

**Spiritual Activity Workshop:**  
**Children and Youth/Adults Learning Together**  
**Printable resources are included**

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**Meditation: Asking Inner Questions**

General Introduction

This Material is designed for workshops/conferences, children's classes, families, and individual learning.

Unless we can make deep spiritual concepts understandable, we risk losing future generations to the distorted thinking of a deteriorating materialistic world.. Each spiritual concept explored includes activities specifically designed for groups of youth and adults and activities designed for children.

It is a method of group learning, based on the model of the oneness of humanity. Everyone is a student, and everyone is a teacher. Our mission is not to provide exhaustive research and explanation of concepts for scholars. Our goal is to enable everyone to gain a basic knowledge of concepts indispensable for spiritual survival. It is our hope that parents and teachers gathered in living rooms, backyards; in cities and villages, will use these spiritual concepts to improve the lives of children, youth and adults.

The writers, as members of the Baha'i Faith, are guided by its teachings and principles. We have used language that allows the concepts to be accessible to the wider community. Reference is made to the sources of authority of the Bahá'í Faith. We are referring to the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice.

This material reflects the personal interpretations of the authors and should not be taken as authoritative.

Instructions

Materials listed in the Resource section of each activity, including images, should be carefully prepared. Images can be enlarged and are essential for presentation. If some of the materials listed are not available, facilitators may modify and adapt material to best meet the unique needs of different groups.

Activities for youth/adults may be completed in approximately one hour.

Activities for children are approximately twenty minutes to an hour in length.

## **Adult Activity**

Document with text to be read aloud by participants. Facilitator may choose to use a projector.

Materials in Resource Section

**Facilitator says:** Here is how the dictionary defines meditation:

1. The act of meditating
2. Continued or extended thought; reflection; contemplation
3. Devout religious contemplation or spiritual introspection

When we hear someone talk about meditation they are usually describing a practice to relax and clear the mind.

However this practice is really a prelude to a much deeper form of contemplation or spiritual introspection. Let's hear 'Abdu'l-Bahá's very different definition of meditation:

**Facilitator asks:** participant to read this quotation in a loud voice:

**“It is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed.”**

-'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Reference Library: *Paris Talks*: 54

**Facilitator repeats quotation**

**Facilitator says:** Not only do the Bahá'í Writings redefine meditation, they also redefine what we call the heart. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, **“the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed”**. But where does the light break forth -- where do we get our answers? The answers are **“...imprinted upon the tablet of thy heart”**. Bahá'u'lláh refers to the heart as **“the wellspring of divine treasures...”**

Bahá'í Reference Library: *The Seven Valleys, Call of the Divine Beloved*: 19

When we ask an inner question -- engage in meditation, the knowledge we need is revealed in our heart - “the wellspring of divine treasures”.

After we hear the next quotation, we will talk about what it means.

**Facilitator asks:** participant to read this quotation in a loud voice:

**...The Holy Spirit will inspire that soul with evidences, proofs and facts and the lights will shine upon it from the Kingdom of God. “Verily, it is the shining morning and the rosy dawn which will impart unto thee the lights, reveal the**

**mysteries and make thee competent in science, and through it the pictures of the Supreme World will be printed in thy heart and the facts of the Kingdom of God will shine before thee.”**

