other forms. The next best would be poultry. Eliminate or cut back on pork and beef. Eat more fresh vegetables. Perhaps take a vegetarian cooking class. There are several great vegetarian restaurants, such as "Veggie Garden" (*on Arapaho Rd. @ Custer Rd. in Richardson, TX*). Consider having at least one vegetarian meal per day, and maybe one day a week that is completely vegetarian.

11) "Dana" (Generosity) & "Seva" (Service) – Consider making a donation of at least \$11 each week during this month, this season, or this year to AWAKENING HEART. Or give a one-time gift of \$111. Or \$1,111. And serve through volunteer work here or elsewhere. Dana and seva are at the very heart of our practice. NAMO AMITABHA! ☺

