A Powerful Silence
The Role of Meditation and Other Contemplative Practices
In American Life and Work

By Maia Duerr

The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society
www.contemplativemind.org

2004
Acknowledgements

Report prepared by: Maia Duerr, Research Director
Photos on “Invitation” pages: Gina M. Smith
Artwork on “Story” pages: Jesse Maceo Vega-Frey

The Contemplative Net Project was originally envisioned and developed in a series of meetings of the Center’s board members, including founding board member Rob Lehman. A number of other people as well have been instrumental in laying down the foundation for this project and contributing to the analysis of the information; they include BethAnn Albro-Fisher, Carrie Bergman, Mirabai Bush, Stephanie Clohesy, Megan Cope, Paul Gorman, Prajna Hallstrom, Sunanda Markus, Patrick McNamara, Olivia Nix, Heidi Norton, Gina M. Smith, René Theberge, and Jesse Maceo Vega-Frey.

The writings of Jon Kabat-Zinn and Daniel Goleman have been particularly helpful in framing the cultural/historical context section of this report.

Special thanks to all the interviewees who took time out of their busy lives to share their stories with us.

This research was generously supported with grants from the Fetzer Institute, the Ford Foundation, and the Nathan Cummings Foundation.

Center for Contemplative Mind in Society Staff, 2004
Mirabai Bush, Director
Jennifer Akey
Carrie Bergman
Maia Duerr
Dan Edwards
Paul Nelson

Lila Palivoda
Billye Smith
Gina M. Smith
René Theberge
Jesse Maceo Vega-Frey

Center for Contemplative Mind in Society Board of Directors
Caroline Brown
David Brown
Harlon Dalton
Charles Halpern

Joan Konner
Robert Shapiro
Charles Terry

Contemplative Net Project Interviewers
Narelle Bouthillier
Maia Duerr
Dan Edwards
Rich Fournier
Prajna Hallstrom

Stan Hoffman
Patrick McNamara
Mary Ramsey
Andrew Weiss
Jesse Maceo Vega-Frey
A Powerful Silence:  
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Executive Summary  

A Report on the Contemplative Net Project  
The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society  
Northampton, Massachusetts  

Over the past two decades, interest in contemplative practices has grown tremendously. *Time* magazine has estimated that 15 million Americans practice yoga (2001) and 10 million meditate regularly (2003). During this same period of time, meditation, yoga, and other meditative techniques have been the subject of hundreds of studies which have highlighted their potential as a means of stress reduction (Murphy and Donovan 1996).

In an effort to understand more about the growing public interest in these practices and their use in settings outside of religious and spiritual contexts, the Center for Contemplative in Society, based in Northampton, Massachusetts, initiated the Contemplative Net Project, a qualitative research study designed to document the prevalence and nature of this phenomenon.

Three sources provided data for this study:  
1) In-depth, qualitative interviews with 84 professionals who incorporate contemplative practices in their work;  
2) Media searches of newspaper and magazine articles, professional journals, and the Internet;  
3) Supplementary program reports and research from the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society.

This report is a summary of the Contemplative Net Project’s findings. The report begins by reviewing the historical and cultural context for the current interest in meditation and other contemplative practices. The secular application of these practices is then surveyed in five professional fields: Business and Organizational Development, Medicine and Healthcare, Education and Youth Work, Law and Government, and Prison Work. Through the use of stories, profiles, and quotes from research interviews, the report offers an in-depth, narrative look at how exposure to meditation and other practices has impacted individuals, workplaces, and society at large.
Findings

Out of the Monastery and Into the Boardroom

Use of contemplative practices in professional settings is on the rise. During the past two decades, meditation and other contemplative practices are being applied to a growing number of professional fields:

- In healthcare, the number of hospitals and medical clinics that provide Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction training for patients grew from 80 in 1993 to 250 in 2003.
- In higher education, 100 professors have received a Contemplative Fellowship to assist them in integrating these practices into their university and college class curriculum, and 32 educational institutions were identified as integrating these practices at the program and department level.
- In the business and nonprofit sector, at least 135 companies, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies have offered their employees classes in some form of meditation and/or yoga.

It Doesn’t End with the Retreat

Individuals who meditate or have other contemplative practices report a difference in their personal relationships and their work.

The benefits of meditation go beyond stress reduction. Interviewees described how these practices served as a tool to help increase self-awareness and as a vehicle for forgiveness and reconciliation. In their professional lives, interviewees reported a renewed sense of commitment to their work, improved workplace communication, and an increased ability to deal with organizational challenges. Interviewees also spoke of how these practices enhanced their relationships with family, friends, co-workers, and significant others.

A Different Way to Work

The emergence of the “Contemplative Organization.”

Thirty-eight of the 84 interviewees (32%) described bringing contemplative practices into their workplace with the intention of creating a more reflective environment. Analysis of the interviews revealed a new organizational paradigm, one that uses contemplative awareness as an organizing principle for the workplace. In these companies and organizations, meditation and other practices are not simply add-on benefits but are incorporated into the structure of daily work and decision-making processes. This report names five characteristics of a Contemplative Organization and 15 workplaces that are moving toward being such an entity.

Supporting Sustainable Social Change

Meditation and other contemplative practices play a role in social change.

Historically, spirituality has been the source for some of the 20th century’s major social change movements, including the civil rights movement. In the present time, meditation and other practices are being tapped by activists who are seeking
sustainable methods of social change. Forty-four of the interviewees worked in organizations that addressed social justice issues. Three strategies through which practices are being applied to social transformation are identified:

1) Contemplative Infusion (practicing meditation in a location such as the Pentagon with the intention of increasing awareness in that setting);
2) Leveraging Leadership (introducing meditation and other practices to executives and others in decision- or policy-making positions);
3) Socially Transformative Forms of Contemplative Practice (group reflective practices such as Open Space Technology that engage communities in problem solving).

“Meeting People Where They’re At”
Language and teaching approaches are adapted to make contemplative practices accessible to secular audiences.
Contemplative practices are usually rooted in religious traditions. Three teaching philosophies were identified when these practices were presented to secular audiences:

1) The “clinical” use of contemplative practices; goal-oriented, focus on stress reduction, relaxation, and concentration;
2) Contemplative practice as a “doorway to change;” starting point may be stress reduction but there is support for deeper exploration;
3) The “transformative” use of contemplative practices; intention-oriented, focus on personal and social transformation.

One strategy for introducing a reflective dimension into an organization is to create secular ethical guidelines. One example is the Greyston Foundation’s “Three Attitudes:” deep attention, exchanging self and others, and compassionate action.

In summary, this report confirms that the growing use of contemplative practice in secular settings is changing lives, workplaces, and society and is a phenomenon worthy of further study and support.

About the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society
Since 1997, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society has explored the impact of contemplative practices on society. The Center’s mission is to integrate contemplative awareness into contemporary life in order to help create a more just, compassionate, and reflective society.

Center for Contemplative Mind in Society
199 Main Street, Suite 3
Northampton, MA 01060
Ph: 413/582-0071
e-mail: info@contemplativemind.org
www.contemplativemind.org
# A Powerful Silence:
The Role of Meditation and Other Contemplative Practices
In American Life and Work

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An Invitation to the Reader

Wading through a lengthy report can be a mind-numbing experience, and relying on the intellect as the only channel through which to process information can limit possibilities for deeper understanding.

In the spirit of the Center’s mission, we have included occasional invitations to you, the reader, to return to your own contemplative mind as you engage with this material. We hope these offerings of words and images will help to open up spacious perspectives as you read this report.
I. Introduction

Contemplative practices such as meditation and centering prayer have their roots in religious traditions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and indigenous spirituality. Historically, these practices have primarily been the domain of those who entered monastic life or who have had considerable time to devote to spiritual pursuits.

But recently, a renaissance is underway to apply the contemplative disciplines to the rhythm of our everyday lives – lives spent in offices, classrooms, courtrooms, and living rooms. Growing numbers of people are experimenting with ways that these practices can transform their work and lives and in the process are becoming “urban contemplatives,” in the words of Father Edward J. Farrell (2000), spiritual director at Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit.

This increased interest in contemplative practices is happening at a time when Americans are showing the strain of living with the fear and anxiety generated by an unstable economy, terrorist threats, social unrest, and environmental peril. In a recent survey, a Chicago-based employee assistance provider reported a 23% increase in crisis- and stress-related counseling requests during the first quarter of 2003 compared to the first quarter of 2002 (Armour 2003). At a conference titled “Speed.com: The Search for Meaning in the New Millennium” held in 2000 in California’s Silicon Valley, computer industry workers and therapists came together to talk about the emergence of two high-tech illnesses: “hurry sickness” and “speed addiction.”

In this atmosphere, individuals and organizations are turning to contemplative practices such as meditation and yoga to help alleviate stress and promote well-being. But contemplative practices have an even greater potential. At a time when there is widespread inability to respond effectively to situations that seem overwhelmingly large and complex, a cadre of leaders is conducting an inquiry – often inspired by the insights gained from their own meditative practice – into how more sustainable forms of change might evolve out of environments where contemplative awareness is nurtured.

In the words of Rob Lehman, founding board member of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, “There is an inner revolution taking place in our culture in which great numbers of people are becoming aware of the relationship of their inner lives to their outer lives” (Center for Contemplative Mind in Society 1999). His Holiness the Dalai Lama describes this movement in terms of an emerging lay spirituality, and Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow (1998) traces the transition from organized religion to “seeker-oriented” and “practice-oriented” spirituality.

The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society has been exploring and supporting this movement for the past seven years. Founded in 1997, the Center’s mission is to integrate contemplative awareness into contemporary life in order to help create a more just,
compassionate, and reflective society. The Center’s programs have helped to introduce and sustain contemplative practices in the fields of business, environmental work, law, higher education, philanthropy, and in youth programs.

The Center is grounded in the belief that contemplative awareness can assist in identifying the root causes of social problems and finding creative approaches to eliminating them. By developing the contemplative mind as well as the rational, critical mind – that is, developing one’s ability to simply “be”, with awareness, openness, and clarity – one may become more centered, relaxed, and aware of his or her actions. The personal changes that often occur with regular contemplative practice, such as increased patience, compassion, and concentration, can play a part in the positive transformation of individuals, organizations, and social institutions.

The rise in popularity of contemplative practices is part of a larger movement to explore spirituality in everyday life. But even with a growing acceptance for the integration of spirituality in secular settings, many people have difficulty finding others with whom to discuss this process (Neal, Lichtenstein, and Banner 1999). Contemplative awareness can be seen as a unique dimension of the spiritual experience that is inclusive of spirituality but not constrained by it. A contemplative approach can have a distinctly secular tone. One example is the technique of “Reflective Notetaking,” piloted at Harley Davidson, a process in which a “Reflective Analyst” offers observations to support organizational learning (Castleberg 1999).

In 2001, the Center initiated the Contemplative Net, a project designed to “map” the use of contemplative practices in society. While there is a growing body of clinical research that documents the positive effects of meditation and other contemplative practice on physical and emotional well-being (Benson 1976; Andresen 2000; Murphy and Donovan 1996), the Center’s research offers a social and cultural perspective. Our intention was to document the prevalence of contemplative practices in contemporary society, and to collect qualitative information that would complement the quantitative information collected in other studies. We approached this task as data collectors, but also as storygatherers. We thought of ourselves as cultural anthropologists, uncovering artifacts of contemplative awareness arising in the most unusual of places – for example, a meditation instruction card tucked into the seat pocket of a JetBlue airplane. The resulting stories, quotes, and anecdotes provide a window into the deeper dimensions and nuances of the influence of contemplative practices on individuals and society.

This report, based on material collected through the Contemplative Net Project’s in-depth interviews and an extensive “culture scanning” process (reviewing media sources for stories on contemplative practices), is a summary of these research findings.

Section II provides background material on the project, including working assumptions, project description, goals, and methodology.
Section III, “The Big Picture,” is an examination of the historical and cultural context that has given rise to the current interest in contemplative practices in the U.S.

Because one of the study goals was to generate a contemporary definition of contemplative practice, interviewees were invited to give their own definition of the term. Section IV reports their responses and names the practices that are included under the term “contemplative practices” for the purposes of this research.

Section V, “A Closer Look,” is the heart of the report and explores how contemplative practice is impacting American society in a pattern of expanding ripples. First, in “Opening the Door to Change,” we look at how individual lives have been influenced with the adoption of a regular contemplative practice. In “Meditation Goes to Work,” we survey the use of practices in five professional domains: Business and Organizational Development, Medicine and Healthcare, Education and Youth Work, Law and Government, and Prison Work. Finally, “Supporting Social Change through Contemplative Awareness” examines how individuals and groups are experimenting with strategies to effect social transformation through contemplative forms. These chapters draw primarily on material from in-depth interviews conducted with 84 people and include extensive quotes and stories to convey the diversity and power of their experiences.

Section VI, “The Challenge of Teaching Contemplative Practices in the Secular World,” addresses some of the questions that initially inspired the Center to research this topic: What kinds of issues arise when contemplative practices are introduced outside of a religious setting? Are these taught in the context of the religious or ethical traditions from which they originated? How are ethical implications addressed, if they are?

Section VII concludes with a summary and reflections on these findings.

Because of space constraints, several of the sectors surveyed in the study are covered only briefly in this report, including Art and Religious/Spiritual Communities. The use of contemplative practices in social justice work is also noted here, but is covered in more depth in a separate report from the Center, “Inviting the World to Transform” (2002).

Jon Kabat-Zinn, one of the founders of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program and a member of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society’s original working group, compared the current era with the technological innovations of other periods of history, such as the telephone, the transistor, and the home computer. He wrote, “the transformative effects on society of large numbers of people purposefully cultivating a more mindful and contemplative life are potentially as powerful, if not more so, than such technological advances in power and connectivity and the capabilities they give rise to” (1994, p. 1). The Center’s work is intended to be part of this contemplative revolution, and to contribute to organizational sustainability, moral awareness, and visionary leadership. Our hope is that our programs and research will support the creation of a national culture of reflection, contemplation, and compassion.
II. Project Background

A. Starting Point: Working Assumptions

A qualitative study begins with an understanding of researcher objectivity that is different from a quantitative study. Quantitative research is deductive and confirmatory; the researcher seeks to create an experimental design that removes as much bias as possible. Qualitative research is inductive and exploratory, and posits that pure objectivity is never possible. In this methodology, the researcher’s own experiences and biases are viewed as inseparable from the collection and analysis of the data, and in fact become part of the process. This makes it essential to name the researcher’s position and assumptions at the outset of the research and acknowledge the impact they may have on the data. These are some of the assumptions that the research staff of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society began with and have noted during the course of this project:

- We believe that contemplative practices have the potential to benefit both individuals, groups, organizations, and we are interested in supporting a cultural shift that will value these practices and this way of thinking.

- We began this study by constructing our own operational definition of contemplative practice (which was incorporated in the research interview of the 84 participants):

  A practice designed to quiet the mind in the midst of the stress and distraction of everyday life in order to cultivate a personal capacity for deep concentration and insight.

  Although usually practiced in silence, examples of contemplative practice include not only sitting in silence but also many forms of single-minded concentration, including meditation, contemplative prayer, mindful walking, focused experiences in nature, yoga and other contemplative physical or artistic practices. We also consider various kinds of ritual and ceremony designed to create sacred space and increase insight and awareness, such as council circle or vision quest, to be forms of contemplative practice.

  Contemplative practice has the potential to bring different aspects of oneself into focus, to help develop personal goodness and compassion, and to awaken an awareness of the interconnectedness of all life.

- We believe that contemplative practices exist on a continuum of sacred and secular. Most of the practices described in this report have their roots in religious traditions. Several of the Contemplative Net interviewees have been instrumental in facilitating a renaissance of contemplative practices within their own religious traditions, such as Rev. Eugene Callender (Protestantism), Father Thomas Keating (Catholicism), Rabbi Jonathan Omer-Man (Judaism), Rabbi
Zalman Schecter (Judaism), and Robert Toth (Christianity). However, the Center’s primary interest has been in documenting how these practices are translated to settings outside of religious and spiritual communities, and so this report emphasizes secular applications of these practices.

- We believe that contemplative practices, like meditation and centering prayer, are distinct from more active forms of prayer (such as petitionary prayer), though not mutually exclusive. Active prayer and faith-based approaches tend to reinforce people’s pre-existing religious, spiritual, and psychological beliefs. Contemplative practices, in contrast, emphasize direct experience and receptivity to emergent messages, as reflected by the title of the classic 14th century Christian contemplative treatise, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Literature from Father Thomas Keating’s organization, Contemplative Outreach, has been helpful in understanding the distinction between active and contemplative forms of prayer:

  *Active modes of prayer tend be devotional or petitionary in nature... contemplative practices (including contemplative and centering prayer) tend to be more receptive...Centering Prayer workshops are transformational rather than devotional or informational. Most often they lead to a deepening commitment to prayer which can have a significant influence on a faith community.*

- All of us at the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society have some kind of personal contemplative practice. For many of us, this is some form of Buddhist practice, though all of us come from a convert Buddhist perspective. While contemplative teachers and practitioners from Christian, Quaker, and Jewish traditions are represented in this study, we are most familiar with Buddhist traditions. This accounts for the skew in the interview sample – the first group of interviewees included people who were known to the Center through executive director Mirabai Bush’s connections in the Buddhist and Hindu communities. A snowball sampling method led to other interviewees with a similar background.

- Buddhism is one of the few major world religions that is non-theistic; that is, the idea of a divine being as creator is not considered central to its body of teachings. (Representations of deity-like beings in Buddhist teachings, especially in the Tibetan tradition, are generally understood to be aspects of mind states rather than external gods.) For this reason, Buddhist meditation techniques may be easier to adapt to multifaith or nonreligious audiences, and are often used by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society in our work with professional groups. However, we do not assume that Buddhism is religion-neutral. It is also important to remember that Buddhist traditions and practices are diverse: some, such as Zen, emphasize sitting meditation practice while others, such as Shin (Pure Land), are more devotional in nature.
B. Contemplative Net Project Description

Overview
The goal of the Contemplative Net Project, started in 2001, is to research and communicate the story of contemplative practice in secular contexts and to document the growth of contemplative awareness in the U.S. In doing so, the Center hopes to increase understanding and support for this emerging movement. Originally called the “Mapping Project,” it came to be known as the Contemplative Net in recognition of the fact that mapping was one of four components of the project:

- Naming the Phenomenon (mapping the field and research to identify the leaders and the practices they use)
- Community Development (supporting the development of a national network)
- Resourcing the Field (providing tools for change)
- Telling the Story (national communications and outreach)

This report represents the culmination of the first objective, “Naming the Phenomenon.” The next phase of the project will focus on the community building and developing resources for the field. We are currently developing a toolbox intended to serve as a resource for individuals and organizations who wish to include a contemplative dimension in their work. In addition, a follow-up study, “The Contemplative Organization,” using participatory action research techniques, is currently underway. The goal of that study is to paint a more detailed picture of the day-to-day workings of organizations that use contemplative practices.

Methodology
In the fall of 2001, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society initiated a research study to map the use of contemplative practices across a wide range of professions, including business, healthcare, media, education, and social change organizations, and to document the impact of contemplative practices in these settings.

A qualitative research approach was chosen as the most appropriate methodology for this study because the goal was to investigate a cultural phenomenon that involves complexity and change over a long period of time. We operated from a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) in which the aim is to discover the theories implicit in the data rather than testing an hypothesis. Glaser and Strauss stressed the importance of continuous comparative analysis to generate formal theory rather than succumbing to “the simple ordering of a mass of data under a logically worked-out set of categories” (p. 92).

We were also interested in choosing a method that would lend itself to a contemplative approach as we were doing the research. The use of grounded theory supported a reflective
The benefits of practice for individuals are increasingly well documented, especially in health and healing. Most recently, research by Richard Davidson of the University of Wisconsin has demonstrated the neuroplasticity of the brain. Davidson and other researchers are finding that through the practice of meditation, we can actually alter what had been thought to be fixed set points for our emotions (Goleman 2003). But there have been relatively few studies of the ways contemplative practices impact groups and organizations, and the effect on society at large. Most research on contemplative practices has focused on the physiological and psychological impact of those practices upon individuals (Benson 1976; Speca, M., Carlson, L.E., Goodey, E., Angen, M. 2000. For comprehensive literature reviews of clinical studies, see Andresen 2000, and Murphy and Donovan 1996.) These studies have also defined contemplative practices primarily as sitting meditation, often rooted in Asian religious traditions, and Transcendental Meditation (TM).

The current study surveyed a broad selection of contemplative practices. Using an inductive rather than deductive approach, we started by looking for broad linguistic markers of contemplative awareness – such as “mindful,” “reflective,” “quietness,” and “stillness” – and then inquired to find out what practices and techniques people use to cultivate such qualities.

The Contemplative Net Project, has drawn data from three sources:

1) In-depth interviews
2) Culture scanning and mapping
3) Supplementary material from the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society’s archives

1) In-depth Interviews
From October 2001 through May 2003, interviews were conducted with 84 people across the United States and one in Canada who brought contemplative practice into their work (see Table 1, p. 16). Individuals who were known to the Center for their innovative work in this area were the first to be interviewed. A snowball method of sampling was then used; each participant was asked for names of others who were making similar efforts to integrate a contemplative approach into their work. The result is a list of interviewees that is by no means exhaustive but rather represents some of the key leaders of this movement.

Interviewees included executive directors, presidents, and founders of organizations and programs in for-profit and nonprofit sectors. Organizational development consultants and leadership trainers who worked in corporate and nonprofit settings were also interviewed. Demographic information on interviewees’ gender, age, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and other data is included in Appendix II.
The majority of the interviews were conducted on the telephone; several were done in person. The semi-structured interview consisted of 47 open-ended questions and lasted approximately an hour and a half. The questions were designed to elicit information about the organization, the individual's personal experience with contemplative practice, and how contemplative awareness informed and impacted the work of their organization (see Appendix I for interview questions). The interview questions also offered participants a chance to reflect on their own journey with contemplative practice. Interviewers invited research participants to have a moment of silence in the middle of the interview (most of them happily accepted the opportunity).

Some of the research questions addressed with this group were:

1) Which secular institutions and programs are incorporating contemplative practices into their work?
2) What contemplative activities are being used? Are they taught within a moral or ethical framework based on a spiritual tradition?
3) What is each particular organization’s/institution’s history of integration of practice into their work?
4) What is the impact of contemplative practice on each sector?
6) What are the obstacles to the integration of contemplative practices?
7) Is there a movement/cultural shift toward the integration of contemplative practices and/or contemplative values into the culture?

The interviews were transcribed and the transcripts were then checked for accuracy. In order to identify important patterns and themes that arose from the data, a coding system utilizing grounded theory principles (Glaser & Strauss 1967) was developed. The transcripts were entered into Atlas.ti (Muhr 1997), computer software which facilitates the analysis of larges bodies of textual data. Through the concurrent process of coding and comparative analysis, recurring themes and patterns were identified, as well as aberrations of those patterns.

After the interviews were completed, research participants were sent a questionnaire to gather supplemental demographic information. Fifty-one people (65%) returned the form – this demographic information is included in Appendix II. Additionally, research participants were asked to send brochures and other material about their organization to the Center.
### Table 1: List of Contemplative Net interviewees and affiliation at time of interview

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Joan Halifax  
Upaya Foundation  
www.upaya.org

Vijali Hamilton  
Earth Mandala  
www.rocvision.com/vijali.htm

Pat Harbour  
Healing the Heart of Diversity  
www.healingtheheart.org

Kurt Hoelting  
Inside Passages  
www.insidepassages.com

Lorin Hollander  
Creative Vision Education, Inc.  
www.lorinhollander.com

Claudia Horwitz  
stone circles  
www.stonecircles.org

Cathy Howell  
ALF-CIO  
www.af-cio.org

Mutima Imani  
Simplexity, consultant

Kavita Kapur  
Self-Knowledge Symposium  
www.selfknowledge.org

Father Thomas Keating  
Contemplative Outreach Ltd.  
www.contemplativeoutreach.org

Rachael Kessler  
PassageWays Institute  
www.mediatorsfoundation.org/isel/index.html

Michael Lerner  
Commonweal  
www.commonweal.org/

Thea Levkovitz  
The Wilderness Society  
www.tws.org

Carol Miller Lieber  
Resolving Conflict Creatively Program  
www.esrnational.org

Charles Lief  
Greyston Foundation  
www.greyston.org

Frederique Marglin  
Center for Integrative Learning and Action

Marcelle Martin  
Religious Society of Friends

Fleet Maull  
Prison Dharma Network  
www.prisondharmanetwork.org/

Corinne McLaughlin  
Center for Visionary Leadership  
www.visionarylead.org

Michael Meade  
Mosaic Multicultural Foundation  
www.mosaicvoices.org

Wayne Muller  
Bread for the Journey  
www.breadforthejourney.org

George T. Mumford  
Consultant

Charles Murphy  
Power of Hope  
www.powerofhope.org

David Murphy  
North King County Rehabilitation Facility  
www.metrokc.gov/health/nrf/

Rabbi Jonathan Omer-Mann  
Metivta

Frank Ostaseski  
Zen Hospice Project  
www.zenhospice.org

Harrison Owen  
OST Network  
www.openspaceworld.com

Pythia Peay  
Journalist

Phyllis Robinson  
Center for Integrative Learning and Action
2) Culture Scanning and Mapping
For the past three years, Center staff have been scanning popular media sources such as the New York Times, Time Magazine, public interest magazines in the fields of business and popular culture (e.g. Fast Company, Fortune, Oprah), and specialty magazines that cover specific forms of contemplative practice (e.g. Yoga Journal, Tricycle). We have conducted ongoing searches on the Internet to collect examples, anecdotes, writings, stories, and images of contemplative practices in use in society. In addition, we have monitored journals, conference announcements, and conference proceedings in fields such as law and education to note the use of practices in these professional settings.

These materials are filed and archived at the Center’s office in Northampton, MA, and are also periodically digested in a form called “Contemplative Culturewatch,” available through the Center’s website at www.contemplativemind.org.

This scanning process also yielded potential interviewees and helped us to identify the key professional, regional, and national networks that support those integrating contemplative practices into their work and life.

3) Supplementary material
We have also drawn on the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society’s collection of program documents, research reports, and white papers by members of the Center’s original working group. In addition, informal conversations with participants of the Center’s Academic and Law programs have provided background material for this report.

**Research Reports**

1997  “No Part Left Out: Polyrhythmic Perspectives on Cultivating Awareness,” by Rachel Bagby and Sunanda Markus

2002  “Inviting the World to Transform: Nourishing Social Justice Work with Contemplative Practice,” by Maia Duerr


2003  “Survey of Transformative and Spiritual Dimensions of Higher Education: Case Studies” by Maia Duerr, Arthur Zajonc, and Diane Dana


**Program Documents**

*Social Justice Work*

Law Program
1999  Contemplative Law Program Report
2001  Fall Contemplative Law Retreat Report
2002  Spring Contemplative Law Retreat Report
2002  Law Exploratory Gathering Report

Academic Program
1999  Contemplative Practice Fellowship Program Report
2002  Contemplative Practice Fellowship Program Pamphlet
2003  Brief Report on the Regional Symposium of Contemplative Practice in Higher Education

Philanthropy Program
1997  Spirituality and Philanthropy Report
2000  Philanthropy & The Inner Life: Gathering Report

General Organizational Documents
1996  Working Group on the Contemplative Mind Report
1998  The Contemplative Mind in Society:
      A History of the Center and the Working Group

White Papers (all published in 1996)

Goleman, Daniel, *The Contemplative Mind: Reinventing the News*

Kabat-Zinn, Jon, *Catalyzing Movement Toward a More Contemplative/Sacred-
      Appreciating/Non-Dualistic Society*

Rockefeller, Steven, *Meditation, Social Change, and Undergraduate Education*

Stock, Brian, *The Contemplative Life and the Teaching of the Humanities*

Thurman, Robert A. F., *Meditation and Education: Buddhist India, Tibet and Modern America*
Growing Interest in Meditation and Contemplative Practices

From the 1970s to the present, meditation and other contemplative practices have surged in popularity. Public opinion polls and surveys tell one facet of the story. Because survey questions are often worded inconsistently (prayer and meditation may be grouped together), it is impossible to track the growth of the interest in contemplative practices with statistical precision, but the general trend is evident in this graph of surveys taken in the U.S. between 1976 and 2000:

Sources
1976: Gallup Poll
1978: Gallup Interviews
1996: ABC/Washington Post Poll

In addition to these public opinion polls and surveys, *Time* magazine has estimated that 15 million Americans practice yoga (Corliss 2001) and 10 million meditate regularly (Stein 2003).
Contemplative Practices and Religion in America

The story of contemplative practices and the role they play in society mirrors the changing way that Americans have related to religion and spirituality over the past fifty years. During this time, the United States has moved from being a country where the majority of people belong to an organized religion and regularly attend services to one where a growing number are cultivating their own sense of spirituality (Wuthnow 1998). Demographic researcher George Gallup (1999) reported that the percentage of Americans who considered spiritual growth as a critical value in their lives grew from 58% in 1994 to 82% in 1998. This trend is apparent not only in the U.S. but globally as well. The Gallup International Millennium Survey (1999), conducted in 60 countries, revealed that

in spite of the high proportion of people who say they belong to some religious faith, their beliefs are not channeled through “institutional” or established practices of worship but are rather expressed as a personal relationship with God by means of meditation or praying in solitude for example. Seven out of ten respondents say they regularly engage in such practices.