*-Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Abbas, p. 707*

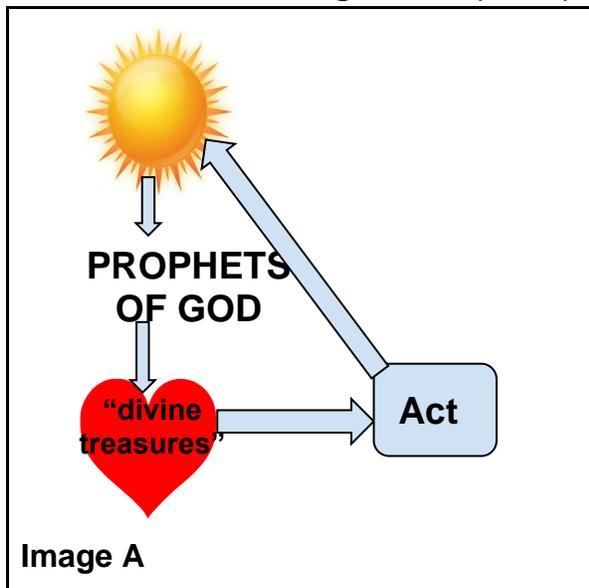
**Facilitator says:** Now turn to someone next to you. Reread this quotation and discuss what you think it means. As you talk, discuss how this knowledge changes our own sense of self-worth and the worth of all humanity.

**Allow 4 minutes**

**Facilitator says:** Now let’s share our insights with the whole group

**Allow up to 4 minutes to share**

**Facilitator shares Image A with participants:**



**Facilitator says:** Here is a simplified diagram of what happens when we ask an inner question. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes that “A ray of light’ from the “universal divine Intellect” (the realm of the Prophets of God) falls upon the mirrors of hearts of the righteous...”

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá’í Reference Library: *Some Answered Questions*: 58

For full quotation see Appendix

In this image, a person is asking a question as a servant of God. They receive knowledge that they need at this moment in time. They are guided to use this knowledge to generate appropriate acts of service for this time and for this particular

situation. We send a message, through our acts of service, back to God that we value His guidance and we want more of it! With every act of service we do for others, we build up our capacity for **“increasingly more complex acts of service.”**

- Letter from the Universal House of Justice - December 27, 2005

God has **always** placed material and spiritual knowledge in our hearts. We are meant to use this knowledge to improve our own personal lives and the life of humanity. This transference of knowledge does not depend on what religion we are a member of and which Prophet of God that we follow. It also does not depend on whether we believe in God or not. God believes in us. God believes in the oneness of mankind, even when we don't.

God has placed in our hearts all the knowledge we will ever need throughout our journey in the worlds of God.

Bahá'u'lláh tells us what God has placed in our heart:

**Facilitator asks:** participant to read the following in a loud voice:

**“O Ye Sons of Spirit!**

**Ye are My treasury, for in you I have treasured the pearls of My mysteries and the gems of My knowledge...”**

- Bahá'í Reference Library: *The Hidden Words*: Part One: From the Arabic: 69

**Facilitator asks:** participant to read the following in a loud voice:

**“O Son Of Dust! All that is in heaven and earth I have ordained for thee, except the human heart, which I have made the habitation of My beauty and glory...”** -

Bahá'í Reference Library: *The Hidden Words*: Part One: From the Persian: 27

This does not mean that we are all-knowing. God has placed knowledge in our hearts, the “wellspring of divine treasures”. We will always make mistakes -- in this world and in the next. This self-reflection will lead us to humility and not arrogance.

**Facilitator says:** Now let's turn to someone next to us and discuss how this knowledge changes our own sense of self-worth and the worth of all humanity.

**Allow 4 minutes**

**Facilitator says:** Now let's share our insights with the whole group

**Allow up to 4 minutes to share**

**Facilitator says:** Why is it then that two people can ask the same exact inner question when they meditate, they receive very different answers? The guidance which God gives us is what we, as individuals, need at this moment. This guidance may be meant only for us. We are all unique and our individual circumstances are unique. The answer one person needs may not be what another person needs. What works for one person may not work for someone else. God knows this.

If we are asking an inner question with the identity of a servant of God, we will get a different answer than asking the same question as a servant of things. Bahá'u'lláh tells us that our true identity is a “servant of God”:

**“I now assure thee, O servant of God...”**

*Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Abbas p. 706*

For full quotation see Appendix

**Facilitator asks: participant** to read the following in a loud voice:

**Think of the heart as a mirror that can reflect things of the earth or things of heaven. “The meditative capacity is, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says, like a mirror and will reflect whatever is put before it, either earthly concerns or spiritual matters.”**

-Wendi Momen, *Meditation*, p.9

**Facilitator says:** We are placed in a world which presents the individual with material and spiritual challenges which can cause great stress. We need to physically and mentally relax before we proceed to ask our inner questions.

