

The Isle of Is

Guide for Groups

Herewith we present you with a few guidelines for experiencing *The Isle of Is* in a small group. This guide is available by email (centerwithin@connect.com.fj) and by printing out from our web site (www.thecenterwithin.com). These guidelines, up to the Suggested Course Outline on pg. 3, should be read by all members of an Isle of Is group. The Suggested Course Outline is to assist those who will facilitate the group.

Key Aspects of the Book

1. The book is designed to be *experiential*. Full benefit is possible only through participating in the activities and exercises described in the book and provided on the CD. *The Isle of Is* offers an experience, not just “food for thought.” The two are as different as reading about running, and putting on your shoes and actually running through the park. The book’s experiences are intended to help people transform their lives.
2. Doing the book with a small group of family, friends, or spiritual associates is a very powerful way to experience the Isle of Is.
3. The experiential aspect of the book is built on a few basic tools: Meditation on the Source (“the Well”), free writing (“pick up your Wand and write”), energy exercises, and Presence Practice. All assist you in feeling and experiencing Presence, which is the primary goal of the book. This takes you beyond thinking, beyond the mind – an experience that is missing in most spiritual texts.
4. If the basic tools are used regularly, you can expect large changes. You may experience this while doing the book the first time – so allow yourself to be open to it. But one must continue beyond the first reading/doing of the book. What we’re after is understanding our Divinity and clearing/releasing what gets in our way of living from that place continuously. The more residue that is cleared away – that is, by using the tools – the more one is able to live from that place. The more you practice jogging, the greater your endurance and the further you can run.
5. Throughout your experience on the Isle of Is, have fun. Bring items to group meetings that keep fun and life happening on the island. For the first meeting, for example, bring something that resonates with you from the first chapter – for example, a sun hat, tee shirt with an image of a boat, map, palm frond, or ring of keys. In succeeding weeks, bring items that are inspired by that chapter’s experience: leaves from the Old Tree, a feather from a raven, figurine of a gnome, or a crystal or gemstone when you enter the cave. Island music, island clothes, beach artifacts. . . these or other creative ideas are appropriate to bring and share with the group. One caution, however: Do not allow socializing – chatting about various topics – to interfere with the tasks of each group meeting.

Creating a Group

A group may be formed among family members, already existing groups (meditators, church group, women's or men's group, etc.), friends, coworkers, or others. The ideal group size is 5 to 10 members.

Members should agree on who will facilitate the group. One person may volunteer, two people may agree to share the role, or the members may choose to rotate the role of facilitator. If one person agrees to facilitate, members should discuss offering a small fee to the facilitator, or the facilitator may request a fee.

Commitment

A commitment to meet weekly for a period of 12 weeks is required of all group members. The group may wish to skip one or two weeks during the 12-week timeframe, for example, during holidays, but we do not advise skipping more than two weeks. In order to sustain the group, it is important to maintain the momentum of regular meetings. If a group member needs to miss a meeting, he or she should commit to reading the text and doing the exercises on their own during the time they are absent.

The commitment is, first of all, to one's self. Do not be concerned about doing the reading and exercises perfectly, or about "getting behind," even if you find you must miss one or two chapters. It is more important to continue as a part of the group. After the 12-week process, return to those aspects you wish to spend more time with – or return to the beginning and follow the process again in your own timeframe. Alternately, set up another group.

Imagine yourself embarking on a voyage . . . you have arrived on the island and wish to experience all it has to offer. You commit to staying on the island for the entire length of the trip in order to experience ever treasure.

You will find that the reading is light and easy, and in general, the exercises take little to no effort. The exercises point you toward simple practices, including meditation, which requires setting time aside each day, and Presence Practice, which takes no time at all. The latter can be done while waiting in line, waiting in traffic, watching television, or listening to others talk. Over time, you will find that you can do Presence Practice (that is, be in a place of Presence) at all times, regardless of your activity, thought processes, or emotions.

Weekly Gatherings

The ideal is to meet once a week for a period of 2 hours. Find a meeting day and time that suits group members and decide on a start date.

You may choose to meet in the same place every week, or rotate to members' homes. If you choose the latter, create a schedule in advance so that everyone is clear where each meeting will be held.

Prior to the first gathering, each member should obtain a copy of *The Isle of Is: A Guide to Awakening*, which is available through Amazon.com and local bookstores.

