

# PRACTICING PRESENCE



“The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only hope.”

— *Wendell Berry*

“Ecology and spirituality are fundamentally connected, because deep ecological awareness, ultimately, is spiritual awareness.”

— *Fritjof Capra*

“You can hear the footsteps of God when silence reigns in the mind.”

— *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*



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Practicing Presence requires a certain amount of non-reactivity. Being able to notice and observe our own emotions allows for a space between what activates us (or triggers us) and our next thought, word, or action. The space allows us to respond skillfully rather than react choicelessly. It also creates pathways to take care of our own needs in the moment. This practicing awareness of our emotional process gives us insight into the experience of others, precisely because all of us are human. Happily, that new information we gain inside that moment of presence increases the likelihood that we can, and will, envision ourselves in someone else’s situation.

We often have the perception that nature is remote. It’s somewhere out there in the distance, and to fully access it and benefit from it we have to leave our workaday lives behind. Wherever we are, nature surrounds us and we’re a part of it.

Symphonies of birdsong play overhead as we load groceries into our car trunk. The tangy scent of earth dampened by dew fills the morning air. And even alongside highway on-ramps, flowers grow.

Biomimicry expert Jane Benyus has said when she’s outside she tries to quiet her analytical mind. She listens, observes, and puts herself in the presence of nature, allowing its beauty and surprise to unfold before her.

We can do the same whether we’re walking along city streets or sitting quietly in a meadow. Next time you step outside or travel deep into the wilderness, try the following mindfulness perspectives and practices to invite the wonder of nature into your life and learn a bit from its majesty. *Full article by Kelly Barron at [Mindful.org](http://Mindful.org)*



**“PRESENCE IS**  
more than just being there.”

— *Malcolm Forbes*

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# MAKING SPACE FOR PRESENCE

**H**olding space is a conscious act of being present, open, allowing, and protective of what another needs in each moment. The term has been growing in popularity among caregivers, healers, yogis, and spiritual seekers. It's a broadly used phrase to define the act of "being there" for another. The effects of this practice, however, go much deeper than simply offering support.



Consider the individual words for a moment. To hold means to embrace or encircle someone or something in your grasp. Physically, this might take the form of a hug or the cradling of a hand in yours. But you can also embrace someone non-physically with your intention, attention, and energy.

Space refers to the immediate environment you are sharing with another. This, too, may be the physical space of a room, but more frequently refers to the mental and emotional environment you are in with others. Put together, these words embody the principle of surrounding the environment with

your awareness in way that provides comfort and compassion for all. Holding space involves several specific qualities of consciously relating to others, the sum of which are greater than the individual parts. Let us explore these attributes and see how they can deepen your ability to hold space for others.

## SAFETY

A key component to holding space is the quality of safety. For others to be open, genuine, and oftentimes vulnerable, they must feel secure and have a sense of trust. People won't let down their defenses until they know it is safe to do so.

## SUSPENDED SELF-IMPORTANCE

A vitally important aspect of holding space is the understanding that it's not about you. When you hold space you must make the conscious decision to leave your ego at the door. Holding space is about serving others and your personal concerns or needs are not part of the process.

## ATTENTION

One of the most precious gifts you can give another is the gift of your full and complete attention. However, listening attentively without the need to respond, interrupt, or comment is a skill that takes considerable practice to master.



"The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion."

*Laudato Si'*, [219]

The rich heritage of Christian spirituality, the fruit of twenty centuries of personal and communal experience, has a precious contribution to make to the renewal of humanity. Here, I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith, since the teachings of the Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living.

*Laudato Si'* [216]

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### Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be, I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds. I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water. And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with their light. For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

— Wendell Berry

### PRACTICE ACCEPTANCE

Holding space is all about allowing — allowing this person or group to feel what they feel. Allowing them to say what they need to say. Allowing yourself to be whatever they need you to be right now. Holding space, therefore, isn't about controlling anything. Your role is that of a guardian of the space. Like two cupped hands filled with water, you are there to hold the other with your awareness. In doing so, you must allow that experience to take whatever shape it will.

### NONJUDGEMENT

Holding space is an impartial process. You're not there to pass judgement or to evaluate another. When you judge another's experience you create additional mental static that will only get in the way and obscure the truth. In the moment when you're holding another's fears, suffering, or grief, your opinions are irrelevant.

### COMPASSION

Although you nonjudgmentally practice acceptance with your full attention, that doesn't mean you wouldn't prefer things to be better. Compassion is an essential quality for the practice of holding space. To embrace another in acceptance is an act of compassion in and of itself. In your openness to the pain of others you are essentially saying, "How can I help you? I don't want you to hurt. What can I do to help support your highest good?" Even if not spoken aloud, these intentions to relieve the suffering of others are the essence of compassion.

### WITNESSING

Witnessing allows you to play a special part while holding space—that of the observer. Like in quantum physics, the observer is what triggers the collapse of the wave of potential into a particle, the non-local into the localized phenomenon. But this doesn't involve any action on the observer's part. In holding space you're just there as the witness, almost like a fly on the wall. Naturally, you can participate if requested to do so, but essentially your role is that of the watcher.

Through the practice of holding space, you serve as a container for which the healing and transformation can take place. It's a powerful gift of presence that you can give to others through the quality of your attention.

*Full Article by Adam Brady - [Holding Space: The Art of Being Present with Others](#)*

# INVITE NATURE INTO YOUR LIFE

## 1) Open Your Senses to the Outdoors

Whenever you're outside, open up your senses. See the sky overhead, feel the ground beneath your every step, look for insects that might be hiding in narrow sidewalk cracks. Nature can be warm, wondrous, and welcoming, but also raw, gray, and punishing. When we allow nature to be just as we find it, our perspective widens, inviting delight or invigoration and helping us put our daily worries into perspective, even if only for a few moments.

## 2) Get Outside More Often

Whether we realize it or not, we spend most of our time indoors. In doing so we cut ourselves off from the wide-ranging benefits of being in nature, which include everything from lessening depression to boosting our immune systems.

As we begin our day, we can become more mindful about the indoor/outdoor balance we're striking. And if we've had a roof over our head for too long, we can plan a walk, a day at the beach, or a hike in the woods.

## 3) Marvel at Nature's Genius

Awe is a powerfully uplifting emotion and most everything in nature is awesome—whether it's a raspberry-sherbet-colored sunset or the elegantly repeating spirals found in the bright-yellow center of a daisy. We can invite more awe into our daily lives by marveling at nature's genius.

Next time you're outdoors, take a few moments to bring your full, patient attention to an aspect of the natural world. It can be something as small as a blade of grass or as all-encompassing as a mountain vista, as mild as a mud puddle or as fearsome as a lightning storm. By more closely observing the natural world, we can discover the splendor we often take for granted but that always surrounds us. *Full article by Kelly Barron at [Mindful.org](http://Mindful.org)*

### **“ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY**

is the compassion that arises naturally within consciousness when we feel our biological unity with people, animals, plants and the elements of the Earth.”

— David Crow



“Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.”

*Laudato Si' [246]*

“A fragile world, entrusted by God to human care, challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing and limiting our power.”

*Laudato Si' [78]*

There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions.”

*Laudato Si', [211]*



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