This movement from institutionalized religion to individualized spirituality is marked by several important milestones, one of them the introduction of Buddhism to America in the early 20th century, documented in the book How the Swans Came to the Lake (Fields 1981). The spirit of openness and experimentation of the 1960s and 70s, exemplified by the Beat Generation and people like Gary Snyder, Ram Dass, and Allen Ginsburg, fueled an interest in Eastern religions and meditation. These decades saw a wave of young people who traveled to Asia in search of teachers or gurus and who learned contemplative practices at their source. In the U.S., meditation centers like the San Francisco Zen Center, founded in 1962, experienced phenomenal growth, initially drawing a handful of curious people and evolving to packed rooms of attentive students within a few years. This was a generation in which, according to a 1989 Gallup Poll, 10% of adults reported taking up yoga, Transcendental Meditation, or some kind of Eastern religion.

In the Aquarian Conspiracy, Marilyn Ferguson (1987) wrote about this generation of people who were, in Abraham Maslow’s term, “Transcenders,” or advance scouts for the human race, for whom self-actualization was a way of life. A significant number of Contemplative Net interviewees (59% of the interviewees were between 50 – 70 years old) and members of the Center for Contemplative Mind’s original Working Group were a part of this generation. After coming out of intense initial periods of introspection and self-reflection, often in retreat settings, they returned to their careers and lives with a passion for service and for becoming agents of change.

This interest in meditation was not confined to Buddhism. In the wake of Vatican II, the writings of Thomas Merton, Father Thomas Keating, and others helped to lead a movement to reclaim Christian contemplative traditions, which had been virtually lost after the Reformation of the 16th century. In the mid-1970s, William Menninger, Basil Pennington, and Fr. Keating distilled the practices and teachings of St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, and other Christian contemplatives into the discipline of centering
prayer. They also re-introduced Christians to the practice of *Lectio Divina*. In 1983, a ret"eat at the Lama Foundation in New Mexico brought together Father Keating and 11 other participants who were dedicated to honoring the Christian contemplative heritage and bringing it up-to-date. As Father Keating told us in his interview, this retreat was a “watershed event.” He said, “Two-thirds of the people who were there are still working with us and have worked with us from the beginning. And that retreat really was the heart of the teaching.” In 1984, Father Keating established Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. to provide a support system for those wishing to sustain their commitment to Christianity while developing these practices. Today, there are 32 chapters of Contemplative Outreach in the United States and 20 other countries, and more than 46,000 people receive the organization’s newsletter.

In 1990, a group of rabbis traveled to India to meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama and consider the problem of spiritual survival in exile common to both the Tibetan and Jewish people. Rodger Kamenetz, who went along to record the meeting, found his life changed as he rediscovered his Jewish roots, a story he subsequently wrote about in the book *The Jew in the Lotus* (1995). Within the Jewish tradition, Metivta, the Center for Contemplative Judaism (in Los Angeles), was founded by Rabbi Jonathan Omer-Man. Centers such as Elat Chayim (New York), founded in 1992 and Chochmat HaLev (Berkeley, CA), became gathering places to explore the rich tradition of Jewish meditation practices, and numerous synagogues and temples now include classes and groups in Jewish meditation as part of their offerings. The Spirituality Institute, based in Northampton, MA, is another center for diffusion of contemplative practice within Jewish leadership circles. A rich dialogue has grown out of conversations among Rabbi Alan Lew, Zen teacher Norman Fischer, Vipassana teacher Sylvia Boorstein, and others who are steeped in both Jewish traditions and Buddhist forms of practice.

**Crossing the Bridge Between the Religious and Secular Worlds**

This movement within organized religions to reclaim contemplative traditions has been accompanied by developments in the secular world that have made these practices much more accessible to a new generation of seekers. “Holistic learning centers” like the Omega Institute (in Rhinebeck, NY, and also in Texas), Hollyhock (Vancouver, BC), and the Kripalu Center (Lenox, MA), and personal growth and education providers like the Learning Annex have enabled people to sample contemplative practices without having to formally join a religion. Omega, the largest of these centers, was founded in 1977. It now hosts over 20,000 guests each year who participate in workshops such as “Letting Go of Who You Used to Be,” “Sufi Meditation,” and “Yoga, Meditation, and Chanting.” For individuals who wish to immerse themselves in wisdom traditions such as Buddhism, retreat centers like Tassajara Mountain Zen Center (California) and the Insight Meditation Society (Massachusetts) host hundreds of meditation students each year. Christian monastic experience has been available to lay people for many years; hundreds of Catholic and Protestant centers around the U.S. include Christian contemplative prayer and meditation retreats as part of their programs. The website of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd., lists many of them on this web page: www.centeringprayer.com/contacts/index.htm
We are in the midst of a massive demystification and democratization of contemplative practices...Resources such as on-line meditations and recordings of wisdom teachings give people a chance to explore their own spirituality.

Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron, and Christian contemplative James Finley. In 1988, Sounds True sold 8,000 tapes; in 2002, the company racked up more than 547,000 product sales. The Internet has amplified the potential for disseminating these practices. Websites such as Beliefnet.com, launched in 2000, provides instant access to online guided meditation techniques from various traditions. A project called Dharma Seed aims to preserve and share the oral tradition of contemporary Theravadin Buddhist teachings by producing more than 17,000 tapes a year.

In short, we are in the midst of a massive demystification and democratization of contemplative practices. We are witnessing a period of time when resources such as on-line meditations and recorded wisdom teachings that allow people to explore their own spirituality are available on a much broader level. These conditions have allowed contemplative practices to become untethered from religious traditions and monastic settings and have created fertile ground for their application in secular society.

Contemplation on the Cultural Landscape

The growing interest in contemplative practices comes at a time when concern about the social fabric of the country cuts across political and social lines. Market values, or “bottom line” consciousness, permeate our lives, encouraging an extreme individuality, affecting relationships and friendships, and leaving people in need of recognition, caring, and meaning. This yearning for meaning and a desire for tools that help us to slow down and reflect is showing up in many ways in popular culture. Some of the cornerstones of daily life reflect this need to slow down and reflect:

- **Work:** In April, 2003, Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, organized an “Hour of Presence.” Classes were cancelled, administrative offices closed, club meetings were postponed, and members of the University community were encouraged to enjoy the spring weather, meditate, walk, sit, reflect, discuss, or rest, and think through our use of time. The Hour was also observed at Wellesley College, Southern Oregon University, Duke University’s Self-Knowledge Symposium, Spirituality and Health Publishing, and The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society.

- **City Governance:** In Denver, Colorado, 2,642 people signed a petition that put Initiative 101, entitled “Safety Through Peace,” on the November 2003 election ballot. The initiative would have required the city to implement...
community-wide stress-reduction measures - such as mass meditation sessions, piping soothing music into public buildings, and serving natural foods in school cafeterias - to “help ensure public safety by increasing peacefulness.” The initiative didn’t pass, but it raised discussion among city residents about the social ramifications of stress, and the role of the government in intervening in this area.

- **Technology:** Technology is often berated as the source of our speed-centered culture. But there is a Zen Buddhist saying, “The medicine and the sickness cure each other.” Even as high-tech innovations accelerate the pace of our lives, there are attempts to harness the same technology to support reflection. “Mindful Clock” free software (Steigerwald 2001) reminds the computer user to stop and breathe with the sound of a bell each hour; *The Divine Indwelling*, a collection of essays by Thomas Keating and others on centering prayer and the contemplative outreach movement, is available as an e-book; and a Book of Hours (a Christian contemplative prayer tradition) is available for Palm Pilots.

- **Food:** The “Slow Food” movement, founded in Paris in 1989, now has 65,000 members worldwide who gather to “preserve local landscapes, culture and traditions, and promote the joys of quiet, reflective living.” To display the movement’s logo – a snail – cities must meet a range of requirements, including banning car alarms.

- **Sports/Leisure:** Also in evidence is the tremendous growth in leisure activities like bicycling, kayaking, and fishing, which some would contend are contemplative practice for a broader social stratum (Walton 1998). Consider this excerpt from an essay titled “Observations on a Soggy Cigar” (Curry 2000):

> Fishing offers the opportunity to step outside the timestream of faxes and emails, of conference calls and thrice-rescheduled meetings, to a place beyond time... Just as time is defined by space and motion, timeless observation is defined by the space around you, the macro/microcosm, and blissful immobility. The fisherman who has a warbler land on his rod-tip is doing something right.

Even the Girl Scouts now award a “Stress Less” merit badge to scouts who take part in activities such as morning tai chi exercises, meditation, keeping a journal, and analyzing their daily schedule to see where they can build more time for relaxation.
Book sales and media coverage provide another measuring stick for this phenomenon. Large chains like Barnes & Noble and Borders have created entire sections for books on yoga, meditation, and Buddhism. *Time*

magazine featured cover stories on Buddhism with an emphasis on meditation (1997), yoga (2001), and the use of meditation in secular settings (2003). Magazines as diverse as *Seventeen* (1999) and *Runner’s World* (1999) have included articles on meditation. Professional journals in the education, healthcare, and law communities, including the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2001), the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2000) and the *Harvard Negotiation Law Review* (2002) have covered the topic of mindfulness in their respective fields. (A bibliography of selected writings in these and other professional sectors is listed in Appendix IV.)

During the 1990s, specialty magazines that focused on essays and news about contemplative practices saw a dramatic rise in readership. At *Yoga Journal*, founded in 1975, the number of subscribers increased from 55,000 in 1990 to more than 300,000 in 2002. *Tricycle*, a Buddhist quarterly, now sells more than 50,000 copies per issue, compared with a few thousand when it was first published in 1991. The magazine estimates its total readership at 200,000, with one half of its readers considering themselves non-Buddhist.

In addition, a new genre of magazine has emerged - one that appeals to the demographic mainstream but takes a different perspective on topics like finances, shopping, and sex appeal. These “new paradigm” magazines, such as *Fast Company* and *O* (The *Oprah* magazine), have lofty mission statements that reflect a shift to explore deeper meaning in business, relationships, and life. *Fast Company* describes itself as “the magazine for business leaders who are looking to bring out the best in themselves - the magazine for companies that believe that you win by doing what’s right, not what you can get away with.” *O* magazine pledges to give women the tools they need “to make choices that will lead to a happier and more fulfilling life” and to serve “as a catalyst for transforming women’s lives.”

In these magazines, stories about contemplative practices are given prominent placement and coverage. From 1997-2003, *Fast Company* published 54 articles that examined how contemplative practices influence CEOs and companies. Since launching in May 2000, *O* magazine has regularly featured articles by leading meditation teachers such as Sharon Salzberg, who help readers to understand how insights from contemplative practices can be applied to relationship breakups or challenging work situations. Every issue of *O* also includes a two-page spread called “Breathing Space” – a scenic photograph accompanied by a few words that invite the reader to stop and contemplate the beauty of nature.

As celebrities and politicians and such as Richard Gere, Philip Glass, Goldie Hawn, Madonna, Sting, Al Gore, and Hilary Clinton proclaimed the virtues of meditation and
yoga, these practices continued to catch the eye of the public. This interest crosses generational lines – musicians like the Beastie Boys, Michael Franti, and hip-hop star Russell Simmons all have stories about the enhanced creativity and inner peace that contemplative practices have brought into their lives. During their 2000 concert tour, the Red Hot Chili Peppers’ contract stipulated a meditation room in each venue they played.

The use of meditation in the sports world has also taken on a high profile, especially after NBA coach Phil Jackson published his book, *Sacred Hoops: Spiritual Lessons of a Hardwood Warrior* (1995). In the book, Jackson outlined his approach to “mindful basketball,” weaving together an eclectic mix of Zen Buddhism, Native American traditions, and Western philosophy to maximize his team’s effectiveness. Other sports figures who have credited meditation with improving their performance include Michael Jordan (basketball), Tiger Woods (golf), and Barry Zito (baseball). A number of people specialize in teaching meditation to athletes, including Contemplative Net interviewee George Mumford who has taught insight meditation to the Chicago Bulls and the Los Angeles Lakers N.B.A. teams.

Some public spaces and commercial undertakings have also become for contemplation. Passengers on JetBlue Airways who look in their seat pockets will find the usual airplane safety instructions, but they’ll also receive meditation and yoga instruction cards. At the Melville Corporate Center, just off the Long Island Expressway, a 4,000-square-foot meditation garden provides a tranquil place for employees to relax and reflect. The garden’s designer, Jack Carman, reported a noticeable increase in contracts for these contemplative spaces since September 11, 2001. He said, “These gardens are a wonderful opportunity for people who are having a bad day. More schools, senior residences, and health-care facilities are creating them” (Paquette 2002). Public labyrinths can be found in many locations, including the City University of New York School of Law in Flushing, New York, and California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco, where a large labyrinth garden was built off of the hospital’s main lobby for use by patients, staff, and visitors. The hospital sees the labyrinth as an integral part of its healing mission.

But perhaps it is inevitable that any American phenomenon takes on the particularly American characteristic of commodification. Take a trip to Target and it’s easy to find yoga box kits that include a video, mat, and props. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a crop of advertisements using imagery from contemplative practice began to appear as marketing departments linked the feeling of fulfillment associated with meditation and yoga to products such as Apple computers, Ford trucks, and even Playtex underwear.
While there is nothing new about marketing spirituality (the Catholic church of the Middle Ages sold relics of saints and indulgences to help pay for the construction of St. Peter’s Basilica), the phenomenon has taken on a distinctly 21st century corporate twist. Recently, Bikram Choudhury, founder of Bikram yoga, copyrighted the series of poses used in his 300 U.S. studios and threatened to sue teachers that deviate from it. He cited the Starbucks franchise model as the inspiration for his business (Grigoriadis 2003).

Anecdotes like this have generated lively discussions about the consequences of separating contemplative practices from their religious and spiritual contexts in order to make them accessible to larger audiences (Wild 2002). Some see no harm in this approach; others firmly believe that it is wrong and even potentially dangerous to ignore the spiritual roots of these practices. This question was explored with the Contemplative Net interviewees and is covered in Section VI of this report.

**Contemplative Practices in Professional Settings**

At the same time that religious communities were seeing renewed interest in contemplative practices in their respective traditions, a small group of people began to think about how to apply these practices to professional settings. One of the first to do so was Jon Kabat-Zinn, who, in 1979, developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program at the University of Massachusetts, Worcester. As the benefits of MBSR were documented through scientific research (Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth, Burney, and Sellers 1986; Bernhard, Kristeller, and Kabat-Zinn 1988; Kabat-Zinn et al. 1992), the program was introduced in other settings, including a public school system and correctional institutions (Kabat-Zinn 1996).

This coincided with similar efforts by others to introduce mindfulness practices into schools, hospices, and prisons. In higher education, institutions were established to formally build a bridge between the inner wisdom traditions and contemporary Western academic practices. Two of these schools, the California Institute of Integral Studies (founded in 1968) and Naropa University (founded in 1974), continue to lead the field of contemplative education, but they are now joined by dozens of other educational institutes, including public universities such as the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. In 1987, the Zen Hospice Center in San Francisco was begun as a way to fuse spiritual insight and practical social action. The Prison Dharma Network, based in Boulder, Colorado, was founded in 1989 as a nonsectarian contemplative support network for prisoners, prison volunteers, and correctional workers.

In 1993, a group of 16 people, including Michael Lerner, Brian Stock, Joan Halifax, Charles Halpern, and Jon Kabat-Zinn, came together to begin a conversation about how to document and nurture this growing field. The Working Group on Contemplative Mind in Society, supported by a grant from the Nathan Cummings Foundation, met several times over the next few years. In 1997, The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society was formed as a nonprofit organization. Its mission was to integrate contemplative awareness into contemporary life in order to help create a more just, compassionate, and reflective
society. The Center’s first efforts focused on Philanthropy, Environmental work, Higher Education, Law, Youth, and Business.

Since its inception, the Center for Contemplative Mind has played an integral role in seeding contemplative awareness in these professional sectors, along with other key players such as the Fetzer Institute, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, and the Ford Foundation.

In 1997 and 2000, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society collaborated with the National Religious Partnership, Nathan Cummings Foundation, and the Fetzer Institute to host a series of retreats for the Green Group, an informal alliance of 24 CEOs of major national environmental organizations. The goals of the retreat were to enhance networking among the CEOs, create a bridge between the religious and secular environmental movements, and to discover pathways to personal and institutional sustainability of spirit. Subsequently, members of the Green Group cited the retreat as one of the factors that contributed to their successful collaboration on legislation to protect the environment.

Environmental groups that continue to integrate contemplative practices into their planning and work include The Wilderness Society and the Trust for Public Land. Organizational development consultants like Robert Gass emphasize contemplative awareness in their work with organizations such as Greenpeace and the Rainforest Action Network.

Many philanthropists became interested in the connection between philanthropy and the inner life during these years and worked to make their philanthropy more responsive to the human condition and the particular problems of the time. Nathan Cummings Foundation, Fetzer Institute, and Tides Foundation took the lead in exploring how the inner life can be a force for cultivating the public good, and began to explore grant making in this area. Grants included the contemplative dimension of the growing mind-body health field, leadership training for environmentalists, and research into the effect of contemplative practices on creativity led by Howard Gardner at Harvard. In 1998, Ellen Friedman, vice president of Tides Foundation and Tides Center, published “Mapping the Heart of Philanthropy,” which explored how “values of the heart” and the contemplative dimension could be brought to philanthropy.

Over 100 philanthropists interested in the way in which practice could influence the process of their giving, as well as the projects they funded, formed a group called Philanthropy and the Inner Life. They came together in a series of retreats and gatherings from 1996 to 2003 in Big Sur, Santa Fe, Sedona, Hawaii, and The Pocantico Conference Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Another series, “The Giver and the Gift,” convened at Fetzer Institute and brought together foundation executives to explore money, power, integrity, and organizational structure from a contemplative perspective. Contemplative themes also made their way into national philanthropic meetings: Rob Lehman, then President of Fetzer, delivered a keynote speech at the 1998 Family Foundations meeting on “The Heart of Philanthropy,” and later led a national dialogue
among executives and trustees of foundations on the meaning of philanthropy. From 1997 to 1999, Steven Smith, a meditation teacher who has led retreats world-wide, offered mindfulness instructions in sessions sponsored by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society at meetings of the Council on Foundations.

In the media sector, it is more challenging to find explorations into the contemplative dimension of the profession. In a 1996 paper titled “The Contemplative Mind: Reinventing the News,” Daniel Goleman writes,

\[
A \text{ contemplative journalism might reflect on the conditions that underlie those incidents, teasing out what Gregory Bateson called “the pattern that connects” the event to a larger web of meaning. Consider an investigative mode that might be called “the position of no position”; a completely open, spacious inquiry into a state of affairs, free of prior commitment to any point of view a contemplative mind. Such a deeply reflective look at events could produce a very different version of “news.”}
\]

In 1998, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society developed a retreat with the Fetzer Institute for 25 members of the mainstream media, including the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and major networks. The retreat was intended as an opportunity to reflect on the deeper dimensions of journalism. Joan Konner (1998), Dean Emerita and Professor at Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, related some of the questions that occurred as an outgrowth of the retreat: “What’s the story we are missing? What would a compassionate journalism be like? How can the media be the reflective mind of the culture?”

**New Directions: Contemplative Practices in the 21st Century**

As we move into the 21st century, a multicultural and postmodern sensibility provides another lens through which to view the role that meditation and other contemplative practices play in society.

These practices have served as a powerful container in which to examine issues of multiculturalism and diversity. Organizations such as Healing the Heart of Diversity, based in Virginia, make use of practices to lead participants toward a deeper understanding of diversity issues in their workplaces. A number of Buddhist sanghas are exploring how racism manifests within spiritual communities (Adams et al. 2000).

But also from this perspective, meditation and other practices are not seen as neutral but rather as having different meanings depending on the participant’s own life experience. For example, contemplative practices that emphasize silence may not always be experienced as a path of liberation. For those who have historically been marginalized, silence may symbolize a tool of oppression. In the words of Audre Lorde (1984),

\[
\text{While we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us. The fact that we are here and that I speak these words is an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us, for}
\]
it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken.

A number of interviewees in this research study stressed that contemplative practices do not function in the same way for everyone. They spoke of how race, class, leisure time, and the cultural assumptions embedded within practices themselves are factors that affect accessibility. These insights have led to creative adaptations and innovative new forms of practice that allow a wide range of people, from incarcerated teens to corporate executives, to “start where they are.”

Contemplative Net interviewee Michael Lerner, founder of Commonweal, reminded us of the importance of context and respect for different backgrounds:

I don’t think we should universalize contemplative practice as the only approach either within the religious and spiritual framework or within the broader framework of how people meet their spiritual, psychological, and social needs. I see “contemplative mind” as one extremely useful approach – but it is not the only one.

Trends and Movements

Is the popularity of meditation a passing fad or something more lasting? Social scientists and marketing professionals distinguish between trends and more sustaining movements (Minkin 1995; Gladwell 2002; Barabasi 2002). Economist Laurence Iannaccone notes, “It is always a big mistake to look at a current trend and project it into the future. Because yoga has been growing in leaps and bounds, that does not mean that by the year 2050, we’ll all be yogis. Some people will never be interested in anything having to do with health or Eastern spirituality” (Wild 2002).

The increasing popularity of contemplative practices seems to be related to several other developments during the 1990s, including the interest in health and wellness, the mind-body connection, and the demographic group dubbed the “Cultural Creatives” by sociologist Paul Ray (1996). Ray estimates that 50 million Americans (26% of the U.S. adult population) are Cultural Creatives, and he theorizes that this group has significantly influenced the social agenda for the next century. Ray sifted through thirteen years of survey research studies and found a hidden subculture of Americans with a set of shared values: this group is both inner-directed and socially concerned; they place a high value on authenticity and learning through direct experience; they care about ecology, peace, and social justice; they volunteer or contribute to society in other ways more frequently than most people. It would make sense that a large number of these Cultural Creatives either have or are interested in a contemplative practice such as meditation or yoga.

Interviewees stressed that contemplative practices do not function in the same way for everyone. Race, class, leisure time, and the assumptions embedded within practices all affect accessibility.
numbers. Documentation from the Association for Spirit at Work, *Business Week*, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, Yoga Research Institute, *Time* magazine, and *The Washington Post* shows that 135 organizations that have offered meditation, yoga, and other practices to their employees (see Tables 3 and 4 on pp. 57-58).

In the midst of this growing interest in meditation and other contemplative practices, social and cultural conditioning still runs deep. The core beliefs of a capitalist society often trump the less-marketable values of wisdom, insight, and compassion. When a contemplative approach is used with the intent of improving the bottom line in a corporate setting, it may be the first thing discarded when expectations are not met. This was the case when Infiniti auto dealers removed the “contemplation areas” – small meditative spaces set off by Japanese shoji screens – in their showrooms. Infiniti general manager Mike McNabb said, “The space was set up on the premise of less pressure, to give people a little bit more breathing room. But now we’ve decided we need the space, number one” (Stoffer 2002). Elimination of the areas yielded space for two additional vehicles in the showroom. And recently, prompted by falling advertising revenues and a challenging economic climate, *Fast Company* has changed its editorial focus away from articles on creativity and reflection and toward practical applicability for business and technology professionals.

But despite these setbacks, one of the strongest indicators that this gravitation toward contemplative practice is sinking deeper roots in American society is the emergence of dozens of networks intended to support people in contemplative practices, both on their personal journeys and in their professional lives (see Appendix III). Some of these include Contemplative Outreach, the Prison Dharma Network, and the Mindfulness in Education Network. There are also a number of training groups that incorporate contemplative practices into their curriculum for leaders, such as Ripples (North Carolina), the Rockwood Foundation (California), and Sustaining the Soul that Serves (South Carolina). These groups have seeded a new generation of leaders with a keen awareness of the relationship between inner transformation and social change. In many ways, their vision and methods recall the nonviolence trainings held in Southern churches that laid the foundation for the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s. The difference is that in this incarnation, participants are just as likely to be Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, or have a secular orientation.

In nearly every professional sector and corner of U.S. culture, there are signs that contemplative practices are becoming more accessible to larger audiences. But for all their practical applications, these practices still provide a pathway into a reflective, sacred space in an increasingly material world. Public polls, media coverage, and the stories collected through this study indicate that the desire to slow down, turn inward, and listen deeply to the voice of wisdom and compassion remains essential to the human experience.
IV. What is Contemplative Practice?  
A Contemporary Definition

I think about contemplative practice as whatever is the thing that gets me in touch with me, with the light in me.

~ Marian David, Sustaining the Soul that Serves

One of the goals of the Contemplative Net Project was to generate a contemporary definition of contemplative practice. By using the term “contemplative practice” rather than simply “meditation,” we are indicating our understanding that the contemplative experience can be accessed through a variety of methods. Using an inductive rather than deductive approach, we wanted to find out how Contemplative Net interviewees understood the term “contemplative practice” and what forms it took in their lives and work. This section reports their responses and names the practices that are included under the term “contemplative practice” for the purposes of this study.

The first step in constructing the research interview was to create an operational definition of contemplative practice. The definition was intended to establish a common language between the interviewers and the 84 research participants. It was also intended to be a launching point to find out how people actually define and use these practices in their daily lives.

Definition of Contemplative Practice  
Used for Contemplative Net Interviews

A practice designed to quiet the mind in the midst of the stress and distraction of everyday life in order to cultivate a personal capacity for deep concentration and insight.

Although usually practiced in silence, examples of contemplative practice include not only sitting in silence but also many forms of single-minded concentration, including meditation, contemplative prayer, mindful walking, focused experiences in nature, yoga and other contemplative physical or artistic practices. We also consider various kinds of ritual and ceremony designed to create sacred space and increase insight and awareness, such as council circle or vision quest, to be forms of contemplative practice.

Contemplative practice has the potential to bring different aspects of oneself into focus, to help develop personal goodness and compassion, and to awaken an awareness of the interconnectedness of all life.
This definition was read to research participants near the beginning of the interview; they were then asked how their own definitions were similar to or different from the working definition.

The majority of people were enthusiastic about the definition and felt it was resonated with their understanding of the term. They also suggested ways to expand on the definition. Kazuaki Tanahashi, an artist whose work addresses peace and environmental issues, reminded us that these practices are useful not only in the midst of “stress and distraction” but also in times of love and joy. Doug Tanner, director of the Faith and Politics Institute, cited Parker Palmer’s definition for contemplative practice: “Anything that breaks through illusion and touches reality.”

When interviewees were asked how their definitions differed from the working definition, four main themes arose:

1. Contemplative practice as a communal practice
2. Contemplative practice as an active process
3. Frequency
4. Form Follows Function

1. Contemplative Practice as a Communal Practice

Often, contemplative practice is thought of as a solitary activity. A substantial amount of research has been conducted on the physiological and psychological benefits of meditation and other contemplative practices on individuals (Benson 1976, Murphy and Donovan 1996). But many interviewees described using contemplative practices in group and communal settings. Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, founder of the Spiritual Eldering Institute, said,

Most of the time, when people do meditation, it’s such a solitary thing and they’re cut off from other people. But let us say a couple or two friends go into that space and they share with each other as these things are arising, and there is this kind of dialogue that comes out of deep spiritual intimacy, so it is meditative and it is contemplative, but it’s also socializing. It creates a bond between people who can share such depth and integrity.

Rabbi Schachter-Shalomi called this “socialized meditation.” As analysis of the interviews progressed, we discovered an extension of this theme: the application of contemplative principles to organizations and large systems (see p. 106).

2. Contemplative Practice as an Active Process

A number of interviewees emphasized that contemplative practice involves not only “quieting the mind,” but also the active process of paying attention to the awareness that arises from that mind and applying these insights to everyday life. Saki Santorelli, director
of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society, described the Center’s philosophy about mindfulness training:

[The real intention for participants is] that there would be some capacity for them to connect to that part of them that is able to see, that is able to stop and understand and therefore make choices. By and large, in the stress reduction program we’ve never really attempted to teach people to “relax” in the traditional way that relaxation therapies often do. We’ve been very clear that meditation and relaxation are not interchangeable words.

David Sawyer, an organizational consultant, said,

I’m not sure that quieting the mind is necessarily the goal of spiritual practice. I would be more likely to say that purifying the mind is the goal of spiritual practice, which may involve a great deal of turmoil initially as the material is brought up and purified.

Respondents who work in social justice organizations were especially apt to emphasize the active component of contemplation. Andre Carothers, founder and director of the Rockwood Leadership Program, spoke of his work as building a bridge between inner and outer work, of bringing a contemplative approach to tasks such as organizing a meeting, negotiating with a so-called “adversary,” or simply calling a colleague to discuss a program:

Often activists don’t see that connection. They see the movement into the inner dialogue as sort of a vacation or a different piece of work that’s difficult for them to tie to their actual campaign work.

Many participants commented that contemplation and action were inseparably linked — one depends on the other. In fact, the journey of their work and lives has been to bridge the perceived division between the two. In many ways, those observations are at the heart of our findings. As Joan Halifax, founder of the Upaya Foundation, told us, “Compassionate action, if done in the right frame of mind and heart, is contemplative practice.”

3. Frequency

Some interviewees suggested that regularity and commitment to practice were important factors to include in the definition. Father Thomas Keating, of Contemplative Outreach, said “We would recommend that there be a practice that is daily, supported perhaps by other practices, like a vision quest.”

In contrast, other interviewees distinguished between long-term, ongoing practices and retreats with what Janine Geske of Marquette University called “grace moments.”

“Compassionate action, if done in the right frame of mind and heart, is contemplative practice.” Joan Halifax
In the small moments of the day, there is space and time for you to look around and appreciate what’s going on; mini-moments of contemplation in the middle of busyness throughout the day.

Janine Sagert, organizational consultant and founder of Time Out, described practice as something that helps to maintain “that contemplative mindset as we move through our daily activities... in the middle of change, pressure, and demands.”

I’m a very secular person. I certainly try to incorporate times of quiet, reflection, and journaling in my own life. Since my whole job is about multi-tasking, for me it’s finding moments and routines and experiences where I’m only doing one thing. I see taking a luxurious bubble bath and watering my plants as slowly as possible as contemplative practices. There are many of us who get so used to multi-tasking that doing just one thing and being fully present with that one experience, whatever it is, is very challenging. So I try to create opportunities for that.