Getting Around the Island: Before the first meeting, each member should read the introduction, "Opening to Timeless Truth," and Chapter 1, "Ferry to Sacred Island." They should also become familiar with the sections at the back of the book: Glossary of Spiritual Terms, A Legend Unfolds, and Chapter References. These resources are available to you throughout your journey on the island. As you start the book, become acquainted with the use of "we" and "ye" as discussed in A Legend Unfolds.

We suggest that group members agree to the following points at your first meeting:

1. Listen to each other. When someone in the group is speaking, give them your full attention, with eye contact and interest in what is being said.
2. Encourage all voices to be heard equally. Every member should speak in response to a question before any member speaks a second time. For a question that involves longer responses, allow each person an equal amount of time, for example, 3 or 5 minutes each.
3. Respect one another by holding each other's sharing in confidence. Do not discuss any member's contribution with anyone outside the group.
4. Refrain from analyzing or judging your own or anyone else's comments. The Isle of Is is about experiencing Presence, not debating ideas. The concepts and exercises are distilled from over 60 years experience of meditation, exploration, and spiritual practices by the authors and culled from study of ancient texts and indigenous practices worldwide. Try the exercises without pre-judging them. Allow yourself to be open to experiencing what they have to offer.

It's Not About "Time"

Ultimately, being and living in a state of Presence *takes no time*. It is a shift in consciousness and energetic vibration, one which will likely require engaging in certain ongoing experiences (meditation, Presence Practice, etc.) until you have undergone this shift. In fact, by living in a state of Presence, you will find that time expands until you experience each moment as timeless. Do not allow yourself to use the excuse that you "don't have time" to experience the Isle of Is.

How to Use the CD

The tracks included on the CD are auditory guidance for exercises described in the book. The CD can be used during group meetings, as well as during individual experiences at home.

Suggested Course Outline For Facilitators

Prior to the first meeting, each member should read the introduction and Chapter 1, as well as familiarize themselves with the sections at the back of the book, beginning on page 178.

Bring to each meeting: A pen and a writing notebook – perhaps a special notebook for the Isle of Is – as well as your copy of book. You will need all three at every meeting. Also bring artifacts of the Isle of Is to keep the mood light and fun. Note: You will need access to a CD player at most meetings.

Week 1 – The Gate of Gratitude

Welcome everyone to the gathering, expressing appreciation for each one coming to the group.

1. Ask each member to introduce themselves to the group: (1) Your name, (2) What drew you to participate in the Isle of Is experience? (3) What do you hope to gain from being a part of the group?

2. Notice that the name of the boat in Chapter 1 – the boat E. Satva – is a pun on “bodhisattva” described in the glossary. Discuss the idea that there are indeed people, books, and experiences that serve as bodhisattvas to lead us to higher spiritual truth.

3. Read the quote aloud on page 20, the beginning of Chapter 2, The Gate of Gratitude. Ask the group: *Why do you think this quote might be true?*

4. Read the first three pages of the chapter aloud. You can pass the book to a new reader after each half page.

5. On page 23, read the first two paragraphs in italics aloud, then allow 10 minutes for members to make their list of blessings. At the end of 10 minutes, ask each person to share their list with the group.

6. Read the remaining paragraphs in italics: *Second, Third, and Most Importantly*. Encourage group members to make the collage during the week at home. Do they need any materials in order to do this?

7. Read aloud the final paragraph on page 23. Then, instead of reading the directions on page 24, play CD Track 1, “Deepening Your Gratitude.” Afterward, allow time for comments about the experience.

8. Read aloud the second half of page 24 and first half of page 25. Group members then make a second list in their writing notebook, of those things it is difficult to feel grateful for. Once completed, ask the group, *Do you think it is possible to be grateful for these things?* Discuss for up to 10 minutes.

9. Continue reading until you reach the exercise on page 28. One person reads the first paragraph of the directions aloud (p. 28), then everyone enters the Well for 10 minutes. At the end of 10 minutes, someone reads the rest of the directions aloud.

10. At the end of this time, ask for group members to share what they discovered that they can be grateful for. Share as much as you have time for.

Assignment: Begin a daily habit of deepening your gratitude by following the directions at the top of page 29, then listening to CD Track 1.

Read Chapter 2 to middle of page 32.

Recommended, but optional: Make a collage of images of your blessings. This can be very simple or as elaborate as you'd like. Post the collage where you will see it often. Bring it to Week 2 to share with the group.

Week 2 – The Gate of Gratitude, continued

1. Invite those who created a blessings collage to share it with the group, along with brief comments about the experience.

