

# Neurodiverse Spiritual Formation Exercises

## Introduction

Life is busy. Sometimes we get so caught up in running from one activity to another that we forget to pause. We forget to give our attention to God. Spiritual formation exercises are a great way to help slow us down and to fix our eyes on Jesus.







Over the next four weeks, to help us to focus on Jesus, you are invited to spend some time each day practicing a spiritual exercise. The exercises are all adapted from Adele Ahlberg Calhoun's book *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*.

There are a total of four exercises to practice with some options as to what you might like to do. The idea is to select one exercise and practice it every day for a week.

At the conclusion of each week, you are encouraged to reflect on your experiences practicing these exercises for the week with your Corps Officer or Discipleship Group Leader. There is a short reflection guide at the end of each week.

It is our prayer that these exercises will assist you in developing a deeper relationship with God.

## Summary of Spiritual Formation Exercises

Week 1	Celebration	
Week 2	Gratitude	
Week 3	Breath Prayer	 
Week 4	Praying for Others	 

## Resource Acknowledgement

Major Catherine Spiller developed and piloted this resource at the Mooroolbark Corps in Victoria.

## Resource Feedback

Please send your feedback on how you found this resource and any suggested improvements to [disabilityinclusion@salvationarmy.org.au](mailto:disabilityinclusion@salvationarmy.org.au)

## About this resource

The resource utilises the *Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)*, an alternative/augmentative communication system that can support people with various cognitive, physical and communication challenges. PECS allows people to communicate using pictures. Learn more about [PECS](#).

### Applying PECS Overview: The Six Phases of PECS

PECS consists of six phases and begins by teaching an individual to give a single picture of a desired item or action to a “communicative partner” who immediately honours the exchange as a request. The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together in sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to use modifiers, answer questions and comment.

#### Phase 1 – How to communicate:

Individuals learn to exchange single pictures for items or activities they really want.

#### Phase 2 – Distance and Persistence:

Still using single pictures, individuals learn to generalise this new skill by using it in different places, with different people and across distances. They are also taught to be more persistent communicators.

#### Phase 3 – Picture Discrimination:

Individuals learn to select from two or more pictures to ask for their favourite things. These are placed in a PECS Communication Book—a ringed binder with self-adhesive hook fastener strips where pictures are stored and easily removed for communication.

#### Phase 4 – Sentence Structure:

Individuals learn to construct simple sentences on a detachable Sentence Strip using an “I want” picture followed by a picture of the item being requested.

#### *Attributes & Language Expansion*

Individuals learn to expand their sentences by adding adjectives, verbs and prepositions.

#### Phase 5 – Responsive Requesting:

Individuals learn to use PECS to answer questions such as “What do you want?”

#### Phase 6 – Commenting:

Individuals are taught to comment in response to questions such as, “What do you see?”, “What do you hear?” and “What is it?” They learn to make up sentences starting with “I see”, “I hear”, “I feel”, “It is a”, etc.

### PECS Training

The most effective way to learn how to implement PECS is by attending PECS Training. The Pyramid Educational Consultants Australia provide [PECS Training](#) via online webinars and face-to-face workshops across Australia.



## Spiritual Exercise Week One – Celebration



what

### What is it?

This exercise is about delighting in God. God created joy and celebration. And one way can encounter God is when we celebrate. Celebrating God does not depend on everything being perfect in our lives. Despite the trouble in the world, we can choose how we respond to our circumstances. We can find hope, joy and celebration in God.



### What does the Bible say?

Psalm 145:1-7 (NIV)

I will exalt you, my God the King;  
 I will praise your name for ever and ever.  
 Every day I will praise you  
 and extol your name for ever and ever.  
 Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;  
 his greatness no one can fathom.  
 One generation commends your works to another;  
 they tell of your mighty acts.  
 They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty—  
 and I will meditate on your wonderful works.  
 They tell of the power of your awesome works—  
 and I will proclaim your great deeds.  
 They celebrate your abundant goodness  
 and joyfully sing of your righteousness.



what

### What do I do?

Choose an activity that brings you gladness or joy and celebrate that before God. Here are some suggestions:

1. Celebrate by having dance party in your lounge room to your favourite song.



choose



new activity



happy



celebration



Jesus



celebration



dance



party

2. Celebrate by making a collage or by drawing a picture of something that brings you joy.



3. Celebrate while you enjoy a piece of cake with a friend.



4. Celebrate by putting on your favourite worship song and sing it at the top of your lungs.



5. Think about a place where you connect with God. It might be taking a bush walk. Go to that place. Celebrate by thanking God for the joy that you feel when you are there.



