

# Meditative Self-Inquiry Group

The meditative self-inquiry group is inspired by Quaker meetings, Zen Buddhism and Socratic dialogue. It is guided by Leslie Ihde, a psychotherapist and spiritual teacher. As the meeting begins, members sit in silence. After a period of silent self-reflection, Leslie offers a few brief thoughts of her own or extends an invitation to others. The invitation is always the same. 'If you would like to share a perception or reflection that you have been working with, please feel free to do this now.'

Any member may offer a thought at this point. The group maintains the silence respectfully and attentively listening in support of the speaker. After the speaker has finished the silence is maintained for several minutes. This allows each person, including the speaker, to reflect on what has been said. After the pause another person may offer his or her thoughts at his or her own discretion. This pattern repeats, with ample periods of silence, until each person who would like to has had a chance to share.

It is important to describe the character of the speaking as well as of the silence in this group. The verbal offerings are sincere, honest and fairly brief. While the speaker does not need to leave anything out of his or her remarks, he or she will also be asked not to ramble on once he or she has spoken meaningfully. Part of the reason for this is to help the speaker be essential and achieve self-clarity. Part of the reason for brevity is so that the others in the group won't be lost in unnecessary detail. Everyone is working to sustain a spirit of mindful self-inquiry.

The quality of attention in the meetings is palpable. In the silence you will discern respect, love, wonder and determination to see the mystery of who we are. Everyone who is interested is invited to attend. Each meeting may be attended by a slightly different group.

After offerings of perception and reflection are complete, Leslie will initiate a dialogue. While the way of offering of private thoughts to a meditative group resembles the Quaker meeting, the dialogue phase of the meeting resembles a Socratic dialogue. Sometimes Leslie will develop a dialogue with one person to continue the inquiry that the person initiated with his or her original remarks. At other times Leslie will encourage a group discussion while gently guiding the quality and theme of the talk.

The silence that concludes the meeting, like the silence that began it, is inspired by Zen Buddhism. Reflecting the spiritual intent of this meeting there is no charge, but members are encouraged to make a donation. The suggested donation is \$10-\$20 per person but is left to the discretion of the participant. A donation box near the door is for this purpose. The Ithaca meeting is held on alternate Saturdays from 10:00 am to 11:30. Please check <http://www.spiritualself-inquiry.com> for the next meeting date.