2. Ask the group: *What has been your experience of finding gratitude in difficult situations over the past week?* Discuss for 10-15 minutes.

3. Read aloud beginning middle of pg. 32, up to middle of pg. 35. Then do the exercise on p. 35.

4. Free writing – Read from the text following the exercise on pg. 35, through description of the free-writing exercise on pg. 37. Then free- write for 10 minutes as described in the exercise. Ask for everyone to read what they wrote, or share the essence of what they wrote. *What did you discover? Was free writing helpful to you?*

5. Read the list in italics at the top of pg. 39. Discuss each bullet point after it is read aloud.

Assignment: Continue gratitude practice, writing down three things you are grateful for, and one difficulty or frustration, then look for what you can be grateful for in that situation.

Read the rest of Chapter 2, and Chapter 3 to the top of pg. 48. Do the exercises along the way.

Week 3 – The Pool of (Ac)Knowledge

1. What is a synchronicity? Does everyone understand that it is a different way of understanding a “coincidence”?

2. Discuss the stories of the Maori man and the color “putty.” What makes these synchronicities?

3. Read together the section called Immersed in the Realm. Do the exercise on pg. 50. Ask each person to share a synchronicity they have experienced recently, or one they are now coming to understand as a synchronicity. Ask the group, *Is it possible that all these events were orchestrated on our behalf? What do you think?*

4. Continue reading aloud to the end of the chapter. Discuss: *Is it possible that I am Divine? What keeps me from believing that might be true?*

5. If time, discuss the quote at the beginning of Chapter 4, The Briar of Beliefs. *What do you think Gauguin meant by this?*

Assignment: Read Chapter 4 and do the exercises up to the exercise on pg. 64 – leave this one to do with the group.

Week 4 – The Briar of Beliefs and The Ever-Present

1. Discuss the list of beliefs on pg. 57. *Which of these beliefs did you hold when you started the book? Has this changed in any way? What other beliefs about Divinity do you hold?*
2. Do the writing exercise on pg. 64 together, then go to the Well for 15 minutes of silence. Share your experience with the group.
3. Turn to Chapter 5. *What is the silent space Eckhart Tolle speaks of in this quote?*
4. Read aloud up to the meditation on pg. 68. Instead of reading the directions, listen to CD Track 2, as you meditate together as a group. At the end of the meditation, have someone read the final paragraph in italics aloud (pg. 69).
5. Allow 5 minutes for the free writing. *Who would like to share what they found?*
6. Have someone read aloud the remainder of pg. 69-70, up to "This Is Heaven, Man." Discuss the idea that the meadow is a metaphor for the Ever-Present, and the light represents the Presence or Divinity that resides there. *Does the metaphor assist you in understanding the relationship between the Ever-Present and Presence?*

Assignment: Read the rest of Chapter 5.

Do the Meditation in the Ever-Present every day – twice a day if possible. Use the CD track if you find it helpful.

Week 5 – The Waves of Energy

1. Discuss group members' experiences doing the Meditation in the Ever-Present in the past week. *What has been your experience in doing the meditation? If you have used the meditation regularly, have you experienced any changes in your daily life? Has anyone else noticed a change in you?*
2. Read the first two pages of Chapter 6 aloud, up to "The Chalice" on pg. 81.
3. Do the chalice exercise. *What did you feel?*
4. Do the Prana Exercise, using Track 3 on the CD. *What did you feel? What substance is it that you are feeling? Where does it exist? Where does it come from?*
5. Read aloud the section called "Water," pp. 85-86. Then play CD Track 4, Meditation with Divine Personalities. After the meditation, free write for 5 minutes about your experience. Then share with the group.

Assignment: Read Chapter 6, up to "Fire" on p. 88.

Do the Prana Exercise for 5-10 minutes every day.

After reading about it, do the Meditation with Divine Personalities (Track 4) again, then write about the experience to record anything you will share with the group. Do this meditation once a day this week if you can.

Week 6 – The Ocean of Being

1. Discuss your experiences of the last week with doing the Prana Exercise and the Meditation with Divine Personalities.
2. Read together the "Fire" section on pp. 88-90. Pause to do the two exercises together, then discuss what you wrote after finishing the chapter. Ask each group member to select a person, pet, or situation that is ill or troubled, to send love to every day for the next week. Write this person, pet, or situation in your writing tablet. Commit to doing this for one week.