Carol Miller Lieber, Educators for Social Responsibility

4. Form Follows Function

Contemplative practice can take the form of a lone meditator sitting on a cushion in an empty room. But descriptions from the interviewees indicated that it can also manifest as a group of high-powered business executives quietly slicing tomatoes in preparation for a dinner together, or a group of social activists listening and speaking to each other in intense yet focused conversations. When we asked interviewees to tell us about the kinds of contemplative practices they use in their work, the result was a list of more than 80 different forms of practice (see Table 2, p. 41). Almost all of the research participants noted that the intention with which a practice is done is more important than attachment to any one particular form or technique.

I don’t think there is anything special about contemplative practice. It’s being completely present and aware in the moment, whether you are at work or doing the laundry...Getting the technique right is not important at all. In fact, it can be distracting...It’s just that as human beings, I think we tend to need something to give us a little nudge, to help us let go.

Nancy Eggert, Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation

I haven’t been practicing meditation and contemplative practice on a daily basis at all or anything like it in a formal way. I always felt, however, that I engaged in that practice in my own way even from my very early childhood, partly because of where I grew up. I was born on a very small island, a very remote island with only about a hundred people. Four miles by two miles wide. I really felt growing up there that everything was very connected. You felt very close to nature. You felt very close to the universe because it was all so vivid. So I always had this experience of being close to nature and always had a great appreciation of poetry, for example, which I think also has a lot to do with the ideas of contemplative practice.

David Scott, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Ed Sarath, a professor of music at the University of Michigan, articulated the variety of practices and the importance of sitting meditation:

*I look at it as a continuum. I think that the quiet sitting is really, in a sense, an anchor for the whole thing. I think there’s something unique that happens with all the kinds of contemplative practices. I don’t think they’re all the same thing. I think that one of the things that those who are involved in these practices, particularly in education, need to explore is the particular value that each kind of contemplative discipline brings to the overall growth.*

**Revised Definition**

As we conclude this study, we offer this revised definition based on the responses of the interviewees:

**Contemplative Practice**

A practice undertaken with the intention to quiet the mind and to cultivate a personal capacity for deep concentration, presence, and awareness. Ideally, the insights that arise from the mind, body, and heart in this contemplative state can be applied to one’s everyday life.

Although often practiced in silence, these practices exist on a continuum and can include many forms of single-minded concentration, such as meditation, mindful movement (i.e. Hatha Yoga, T’ai Chi, walking meditation), contemplative prayer, reading of sacred texts (i.e. Lectio Divina), focused experiences in nature, contemplative physical or artistic practices (i.e. Buddhist sand mandalas), and certain forms of social activism in a context of mindfulness. These practices may be done in solitude, but they may also take a communal form.

We consider various kinds of rituals and ceremonies designed to create sacred space and to mark rites of passage and the cyclical nature of time to be forms of contemplative practice, such as the Jewish practice of Shabbat, liturgy (i.e. Catholic mass), fasting, and vision quests. We also view engaged interpersonal dialogue as a form of contemplative practice, such as the Native American council circle process, storytelling, and reflective learning.

These practices have the potential to bring different aspects of oneself into focus, to help develop personal goodness and compassion, and to awaken an awareness of the interconnectedness of all life.

**The Tree of Contemplative Practices**

We were inspired to use the image of a tree (see p. 39) to convey the breadth of practices that were described by the research participants. The tree is an ideal metaphor for this purpose – it is an organic, living being whose trunk, branches, and leaves form an ecosystem that embodies interconnection. While Contemplative Net interviewees named many different forms of practices, all the practices shared two common intentions: cultivating awareness and developing a stronger connection to one’s inner wisdom and/or the divine/God. These intentions are the foundation of all contemplative practices. They
encompass and transcend differences in the religious traditions from which many of the practices originated, and allow room for new practices to be created in secular contexts. As Peter Senge, of the Society of Organizational Learning, said:

*Deep down, all of the contemplative traditions of the world, of which there are an extraordinary variety, stem from the same source. Before there were all the religions of the last 3,000 years or so, there was a common religion that was shared by indigenous people all around the world in different ways, but it always involved a deep experience in nature and becoming open to the influence of spirit or source, or whatever terms might have been used.*

The branches of the tree represent the different groupings of practices. For example, Stillness Practices focus on quieting the mind and body in order to develop stillness and stability. Generative Practices come in many different forms (i.e. prayers, visualizations, chanting) but share the common intention of generating feelings of devotion and compassion.

Many activities not included on the Tree (such as gardening, practicing a musical instrument, taking a bath) could be considered contemplative practice when done with the intention of cultivating awareness and developing a stronger connection to God and/or one’s inner wisdom. A practice may be found on more than one branch, depending on the context. For example, chanting can be either a Generative or a Creative Process practice (or both).
The Tree of Contemplative Practices

Artwork by Carrie Bergman
The Tree of Contemplative Practices

Description of the “branches”

**Active Practice:** Work, service, and activism as practice.

**Creation Process Practices:** An artistic manifestation of contemplation, in which process is emphasized more than product.

**Generative Practices:** “Generative: the ability to give birth, to bring into being, or to evoke.” Practices done with the intention of generating devotion to God/Spirit/the Divine, or evoking compassion, lovingkindness, etc.

**Movement Practices:** Practices that emphasize movement as a path to awareness and connection.

**Relational Practices:** Practices that involve communicating either with others or oneself in a reflective process.

**Ritual/Cyclical Practices:** Practices done either alone or in community to mark passages of time or milestones in a person’s life, to acknowledge and/or catalyze change.

**Stillness Practices:** Practices that cultivate stillness, with the intention of quieting the mind, increasing awareness, and/or creating space for God/wisdom to come forward.
Table 2: Contemplative practices named by interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African dance</th>
<th>Jewish practices – general</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aikido</td>
<td>hitbonenut</td>
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<tr>
<td>altarbuilding</td>
<td>Shabbat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciative Inquiry</td>
<td>teshuvah</td>
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<td>art</td>
<td>tefila</td>
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<tr>
<td>astrology</td>
<td>tzedakah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basque mysticism</td>
<td>listening – “deep listening”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“bearing witness”</td>
<td>mandala making</td>
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<tr>
<td>brushwork/calligraphy</td>
<td>mantra practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>bubble baths</td>
<td>martial arts</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Buddhist practices – general</strong></td>
<td>massage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dzogchen practices</td>
<td><strong>Meditation – general</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>koan practice</td>
<td>guided meditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mahamudra meditation</td>
<td>Mahamudra meditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>metta (lovingkindness)</td>
<td>Transcendental Meditation – Siddhis</td>
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<td>Tibetan Buddhist visualization</td>
<td>Vipassana (insight meditation)</td>
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<td>tong-len</td>
<td>zazen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vipassana (insight meditation)</td>
<td>mindfulness practice</td>
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<td>zazen</td>
<td>music</td>
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<td>chanting</td>
<td>nature – solitary time</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Christian practices – general</strong></td>
<td>Open Space Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centering prayer</td>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
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<td>devotional prayer</td>
<td>prayer</td>
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<td>Ignatian spiritual exercises</td>
<td>qi gong</td>
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<tr>
<td>labyrinth walking</td>
<td><strong>Quaker practices – general</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lectio divina</strong></td>
<td>“listening to the inner voice”</td>
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<td>“connecting”</td>
<td>clearness committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>contemplative dialogue</td>
<td>reading sacred texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>contemplative movement</td>
<td>Reflective Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>dance</td>
<td>Sabbath</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earth-based rituals, Pagan practices</td>
<td>Shamanistic practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>fasting</td>
<td>singing</td>
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<td>gardening</td>
<td>storytelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hindu practices</td>
<td>Sufi practices</td>
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<td><strong>Indigenous practices – general</strong></td>
<td>Swedenborgian practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>council circle</td>
<td>T’ai chi</td>
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<td>invoking the ancestors</td>
<td>vigils</td>
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<td>medicine wheel creation</td>
<td>walking meditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>storytelling</td>
<td>writing/journaling</td>
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<td>sweatlodge</td>
<td><strong>Yoga – general</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>vision quest</td>
<td>Hatha yoga</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kundalini yoga</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Siddha yoga</td>
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An Invitation

Take a moment to stop. Close your eyes and see if you can recall the first sound that you heard today. The shrill ring of the alarm clock, the soft breathing of the person next to you, the song of birds? Then come back to the present moment and listen, carefully, to the sounds around you.

Enjoy.

The fruit of silence is prayer.
The fruit of prayer is faith.
The fruit of faith is love.
The fruit of love is service.
The fruit of service is peace.

Mother Teresa
A. Opening the Door to Change: How Contemplative Practice Can Transform a Life

Contemplative practices help people learn - via direct experience - that the self is less like a noun and more like a verb.

When you begin to discover and live inside a self that is more like a verb, you have tremendous possibilities because you realize there are more choices...more choices in the way you interact with the world, the way you interact with yourself, the way you interact with others. In the process, what one thinks of as “me” becomes much bigger. This “enlarging” alters your relationship with self, others, and the world, irrevocably.

~ Saki Santorelli, University of Massachusetts

Overview
Silence is the space which opens up possibilities – the possibility for a high school student to enter a classroom from the chaos of the outside world and stop, breathe, and focus on her work; the possibility for two family members in conflict to hear something new in each others’ perspective; the possibility for a criminal to understand the consequences of his actions and express remorse. Contemplative practices, in myriad shapes and forms, offer the gift of awareness buried within this silence.

Over the past 20 years, hundreds of clinical and empirical studies have established a positive correlation between physical and psychological well-being and meditation practices (for a comprehensive bibliography, see Murphy, Donovan, and Taylor 1999). Author and social psychologist Daniel Goleman has outlined some of the recent dramatic advances in attempts to measure the effects of meditation on the brain’s functioning (2003). These studies indicate that meditation can actually alter the brain’s neural circuitry to better deal with emotions and stress. Research from Dr. Richard Davidson of the University of Wisconsin (Davidson et al. 2003) demonstrates how mindfulness meditation influences the amygdala and the right prefrontal cortex, regions of the brain that help to regulate emotions and responses to stress. In one study, biotechnology workers received eight weeks of training in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction from Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn. Their brain electrical activity was measured before and after the training, and was compared to subjects in a control group who received no training. The subjects in the meditation group showed significant increases in the left-sided anterior activitation; that is, the emotional set point of their brain actually shifted toward a more positive zone. The workers reported that they felt more energized and less anxious after the training.

In this section, quotes and stories illustrate how this awareness works in individual lives, and give a human face to the scientific data that has been collected.
Words and phrases used by interviewees to describe the qualities cultivated through the use of contemplative practice:

- authentic
- listening
- awareness
- calm
- clarity
- compassion
- concentration
- contentment
- equanimity
- focus
- forgiveness
- gratitude
- insight
- less anxiety
- less judgment
- love
- mindfulness
- presence
- relaxed alertness
- sanctuary
- self-knowledge
- sense of
- interconnection
- spaciousness
- wide open awareness

The Nature of Contemplative Change

Each of the 84 Contemplative Net interviewees spoke of how contemplative practices have influenced them, both short-term behavioral changes and longer term life transformations. They also told stories about the changes they witnessed in those with whom they shared these practices.

The story of Robert Forman, a former professor of religion at Hunters College, is a good example of the subtle trajectory of change often described:

I was depressed when I started meditation, when I was in college in 1969. I had been depressed for about three years. Taking up meditation has had a huge impact on my psyche. I was pretty much always anxious, along with being depressed. After about three years of meditating, I said to myself one day, “You know, I don’t think I’ve been anxious for the last five minutes.” It was a revelation that I could be not anxious.

After a couple more years, it was like, “You know, I don’t think I’ve been anxious today.” And then another few years later, it was, “It’s been a long time since I’ve been anxious.” And then, there was one day (I was getting fairly on in years now) that I said to myself, “You know, it’s not like I don’t feel anxious – I actually feel good.” And that positive good feeling about being alive has grown more and more over the years so that I generally feel pretty damn good about what it is to be alive and feel good about being me.

All of that has developed with meditation, that sort of huge thing. It’s not like there was one kind of epiphany; it was more a sense of some ongoing slow growth that meditation seems to have achieved...a kind of slow, steady maturation process.
Joe D’Arrigo, who founded Tuscan Sabbaticals as a way to offer business leaders a contemplative experience and tools to help them find balance, told about one executive whose life was transformed through his sabbatical:

> When I first met George [not his real name], he was on Prozac and thought he was going out of business. That was three years ago. Today, he understands his values, he journals. He would never call it a contemplative life. In fact, when he was in Italy, his comments were that the silence was overwhelming and drove him crazy. He wasn’t used to it.

George’s life today is much different. Not that he runs to get silence, but in the middle of the day, he’ll take a walk over to a wonderful Franciscan chapel in the middle of Providence [Rhode Island]. I encourage him to do that, right before big meetings. He prays or he contemplates what’s about to happen. It’s a change in behavior. He said, “I learned that thoughtful quiet time can be beneficial. I’ve never had reflective time in quantity and found that pondering time alone was beneficial to me.” So there’s an individual who has changed.

George has learned how to realize when there is tension in the situation, which he could never do before. He can now realize when there is tension in his body in a situation and can step back from it. To me, that is a home run.

Often interviewees began meditation or another contemplative practice in order to cope with a physical disease or stress in their lives. In some cases, they had experienced a personal crisis such as the death of a loved one, a professional challenge, or a life transition, and used contemplative practice to help them navigate through the changes in their life.

As they began to explore practices such as yoga or meditation in more depth, they made it a regular part of their lives. This ongoing commitment to develop contemplative awareness shifted the level of change in their lives from temporary relief to something more significant. Angel Kyodo Williams, founder of urbanPEACE, made a distinction between “change” and “transformation”:

> Change is not enough. We need transformation. We have a whole lot of people that are changed every time they sit down on the cushion but they’re not transformed because they’re not actualizing it. I believe that it’s possible to expose people to moments of insight in such a way that it is seeded and they become interested in their own process and then they are endowed with the revelation of their internal compass.

The encounter with the contemplative dimension seems to take on a cyclical nature, leading people to structure their work and living situation so that time for reflection becomes integrated into the rhythm of their life. Nancy Roof, who helped to convene the Spiritual Caucus at the United Nations, said:
I have been a meditator for 35 years or so. In my own practice, I move in and out of being alone, in solitude, in the country for long periods, and then moving back into the “real world” to bring in what has happened during that time. So I balance time and solitude where I read and meditate for two or three months with projects that I do in the outer world. That is one thing I find necessary in my life.

These contemplative, sabbatical experiences are only the starting point of the journey. Much like the story of Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) who realized that enlightenment was not his alone, the stories told by Contemplative Net interviewees illustrated how people felt called to apply the insights from these times of reflection to their everyday lives and in their relationships with friends, family, and co-workers.

Relationships With Others
Interviewees described changes within themselves, but they also talked about how contemplative practices had contributed to their relationships with the significant people in their lives, particularly family members. Claudia Horwitz, founder of stone circles, described the influence of this deeper level of contemplative practice:

*I think as folks begin to carve out intentional time on a daily basis, their whole relationship to life really shifts - that ability to live a little bit more in the present moment, to release or surrender the ego position, and to move into a place of compassion completely transforms the way relationships get built. It allows people to be a lot more intentional about how they live their lives and the choices they make. This work really helps people sustain themselves through transitions, whether it’s some large transformation or something smaller. It provides an anchor.*

Interviewees noted several changes that took place after they had begun a regular practice:

- increased awareness of the importance of one’s family, which often led to redefining priorities in order to spend more time with family;
- identifying “unfinished business” with family members and learning new tools with which to address these issues;
- inter-generational forgiveness and reconciliation (see stories on pp. 48-49).

Change Isn’t Easy
Though these stories of transformation can sound idyllic, the process of change is more complex. In the movie *Moonstruck*, Nicolas Cage’s character makes a wise observation about the nature of love: “Loretta, I love you,” he pleads. “Not like they told you love is...love don’t make things nice - it ruins everything. It breaks your heart. It makes
things a mess.” Introducing contemplative practice into one’s life may lead one to the same conclusion.

While meditation and other practices can serve as a calming balm to soothe against life’s stresses, those who engage with the deeper dimension of awareness sometimes find out that the insights they uncover can turn their lives upside down. Or, as Kavita Kapur of the Self Knowledge Symposium told us,

“There are a lot of times when contemplative practice is really hard and it takes you to places in your subconscious or within yourself that you don’t really want to go. You discover a lot about yourself that you are usually scared to know. So I think there can be a scary aspect to it, but it’s for the good – it’s the self-knowledge aspect in learning more about yourself and how you work and how you tick.

Saki Santorelli described this phenomenon when he noted that participants in the University of Massachusetts Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program would frequently get two weeks into the program and say, “I’ve got more stress now than before I started!” Saki explained,

"In the short term, it is stressful to take the stress reduction program. In the long run, it has the potential for tremendous reductions in a certain kind of suffering, or stress. It doesn’t mean that the stress in our lives is going to go away, but the way we face it...might change radically.

As the individual begins to find a deeper sense of connection to their own values through these practices, they sometimes discover that those values are not in alignment with the structure of their life. Grove Burnett, of the Vallecitos Mountain Refuge in northern New Mexico, described seeing this process take place in retreats:

“There’s a power in the contemplative experience of our retreats that is transformative on a personal and a professional level. And the transformations have to do with really recognizing some essential fundamental needs that are not being met in people’s personal lives—of taking care of themselves, of acting from a deeper place of vision and insight and core values, spiritual understanding...

I say this as a joke sometimes, but it’s actually true—people come to Vallecitos and go home and quit their jobs (laughs). It happens, actually not that infrequently. What it means is that they’ve had such a deep experience that they realize that they’re at a place in their lives where they need to move on... [to] the next stage of their work in their lives that they’re supposed to be doing.
There was an older black man that we took care of in the hospice. His son, John [not his real name], was an attorney. The morning that the older man died, I called John and he came to the hospice. He stood next to his father at the bedside and just cried, “I love you, Dad.” He hadn’t imagined that his dad would die that morning. It took him by surprise. I noticed that he looked at his watch. He was due in court that day so when he looked at his watch, I sat down (this is my favorite intervention). And when I sat down, of course, he did too. Then I asked him, “Was your dad the kind of guy that gave you advice?” He said, “Oh, no, he was the sort of guy you shoot pool with...” and the stories began to come forward.

After a while, he began to be comfortable in an environment in which he was before quite uncomfortable, and he wanted to stay with his dad. I suggested that we call his friend and cancel his court cases that day. He agreed. Then I called John’s son, Larry, who is also an attorney, and said, “Cancel his cases and cancel yours; you come, too, be with your dad.”

So Larry arrived, sat on the opposite side of the bed, the son across from the father. While the father who had just died loved John immensely, the nature of their relationship was such that he didn’t say it to him so directly. He didn’t tell him about the things that he was proud of. But he had told them to Larry, his grandson. So now Larry had the opportunity, in this ritual setting, to tell his father all the things that his father had wanted to say but couldn’t say to him directly. So sitting across the bed from the father, Larry began to tell these stories. Extraordinary process. It took some hours. Eventually, I called the son’s wife and suggested that she come also and bring the children. She said, “Well, it was upsetting to the children ‘cause Grandpa was very restless the night before.” I said, “Well, he’s very still now. so why don’t you bring them.”

So she came with the children. Mostly what we did was offer tea and make sandwiches, very minimal intervention really. Several more hours passed and finally about 9:00 that evening, everyone said, “It’s time for us to go now. We really appreciate it, we had a real good time. It was good for us to be here.” The children ended up telling their stories about Grandpa so the whole process was very healing. What happened was that people were given the opportunity to come to the situation without any interference and yet there was a safe container for all of this in a ritual. It was a process that helped to absolve the truth of experience, a deep listening, a willingness to have people listening.
We recently had a very emotional case with a woman who was dying. She was in a wheelchair. Her house was being foreclosed on and she was suing her adult daughter, ostensibly for a $500 loan that the daughter had taken several years earlier.

The mother and the daughter had not spoken in three years. Well, this wasn’t about the loan. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out that the mother was trying to make new contact. They went into the court, into the mediation, and they were really yelling at each other and really angry. The daughter was infuriated that she had been sued and the mother was infuriated at the daughter.

My student, Patrick, who is a great big guy (he played in the Rose Bowl game as a University of Wisconsin football player) took them individually. He talked to the mom and she was ranting and raving. He talked to her for a while and then he talked to the daughter and she was ranting and raving. He said, “How do you feel about your mom dying?” She just melted, and started crying and talked about the pain of her mother dying and that she wasn’t taking care of her and she couldn’t believe she was going to lose her mother and how much she loved her. Patrick said to her, “Can you tell her that?” She said, “I can’t tell her that. We’ve said too many bad things. I can’t go there.”

Patrick said, “Well, can you write something? Can you write it down?”

The daughter wrote some things down. They went back in together and things were said, and then there was silence in the room – a pregnant pause, you might say. Patrick used the silence. Finally, the daughter pushed over the note to the mother and the whole thing went together. The mother dismissed the lawsuit, everybody in the room was weeping. The daughter agreed that she would help the mother find a new place and come see her three times a week. Through her tears, the daughter looked at Patrick and said, “How can I ever thank you for what you just gave me?” And he said, “Just go hug your mom.”
B. Meditation Goes to Work: Meditation and Other Contemplative Practices in the Workplace

There’s a continuum between meditation practice and more complex activities. Organizational practice could be a contemplative practice if we’re successful in bringing meditative awareness into it.

We’re not talking about contemplative practice as a foundation or something that you go off and do so that you’re better prepared to do something else. We’re talking about it as a continuum that completely infiltrates activity in the world.

~ Bob Ziegler, The Shambhala Institute

Overview
Monasteries, churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship have traditionally served as the sites for people to share the joys and challenges of the spiritual dimension of life. In contemporary U.S., the office has become the location where Americans spend the majority of their waking hours. This factor, in conjunction with the breakdown of traditional religious communities, has led to work becoming a contemporary vehicle for the inner journey.

In the first part of this section, we look at one theme that arose in the Contemplative Net interviews: the emerging paradigm of the Contemplative Organization. In the following chapters, we survey the use of these practices in five professional fields: Business and Organizational Development, Medicine and Healthcare, Education and Youth Work, Law and Government, and Prison Work.
1. The Contemplative Organization

Thirty-eight of the 84 Contemplative Net interviewees (32%) described bringing contemplative practices into their workplace with the intention of creating a more reflective environment. Analysis of these interviews revealed 12 locations where organizations were attempting to infuse a contemplative approach into the workplace. We called this emerging paradigm a “Contemplative Organization” (Duerr 2004). In these companies and organizations, meditation and other practices are used not only as ancillary stress-reduction techniques for individuals but are incorporated into the structure of daily work and decision-making processes. These practices, often shared in a group context, help to cultivate a work environment where contemplative awareness is a core value.

As these 38 interviewees described how their organizations function, five characteristics were identified as part of “the Contemplative Organization.” Such an organization strives to incorporate contemplative practices into all aspects of work; embody and explore organizational mission and values; move between cycles of action and reflection; balance product with process; and have an organizational structure that reflects a contemplative philosophy.

At a Contemplative Organization, these efforts to bring more reflection into the workplace are not segregated from the core of the organization’s work, but are seen as integral to it. Peter Senge, founder of the Society of Organizational Learning, told us, “One of the problems we have in business is that people want to programatize things. That itself is a source of a lot of limitation because programs come and go.” Rather, he suggested, organizations could benefit by an ongoing exploration of the question, “What does it mean to create a climate in which people are working where reflection, deep conversation, and becoming more and more open is basically how we work together?”

The Contemplative Organization model has its roots in Christian monasteries, Buddhist dharma centers, and Hindu ashrams, where work has long been viewed as one form of spiritual practice. More recently, retreat centers such as Kripalu and the Omega Institute have taken a related approach in their personnel guidelines and management techniques, stressing concepts of right livelihood and mindful work. The Seva Foundation, founded in 1978, has used a similar model to guide its service work around the world. (The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society itself started out as a project of the Seva Foundation.)

A Contemplative Organization is different from a faith-based organization in that it does not require its employees to identify with a specific religious tradition. While a faith-based organization is usually firmly rooted in a set of clear ethics deriving from one religious tradition, the Contemplative Organization places a high value on
discovering emergent truths and honoring diverse spiritual backgrounds of its employees. The organization may adhere to a set of ethical guidelines, but the language used to communicate these is of a secular or multifaith nature (see “Secular Ethical Guidelines in Organizations,” p. 120).

The Five Characteristics of the Contemplative Organization

The Contemplative Organization strives to:

1) Incorporate contemplative practices into all aspects of work
2) Embody and explore organizational values
3) Move between cycles of action and reflection
4) Balance process with product
5) Have an organizational structure that reflects a contemplative philosophy

Of the organizations profiled in this study, the Greyston Foundation is probably the best developed example of a Contemplative Organization. Greyston, which provides comprehensive social services in Yonkers, NY, was founded by Roshi Bernie Glassman in 1982 as an experiment to explore the connections between Buddhist teachings and social change. The Greyston “Mandala” is comprised of an array of nonprofit and for-profit entities including the Greyston Bakery, which supplies Ben & Jerry’s with baked good products. Charles Lief, president of Greyston, summarized the elements that are part of the culture of a Contemplative Organization:

We are an organization that finds it acceptable within the work day for people to explore their own contemplative practice. Institutional norms here are things like working with the Native American practice of council as a way of conducting meetings and having periods of meditation or silence before and after we start events.

The idea of a Contemplative Organization is still early in development, and may be most useful as a conceptual model. To the extent that these organizations do exist, they are in different stages of development – some are dipping their toe in the water by offering employees an occasional meditation class; others have taken the plunge and use contemplative practices in many of their planning processes and other work functions. Some of these include:

- beginning meetings with silence
- use of reflective dialogue in meetings
- permission to take “contemplative breaks” during the day
- creation of a special space in the office for meditation, reflection and/or prayer
- use of contemplative group techniques such as a reflective dialogue, “Open Space Technology,” or council circle to conduct strategic planning
In addition to the 12 organizations associated with our research interviewees, we subsequently identified three others that were making similar efforts: Sounds True, Windhorse Associates, and our own workplace, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (see sidebar below).

### Contemplative Organizations

Companies and organizations identified as having characteristics of a Contemplative Organization

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<tr>
<th>Berkana Institute</th>
<th>Institute for Health and Healing (California Pacific Medical Center)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Buddhist Peace Fellowship</td>
<td>Jobs With Justice (New York office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Contemplative Mind in Society</td>
<td>Peacemaker Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Mindfulness and Medicine (University of Massachusetts, Worcester)</td>
<td>Shalem Institute</td>
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<td>Global Renaissance Alliance</td>
<td>Sounds True</td>
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<td>Greyston Foundation</td>
<td>Trust for Public Land</td>
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<td>The Wilderness Society</td>
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<td>Windhorse Associates</td>
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<td>Zen Hospice Project</td>
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A current study by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society is exploring the concept of the Contemplative Organization in more depth through the use of ethnographic research techniques. Preliminary anecdotal data indicates that Contemplative Organization employees may have a higher retention rate and overall increased job satisfaction.

The deeper integration of contemplative practices into the texture of work can fundamentally change the way people work together. Many of the interviewees related stories about improved communication, a greater sense of teamwork, and an increased ability to work toward goals when contemplative practices were present in their workplaces. These findings were similar to those of Schaefer and Darling (1997), who identified greater commitment to mission and values, enhanced relationships, and sense of community as by-products of organizational contemplative practices. Claudia Horwitz, founder of stone circles, said:

> I think contemplative practice strengthens the way people communicate with each other in an organizational context, allows for a totally different approach to conflict, and also to knowing and appreciating each other. You get to see more of who each other really is, and that shifts the nature of relationships. It can really shift the way people deal with crisis or the hard times that
organizations inevitably go through. It can allow people to prepare well for crunch times, periods when they know it is going to be really crazy or busy or hectic.

Janine Sagert, who teaches corporate clients such as Dell Computer, IBM, and Motorola how to achieve optimal performance and well-being, begins meetings with her own staff with a short meditation. She said,

[Contemplative practice] certainly clears away any petty issues that might be going on between us...It re-establishes each one of us in our own joy, so it makes meetings more efficient and focused.
2. Applying Meditation and Other Practices to Professions

a. Business and Organizational Development

*Contemplative Net Interviewees*

- Angeles Arrien, Foundation for Cross-Cultural Education and Research (Sausalito, CA)
- Pam Caraffa, Monsanto (St. Louis, MO)
- Andre Carothers, The Rockwood Foundation (Berkeley, CA)
- Amber Chand, Eziba (North Adams, MA)
- David Cooperrider, Case Western Reserve Weatherhead School of Management (Cleveland, OH)
- Joe D’Arrigo, Tuscan Sabbaticals (Boston, MA)
- Marian David, Sustaining the Soul that Serves (Conway, SC)
- Nancy Eggert, The Shalem Institute (Bethesda, MD)
- Robert Gass, Consultant (Boulder, CO)
- Pat Harbour, Healing the Heart of Diversity (Roanoke, VA)
- Claudia Horwitz, stone circles (Durham, NC)
- Mutima Imani, Simplexity (Piedmont, CA)
- Harrison Owen, Open Space Technology (Potomac, MD)
- Janine Sagert, Consultant (Austin, TX)
- David Sawyer, Consultant (Portland, OR)
- Peter Senge, Society of Organizational Learning (Cambridge, MA)
- Susan Szpakowski, The Shambhala Institute (Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada)
- Margaret Wheatley, The Berkana Institute (Provo, UT)
- Nadya Zhexembayeva, Case Western Reserve, Weatherhead School of Management (Cleveland, OH)

In the 1980s and 90s, meditation and other contemplative practices found their way into businesses and nonprofits organizations, fueled by an interest in spirituality in the workplace (Briskin, 1998; Burack, 1999; Conlin, 1999; Mitroff and Denton, 1999; Neal, Lichtenstein, and Banner, 1999) and bolstered by studies that linked meditation with decreased stress and increased employee satisfaction (Langer, Heffernan, and Kiester, 1988; Park, 1990).
In the corporate sector, businesses were initially attracted to the idea of meditation in the workplace as a way to increase productivity and efficiency. One of the earliest companies to try out meditation was the Montgomery Company, a Detroit-based chemical manufacturing firm. R.W. Montgomery introduced Transcendental Meditation for stress management throughout the company in 1983. Within three years, 52 of the 70 workers were meditating for 20 minutes before they came to work and 20 minutes in the afternoon, on company time. According to Montgomery, absenteeism fell by 85%, injuries declined by 70%, and productivity rose 120% during that period of time (Stevens 1996).

