

JOURNEY IN... YEAR THREE

THE DIVINE WITHIN SCIENCE

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

- Copies of attached EcoPractice checklist
- Pencils
- Chalkboard and chalk
- Box of household objects

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

🕒 2-3 minutes

A Math Starter for Upper Elementary:

Did you know that some religions have very clear rules about the spiritual practice of giving money to charity and church? In Islam, a rule called *zakah* says that faithful Muslims give 2.5% of their money to the poor. In Christianity, a rule called *tithing* says that 10% of a faithful Christian's money must be given back to God, from whom it came.

- Which percentage will mean more money for charity?
- If you earned \$100 every week, how much money would you practice sharing if you were a Muslim? A Christian?
- What is your allowance, if you get one? How much meets *zakah*? How much would be tithing?
- Is it a good thing for your spirit to share the money you have? Why?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE EARTH FRIENDLY HABITS AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

🕒 15-20 minutes

Attached is a survey listing habits that lead to a lighter impact on the environment and the other people with whom we share our planet.

Go through and read over the items. Invite the kids to guess why this habit helps the environment. Then have them wonder how this habit could help *them*, spiritually. Would it make them more aware? More patient? More balanced? Friendlier to others? Have the kids check off the habits they already do as well as those they'd be willing to try. Invite parents to look over their child's survey and support him or her in cultivating a new earth-friendly spiritual practice.

PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO THINKING GREEN: REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

🕒 25-30 minutes

We'll play a brainstorming game to practice thinking green. The three practices that are part of an earth-friendly lifestyle are **REDUCING** (not buying and using so much in the first place), **REUSING** (finding new ways to use old things without changing them much) and **RECYCLING** (changing the materials from old products to make different, useful products).

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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- Round One: Reducing—on the attached sheet you'll find questions to ask each child about ways to reduce our consumption.
- Round Two: Reusing—we'll play a Brain Drain game, where we pass an object around a circle to think of different ways to use it. We'll see if we can get all the way around our group and still have ideas.
- Round Three: Recycling "Family Feud"-style, the class will try to guess at a Top-Ten list for several categories about recycling.

Wondering Together

- I wonder if it's enough to do things like recycling just once or do you have to do it every day? Why?
- I wonder what you think about when you choose an earth-friendly habit like recycling or turning the lights off?
- Unitarian Universalists think it's SO important to care for the earth that we've made it one of our seven principles: "We respect the interdependent web of life of which we are all a part." Why do the environment and church go together for us, I wonder?
- Can helping the earth help your spirit? How?
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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.

Eco-Practices

I'd like to try this	I do it sometimes!	It's a practice!	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. I turn off the lights and other electrical things when I leave a room.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. I eat a meal of vegetable foods (no meat or fish) once a week.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. I use rechargeable batteries in my toys and games.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. I turn off the water when I brush my teeth.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. I go to a farmer's market with my family to buy food from farmers who live near my home.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. I use both sides of a sheet of paper when writing or drawing.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. I put my empty cans and bottles into a recycling container instead of in the trash.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. I invent games and ways to play that don't need new toys or equipment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. I give some of my allowance or gift money to groups that help the environment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10. I have fluorescent light bulbs in my room instead of incandescent ones.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	11.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12.

**(Think of your own ideas
for #11 and #12)**

PRACTICING A 'GREEN' WAY OF THINKING

Round 1: Reduce

Each person will offer an answer to one question or say 'PASS'. Each child gets a different question.

- What could you use to decorate for a birthday party without going to the store to buy decorations?
- What could you use to set up a baseball game without buying stuff from a sports store?
- What could you make someone for Valentine's Day without going to the store?
- What could you pack your lunch in so that you didn't have to throw anything away?
- What could you do so that you didn't have to go to the gas station to fill up this week?
- What could you do on a rainy day without having to spend any money?
- What could you trade with your best friend for a while so that you didn't have to buy one for yourself?
- What are some things you can check out from or use at the library so that you don't have to buy new things.
- What are some things around the house or yard you could use to make an art project without having to buy anything?
- What are two things you could stop buying forever?
- What's something that a family only needs ONE of but many families have more?
- What would you do for a fun family night at home if you were the event planner?
- What are two ways you could use less energy at home?
- What are two MORE ways you could use less energy at home?
- Which two books would you loan to a friend because they were SO awesome?
- Of all your recent holiday or birthday presents, name one you could probably be happy without.
- What's one disposable product that your family could stop using forever? What would you use instead?
- What's something you've seen advertised on TV that no one *really* needs to have?

Round 2: Reuse

Pull household items out of the box provided. Establish its normal use: hangers are for hanging clothes, ice cube trays for making ice, etc. Pass the object around the circle (alternate starting points and directions of play so that all children are involved) and have each child describe a *new use* for this object (without changing it). Example: hangers can be used to create mobiles, ice cube trays can be used to sort beads. Play for as long as their attention holds or you run out objects. How many times can you get around the whole circle without running out of ideas?

Round 3: Recycle

Below are lists of ten products that can be made out of recycled materials. Can the class guess these exact ten items? You can write correct guesses on the chalkboard. Don't you wonder how some of these transformations happen?

PAPER

egg cartons
magazines
diapers
toilet paper
paper towels
greeting cards
bricks to build houses
napkins
jewelry
newsprint

GLASS

drinking glasses
new jars/bottles
floor and wall tiles
beads
suncatchers
fiberglass bathtubs
highway pavement
marbles
insulation

PLASTIC BOTTLES & MILK JUGS

garden furniture
stuffing for sleeping bags
new bottles
CD cases
plastic bags
fences
bridges (!)
decks and patios
fleece sweatshirts
wallboard for houses

TIRES

athletic tracks
welcome mats
traffic cones
tubes and hoses
planters
tree mulch
sidewalks
wallets
houses
bags/briefcases