3. Chapter 7: "Be still and know that ye are God." *Is this heresy? Is this what Christ meant when he said that the Kingdom of God is within? (This is a translation of Luke 17:21 in many versions of the Bible.)*

4. Read Chapter 7 together, beginning with "A Chorus of Waves" on pg. 93. When you get to the top of pg. 95, discuss the stories the waves have told. *Is there a time in your life when you did not listen to the messages of God, Spirit, Nature, the Universe – and the messages became more insistent?* Share. Continue reading aloud to the bottom of pg. 96.

6. Do the "Conversation with Divine Personalities," pp. 96-97. Have someone read this while the rest of the group experiences it. When you have finished, write about the experience for 5 minutes. Then share your experiences with the group.

Assignment: Do the "energy + meditation" experience on p. 90 daily.

Read the rest of Chapter 7. Do any exercises in the chapter that you feel will be beneficial for you. The exercise at the bottom of pg. 99 will be done together in the group in Week 7.

Week 7 – The Forest of Forgetfulness

1. *Where are you with the idea that Divinity is your true identity?* Discuss. Then do the writing exercise at the bottom of pg. 99. Share what you have discovered.

2. Read together Chapter 8 to the top of pg. 104. Then do the writing exercise on pg. 106. Each person share with the group their answers to these questions.

4. Do the Wand exercise on the top of pg. 109, and share.

5. End the group meeting by experiencing Presence Practice, CD Track 5. If time, share how you feel after doing Presence Practice. *What, if anything, has shifted for you in those few minutes?* Notice how simple the exercise is, and how quickly one can feel a shift in energy, calmness, and peace.

Assignment: Read Chapter 8 and do the Wand exercise on pg. 112.

Listen to Track 5 and do Presence Practice at least once a day. Do Presence Practice in other life situations as well, cuing yourself with just three words: *breathe, relax, feel*. Do it whenever you think of it.

Meditate daily, preferably twice a day, using one of the two meditations on the CD. You may choose to use the CD to meditate, or you may guide yourself into inner silence with the basic steps outlined on pg. 112. *Use the meditations described in the book, rather than meditation techniques you have used in the past.*

Week 8 – Mount Metaphor

Chapter 9 will take two weeks to read and experience. The first group meeting will allow you to read and experience about half of the chapter.

1. The written material of this chapter is essential to doing the exercises. Hence, we ask that you read the chapter together aloud, pausing whenever you wish in order to answer any questions. For this first reading, if everyone has a copy of the book in hand, you may choose to read the pages silently. Read from pg. 114 up to the exercise on pg. 121. Discuss what you've read. *What questions or new understandings does this section present?*

2. Read aloud the list of metaphors on pg. 121 and do the writing exercise individually. Allow 10 minutes so that members will be encouraged to think deeply about each metaphor. Then discuss your answers together.

3. Continue reading from bottom of pg. 121 to middle of pg. 124. Ask for questions about the process that the gnomes have proposed. Then do the exercise on pg. 124. Make sure people understand that they are to write metaphors, not adjectives. Ask group members to offer more examples if needed.

4. When everyone has finished writing and has circled or starred items that resonate for them, go around the room and have everyone share their “good day-bad day” metaphors and those items they have starred.

5. As time allows, continue through the chapter in the same way, reading a section, then doing an exercise and sharing it in the group. You will not complete the chapter in one sitting.

6. Next week you will be creating collages, which will require bringing some materials. Everyone will need a piece of poster board (obtainable from drugstores and art stores), scissors, and glue. The group will also need a stack of magazines with uplifting images that can be cut up and used for the collage. Divide up the tasks of bringing these supplies. Magazines might include parenting, travel, nature, spirituality, family, physical activity, health, etc.

If possible, arrange to meet for a 3-hour time block for Week 9.

Assignment: Read the remainder of Chapter 9, doing the exercises along the way – up to the exercise on the top of pg. 134.

Meditate daily – twice a day for 20-30 minutes if possible – using one of the meditations in the book. You will notice a change in how you experience your days if you meditate once a day – regardless of how peaceful your days have been up to this point in time. You will notice an even greater change if you meditate twice a day. Greater peace and greater joy will follow.

Week 9 – Mount Metaphor continued

1. Ask group members to state their old life metaphor. The rest of the group should ask questions to ascertain what the metaphor represents to that person, and what sensual experiences it represents.

