
ETHIC EDUCATION: PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Grade Level / Age 8-9 /14-15y



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Ethic Education: Prayer and Meditation

Competences/Learning Outcomes

- The students know central prayers and meditations and are familiar with their practice.
- They can interpret different physical forms of expression and put into words the attitudes associated with them in the praying/meditating person.
- They can assign appropriate spaces to different forms of prayer/meditation and can deal appropriately with the respective (liturgical) situation.
- They can distinguish between different occasions and times of prayer.
- They can interpret ritualized elements of prayer/meditation and understand them as aids to engaging in the life-enhancing character of prayer/meditation.

Grade level / Age

8-9 /14-15y

Duration

120 min



Preparation

- Prepare three tables in different corners of the classroom ("stations"). Name them as follows:
 - Station 1 – When?
 - Station 2 – How?
 - Station 3 – Where?
- Provide the tables with the corresponding material.
- Bring a bell.
- Bring as many objects shown in **M8** as you can.

Step-by-step description

- Arrange students to sit in a circle.
- Read the text about secular rituals (from **M1**) and ask students to share their personal experiences on a minute's silence and meditation.
- Explain that with this lesson they will explore different aspects of prayer/meditation and write down the categories form (*how*), *location (where)* and *time (when)* on the blackboard.
- Explain that results will be collected and presented at the Encounter Day. Aim is to introduce meditation to others.
- Divide the participants into 3 groups to work together for the whole unit.
- Ask each group to start with a different station.
- Let them work on the station for about 15-20 min. Then ring a bell to make them change to the next station.
- Repeat the last step until every group has visited every station (3 times).
- Let all students take their seats.
- Hang an empty poster on the blackboard.
- Ask students to complete the poster with information they collected in the stations. Provide materials from the stations and stick it to the poster when mentioned by a student.
- Use the poster to present your prayer at the Encounter Day.



Materials

Station 1

[M1] Information Text

Secular rituals

Within secular society, prayer does not exist in the same way as it does in religions. Nevertheless, there are comparable civil rituals, i.e. recurring, regulated sequences of actions with a symbolic character. Terms with a long philosophical history such as contemplation or meditation come close to prayer without being absorbed into it. The forms of secular contemplation, devotion and remembrance can perhaps best be distinguished from religious ones by their intention: while religions are concerned with the worship of the respective deity, in the secular realm it is about the perfection of the self. "Prayer" is a spiritual exercise in which moral goodness is promoted or the purification of the soul on the path of wisdom is supported. In doing so, man endeavors to come into harmony with the fundamental orders of the world that apply to him. In this sense, Seneca (ca. 1-65 AD) already recommended silent personal prayer as helpful, naturally free from superstition and idolatry (cf. Dutoit, Yves & Giradet, Sabine (2017): Gebet und Meditation. Wege zum Unendlichen. Editions Agora & Iras Cotis, 41)

There are communal (collective) and personal (individual) forms of these secular rituals.

The minute's silence

The minute's silence is a collective ritual. It dates back to the First World War and was originally introduced to commemorate the fallen soldiers. Since then, the minute's silence has gained recognition and spread in many countries as a form of public commemoration of tragic events.

How does it work?

Those gathered become silent. They gather their thoughts and focus them on the essentials in memory of the victims and their survivors. They adopt different postures: Many stand with their heads bowed, but kneeling is also not uncommon. People lay symbolic flowers of comfort and light candles or lights. They also express their grief and sympathy in writing through letters, notes, graffiti, etc. In some cities or communities, flags are flown at half-mast or draped in black mourning flags in remembrance. Some people wear black clothing.

When?

Silence is observed for a short period of time - it does not always have to be exactly 60 seconds. For very significant events, memorial days are sometimes set up in an attempt to encourage a regular repetition of reflection.



Where?

People often return to the historical site of the event. Commemorative plaques or memorials can mark these places. But even without being at a specific geographical location, the minute's silence can be held in a public place (school, parliament, sports ground, etc.).

Individual meditation paths

Forms of meditation originating from Buddhism and esoteric movements have become trivialized in our civil society and have often been stripped of their traditional rituals. This makes them easily accessible to the general public. Through individual yoga practice or regular meditation in a private space, alone or in a group, it is possible for many people to reduce inner tension and find serenity and peace despite a hectic everyday life.

How does it work?

Meditation is done sitting down or in a certain (yoga) posture. An atmospheric environment can be very stimulating: candles or scented sticks are often lit or relaxing music is played. You can decide for yourself whether to meditate alone or in a group.

When?

