



CONCENTRATION
IN PRAYER

AWAITING
(ATFS)
IMAM MEHDI'S

REAPPEARANCE
IS
THE BEST WORSHIP

Allah, Allah in your Namaz...
Surely it is the pillar of your Religion.
Imam Ali (as)

**CONCENTRATION
IN
PRAYER**

Imam Sadiq (p) narrates that it is written in the Torah: "*O' Son of Man, if you EMPTY yourself, i.e. disengage yourself from all other pre-occupations to make yourself available for My worship, I will fill your heart with richness and I will not abandon you to what you seek and long for. And it will be upon Me to close the door of poverty upon you and to fill your heart with awe for Me. And if you don't empty yourself for My worship, I will fill your heart with preoccupation with the world. I will not close upon you the door of poverty and will abandon you to what you seek.*" (Kafi, Kitab: Iman wal-Kufr, Bab: Ibadah, Tr. 1)

IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

Imam Sadiq (p) was asked what was the best deed that brings human beings close to Allah and is also liked by Him?

He (p) replied: *After enlightenment of God's Essence, I do not know anything better than the Prayer. The most esteemed and favorite deed before Allah is Prayer. Prayer is the last dying will of all Prophets (as)...When a servant bows himself down into prostration and prolongs it, then Shaytan says: O, Woe upon Me! This servant has obeyed Allah, while I transgressed, and he has offered prostration that I refused.*

Imam Sadiq (p) said: *The Prayer will not be complete except for the one who has full purity and a mature completeness, and is away from temptation and deviation.* (Falah al-Sail P. 23, Chp 2, On the Description of The Prayer)

Imam Sajjad (p) as having said: *As regards the rights of the Prayer, you are to know that it is a visit to Allah and that in it you are standing before Him.* (Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, Book of The Prayer)

THE REALITY OF PRAYER

Saying your Prayer on time is a highly recommended act, and none other than Allah reminds us of this obligation: *And when he (the worshipper) knows that it is time of Prayer and he does not pray, he is indeed careless about Me.* (Hadith al-Qudsi)

In Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 3, P 90, Imam Sadiq (p) is reported to have said: *Whoever performed the obligatory Prayer at the beginning of their appointed times and observed their restrictions, the angels would raise them white and pure into heaven. The Prayer would say (to the performer): 'May Allah preserve you as you preserved me and entrusted me to a generous angel'. But whoever performed them after the appointed times with no excuse, and did not observe their restrictions, the angels would raise them, black and dark. The Prayer would shout at the performer: 'You have lost me, may Allah lose you, and may He not care for you as you did not care for me'.*

In explaining the true nature of Prayer, Imam al-Riza (p) comments: *The reason for Prayer is that it is the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Allah and negating all kinds of partners and plurality for Him. Prayer is standing before the Omnipotent, with humility, humbleness and*

confession (of sins), and begging forgiveness of the previous sins. Prayer is placing the face on dust five times a day as (a sign of) recognition and confession of His Greatness.

S. V. Mir Ahmad 'Ali, in his Commentary of the Quran, narrates seven values that have been kept concealed by Allah, the Most High:

1. According to some reports, The Night of Power (Qadr) is concealed in the year as a whole. This is because man may ever seek His grace every night as much as he possibly can. Similarly, one of these several nights in the months of Shaban and Ramazan are said be The Night of Grandeur.
2. The Greatest Name of Allah, with which one could have everything he desires, is concealed in several names, so that one may remember and recite all the Divine Names of the Lord.
3. The Prayer al-Wusta or the Middle One of the prescribed Daily Prayer is kept concealed in the Five Daily Prayer so that one may offer every one of them with eagerness to earn its special reward.
4. In one particular hour of Friday, every week, it is said, the prayer is heard without fail. However, the hour is not disclosed particularly so that one may engage in Prayer the whole day as much as he can.
5. God's pleasure is concealed in Prayer so that one may always worship the Lord.
6. The displeasure of the Lord is mentioned to be in sinning in general so that man may abstain from all kinds of sinning.