This is the first stage of meditation.

There are many ways of relaxing ourselves in preparing to engage in meditation. One traditional method of calming and focusing the mind, used with adults and children is called “**Crow’s Breath**”. It mimics how a crow breathes through its beak.

We are going to do the “crow’s breath” exercise to quiet the inner noise:

**Facilitator shares: Image B** with participants:

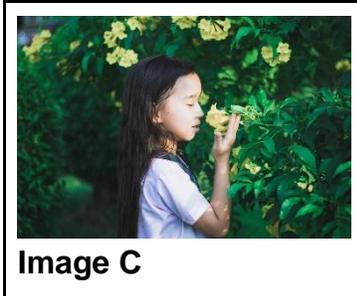


**Inner noise**

**Image B**

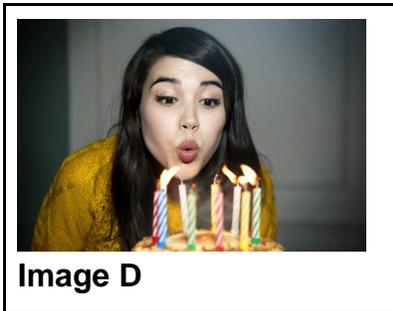
**Facilitator says:** This shows how our minds can get cluttered, noisy and distracted. This is inner noise.

**Facilitator shares: Image C** with participants



**Facilitator says:**  
Imagine holding a flower up to your nose and forcefully inhaling.

**Facilitator share: Image D** with participants



**Facilitator says:** Now blow out the candles by forcefully exhaling through your mouth.

Now let's repeat this Crow's Breath exercise five times.

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator asks:** Do you feel more relaxed?

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator says:** First thing in the morning -- do this:

**Say:** I am looking at the day ahead of me.

.... I ask myself, "What are my challenges today?"

Or just before going to sleep we can say: "what will my challenges be tomorrow?" It takes practice. No skill is learned immediately. Over time we can train ourselves to be receptive to the guidance that is imprinted in our hearts. We can also ask to receive the

guidance at a specific time in the day when we feel we are most receptive to hear with our inner ear.

After we have thought about what the challenges of the day will be, then ask ourselves another inner question: “What is the positive virtue that I will need today to meet these challenges?”

We also need to ask: “What negative quality do I need to let go?”

**Facilitator shares: Image E** with participants



**Facilitator says:** For example: A mistake was made yesterday and I need to meet with my boss. I am filled with fear and I need to let it go. I know that today I will need the positive quality of courage.

**Facilitator says:** Together, let’s all inhale courage and exhale fear.

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator asks: participant** to read this in a loud voice:

**Courage is the antidote to fear. Courage is the reality. Inhale courage and exhale fear. Fear is just an inner signal urging us to embrace courage or other spiritual qualities.**

**Facilitator shares image F** with participants:



**Facilitator says:** Here is another example: I am waiting for someone and they are late. I know that I need the spiritual quality of patience.

Like the crow, I inhale patience and exhale impatience.  
Together let's all inhale patience and exhale impatience.

### **Participants respond**

**Facilitator asks:** **participant** to read this in a loud voice:

**Patience is the antidote to impatience. Patience increases Patience. Impatience increases impatience**

**Facilitator says:** Take two minutes to quietly look within and think about a "challenge/need" that you will face today. Think about what spiritual quality you will need as an antidote to meet this challenge/need.

### **Allow two minutes**

\* **Facilitator:** if time allows, invite participants to write down their specific needs/challenges and spiritual antidotes. Some may choose to share their experiences with the whole group.

**Facilitator's closing remarks:** The concerns and problems of today may not be those of yesterday or tomorrow. Be mindful of your specific needs each day. Don't assume that the same spiritual quality we used yesterday is the correct choice for today. We have changed because of the spiritual progress we have made yesterday. The barriers come from not facing our problems and/or blindly imitating how we handled yesterday's concerns.

