

## Reverence-Enhancing Activities

These activities benefit from being done with full attention (presence). Engage in some of these activities regularly to enhance your reverence.

**Time in Nature:** Some research suggests that even 2 hours a week in nature enhances wellbeing. Aristotle reportedly once said, “In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous.” Connection with nature is essential to our wellbeing. Nature triggers awe probably more than any other experience. When you are in nature, simply be in nature. Let the mind still. Pay careful attention to the senses. Take a “presence walk.” Note sights, sounds, smells, and the feeling of walking. See and hear everything as if for the first time. Let go of ideas of beautiful and ugly. Just notice what you experience without judgment. Note the vastness of your environment. Look at the sky. Look at the clouds above. When you see a rainbow, stop and savor it. There are many ways to savor Nature. You can go on a hike, sit in a park, watch sunsets and sunrises, or spend time at the ocean or by a lake.

**Music:** Listening to music can cultivate reverence and joy.

**Art:** Great art can inspire awe. Museums are a good option for viewing art. Art appreciation classes can also inspire joy and awe.

**Watch Inspiring performances:** This could be sports, dance, theater, rock concerts, or any other venue where people give awe-inspiring performances of beauty, grace, and skill.

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**Poetry and Literature:** Poetry in particular can convey the truth that cannot be conceptualized or spoken. Poetry often reveals the hidden truths and beauty that we take for granted.

**Take in the stars:** When you want to get a grounded perspective on your life, go out and look at the night sky. Take in the stars. Consider the vastness of the universe. Consider our tiny place in this vastness. Consider the infinitude of space in our expanding universe. Reflect on the fact that the light we see from some stars left that star hundreds to thousands of years ago.

**The Blue Marble:** Google “The Blue Marble.” As you consider this image of the earth from space, sense “the folly of human conceits,” as Carl Sagan once noted. Sense our oneness and our utter dependence upon the life system on our tiny planet.

**Spiritual reading:** Reading spiritual literature inspires ways of considering life and Reality that are infused with love and reverence.

**Look out for Awe and Inspiration:** Keep an eye out for awe-inspiring stories of love, courage, and virtue. The story of Nelson Mandela’s life is one such example. Let the lives of others who have overcome trauma and hardship inspire you. Let the examples of greatness all around you be a light to guide and support your healing and growth.

**Study Reality:** My first awakening to reverence was in the study of biology. Any field of study can provoke awe at the vastness, complexity, miracle, and mystery of this amazing universe.

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**Slow down and do one thing at a time:** The practice of careful attending is aided by slowing down and doing one thing at a time. Slowing down also allows for savoring this existence, moment by moment. Linger on the moment. Take breaks. Pause. Stop frequently and look around. Attend. Note that you are seeing, hearing, sensing. Note all that you are seeing, hearing, sensing. Let go of “rushedness.” Stop the tendency to tumble forward into the future. Literally slow down on the road. Ask yourself if it matters if you get home five minutes earlier. Welcome moments of waiting in lines as opportunities to really stop and appreciate the miracle of existence. In general, slow down as much as you can in everything you do.

**Travel:** Travel introduces novelty into our lives and expands our perspectives. It is another way to experience the awe-inspiring vastness of our planet and the life upon it.

**First time, last time:** In your attending practice, imagine each act as if you were doing it for both the first and last time. Brushing your teeth and washing your face in the morning. Getting dressed. Eating breakfast. Driving to work, and so on. Attend to experience with the fresh eyes of a child. This practice helps you to be present with this moment rather than lost in thought. It opens up perceptual experience, pulling down a bit the perceptual filters that block out the routine from awareness.

**Spend time unplugged:** We know that the more time you spend on a screen or watching TV, the more vulnerable you will be to depression. Screen time, including TV, degrades here-and-now engagement with this world and with others. We know that overall happiness in the US has fallen in large part due to teens and young adults trading social connection for screen time.

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