2. Read aloud the exercise on pg. 134. Then enter the Well, and write down any ideas that come during the silence. Once everyone has finished this task, ask if everyone has identified a new metaphor. If someone has not, ask them to describe what they have discovered thus far. Allow the group to assist them in choosing a new life metaphor.

3. Read pp. 134-135 aloud together, then do the exercise that begins on the bottom of pg. 135 – just the first two paragraphs. Allow 15 minutes for the writing. Then pair up to discuss changes the new metaphor would make in these eight areas of your life.

4. The Collage: Read the directions for the collage aloud on pg. 136. Begin the process by selecting images from magazines. Do as much of the collage as you can before the end of the meeting. If you do not complete the collages, take them home to finish them.

Assignment: Finish your collage and bring it to the next group meeting.

Read the last few paragraphs of Chapter 9, then read Chapter 10. Do as many of the exercises as you wish. The exercise on pg. 139 will be done in next week's group meeting. Continue to meditate daily, using meditations from the book.

Week 10 – The Cascades of Compassion

1. Share your collage with the group, discussing briefly the images you chose to illustrate your new metaphor.
2. Do the exercise on pg. 139 together. Ask someone to read the directions aloud, then everyone closes their eyes to experience the meditation. Know that by bringing our senses and images into meditation (the Well), we manifest these images in our waking life.
3. Discuss the Rumi quote on pg. 138. *Do you think it is true that embracing our hurts allows them to change?* Be open to the possibility that this is true.
4. Read aloud the exercise on pg. 144, Presence Practice. Then play CD Track 5, calling up an uncomfortable thought or feeling and embracing it with Presence. When you have finished, take up your Wand and write for 5-10 minutes. Share this experience with the group.
5. Consider the role of Nature's creatures on the island. *Do you have a favorite character on the Island of Is? Why is this your favorite? Has your awareness of the beings of Nature been heightened by your travels on the Isle of Is? Have you tried communicating with flowers, insects, sky, or trees?*
6. If time, read aloud the directions for the exercise on pg. 147 and discuss times you will use this in your life.

Assignment: Read Chapter 11, if possible a section at a time – one section each day you sit down to read – doing the exercise that is included in that section.

Week 11 – The Stream of Consciousness

1. Discuss the Stream of Consciousness that unites everything. *Has your perception of the connections among all things, all levels of consciousness (waking, sleeping, dreaming), all space and all time, changed while traveling on the Isle of Is? If so, how?*
2. Consider the idea that the body is a portal that leads to a deeper experience of Presence. Read aloud, beginning with the quote in the margin at the bottom of pg. 158, then do the exercise on pg. 159 together. If the group feels ready, do Presence Practice without using the CD.
3. Read aloud pp. 159-161. Then write for 15 minutes, as described at the bottom of pg. 161. Choose one of your body's messages you will honor by writing down and posting it where you can see it. Share this with the group.
4. If time, read the remainder of the chapter aloud together. Regardless, do the Meditation with Divine Personalities together (pp. 167-168), calling forth the creatures of Nature you've met on the island. Meditate for a full 30 minutes. If your thoughts take you away, gently bring your awareness back to the Light, and feel this in your body.
5. To prepare for Week 12, the last week on the island together, decide on a closing ceremony in which you will share what has changed in your life since embarking for the Isle

of Is, and also what commitments you will make to yourself. Bring artifacts for the closing session – for example, images or items or clothing that reflects your new metaphor, or artifacts that represent the commitment you making to yourself.

Assignment: Read Chapters 12 and 13.

Week 12 – A Continuance

1. Review your 12 weeks together by referring back to the experiences you have shared, from the Gate of Gratitude to the Constant Cosmos of Is. *Which experiences have been the most meaningful for you personally?* Discuss as a group.

2. Choose one or more of the non-writing exercises you did together as a group to experience again in your closing session. This might be an energy exercise (the chalice, or prana exercise), one of the meditations, and/or Presence Practice.

3. Closing ceremony: Share what has changed in your life since embarking for the Island. Then, in a second sharing, tell what commitments you will make to yourself. *What will you do differently?*

4. Finally, consider what you might do to assist others in having a similar experience. Decide if anyone will facilitate bringing together another Isle of Is group, and if so, where and when. Can others in the group assist by telling friends and family about the new group?

5. As your Divine Selves, ask each person to offer a blessing to the group, for example, “I offer the blessing of peace in your heart and in your relationships.”

**Go in Peace, Joy and Connection to All Things,
knowing that you are that Divine Presence.**