7. The most honorable with Allah is the most pious, so that one may acquire piety for himself and seek the friendship of the most honorable ones with the Lord; love the pious and the righteous one, hate impiety, and stay away from disobedience.

THE VALUE OF PRAYER

The Holy Prophet (p) used to be waiting for the time of the Prayer, his longing ever increasing, until at last he would say to Bilal: *'Relieve us, O' Bilal'*. (al-Mahajjat al-Bayda fi Tahdhib al-Ahya vol. 1, Page 377)

In advising Abu Dhar, Holy Prophet (p) says: *O' Abu Dhar! Allah, the Glorious is His Praise, has made the pleasure of my eye in (daily) Prayer, and has made me love Prayer like food is made lovable to the hungry and water to the thirsty. And surely, while the hungry one, when he eats is satiated, and the thirsty one, when he drinks he is quenched; I am not satiated from Prayer.*

O' Abu Dhar! No man puts his forehead (in prostration) in any place on earth but that place bears witness of that for him on The Day of Judgment. There is no place that a group of people visit but that it starts either sending salutation on them, or cursing them.

O' Abu Dhar! Do you know the reason behind revelation of the verse: 'Be patient, exhort others to be patient, establish Prayer, and fear Allah that you may be successful?' I said, 'I don't know - May my father and mother be sacrificed for you'. The Holy Prophet (p) said: For waiting for the next Prayer after every Prayer.

THE BLESSINGS OF PRAYER

The Holy Prophet (p): *Whoever performs 2 units of Prayer without paying attention to any worldly matter, Allah will forgive him his sins.* (Mustadrak al-Wasail, Chp 2, Tr. 13)

Considerable importance has been attached to Prayer, and no words can describe the amount of reward Allah grants to this individual, who is only fulfilling an obligation. The Aimmah (AS) have said:

1. Prayer is what angels love,
2. Prayer is the practice of the Prophets (AS),
3. Prayer is the light of understanding,
4. Prayer is what makes faith strong,
5. Prayer is what makes actions accepted,
6. Prayer increases sustenance,
7. Prayer keeps you away from illness,
8. Prayer is what Shaytan hates,
9. Prayer is a weapon to confront your enemies,
10. Prayer is what will assist you with the Angel of Death,
11. Prayer is the light in your grave,
12. Prayer is an answer to Munkar and Nakeer, and
13. Prayer is what will help you in the grave till The Judgment Day.

TREATING PRAYER LIGHTLY

According to Holy Prophet (p), *one who wastes his Prayer will be raised with Qarun and Haman, so that it will be right for Allah to put him in Hell together with the hypocrites.*

Imam Sadiq (p) said to Zurarah: *Don't be negligent in regard to your Prayers. Verily, The Holy Prophet (p) said on his deathbed; One who makes light of his Prayers does not belong to me, or the one who takes intoxicating drinks. And, by God! He will not reach me at The Pond (of Kawthar).* (Furu' al-Kafi, iii, 269)

Imam Kazim (p) said: *At the time of his death my father said to me, 'My son, the one who makes light of Prayer will not receive our intercession'.* (Furu' al-Kafi, iii, 270)

THE PRESENCE OF HEART IN PRAYER

Imam Sadiq (p) said: *Dear to me is the believer from among you who attends to God with his heart at the time of Prayer and does not pre-occupy his heart with any mundane matter. For, whenever a devotee turns with his heart to God, the Exalted, during Prayer, God heeds him and turns towards him the hearts of the faithful who regard him with affection, following God's love of him.* (Wasa'ilush-Shi'ah, iv, 686)

Imam's (p) said: *A Prayer, half of it may be accepted, or one-third, or a quarter, or one-fifth, or even one-tenth. Another Prayer may be folded like an old dress, and be thrown back at the face of its owner. No part of the Prayer is yours except that part which you perform with an attentive heart.* (Bihar, vol 81, P 260, Chp 16, Tr 59)

Imam Sadiq (p) warns us that: *When a servant stands to offer Prayer, Allah pays attention to him and does not shift His attention until the servant deviates from His remembrance for the third time. When this happens, Allah too turns His attention away from the worshipper.*

In his book Self Building, al-Amini relates: In as much as heart's presence is important and worthwhile, in the same proportion, its attainment is extremely difficult. No sooner a person starts his Prayer, Shaytan whispers in his heart pulling him from one side to another, and continuously engaging him into all sorts of thoughts and memories.

