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"Spiritual Practices" (from your Community Wellness Co-Ordinator)

Although we are all complex and unique individuals, psychologists continually try to pigeon-hole us into personality types. One common assessment tool is the 'Myers Briggs' scale which commonly classifies people as either introverts or extroverts. As the names would imply, extroverts are more spontaneous, outgoing and highly social people, whereas introverts thrive on reflection and solitude. Asked recently how he was coping during these times of physical distancing and isolation, one of my more reserved colleagues responded "*Are you kidding? I'm living the introvert's dream!*"

Believe it or not, I'm an introvert too, so I can relate! Spending quiet days at home, doing lots of reading, having time to meditate and journal, going for long walks by myself – these are things I often yearn to do more of during times that are busily hectic with full calendars and many social obligations. Often negatively labelled as 'shy' as a child, I have learned to accept my true identity as an introvert as who I am and who I will remain, rather than some kind of defect to overcome.

Introverts are at a distinct advantage in coping with the current global crisis. We naturally turn inward and are able to nourish ourselves in solitude. And so I thought I would share from the secret stash of spiritual practices well known to many introverts, with an invitation to those of you who are extroverts and perhaps suffering from the lack of socialization, to try them. They're all simple to do by yourself at home and perhaps you may discover this period of isolation as a meaningful time of surprising spiritual renewal for all personality types!

- **Create a Sacred Space:** gather a few significant items (a treasured photo or small memento, an interesting rock or fossil, a feather or shell) and create a personal altar somewhere that you can light a candle and quietly sit. You might contemplate the items, you might meditate or pray, you might just sit. Without expectations, just see what unfolds!
- **Journaling:** Whether on a computer or by hand, even drawing if you're artistic. We are living in historic times and you can offer a first-person account! Record what you're doing, expressing honestly how you're feeling, what are your hopes and fears. Unsure how to start or what to say? Try the form of a letter: Dear _____, Today I _____ and it made me feel _____.
- **Sensory Meditation:** Whether you're eating a snack or meal, be completely mindful in what you're doing. Pay attention to your senses – as you cut fruit or vegetables notice the scent, the feel, the sound. The sizzle of meat in a pan, how the colour changes as food is cooked, the texture of grains of rice. Then when you finally sit to eat, pay attention to each mouthful, slowly appreciating not just the taste, but every aspect of the experience. Savour it!
- **Crafting:** Whether you scrapbook, knit, sew, carve or build, this again can be a mindful experience when undivided attention is paid to the materials, the intricacy of their connections and our own concentration on what we are creating. It allows our mind to clear and be eased of distractions while we focus on what is immediately in front of us where again we may be surprised to find unexpected meaning and connection.

Grace to you, and peace,

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¹ For fun you can take the full Myers Briggs quiz and learn about your 'type' – I'm an ISTJ – what are you? <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp>