

The Clinician as Contemplative: Toolkit

1. Contemplative Presence Definition

- **What is Contemplative Presence?**
 - **Contemplative presence** is the deep, attuned state of being with someone in a way that transcends technique, emphasizing intention and compassionate attention. It is different from mere stress reduction or mindfulness in its aspirational and directional orientation.

2. Reflection Prompts for Inner Formation

- **Personal Reflection Questions:**
 - Who am I becoming through the work I do?
 - What practices help me return to my truest self?
 - What sacred texts, stories, or rituals sustain me?

3. Contemplative Practices for Daily Use

- **Simplicity of Zen:**
 - **Sit Down, Quiet Down, Pay Attention** — A simple reminder to create space for stillness in your day.
- **Posture Awareness:**
 - Be mindful of posture, both physical and mental. Engage with the world from a place of grounding, intentionality, and presence.

4. Practices for Building Presence in Caregiving

- **One-Minute Monastery:**
 - Before each patient interaction, take a **three-breath pause** to center yourself.
 - Name the sacredness of the interaction silently or out loud.
- **Naming Sacredness in Ordinary Interactions:**
 - Acknowledge the sacredness of daily interactions, from brief exchanges to deep conversations.

5. Contemplative Formation through Lectio Divina (“Divine Reading”)

- **Living Human Document:**
 - Consider each patient or colleague as a "living document" deserving of your full, compassionate attention, as if reading a sacred text.
- **Four Movements of Lectio Divina:**
 - **Lectio:** Encountering the “Living Human Document,” as if for a first time.
 - **Meditatio:** Focus on what stands out, what demands attention.

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- o **Oratio:** Recalibration with intentional and ethical commitments
- o **Contemplatio:** Truly being with and responding to the patient.

6. Tools for Integrating Spirituality in the Clinical Role

- **Engaging in Ethical Attunement:**
 - o Explore how your own spiritual or religious identity shapes your caregiving posture.
 - o Remember, **“Preach the Gospel at all times, when necessary use words.”** Let your actions of care and attention embody your deepest beliefs.

7. Using the Fruits of Contemplation in Healthcare

- **Attunement & Recalibration:**
 - o Contemplative practice helps recalibrate the clinician to experience wonder, mystery, awe, fear, joy, and grace in every encounter.
 - o Use mindfulness to stay aware of your own emotional states and ensure ethical attunement with others.

10. Closing Axioms for Reflection

- **In the mind of the beginner, the possibilities are endless. In the mind of the expert, they are few.** (Shunryu Suzuki)
- **Unless you acquire the heart of a child, you cannot enter the kingdom of God.** (Psalm 131)
- **One moment of pure awareness, is one moment of pure enlightenment.** (Zen saying)
- Use these axioms as gentle reminders to stay open, humble, and curious in your ongoing practice.