The heart engages itself into accounting, planning, reviewing past and future problems, solving academic problems, very often recollecting during Prayer, and topics, which were forgotten by him completely. And when he returns to himself, he discovers his Prayer is over.

STRATEGIES FOR CONCENTRATING IN PRAYER

Setting the Prayer Scene and Burning Incense

The place you say your Prayer should be special. Every item that can distract you from your Prayer should be taken care of. The room should be the one that you don't use regularly, and should be neat and clean, a comfortable temperature, and dark. Human skin is filled with thermal receptors that will constantly remind you of any discomfort to your body.

If the room you use to say your Prayer is slightly dark, the sense of darkness brings into us fear and awe, increasing one's concentration by further limiting eyesight. The lesser

the items you are able to see during Prayer, the better it is. The walls should be free from pictures and other objects that might attract your attention or stimulate a memory or thought.

You are also advised to select an isolated place free from noise and disturbance. You should not have direct access to a telephone, as its ring would only create thoughts in your mind as to the urgency of the call. Also, you should be away from any kind of smell from the kitchen to allow you to focus more on the task at hand, rather than salivating and thinking about food during Prayer. Finally, you should appreciate and respect your communication with Allah (SWT) by closing doors (not locking them) of the room you pray in, so as not to hear other family members conversing and kids screaming at each other.

You should burn incense to perfume your Prayer room. It is a greatly recommended act and carries significant weight in research and science. There is significant evidence on the practical applications of burning incense, as this is one major way to relax one's nerves and emotions, and through deep breathing and meditation, a high inner state of purity is attained. Aroma therapists are experts in this field and the oils they use to apply on the skin or burn to release fumes can significantly reduce stress in the brain, lower muscle activity, decrease the train of thoughts, thereby increasing concentration in Prayer.

Wudhu, as a Way of Increase your Attention: Performing wudhu slowly and contemplating on the words in the invocation recommended during every wash would help you a great deal to think about your life, death and the Creator whom you will be standing in front of soon.

There should be no interval of talking and discussing worldly matters between the performance of wudhu and your Prayer.

STRATEGY 1 UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATING ALLAH'S PRESENCE

It is always to your benefit if you were to ponder the Existence of Allāh (SWT) and His Power, Signs and Decisions related to this world and the next. Therefore, piety, perseverance and appreciation of the Lord and His Mightiness are effective ingredients in developing and maintaining your attention in Prayer.

Imam Sadiq (AS): *O' Servant of Allah! When you offer Prayer, pray like someone who bids farewell and fears that he will never return (i.e. pray in such a manner as if it were the last Prayer of your life). Then fix your gaze on the point of your prostration. If you know that there is someone on your left or right, you take more care in offering your Prayer; then know that you stand in front of Someone Who sees you and you don't see Him.* (Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, iv, 685)

STRATEGY 2 REMINDING YOURSELF OF ALLAH

One of the reasons why Adhan and Iqamah have been much emphasized before Prayer is to establish a strong link between the worshipper and his Creator.

Ayatullah Mutahhari quotes a tradition, which is referenced in the book *Light Within Me: The aim in Dhikr (remembrance) of Allah is that the heart be always aware of al-Haqq (The Most Truthful, a Name of Allah, for its practice banishes inattention.*

STRATEGY 3 A RELAXED AND ALERT STATE OF MIND

If you are tired and exhausted, it is better to rest and do some deep breathing and relaxation exercises before you make the commitment to stand in front of your Lord. And yes, it is preferred to pray a bit late but with attention and concentration.