Meditation as a civil ritual does not follow a fixed schedule. It can take place irregularly or regularly, as part of a (weekly) leisure program or at festivals.

Where?

People come together to meditate in yoga or meditation centers. But you can also meditate at home, outdoors or in a monastery. There are no obligations here either.

Fig. 2:

A Person performing a yoga ritual in a park.



[M2] When to perform a secular ritual – Tasks

1. Read the information text [M1] and underline all the information about the different times of the minute's silence and meditation. Write them on the lines. When do you perform secular rituals yourself? Which events do you commemorate? Fill in the times on worksheets [M2] and [M3].

2. Some people meditate more often than others. Think about the possible reasons for this. Discuss them in your small group.

3. Can you remember a situation in which you experienced a secular ritual as something special? When was that? Describe the situation and write it in the lines below. If you like, tell your small group about it.



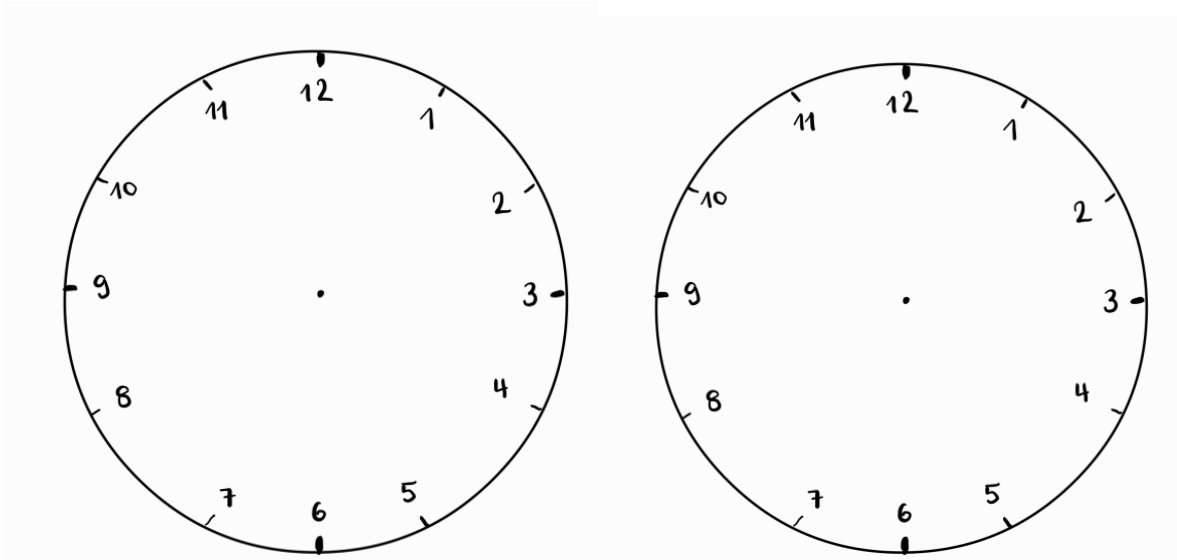
[M3] When to perform a secular ritual – Times

Draw in to which times you meditate or commemorate a special event.