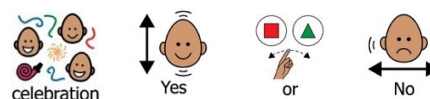
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## Weekly Reflection Guide

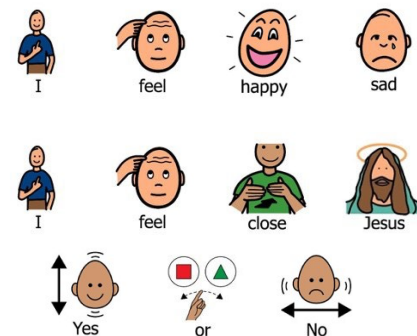
At the end of the week complete the reflection guide about the spiritual practice.



Have you practiced celebration before as a spiritual practice?



What did you find helpful about this practice?





## Spiritual Exercise Week Two - Gratitude



### What is it?

Everything we have in life is a gift from God. An attitude of gratitude can be our response. Being thankful is the glue that holds everything together. Being thankful is not about our lives being perfect. It is a discipline to choose to glue our days together, both good and bad, with gratitude.



### What does the Bible say?

Psalm 136: 1-3 (The Message)

Thank God! He deserves your thanks.

His love never quits.

Thank the God of all gods,

His love never quits.

Thank the Lord of all lords.

His love never quits.



### What do I do?

Choose an activity that will help you to focus on gratitude this week.

Here are some suggestions:



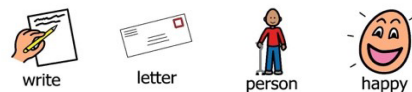
1. Practice showing gratitude by saying "thank-you" as much as you can this week.



2. Count your Blessings: before you go to bed spend a few moments thanking God for things in your day.



- Write a letter of thanks to someone who has touched your life in the past year, the past month, the past week.



- Draw a picture or create a scrapbook of people and things you are thankful for.  
Next to the photos or pictures you might like to write a prayer of thanks to God.



- Notice during the week when you are comparing yourself to others. Rather than thinking about what you don't have, turn the negative thought around by thanking God for what you do have.



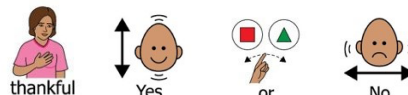
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## Weekly Reflection Guide

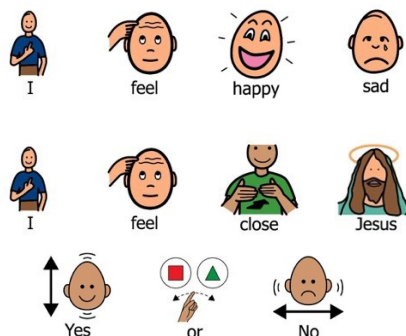
At the end of the week complete the reflection guide about the spiritual practice.



Have you practiced gratitude before as a spiritual practice?



What did you find helpful about this practice?





## Spiritual Exercise Week Three – Breath Prayer



### What is it?

Brother Lawrence once said: “Think often of God, by day, by night, in your business and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you; leave him not alone.” A breath prayer is one way that we can help to focus our thoughts throughout our day on God. These short prayers can be prayed in one breath.



### What does the Bible say?

1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18 (NLT)

Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.



### What do I do?

Choose a suggested Scripture or phrase to use as a breath prayer this week. When you are changing activity during your day use this as a reminder to pause for a few minutes and to prayer your breath prayer. The prayer is short so you can pray it multiple times over the day. This is a great reminder throughout your day that you are in the presence of God.



