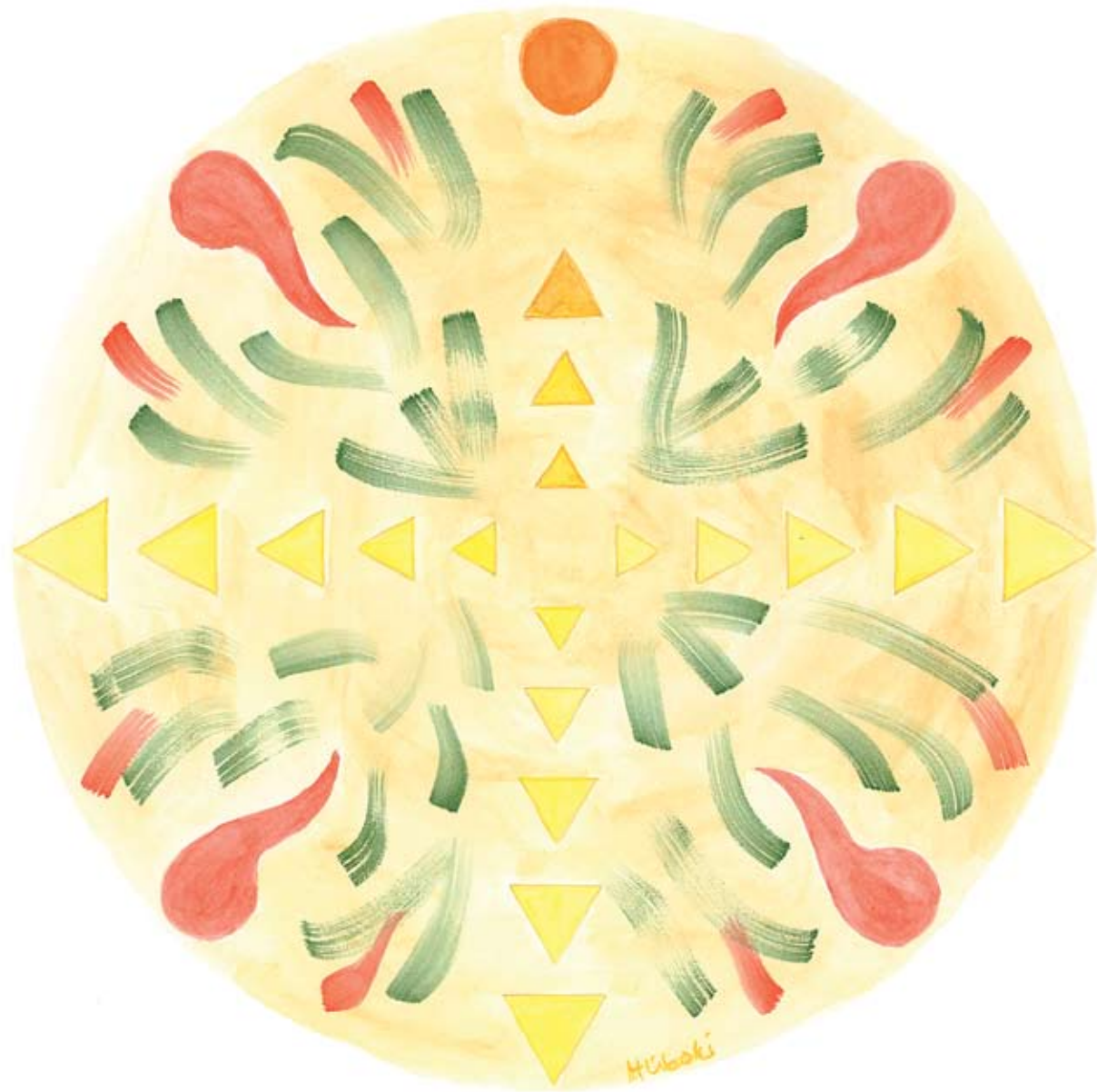


Awareness (Al-Khabir)



Fostering the Present Moment

Dearly Beloved Divine,

How do I accept the notion of continuous change and its resulting impermanence while maintaining that You are aware of all? I struggle sometimes with the paradoxical notion of being on Your path, ever straying from that path, and yet always being exactly where I need to be in Your presence. There is a tremendous freedom in knowing that wherever I am, it is the perfect place to be, and that in the next moment I will be in the next perfect place because I am walking with You.