Imam Ali (p) that he said: None of you should ever stand for Prayer in a lazy or drowsy state, nor should you let (random) thoughts pass through your mind (in the state of Prayer). For, in that state, you stand before your Glorious and Almighty Lord. Verily, the reward a devotee derives from Prayer is equal to the extent of it that he offers with an attentive heart. (al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, iv, 687)

In Fiqh al-Ridha it is stated: *...You are to show awe and signs of fear and hope, with caution and apprehension. Thus, you are to stand before Him, as an escapee and sinful slave stands at attention before his master; on the alert, with joined heels, erected trunk, not looking to right and left, reckoning as if you see Him. If you do not, He certainly does see you...* (Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, Chapter 1, Tradition 7)

Imam's (p) posture always allowed him to relax and to be comfortable.

STRATEGY 4 UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU RECITE

Imam Sadiq (AS): *One who offers two units of Prayer with the knowledge of what he says therein, he does not finish them without God forgiving him every sin that there is between him and God.* (Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, iv, 686)

STRATEGY 5 PROPER PRONUNCIATION

Arabic language is considered one of the sweetest of all the languages. So, reciting Prayer with proper Makharij (proper pronunciation) and Tajweed (following the rules of the Arabic Language) and learning the rules of reciting The Qur'an, would make your efforts in maintaining attention a lot easier.

STRATEGY 6 CONFIDENCE

To have firm intention and belief that whatsoever the case, you will never be mislead in Prayer, you need to be confident and accept with full heart that Shaytan's forces are weaker than what you have been endowed with by your loving Lord. Allah states in Quran: *Indeed! The cunning of Shaytan is feeble.* (20:125)

Self-confidence reflects your assessment of your own self-worth. It will play a large part in determining your level of attention and concentration in Prayer. Goal setting is probably the most effective way of building self-confidence.

STRATEGY 7 ALTERNATING RECITATIONS

Reciting different chapters of the Quran, different supplications and different forms of glorification in your Prayer. This is vital because your brain will not become accustomed and habituated to what is being recited daily and switch off attention to something else.

STRATEGY 8 CONTINUED CLEANLINESS

Cleanliness is a barrier preventing lustful ideas and disruptive thoughts from entering your mind during Prayer. Holy Prophet (p): *It is, therefore, a good idea to brush your teeth, perfume yourself, and observe some kind of uniform, preferably white, and stand in-front of Allah (SWT), fresh and clean. Cleanliness is a weapon of a believer and evokes inner enlightenment.*

STRATEGY 9 SEEKING FORGIVENESS AND ACCEPTING LIMITATIONS

STRATEGY 10 TRUST

Verily, We offered the trust to the Heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and were afraid thereof, and man undertook it. Verily he was (proved) unjust, ignorant. (33:72)

STRATEGY 11 STRESS MANAGEMENT

Depending on the stress agent, hormones like adrenaline, may surge. Your heartbeat and blood pressure will probably increase. Your blood sugar rises. Besides many health problems related to stress, from high blood pressure to

STRATEGY 17 GRIEF-STRICKEN, SUBMISSION AND SADNESS

No doubt, sadness brings to your soul many benefits, one of which is a revolution of the soul. It is the time when you are sad and grief-stricken, that you are able to fully organize and empower yourself to be most attentive in Prayer. It is widely accepted that a sad mind is more attuned towards an objective (Allah (SWT), in this case) and more capable of maintaining a high level of attention and concentration.

There shouldn't be any problem practicing this kind of emotion before Prayer, since you have to warn yourself of the following, *'You have no way of knowing that your past sins have been forgiven; no way of knowing that you will refrain from committing sins in the future; no way of knowing that your actions win the pleasure of Allah...'* (Imam Sadiq (p))

The Holy Prophet (p) puts this all clearly by saying to Abu Dhar: *O' Abu Dhar! Allah has not been worshipped with anything like that of length of grief.*

STRATEGY 18 PATIENCE, ACCEPTING FAULT, AND ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM TO ALLAH

Patience is vital when we have to perform obedient acts for the love of Allah (SWT), the Great. As He has said: *Indeed, you will not get what I possess, but being patient with those things, which you don't like (but you still do) in order to seek My pleasure. Patience on My obedience is easier for you than patience in the Fire of Hell.* (Hadith al-Qudsi)

Khumeini (ra) reports that Patience is of 3 kinds: *Patience at the time of Affliction; Patience in regard to Obedience; Patience in regard to Disobedience.*

One who bears patiently with affliction, resisting it with a fair consolation, Allah uplifts him 300 degrees, the elevation of one degree over another being like the distance between earth and heavens.

