



MEDITATION TO WELCOME SHABBAT

Welcome. Take a moment to get comfortable, whether sitting or lying down. Focus on your breath and your your body. Allow yourself to relax, to inhale (one-two-three) and exhale (three-two-one) as you settle into place.

We've joined to share Friday night together, to transition from the hectic demands of work and our daily routines into the rest and relaxation of Shabbat. You are invited to leave the week behind.

Let go of what has been, let go of what will be, and enter a place of stillness, a sacred space and time. Envision the sun beginning to set, slipping behind the horizon out of view. Breathe in the glow of the sunset, and pause, breathe out the stresses of the week; breathe in the calm of nightfall, and pause, breathe out and feel a sense of release. Breathe in the radiance of the moon and stars, and pause, breathe out all thoughts of doing, and become one with this present moment.

Feel the warmth of relaxation wash over you. Breathe in the radiant light, and pause, feel your mind become open and free. Breathe out and invite your soul to soar to new heights; breathe in the calm, and pause, feel yourself let go; breathe out everything and focus only on Now. Feel your body, mind, and soul become whole and at peace.

Now we are finally ready, to graciously accept this present, to embrace the gift of rest, to turn our complete attention toward Shabbat, to savor all that Shabbat provides, and become enveloped by holiness. As we breathe in and out once more, we pause, and welcome Shabbat.

By Evette Nan Katlin at ritualwell.org | Modified by Rabbi Jessica Minnen

CANDLE LIGHTING MEDITATION

Light your Shabbat candles, preferably two, in any way you feel comfortable. This is an open-eye meditation that focuses attention on the candlelight, letting go of the week that was, and welcoming Shabbat.

Bring your attention to the flame. Draw in a long, slow breath through your nose, and as you slowly exhale through your mouth let the busyness of the day drop away. Take in another long, slow, deep breath through your nose, and as you slowly exhale through your mouth, let go of the worries that may have been troubling you this week. Take a third long, slow, deep breath, breathing all the way down into your belly. As you slowly breathe out through your nose, allow yourself to sink comfortably into your posture, to settle into Shabbat. Whether you are sitting or standing, become aware of your back and gently straighten it, allow your shoulders to gently slope downwards, let your face be smooth and serene.

Now allow your breathing to come naturally, keeping your focus on the candle flame. Hear these words and let them go, just being aware of the guidance but not holding onto the words. Gaze softly at the flame, and as you continue to do so if you feel you are starting to stare at the light, ever so gently blink and refocus your eyes, gazing softly at the candlelight once more and allowing your mind to quiet down, allowing the thoughts that enter your mind to be there, but like these words just letting them drift by. As you softly gaze at the flame, you will notice that thoughts will come into your mind. Just allow them to be there, and allow them to float out of your mind like passing clouds. Just as Shabbat rest takes time to enter your night, your mind takes time to rest, to come to a place of quiet. When your mind influences you with thoughts, bring it gently but firmly back to the flame. This is a meditation practice, this is a Shabbat practice, and it takes time and patience to change.

Continue to gaze gently at the flame. Keep your awareness on the flame, gently gazing at the flame, remaining aware, remaining focused, remaining concentrated, aware, focused, and at rest. Remain aware, letting all thoughts pass through your mind like clouds in the sky.

Allow time for silence.

And now, when you are ready, gently lower your gaze from the flame. Bring your consciousness back into the room. Give thanks for having been able to spend this time in meditation. Give thanks for the gift of Shabbat. Slowly turn your head from side to side. Become aware of the temperature in the room. Become aware of your body. Become aware of your thoughts. When you are ready, take a deep and clearing breath.

Option 1) Close with the blessing over the candles:

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat. Blessed are you, Infinite One, who makes us holy through our actions and honors us with the light of Shabbat. Amen. Shabbat shalom.

Option 2) Close with Shabbat Shalom.

DRINKING MEDITATION

Let's start by taking a few breaths, quieting and slowing ourselves down, breathing in and breathing out. Sit how you'd like to feel. Feel your feet on the ground, and feel grounded. Sit upright, and feel uplifted. Notice what it feels like to breathe. You can remind yourself, "Oh right, this is breathing. This is what it feels like to be alive." Close your eyes. See if you can feel where your body ends and the air begins. Notice when you get distracted from simply feeling your breath in your body and gently return to paying attention to your next inhale.

Open your eyes and pick up your glass of wine. Don't drink yet. Feel the weight of the cup in your hand, feel the temperature on your skin. Look at your hand holding the glass. Notice all of the colors you see in the wine. Pay attention and see if you notice more colors as you keep looking. Now, smell your drink. Again, don't drink yet! Notice what you smell and if you can notice more nuances as you keep smelling. Close your eyes, and see if that makes a difference.

Think about what brought your drink to your hand. Start at the very beginning. Imagine seeds plants, grape vines growing. Picture the soil, water, sun that nourished the grapes that created the wine in your glass. Think of the people, the farmers, who cultivated those grapes. The journey from grape, to wine, to bottle. Imagine the people and machines and materials and miracles that worked together to create a bottle of wine. Think of the bottles transported from farm to store to table. Imagine the people who made that happen - the truck driver, the workers, the people who stocked the shelves, the cashier who rang up the bottle at the register, the person who might have poured your drink or handed you your glass. Think of all that went into the glass of wine you're holding, and take a moment to feel gratitude, to feel blessed, and to bless.

Remind yourself of what brought you to this moment. Think way back to what nourished you, who cultivated you, all of the happenings and crazy coincidences that led up to you being right here in this moment holding this particular glass of wine. Think about your life, the past year, the past week, today. Again, take a moment to feel gratitude for being right here, right now, holding this glass. Slowly bring your drink to your lips. Don't drink yet! Feel the desire to drink.

Take a breath. Bless.

By Alison Laichter | alisonlaichter.com





CHALLAH MEDITATION

Find a comfortable position in your seat. Come into the present of this Shabbat gathering by taking a few breaths, noticing how you feel physically. Take a piece of challah your hand. Notice the impulse you might have to pop it in your mouth right away. Look at the challah, examining it with curiosity as if you've never seen bread before. Notice how it feels in your hand – the texture, shape and weight. You may want to close your eyes while doing this. Notice the color of the challah and if it has any unique features. Imagine where the challah came from before arriving at this Shabbat dinner table, how it started as ripe stalks of wheat in a field. Picture the workers on the farm harvesting the wheat and another set of workers transporting the wheat to a mill. Imagine the process of grinding the wheat into flour, and that flour being mixed with water, oil, and eggs, and baked into bread. Slowly bring the challah to your nose to learn what it smells like. Notice the natural motion of your arm as it moves to do this. Continue to notice any thoughts of like or dislike you might have as you observe the bread. Notice whether you're anticipating what it will taste like. Perhaps you're starting to salivate or feeling an impulse to eat it. Now, place the challah in your mouth without biting into it. Keep it in your mouth without chewing for at least 10 seconds and explore what it feels like. Notice what it's like to take this time before eating the bread. When you are ready, slowly and softly bite into the challah. Notice what it tastes like, how its flavor and texture changes as you chew. Notice your natural impulse to swallow it. Let it nourish your body as you enter Shabbat. Sit quietly and notice what you are feeling.

And now, let's eat.

By Jon Kabat-Zinn, modified for Shabbat by Rabbi Jessica Minnen