Articles in Business Week (Dunkin 1993), The Washington Post (Stevens 1996), and other publications reinforced the idea that meditation was an effective form of stress reduction that could also help the bottom line. The business sector embraced the use of contemplative practices as part of employee benefit offerings (Businessweek Online 2003). According to a survey conducted by Oxford Health Plans (2000), 13% of employers offer a meditation room. When such a room is available, 55% of employees make use of it. A short list of companies offering yoga or meditation classes to their employees includes Apple Computer, Chase Manhattan, General Electric, the New York City Police Department, Nike, and Texas Instruments (see Tables 3 and 4 on the following pages). Employees at New York City-based clothing manufacturer Eileen Fisher receive a “Wellness Benefit” for self-care, which may include massages, meditation, instruction, or art classes. Sounds True, a Boulder, Colorado-based company, offers its workers morning and evening yoga classes, as well as a meditation room for use anytime during the workday.
Table 3: Businesses which offer (or have offered) contemplative practices for employees


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<th>Adolph Coors Co.</th>
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<td>AOL/Time Warner</td>
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<td>Apple Computer</td>
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<td>Astrazeneca Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>Loews Hotels</td>
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<td>AT&amp;T</td>
<td>Los Angeles Lakers N.B.A. team</td>
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<td>Biometric Imaging</td>
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<td>The Body Shop</td>
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<td>Candle Corp.</td>
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<td>Chase Manhattan</td>
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<td>Chicago Bulls N.B.A. team</td>
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<td>Cohesion Technologies</td>
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<td>Compaq</td>
<td>New York Telephone Company</td>
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<td>Computer Solutions and Development</td>
<td>Nortel Networks</td>
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<td>Compuware Corp.</td>
<td>NYNEX</td>
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<td>Daimler Chrysler</td>
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<td>Dell Computer</td>
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<td>Deutsche Bank</td>
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<td>Dollar Tree Stores, Inc.</td>
<td>Princeton Review</td>
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<td>Eileen Fisher</td>
<td>Public Service Electric &amp; Gas Co.,</td>
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<td>Executive Director, Inc.</td>
<td>Newark, NJ</td>
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<td>Eziba</td>
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<td>Ford Motor Co.</td>
<td>Ritz Carlton Hotels</td>
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<td>Gaiam</td>
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<td>Gelula &amp; Co.</td>
<td>Sematech</td>
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<td>General Electric</td>
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<td>General Mills</td>
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<td>J. Paul Getty Museum</td>
<td>Texas Instruments</td>
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<td>H.A. Montgomery Co.</td>
<td>Tower Companies</td>
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<td>Hewlett Packard</td>
<td>Yahoo.com</td>
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<td>Hoffman-LaRoche</td>
<td>Walt Disney Co.</td>
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<td>Hughes Aircraft</td>
<td>Xerox</td>
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Table 4: Education, government, and nonprofit agencies which offer (or have offered) contemplative practices for employees

Sources: Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, Yoga Research Institute

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<tr>
<th>Berkana Institute</th>
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<td>Power of Hope</td>
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<td>California Pacific Medical Center, Institute for Health and Healing</td>
<td>Prison Dharma Network</td>
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<td>Cambridge Rindge and Latin School</td>
<td>Rediscovery</td>
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<td>Case Western Reserve Weatherhead School of Management</td>
<td>Resolving Conflict Creatively Program</td>
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<td>Center for Contemplative Mind in Society</td>
<td>Self-Knowledge Symposium (Duke University)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Integrative Learning and Action</td>
<td>Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation</td>
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<td>Center for Visionary Leadership</td>
<td>Shambhala Institute</td>
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<td>Commonweal</td>
<td>Society of Organizational Learning</td>
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<td>Creating Our Future</td>
<td>Southeast Regional Economic Justice Network</td>
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<td>The Nathan Cummings Foundation</td>
<td>Spirit in Action</td>
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<td>CUNY Law School</td>
<td>Spirit in Human Rights</td>
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<td>Environmental Leadership Program</td>
<td>Spiritual Eldering Institute</td>
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<td>Faith and Politics Institute</td>
<td>stone circles</td>
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<td>Federal Trade Commission</td>
<td>Sustaining the Soul that Serves</td>
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<td>The Fetzer Institute</td>
<td>The Lineage Project</td>
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<td>Foundation for Cross-Cultural Education and Research</td>
<td>The Thomas Merton Foundation</td>
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<td>Gay Spirit Visions</td>
<td>The Trust for Public Land</td>
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<td>Global Renaissance Alliance</td>
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<td>Greyston Foundation</td>
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<td>Healthcare Without Harm</td>
<td>United Nations Spiritual Caucus</td>
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<td>Holyoke Youth Alliance</td>
<td>University of Arizona, Program in Integrative Medicine</td>
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<td>Inner Voices of Hope</td>
<td>University of California Davis Medical Center</td>
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<td>Jobs with Justice (New York)</td>
<td>UMass Worcester, Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Angeles City Police Department</td>
<td>University of Michigan School of Music</td>
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<td>Mosaic Multicultural Foundation</td>
<td>University of Minnesota</td>
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<td>New York City Police Department</td>
<td>University of Utah</td>
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<td>New York State Education Department</td>
<td>UrbanPEACE</td>
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<td>No Ordinary Time</td>
<td>Zen Hospice Project</td>
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<td>North King County Rehabilitation Facility</td>
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<td>Parallax Press</td>
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In addition to these company-wide initiatives, programs that afford executives and senior managers a chance to explore their contemplative side are becoming more widely available. Some examples:

- **A Tuscan Sabbatical.** Joe D’Arrigo designed “A Tuscan Sabbatical” as a weeklong experience to aid business leaders in discovering their passions and finding balance. Programs in the U.S. and Italy give executives a chance to practice yoga, meditation, journaling, and other contemplative practices as a vehicle to remember what gives meaning to their lives.

- **The Soul of the Executive.** The Shalem Institute, in Maryland, offers “The Soul of the Executive” that draws from the spiritual heritage of the Christian contemplative tradition. During the sixteen-month program, participants attend two five-day residential retreats and engage in ongoing at-home activities such as meditation, journaling, prayer, and readings. The Institute literature says, “In today’s climate of rapid economic change and social turbulence, a strong spiritual foundation can open new possibilities for responsible, visionary decision-making that enhances the life of the workplace and that of the community beyond.”

- **Time Out.** Janine Sagert, a corporate consultant based in Texas whose clients include Dell and Motorola, has created a curriculum called “Time Out.” The tools in the program include meditation and other self-inquiry practices which help executives to “keep themselves open, keep their hearts open in the midst of very demanding business circumstances.” Janine noted that “as more and more people have been introduced to these things, it’s not such a strange thing even in a business context.”

**Contemplative Practices and New Business Paradigms**

Over the past decade, conversations in the corporate world about spirituality and business have raised the bar for using contemplative practices not only for stress reduction, but for organizational development and transformation. Executives and managers who experience a contemplative perspective often look at business in a different light. The work of Peter Senge and his colleagues at the Society of Organizational Learning (SoL) has been influential in articulating how contemplative principles can be translated into corporate settings. In Senge’s book *The Fifth Discipline* (1990), he notes the role of contemplation in “personal mastery,” one of the core disciplines necessary in building a Learning Organization:

> People committed to continually developing personal mastery practice some form of “meditation.” Whether it is through contemplative prayer or other methods of simply “quieting” the conscious mind, regular meditative practice can be extremely helpful in working more productively with the subconscious mind. (p. 164)
In his Contemplative Net interview, Peter Senge shared his thoughts on the nature of organizational change and the role that meditation can play in it:

*The first fundamental capability in deep change is the ability to become aware of your thought and suspend it, rather than thinking that what you see is reality...*

*Rarely do change processes fail because people don’t have exciting ideas of what they want to change. It’s often the case they do have lots of ideas, but they often fail because they have a very limited understanding of the reality which they’re dealing with. We tend to project our assumptions and biases, histories and habitual ways of looking at the world, rather than have a capacity to begin to see or be aware of those habits of thought, to suspend them so we can actually see the world in more multi-faceted and complex ways.*

Nadia Zhexembayeva, an organizational consultant trained at Case Western Reserve’s Weatherhead School of Management, told us, “Contemplation takes the central place in our work because we’re doing inquiry, and inquiry is an inward look into something. We’re inquiring deeply within one person or within our organization, into what it means to do good business and what business is, and how to engage business in society.”

Amber Chand, co-founder of Eziba, a Massachusetts-based company that retails handmade arts and crafts, also spoke about this paradigm shift:

*Businesses can so easily look at themselves as a service and then begin to incorporate that kind of thinking and perspective into everything that happens, from the person who greets you at the door to the way you communicate with your colleagues. If it comes from service, it’s such a gentle but powerful place.*

*It is the feminization of business that we’re really talking about. All of this – the contemplative practice, the gentle spaciousness – is part of the feminine principles. I think business has gone so down one path, hard and rigid, and I’ve seen the exhaustion. We talk about productivity with employees. We have no idea how to create productivity. So rather than calling it productivity, let’s call it creativity.*

**Meditation at Monsanto**

From 1996 to 2001, The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society worked with the Monsanto Corporation in St. Louis, MO, to develop the first insight meditation program within a major U.S. company. At the time, Monsanto was undergoing a significant internal re-organization and was refashioning itself as a leader in world agriculture and genetic engineering. Leaders there saw the potential to help people tap their creativity and to enhance their relationship skills.
The first retreat, for 15 of the company’s top-level executives, was held in May 1996. The program included discussions of personal and professional responsibility among scientists and managers who were faced with critical decisions. A second retreat, attended by 35 executives and managers, was held in June 1997. Both retreats were called “Deep Thinking Skills,” reflecting an attempt to bridge the gulf between the traditional language of meditation and business culture. A third retreat took place in September 1997. By this time, interest in mindfulness practices had grown to the point where the company requested a proposal for the development of materials that would support the mindfulness program at Monsanto’s Learning Hub. Meditation rooms were set up in the conference center and science building of the company. The company library stocked meditation books and tapes, and the employee website included a learning module on mindfulness practice.

The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society was aware of the ethical questions implicit in working with the company that produced Agent Orange and Round-Up. The Center’s director Mirabai Bush said,

Monsanto is at the heart of a major international controversy over genetically modified food, and some people have criticized us for working with them. On the contrary, I think it is exactly the reason to be there. They are being challenged to re-think their position on the future of agriculture, in which they will play a very significant role. Who could benefit more from a practice that awakens wisdom and compassion? (Holland 2000)

During each retreat, Monsanto executives were led through a metta meditation that involved extending lovingkindness to the world’s species. The exercise, and the entire program, was offered in a spirit of inquiry and openness. During one retreat, a Monsanto scientist said, “Wait—we have been creating products, like herbicides, that kill living things, like weeds. We need to shift our understanding so that we create products that support life.” Pamela Caraffa, Monsanto’s Vice President of Organizational and Management Development, told us,

The most noticeable [change] in the largest group, which included scientists and some of the foundation team folks, was a shift from cynicism to hope. When people talk about what happened to them or how it’s changed them, they talk about how they went from being negative, pessimistic, and cynical to being hopeful, being more centered.

One project coordinator at Monsanto who took part in the program said, “Contemplation helps clear all the chatter that goes on constantly in your head, and you begin to find out what’s real for you in your life. What makes this program so great is that it can affect long-term evolution in individuals, and therefore in the organization. It has provided more purpose and meaning to what I am doing at work” (Holland 2000).
Organizational Development

In the nonprofit world, consultants such as Angeles Arrien, Andre Carothers, Marian David, Nancy Eggert, Pat Harbour, Claudia Horwitz, Margaret Wheatley, and others have developed leadership training models that utilize contemplative practices. Some, like Robert Gass and David Sawyer, consult for both nonprofits and corporations and bring a reflective approach to their work. They see this cross-sector work as an essential component of social transformation. Sawyer, who has worked with the British Petroleum company (BP) as well as dozens of nonprofits, said,

*I have been in education, government, nonprofits, and now corporations and I see a strong progressive movement everywhere. Some of the most thoughtful people I have ever met in my life were BP people...Some of my colleagues in the social sector are hungry to find someone to blame and there’s a creation of an “enemy” formation. Ultimately, I don’t think we have the luxury of that anymore. I don’t think corporate America is the problem. I think human ignorance is the problem and you can find it everywhere.*

Business Education and Networking

Several MBA programs across the country have introduced contemplative practices into their curriculum and pedagogy, including Stanford University, the Drucker School of Management at the Claremont Colleges, the Wharton Center for Leadership and Change Management at the University of Pennsylvania, and Santa Clara University. Andre Delbecq, Professor of Organizational Analysis and Management at Santa Clara University, developed a “Seminar in Spirituality and Business Leadership.” The class was intended to explore “the relationship between business as a pivotal societal institution and spirituality,” with a focus on the challenges of business leadership.

Networking opportunities for business people interested in bringing the spiritual and contemplative dimensions into their work have proliferated in the past few years.

- The Association for Spirit at Work, based in West Haven, CT, was founded in 1993. When the first issue of its newsletter came out in January of 1994, there were six subscribers. By 1998, the newsletter was distributed to over 1,000 people in several countries.

- The Society of Organizational Learning, founded in 1997 by Peter Senge and colleagues, is a consortium of businesses, organizations, and individuals who are innovating the use of reflective practices in corporate settings. One example is Harley-Davidson, where consultant Marty Castleberg (1999) has developed the Reflective Notetaking method.

- In 2002, 550 people from 30 countries attended the first “Spirit in Business” conference in New York City and listened as executives from companies such as American Express, Honeywell, and Hewlett-Packard spoke about their experiences with spirituality in the workplace. The conference was organized by Spirit in Business, based in Northampton, MA.
Eziba, launched in 1999, is a retail business featuring fine handcrafted artisan items from around the world. Eziba sells many of its products online, but also has stores in New York, Chicago and North Adams, Massachusetts.

The idea for Eziba was born from a conversation between Amber Chand and her brother-in-law, economist and entrepreneur Dick Sabot. Amber, director of the Williams College Museum of Art shop at the time, was passionate about handicrafts. She saw weaving, embroidering, and pottery, and other crafts as a way to make contemplative practice manifest through the hands. She was also fascinated by the bridges that can be built between people around the globe. Amber and Dick envisioned a company which would become a global bazaar of handmade objects and would, in turn, support the artists who created these works and their communities. As she explains,

"First, this is a business and it’s based on a model of creating a socially responsible and profitable company, with ambitious growth. At the same time, what I love about Eziba is the fact that we have tried to find a way to give back to the communities that we’re serving. I use the word “serving” in an emphatic way because that’s why our business exists. We’re here to create a profit but in a very principled way and to serve the artisan communities that we are sourcing from. So many of the crafts people that we work with have never had access to an international market. The money they get from the Eziba orders translates into food for families, medicines, clothes, uniforms and literally has an impact on these communities.

The company now markets products, including home furnishings, jewelry, art, and clothing, from more than 60 countries. Amber continues to work at Eziba in her role as co-founder and vice president.

Amber finds that chanting, prayer, mindful walking, and the use of sound – particularly a meditation bell – all help her to cultivate awareness and calm in her life and in her business. She is also a follower of Satya Sai Baba, an Indian spiritual teacher. She says, “Ultimately, my practice gives me a base, but it’s my awareness during each moment of my day that really creates the impact.” For Amber, the ways in which business tasks
intersect with these moments of awareness is at the heart of her practice – like when she writes a business letter while listening to Native American flute music. She says,

Creating the capacity to be very calm, steady, and patient goes against the rhythm of traditional business, which can be very impatient, restless, driven, and reactive. I’m fascinated, challenged, and intrigued by the capacity to incorporate contemplative practice within a business setting. It’s been an amazing journey.

Before I founded this company, I thought that really where I wanted to be was in an ashram, a quiet contemplative setting, which is where my instincts gravitate towards. And then I found myself in business and I thought, “Gosh, this is really strange. How did I end up here?” But I found that this was exactly the place I needed to be. I needed to understand how to cultivate this capacity for great calm, awareness, and vigilance, and at the same time, to work with great energy and single-mindedness to accomplish our company’s goals.

Coming into the business world with a creative and spiritual background has given Amber a unique perspective on business, and she often imagines the possibilities for its transformation. Her reflective approach to life is apparent in her observations:

I have come to a couple of conclusions about traditional business. I think that the old paradigm of business is very much based on fear, greed, and scarcity. Fear generates a “what’s in it for me” attitude, greed seeks to maximize profit for just a few, and scarcity encourages a sense of devouring competition. I came to understand that business can be incredibly fearful and incredibly reactionary to the market. The intense pressure to make the right decision and to react quickly and forcefully goes against the wisdom of acting from a place of responsiveness and calm.

I’ve been very grateful at Eziba to see how, yes, there have been times when we as a team have reacted to an external situation from a space of panic and fear, but there have been many more times when we have calmly responded as a team. From that calm place, we’ve been able to make decisions that have been incredibly insightful. I’ve seen myself react quickly to a decision and then I’ve had to question myself and say, “What happened there?” Every time I’ve reacted with impatience, with anger, with restlessness, I sense that it is because fear has moved through me. And every time I have responded with a steady, calm, quiet, trusting response, I have sensed that love is moving through me. I can’t speak for anybody else in the company, but I can tell you that every time I have been afraid, I’ve seen how it affects my personal decisions. Ultimately, the actions don’t have the kind of impact I want.

The world of a start-up business can be stressful, as Amber notes. “There’s a lot of hard work and with it can come a lot of frustration and stress. In many ways we’re living on the creative edge.” To help both her and Eziba employees deal with these challenges, Amber once again drew on her contemplative background:
About a year and a half ago, I remember feeling a little disconnected from people in the company and I realized that I hadn’t cleared a space to really engage with people as people, rather than as employees in this business model. So I created something called “Tea with Amber.” It was a very simple act – come and have tea with me, let’s sit together. Let’s have a conversation. I always find that when you pour a cup of tea and sit with it, it relaxes you.

“Tea with Amber” became a way to relate and connect within a more formal structure, and people really appreciated it. When people gather to talk, issues come up, and there is this spacious sense of feeling engaged and valued. If there are only structured meetings and tight agendas, you might feel very boxed in. Obviously there is a place for rigorous agenda, but there is also an important place for conversation.

Amber shares this wisdom within Eziba and also throughout the larger business and global community. She is a charter member of the Women’s Business Council for Peace, a program of the Global Peace Initiative of Women. One recent journey took Amber to Rwanda where she met with women from the Hutu and Tutsi tribes who were widows of the country’s 1994 genocide. The women from these warring tribes came together to weave “Peace Baskets.” Amber helped to create a business partnership with them through Eziba, which now offers the baskets to its customers along with the inspiring story behind them. She said,

I have found myself speaking more deliberately about business using the language of peace building. Within this context, craft becomes symbolic of peacemaking – the Hutus and Tutsis coming together in reconciliation, creating baskets. Now we’re looking in the Middle East at projects where the Palestinians and Israelis artisans can come together using their craft traditions as an important bridge. Eziba, as a business, is able to promote and present this to the world and give it back. It’s a circle. Strong. It’s powerful. Isn’t it?
Joe D’Arrigo has spent the better part of forty years as a highly effective businessman. He has worked as a salesman in the financial services industry, as CEO of a successful employee benefits consulting company that he founded in New England, and more recently as a business mentor to CEOs of financial services companies.

Joe turned to contemplative practice in 1992 after his wife died of cancer. He sold his company in 1995, and then a two-month stay in Tuscany became a turning point in his life. He used his time alone in Italy to think, write, and to study the Renaissance. In an effort to heal from his loss, he began to practice yoga, to study mindfulness meditation with Jon Kabat-Zinn, and he took up various artistic pursuits. Joe said,

*The artists of the Renaissance did not create art only for art’s sake. They did it for a living. Brunelleschi and Michelangelo lived with many of the same stresses as today’s executives: competition, RFPs, deadlines, not getting paid for the job, working with people they didn’t like... Nothing has changed. The big difference was artists like Brunelleschi and Michelangelo pursued many of their passions - painting, sculpting, architecture, and writing. What they did and who they were was the same.*

Out of his own healing process, Joe founded “A Tuscan Sabbatical,” weeklong retreats in the countryside outside Florence, Italy, designed to give business leaders tools to help them awaken, discover their passions, and find balance. The sabbaticals offer executives a chance to try yoga, meditation, music, art, and poetry. Joe’s website says, “Passion for life resides in the soul. Work is not who we are, it is what we do. Work is doing, the soul is being. In finding the soul, we can find the coexistence of serenity, passion, and illumination.”

Joe’s real passion is keeping his own life in balance and being present for life as it comes. “A Tuscan Sabbatical” is a direct result of this journey. He knows what it is to be an entrepreneur, an executive in a large company, and self-employed. He said,

*There is a delicate balance between finding serenity in everyday life and enjoying the intensity of fully participating in life. There is a seductiveness to the life that I’ve led that keeps on calling, even though my soul knows that is not where I should go. I now realize I can have passion and intensity, but in a peaceful way. I have a choice, and I need to make that choice every day.*
b. Medicine and Healthcare

*Contemplative Net Interviewees*

- Dr. Herbert Benson, Harvard Medical School and the Mind/Body Medical Institute (Chestnut Hill, MA)
- Gary Cohen, Healthcare Without Harm (Washington, DC)
- Michael Lerner, Commonweal (Bolinas, CA)
- Frank Ostaseski, Zen Hospice Project (San Francisco, CA)
- Saki Santorelli, Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Healthcare, and Society (Worcester, MA)
- Rev. Sue Turley, Institute for Health and Healing, California Pacific Medical Center (San Francisco, CA)
- Dr. Andrew Weil, Program in Integrative Medicine, University of Arizona (Tuscon, AZ)

**Mindfulness and Patient Care**

In 1976, Dr. Herbert Benson published *The Relaxation Response*, a book which was influential in raising the medical profession’s awareness about the potential health benefits of meditation. Along with the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts, it laid the foundation for the application of meditation to the field of medicine. It is perhaps not surprising that healthcare has been the first and, in many ways, still the most effective vehicle for introducing a larger segment of the public to contemplative practices outside of a religious or spiritual context. Brian Stock (1996), professor of history and comparative literature at the University of Toronto, has written:

> Many Americans have little understanding of what is meant by meditation. But they all understand sickness, discomfort, and healing. If they are persuaded that meditation will contribute to their health, they may accept the idea of pursuing a contemplative activity within their daily lives. In traditional settings, the pursuit of the contemplative life normally takes place within an accompanying belief system. The only equivalent of this type of faith in contemporary society may be the confidence displayed in science.

During the past three decades, a growing body of clinical research has documented a positive correlation between meditation and measures of physiological and psychological well-being (Benson 1976; Speca et al. 2000; Davidson et al. 2003. For comprehensive literature reviews of clinical studies, see Murphy, Donovan, and Taylor 1996). Wellness programs developed by Drs. Dean Ornish, Andrew Weil, and Deepak Chopra which include a meditation component, along with media coverage of health
issues have helped to increase understanding and support among both medical professionals and the public. In 1992, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) established an Office of Alternative Medicine to fund rigorous evaluations of alternative therapies. Based on the findings, one expert panel has endorsed meditation for chronic pain and insomnia (NIH 1996). And in 1993, millions of television viewers watched Bill Moyer’s landmark documentary series, “Healing and the Mind,” further legitimizing the use of complementary and alternative medicines, including the therapeutic use of meditation.

In 1979, Jon Kabat-Zinn founded the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts, Worcester, and pioneered the use of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). This eight-week course teaches participants to develop awareness of their experiences, both physical and emotional, and to apply this attention to everyday situations. Daily MBSR practice sessions of 20 to 30 minutes help participants to cultivate a state of attention which leads to deep relaxation.

When the Stress Reduction Clinic began, it was the only such facility in the United States. The number of clinics, hospitals, and academic medical centers using MBSR increased to 80 in 1993, and in 2003, to 250. Since 1979, more than 13,000 medical patients have completed the MBSR program and more than 3,000 healthcare professionals have been trained to teach MBSR.

In 1995, Kabat-Zinn established the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Healthcare, and Society (CFM), which now serves as the umbrella organization for the Stress Reduction Clinic and a variety of other activities, including research and outreach. Researchers and practitioners associated with CFM have published 13 peer-reviewed papers about MBSR, three books, and nearly 20 book chapters and other abstracts. Outreach initiatives have included offering MBSR to corporate clients, public school students, and nearly 4,000 inmates in the Massachusetts criminal justice system. MBSR training materials have also been translated into Spanish for use in neighborhood health centers.

Contemplative Net interviewee Saki Santorelli, the current director of the Stress Reduction Clinic, said,

Since our small beginnings in 1979, our compelling commitment in patient care, research, education, and outreach, has been to make explicit in very practical and practicable ways the reality of the inner life as a vital substantive and transformative force in the everyday lives of people. We’ve felt and known in many ways from the beginning that mindfulness, this quality of awareness, is
intrinsic and innate, and that our mission has been to make that more available in the lives of people and in medicine and in the larger society.

Santorelli likened the Center for Mindfulness in Society’s current work to the kind of “crossover” audiences that musicians like Bob Dylan and Aretha Franklin generate when they explore new musical genres:

*My own view is that the Center for Mindfulness and the Stress Reduction Clinic is now crossing over – we’ve established credibility in medicine and health care, we’ve set out and accomplished probably much of what was intended when this whole clinic began. Now I think the work is to take what we’ve learned in the domain of medicine and healthcare and adapt and bring it into a lot of other arenas, into the public and private sector, to education and to government agencies. That’s the work that we’re slowly beginning to forge, without abandoning medicine and healthcare.*

In addition to MBSR programs, medical centers across the U.S., such as Beth Israel Medical Center in Boston and Scripps Health in La Jolla, CA, are making contemplative practices in a variety of forms available to their patients and staff (see Table 5, p. 70).

Contemplative practice is becoming a more common feature in psychiatric and mental health care as well. Books and journal articles on the subject of meditation and psychology are plentiful (May 1983; Epstein 1996; Marlatt and Kristeller 1998; Welwood 2002). Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, a technique based on MBSR that combines cognitive therapy with mindfulness meditation, is being used to prevent relapse in persons with depression (Segal, Williams, and Teasdale 2002). Windhorse Associates, a mental health treatment facility in Northampton, Massachusetts, originated in the work of Dr. Edward Podvoll, who believed that a meditative approach to working with people in extreme emotional states could support their ability to recover (Podvoll 1991). At Windhorse, clinicians practice a technique called Basic Attendance with clients. Basic Attendance consists of ten skills, including “Being Present – basic mindfulness awareness in the present moment,” and “Letting Be – dropping therapeutic ambition and accepting a person just as they are.”
Table 5

Contemplative practices in U.S. medical centers

Some of the leading medical centers in the U.S. provide a variety of contemplative practices as part of their services:

Beth Israel Medical Center, Boston, MA
Center for Health and Healing
Psychological/Mind-Body Services, including Creative Visualization/Guided Imagery; Journaling; Meditative Techniques; Prayer; Relaxation Training.

California Pacific Medical Center, San Francisco, CA
Institute for Health and Healing
Labyrinth Garden; classes in yoga, meditation, “Wisdom Practices for Self Care”

Columbia-Presbyterian, New York City, NY
Center for Meditation and Healing
Instruction in Indo-Tibetan meditation techniques

Duke University Health System, Durham, NC
Duke Center for Integrative Medicine
Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program

Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York City, NY
Integrative Medicine Service
Studio for meditation, yoga, exercise

Scripps Health, La Jolla, CA
Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine
Classes in Music and Wellness, Kundalini Yoga, “Yoga and Meditation for a Vibrant Heart and Conscious Living”

Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, Philadelphia, PA
Jefferson - Myrna Brind Center of Integrative Medicine
Mindfulness-Based Art Therapy Program for cancer patients
Yoga Program

University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ
Department of Psychology
Mindfulness-Based Depression Relapse Prevention Program

University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI
Integrative Medicine Program
Eastern Practices classes in T’ai Chi, Qi Gong, Hatha Yoga, Kundalini Yoga and more
Physician Training Incorporates Contemplative Practice

In addition to the application of mindfulness practice as an adjunct treatment for patients, a number of physicians have begun to recognize its contribution to the training of physicians and to the patient-doctor relationship, increasingly seen as a critical factor in well-being (Tresolini 1994). In the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Ronald Epstein (1999) wrote that mindfulness and “critical self-reflection enables physicians to listen attentively to patients’ distress, recognize their own errors, refine their technical skills, make evidence-based decisions, and clarify their values so that they can act with compassion, technical competence, presence, and insight.”

One study of second-year medical students at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia found that students who participated in MBSR training had diminished levels of tension and anxiety compared to students in a control group who did not receive the training (Rosenzweig et al. 2003). The lead author, Dr. Steven Rosenzweig, said “These findings suggest that participation in the MBSR program improves psychological health during a period of time in which mood disturbance may otherwise be expected to increase” (Myers 2003). Another study examined the short-term effects of an eight-week meditation-based stress reduction intervention on premedical and medical students at the University of Arizona, Tuscon (Shapiro et al. 1998). Participants in the program reported reduced anxiety and depression levels and showed increased scores on overall empathy levels and on a measure of spiritual experiences.