And one who is patient in regard to obedience, Allah uplifts him 600 degrees, the elevation of one degree over another being like the distance between the earth's depths and The Throne.

And one who is patient in regard to disobedience, Allah uplifts him 900 degrees, the elevation of one degree over another being like the distance between the earth's depths and the furthest frontiers of The Throne.

STRATEGY 19 FASTING

Khumeini (RA) reports a tradition that there was once a person who was in great misfortune. He had nothing to eat and neither was he invited for a meal on that strenuous day. He thus decided to visit one of the houses of Allah (mosque) and declare his poverty in front of his Lord. It is reported that he passed the whole night in hunger and his invocation was not answered. The next day Holy Prophet (p) was informed of the situation. He (p), at that very moment, was blessed with a revelation from the Almighty that: *Tell our guest that We were his Host last night and wanted to provide*

him with sumptuous food, but found no better food than hunger! (Adabus Salat)

Fasting also offers physiological rest to all the major organs in the body, including the brain, and there is a stabilizing effect on all the vital physiological, nervous and mental functions. Mental powers are thus improved.

STRATEGY 20 THE WORLD AND ITS PLEASURES

According to Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini, one of the greatest obstacle to attaining the state of perfect communion with Allah is unwavering attachment to worldly allurements namely, wealth and property, power and position.

There are various interpretations of the term World. What is essential here is to understand the Disapproved World. According to al-Majlisi (ra): All things that prevent men and women from obeying Allah and keep them away from His Love, and from seeking the hereafter, is defined as the Disapproved World.

Imam Ali (p): *The Approved World is the abode of truth for him who appreciates its truthfulness, a place of safety for him who understands it, a mine of treasures for him who collects provisions from it (for the next world), and a house of instructions for him who draws lessons from it. It is the shrine of worship for those who love Allah, the house of Prayer for His Angels, the place where the revelations of Allah descend, and the market place for those devoted to Him. Herein, they earn His Mercy and herein they acquire Paradise by way of profit.*

STRATEGY 21 ARRESTING THOUGHTS

When a thought comes, a command stop is used subconsciously to arrest and halt that thought and the person does not dwell on it. If this strategy is used on all incoming thoughts, then one will assume command and control over his incoming thoughts during Prayer.

Imam Baqir (p): When doubts in the Prayer become too frequent, do not give heed to them, and regard the Prayer to be correct. It is hoped that this state would leave you, as Shaytan causes it. (Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, P 359, Tr 8)

One technique is to draw a small dot on a piece of paper and concentrating on it very intensely. Any thought coming to your mind has to be thrown back and ignored. Focusing more on the dot, and freezing your mind will give rise to unwavering meditation. The more time you involve yourself with thinking about NOTHING, the more attentive and focused you become. This way your brain gets habituated to concentrating for longer periods of time without letting distracting thoughts interrupt your goals.

It is also more effective if you explore and list down all the stressful and negative thoughts that interfere with your Prayer. You should then categorize them in the following four sections - No interference, Interferes a little, Interferes moderately and Interferes a great deal. This way, you have a list, and all this needs to be done in writing. It should be understood as an accepted fact that none of these thoughts are productive during Prayer.

STRATEGY 22 REMEMBRANCE OF DEATH

Great Scholars have advised you to keep busy reminding yourself of death as a way to fear Allah and maintain vigilance in your daily Prayer and communication with Allah. The idea is to develop piety and fear in you and to convince your soul the importance of Prayer.

Imam Ali (p): *Frequent remembrance of death decreases one's desires.*

STRATEGY 23 FIXING YOUR GAZE

When one stands for Prayer, the less his eyes moves, the better.