Time of day

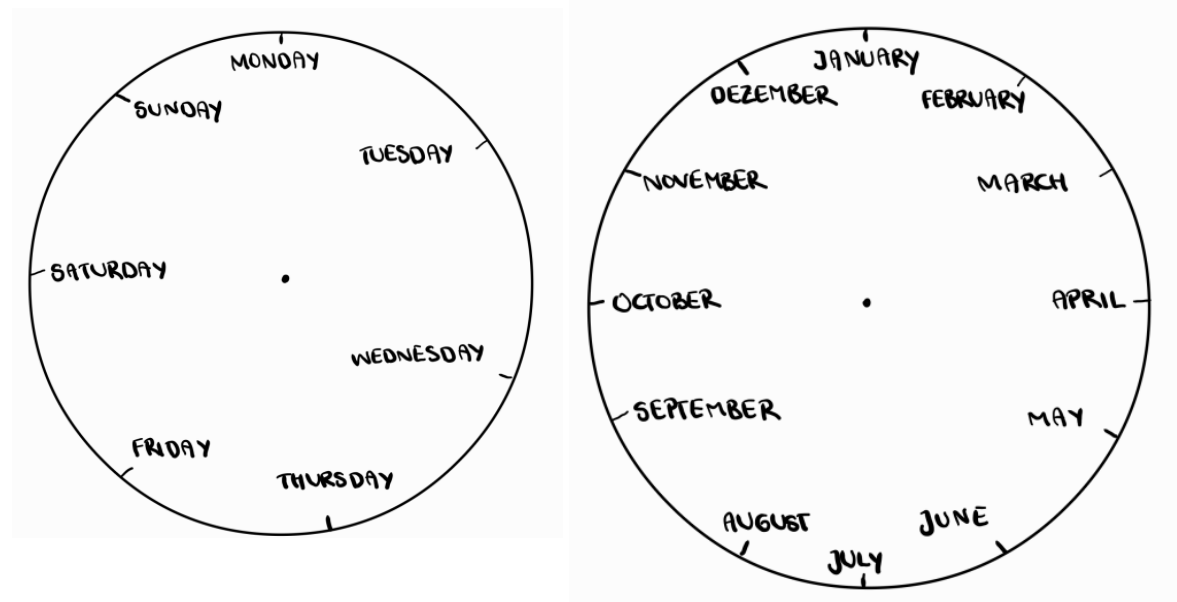
Day

Night



Days of the week

Months of the year



Station 2

[M4] How to perform a secular ritual – Tasks

1. Match the different postures [M7] with the word cards [M5] and the sentence cards [M6].
2. Try the different postures [M7]. In which posture could you concentrate best? Why?

3. In some worldviews people use different objects while meditating or praying. Look at the objects [M8]. Some you may know, some you may not know. Read the explanations. Can you understand why people use these objects?

4. What can you write/stick to the poster at the end? What is important while meditating? What can help?



[M5] How to perform a secular ritual – Word cards

Standing

Kneeling

Sitting

Bowing

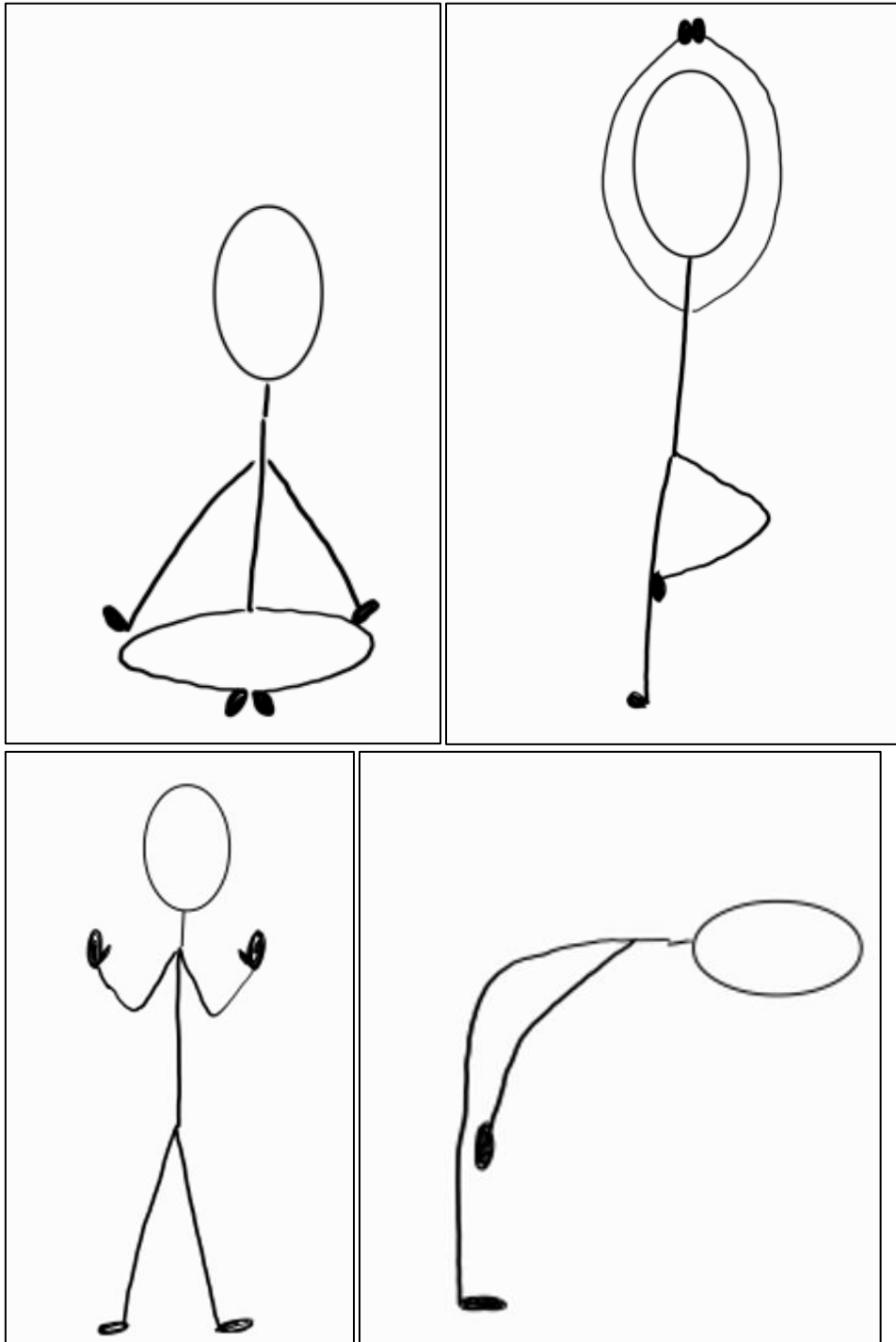
[M6] How to perform a secular ritual – Sentence cards

