

DRINKING WATER MINDFULLY

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OBJECTIVE //

To encourage us to be mindful of the value and wonders of water, a unique fluid without which life could not exist.

TIME // 15 minutes

GROUP SIZE //

The number of participants should be small enough to maintain a meditative atmosphere. Some groups may need to be divided and led in separate sessions.

MATERIALS //

- One clear, clean glass pitcher of cold water – enough for each participant
- One clear, clean glass for each participant
- Water, plants, flowers, a diving mask, a toothbrush, soap or any other water-related item, to set up as a focal point.

ACTIVITY GUIDE

Ideally, carry this out in a quiet space conducive to community and prayerfulness.

1. LEADER: The Anishinabe people think of rivers, especially underground rivers, as the veins of Mother Earth carrying her lifeblood to all her children. Many of their elders are deeply concerned that her lifeblood is being polluted, contaminated and depleted willfully, thoughtlessly, and extensively by people of our times. We need to develop a new consciousness about water. We need to understand that it is the lifeblood and the birthright of every human being (Priscilla Solomon, Development and Peace *Sacred Waters*).

We will now share a meditation on water. I ask each of you to silently reflect on the words you hear and the water you will hold.

2. When the group is quiet, someone pours water into each of the glasses and passes them around to the group. A full glass is not necessary.

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3. LEADER: Take a sip of the water in your glass and focus on how it feels as it enters your mouth and as you swallow. (*Pause*)

The hydrogen that makes up your water existed at the beginning of the universe. It is older than the Earth itself. Joined by oxygen, water now covers three-quarters of our planet. It is frozen in polar icecaps, fills ocean and lake basins, and flows in rivers and streams. This makes our home distinct from all other bodies in our solar system. Water is our planet's lifeblood.

4. LEADER: Take another sip and reflect on our blue planet. (*Pause*)

The first living cell, Earth's first life, swam in primordial waters just as each of us swam in the waters of our mothers' wombs. The salty taste of our blood reminds us of the saline seas. The mass of our bodies, like the Earth, is three-quarters water. Just as water travels the Earth, the water in our bodies moves from cell to cell, carrying necessary nutrients and removing waste. One litre of water a day escapes through our breath and sweat, and is released into the atmosphere.

5. LEADER: Take another sip and reflect on the water in your body. (*Pause*)

Water in the atmosphere collects in floating masses that decorate our skies. These clouds constantly change and eventually drop rain onto the Earth. Some of the water is absorbed by roots, lifted to leaves and released again to continue the cycle. Some flows on the surface of the land while some sinks deep into the ground. Water is always in motion, passing through living things, traveling throughout the planet.

6. LEADER: Take another sip and reflect on the miracle of water. (*Pause*)

Water is essential to life. Imagine yourself in the following scenario. You wake up on a bright sunny morning and go into the bathroom to find the toilet bowl is dry. You turn on the tap but nothing happens. No water. You check every tap, indoors and out. You look in the fridge. Nothing. You see the morning paper on the kitchen table and quickly read the headline news. There has been a major accident in your town. A state of emergency has been declared. Roads are closed. At the bottom of the page is a map showing the locations of emergency water stations. Your heart sinks as you realize you and your family will have to walk over two kilometres for water.

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Water has suddenly become a precious commodity. You can no longer take it for granted. (*Leave a brief pause between questions.*):

- How will your life be affected?
- Who will collect the water?
- How often will you have to go for water?
- What will you no longer be able to do?

7. LEADER: Take another sip and reflect on how you have taken water for granted. (*Pause*)

For the majority of the people on this planet, having enough water to survive is a constant worry. Women and children are responsible for getting the household water. This can take as much as six hours a day — leaving little time for learning, earning money or caring for one's family. As well, the weight of water can cause serious health problems.

8. LEADER: Imagine you have just walked six hours barefoot in the hot sun to fetch the water in your glass and take another sip. (*Pause*)

Water brings life, but it can also bring death through diseases like typhoid, cholera and dysentery. As you drink this water, be assured it is cleaner than the water available to our sisters and brothers in the majority world. In 2017 there were more than 144 drinking water advisories in 95 First Nations communities in Canada. Their water is contaminated and they must boil it before using it and/or import expensive bottled water to their communities.¹

9. LEADER: Take a sip and be grateful for clean water. (*Pause*)

Water gives many gifts. We are relaxed and comforted by a warm bath, refreshed by a summer swim and invigorated by an ocean breeze. Our skates and skis, toboggans and snowboards travel over water transformed by cold. Our souls are fed by the magnificence of a waterfall, the serenity of a lakeside sunset, the companionship of a gurgling stream.

¹Lui, Emma. The Council of Canadians, April 2017. How Students and Teachers can take action for clean water in First Nations. Retrieved from <https://canadians.org/blog/how-students-and-teachers-can-take-action-clean-water-first-nations>

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10. LEADER: Take another sip and reflect on the beauty of water. *(Pause)*

We call water 'holy'. It is sacred to indigenous peoples, to Christians, Jews and Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus — to peoples of all faiths. Creation myths begin with water. Water gives life. In Baptism, water is poured on our heads and we are reborn of water and the spirit.

Water in the veins of the Earth, water in the veins of our bodies.

Water that supported the feet of Jesus as He walked on the sea.

Without water there is no life.

11. LEADER: Take a sip and reflect on the sacredness of water. *(Pause)*

The last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, ends with these words:

"And let everyone who is thirsty come.
Let anyone who wishes
take the water of life as a gift."

Revelation 22:17

12. LEADER: As you finish your glass, be mindful of all that we have reflected on. Think of those who have no access to water.

"Each of us has a role to play in shaping the creation story of the future."ⁱⁱ
What will our individual and collective role be in shaping a future where all may share the waters of life as a gift?

13. You may wish to end with a prayer, a song, or a moment of silence, followed by a time for participants to express their thoughts or feelings on the meditation.

- Written by Marika Ince, Development and Peace member, Burlington.

² Shiva, Vandana (2002) *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution and Profit*. Boston: South End Press, p. 139.