In summary, meditation is: focusing our hearts towards God: Asking inner clear questions and patiently waiting for answers from God. It is also very important to calm the mind to get us ready to ask our inner questions. Then following through on the guidance we receive from God.

Remember that God's Divine Voice is infallible, but our human ears are fallible. Whatever we think about the Word of God, is always going to be our personal opinion based on our own maturity at a particular moment in our lives.

**To the Facilitator and all participants:**

**Facilitator says: The physical world has been created by God to teach us deep spiritual concepts. It is the hope of the creators of this activity that we all make the transition as quickly as possible, from being student participants, to being teachers, sharing these ideas with others. Spiritual concepts are the building blocks for an ever-progressing world civilization.**

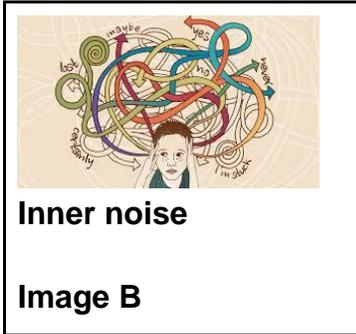
**Please feel free to adapt this material to best meet the unique needs of different groups.**

## Children’s Activity

Document with text to be read aloud by participants. Facilitator may choose to use a projector.

Materials in Resource Section

Facilitator shares **Image B** with participants:



**Facilitator says:** Sometimes we just can’t seem to think because there is so much going on in our heads... All that stuff is called inner noise. That noise confuses us and distracts us. It stops us from focusing on what we need to get done right now.

Facilitator shares **Image G** with participants:



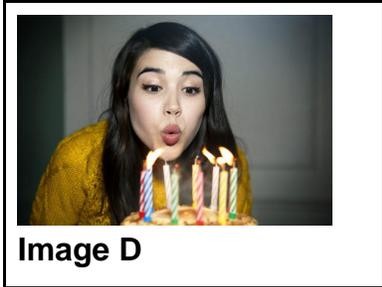
**Facilitator says:** We are going to do the “crow’s breath” exercise . We want to quiet the inner noise in our heads so we can focus:

Facilitator shares **Image C** with participants:



**Facilitator says:** Imagine holding a flower up to your nose and smelling deeply.”

Facilitator shares **Image D** with participants:



**Image D**

**Facilitator says:** Now blow out the candles by blowing out hard through your mouth. Now we are going to repeat this five times in a row. Breathe in the flowers.....Blow out the candles

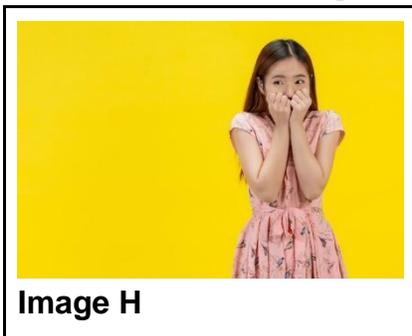
**Participants respond**

**Facilitator asks:** How did it feel?

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator says:** When we wake every morning we can say: "I just woke up and today is a new day." I ask myself "What do I have to do today?" "Will I have to do something that is going to be hard for me?" Let's all look at this example:

**Facilitator shares image H** with participants:



**Image H**

**Facilitator says:** Today I know I am going to have a spelling test. I am not good speller! I am scared. I need to do something to calm myself down. I don't want to be nervous all day. I don't want to be stuck. I want to be unstuck. I need to find the **virtue super power** that will quiet the noise and get me through this hard test!

**Facilitator shares image I** with participants:



**Image I**

**Facilitator says:** I need calmness. I need the virtue super power of calmness. Calmness is what I need to help me stop being worried. A virtue is a super power we use to help us when we have a problem. When I am upset and worried about what I have to do to stay calm, I can do my crow's breath breathing. Let's try it. Pretend we are the child worried about the spelling test. Let's all close our eyes and slowly take in a big breath of calmness like a swan. Now let's all slowly let out a big breath of being scared.