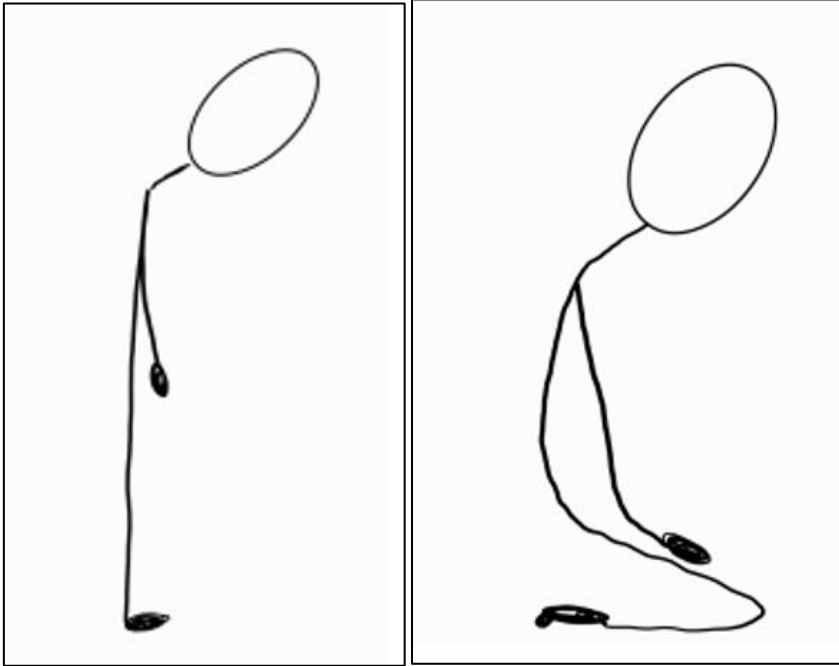
These text cards show possible interpretations of the postures. Place them with the matching posture cards (M7) and word cards (M5). If you want to you can supplement other interpretations or postures that are important to you.

I am sad because something tragic has happened.	I concentrate on my inner self.	I want to find peace
I let go of what is bothering me in my daily life.	I honor the courage or attitude of those who have been victimized.	I stand with the victims for the good.



[M7] How to perform a secular ritual – Postures





[M8] How to perform a secular ritual – Ritual objects



People light **candles** while praying or meditating.

Fig. 3: Orthodox Monastery Prayer Candles



Flowers and lights in remembrance after assassinations

Fig. 4: Peoples reaction to the attack on Bataclan, Paris in 2015





Some believers consider **images** of Saints while praying.
Fig.5: Iconostasis in an orthodox church



Monuments picture famous people to commemorate their works. Monuments can also symbolize ideas or common values

Fig. 6: German poets J.W.v. Goethe and F. Schiller in Weimar/Germany

Fig. 7: Statue of Liberty, New York





People sometimes wear special **clothes** or dark colours for a memorial event

Fig. 8: Men dressed up in a austrian traditional costumes.



Some people cover their heads and wear certain **clothes** during prayer.

Fig. 9: Jewish prayer shawl (tallit)

Fig. 10: Jewish head covering (kippah)





The prayer **mat** protects the praying person from impurity and indicates the direction of prayer.

Fig.11: Muslim prayer mat



Fig. 12: Mats and pillows used for a Yoga session



[M10] Where do you perform a secular ritual? – Sketch your favorite place

The place where I like the most is:



[M11] Where do you perform a secular ritual? – Pictures of places public or private



Fig.13



Fig.14



Fig. 15



Picture Credits

Fig. 1

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