Contemplative Net interviewee Dr. Andrew Weil, who directs the Program in Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona, said,

> I think one of the great failings of conventional medical education is that students are taken through a process that brings up a lot of emotional stuff but they’re given no opportunity to process that or even to express it. So we try to correct that somewhat...One of the strongest beliefs we have is that good physicians have to be good complete human beings. In order to treat patients well, they have to be committed to doing work on themselves. In my view, work on one’s self should be grounded in mindfulness and practice, so I think that’s something we emphasize to all physicians. Not only do they need to learn the knowledge of medicine but they need to learn how to keep themselves healthy and models of good mind/body health. They’re encouraged to learn and practice good nutrition, to exercise, to relax, as well as to do inner work.

Dr. Weil described some of the ways that contemplative awareness is woven into physician training at the University of Arizona Program in Integrative Medicine:

> At the beginning of each patient care conference, we do some kind of meditation. That can be a guided meditation, it can be a silent meditation, it can be reading of an inspirational poem, it can be meditation on a sound. This is something we do to center the group and focus our attention on where to set our intention for promoting the well-being of the patients that we’re going to discuss.
Physicians have begun to recognize the contributions of mindfulness to the training of physicians and to the patient-doctor relationship, increasingly seen as a critical factor in well-being.

Rev. Sue Turley is the chaplain at the Institute for Health and Healing (IHH) based at California Pacific Medical Center, where she supervises students training in pastoral care in healthcare settings. The IHH community includes doctors, chaplains, therapists, and the administrative team. They begin their meetings with meditation, rituals, or readings from diverse wisdom texts. Patients and their families are offered the chance to use the hospital’s meditation room, walk a labyrinth, or take part in guided meditation, art, and other services. Turley summed up how the use of contemplative practices has changed the way she and her colleagues work together:

One of the ways it impacts us is that both the strengths and the weaknesses of our interpersonal relationships and our working together as professionals surfaces. This gives us the opportunity to choose as an individual and as a community how we’re going to address those and then be able to evaluate whether those choices are having a positive or negative impact. And because it’s interwoven in our life here, we’re constantly evaluating ourselves and how we’re operating as a community. Therefore, we have the option to make appropriate changes.

There are times when it is very difficult and painful because we’re looking at our weaknesses, but generally the bottom line is that for most people, it builds trust, and it builds the opportunity for collaboration and collegiality as opposed to having hidden tension not dealing with issues. I think it’s a way to resolve conflict, a way to enrich our understanding of each other’s gifts and to make better, appropriate referrals.

Integrative Medicine and Contemplative Practices

Integrative medicine is an approach to healthcare that emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the practitioner and the patient, a collaborative approach to patient care among practitioners, and the practice of conventional, complementary, and alternative health care. Integrative medicine seeks to incorporate treatment options from conventional and alternative approaches and takes into account not only physical symptoms, but also psychological, social and spiritual aspects of health and illness. Mind-body interventions, including meditation, yoga, and t’ai chi, are one important component of integrative medicine programs.

Dr. Weil, a leader in the field of integrative medicine, shared with us his vision for the future of healthcare:

I could envision a whole new kind of institution coming into existence that I would call a Healing Center. I would see this as a hybrid between a spa and a
Medical professionals like Dr. Weil, Santorelli, and others who advocate for an integrative health approach have first-hand knowledge of the corporatization of medicine. Even so, they believe that an integrative approach has the potential to actually enable a larger and more diverse group of people to access complementary and alternative medicine. Dr. Weil said,

*I think that integrative medicine really has the promise of cutting healthcare costs. I would like to see experimentation done with looking at how integrative wellness, corporate wellness plans, and employee health plans might save money. If we could have corporations be partners in this movement, I think it would really advance it in a great way. It would also bring this kind of medicine to a segment of the population that probably now does not get it as much, especially blue-collar workers. I think it would help counter the pitfall that this kind of medicine is elitist medicine that is only available to the affluent.*

Jon Kabat-Zinn and Andrew Weil have worked together to help form the Consortium of Academic Health Centers for Integrative Medicine, a coalition of medical schools that advocate an integrative model of healthcare. Twenty schools are currently members of the consortium, including the University of Arizona, University of Massachusetts, University of Michigan, Duke, Harvard, Georgetown, University of California San Francisco, Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University, and Columbia University.

**Community and Environmental Health**

Some of the Contemplative Net interviewees worked in health settings outside of medical institutions. Commonweal, directed by Michael Lerner, is a health and environmental research institute in Bolinas, California, that offers complementary and alternative medicine services and training to children with learning and behavior disorders, adults with cancer, and health professionals. Commonweal also addresses environmental health issues.

Healthcare Without Harm (HWH), which was founded at a Commonweal conference in 1996, is an international coalition of more than 190 groups that educates medical professionals about the link between environmental toxins and health. The organization has been working to eliminate the environmental and public health threats from
healthcare practices. Gary Cohen has helped to organize retreats using meditation, yoga, and other contemplative practices for HWH staff and campaign leaders. Occasionally, HWH groups do “bearing witness” retreats to environmental sites that have been contaminated by companies. Cohen said,

“We are trying to build community around the deepest wellspring of commitment, the spiritual and emotional wellsprings of peoples’ commitment to the work, as opposed to their political agreement. Our presumption is that this is a much deeper bond between people, more enduring than agreeing around political strategy or philosophical views of corporate power...Creating space for spirit in the circle just makes it a much more powerful coalition.
We had two doctors who were taking care of a patient who was a Buddhist and for whom there wasn’t anything more they could do medically. Frustrated, they came downstairs to the kitchen and they asked me if I could teach them some Buddhist practice that might help. So, I asked them what they did when their children were sick. They said, well, that they sat next to them.

“Ok, then what do you do?”

The doctor said, “Well, then I just put my hand on them, and I...I want to tell them that they’re okay, that they’re safe.”

“Anything else?”

“Yeah, I want to tell them that they’re loved.”

“Wonderful. And what do you wish for them?”

“I wish that they’d be free from suffering. I wish that their pain would go away.”

“Wonderful.” So I said, “Why don’t you go upstairs and do that with Robert?”

So they went upstairs and in their own language, in their own way, silently and out loud, they spoke to Robert. “Be happy, be safe, be free from all danger. Know that you’re loved and free from suffering now.”

After a while, they came downstairs and I asked how it was going. He said, “Well, we don’t know about Robert, but we’re much calmer now.”
c. Education and Youth Work

*Contemplative Net Interviewees*

**Education**

- Arnie Clayton, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (Cambridge, MA)
- Kavita Kapur, Self Knowledge Symposium (Durham, NC)
- Rachael Kessler, PassageWays Institute (Boulder, CO)
- Carol Miller Lieber, Educators for Social Responsibility (Cambridge, MA)
- Phyllis Robinson, Community for Integrative Learning and Action (Amherst, MA)
- David Scott, Community for Integrative Learning and Action (Amherst, MA)
- Frederique Marglin, Smith College (Northampton, MA)

**Youth Work**

- Adi Bemak, Holyoke Youth Alliance (Holyoke, MA)
- Arrington Chambliss, No Ordinary Time (Roslindale, MA)
- Lorain Fox Davis, Rediscovery (Crestone, CO)
- Soren Gordhamer, The Lineage Project (New York, NY)
- Michael Meade, Mosaic Multicultural Foundation (Seattle, WA)
- Charles Murphy, Power of Hope (Bellingham, WA)
- Judith Thompson, Spirit in Human Rights (Merrimac, MA)

The interviewees listed here work primarily with young people, both in and outside of educational settings, but a number of other programs include some component for youth, such as Vallecitos Mountain Refuge, which offers retreats for young social activists, and Marian David’s work at Sustaining the Soul that Serves, which brings together different generations of activists to share contemplative practices. Contemplative Net interviewees in all sectors emphasized the importance of supporting the emerging generation in order for the vision of a more reflective and compassionate society to become a reality.

Rachel Kessler described the mission of the PassageWays Institute, which works to nurture young people in their search for meaning, deep connection, and integrity:

*The vision is to have a country, if not a world, in which adults understand the importance of safely welcoming and nurturing the inner life of young*
people...While the family is the first and most important place that nurtures the spirit of young people, there is something that happens in community and in the peer community that adds a very important element. Children need to have access to this kind of experience in schools and also in development work.

**Contemplative Practices in K-12 Education**

Anecdotal and empirical evidence indicates that meditation, yoga, and other practices have a positive affect on students’ ability to concentrate and on their academic performance (Benson et al. 2000; Lynem 2000; Stukin 2001; Brown 2002). One study showed that students who received semester-long training in a relaxation response curriculum had higher grade point averages, work habits scores, and cooperation scores than students with fewer exposures to the curriculum (Benson 2000).

A number of educators have developed ways to incorporate contemplative and reflective practices into teaching strategies. By tying these practices together with improved learning outcomes – particularly important in an era of high-stakes testing – they are finding greater receptivity to these practices. Rachael Kessler said,

> A lot of what I do is help educators see that some of the key obstacles to having their students perform well on tests are precisely the obstacles we address. If you don’t address those obstacles you don’t get performance on those tests. There is one quote from brain research that I use a lot because it is so simple and eloquent: “Emotion draws attention, attention draws memory, and memory draws learning.”

> So I’ll start by saying if all we cared about was how our students performed on these tests, and I know that is not all you care about, you would need to understand how to work with emotions and how to engage the attention of your students. When I ask, “How many of you have students that have trouble paying attention, focusing, concentrating, listening?” everybody nods or raises their hand. That is where contemplative practice comes in. It is not called that as such, but I call it “strategies for learning readiness.”

Carol Miller Lieber, a nationally recognized expert on secondary education from Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR), helped to develop Partners in Learning, a program that helps teachers to identify reflective practices and share them with students. Other components of ESR also incorporate contemplative and reflective practices, including the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program.

Through Partners in Learning, Lieber helps teachers design practices that infuse reflection, silence, and focus in the high school classroom. One challenge for teachers is supporting students

> “When I ask, ‘How many of you have students that have trouble paying attention, concentrating, listening?’ everybody nods or raises their hand. That is where contemplative practice comes in.”

~ Rachael Kessler
to make the transition from one physical space to another. For example, the students may come into a classroom from a lunch period unsettled and “emotionally flooded.” Teachers ask the students to pair up and then check in with each other about the strongest emotion they are experiencing in that moment. The students talk about it, stop to reflect, then share with their partner one goal they have for how they want to be present during that next hour. According to Lieber, this practice has improved their ability to concentrate in class.

At Lyons Township High School in LaGrange, Illinois, where a Partners in Learning program using these reflective practices was implemented, data collected over a five-year period found that students showed increased satisfaction with student/teacher relationships, with the learning environment, and with peer relationships. (Breunlin, D. http://www.family-institute.org/research/peaceresearch.htm)

A community of educators who care about the contemplative dimension of education is slowly developing. Parker Palmer’s 1997 book, The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life, gave rise to retreats and ongoing support groups for teachers across the country. In 1998, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development published a special issue on spirit in education in the journal Educational Leadership and later published Rachel Kessler’s book The Soul of Education (2000). In October, 2002, a group of teachers who attended Vietnamese Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh’s retreats were impassioned to explore the possibilities of mindfulness in their work and created the “Mindfulness in Education Network.” There are now nearly 250 subscribers to the group’s e-mail list. A similar network exists in the Quaker community; the “E Quakes” email list from the Friends Council on Education. Educators in these pre-K-12 schools work from a contemplative perspective with students from all backgrounds.

Contemplative Net interviewees in K-12 education spoke of how a contemplative approach made a difference in the learning process for students, and also in the work of teachers:

It’s a method that works very well with meetings for the adults, as well as for the students. The notion of taking a few minutes to sit with yourself in silence. To mark...to notice the boundaries. Yesterday, I had a three-hour meeting in which students were dismissed and teachers had to concentrate on aspects of this re-accreditation process. As we sat in silence and I invited them to cross the boundary, I said, “The boundary I am talking about is the boundary that separates us right now from the work we did with the students this morning, the work we did having lunch and listening to the administrator speak. We need to leave that behind and create a space where we can focus on our specific task.” At the end, several people mentioned that the exercise was a driving force in letting us accomplish as much as we did.

Arnie Clayton, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School
Teachers are more intentional about creating caring environments and are more intentional in providing differentiated support to help different kids learn. I think that is a place where all of these tools and strategies that support slowing down, that support reflection, that support goal setting, that support focus and settling in activities – all of those things help more kids learn.

Carol Miller Lieber, Educators for Social Responsibility

One of the biggest challenges in bringing contemplative practices into educational settings, particularly public schools, is their perceived connection with religious traditions and issues of separation of church and state. Rachael Kessler notes the importance of having respectful conversations with parents about these questions:

*I think it is very risky legally and very risky in terms of respect to families or to teachers to use a practice that comes from a particular religious tradition in a public setting. Now I think it is possible. Let’s say you have a public school in a community and a teacher wants to offer yoga as part of their gym class, if they have met with the parents. If they have in some way inquired into all of those parents’ feelings about yoga to clarify whether those families have any concerns about it, and no one has any concerns, and no one sees it as a religious practice, then I think it is fine. But there are a lot of families for whom yoga is a religious practice and comes from a religious tradition. So unlike a lot of my colleagues I think it is not just something you can import into a public school setting.*

**Contemplative Practices in Higher Education**

Recently, interest in contemplative practices in higher education appears to be increasing, as evidenced by journal articles (Sarath 2003; Zajonc 2003) and publications devoted to the subject of contemplative and holistic dimensions of education (*Paths of Learning*, published by the Foundation for Educational Renewal; *Journal of Transformative Education*, published by Sage). Several conferences on the topic of spirituality and higher education have been sponsored by institutions such as Wellesley College, the University of Massachusetts, and the American Association of Colleges and Universities.

In 2003, a nationwide survey conducted by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (Duer, Zajonc, and Dana) identified 72 professors who use contemplative practices in their college or university classes and 32 institutions of higher education in which these practices are integrated at the program and department level (see Table 6). Occasionally, entire institutions have committed themselves to transformative and spiritual learning, like the California Institute of Integral Studies (San Francisco) and Naropa University (Boulder, Colorado). But colleges such as the University of Texas, the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, and the State University of West Georgia are also applying contemplative principles to departmental pedagogy.
Table 6
Higher education institutions where transformative/spiritual elements, including contemplative practices, are offered at the program/department level.

Source: Survey of Transformative and Spiritual Dimensions of Higher Education (Duerr, Zajonc, and Dana 2003)

| Alma College | Holistic Education School of Portland |
| Boston College | Macalester College |
| California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) | Maharishi University of Management |
| California State University, San Bernardino | Marquette University |
| College of the Holy Cross | Millsaps College |
| Davidson College | Moraine Valley Community College |
| El Centro College | Naropa University |
| Elon University | Pepperdine University |
| Fairfield University | Saybrook Graduate School |
| Fielding Graduate Institute | Sonoma State University |
| Furman University | State University of West Georgia |
| Goddard College | University of Denver |
| Goshen College | University of Michigan, Ann Arbor |
| Graduate Institute | University of Notre Dame |
| Gustavus Adolphus College | University of Texas Medical Branch |
| Hobart and William Smith Colleges | Westmont College |

In 1997, The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, in collaboration with the Fetzer Institute, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, and the American Council of Learned Societies, began the Contemplative Fellows program. From 1997 until 2002, 100 fellows at over 70 colleges and universities put their grants to use and incorporated contemplative practices within their coursework. The Fellowships were designed to support the study of contemplation not only as a category of religious and cultural practice but as a method for developing concentration and deeper understanding – in particular, as a means of intellectual and pedagogic revitalization and change. The fellowships were granted in a wide range of disciplines, including architecture, astronomy, the arts, environmental sciences, literature, technology, business, law, and social work (see sidebar on p. 82). Over the years, fellows have met annually to share information and support. In 2003, the Center’s Academic Program hosted the first public “Regional Symposium on Contemplative Practice in Higher Education” at Amherst College, opened by Diana Chapman Walsh, president of Wellesley University. The Center is planning a conference on contemplative pedagogy at Columbia Teachers College in 2005.
Through this program, a contemplative pedagogy is emerging and bringing new life to traditional subjects. One of the fellows, Ed Sarath of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, introduced contemplative practices into his music classes and subsequently created a degree in Jazz and Contemplative Studies. He said,

*I think [contemplative practice] gives a foundation and an awareness that creative individuals often glimpse, but perhaps don’t invoke as consistently as they might. And so the contemplative practice can enhance the creative process. It can also make connections between the study of a given discipline and the broader perspective on human development.**

Sarath talked about the feedback he has received from students who take part in his classes:

*Generally, students that are maintaining a regular practice say that they notice during the day more of a mental alertness, clarity, and a sense of well-being. They relate that if they sometimes miss a session, they don’t feel quite as sharp and clear. There are some students that comment on a kind of blossoming, an opening in their personality, increased confidence, and better relationships with their peers; even a sense of meaning, or purpose.*

The Community of Integrative Learning and Action (CILA) encompasses several initiatives underway at the Five Colleges of Western Massachusetts (Amherst, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke, Smith, and the University of Massachusetts), including the “Five College Faculty Seminar on New Ways of Knowing and Contemplation” and the “Five College Series on the Contemplative Mind and Higher Education.” CILA’s vision is to build a constituency of people who share an interest in using contemplation as a gateway to other modes of knowing. David Scott, former chancellor of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, helped to found CILA. He said,

*As a physicist, I have a deep sense of trying to connect everything. When I became an administrator, I began to see then how the separation and the fragmentation was also a problem in how an organization works and how we all work within it. I guess my view is that an organization should be more like a living, breathing organism rather than a hierarchical clockwork machine. So gradually I came to the view that one should really try and do something about this, particularly in an education organization.*
Since 1997, 100 professors have received Contemplative Fellowships. A sampling of the course offerings:

“Contemplative practice in psychotherapy”
Linda Bell, Professor of Psychology and Director of Training in Family Therapy
University of Houston - Clear Lake

“Spirituality for business leadership”
Andre Delbecq, Professor of Organizational Analysis and Management
Santa Clara University

“Crime, criminal justice, and consciousness”
John J. Gibbs, Professor of Criminology
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

“Consenting to see: The practice of contemplation in literature and the visual arts”
Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, Associate Professor of English
Westmont College

“Contemplating the cosmos”
Joel R. Primack and Nancy Ellen Abrams, Department of Physics
University of California, Santa Cruz

“Improvisation, temporality, and consciousness”
Edward Sarath, Assistant Professor of Music
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

“Found Spaces: Mindful practice in architectural design”
Peter Alwyn Schnieder, Professor of Architecture
University of Colorado, Denver

“Contemplative Citizenship Practicum”
Thomas Stewart, Associate Professor of Political Science
University of the District of Columbia

Student Life
Contemplative approaches can be found outside the classroom as well. Perhaps in response to nationwide surveys like “Your First College Year” (Sax, Keup, Gilmartin, Stolzenberg, and Harper 2002), which found that the majority of college students feel more overwhelmed and depressed than when they entered college, more schools are recognizing the need to support the contemplative and spiritual dimension of student life.
For example, the University of Denver’s Center for Spirituality provides lunchtime meditation sessions for faculty, staff, and students, and sponsors speakers on topics such as “Spirituality in Our Ordinary Lives.” In 2003, Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, invited the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society to offer a component in its Leadership Program. Every morning for ten days, staff from the Center led a meditation with the students and then introduced women leaders from the community who spoke about the role contemplative practices played in their lives.

In the Five Colleges community, CILA has sponsored talks, workshops, and meditation retreats for staff, students, faculty, and administrators; and a meditation class for students, co-sponsored by Mental Health Services at the University of Massachusetts. The CUNY School of Law in Flushing, New York, is home to the Contemplative Urban Law Program for students, faculty and staff. Jeanne Anselmo, who works as a meditation guide in the program, said:

> The focus is on building a contemplative community of support and practice. We offer weekly yoga and meditation programs, retreats, luncheon dialogues, and guests involved in transformative justice models. Transformative learning in this context is a collective community process. Those involved in the program participate in a multitude of ways: personal reflection, insight or practice, group practice and dialogue and on-line practice, connection and communication. The program is open to the whole community – students, custodial staff, office staff, faculty, and administration.

Kavita Kapur is the executive director of the Self Knowledge Symposium (SKS), a student-run organization that is dedicated to helping college students find their personal, moral, and spiritual values and to figure out how to live according to them. Two of the programs SKS offers are a national conference (attended by over 2,000 students) and an “alternative spring break” where students can travel to a Buddhist monastery in North Carolina or a Catholic monastery in South Carolina and live like monks for a week. As Kavita told us, they get a chance to “turn in their bikinis for robes.”

**Youth Work**

Contemplative Net interviewees who worked with youth had some of the most creative ways of teaching contemplative practices. In addition to sitting meditation, they incorporated art, movement, rites of passage such as vision quests, dialogue, and journaling in liberal doses in their work with young people.
At “No Ordinary Time,” a Boston program for inner city youth coordinated by Arrington Chambliss, contemplative practice may be a combination of music, art, journaling, and silence. At one gathering, teenagers were invited to walk into a room filled with televisions and computers. The TVs came on one by one, showing graphic scenes of violence, sex, and other intense visuals. Then the computers were turned on with music blaring from their speakers. Mentors in the room, representing an influence in the youths’ life, yelled out phrases such as, “You need to get in school!” or “You’re lazy.” After a while, the chaotic bombardment abruptly stopped. The teens were then asked to journal on the question, “What creates your false self?” After a period of silence, they were invited to share what they learned from their inner voice. The idea of the entire experience was to re-create the sensory overload that comprises everyday life for most teens and then to help them find a place of stillness within it. This kind of experience was much more recognizable to them than sitting silently on a meditation cushion, and made the practice more accessible.

Youth work sometimes takes place in tranquil outdoor retreat environments, such as the Power of Hope camp in Washington State. But just as often, practices like meditation and yoga are offered in urban environments as one component in programs for at-risk, street-involved, or incarcerated youth (see Table 7, p. 85). These practices have the potential to increase self-respect and self-esteem, and to gain awareness in order to decrease impulsive and addictive behaviors. There are physiological benefits as well. A research team at the Medical College of Georgia (Barnes et al. 2001) found that an experimental group, comprised of African-American adolescents, was able to reduce their hypertension risk through two daily practice sessions in transcendental meditation (TM). This study revealed that teens who practiced TM maintained lower blood pressure during rest and during stressful interviews and virtual reality car-driving simulation tasks than did a control group.

Lorain Fox Davis, director of Rediscovery Four Corners, an environmental, multicultural wilderness program for youth, talked about using nature to help cultivate the contemplative dimension in teens:

Young people from all different backgrounds, who would have no experience in sitting by themselves for hours in the mountains or by a stream, would blossom; the growth that would come out of them just by being quiet in nature and learning to trust themselves. The silence in nature is how we receive the deepest teachings. Part of it is the contemplation in looking around and knowing that we are one with nature and not separate from nature. Another part of it is just being quiet and finding what teachings will come.

Every year, opportunities for young adults to learn about meditation increase. The Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, holds retreats especially designed for young adults; in 2000, 58 teens between 14 and 19 years old attended the five-day program. Several books have been written for teen readers interested in Buddhist meditation, including Noah Levine’s *Dharma Punx* (2003) and Diana Winston’s *Wide Awake* (2003). In September 2003, a conference at Kripalu in Lenox, MA, “Nurturing the Spirit in Youth,” brought together parents, educators, social workers, guidance counselors, therapists, religious/spiritual leaders,
and youth leaders to imagine how to support and empower youth to become more deeply connected to a spiritual source. During that same year, Kripalu offered a class for yoga teachers, “Reaching Out: Teaching Yoga to Incarcerated and At-Risk Youth.”

Table 7
Organizations that offer yoga and meditation to at-risk, street-involved, and incarcerated youth

Center for Contemplative Mind in Society Youth Program (Springfield, MA)
Deer Hill Ranch (Lafayette, CA)
Exhale Anger (nationwide, focus on NY, NJ, PA)
Holyoke Youth Alliance (Holyoke, MA)
Lineage Project (NY Metro area)
Mosaic Voices (Seattle, WA)
Power of Hope (Bellingham and Seattle, WA)
The Mind Body Awareness Project (San Francisco, CA)
The Y-HEP Drop-in Center (Philadelphia, PA)
urbanPEACE (NY Metro area)
Vision Youthz (San Francisco, CA)
Yoga for Youth (incarcerated youths in Los Angeles County Detention Center camps)
Yoga Inside (Venice, CA)
Youth Horizons (San Francisco, CA)
We would sit in meditation, especially around the time that the gang activity was really intense and very scary for everybody, because there were shootings all the time. Some of them were being shot at, some of their friends were being shot at, and it just wasn’t safe. So we sat in meditation, we talked about what was happening in the community, and then I gave them journals. One of the boys wrote in his journal, “At first I thought this meditation stuff was really wacky, but now I like feeling that quiet place in my body.”

I remember one time especially that there was a quality of silence sitting with them that was equal to any quality of any silence I’ve ever sat with in a meditation hall. It was really profound. So, in all the experiences I’ve had so far introducing mindfulness and contemplative practice, there’s such receptivity.

For young people, especially those who have a “bad rep,” they want an opening. If you give them an opportunity to find peace in themselves and to express that, it’s empowering. It’s not just calming. It’s not just relaxing. It teaches them something about themselves. It really shows them their capacity for patience. It shows them their capacity for compassion toward themselves and each other. And it can happen rather quickly, because they’re waiting for it.
I worked with a group of science teachers at Lyons Township who started having a weekly reflection for students where they could write and then could look at their goals, at how they felt they were doing in class, name the kinds of support that would be helpful, and talk about what was stressing them out. It absolutely made a difference in how kids saw themselves as learners, and it improved their grades.

One of the pieces around reflection and goal-setting is improving the capacity to predict accurately. You know, kids in adolescence can be way off in their self-assessment. The more they can experience “taking stock,” the more opportunities they have to refine that skill of accurate self-assessment. It also helps to build openness, in that then they can talk to the teacher and say, “Listen, I didn’t get this.” So it helps build assertion too. There’s a whole interdependent set of other skill that it supports.

I hear stories all the time from teachers who, instead of punishing and tossing kids out of class, have made a deliberate attempt to invite kids to talk first and then the teacher listens. Part of effective conferencing and problem-solving with kids is slowing the process down so that teachers take the time to listen first without judging and without attempting to fix it. What teachers tend to do is like a Pavlovian response: “I want to fix the problem and I don’t need to hone my problem-solving skills. I’m already pretty good at that.” When you talk with kids one-to-one, that empowers them to reflect on what they are doing and problem-solve around it. Often the first piece is making the connection in the relationship. Countless times I’ve heard teachers say, “It works! I didn’t talk; I didn’t fix it; I really listened and let the kids speak and reflected what the kid was saying. Then we were able to move to problem-solving.”

So that whole piece of stopping and listening first before fixing it, that in itself is a transformative process. It changes the way you work things out with kids.
One evening, we were doing group support work in small groups and large groups, so that the stories were being told and the process of healing was happening. In the evenings we would often focus on one particular regional area or conflict area and give some more straightforward socio-political information. What is Apartheid? How did it occur? What are its historic routes? We might show a movie or something like that and then the people from that region of the world would get up and tell their personal stories.

On this particular evening, we were telling the story of Cambodia. The Cambodian youth got up to share their story but really they just began to weep. This was maybe four days into the program and a very safe community had formed, a very open community and so when they began to weep everybody began weeping. There were 75 or so people in the room from all these different parts of the world and I truly felt that the process that evolved was really a transpersonal process. I would view it as a holographic experience, meaning the whole was present in the parts and the parts were present in the whole and we were really allowing the suffering of the entire world to come through.

We were all in a circle and eventually one or two people stood up and then other people. Suddenly one African-American girl from South Central Los Angeles started to sing a spiritual. Someone else started singing a freedom song and then the South Africans began singing their freedom songs and then they began to do their freedom dances. Then suddenly they broke off and there was a sort of snake dance outside the building and around the grounds, then people came back in and there we were in this big room. Then someone turned on some music and we just started dancing.

It was a party. And there was never a point in time where the process was at all manipulated. It was an organic healing, sacred experience of allowing the depth of suffering to be felt and discharged and from that an extraordinary experience of unity because in the end you could look anyone in that room in the face and there was an absolute present-ness and disarmament and complete, authentic alignment to their true self... It happened because we allowed ourselves to be with our suffering.

When we make a connection across hearts, across identities and being-ness and presences in the moment of suffering that immediately offers the antidote for suffering to occur. Not only that, but it actually opens up the possibility of joy so one can really move from suffering to joy through the willingness of being present. I don’t want to make it sound overly romantic or Pollyanna-ish; it’s not like suddenly the people who are really oppressed and are suffering are not going to suffer anymore.

But what we can learn from these moments or from these experiences is the value, the potency, the transformative possibility of engagement. This is what I call “ecstatic activism” and the “alchemy of engagement.”
d. Law and Government

Contemplative Net Interviewees

- Jeanne Anselmo, Contemplative Urban Law Program (CUNY Queens, New York)
- Janine Geske, Marquette University Center for Dispute Resolution Education (Milwaukee, WI)
- Corrine McLaughlin, Center for Visionary Leadership (Washington, DC)
- Nancy Roof, Spiritual Caucus of the United Nations (New York, NY)
- Fred Rooney, Contemplative Urban Law Program (CUNY Queens, New York)
- Rev. Doug Tanner, Faith and Politics Institute (Washington, DC)

Contemplative Practices with Lawyers

In the past decade, sustained efforts by the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, and other groups have raised awareness of the contemplative dimension of law and government.

Building on its success with introducing contemplative practice into healthcare, the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society offered a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program to trial court judges in 1989. In the mid-1990’s, mediators for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit attended a day-long session on mindfulness at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California.

