

JOURNEY IN... YEAR THREE

THE DIVINE WITHIN BODY

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- 'Practice' implies having the discipline and commitment to do something over and over again until it becomes second nature. Artistic, musical, athletic and language skills are all things that demand practice, as kids know well.
- It takes practice to establish a strong connection to the divine presence within us and in our lives. We call this sort of effort 'spiritual practice'.
- Each person can find a spiritual practice that helps cultivate inner balance and depth. There are plenty of options to choose from, drawing from many traditions and schools of thought.

Lesson Materials

- DVD: *T'ai Chi Flow for Kids*
- DVD player and TV

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Don't put anything else into your mouth, like your projects, your worries, your fear, just put the carrot in. And when you chew, chew only the carrot, not your projects or your ideas.

– Thich Nhat Hanh

Do you have a body? Don't sit on the porch! Go out and walk in the rain!

– Kabir

At the end of his spiritual talks, Gurdjieff said "Amen." When asked to translate "Amen," one of Gurdjieff's closet pupils answered, "Give it a try!"

– Michel Legris

Any act that protects life is sacred. Technology that is dedicated to life-saving purposes acquires sanctity as well, and its use becomes a holy act.

– Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Every act done in the sunlight of awareness becomes sacred.

– Thich Nhat Hanh

Every time you pick up a piece of trash along the road, say to yourself, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the house of the Lord."

– Edward Hays in *Psalms for Zero Gravity*

This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God.

– Walt Whitman

If you keep your practice steady, morning and night, summer and winter, there is nothing you cannot do and nothing that can harm you.

– from the *Upasakashila Sutra*

What is your preferred spiritual practice? How would you describe your commitment to it? What benefits do you reap? Are there any habits or acts in your life that are unrecognized spiritual practices?

Did you understand spiritual practice as a child? Imagine the gift you are giving your students, sharing this idea with them, offering them possible tools to find and keep their balance throughout their life!

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

- You might find the word **discipline** a helpful tool, but be sure to clarify that in this sense, the word discipline doesn't mean that we punish ourselves. Discipline comes from an old word that means "teaching". When we commit to a new discipline, it means we're teaching ourselves something new.

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YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

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GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 5-10 minutes

Check in:

Did anyone play a sport or do an outside activity this past week? Do you like to play in ways that use your whole body?

Gearing up:

If I name a sport, can you tell me some special skills that you would have to practice to become a good player? How about basketball? (dribbling, shooting free throws, passing) Swimming? Ice skating? Soccer? Rock climbing? Volleyball? How long would you have to practice a basketball free throw to become really skilled at making the shot? How would it feel if you could shoot ten free throws in a row?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE T'AI CHI AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

🕒 40-50 minutes

In this set of workshop lessons, we're exploring the ways that people can practice connecting with the divine presence—the holy part of the holy whole! — that is in each of us. We call it spiritual practice, because just like free throws or spinning on ice skates, it takes a lot of work and a promise to ourselves to do it as often as necessary to get good at it.

Our bodies can become part of our spiritual practice. Lots of people find that when they really focus on their connection with their muscles, bones, and senses, they feel connected to something bigger than themselves. Running, yoga, fasting, walking meditation and sweat lodges are all examples.

We're going to explore T'ai Chi Ch'uan as a spiritual practice. T'ai Chi comes from China and uses slow, graceful movements in a specific order to focus the mind and the body. The movements come from martial arts but are done in a peaceful, harmless way. Many people practice a form of T'ai Chi every day.

There are two ways that teachers can conduct this lesson: One way is to use the video provided and follow along as a class. Another way is to watch the video alone to master a section of the form and then teach it to the class yourself. Do whichever is more comfortable and effective.

If you use the video in class, feel free to pause, rewind and fast forward

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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as you see necessary. Leave at least 10 minutes to discuss the practice at the end of the class.

Wondering Together

- I wonder if T'ai Chi seems easy or hard to practice?
- I wonder what you thought about as you were learning it?
- I wonder how your body feels after doing this kind of exercise?
- I wonder which moves you'll be able to remember later today?
- I wonder how often or how long you think you'd have to practice to get pretty good at T'ai Chi?
- I wonder what benefits a person sees if they do T'ai Chi every day?
- I wonder if T'ai Chi could be the right spiritual practice for any of you?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 2 minutes

Gather in a circle, take each other's hands and speak these words:

Deep peace of the running wave to you.

Deep peace of the flowing air to you.

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.

Deep peace of the shining stars to you.

Deep peace of the infinite peace to you.