Holy Prophet (p) said: *While a person is in the standing position during Prayer, he must look down fixing his gaze to the point where he places his forehead while in prostration; while in Ruku' (bending position) the gaze should be between his two feet; while in Qunoot (when he raises his hands reciting the invocation) he should fix the gaze on the palms of his hands, placing them in front of his face; during Sajdah (prostration) his eyes looking at his nose; and while in the final sitting position the gaze to be towards his armpits.*

STRATEGY 24 AVOIDING THE WHISPERINGS OF SHAYTAN, THE ACCURSED

Imam Sadiq (p): *A man came to Holy Prophet (p) and said: 'O Prophet of Allah, I complain to you concerning the whisperings from Shaytan that so troubles me during Prayer*

that I don't know how much of my prayer I have offered.' Holy Prophet (p) said to him: When you enter the state of Prayer, strike your left thigh with the forefinger of your right hand, then say: "In the Name of Allah and by Allah, I put my trust in God, I seek refuge in God, the All-hearing, the All-knowing from Shaytan, the Stoned One." You will exorcise him (Shaytan) and drive him away'.

STRATEGY 25 EXERCISES TO DEVELOP ATTENTION – MEDITATION

Meditation is one effective way to enhance alertness in Prayer. Contemplation whilst walking and performing our daily chores is another alternative.

Imam Sadiq (AS) has said: *If you are intelligent, then you should be of firm resolution and sincere intention before you set out for any place, for surely the self's nature is to overstep the bounds and encroach on the forbidden. You should reflect when you walk, and take note of the wonders of God's work wherever you go.*

Lower your gaze from whatever is inappropriate to faith, and remember Allah frequently. Those places where, and in connection with which, Allah is mentioned will testify to that before Allah on The Day of Judgment, and will ask forgiveness for those people so that Allah will let them enter the Garden.

MEDITATION

ONE - Focused Meditation Exercise

Sit with a pencil and paper. Allow your eyes to rest gently on the blank paper. Pay attention to what you are experiencing. When something comes to mind (a thought, an emotion, a memory, a sensation), follow this direction very carefully:

Write down just enough that, if you wanted to, you could remember that what you just experienced. Then let that experience go, and your eyes rest gently on the paper. This is important: Do not think about what you wrote. Do not analyze it. Do not resist it or fight it or try to change it. Do not connect it with anything. Simply accept it, note it, and let it go. To keep yourself from being drawn into the words on the paper, and the thoughts behind them, rotate the page around 15 degrees after writing, so that as you write more, the words appear on the page as a roughly circular series of jottings.

If a thought recurs, just put a check by it. If it keeps recurring, sit with it a while to make certain you have noted enough about this experience so that you could fully remember it if you wanted to. Then let it go and return to the open-ended focus on your present awareness.

Continue doing this for 10 minutes.

Another form of this exercise is as follows: An ancient technique is to use a candle as a visual focus. In that technique, you meditate with your eyes open. The candle is

your focus. Whatever you think is OK. Whatever you imagine or feel is OK. Just keep bringing your focus back to the candle.

Do not JUDGE your meditation. Whatever happens is okay. Keep practicing at least ten minutes a day, preferably in the early morning when there are very few distractions. After a while, when you sit down for these two exercises, nothing should come to your mind that can significantly distract you. Your mind will be as blank as ever. Exercise two should be much easier for you -- give it a try.

TWO - Blank Meditation Exercise

A blank form of Meditation equals a frozen mind (not even one thought should be entertained; one should play dead and should not think of anything - a blank mind throughout the exercise) and this act may be practiced for five to ten minutes each day, and within a few weeks, you may notice that your intuition and level of concentration on any given task will begin to increase.

THREE - Breathing Meditation Exercise

Quoted by Mutahhari (ra), Holy Prophet (p) said: True worship does not lie in engaging oneself constantly in supererogatory Prayer or in fasting frequently, but in contemplation of the creation and seeking to know the Creator through His works.

Indeed, if one were to lie down, eyes closed, all muscles relaxed, practicing very slow and deep breathing, and

contemplate on the Creation and workings of Allah this act would be considered not only an effective way to develop one's attention, but a form of worship. However, one should not entertain any other thought during this 5-10 minute exercise, except that which concerns the Creation of Allah.

