

Benedictine Tradition of Spirituality: Baby Steps to Getting a Little Balance in Your Life

Take time each day to reflect and breathe. Push away from your desk, sit with a cup of coffee or tea, take a walk or go to a quiet place...detach...breathe...pay attention to sensations in your body. With all the static and noise around us, it's hard to listen to the deep wisdom of God within us. Find break times in the day; even five minutes a day is a good start.

Learn to be a good listener. Listening "with the ear of our heart" is central to deepening our spirituality. Real listening is more than the physical act of hearing, or even comprehending. It's about being open and receptive to other points of view. To really listen is to be so open that whatever you tell me can become a part of my broader view of life.

Face your impulse to run away when life gets tough. Stability means staying in the present moment through its inevitable pains and joys. That means staying in a relationship and working out conflicts. It means riding out a rough week or month on the job. We tend to run away from any situation that gets to be difficult. Stability means knowing that we have the strength to work through those problems.

Be open to the ways God works in your life. That means being open to possibilities for change, to anything that calls you to a fuller life. It means recognizing opportunities for broader vision and greater purity of heart. Maybe it's something as routine as accepting praise—or criticism—from a co-worker or friend. Try to shed habits of rigid, static thinking and prejudice.

Don't expect a quick fix. It takes discipline and time to develop new habits. Getting spiritual balance is a spiritual maintenance program, in a way that exercise is a physical maintenance program. Don't be turned away by feat or the difficulty. Stay with it. Over time you will see that the practice works.

Find spiritual reading that feeds your soul. See list for suggestions:
The Order of St. Benedict at www.osb.org run by St. John's Abbey
Work and Prayer: The Rule of St. Benedict for Lay People by Columba Cary-Elwes
The Rule of Benedict: Insight of the Ages by Joan Chittister
Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of benedict Today by Joan Chittister
Seeking God: the Way of St. Benedict by Esther deWaal
No Moment Too Small by Norvene Vest
Preferring Christ: A Devotional Commentary of the Rule of St. Benedict by Norvene Vest
Friend of the Soul: A Benedictine Spirituality of Work by Norvene Vest.

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