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator says:** Let's look at another example:

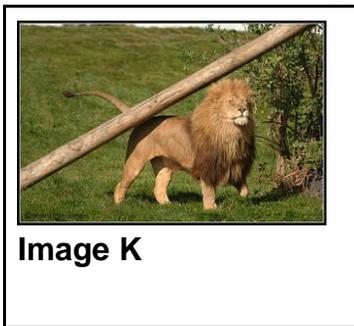
**Facilitator shares Image J** with participants:



**Image J**

**Facilitator says:** "Matty has to go to the dentist in the afternoon. He is very nervous. That morning he closes his eyes .....and looks inside..... and asks himself "What virtue super power do I need today?"

**Facilitator shares Image K** with participants:



**Facilitator says:** He decides that he needs courage. Courage is the virtue super power he needs to help him let go of his nervousness.

Let's help Matty: Let's all slowly breathe in courage like a lion.

We are giving that courage to Matty.

Now let's all slowly breathe out nervousness.

We are helping Matty let go of his nervousness.

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator shares Image L** with participants:



**\*Facilitator** - if practical, direct children to sit in a circle and hold hands.

**Facilitator says:** So, every morning, we need to take a minute to close our eyes..... and look inside ourselves and ask .....

“What is the virtue super power that I will need to help me today?”

Take one minute to quietly look inside ourselves and think about something you will need help with today....

Now think about what virtue super power you will need to help you.

**Participants respond - Pause for up to a minute**

**\*Facilitator:** if time allows, invite participants to share their thoughts with a child next to them and/or with the whole group.

**Facilitator says:** Remember that every day is different. The challenges and problems of today are not the same as they were yesterday because you are not the same person. You have grown by using your virtue super powers to solve problems. Different days may need different virtue powers. Your job is only to ask the inner question and listen for the answer. The answers come to your heart from God.

Let's look at a few more situations.

**Facilitator shares Image M** with participants:



**Facilitator asks:** What is happening here? How is one family careful and one family careless?

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator says:** That's right. We need our virtue super power of carefulness. Let's do our "Crow's Breath" exercise:

Let's breathe in carefulness..... Let's breathe out carelessness.

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator asks:**

Now can we think of some other examples of when we would need to Breathe in carefulness and breathe out carelessness?

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator shares Image N** with participants:



**Facilitator asks:** What is happening here? How does one picture show boldness and the other show shyness careful and one show confidence?

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator says:** That's right. We need our virtue super power of confidence.

Let's do our "Crow's Breath" exercise:

Let's breathe in confidence..... Let's breathe out shyness.

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator asks:** Now can we think of some other examples of when we would need to breathe in confidence and breathe out shyness?

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator shares Image O** with participants:

Breathe out selfishness



Breathe in Sharing



**Image O**

**Facilitator asks:** What is happening here? How does one picture show selfishness and the other show sharing?

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator says:** That's right. We need our virtue super power of sharing. Let's do our "Crow's Breath" exercise:

Let's breathe in sharing..... Let's breathe out selfishness.

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator asks:** Now can we think of some other examples of when we would need to breathe in sharing and breathe out selfishness?

**Participants respond**

**Facilitator says:** We can always think of some virtue super power, that we need -- to breathe in. We can always think of the opposite feelings we want to get rid of -- to breathe out.

**\*Note to Facilitator:**

Student Sheet -Virtue Super Powers - Using Crow's Breath can be completed by younger children with facilitator assistance and independently by older children.