In 1997, the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society held the first meeting of its Contemplative Law Program. Since that time, the program has offered retreats and events which provide a framework for lawyers, judges, professors, and students to reconnect with their deepest values and intentions through meditation, yoga, and other contemplative practices.

In October of 1998, the Center hosted a Contemplative Law Retreat for 40 participants from Yale Law School at Trinity Conference Center in Connecticut. The retreat brought together students, faculty, and practitioners for instruction in and time for contemplative practices and group discussions. Retreatants addressed many questions from both a contemplative and legal perspective, including: the nature of winning and losing, the role of compassion in adversarial situations, Socratic and contemplative methods of inquiry, separation and connection, and listening. The premise of the retreats and the program was simple: If lawyers had the time and tools for quiet contemplation, their professional actions could be informed by their own deep and abiding personal values.
Since 1998, the Center’s Law Program has sponsored six more retreats and shorter gatherings for over 200 lawyers, judges, law professors, and students. The program has also led the first CLE course in meditation at the Bar Association of San Francisco. Program participants represent a diverse cross-section of the profession, including attorneys working in the fields of public interest law, corporate law, and with small private firms; and professors and students from law schools across the country, including Yale, Harvard, Columbia, the University of Miami, and the University of Colorado.

Fred Rooney, who attended a Center law retreat and is director of the Community Legal Resources Network at City University of New York School of Law (Queens), said,

*Once you incorporate contemplative practice in your life, you enhance your ability to focus, you enhance your ability to concentrate, you enhance your ability to be much more effective in terms what you do and for whom. Therefore your ability to offer equal access to justice on a very individual level increases every single day. I believe that I was not as effective a litigator or advocate before I integrated contemplative practice into my own life. I can say on a very personal level that my ability to do more for my clients and my community has increased remarkably.*

Similar events sponsored by other organizations during the past few years have included workshops for the law community on “Dispute Resolution: Expanding Mediation Skills through Mindfulness and the New Grid” at Pepperdine University Law School; “Contemplative Practice for Lawyers: Zen, Yoga and Law Practice” at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center; “Reimagining Our Professional Lives: A Gathering for Lawyers and Judges” at Suffolk University Law School in 2002; and “Lawyering and its Discontents: Reclaiming Meaning in the Practice of Law,” sponsored by Touro Law Center in Huntington, NY.

Leonard Riskin, Professor of Law at the University of Missouri-Columbia, is the author of “The Contemplative Lawyer: On the Potential Contributions of Mindfulness Meditation to Law Students, Lawyers, and their Clients,” published in the *Harvard Negotiation Law Review* (2002). In the article, Riskin comprehensively maps the use and impact of contemplative practices in the legal field. He concludes that mindfulness, properly practiced, need not exclude adversarial perspectives from a lawyer’s consciousness but rather can allow the lawyer to see all perspectives. Riskin notes that the insights gained through contemplative practices, supported by patience, wisdom, and compassion, have the potential to help lawyers maintain the clarity and balance essential for making wise choices. The article became the basis of a 2002 symposium at Harvard Law School on Mindfulness and Alternative Dispute Resolution attended by more than 100 people.

At CUNY in Queens, the Contemplative Urban Law Program is actively applying contemplative principles to the education of lawyers. Two Contemplative Net interviewees, Jeanne Anselmo and Fred Rooney, are affiliated with the program, which aims to build a “contemplative community” for students, graduates, faculty, and staff. The program offers weekly yoga and meditation.
programs, retreats, luncheon dialogues, and guest speakers involved in transformative justice models. Rooney described his vision for the field of law:

On a personal level, I believe that law should be like medicine – it should be a vocation instead of just a profession. Our goal as lawyers should be to create a society where the concepts of liberty, justice, and equality abound and where economics should not be the determining factor whether or not a person can seek justice in the courts. I think that on a very spiritual level, when you seek to enhance those kinds of concepts in society, you are doing something that’s in keeping with creating a more balanced and harmonious society.

Meditation in Politics and Government

U.S. Congressional leaders and government agencies have had several chances to explore mindfulness and other contemplative practices. In the fall of 2003, Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh led several events for members of Congress (Abernathy 2003). On September 10, Nhat Hanh delivered a talk to more than 400 people at the Library of Congress. Several days later, he led a two-day retreat attended by 11 members of Congress and their family members. The events were organized by the Committee on Mindful Politics (of the Washington, D.C., Mindfulness Community) and the Faith and Politics Institute. The talk and retreat were intended to support members of the House and Senate to balance the political and spiritual dimension of their lives through the practice of mindfulness. One of the retreat participants said,

The practice that had the most profound affect on me was the small discussion groups where we were allowed to speak without interruption. I realized how much unnecessary talk is done on the Hill on subjects that don’t really mean anything, and how little time we spend on subjects that really need our reflection—such as war (Personal correspondence, Carolyn Cleveland).

There have been several other efforts to support mindful ways to practice politics and governance. Corrine McLaughlin, through the Center for Visionary Leadership, has taught meditation at the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Education. Mirabai Bush of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society and Pat Harbour of Healing the Heart of Diversity led a workshop on mindfulness and diversity with the Federal Trade Commission. The Faith and Politics Institute, based in Washington, D.C., has provided occasions for moral reflection and spiritual community to political leaders on an ongoing basis since 1991.

Some of the Faith and Politics Institute’s programs for the members of the House and Senate and their staff include weekly reflection groups and pilgrimages to historic civil rights sites. Institute founder Rev. Doug Tanner said, “Politics is a rough arena in which to keep one’s bearings. I value the capacity of my organization to give time for reflection to politicians and others involved in government, often the only time set aside for reflection in their schedules.” Tanner commented on the effectiveness of the program:

Three or four years ago, we interviewed 12 House members who had participated in reflection groups. They called it the best hour of the week—they said it was very grounding and that it helped shape their perspective. They also reported that it was the best way to get to know colleagues in depth and that it increased potential for bridging party
boundaries. In general, I would say that they feel it’s an anchor. This is saying a lot because there is very little sense of community in D.C.

In April, 2000, more than 450 people attended “Re-igniting the Spirit of America Summit on Values, Spirituality, and Politics,” organized by Contemplative Net interviewee Corrine McLaughlin and others. Speakers at the conference, held at Georgetown University, included Congressman Dennis Kucinich, environmental activist Robert Kennedy, Jr., and Senator John Vasconcellos. McLaughlin, who has led workshops with government agencies including HUD and the EPA, told us about the changes she sees in the government officials she has worked with:

You can actually sometimes see it in their faces – they actually look brighter, more relaxed. They’ve told us about how it’s affected their relationships. They’re getting along better with people at home, their family, or colleagues at work. Often they find that they have finally gotten a clear sense of their lives’ purpose, or the work that they do brings them a sense of satisfaction, or engages them in their passion.
John Smith [pseudonym] was, at the time, a freshman Congressman from southern Illinois. He had come from a fundamentalist southern Baptist background but he read a lot of Merton and he went on retreats. When I learned that, I thought, “This is an interesting character.”

A group of four of us started to meet in John’s office for an hour-and-a-half on Wednesday mornings in a style that was very similar to the reflection group. It was such a positive experience that out of that we began to think about making it available to others.

John shared with the group after a few weeks that he was having a very hard time facing the prospect of going out and raising another half-million dollars for his re-election campaign. He just couldn’t in good conscious do it, for several reasons. He wanted to try to do it differently: not take any PAC money, not take more than $50 from anybody, debate his opponent in all 22 of the local counties, not buy television time and count on local newspapers to cover it, etc.

John served five terms, always being grossly outspent by his opponents and every time getting a higher percentage of the vote than he had the last time. He ran for governor and got the nomination but lost in the general election by just a few points. He said without that little group he would not have had the clarity to make that decision or the courage to stay with it. It all happened within a setting where he was given the freedom and encouragement to follow where his spirit was leading him.
Profile:
Janine Geske,
Marquette University School of Law

From 1993 to 1998, Janine Geske served as a justice on the Wisconsin Supreme Court. Janine’s contemplative path led her to make the decision to step down from her position on the court and change directions in her life. She retraces the steps of the journey:

*The beginning of my awareness of trying to create space for myself to connect spiritually came out of my years as a legal aid lawyer. I’m one of these people who’s always got an incredibly jammed calendar. I’ve always got a million things going on because I do a lot of volunteer work. I have struggled with the busyness of my life and have tried to create times of contemplation, quiet, and prayer.*

*I remember trying to create places and times to do that close to 25 years ago – trying to take the time just to become peaceful, in hopes that it would lead to some discernment of the priorities in my life. As the years went on, I became a Catholic and looked for how it is that I connect with God. I have struggled with that, and tried to create contemplative space and time outside of formal worship (which also is, or can be, a very contemplative time).*

*I have taken three one-week silent retreats, the first one in the late ’80s. I met with the spiritual advisor once a day for an hour but other than that, I was in silence and totally removed from the world. My first retreat was the most wonderful experience in my life, and it probably still is, because of the whole discovery of what happens in silence. As the week tends to go on in my retreats, I start using periods of that time to look at my life, to get my priorities back in order, and try to discern decisions.*

The retreats that Janine takes are in the Jesuit tradition and are based on Ignatian “Spiritual Exercises,” a series of instructions on methods of prayer and reflection. The exercises were developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola and originally used by Jesuits as they were preparing to take their final vows. The exercises were also offered to lay people as a means to discern God’s call in their life. Janine explained,

*As you go through those weeks, you’re contemplating different parts of Christ’s life. Through prayer and quiet time, you get to a point where you try on different decisions and live with them for a day. So, you live with one decision for a day and then you live with another decision for a day in your head.*
But a lot of the time is open prayer time... sitting at the side of the lake, or sometimes, it’s walking in the middle of the city. I use that time to connect with my God and to be able to get to a place where I have a better understanding. I’m at a better place to think things through.

While serving on the Wisconsin Supreme Court, Janine went on retreat with other lawyers to the Dominican Republic. When she returned, she said,

I struggled for a year about whether I should stay with the Court or not. I had a spiritual advisor who suggested that I put everything on hold and journal for a year, which I did, and then take the 10-day retreat at the end. That was the time in which I decided to resign from the Supreme Court, which was a monumental decision in this state. I was in my 40s and I had five more years of my term when I stepped down from the Court. It was pretty startling for a lot of people. But I truly believe that because of the process I used, I have never once regretted that decision.

Janine now teaches a mediation class for law students at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and also leads groups with victims and offenders in a maximum security prison in the Green Bay Correctional System. She uses contemplative practices in both these settings. Reflecting on her life, she says,

I can’t separate parts of my life. The contemplative things that I do personally and the way I try to train others in these practices are very interrelated. I know that if I am not engaged in my own personal contemplative time, it’s a big problem, because it’s where I get grounded, focused, and more at peace. Because of these practices, I believe that I am able to experience great joy in the work I do. I am able to connect with life in a more joyful way, to be able to see people in a good light, and to be able to appreciate the importance of doing good in the world.
e. Prison Work

Contemplative Net Interviewees

- Geoffrey Shugen Arnold Sensei, National Buddhist Prison Sangha (Mt. Tremper, NY)
- Rev. Daniel Nagacitta Buckley, Strawberry Dragon Zendo (Los Angeles, CA)
- Joan Halifax, Upaya Prison Project (Santa Fe, NM)
- Fleet Maull, Prison Dharma Network (Boulder, CO)
- David Murphy, North King County Rehabilitation Facility (Seattle, WA)
- Soren Gordhamer, The Lineage Project (New York City, NY)

With nearly two million men and women in prison, the U.S. has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, and the prison industry is one of the country’s fastest growing economic sectors. Even so, some of the most profound stories of transformation through contemplative practice come from behind prison bars in both the U.S and internationally.

In 1976, Bo Lozoff and Ram Dass started the Prison Ashram Project. In the Hindu tradition, an ashram is a place where people live for a period of time to strengthen their spiritual practice and self-discipline. Lozoff and Ram Dass hoped that the project would support prisoners to use their prison time in a similar way. During the 20 years of the project’s existence, Lozoff has visited more than 600 prisons and offered basic meditation instruction and spiritual encouragement. His book, *We’re All Doing Time* (1984), is now in its thirteenth printing and is distributed free of charge to any inmate who requests it.

The documentary film *Doing Time, Doing Vipassana* (1997) tells the story of the introduction of meditation to inmates at the largest prison in India, Tihar Jail outside of New Delhi. In the early 1990s, India’s Joint Commissioner of Police Kiran Bedi was seeking a way to reform the corrupt prison system and to address the violence occurring within jails. She learned that 20 years earlier Vipassana teacher S.N. Goenka had offered 10-day meditation courses to inmates in Indian jails, with profound results. When these courses were reintroduced in the ‘90s, the wardens and jail personnel reported that inmates’ violent behavior was reduced dramatically. In the film, hardened criminals are shown crying in the arms of prison guards after the end of the meditation course.

In the United States, dozens of programs began to introduce meditation programs for inmates, including the King County North Rehabilitation Center (NRF) near Seattle. One study showed that the recidivism rate for inmates who had completed a Vipassana course at NRF was 56% compared with a 75% rate in a NRF General Population Study (Murphy 2002). In 1999, the National Institute of Health funded the University of Washington to study if Vipassana meditation could help inmates at the NRF to control drug and alcohol addictions and reduce the prison recidivism rate. Preliminary data indicates a clear trend favoring meditation course completers on measures of control over drinking behavior and drug use, as well as depression and optimism (Parks et al. 2003).
Other prison meditation retreats and programs incorporating Vipassana meditation, Zen meditation, and Centering Prayer have been offered at minimum, medium, and maximum security units across the U.S., including in Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, New Mexico, and New York. At Folsom State Prison in California, more than 450 inmates have been introduced to Centering Prayer through Father Thomas Keating’s organization Contemplative Outreach. More than 5,000 inmates have contacted Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper seeking support for their meditation practice. Geoffrey Shugen Arnold Sensei, a monk at the monastery, noted that “One of the most interesting characteristics of these sanghas [inside prisons] is that they go across all ethnic lines.” This contrasts to outside the prison where most native-born American practitioners form “an almost exclusively white Buddhist population” (Niebhur 2001).

A number of organizations have formed a coalition to offer meditation instruction and correspondence to inmates with a contemplative practice, including the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Contemplative Outreach, the Human Kindness Foundation, the National Prison Buddhist Sangha, Strawberry Dragon Zendo, the Upaya Prison Project, Yoga Inside, and Zen Mountain Monastery. Within the Buddhist community, many of these organizations are part of the nationwide Prison Dharma Network, started by Fleet Maull in 1989 while he was then a federal prisoner.

Interfaith conferences on meditation in prison have included a gathering in September 2000, at the Upaya Foundation in Santa Fe, New Mexico; a December 2002 meeting at the Institute of Noetic Sciences campus near Petaluma, California; and an April 2002 conference, “Imprisonment and Transformation,” at the Mercy Center in Burlingame, California. Presenters at the Mercy Center conference included Fr. Thomas Keating of Contemplative Outreach, Fleet Maull of the Prison Dharma Network, Gangaji (an American-born spiritual teacher), and Rev. Alan Senauke of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

Joan Halifax is the founder and director of the Upaya Prison Project in New Mexico. For the past three years, she and other volunteers have been encouraging inmates to pursue some form of contemplation. “We’re hoping to create the kind of behavioral changes in individuals that make coming back to prison extremely undesirable,” says Halifax. “Recidivism is such a big problem. Many of us realize that it’s important to humanize the prison system—to really stress rehabilitation and help people move off the punitive model.”

Daniel Nagacitta “Nagi” Buckley, founder of the Strawberry Dragon Zendo, a Buddhist outreach program involved in prisons, hospitals, and with Native American children, said:

*One of the things that we always emphasize is about freedom and only you can decide if you’re going to be free, not a jury. I’ve seen guys realize that maybe being in jail could be one of the most productive times of their lives because they are learning. Some guys have even taken it forward just like being in a monastic situation.*
Other Contemplative Net interviewees whose work has included teaching meditation techniques to people behind bars include Jon Kabat-Zinn, Father Thomas Keating, and George Mumford.

Fleet Maull emphasized that many of the projects that the Prison Dharma Network supports are directed not only toward helping inmates gain the emotional stability and psychological skills to make better life choices, but also address systemic issues about the Prison Industrial Complex:

*Our whole approach is to try to create a circle in which we can invite all the players...and bring people into a more uplifted vision of the whole thing. So, I’m just as keen on working with correctional guards and correctional professionals and prison lobbyists and people who are invested in making money in this industry...Those are the people I would love to teach meditation to and get in council with. I’d much rather do that than be preaching to the choir.*

Maull’s vision may, in fact, be gradually turning into a reality. In September 2003, a conference in New York City, “Healing Through Great Difficulty,” was planned to coincide with His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s visit American Tour. The participants – 18 former inmates, State Department security agents, and meditation teachers – spent three days together practicing meditation and in discussions. The inmates had been nominated to attend by prison groups and halfway house across the country. One highlight of the conference was when the group had an opportunity to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. One of the organizers, Soren Gordhamer, said,

*We’re trying to address a system that’s not working. Too often prisoners come out angrier than when they went in. Prison guards have a shorter life expectancy than most other vocations and often die shortly after retirement...Our goal is not to make people Buddhists. It’s about helping to calm the minds of prisoners and staff, and to support the human values of empathy and respect* (Kachtick 2003).

Jeremy Hunter, professor at the Drucker School at the Claremont Colleges, has taught mindfulness techniques to captains and commanders of the Los Angeles Police Department. In 2003, Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh led a mindfulness retreat for more than criminal justice and law enforcement professionals in Madison, Wisconsin. At least 12 police officers attended the retreat, “Protecting and Serving Without Stress or Fear,” which was billed as a health and wellness event. According to a 1999 FBI study, the suicide rate among police is twice the national average. Each year, fewer than 100 police officers die in the line of duty compared to nearly 300 that commit suicide (Howlett 2003). The retreat organizer, Captain Cheri Maples of the Madison Police Department, noted that “a lot of skills that work so well in policing don’t work so well at home” (Howlett 2003).

A number of groups in the Prison Dharma Network are working to create support systems for prisoners after release, such as Sangha X, a group of former inmates in the San Francisco Bay Area who meet together regularly for meditation and mutual encouragement.
At the age of 35, Fleet Maull already had a meditation practice and a strong relationship with his Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, when he was arrested and convicted for drug trafficking. He was imprisoned for the next 14 years, leaving behind his wife and nine-year-old son “with nothing.” His time in prison offered him plenty of opportunity to reflect on the choices he had made.

Even though I had done a lot of good things over my life, I had also been involved in a lot of craziness. I really saw that I had wasted so much of my talents and energy. I had deep regrets about that and was determined to become a contributor, become a positive force in the world rather than the confusing mixed bag I’d been.

I was determined to use these tools and really transform my life. Most prisoners don’t come into prison with those tools. They come in already somewhat dysfunctional and then they get buried under extreme demonization and shaming. For anybody to go through a real transformation, they have to get in touch with some genuine feelings of regret, which is very different from guilt and shame.

I had a very powerful experience in the county jail while I was there. I was in this concrete and steel tank with only one meal slot in the door, no windows, and there were five cells and a small common area that was taken up with a long metal picnic table and a really grody shower in one corner. It was just a hell hole. They allowed guys to have TVs and radios that their families brought them from home and they kept them going 24 hours a day, screaming and yelling and fighting.

My mind was racing. I was completely nuts and the environment was nuts, but I was determined to practice anyway. I remember one time, I was sitting [meditating] up on my bunk. I had already been sitting for about five hours that day and suddenly, I had this experience. I’d had this experience many times before in retreats but always in a quiet, peaceful place. I realized that my mind wasn’t moving – that there was all the noise in the jail but my mind wasn’t being caught by any of it. There was this absolute steady awareness. It wasn’t being pulled by anything.

It was at that moment that I realized that this path could work for me in prison. At that point, I was pretty scared about going to the penitentiary. I was having nightmares about everything. At that time, I thought I was going to be in prison for 30 years, and 14 was
long enough. But at that moment, seeing my mind like that in that chaos, I realized that this is workable.

I was driven to practice, and I had seen my life go through powerful transformation. I wanted to give that gift to others. I felt an obligation to provide that to other people going through the same experience that I was.

Out of his experiences, Fleet was inspired to found the Prison Dharma Network, a coalition of more than 35 organizations which offer meditation instruction and other resources to hundreds of inmates across the U.S.
One story that comes to mind is about Sam [not his real name], a big guy – most of these guys are pretty big – who has been in prison a long time and is a model prisoner. He doesn’t get into trouble, he’s very well respected by the other inmates, by the staff, and is very talented in many ways. He’s on a track to getting out, which he is very, very committed to.

Sam told me a story about a situation where he worked very closely with another person, a supervisor. He said this other guy was just getting under his skin. It had been going on and on, and it was building up until there was quite a bit of animosity between them, but they still had to work together. One day, the supervisor did something and the dam broke. Sam just lost everything and he consciously decided, although it took only fractions of a second, to throw everything away and to teach this guy a lesson. He lunged across the room and he was going to take him down. As he was going across the room, he recognized what he was doing. It’s very interesting, you know? I’ve read studies about violent action and criminal behavior where there is this recognition. In other words, we are making decisions all along the way. They can happen so fast that sometimes we may excuse ourselves into thinking that it wasn’t a conscious decision, but we actually are making a choice.

So, Sam said, at the last second before he actually made contact with the guy, it was like something woke up in him and he realized what was happening – the foolishness of it, and the craziness that if he did that, an hour later, six hours later, or tomorrow morning he was going to wake up and think, “What in God’s name did I do?” And so he’s flying across the room and the supervisor, meanwhile, is running over to hit the panic button, which means, they are going to be descended upon by guards and batons and the whole nine yards.

I asked, “Well, what did you do?” And Sam said, “I hugged him.”

I said, “What did the other guy do?” Sam said, “He didn’t know what to do. He didn’t know whether to run.” Sam said, “It scared him more than if I had hit him.” And so after a second of this hugging, Sam left the room to chill out and just get grounded again.
C. Supporting Social Change through Contemplative Awareness

The first primary condition for any social change to occur is to create an environment of radical respectfulness.

I believe that without creating an environment of radical respect and a deep sense of our own fallibility, each and every one of us, you can’t possibly get real social change. All you can ever get is people at war with one another, whether with guns or words, because we’re all trying to impose ourselves on one another.

~ Peter Senge, Society of Organizational Learning

Overview

Growing numbers of “everyday contemplatives” are bringing the insights from their inner journeys to their personal and professional lives. Groups of students, teachers, employees, executives, artists, and others are discovering how practices like meditation enhance their work. But do these practices have the capacity to effect change on a larger level? Some people hold a vision of a society in which cultural institutions like government, law, business, and education are grounded in contemplative awareness, contributing to the creation of a more compassionate society. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society was founded with just such a vision, and it is not alone. In this section, we look at this broadest circle of impact and identify three strategies that Contemplative Net interviewees have used to apply contemplative disciplines to the work of social transformation.

Contemplative Practice and Social Justice Work

The relationship between contemplative practice and social justice work is explored in-depth in the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society’s report, “Inviting the World to Transform” (Duerr 2002). The report, which analyzed the subset of 44 interviewees who worked on social justice issues, found that the use of contemplative practices in these settings helped to

- support deep, significant social change
- increase awareness of the tendency to re-create oppressive relationships and structures within social movements
- sustain activism on a physical, psychological, and spiritual level
- process emotions in a constructive way
- bring personal and organizational “shadows” into light
- shift organizational and institutional power dynamics and structures

For many Contemplative Net interviewees, the idea of transforming society is implicit in the idea of transforming oneself:

I think the transformational process, both as individuals and collectively, is also a social/political transformation process. When you have people moving out of their woundedness and toward wholeness, then they can share and serve out of that wholeness. That’s going to make an impact on the next person. It’s a domino effect, the hundredth monkey kind of thing.

Sue Turley, Institute of Health and Healing, California Pacific Medical Center
I have always perceived a connection between the inner life and spirituality and social change. That’s been clear to me from the beginning. The civil rights movement was a spiritual movement, as far as I’m concerned. I think that Dr. King was an early example of a leader who was driven by compassion, and for me that’s very convergent with Buddhism and other major spiritual traditions.

Charles Murphy, the Power of Hope

Social action often ends up being so goal oriented on fixing a social ill that it forgets the individual in the process. You end up with individuals who are burned out, overwhelmed, overworked. They are working towards one area of justice and equality, and yet they may still be carrying deep seeds of racism or homophobia. The idea of urbanPEACE is to always bring self-awareness to social transformation and social consciousness. We want to make sure that people are paying as much attention to individual personal transformation as they are to social transformation.

Angel Kyodo Williams, urbanPEACE

Contemplative practice can happen when I do service – social change work is not separate from my meditation on the cushion.

Diana Winston, Buddhist Peace Fellowship

Three Strategies for Social Transformation
In the responses from the Contemplative Net interviewees, we identified three strategies through which contemplative practices are being applied to the effort of social transformation:

1) **Contemplative Infusion** – Introducing contemplative practices into a “field” or location with the intention of increasing awareness within that setting.

2) **Leveraging Leadership** – Offering opportunities for contemplative practice to leaders in decision- and policy-making positions.

3) **Socially Transformative Forms of Contemplative Practice** – Applying the principles and techniques of traditional contemplative practices to large group and social environments.

1) **Contemplative Infusion**
In this strategy, a contemplative presence is introduced into a “field” with the intention of infusing that place or group of people with contemplative energy, out of which mindful dialogue and decisions can take place. One example comes from New Age circles, such as the “Gaiamind global meditation and prayer” that took place on January 23, 1997.

But this strategy appears in some decidedly non-New Age locations such as the Pentagon, where a meditation club of about a half-dozen federal employees has met every Friday (Contemplative Net interviewee Corrine McLaughlin has led the group in meditation). The group tries to maintain
what they call a “pilot light” of spirituality at the Pentagon despite hostility from bureaucrats and fundamentalist co-workers. Bart Ives, club president, told Tricycle magazine (1997),

This is a very transitory, high-pressure place. The fact that this group had a twentieth anniversary, small as we are, is phenomenal. We can’t advertise. I put up flyers and I come back an hour later and they’re torn down, as though people have nothing better to do but stand around and wait for them to go up.

Several interviewees related their own pioneering attempts to bring a contemplative presence into institutional settings. Nancy Roof, co-founder of the United Nations Spiritual Caucus, described the UN meditation group:

We began in November 2000 with the idea of convening a space where several people who were interested in spirituality at the global level could come together. In that group, we could meditate together and find the group’s wisdom as to how we should actually function within the UN. We are still in the process of doing that but what came out of the initial meditation together was kind of a format which is that at our meetings we meditate together on spiritual aspects of the global situation. We have complete silence for thirty to forty minutes at the beginning of our meeting and then all of our discussion comes out of that silence together and around discussing spirituality around the UN. The idea behind this is that in some way eventually we may be able to bring contemplation and meditation into a larger arena at the UN rather than just those people who are already interested.

Other examples of “Contemplative Infusion” include:

• Weekly peace vigils at the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, initiated by members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

• “Bearing Witness” pilgrimages to Auschwitz, organized by the Zen Peacemaker Order (now Peacemaker Circles), founded by Bernie Glassman. The group also conducts “street retreats,” where participants spend several days living in conditions similar to those of homeless people.

How effective is this strategy? Evidence at this point is primarily anecdotal rather than empirical, although researchers from the Maharishi University claim to have documented the “Maharishi Effect” in which one percent of a population practicing Transcendental Meditation produces measurable improvements in the quality of life for the whole population, including a decrease in crime. (However, their research methodology and findings have been questioned by peer reviewers.)

It does seem plausible that these infusions help to tone down confrontational situations and create space for less polarized conversation about an issue, which in turn can lead to more creative solutions and collaborations across diverse ideologies. Diana Winston of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF) told us about a vigil held by BPF members at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. For several days, the group sat on meditation cushions at the facility’s parking lot to bear witness to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. At lunchtime, they went to the cafeteria, ate lunch with the lab workers and listened to their stories. Diana said,
It was incredible, because what happened for me was I got to hear the other side. All of my ideas like, “You are evil because you are making nuclear weapons” began to dissolve some because I heard how concerned people were to protect America, and how frightened they were for their family if they didn’t have a job. I didn’t agree with them, but the barriers broke down. To me, that is true Buddhist social change work. How can we understand and love the “other” people? It is not easy.

2) Leveraging Leadership
In this strategy, administrators, executives, legislators, and others in decision- and policy-making positions are offered opportunities to experience contemplative practice. The hope is that these individuals will gain access to insights about themselves and the ways their choices have impacted others. Contemplative space allows a different way to consider and act on these insights, and also helps to enhance creativity and problem-solving capacities. Because these people are situated in positions of influence, the choices they make can subsequently affect many others.

Janine Geske, a law professor at Marquette University, related a story illustrating this:

A very dear friend of mine who is a vice president at a university decided to offer a retreat to some of the big donors to the school – they were businessmen from huge corporations. Some of them came, a little bit reluctantly. By the third day, some of these guys started reflecting on situations in which they had exercised power against employees – things like firing somebody to show that you had the power to do it; grabbing things whether it be opportunities or clients or whatever, just to be more powerful than someone else.

Some of these guys unraveled that weekend. One of them said, “I can’t believe I’m that way.” One man said he was going to go back and re-hire somebody he had fired the week before, some guy with a family. He started having the space to think about the ripple effect of his actions. He realized that his decision affected not only the person whom he had fired, but his family and everybody else. The realization for him to look in silence, in prayer, in quiet contemplation at why he did what he did and how that fit in the scheme of the world, I think, is immense.