During this process, you would learn to breathe slow and deep, provide enough oxygen to furnish and satisfy the brain and other major parts of your body.

The Stages of Breathing - Meditation Exercise

This method works best while you are lying on your back. Here is a brief description of the various phases:

1. Empty the lungs entirely by breathing out all the air in your lungs
2. Slowly lower the diaphragm allowing air into the lungs. The abdomen swells filling the bottom of the lungs with air.
3. Expand the ribs without straining.
4. Allow the lungs to completely fill by raising the collarbone.

Throughout this procedure, the air should enter in a continuous flow, without gasping. It is essential to breathe silently! It is of great importance to concentrate the mind entirely upon the action of breathing in the first few minutes before filling your mind with thoughts concerning the Creation of Allah.

Inhalation, like exhalation, must be silent, slow, continuous and easy. Do not blow yourself up like a balloon! Breathe

easily without straining. Remember that the ideal respiration is deep, slow, silent, and easy.

Lie down on a blanket or rug on the floor. Bend your knees and move your feet about eight inches apart, with your toes turned outward slightly. Make sure your back is straight. Place one hand on your abdomen and one hand on your chest. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose into your abdomen to push up your hand as much as feels comfortable. Your chest should move only a little and only with your abdomen.

Continue until your breathing becomes rhythmic and comfortable. Now, inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth, making a quiet, breezy sound as you gently breathe out. Your mouth, tongue and jaw will be relaxed. Take long, slow, deep breaths raising and lowering your abdomen. Hear the sound and feel the texture of breathing as you become more and more relaxed.

When you first begin this technique, do it for five minutes. When you become more comfortable with it, you may extend it up to 20 minutes. Upon ending a session, stay still for a few minutes and try to keep the entire body relaxed.

The purpose of this technique is to develop a good, relaxing breathing method and developing and maintaining attention during any given task, in particular the Five Daily Prayer.

Learning to Focus and Concentrate on Your Daily Prayer

CATEGORY ONE KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS

1. Have I understood and convinced myself of Allah's presence?
2. Am I aware that I am standing in front of Allah?
3. Do I understand what I recite?
4. Am I making the correct pronunciations in Arabic?
5. Am I aware and practicing the Rules for Reciting the Quran?
6. Have I understood the main reasons behind The Five Daily Prayer?
7. Do I have the motivation and energy to sustain my attention?
8. Am I confident enough that Allah is with me and that He is assisting me in my Prayer?
9. Have I refrained myself from heedless conversations?
10. Do I remember death often?
11. Do I fast often enough to increase my mental clarity?
12. Have I convinced myself that each Prayer I recite maybe my last Prayer?

If you have answered YES to 6 of the 12 questions above, you may proceed with the workout. However, even one negative answer means that you have to go back and invest more time and reflection in that particular aspect. Otherwise, the workout will not be very effective.

CATEGORY TWO SETTING THE SCENE OF PRAYER

1. Am I satisfied with the environment, the surroundings?
2. Am I wearing pure, clean, preferably white clothes?
3. Am I clean, pure and scented?
4. Am I confident enough in alternating recitations?
5. Am I in a relaxed and alert state of mind?
6. Have I been moderate in my food intake?
7. Am I grief-stricken and submissive?
8. Have I satisfied my hunger and thirst, as well as other needs?
9. Have I separated myself from the disapproved world and all its attractions?
10. Am I confident enough in arresting distracting thoughts in Prayer?
11. Have I connected my Ablution to the recitation of Adhan?
12. Have I connected my recitation of Adhan and Iqamah to the Takbir in Prayer?

If you have answered YES to 6 of the 12 questions above, you may proceed with the workout. However, even one negative answer means that you have to go back and invest more time and reflection in that particular aspect. Otherwise, the workout will not be very effective.

This exercise works effectively with FOUR units of Prayer, employed only once a day, AFTER evening (Isha) Prayer. Your intention for this four unit Prayer should be for any lapsed Prayer (Qaza).

In this workout, you will employ a Trigger Mechanism and pay the Debts you are obligated to. There are TWO types of debts: one, which has to be paid during your Prayer and the other, after you complete your Prayer. You have to work and complete the whole program as laid out.