**Facilitator introduces: Student Sheet - Virtue Super Powers - Using Crow's Breath**

**Facilitator distributes sheets and reads directions**

**Participants complete Student Sheet**

**Printable resources follow appendix**

## Appendix: Meditation: Asking Inner Questions

**But the universal divine Intellect, which transcends nature, is the outpouring grace of the pre-existent Power. It encompasses all existing realities and receives its share of the lights and mysteries of God. It is an all-knowing power, not a power of investigation and sensing. The spiritual power associated with the world of nature is the power of investigation, and it is through investigation that it discovers the realities and properties of things. But the heavenly intellectual power, which is beyond nature, encompasses, knows, and comprehends all things; is aware of the divine mysteries, truths, and inner meanings; and discovers the hidden verities of the Kingdom. This divine intellectual power is confined to the holy Manifestations and the Daysprings of prophethood. A ray of this light falls upon the mirrors of the hearts of the righteous, that they may also receive, through the holy Manifestations, a share and benefit of this power.**

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Reference Library: *Some Answered Questions*: 58

I now assure thee, O servant of God, that, if thy mind become empty and pure from every mention and thought and thy heart attracted wholly to the Kingdom of God, forget all else besides God and come in communion with the Spirit of God, then the Holy Spirit will assist thee with a power which will enable thee to penetrate all things, and a Dazzling Spark which enlightens all sides, a Brilliant Flame in the zenith of the heavens, will teach thee that which thou dost not know of the facts of the universe and of the divine doctrine. Verily, I say unto thee, every soul which ariseth today to guide others to the path of safety and infuse in them the Spirit of Life, the Holy Spirit will inspire that soul with evidences, proofs and facts and the lights will shine upon it from the Kingdom of God. Do not forget what I have conveyed unto thee from the breath of the Spirit. Verily, it is the shining morning and the rosy dawn which will impart unto thee the lights, reveal the mysteries and make thee competent in science, and through it the pictures of the Supreme World will be printed in thy heart and the facts of the secrets of the Kingdom of God will shine before thee.

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*Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha Abbas* p. 706