To varying degrees, nearly all 84 Contemplative Net interviewees worked on leadership development, but 12 specialized in teaching contemplative practices to people in leadership positions. Pat Harbour, director of Healing the Heart of Diversity, explained the importance of working with the leaders:

One of the reasons that we don’t sustain change in our culture and our work environment is because we work with only one side of what’s required for leaders. We do a great job in developing analytical and conceptual skills, but we ignore that side of human development that actually fosters and sustains change that motivates one to make a change. So our work is really about that kind of awakening. What is required to support that is a contemplative practice, a way of having participants access their deeper and higher self. We help people create a space where they can begin to see the relationship between the way in which they believe and think and their attitude, and how that impacts on their external action and behavior in the workplace, in communities, and even in their personal lives.
Mutima Imani, who does organizational development with leaders in government and education agencies, said, “When I bring groups together, I always start with some centering process that allows people to be here now, to try to help them to get into their bodies and out of their minds, in a quiet space so that they can be receptive to new information and experience.”

3) Socially Transformative Forms of Contemplative Practice

The third strategy combines some of the core principles of contemplative awareness – embracing change, cultivating compassion and wisdom, discovering one’s deepest intention, listening to the inner voice – with techniques such as basic attendance to breath, awareness of thoughts, reflective inquiry, and engaged dialogue. These ingredients are mixed to create new forms that are applied in small group or large organizational settings, where dozens or even hundreds of participants at a time engage in these practices (see sidebar below).

These socially transformative forms of practice are directed toward collective questions and concerns, such as:

- How can our community work through this conflict together?
- How can our organization deal with this challenging situation?
- How can our company be more aligned with our mission and values and maintain (or improve) our viability?

The Quaker tradition offers several practices that are, in a sense, precursors of this strategy, including the clearness committee, threshing sessions, Claremont dialogue, and consensus process decision making. We identified several “socially transformative forms” of contemplative practice in the interviews, including Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider 2000), Open Space Technology (Owen 1997), and the concept of the Learning Organization (Senge 1996).

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Example of a Socially Transformative Form of Practice: Open Space Technology

Open Space Technology (OST) was developed by organizational consultant Harrison Owen and others in the mid-1980s, based on Owen’s observation that people attending his conferences loved the coffee breaks better than the formal presentations and plenary sessions. OST’s core concepts are drawn from the traditions of Native America, Buddhist philosophy, and Owen’s insights from his experience of life in a West African village. Owen explained how he believes that contemplative and Buddhist principles can be applied to organizational transformation:

In classical Buddhist terminology, it’s about “seeing your original face.” It’s about understanding not just intellectually but experientially that we are a complex adaptive system. This is a very different understanding of the nature of an organization than what we are used to, in which somebody organizes it, somebody is in charge and tells you what to do or the president does. I think that the world is coming to understand that’s not true. There is something else happening here and guess what, nobody is in charge. Transformation is not something you do to anybody. It is something that is occasioned by the environment. There are clearly ways that you can help people through it, but ultimately it’s something they have to do for themselves. So having a program of organizational transformation in the sense that one would, if you will, do that to you is an oxymoron.

In essence, OST is a highly collaborative, self-organizing meeting process which works with groups ranging in size from five to 1,000 people. It has been used to bring people together around a common concern, which can range from peace in the Middle East to enhancing sales. Owen described how the OST process works:

We start in Open Space with all these people sitting in a circle. We start in silence. One of the first things we do is invite everybody in that room – it could be 2,000 people – to simply let their eyes go all the way around the circle and acknowledge those who are there, the folks they like, the folks they know, the folks they don’t like.

I rather suspect that that initial five to ten minutes is probably the most critical thing that is “done,” because what you experience is all of a sudden the vast emptiness in the center of the room. If you have 500 people sitting in a circle, there’s a lot of room in the middle, and it almost miraculously transforms from barrier and fear into a point of connection.

Whether it’s a small circle or big circle, everybody is invited to identify by standing up and saying, “This is what I care about and this is what I think the issue is.” Then we post the issues on the wall and go to work. And what happens is it becomes totally fractal. I mean, that big circle re-forms and forms in multiple varieties. The circles that function well are ones where the space is kept open and whoever convenes the session really provides an opportunity for folks to engage each other. The ones that don’t work very well are the ones where the convener suddenly discovers or perceives that his or her role is to give everybody the “truth” and lecture them until they’re done. At that point, the law of “two feet” [people express their opinion by walking to a different group] takes over and people find better things to do.
What you find is people may get together around what they thought was the killer issue and then discover that in fact it was just a basic misunderstanding in terms and so in five minutes they manage to resolve whatever it was they had to resolve and they go off and do something else.

The most basic OST principle is that everyone who participates must be passionate about the topic and willing to take responsibility for creating things out of that passion. Four other key principles are:

1) Whoever comes are the right people.
2) Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.
3) Whenever it starts is the right time.
4) When it is over it is over.
Profile:
Simon Greer,
Jobs With Justice

From standing along front lines and working for “Solidarity” in Poland to helping tourism industry workers on Hilton Head Island demand living wages and dignity on the job, Simon Greer has taken part in the fight for economic justice around the world. But after six years of organizing, four of them in South Carolina, Simon began to face a personal crisis.

Reflecting on his work, Simon remembers that he was quite effective at applying nonviolent tactics to put pressure on companies and that the coalitions he worked with won many labor battles. But, he said, “I was pretty mean by the end of it. [I] had come to a place where I was doing the work out of anger and out of hate, not out of love or even compassion.” He recalls how he saw people his own age dropping out of the work and many of the older people who stayed in “got to be pretty mean-spirited.”

After Simon’s time in Poland during the Solidarity movement, in South Carolina doing union and community organizing, and a few years working in Washington, D.C. as the Program Director at Jobs with Justice, he was struck by the words of a seasoned organizer who told him: “The tragedy with all this is that even if we win, we’ll lose.” Simon realized that “the people in power might be different, but the way we treat people wouldn’t change. Certainly our policies would make a world of difference for many people, but how we behave might not change significantly enough to affect the change we seek.” He felt called to learn how to “transform how we do this work.”

Realizing that he was already “hardwired” to aggressively organize with people to build more power, Simon discovered that what he really needed was an “effortless, open, quiet, and humble” way of working. While living in Washington, D.C., he returned to a long-lost yoga practice and explored his relationship with Judaism. He also re-connected with the work and vision of Abraham Joshua Heschel, a conservative Jewish Rabbi and ally of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Civil Rights Movement. After taking a class on Rabbi Heschel’s visions about both prayer and social justice work, Simon had a strong feeling that “these things have to connect. If they connected in this great man, they’ve got to connect in this work. I don’t want to do my work and...leave it at the office when I go to yoga or when I go to synagogue. And I don’t want to leave behind the feeling I have when I meditate or when I’m reading sacred text when I go to the office.” Simon now sees this as a turning point in his life: “I don't think I would have made it [in organizing work] five more years if I hadn’t gone this route.”
Simon continued to work in and around the labor and social justice movements and looked for ways to bring spiritual practices to the workplace. In 1998, he founded Jews United for Justice (JUFJ) where he began to create the organizational and personal space to introduce contemplative practices and philosophy into his social justice work.

Simon thrives in the space of tension between apparent opposites:

> Often I find people who [are] moving away from confrontational politics, moving to more mediation, dialogue, spiritual healing, and mindfulness...So I have this tension in me: how do we maintain that there is a struggle in the world for power between the very rich and everybody else and also that the way we tend to do that struggle sometimes hurts the people we’re engaged with, but it doesn’t transform the world the way we want.

> So I think the first calling is to do the work in terms of fighting for justice and the second one is to figure out how we bring a real mindfulness, a deep presence, faith in God, to the work that helps us do it in a different way.

Simon understands the strategic importance of nonviolence in fighting for justice and the role that his own contemplative practice has played in carrying this out. In 2000, he was in charge of security for the World Bank/IMF protests in Washington D.C. At the beginning of the protests, JUFJ put together a haggadah and a “global freedom seder.” This proved very inspiring to both Jews and non-Jews looking for some deeper grounding and motivation as they went into what could easily have been a very tense situation.

Simon told the story of an emerging confrontation between protesters and police at the march. He put a line of peacekeepers in between the two groups. The tension was mounting and one of the protesters lunged at the police.

> Then it dawns on me, from the deepest wisdom, that we’re all lined up facing the protesters, which makes it look like we’re protecting the cops. So I instruct everyone to go front to back so every other person is facing forward. Half of us are now facing the cops, half are facing the protesters. I start leading this chant: “Whose streets, our streets,” which is saying to the protesters and to the police that we control the street. Three or four minutes of this and the police fall out and the protesters get bored and move on.

> If I did not have the practice I have, I wouldn’t have had the wisdom to line people up that way... If that had turned into a violent confrontation and something really bad had happened, that would have been the story. The 25,000-person march would have been forgotten.

Simon is now the executive director of New York City Jobs With Justice. He says, “I hope that my work in New York will help model how you bring [contemplative practice] in. I think we could double our budget and double our staff and build that much more political power, and we’ll still grind people up unless we find some way to create a space where everyone can figure out how they want to have a contemplative practice.”
The vigil began when a meeting was called at Chestnut Hill [a Friends Meeting House in Philadelphia] shortly after the NATO bombing in Yugoslavia began almost three years ago. People there, some Quakers and some from other churches, reflected on what we might be called to do in response to that. Several people expressed an interest in taking part in a vigil and so I helped to organize it. Initially we thought it would be a one-day thing. So we came together to pray for peace in Kosovo and Yugoslavia.

I would say most of us were against the bombing but it wasn’t a vigil against the bombing – it was to pray for peace, to pray for everyone involved in the conflict, and to pray for peaceful ways of conflict resolution. At the end of our vigil, there was a woman there from Argentina and she said, “You know, the mothers of the disappeared ones met every week to make their vigil.” She suggested that we do that throughout the bombing and so we did for the next ten weeks. There were between twenty and forty people who came to those vigils in those ten weeks.

When the bombing stopped, there was a group of us who had become really aware of how this country is always spending its resources, making more bombs and is ready to drop them so easily as way to resolve conflict. We realized that there were wars in other places and that prayer for peace was needed on an ongoing basis, and so a smaller group of us has continued to come every week. We also write reports that we send out by e-mail from the vigil to a list of about 400 people around the country, mostly Friends, in which we reflect upon our experience at the vigil. We reflect on issues of war and peace, on prayer, and also on making a public witness.

A lot of people who participated in vigils or protests against the Vietnam War or other wars say they find that what we do is very different. People came expecting that we would be standing there, holding signs, and shouting at people who pass by. Instead, what we are doing is standing there, holding signs, and we are praying and there will be one person who is ready to interact with people who might have questions. But really the message is that we need to turn to God, we need to turn to that inner sense for help in this. We are not going to make peace by shouting at passersbys. I do believe that as more and more people learn to seek that inner source, get in touch with it, become in harmony with it and realize our essential oneness with other people in this planet, that is the way to peace.
We did an Open Space for nine villages and towns in Western Serbia, all of whom, if they were going to survive meaningfully were going to have to work together, and none of whom really thought that was a good idea. Furthermore, they had about 1,000 years of history saying that each town was worse than the other town, and “my town is better than any town.” I’m not quite clear how they were all invited and why it was they all accepted but, anyhow, we ended up with 150 representatives of all these folks.

Just to make it more interesting, Serbia had existed under Marxist domination or dictatorship for 60 years and then they had 10 years of Milosevic so the general expectations on the part of a lot of people was simply that these folks probably are not going to do anything too unique and useful unless we teach them a lot and lecture to them, and they’re certainly not going to engage each other in any sort of way that would be fruitful for downstream development.

Well, that was 100% wrong. We sat in a circle and checked each other out in Open Space, and from the moment that space was open until the moment it closed two and a half days later, there was a level of engagement and collective practice that was just electric. It’s going to be a while before anybody really understands what the downstream impact was but one thing is really different – these folks now know that they don’t have to be strangers, not because somebody came out and introduced them but because they had the experience of engaging each other in useful ways.
Along with Rabbi Arthur Waskow, Simon helped to introduce Shabbat (the Jewish practice of setting aside one day of rest and reflection each week) to more than 700 labor organizers attending the Jobs With Justice annual conference. Simon remembered:

We brought a rabbi to help lead the Friday evening opening piece of the conference. Rather than what I’ve seen at a lot of places where religious people are given a room off to the side, or Jews are given a room to go pray, this was done centrally. Before the whole crowd, he talked about Shabbat. He had everybody look into each other’s eyes and I thought “This is the worst move of my entire career; what a disaster.” You could feel the tension in the room, and he just kept moving right through it.

During the course of the weekend, I have one memory of a couple of African-American college students standing in a corner. As I walked by, I heard them singing “Shabbat Shalom,” and I thought, “I guess it worked.” I think that would be the largest scale effort to put the Shabbat stuff right in people’s faces at a mostly labor conference, where this should not be done!

I think the more we can free people who fight for justice from feeling overworked, the more we create a space for them to find a way to heal themselves, separate from their work.
VI. The Challenge of Teaching Contemplative Practices in Secular Settings

People understand the words differently. There are so many trigger words in this. And so this has been part of our efforts – to strive to help people get at the essence of spirituality without the trappings of religion.

~ Leah Wise, Southeast Regional Economic Justice Network

What kinds of issues arise when contemplative practices are introduced outside of a religious setting? How are these practices actually used with the organization’s customers, constituents, and employees? Are they taught in the context of the religious or ethical traditions from which they originated? Are ethical implications addressed, and if so, how? This section explores how Contemplative Net interviewees have dealt with these questions in their work.

Three Teaching Philosophies
One of the interview questions asked: “When you teach contemplative techniques, do you teach them along with the religious, cultural, or ethical teachings of the traditions of which they are a part?” There were almost as many answers to this as there were interviewees, but responses generally clustered in three categories, which reflected three philosophies of teaching: Clinical use, Contemplative Practice as a Doorway to Change, and Transformative use (see sidebar below).

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<th>Three Teaching Philosophies</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Clinical use of contemplative practice</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal-oriented and functional; focus on stress reduction, relaxation, concentration</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contemplative practice as doorway to change</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Balance between goals and intentions; “clinical” approach may be starting point, but support for deeper exploration</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transformative use of contemplative practice</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intention-oriented, focus on transformation of individuals, groups, society</td>
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At one end of the scale, contemplative practice is seen primarily as a practical technique that can aid in stress reduction, relaxation, and improved mental functions, such as concentration. On the other end of the scale, contemplative practice is viewed as a powerful tool to support individual and social transformation. In the middle, pragmatic goals such as stress management may be the starting point, but there is room to explore deeper questions that may arise in the course of learning a contemplative practice.

Where people fall on this scale is generally a good indicator of how comfortable they are in talking about the spiritual or religious traditions from which these practices originate and providing an moral and ethical framework for them.

1) Clinical Use
This teaching philosophy is very goal-oriented, in the sense of using contemplative practices to work on specific, measurable objectives such as increased concentration or decreased blood pressure. For this group, the primary goal is to use contemplative practice in the service of improved physical and mental well-being. This might be thought of as a utilitarian or functional approach.

This philosophy is most often associated with healthcare settings - hence the use of the word “clinical” - and is characterized by Dr. Herbert Benson, author of the *The Relaxation Response* and founder of the Mind/Body Medical Institute, where contemplative practice is used as a health intervention. Dr. Benson’s work focuses solely on the physiological benefits that are brought about through meditation and other practices. He said, “Eliciting the relaxation response is the cornerstone of the institute…We are looking at these fundamental aspects of different contemplative practices and utilizing them for health and well-being.”

This category also includes some educators, such as Carol Miller Lieber who introduces contemplative practices to high school teachers and students, who need to be particularly sensitive to the issue of separation of church and state. They were very careful to not include any overtly religious or spiritual language or concepts in their teachings.

From this philosophy, the highest priority is to make the audience to feel comfortable learning the technique. Contemplative practices are often taught on-site - for example, at a hospital, clinic, or in a classroom. Those teaching the practice do not want to create any boundaries or obstacles that would inhibit people from participating or that make them feel like they’re being “preached to.” Religious, spiritual, and ethical issues are seen as an entirely separate domain and, as a rule, are not addressed in practice instruction. If students are interested in delving into these aspects, they would usually be referred to spiritual teachers, meditation groups, churches, etc.

2) Contemplative Practice as a Doorway to Change
The majority of responses clustered in the mid-range of the scale. These interviewees often spoke about using the Clinical approach as a starting point, but they held open the possibility that the practices can serve as a doorway to change for people who were interested in exploring the psychological and spiritual facets of their lives.
These teachers skillfully navigate between explicit and implicit references to ethics and religion, depending on the needs of their audience. Though the practices are initially presented without including religious or ethical principles, the teachers focus on the elements of mindfulness and awareness in relation to the person’s daily experience. They engage the student in an ongoing conversation about how the experience of a contemplative practice might be changing that person’s view on their emotions, anger, goals, etc. This approach changes the locus of control from an external set of rules to a more internally directed sense of ethics.

One of the best examples of this teaching philosophy comes from the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society at the University of Massachusetts, Worcester. The Center teaches patients mindfulness practices to reduce stress. But often, something more happens. The Center’s director, Saki Santorelli, said:

My own experience is that via the practice, people begin to touch the ethical dimension, people often report that the practice itself leads them into seeing themselves so much more clearly that their capacity to understand other human beings, to be less reactive, to be less judgmental, to be more patient or tolerant, to be more compassionate, seems to arise out of the directness of experience rather than some pre-established coda.

Here, as in the Clinical approach, importance is placed on helping people feel comfortable in the teaching environment and to avoid pushing “buttons” related to issues people may have with spirituality and religion. But at the same time, some kind of “sacred secular” dimension is often invited into the space. For example, teachers or retreat leaders may set up a table in the middle of the room and invite participants to place on it objects that symbolize their intentions. This might be called an “altar” in some cases, but to avoid religious trappings that word might be avoided. The setting is often a non-sectarian retreat center where participants can get some distance from their daily life and work routine, but it is usually not affiliated with a religious tradition.

This group paid a great deal of attention to language. Interviewees made strategic decisions to use different words or terms to help them to bring the practices into the sector in which they worked. These phrases allowed entry into settings where there might be resistance to contemplative practices. For example, Rachael Kessler, working in education, uses the phrase “strategies for learning readiness” rather than “contemplative practices” to describe the practices she teaches her students to increase their ability to concentrate, pay attention, and listen. To make these practices more palatable in the business sector, Joe D’Arrigo uses the term “writing exercises” rather than “journaling” and “stretching” rather than “yoga.” A number of interviewees used the word “tools” rather than “contemplative practices.”

Consultant Robert Gass said,

I make a great effort to use very everyday, common sense language, which is why I continually have people at the end of these say, “You know for ten years or twenty years, I’ve been totally turned off to do anything spiritual.” And all of a sudden I get – “This helps our life so much.” I’m deeply committed to a spiritual path, but I’m not wedded to the words of spirituality. It’s the thing itself...it’s not the words.
Amber Chand describes her company, Eziba, as a “case study for business and peace building.” She says,

_I think the language of peacemaking, which implies the language of spirit, is actually more palatable in businesses than is the language of spirit. You know, people can get very like, “Oh, my God, you’re bringing spirituality into business?” But you say, “I want to bring peace into business,” and everybody is going to respond. Everybody wants peace. It’s a very non-threatening way of approaching the same issues we’re trying to approach with spirituality._

This philosophy balances goals with intentions. While the audience or students may initially be drawn to learn about contemplative practices because of goals such as stress reduction, teachers try to tie it to other intentions, which are often worded in secular language. David Sawyer, a consultant who has worked with corporations such as British Petroleum, said:

_\textbf{My intention is not for people to take up spiritual practice or to be involved in contemplative practice. My intention is for the group to build a really strong sense of shared purpose and vision and think well together and act well together on behalf of the greatest possible good. I always set a context for them of envisioning the most noble possible purpose. For an oil executive, this is different than it might be for someone else. For me, contemplative practice is not necessarily the end in itself. I am trying to create an environment in which the very best in each of those people can come to the floor.}_

**3) Transformative Use**

At the other end of the scale, interviewees made it clear that they saw contemplative practices as far more than a technique for stress reduction or relaxation. They believed that contemplative practice was, first and foremost, a vehicle for personal and social transformation. They explicitly named the spiritual or religious roots of these practices when teaching them, along with the ethical frameworks and moral precepts connected to them. Whereas the Clinical approach heavily emphasizes measurable outcomes such as stress reduction, the Transformative approach is oriented to intention; that is, the idea that one’s way of being in the world is the most important dimension of practice.

Father Pat Eastman, of the Monos Foundation, summed up this perspective:

_\textbf{Contemplative practice is much more than just what you might do 30 minutes a day. It’s a whole orientation of one’s whole life...We can’t have a commitment to nonviolent practice in prayer and then be violent or oriented to violence in the rest of [our] life, so the ethical implications that flow from the practice certainly are things that I will indicate.}_

Grove Burnett, of Vallecitos Mountain Refuge, said he sees contemplative practices as

_a vehicle to look at some of the deeper, really spiritual, religious, and ethical questions. What is the moral foundation of our work? Is anger appropriate as a tool for change?...There is a deeper level of practice in contemplative awareness and meditation below stress reduction, and it has to do with freedom, liberation, and a deeper understanding of our reality and our lives and our relationship to the world._
This group often included those who teach to audiences already affiliated with a faith tradition, like Father Thomas Keating who offers Centering Prayer in the context of Christian teachings. The teaching setting is frequently a retreat center associated with a religious tradition, such as a Christian or Buddhist monastery. Sensory stimulation is kept to a minimum in order to create an environment that supports the individual to explore questions of meaning and spirit in their life. Physical accommodations stress solitude and silence, meals are usually simple and vegetarian. Ethical guidelines from these traditions, such as the Buddhist precepts, are often presented at the beginning of the retreat and participants are strongly encouraged to adhere to them during the period of instruction.

But other interviewees who work in secular settings also felt very strongly that a moral and ethical framework should be included and, in fact, had reservations about teaching contemplative practices without it. Gary Cohen of Healthcare Without Harm said,

"You can get very important people in varying positions of great power learning how to meditate or learning contemplative practice. But if it’s not linked to issues of justice and ecology, then there’s a disconnect...The question is, can the change be translated into organizational life, social life?"

This might be thought of as the “No Apologies” approach. Meg Wheatley, founder of the Berkana Institute, said,

"As the world has grown more accepting of even speaking the words of spirit, soul, love, wholeness, that’s created more room for us. Also I have to say that as I get older, I’m just clearer about what’s important and so I can become the voice for it rather than having to wait for someone’s approval of it."

Some interviewees, like Grove Burnett, originally taught from the Clinical philosophy, but then took a leap and began to introduce more overtly spiritual dimensions and language in the teachings. We asked if he encountered any resistance. Burnett replied,

"The resistance was within me, because I was afraid that it would come across too dogmatic or too religious. But to the contrary, as with all of us, there is inside that deeper longing to address those questions. So instead of resistance, we’ve found people who go, “Oh, wow, that’s amazing, what does that mean? What do you mean by freedom, liberation?” And that might lead to a discussion of it from the Buddhist context, or as Thomas Merton talks about it."

"Meeting People Where They’re At"

Nearly all interviewees expressed a strong commitment to maintain a non-judgmental and respectful attitude toward the way their students adopted these practices. No matter where people fell on the scale, they stressed that they tried to gear their teaching methodology and content to the particular group of people they were working with.

They were flexible about offering the appropriate practice for specific settings and audiences. Gary Cohen of Healthcare Without Harm was sensitive to how different groups respond to practices that focus on silence. He said, “Some people don’t do silence. There are different cultural issues
that come up, and you’ve just got to be sensitive to those things.” Linda Stout, founder of Spirit in Action, said,

What we try to create in our circles is a way for everyone to bring in spirit in the way that they understand it...We had a couple of circles that were much more contemplative and used meditation. For some people, that was a put-off, particularly when you start bringing in a lot of people of color and low-income people who may have different experiences of the way they practice spirit. We’re trying to figure out how you create a space that allows for all the different ways of coming in or connecting to be present.

Many interviewees were clear that it was more important for people to be touched by the “heart” of contemplative practice than it was to “get it right.” They recognized the need to let go of fixed ideas about how often and the way someone should practice; this is subordinated to a greater goal of simply having that person be receptive to the idea of reflection and fitting into their life in a way that is most appropriate to their own life conditions. Soren Gordhamer of the Lineage Project offered this story about a young man who attended a class for inmates:

A guy named Michael was in for a gang-related murder and used to come to the classes. But during the yoga, he would never really do the yoga very much. During the meditation, he would just kind of look around. He wasn’t very involved. But afterwards he gave me a big hug and always thanked me.

Over the weeks I started to get frustrated with him. Like, “Why do you show up to class if you’re not interested in practicing?” And then one day it hit me: he didn’t come for the meditation or the yoga—he came for the hug.

...If you never formally sit and close your eyes and meditate, but [if] you’re creating a space that supports people where compassion can come forward and where they feel accepted, that is actually more the central issue, and really maybe the heart of contemplative practice.

Doug Tanner spoke about introducing politicians to contemplative practices:

We have to start with in this setting is the pace at which most people move [which is] anything but contemplative. So when we just get people to be quiet and take a bit of time out, that is a tall order. Often times it is going against the grain. When we have been able to do that, it is a major step for this crowd in a contemplative direction. It is often way short of what someone who has a very solid mature contemplative practice would be doing.
Secular Ethical Guidelines in Organizations

Organizations that want to offer an ethical framework to their staff or employees but strive to be accessible to people from different faith traditions sometimes create their own ethical code. As Dr. Andrew Weil pointed out, the Hippocratic oath for physicians, “Do no harm,” is one of the earliest examples of secular ethical guidelines. These organizations wanted to cultivate an environment in which people could discover and articulate their own ethical values, as those values emerged from doing the practices.

These principles may originally have been based in a certain religious tradition but the organization re-words them so that they do not explicitly refer to that tradition. One example is the “Three Tenets” of the Peacemaker Community, which was originally rooted in Buddhist teachings. Alternately, the principles might be synthesized from a number of faith traditions and cultures, such as the “Four-fold Way,” from Angeles Arrien. These principles become the guiding focus of the organization and the context within which contemplative practices are presented (see sidebar on p. 121).

Leah Wise, of the Southeast Regional Economic Justice Network, said, “We have developed our own statement of moral and ethical principles and values...As a team, we created a kind of medicine wheel that was how we understood the integration of what each person brought.”

In secular settings, organizations are often made up of diverse groups of people, ranging the spectrum of age, ethnicity, race, and religion (and non-religion). When this is the case, more neutral ways of presenting practices are chosen in an effort to create, as Claudia Horwitz said, “the space and the field for people to bring their own origins.” Claudia, the founder of stone circles, gave some examples:

*If I’m going to be doing a workshop for a group of service providers who are doing work around child abuse in North Carolina, I know that a very large percentage of them are going to be Christian. In that case...I might use Christian scripture and I would also draw something specifically from Judaism, to give voice to the margin. Then I would also try to introduce them to meditation and I would say a little bit about Buddhism, because I think it might be something new for a lot of people. In other settings where I know that it’s going to be a very diverse group with respect to ethnic, spiritual, religious, and even geographic background...then I tend to choose things that are a little more neutral like silence and writing.*
Secular Ethical Guidelines

Greyston Mandala

*Three Generic Spiritual Attitudes*

- **Deep attention** A steady and unbiased mindfulness that seeks to dissolve preconceptions in order to see situations as they truly are.
- **Exchanging self and others** A radical openness to the experience of others that seeks to take in and “bear witness” to the other’s pain and confusion while offering in exchange the benefit of one’s own health, strength, and positive qualities.
- **Compassionate action** Interventions to relieve suffering and foster growth that are altruistic, appropriate, and skillfully accomplished.

Foundation for Cross-Cultural Education and Research

*The Four-fold Way*

- Show up, be visible and empower others through example and intention
- Pay attention to what has heart and meaning and to access the human resource of love
- Tell the truth without blame or judgment
- Be open to outcome rather than attached to outcome

Peacemaker Community

*Three Tenets*

1. Not-knowing, thereby giving up fixed ideas about ourselves and the universe
2. Bearing witness to the joy and suffering of the world
3. Loving action toward ourselves and others

*Four Commitments*

1. I commit myself to a culture of nonviolence and reverence for life
2. I commit myself to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order
3. I commit myself to a culture of tolerance and a life based on truthfulness
4. I commit myself to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women
A Place for at the Table for Everyone

A number of interviewees observed that too many times, the opportunity to learn contemplative practices is not available to those with less economic resources. The ability to participate in contemplative retreats is often a luxury reserved for those with expendable income and time. They issued a call for attention to this problem:

*Contemplative practice is being ghetto-ized into a tool for intellectuals and white folks with money who can go on retreats. It is in danger of becoming a country club practice...There’s an elitism that takes place that says somehow that they’re ready and we’re not, and we have to debunk that myth by any means necessary.*

Angel Kyodo Williams, urbanPEACE

Cathy Howell is an AFL-CIO field staff person whose work includes bringing mindfulness techniques and contemplative dialogue to social activists and labor organizers in the South. She told us that while some money for partial scholarships is included in the budgets for retreats she helps to organize, there aren’t enough resources to enable everyone who would like to attend to be there. She said,

*That’s one thing I think is really great about Vallecitos [retreat center in New Mexico for social activists]—they are able, through foundation grants and donor fund-raising, to actually give people fellowships to come there...they have really been able to get a diversity of people there from lots of different economic backgrounds.*

Other interviewees echoed these sentiments.

*One of the things that we all know is that contemplative practice has never been something that communities of color have had a lot of access to. Yoga’s been around for a long time and if you could afford to pay for a yoga class, more power to you. But in places like Brooklyn, the Bronx, parts of Manhattan, these kinds of programs have never existed. There is a tremendous need to expand contemplative practice into communities that have never had the opportunity to experience the wonder of contemplative practice. That for me is the goal – to effect societal change and change in the world, you’ve got to make it not exclusive.*

Fred Rooney, Contemplative Urban Law Program

*It’s not just about practicing contemplative practice in the retreat setting...it should be about helping to bring contemplative practice into everyday life, so that it is accessible to anybody, not just to somebody who can afford to go.*

Adi Bemak, Holyoke Youth Alliance
VII. Conclusion

Summary
This study has attempted to map the current state of the use of meditation and other contemplative practices in the United States. It has also examined the implications of these practices on individuals and society.

