



Twelve Steps to Cultivating Your Spiritual Garden

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Practice is the key to excellence in any field and spiritual growth is no exception. Here are some concrete steps you can take on a regular basis to grow your spiritual garden:

- 1. Take care of the body.** This concerns exercise, diet, proper nutrition and rest. Eating healthy is important, but also consider the discipline of fasting. Fasting from food once a week strengthens our sense of solidarity with the millions in our world who go hungry every day. The practice of fasting can also extend to other things that are “too much” in our lives: business, television, judgment of self or others, etc.
- 2. Cultivate silence.** Most of us are too busy and outwardly focused. Make space in your day and week for solitude and silence.
- 3. Engage in reading and reflection.** Variation on an adage: “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak—and the mind is weaker.” Exercise your mind. Emphasize quality over quantity—and keep reading spiritual material.
- 4. Choose a spiritual director or coach.** Spiritual directors, coaches, mentors—all of these offer a support structure for our spiritual life. They will challenge and encourage you in the direction you are feeling called and hold you accountable for the actions that will get you there.
- 5. Make time for regular personal prayer.** Any relationship requires time—prayer is quiet time with the Holy One.
- 6. Participate in a community of faith.** Gathering regularly with a faith community breaks us out of our individualism and calls us to the common good. It is also the place where we are invited to share our faith connected to daily life and receive support and challenge to live out our faith.
- 7. Keep a journal.** One way to keep in touch with the inner life is to keep a journal. Give yourself the gift of an empty book and carry it with you at all times.
- 8. Find a small faith sharing or growth group.** Meeting at least once a month to reflect and share your spiritual journey with fellow seekers can keep us honest and be very enriching.
- 9. Spend time in nature.** Taking advantage of the outdoors teaches us the natural rhythms. “We are as much alive as we keep the earth alive.” – Chief Dan George

10. Pay attention to the particulars of your relationships. Our human and spiritual development is intimately bound up and reflected by the key relationships in our lives.

11. Engage in acts of service. Bottom line: it's not only about us or what we're getting. We are gifted in immense ways and in recognition of this, we give back—and are empowered and enriched by the giving.

12. Make an annual retreat. Stepping back from the normal routine of life frees up our energy to attend to both our inner and outer life.