



Everyday Gassho

Introduction

The act of *Gassho* is done by putting the palms of one's hands together in front of the heart and bowing the head. Gassho may be done sitting or standing; with eyes closed or open; and with or without *ojuzu* beads.

As part of the 21-Day Program, a Harmony Gassho and Gratitude Gassho are done daily in front of your home altar or SPOT special place of tranquility. (See SPOT information sheet)

The Harmony Gassho is done in the morning and sets your motivation for the day. Decide when doing it will best fit into the flow of your usual morning routine. If helpful, post a "Gassho" reminder sign in a visible place (e.g. in the kitchen or on the inside of the front door). One suggestion is to do your morning Harmony Gassho just before breakfast. As an aid to making Gassho a habit, you can mentally make eating breakfast contingent upon first doing Gassho; i.e., "no Gassho, no meal."

Keep a monthly calendar handy and immediately after doing your morning Harmony Gassho, put a diagonal slash mark from right to left through that day's date.

The Gratitude Gassho is done in the evening and recaps your day. It is suggested that you do it just before eating dinner-- again mentally making eating contingent upon first doing Gassho. On days you eat out, you can do your Gratitude Gassho just before going to bed. Perhaps a "Gassho" reminder sign near your bed would be helpful.

Immediately after doing your Gratitude Gassho, put a diagonal slash mark from left to right through that day's date on your monthly calendar.

Harmony Gassho

The verbal recitation accompanying your morning Gassho can be the word "harmony." In lieu of any other strong considerations, it is suggested you use the recitation "harmony" during your initial 21-Day Program. Other recitations can be introduced later. Your recitation can be spoken with any degree of loudness or simply be said to yourself.

The depth or power of the recitation is facilitated through your breath. After a moderately deep (but not overly long) inhalation through your nose, make your recitation as you exhale through your mouth. The sound of the last syllable should be extended until the end of the exhalation. As an approximate guideline, your inhalation can be about 3-5 seconds long, whereas your exhalation should be about 9-15 seconds long.

Keep your body and head erect as you inhale. As the last syllable of the recitation is being extended, slowly bow your head, keeping your hands and body still. At the end of the recitation most people like to stay in the finishing position for a while (perhaps for 1-3 normal breaths) so that one doesn't get the feeling of rushing off immediately after the recitation.

The preceding is a description of a standard or basic procedure; other variations can be developed later after the initial 21-day period. Other than doing the one recitation, there is no recommended number of additional recitations you should do. More is not necessarily better but if desired, you can do more than one (although it probably is not a good idea to do more than three at a given time).

The underlying sentiment of the Harmony Gassho is that you will try your best to have a spirit of cooperation with others, and always be as calm and patient as possible. The seed of this sentiment will gradually blossom into an understanding that can be called wisdom.

Gratitude Gassho

Use the same procedure as described for the Harmony Gassho except that your recitation is the word "gratitude."

The underlying sentiment accompanying the Gratitude Gassho is an awareness of interdependency-- that one is supported by nature, by other people, by everything. There is a feeling of "counting one's blessings," of "grace," or of "how grateful I am." The seed of this sentiment will naturally blossom and be expressed in compassionate ways.

Everyday Gassho's

Putting your hands together in Gassho can be broadened to include different creative hand gestures that can be related to a variety of themes or everyday activities. Examples of suggested Gassho's to add to one's "Spiritual Tool Bag" are a regular feature in our newsletter Oneness. See "YES" (Your Everyday Spirituality) on the newsletter's back cover. Individuals are encouraged to discover/create their own Gassho's.

Important Considerations

You may feel, "I know about Gassho; what's the big deal about doing Gassho?" You may even think that Gassho is something simplistic and perhaps narrow in scope and effect. However, the Harmony and Gratitude Gassho as previously described are only a beginning. They are two handy "tools" for your "spiritual tool bag." There are many more "tools" or different kinds of Gassho that can be added to your spiritual tool bag. Your spiritual path will become deeper and richer.

Many people need to be liberated from the idea of spiritual practice as only being practices authorized and approved by some authority. There is definitely a place for the time-tested traditional rituals handed down through a particular lineage. These rituals need not be rejected. It is not a matter of advocating that something be taken away but rather of adding something. Modern spirituality requires flexibility of attitude in order to internalize and make the ancient truths relevant to an individual. Spirituality is individual and personal. Individual creativity in spiritual practice does not have to be viewed as an egotistic act that threatens established ways of doing things. Creative expression and application of the established ways should be encouraged. Growth means being open

to change, both for individuals and institutions. If a particular traditional way works for someone and nothing else is desired, this is fine too. It is not necessarily an either-or situation when considering an individual's spiritual path. Do what works for oneself and don't judge others who are doing things in other ways. Being non-judgmental is of great value in living one's life with inner peace and in harmony with others.

Diversity in spiritual paths is okay. One may start out in a narrow, sectarian tradition-- and by following this path in depth, one's spirituality may mature and come to be expressed in very open liberal ways. Conversely, one may start out exploring many different individualized spiritual paths-- and as a result, come to settle on one particular way as the best for oneself. All paths have value because what is of value depends on time, place, and person. The word value is being used here not with regard to religious truth or teachings themselves but rather in how a person accesses, applies, or expresses such truth or teachings.

The point of this discussion is that it helps to examine the assumptions one has about the nature of spirituality and spiritual practice. Such examination is especially helpful when one is not making "progress" spiritually. When spiritual growth does take place, one's assumptions about the whole process often undergo change too. In conclusion, whatever spiritual path you are on, keep your "beginner's mind." Don't get overly attached to your answers and conclusions. At the same time, remember that no matter what happens, nothing is wasted. All your experiences have their place in your spiritual journey. Enjoy the journey itself; the journey is not just a means to get to a destination. Don't ever think you have arrived; keep going, keep going...

Just be sincere, and don't forget to laugh.