I often get caught in limited thinking, a sense that the difficult condition I am in will never change or a hope that a wonderful state will last forever. Both of these desires are incomplete. In the realm of impermanence, life continues to unfold moment by moment. Being present to each moment—living, breathing, experiencing, and accepting one moment at a time—allows us to experience Your ever-abiding awareness.

Faith encourages me to experience and follow the alignment of Your power within and beyond myself, to be led by what resonates deeply inside me, and to become wholly who I am. Within me resides a still point that connects me to something greater than my body, which is the essence of my being, the divine that exists within. Your attentiveness to my faith, my walk, and my essence is forever. You will always welcome me and help me mature into wakefulness.

Dear Loved Ones...

How do you respond to change while knowing that the Divine is aware of all? When do you experience limited thinking, hoping that something will change quickly or last forever? How do you foster being present in each moment? Where do you find your still point, your connection to the Divine?

An Invitation into Contemplative Expression...

With pen and paper in hand, find a quiet place to sit comfortably, preferably in nature. Close your eyes and observe your breathing, noticing the inhalations and exhalations. As you inhale, count “one.” As you exhale, count “two.” Continue breathing normally for several minutes counting “one” and then “two,” “one” and then “two,” with the rhythm of your breath. Next, slowly open your eyes. Take in everything around you through your awareness in the present moment. Notice what you see, hear, sense, and feel. When you are ready, write a poem or journal entry that captures this awareness.

Insights About Awareness from the Abrahamic Faiths

Islam

O you who believe! Be careful of your duty to Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for the morrow, and be careful of your duty to Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do.
Qur'an, 59.18

Christianity

Watch therefore—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.
And what I say to you I say to all: Watch.
Mark 13:35–37

Judaism

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!
Psalms 139:23–24

Gratitude (Ash-Shakur)



Insights About Gratitude from the Abrahamic Faiths

Islam

That is of which Allah gives the good news to His servants, to those who believe and do good deeds. Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives; and whoever earns good, We give him more of good therein; surely Allah is Forgiving, Grateful.
Qur'an, 42.23

Christianity

Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Judaism

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.
Deuteronomy 6:4-7

An Antidote to “Not Enough”

I'm teaching several classes at a local university, and one focuses on helping young people understand how the choices they make in their everyday lives affect the world. Besides discussing globalization and consumerism, we are delving into the subject of media influence. Media messages influence how we view our self-worth, how we spend our resources, how we assess others, and how we interact with the world.

As I've listened to my students, I've realized anew that many of us have lost touch with how deeply our personal choices are influenced by the media. We all know that the advertising industry does its best to manipulate our decisions through enticing commercials. Do we really need pizza at 11:30 p.m.? Is this what our body actually needs, or was our dinner earlier in the evening enough to energize us? Without the commercial's allure, would we have even considered ordering a pizza? In a similar vein, do we really need all the gadgets, toys, clothes, and other material goods advertised? Are we really going to look that good or have that much fun, simply because we buy a product?

I have not owned a television or watched TV for several years. This single decision has greatly reduced my desire to purchase items and has helped me to better understand true need. I also have much more time for everything else in my life that is important to me.

Media outlets can profoundly affect our everyday opinions and decisions. Even the most reputable and well-respected programs contain subtle and effective forms of advertising. Public radio announcers encourage the audience to visit the sponsor's website. When I hear that a story is sponsored by an organization, foundation, or commercial enterprise, I find myself wondering what authority the sponsor had in crafting that story, if any. My personal preference for news is the BBC, British Broadcasting Company, because of its global focus. Even so, I attempt to compare what I hear with other reputable news outlets to ensure a balanced perspective.

Who and what we listen to informs what we believe and can shape our choices. The media perpetuates our fear of scarcity, and at its core, our fear that we do not measure up. Rather than accepting who we are, we are taught that we need to be something else or someone different. It erodes our