A scan of public opinion polls, media coverage, and professional journals and conferences shows that interest in contemplative practices has grown tremendously over the past three decades. Time magazine has estimated that 15 million Americans practice yoga (2001) and 10 million meditate regularly (2003). As practices like meditation and yoga increase in popularity, they are becoming unbound from the religious traditions from which they originated. Increased access to teachings via books, tapes, and retreats designed for laypeople has meant that individuals can learn these practices without formally joining a religion or spiritual group. As a result, these practices are no longer the province of a privileged few but are becoming demystified and democratized for the general public.

This democratization has given rise to at least two consequences. First, as more laypeople take up a contemplative practice and then re-enter their lives, the effects ripple out to impact their families, friends, and co-workers. The benefits of meditation and other reflective practices include stress reduction, but extend beyond it. Interviewees spoke of how these practices served as a tool to help increase self-awareness and as a vehicle for forgiveness and reconciliation. In their professional lives, they reported a renewed sense of commitment to their work, improved communication, and an increased ability to deal with organizational challenges.

Second, the use of contemplative practices in professional settings is on the rise. During the past two decades, meditation and other contemplative practices have been applied to a growing number of professional fields, including business, healthcare, education, law, government, and prison work. Some who have found practices meaningful in their own lives have been inspired to apply these same lessons to their professional sectors, resulting in retreats especially designed for lawyers, teachers, etc. This study has outlined some notable examples in each of these sectors and has presented stories and profiles that illustrate the influence of these practices on these professions.

In the work setting, a new organizational model is emerging, one that we called the “Contemplative Organization.” In these companies and organizations, meditation and other practices are incorporated into the structure of daily work and group decision-making processes. The intention is for contemplative awareness to serve as the organizing principle for the workplace. Five characteristics of a Contemplative Organization were named and 15 U.S. workplaces that are moving toward being such an entity were identified.
Contemplative awareness has also played a role in social transformation. Historically, spirituality has been the source for some of the 20th century’s major social change movements, including the civil rights movement. In the present time, meditation and other practices are being tapped by activists who are seeking sustainable methods of social change. Forty-four of the interviewees worked in organizations that addressed social justice issues. Three strategies through which practices are being applied to social transformation were identified: 1) Contemplative Infusion; 2) Leveraging Leadership; and 3) Socially Transformative Forms of Contemplative Practice.

Finally, the study explored the implications of offering contemplative practices in a secular context. Language and teaching approaches were adapted to make contemplative practices accessible to non-religious audiences, or audiences that include people of diverse faith backgrounds. Three teaching philosophies were identified: 1) The Clinical use of contemplative practice; 2) Contemplative practice as a “doorway to change;” and 3) The Transformative use of contemplative practices.

Limitations
This study had several limitations. The snowball method of sampling is useful when attempting to locate members of a group that are otherwise hard to identify, but can result in a lack of diversity among the population. In the current study, there was a marked lack of ethnic diversity, as well as a preponderance of Buddhists.

The analysis of these interviews was notable for the consistency of themes and patterns across interviews, with little variance. This might also be attributed to the fact that the research sample was comprised primarily of directors and founders of organizations, who generally had positive attitudes toward the use of contemplative practices in the workplace, especially if they had introduced the idea in their organization. A suggestion for future research would be to interview employees at all levels within an organization in order to gain more diverse perspectives on this phenomenon.

Reflections
Through the Contemplative Net Project’s cultural mapping and in-depth interviews, a picture is emerging that confirms Jon Kabat-Zinn’s suggestion that we are in the midst of “a profound social/cultural revolution” driven by a “strong inward longing in our society for well-being, meaning, and connectedness” (1994).

One remarkable thing about this “revolution” is how diverse it is, in terms of the way contemplative practice is defined and the settings it is found in. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Interviewees named more than 80 practices, ranging from sitting meditation to movement practices, such as yoga and t’ai chi, to group practices, such as council circle.

In every setting, careful attention was paid to the unique characteristics and needs of that particular audience. For each group, different qualities of contemplative awareness were highlighted. For young people bursting with energy and passion, practices encouraged creative expression and self-awareness; for lawyers and educators skilled in analytical and
critical modes of thinking, practices supported a perspective of interconnection and wholeness; for social activists trained in organizing and effecting change, practices helped to cultivate patience for the “long arc of change” and appreciation of the many dimensions of social transformation; for business and nonprofit leaders charged with guiding organizations and people, practices enhanced leadership and communication skills. For nearly everyone, meditation and other practices provided an opportunity to re-connect with one’s intentions and motivations.

This study has focused on the positive impact of contemplative practices on individuals and society. Even so, interviewees encouraged us to thoughtfully and critically reflect on the implications of the use of these practices, and to be wary of applying them uniformly. Robert Thurman, professor of Indo-Tibetan studies at Columbia University, writes that the contemplative mind, in the sense of “calming, one-pointed, thought-free meditation,” already exists in all cultures including our own. He names television as “modern culture’s peculiar contemplative shrine” that often reinforces anger, violence, and materialism. For this reason, Thurman suggests,

_It is important that we recognize the value choices implicit in our esteem for contemplation. Only by doing so can we understand the opposition we are encountering, deriving from other value choices._

_Commercial interests, with their advertising industry, do not want people to develop contentment and less greed. Military interests in economic, political, ethnic, or nationalist guises, do not want people to develop more tolerance, nonviolence, and compassion. And ruling groups...do not want the ruled to become too insightful, too independent, too creative on their own, as the danger is that they will become insubordinate, rebellious, and unproductive in their allotted tasks (Thurman 1996, p. 2)._}

Along the same lines, Paul Gorman, executive director of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, reflects,

_In the effort to facilitate integration of contemplation into the American professions and culture, there is a danger of seriously downplaying the moral content of the teachings. Contemplative traditions don’t exist in isolation of moral precepts. This relates to whether you seriously invite executives to look at what they’re doing to the planet, law students to look at the political system they have chosen to enlist in, and journalists to look at the definition of news as it leans more and more toward entertainment. In its intention to mainstream and integrate contemplative practice into the professions of daily life we run the risk of sacrificing the ultimate goal of liberation in our effort to be utilitarian. (Holland 2000)._

The Contemplative Net Project has demonstrated that people in diverse professional and social settings are embracing contemplative practices that were once found primarily within the confines of religious communities and in the rarified atmosphere of monasteries. This
contemplative renaissance has been accompanied by a plethora of empirical studies which have deconstructed the dimensions of practice into minute components, as precisely defined as the parts of a machine. As scientific methodology in this area continues to become more refined, the findings from these and future studies will likely provide more incentive for people to take up these practices.

As we have noted, these developments have resulted in a demystification and democratization of contemplative practices. Demystification can have many positive consequences. In any field, it describes the process of taking a body of knowledge that has traditionally been perceived to be “owned” by an elite group and beyond the understanding of “ordinary” people, and reclaiming it. In turn, this wider circle of people re-interprets the knowledge with a different lens, often creating new forms that speak to the particular needs of their time and cultural context.

And yet, demystification literally implies that mystery is removed. In this midst of this process, how can we remember that the essential role of contemplative practices has been to help guide us through the great mysteries of life – questions of life, death, meaning, suffering? What might it mean that these practices are, as Paul Gorman reminds us, a path to liberation? And how do we reconcile these decidedly immeasurable concepts with our society’s need to measure and quantify? These may well be the great challenges for contemporary practitioners of the contemplative disciplines.
## Appendix I

### Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Selected Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Questions</strong></td>
<td>Please tell me about your organization/program/the work that you do. What is your mission? What do you value most about your work?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where is your organization/program/work that you do right now in its development?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Looking toward the future, what are you and your organization being called to become?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Questions</strong></td>
<td>In the literature we sent you, we included our definition of contemplative practice. Is this close to your definition? In what way does your definition differ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What contemplative practices or activities do you offer in/have you integrated into the work you do?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you describe the relationship between the work of your organization/program and contemplative practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational History/Context</strong></td>
<td>How has your organization/program/work changed since its founding?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What challenges have you encountered along the way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has contemplative practice always been a part of what your organization/program offers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflective - On Practicing Together</strong></td>
<td>Do you as an organization practice some form of contemplative practice? Is this voluntary, suggested, required?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What impact do you feel practicing together has on your organization/program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What obstacles or challenges have you encountered in implementing practice together?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective - On the Work They Do With Others</td>
<td>How were contemplative practices offered to the people who took the training or retreat/ or the people with whom you worked?</td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When you teach contemplative techniques, do you teach them along with the religious, cultural, or ethical teachings of the traditions of which they are a part?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What were recipients of the training/retreat told about the possible benefits of the practices? What motivated them to participate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What impact has the teaching of contemplative practices had on the individuals and organizations you have worked with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking/The Broader Movement</td>
<td>Do you feel that you are part of a broader social movement, a cultural trend, or a paradigm shift as you introduce others to contemplative practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who else do you know who is training others in contemplative practice? With whom do you feel a sense of community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you have a vision for a network of those involved in reclaiming contemplative practice as a part of contemporary life?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix II

Contemplative Net Interviewee Demographics

Demographic information is based on data entered at the beginning of each interview and from information collected in a socio-demographic form sent to participants after the interview. This form was completed and returned by 51 people (65%).

Interviewees worked in 17 different professional sectors, and many worked in multiple sectors. The sector with the highest number of interviewees was Leadership (defined as working with organizational leaders in various sectors on leadership training and skills), followed by Networking Organizations (defined as an organization whose primary mission is to support a network of grassroots activist communities that address multiple social justice issues). We defined a social justice organization as one that explicitly recognizes (either in its mission statement or as expressed by the interviewee) systemic issues that lead to social inequities, and which has developed or is developing a strategy to address these issues. Using this criterion, 44 of the interviewees engaged in social justice work.

Of the organizations represented by the interviewees, 61 were nonprofit, 2 (Eziba and Monsanto) were for-profit, and 2 had for-profit companies “nested” inside of nonprofit foundations (Greyston Bakery and Rainforest Products). Nine of the 84 interviewees were not affiliated with one particular organization but rather worked as consultants, primarily to corporations and for-profit businesses.

Note: When $N \neq 84$, it is due to missing responses on the socio-demographic questionnaire.

Graph 1: Gender of interviewees ($N = 84$)
Graph 2: Age of interviewees (N = 55)

![Age Distribution](image)

Graph 3: Primary ethnicity of interviewees (N = 54)

![Ethnicity Distribution](image)
Graph 4: Geographic location of interviewees (N = 84)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Location</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwestern</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States represented (participants in each state listed in parentheses)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mid-Atlantic**
- District of Columbia (2)
- Maryland (3)
- New Jersey (1)
- New York (10)
- Pennsylvania (1)

**Midwest**
- Illinois (1)
- Michigan (2)
- Missouri (1)
- Ohio (2)
- Wisconsin (1)

**New England**
- Connecticut (1)
- Maine (1)
- Massachusetts (15)
- New Hampshire (1)

**South**
- Georgia (1)
- Kentucky (1)
- North Carolina (4)
- South Carolina (1)
- Virginia (1)

**Southwest**
- Arizona (1)
- New Mexico (2)
- Oklahoma (1)
- Texas (1)

**West**
- California (13)
- Colorado (5)
- Oregon (1)
- Utah (2)
- Washington (5)

**Canada:** Nova Scotia
**Graph 5:** Primary religious or spiritual affiliation of interviewees (N = 59). Fourteen interviewees also listed a second religious affiliation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious/Spiritual Affiliation</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Spiritual but not religious&quot;</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pagan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph 6:** Primary Sector (N = 84) [Sector definitions on next page]
Sector Definitions

**Art and Creativity:** Primary work focus is with creative process and artistic media.

**Business:** Primary work focus is in a for-profit business/corporate setting.

**Education:** Primary work focus is within the setting of established educational institutes (private and public), from grade school through graduate school.

**Environment:** Primary work focus is in organizations that address environmental/ecological issues.

**Health and Healing:** Primary work focus is within a health institute or on health issues, includes hospice work.

**Law:** Primary work focus is in legal institutes (including law schools).

**Leadership:** Primary work focus is with organizational leaders in various sectors, focusing on leadership training and skills. (Often, these interviewees were consultants or self-employed.)

**Media:** Primary work focus is in print, radio, television, or Internet journalism.

**Networking Organization:** Organization that addresses multiple social justice issues; primary mission is to create and support a network of grassroots activist communities.

**Organizational Development/Support:** Works with nonprofit/activist/social justice organizations to enable them to do more effective and sustainable work.

**Prisons:** Primary work focus is inside prison setting and/or addresses related issues (i.e. families of incarcerated individuals, death penalty).

**Sports:** Primary work focus is in the field of sports, either in a professional or amateur capacity.

**Religious/Spiritual Community:** Primary work focus is based in a specific religious tradition/community.

**Youth:** Primary work focus is with young people outside the context of a formal educational setting.
Appendix III: Networks

In *Linked: The New Science of Networks*, Albert-Laszlo Barabasi (2002) explains how networks play a catalytic role in shaping society. In *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell (2002) uses the story of Paul Revere’s midnight ride to illustrate a similar principle. Gladwell notes that there were actually two messengers that fateful night, both of whom set out at the same time to warn of the coming of the British, but only Revere effectively spread the word to villagers along his route. Gladwell defines Revere as a “Connector,” a gregarious and social individual with a gift for bringing people together.

There are literally hundreds of networks or circles of people coming together in both informal and organized ways to explore the use of contemplative practices. One goal of our research was to identify the nodes of this contemplative network. One question we asked interviewees was, “Who else do you know who is training others in contemplative practice? With whom do you feel a sense of community?” In compiling this list, we have tried to locate the “Connectors” of the contemplative world. Our strategy has been to identify key networks or hubs in each sector, rather than attempting to create an exhaustive list of smaller groups. Each of the organizations or groups listed here serves as a portal to hundreds or even thousands of individuals who are interested in applying contemplative awareness to their professions.

This list includes:

- virtual networks that exist primarily on-line
- organizations headquartered in a physical location, often with chapters, circles, or some other form of networking spokes across the country

The list is in alphabetical order. Organizations or groups whose central focus is some form of contemplative practice (e.g. centering prayer, mindfulness, meditation, yoga) are noted with an asterisk. An example would be the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society’s Academic Program, which primarily seeks to integrate contemplative practice, such as meditation, into academic life. The remaining groups include the contemplative dimension as one aspect of their interests, but also consider other dimensions of spirituality or holistic approaches. The Education as Transformation Project, which looks more broadly at the role of spirituality in educational institutions, is an example of this kind of group.
**Business**

**Association for Spirit at Work**
www.spiritatwork.com
36 Sylvan Hills Rd.
East Haven, CT 06513
Ph: 203/804-6160

The Association for Spirit at Work is a nonprofit association of people and organizations who are interested in the study and/or practice of spirituality in the workplace. The mission of the Association for Spirit at Work is to provide community, information, and education, for those who are integrating their work and their spirituality and for those who are called to support societal transformation through organizational development and change.

**Society for Organizational Learning**
www.solonline.org
955 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 201
Cambridge, MA 02139
Ph: 617/300-9500   Fax: 617/354-2093
info@solonline.org

SoL was created to connect corporations and organizations, researchers and consultants to generate knowledge about and capacity for fundamental innovation and change by engaging in collaborative action inquiry projects. SoL’s purpose is to discover, integrate, and implement theories and practices of organizational learning for the interdependent development of people and their institutions and communities such that we continue to increase our capacity to collectively realize our highest aspirations and productively resolve our differences.

**Spirit in Business**
www.spiritinbusiness.org
P.O. Box 228
Greenfield, MA 01302
Ph: 413/586-8950
spiritinbusiness@gmx.net

SiB’s Mission is to connect leaders in a global community of inquiry, learning and action, to release the creative power of individuals and organizations for the benefit of the whole.
Education

* Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, Academic Program
www.contemplativemind.org/programs/academic/overview.html
199 Main Street, Suite 3
Northampton, MA  01060
413/582-0071
Director: Arthur Zajonc

The Academic Program seeks to integrate contemplative practice into academic life and to increase awareness of the history and contributions of contemplative practices.

* Community for Integrative Learning and Action (CILA)
http://people.umass.edu/dkscott/CILA%20Institute/umass.htm
Tel: 413/577-4175
cila@provost.umass.edu

Through its work in higher education, the Community for Integrative Learning and Action seeks to develop the whole human being: body, mind and spirit. It promotes the integration of diverse ways of knowing, and the cultivation of the contemplative, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of life within existing and new institutions of higher education. Through its local, national and international network of colleagues, CILA is already at the crossroads of the movement for the transformation of higher education to include contemplative, spiritual, and integrative insights and practices.

Education as Transformation Project
www.wellesley.edu/RelLife/transformation/
Peter Laurence, Ed.D., EasT Executive Director
5 Trading Post Lane
Putnam Valley, NY 10579
Ph: 845/528-3490
peterll@concentric.net

Education as Transformation is an international organization that works with colleges, universities, K-12 schools and related institutions exploring:
1. the impact of religious diversity on education and strategies for addressing this diversity;
2. the role of spirituality in educational institutions, and particularly its relationship to teaching and learning pedagogy; the cultivation of values; moral and ethical development; and the fostering of global learning communities and responsible global citizens.
* The Friends Council on Education, E Quakes email listserv
To subscribe, see www.friendscouncil.org
Friends Council on Education
1507 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
215/241-7245
QuakerEd@aol.com

A listserv from the Friends Council on Education, a network of 79 Friends (Quaker) schools across the country. The educators in these pre-K-12 schools work with students from all backgrounds to prepare them for weekly Meeting for Worship, which is in a silent meditation format.

Holistic Learning and Spirituality in Education Network
www.oise.utoronto.ca/field-centres/miller-ascd.html
Jack Miller
OISE/UT Southern Centre
252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6
Ph: 416/923.6641 ext 2633 Fax: 416/926.4744
jmiller@oise.utoronto.ca

Holistic Learning is based on the principle of interconnectedness and wholeness. Thus the student is seen as a whole person with body, mind, emotions, and spirit. This network was founded in 1990 by John Palladino and attempts to foster communication and networking among educators interested in Holistic Learning and spirituality.

* The Mindfulness in Education Network
MiEN email listserv (about 250 members)
To subscribe, send a blank message to MiEN-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
Moderator: Richard Brady, bradyr@sidwell.edu

“Our network was established in 2000 by a group of educators who are students of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. Collectively we saw mindfulness as an antidote to the growing stress, conflict and confusion in educational settings as well as an invaluable gift to give students. The purpose of our network is to facilitate communication among educators, parents, students and any others interested in promoting contemplative practice (mindfulness) in educational settings.”
The Self Knowledge Symposium (SKS) is a resource for students engaged in the spiritual search. Asking the big questions—who am I? Why am I here? What can I do with my life that will be meaningful?—is an essential aspect of the successful college experience. The SKS supports students in their quest for a meaningful life through a network of student organizations, as well as lectures, workshops, retreats, conferences and new residential programs in downtown Raleigh. The SKS community includes students, educators, alumni, and many others interested in spiritual seeking.

* The Shambhala Institute

The Shambhala Institute creates powerful learning environments that support the deeper understanding, strength, and skills leaders need to catalyze and sustain positive change in today's complex world.
The AHNA recognizes that nurses must first heal themselves before they can facilitate the healing of others. The AHNA serves as a bridge between the traditional medical paradigm and complementary and alternative healing practices. Directory of practitioners includes meditation teachers.

The Consortium of Academic Health Centers for Integrative Medicine (CAHCIM) includes 22 highly esteemed academic medical centers. The Consortium’s mission is to help transform medicine and healthcare through rigorous scientific studies, new models of clinical care, and innovative educational programs.

The Mind/Body Medical Institute is the world leader in the research and clinical practice of mind/body medicine. The MBMI provides outpatient medical services, training for health professionals, corporate and school-based programs, women’s health services, and affiliation for national and international health care systems.

The Center helps to support a network of more than 3,000 professionals in the United States and Europe, representing a broad spectrum of disciplines and specialties, who have participated in its MBSR training programs.
**Law**

* The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society Law Program  
  www.contemplativemind.org/programs/law/  
  199 Main Street, Suite 3  
  Northampton, MA 01060  
  413/582-0071  

The Law Program of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society explores ways of helping lawyers, judges, law professors and students reconnect with their deepest values and intentions, through meditation, yoga, and other contemplative and spiritual practices.

**International Alliance of Holistic Lawyers (IAHL)**  
www.iahl.org  
1756 Century Blvd., N.E.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30345 USA  
Ph: 800/913-IAHL Fax: 404/248-1464  
director@iahl.org

**International Centre for Healing and the Law**  
www.healingandthelaw.org  
9292 West KL Avenue  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009-5316  
Ph: 269/353-0592 Fax: 269/372-2163  
info@healingandthelaw.org

The International Centre for Healing and the Law is dedicated to the restoration of the legal profession’s calling to serve in the spirit of the public good. The Centre promotes a legal profession that dedicates itself to healing and peace in our society, and provides opportunities for legal professionals to explore and reflect upon the deeper meaning of their vocation and their lives.

**Renaissance Lawyer**  
www.renaissancelawyer.com  
P.O. Box 2784  
Chapel Hill, NC 27515  
information@renaissancelawyer.com

Renaissance Lawyer Society works to help create a legal system that works for everyone by bringing together lawyers; judges; legal assistants, secretaries and administrators; other legal professionals and members of the legal community; and all others interested in the law and the legal system, for mutual support, networking, education, and dialogue concerning the overall advance and development of a healthy society through intelligent implementation of the rule of law.
**Prison Work**

* **Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.**
  www.centeringprayer.com  
  www.thecentering.org/prison.html  
  Contemplative Outreach Ltd.  
  P.O. Box 737  
  10 Park Place, Suite 2B  
  Butler, New Jersey 07405  
  Ph: 973/838-3384  Fax: 973/492-5795  
  office@coutreach.org

Contemplative Outreach is a spiritual network of individuals and small faith communities committed to living the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life through the practice of Centering Prayer. Our purpose is to offer information, support, and an opportunity for networking for people who share the practice of Centering Prayer in particular and contemplative practices in general with prisoners, prison staff and prisoners’ families.

* **Prison Dharma Network**
  www.prisondharmanetwork.org  
  PO Box 4623  
  Boulder CO 80306  
  303/544-5923  
  pdn@indra.com

Prison Dharma Network (PDN) is an international nonsectarian contemplative support network for prisoners, prison volunteers, and correctional workers.

* **Prison Meditation Network**
  www.bpf.org/html/current_projects/prison_program/prison_program.html  
  Buddhist Peace Fellowship  
  PO Box 3470  
  Berkeley, CA 94703 USA  
  Ph: 510/655-6169  Fax: 510/655-1369

The BPF Prison Project is deeply committed to working with prisoners, their families, and all other persons associated with the prison system to address the systemic violence within the prison-industrial complex. We are committed to engaging in compassionate action through the following key areas:

I. Advocacy and Education  
II. Networking and Resources  
III. Ministry and Training  
IV. Correspondence
Religious/Spiritual Communities

Buddhism
Since meditation is the core practice of Buddhism, every Buddhist community (sangha) could be seen as a contemplative network. Rather than attempt to list the thousands of these communities, we recommend Dharmanet as one of the most comprehensive listings of dharma centers, practice groups, monasteries, and organizations in all the major Buddhist traditions.

* Dharmanet
www.dharmanet.org

DharmaNet’s Gateways to Buddhism is an online clearinghouse for Buddhist study and practice resources. It is home to Dharmanet’s own in-house databases and collections, as well as providing links to all online Buddhist resources, large and small. This public service is coordinated by DharmaNet International and is funded entirely through donations.

Christianity

* Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.
www.centeringprayer.com
Contemplative Outreach Ltd.
P.O. Box 737
10 Park Place, Suite 2B
Butler, New Jersey 07405
Ph: 973/838-3384 Fax: 973/492-5795
office@coutreach.org

Contemplative Outreach is a spiritual network of individuals and small faith communities committed to living the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life through the practice of Centering Prayer. The contemplative dimension of the Gospel manifests itself in an ever-deepening union with the living Christ and the practical caring for others that flows from that relationship.

* World Community of Christian Meditation
www.wccm.org
National Information Center/Medio Media
www.mediomedia.org
627 N. Sixth Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85705-8330
Ph: 520/882-0290
Toll free in US: 1-800-324-8305
meditate@mediomedia.org
Judaism

* The Spirituality Institute
www.spiritualityinstitute.org
10 Jewett Street,
Northampton, MA, 01060
413/584-0187
Sheila@spiritualityinstitute.org

The Spirituality Institute was created in response to American Jews’ yearning to lead meaningful lives, connected both to their inner depths and to the world around them. The Institute explores and articulates the world of Jewish spirituality and teaches its modern expression among the leadership of liberal American Jewry. In so doing, The Spirituality Institute fosters growth and transformation of the Jewish soul through contemplative study, discussion and practice. One of the goals of the Spirituality Institute is to develop and nourish a network of faculty and students who will enrich and support each others’ work in teaching Jewish spirituality.

* Network of Jewish Meditation Teachers
www.medteach.net
Chochmat HaLev
2215 Prince Street
Berkeley, CA 94705
510/704-9687

The Network of Jewish Meditation Teachers is a group of about 200 rabbis and educators from around the world who are currently teaching some form of Jewish meditation. The network was started to provide a venue for rabbis and teachers of Jewish meditation to: share resources, communicate about programs and events, discuss ethical issues, standards, and other professional issues.
Social Action/Social Justice

(Kaliya Hamlin is a “Connector and Maven” who is also conducting a mapping project of spiritual or integral activists in the U.S. She can be contacted at kaliya@earthwaters.net.)

* American Friends Service Committee
www.afsc.org
AFSC National Office
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Ph: 215/241-7000 Fax: 215/241-7275
afscinfo@afsc.org

The American Friends Service Committee carries out service, development, social justice, and peace programs throughout the world. Founded by Quakers in 1917 to provide conscientious objectors with an opportunity to aid civilian war victims, AFSC’s work attracts the support and partnership of people of many races, religions, and cultures. AFSC’s work is based on the Quaker belief in the worth of every person and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice.

* Buddhist Peace Fellowship
www.bpf.org/html/home.html
PO Box 3470
Berkeley, CA 94703 USA
Ph: 510/655-6169 Fax: 510/655-1369
bpf@bpf.org

The mission of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF), founded in 1978, is to serve as a catalyst and agent for socially engaged Buddhism. BPF’s aim is to help beings liberate themselves from the suffering that manifests in individuals, relationships, institutions, and social systems. BPF’s programs, publications, and practice groups link Buddhist teachings of wisdom and compassion with progressive social change.

* Global Renaissance Alliance
www.renaissancealliance.org
P.O. Box 3259
Center Line, MI 48015
Ph: 586/754-8105 Fax: 586/754-8106
info@renaissancealliance.org

The Global Renaissance Alliance is a citizen-based, international network of spiritual activists. GRA’s mission is to make a stand in our local, national and global communities for the role of spiritual principle in solving the problems of the world. GRA calls this work the New Activism.
* **Peacemaker Community**  
[www.peacemakercommunity.org/](http://www.peacemakercommunity.org/)  
Peacemaker Circle International, Inc.  
177 Ripley Road  
Montague, MA 01351  
Ph: 413) 367-2048 Fax: 413/367-2065  
info@peacemakercircle.org

The mission of Peacemaker Circles is to experience and manifest the power of diverse people connecting, linking, participating in shared experiences, and working collaboratively on shared goals. Peacemaker Circles believes that the process of listening, connecting, and acting creates a more systemic change that can transform society.

* **Spirit in Action**  
[http://spiritinaction.net/](http://spiritinaction.net/)  
274 North St. Belchertown, MA 01007  
Ph: 413/256-4612 Fax: 413/256-4613  
info@spiritinaction.net

The mission of Spirit in Action is to support the development of a movement of people who are unified by a vision of a world which values and embodies love, equality, justice, nonviolence, spirit, and respect for the earth.

* **stone circles**  
[www.stonecircles.org](http://www.stonecircles.org)  
301 West Main Street  
Durham, NC 27701  
Ph: 919/682-8323 Fax: 919/956-5349  
Claudia@stonecircles.org

stone circles helps individuals and organizations integrate faith, spiritual practice, and reflection into their work for social change. The work is based on values and lessons from historical movements, political realities, and personal journeys and honors the power of strength, spirit, stories, and silence. stone circles is also the base for a network of trainers skilled in facilitation and integrating spirituality into social justice work.

* **urbanPEACE**  
[www.urbanpeace.org](http://www.urbanpeace.org)  
1058 65th Street,  
Emeryville, CA

urbanPEACE is a national, spiritually-based empowerment initiative with a mission to inform, incite, and empower peacemaking in urban environments using self-awareness and community-making practices to bridge spirit and social transformation.
Appendix IV

Contemplative Practices in Secular Society:
A Selected Bibliography

**General**


**Art and Creativity**

**Business**


**Death, Dying, and Hospice Work**


**Education**


**Healthcare**


**Law**


**Media**


**Prisons**


**Films:**

*Changing from the Inside* (David Donnenfield, Producer and Director, 1998). Available from the University of California Extension Center for Media and Independent Learning; Ph: 510/643-2788.

*Doing Time, Doing Vipassana*. Available from Pariyatti, 867 Larmon Road, Onalaska, WA 98570, Ph: 360/978.4998, www.pariyatti.com
**Psychology/Mental Health**


**Social Justice Work**


**Youth**


References


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Cleveland, C. (2003), Personal communication via e-mail (from J. Anselmo).