Using a personal Trigger Mechanism will provide you a signal to get ready for a moment of concentration, while you complete the obligatory task assigned to you. The detail of this workout is described below and has to be employed for a full 30 days, without a break. Answering a complete YES to 6 out of the 12 items (in both categories) is also a requirement for the 30 days.

Your first Trigger Mechanism is the Takbir (Allahu Akbar) that you pronounce before you start your Prayer. This is the signal to your mind that you are now standing in front of your Lord, the Most Powerful in this Universe. You have to appreciate the fact that you are standing in front of Allah (SWT) and He is watching over you.

You promise to recite **5 SUBHANALLAH** each time you have a significant distraction and you entertain the distracting thought for a few seconds. This debt has to be repeated as many times you get distracted and whenever you can pay the debt. All debts are to be paid **ONLY** in the state of Ruku' (bending) or Sajdah (prostration).

For example, while reciting Surah al-Hamd, you get significantly distracted twice, then on your next Ruku', you will pay your debt of **10 SUBHANALLAH** first and then

continue with the recitation normally assigned for Ruku'. If the distracting thought happens to occur whilst in Tashahhud or Salaam, then you will pay your debt as soon as you complete your Prayer.

CAUTION

The above debt and **SUBHANALLAH** forms part of your prayer and you should have that intention before and during your practice prayer. The debt should be paid **ONLY** in the state of bending (Ruku') or prostration (Sajdah), the additions will otherwise make your Prayer **NULL** and **VOID**, even though your practice Prayer is lapsed and not a compulsory Prayer.

In any case, you have 4 Ruku' (bending) and 8 Sujood (prostration) in the four unit Prayer to pay the debts you owe. Do not concentrate on how many times you get significantly distracted as you will be aware of this fact when it happens, and you will pay your debt in your next Ruku' or Sajdah.

You will generalize this activity throughout your 4-unit Prayer. After you complete your act of worship, you will recall how many times you had to repeat the **5 SUBHANALLAH** and how many debts you had to pay. Now you promise to recite **5 ASTAGHFIRULLAHA RABBI WA ATUBU ILAYH** for every debt. If you had paid 10 debts during your Prayer that means you recite **50 ASTAGHFIRULLAHA RABBI WA ATUBU ILAYH** as soon as you complete your Prayer.

You will now record in your chart the number of times you had to pay the debt during your Prayer, 5 or 10, may be 3.

CATEGORY THREE SELF-ASSESSMENT

As soon as you complete your workout, the four units Prayer, you will rate the following in your personal chart - concentration, energy and motivation.

Concentration - your ability to focus and attend to Prayer.
Energy - strength or vigor; interest to perform Prayer
Motivation - an intervening process or an internal state that impels or drives you to Prayer. An energizer of behavior.

The number 10 is excellent and the best score you can give to yourself, zero is the least, the number 5 is average.

FIGURE FIVE

	Rate your level of CONCENTRATION during the Prayer	
1	5	10
	Rate your level of ENERGY during the Prayer	
1	5	10
	Rate your level of MOTIVATION during the Prayer	
1	5	10

Write down all the distracting thoughts that significantly affected you and how many times they recurred: How many times you were significantly deviated in your Prayer?

CATEGORY FOUR EXERCISES AND MENTAL WORKOUT BEFORE SLEEPING AT NIGHT 30 DAYS - 15 MINUTES EACH NIGHT

Spend the first 3-5 minutes contemplating on the distracting thoughts that significantly distracted you from achieving a high level of concentration in your Prayer. Work them through and convince yourself that none of those thoughts play an important role in Prayer and neither are the thoughts solvable during Prayer.

Spend the next 3-5 minutes contemplating on the creation of Allah (SWT) and make sure you are not distracted by any thought - you can spend this time reading The Qur'an, recite invocations, or read a book, whatever suits you. You should not exceed 5 minutes.

Spend the last 3-5 minutes doing a meditation exercise. You can employ any other similar technique you are aware of. However, make sure it has a deep breathing element in it.

you may want to review your chart at this time.