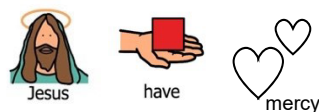
1. “Abba, I belong to you”



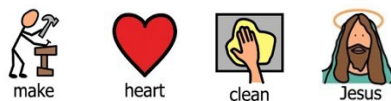
2. "Your Kingdom come; your will be done"



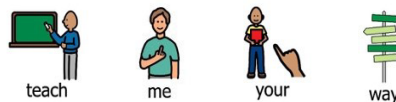
3. "Lord have mercy"



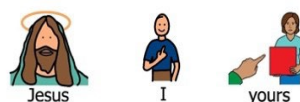
4. "Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit in me." Psalm 51:10



5. "Blessed are you, O Lord. Teach me your ways." Psalm 119:12



6. "My God, I am all yours"

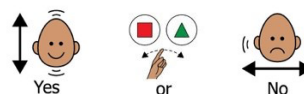
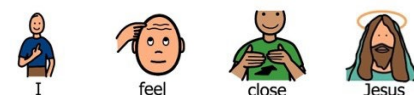
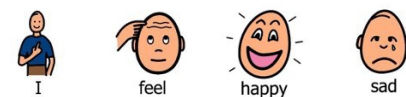
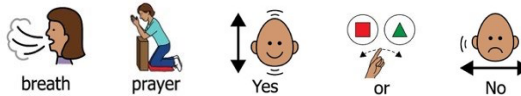


## Weekly Reflection Guide

At the end of the week complete the reflection guide about the spiritual practice.

Have you practiced breath prayer before as a spiritual practice?

What did you find helpful about this practice?





## Spiritual Exercise Week Four – Praying for Others



### What is it?

Praying for others can be called intercession. As we pray, we ask: “your Kingdom come, your will be done.” Praying for others and for things in our world means that we leave them with God. We then trust that God is faithful.



### What does the Bible say?

Philippians 4:6 (The Message)

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concern.

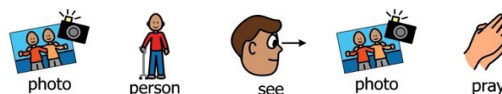


### What do I do?

Take the opportunity this week to prayer for others:



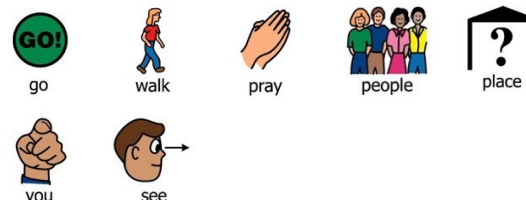
1. Find a photo of write the name of someone you would like to prayer for this week. Put it somewhere where you will see it as a reminder to you to pray.



2. Read the news or watch the news and bring the different issues before God in prayer.



3. Go for a walk. Ask God to draw your attention to things/people/places to pray for. Spend some time praying for the things that you see.



4. Make a prayer journal and paste in pictures or draw people, places and concerns that need prayer.



make



prayer



journal



draw



people



place



pray



form

## Weekly Reflection Guide

At the end of the week complete the reflection guide about the spiritual practice.

Have you practiced praying for others before as a spiritual practice?

What did you find helpful about this practice?



form



think



good



or



not good



pray



people



Yes



or



No



I



feel



happy



sad



I



feel



close



Jesus



Yes












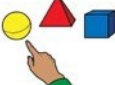































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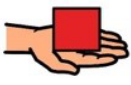
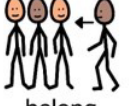












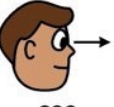






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## PECS Symbols

Symbols can be printed, cut, and laminated for use in a Small PECS Communication Book.

 celebration	 thankful	 breath	 prayer	 pray	 people
 what	 Bible	 form	 choose	 new activity	 Jesus
 think	 good	 or	 not good	 Yes	 No
 I	 feel	 happy	 sad	 close	
 dance	 party	 make	 collage	 draw	 cake
 friend	 sing	 worship	 song	 place	 thank
 thank you	 week	 count	 blessing	 before	 bed

 write	 letter	 person	 make	 scrapbook	 have
 belong	 you	 your	 kingdom	 come	 mercy
 heart	 clean	 teach	 me	 your	 way
 photo	 see	 watch	 go	 walk	 journal