## Resources

### Materials for Adult Activity

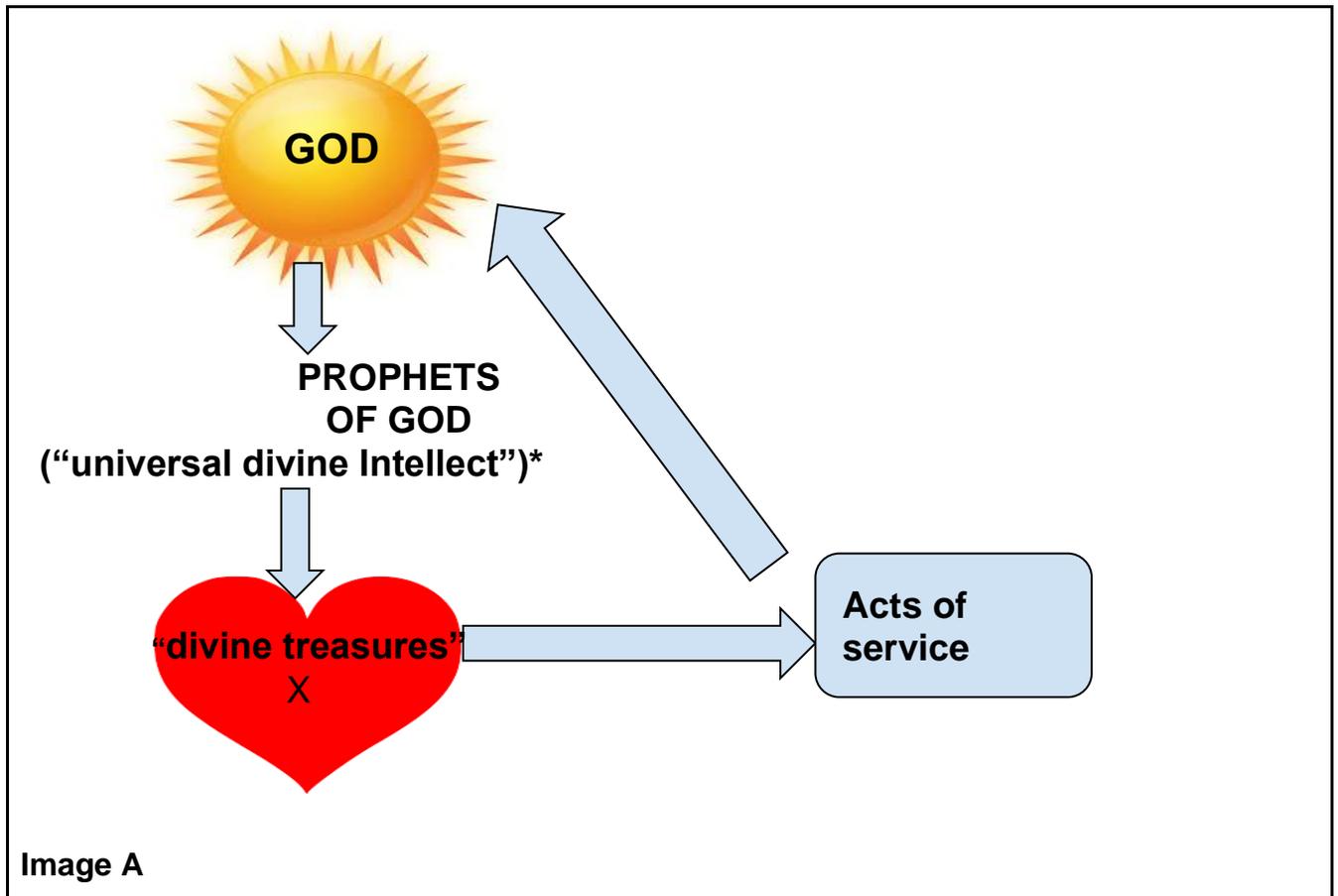
Images A - G

### Materials for Children's Activity

Images B,C,D; G - O

Student Sheet - "Virtue Super Powers - Using Crow's Breath"

