



Meditation



Finding your place: Take this opportunity to unplug from technology. Get a special notebook or journal to write in, and a pen to write with. Leave your cell phone at home. Reserve a chunk of time so you can be contemplative and slow. Walk out to a spot in nature in an easy saunter, as far as you can go in the time you've allotted. Find a tree to lean against, a rock to sit on, a stream to sit by, a meadow to sit in.

Take a deep breath, settle in.

Contemplating Mystery: Opening to mystery is like throwing a fishing line into the vast ocean and waiting patiently. You develop the qualities of receptivity, waiting and listening to what may speak to you or touch your heart in spontaneous, sacred moments.

Settle in to your spot, and listen to the silence of the landscape and the stillness of the trees and rocks all about you. Begin to turn your attention toward what evokes a sense of mystery. Try not to look for anything particular to happen, as this is not a results-focused exercise. Penetrating into the mystery cannot be forced or willed to happen. Turn toward the unknown rather than the known, and contemplate silence itself. Let the thinking, rational mind quiet, as you learn to listen not from your mind but rather from your heart and intuition. Try to drop the labels, descriptions, and evaluations of the life around you, and simply be, resting in awareness.

Choose anything you encounter in nature as the focus of your contemplation, through preferably it will be something that will stay around long enough for you to dwell upon it. For example, you may want to choose an old tree, as stream, or a leaf from a plant. Once you've chosen the object of your attention, engage all of your senses so it comes alive for you. As you look long and deep enough at this leaf or rock or tree, you may begin to sense beneath the surface appearance, beyond your ideas and views about it. Rest as deeply in the present as possible, without any agenda regarding what should happen.

Even in something as minute as a blade of grass, you can sense or touch the mysteriousness of life. You may know how plants germinate, grow, and photosynthesize or that the color green is not inherent to the grass but is only a reflection of the light off the surface of the grass. But as much as you know intellectually, it is still mystifying that blades of grass sprout from tiny seeds, that they instinctually know how to reach toward sunlight, and that they grow in this unique, particular shade of green. Sensing into the interconnections between a leaf and innumerable conditions—from the sun burning in space, to the moist dew of the morning, to the gopher that tickles the tree roots—may take you closer to an understanding of the mystery of things.

Be mindful of how a leaf or a blade of grass can invite you into tranquility or rapture, into a sense of delight or curiosity. When you are present, receptive, and open, the natural world may speak to you in the language of mystery and wonder. You may feel that communication as a sense of silence, stillness, or breathtaking wonder. This dimension of mystery or awe can take you to a place beyond language, that is nearly impossible to articulate and is best left silent. Yet such moments can uplift our heart and make our spirit soar and sing. As we engage more and more in extended periods of silence, stillness, and quiet contemplation of nature, the mysteries of life and the universe will continue to reveal themselves to us.

- Adapted from *Awake in the Wild* by Coleman