## Images



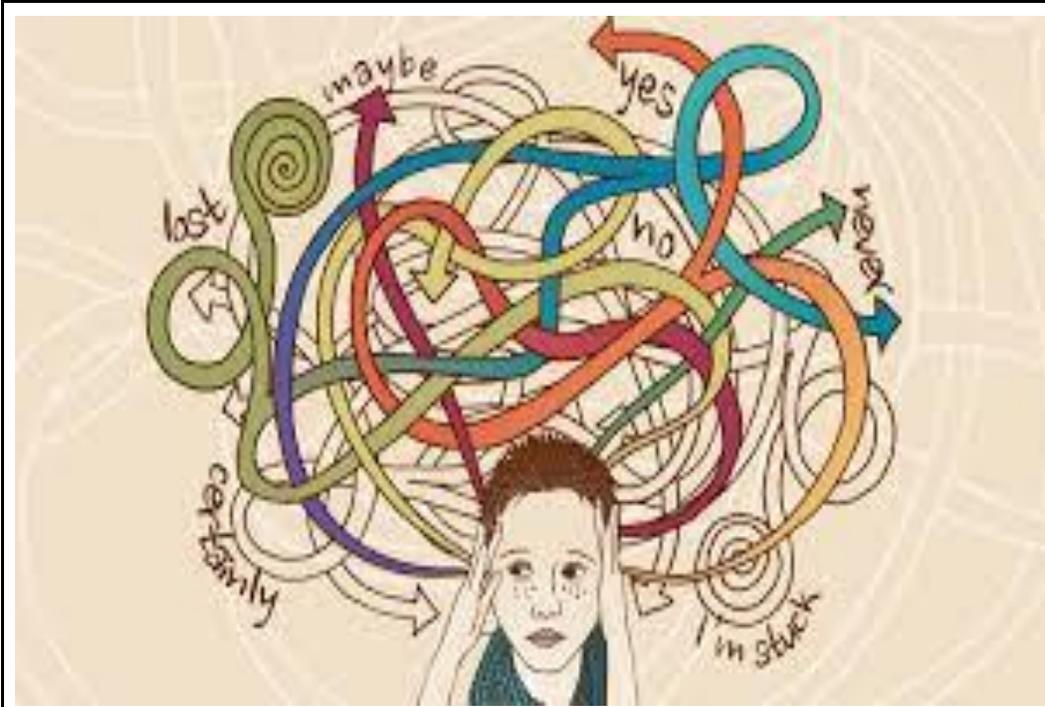


Image B



Image C



**Image D**



**Image E**



**Image F**



**Image G**



**Image H**



**Image I**

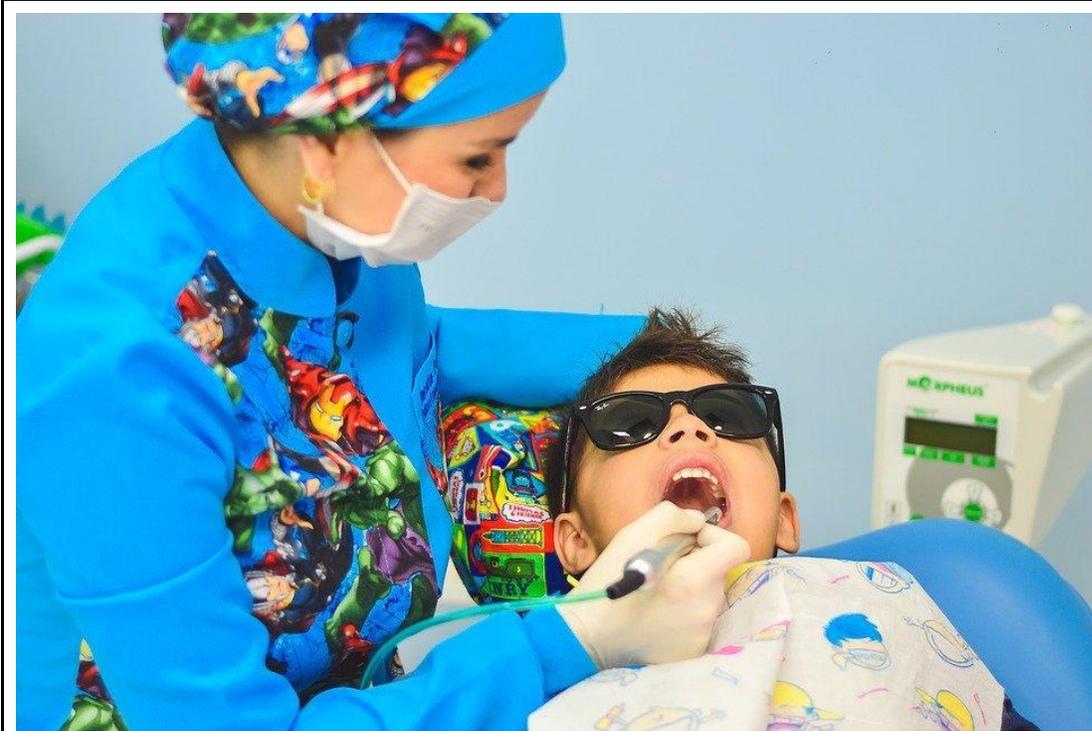


Image J



Image K



Image L

Breathe in carefulness



Breathe out carelessness



**Image M**

Breathe in confidence



Breathe out shyness



Image N

Breathe out selfishness



Breathe in Sharing



Image O

## Student Sheet - Virtue Super Powers - Using Crow's Breath

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Fill in the blanks in each of the two sentences with words from the word box. There is more than one right answer for both sentences. You can choose whichever seems right for you.

| Good Healthy Powers | Unhealthy Powers |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Trust               | Distrust         |
| Obedience           | Disobedience     |
| Safety              | Not being safe   |

I want to go out on my new two-wheeler bike. Mom won't let me because I left my helmet at my aunt's house.  
I am feeling really mad!



I know a helmet will keep me safe.

I look inside me.

I need to breathe in \_\_\_\_\_.

I need to breathe out