

An excerpt from *Your Ultimate Life Plan: How to Deeply Transform Your Everyday Experience and Create Changes That Last*, by Dr. Jennifer Howard.

The Names of God

Words have great power. They carry meaning for us along with vibrations and energy. Like brain entrainment in neuroscience and transmissions from advanced spiritual individuals, invoking Names of God carries vibration and the morphic resonance of the name, which holds the charge and reverberating impact from hundreds if not thousands of years. Using a specific name of the Divine can open you to new avenues of being, helping you deepen in ways beyond words.

The mystical traditions of many religions have practices associated with sacred names, whether it's the Sufi practice of repeating the names of God in Arabic, the Kabbalistic prayers reciting the names in Hebrew, or the Hindu chanting of names in Sanskrit. When you chant, say the name (or names) silently to yourself, move, dance, or rhythmically breathe the different names of God, you are embracing and embodying new possibilities.

Following are a few names of God from the different traditions to get you started. You might try spending a week with the names in one tradition and then go on to another, or mix them together in whatever way feels right to you. As you practice these, see if you can experience them in your body, and then notice your thoughts and emotions. You might experience the urge to move as you do this, or experience great stillness and silence. You can begin your practice with these names and then add to your list as you'd like to. You can do this in several ways:

1. **Name on the Breath:** *Following your breath, say one of the names of God on the inhale and repeat it on the exhale, either silently or out loud.*
2. **Breathing God In and Out:** *You can combine more than one name, using one as you inhale and another as you exhale, either silently or out loud.*
3. **Chanting:** *Start chanting any vowel sound, or use "om," and then move into one or more of the names. You can use any pitch or notes that come to you.*
4. **Drawing:** *If the names are in another language, you can draw the letters on paper or in the air while chanting them at the same time.*

Sufis, the mystics of Islam, often speak of the 99 Names of God, which are described in the Qur'an. Some of the names include Allah (The All-Powerful and All-Knowing Creator); Al-Malik (The King or Absolute Ruler); Ar-Rahman (The All-Merciful); and Ar-Rahim (The All-Beneficent).

In Judaism, the four-letter name of God, YHVH, known as the Tetragrammaton, is the ineffable name, the name beyond words. In *Gates of Light* Joseph Gikatilla says that like the “trunk of a tree that nurtures the branches which are the other Names of God, each of these branches bears a different fruit.” YHVH, pronounced or whispered Y (yod), H (hey), V (vav), H (hey), for many Jewish people is considered forbidden to be uttered except by the highest Rabbi in the Holy Temple on Yom Kipper. Instead, they read it as Adonai (My Lord). It can also be called Yahweh.

In the Bible (Exodus 3:13–15), Moses asked God for his name, and God replies, “Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh” (I Am That I Am). Other names are Elohim, the first name of God in the scripture; El (God); El Shaddai (God Almighty), pronounced (shah-’dah-yy); and El Gibbor (God of Strength). The Shekhinah is the manifestation or presence of the descended “indwelling God.” In the Qur’an, the Arabic word for the Sophia, or Wisdom, is Sakina.

“Om” is the primordial sound and sacred symbol of Brahman in Hinduism. According to Siddha Yoga, chanting the Hindu Sanskrit phrase, Om Namah Shivaya, is a redeeming mantra meaning “the Lord who dwells within you as you.” There are many names of God, and Para Brahman (The Absolute Truth) is considered the ineffable name, along with Brahma (The Creator) and Bhagwan (God). Within the different Hindu traditions we have Vishnu (Preserver of the Universe), who has many other names corresponding to a variety of attributes. Other sacred names in the Hindu tradition are Krishna (Love and Divine Joy), Rama (Supreme Personality of the Godhead or Supreme Essence), Lakshmi (Goddess of Light, Beauty, and Wealth), Kali (Goddess of Transformation, Fierce Divine Mother, Kundalini Energy), Durga (Mother Goddess, Unification of all Divine Forces), and Shiva (The Destroyer of False Identifications, Habitual Reactions, Attachments), supporting the True Self to flourish.

In the Native American traditions Great Spirit is called by many names depending on the tribe. To the Sioux, it’s Wakan Tanka. Russell Means, a Lakotah activist, says a better translation of Wakan Tanka is “the Great Mystery.” The Chickasaw call God, Ababinili; the Cheyenne, Maheo; and the Cherokee, Yehowah.

Most of Buddhism doesn’t think in terms of the names of God, but there are some variations in the words they use in the different traditions. In Mahayana Buddhism, Samantabhadra Buddha is considered “the essence of the heart of all Buddhas.” In Shin Buddhism, the eternal Buddha is Amida Buddha. Amitabha is the Buddha of Infinite Light and Amitayus is Infinite Life. There are also ceremonies invoking the Bodhisattvas’ names. According to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, by chanting the Buddhist phrase, Om mani padme hum, pronounced Om (ohm) Ma (mah) Ni (nee) Pad (pahd) Me (may) Hum (hum), “you can transform your impure body, speech, and mind into the pure exalted body, speech, and mind of a Buddha.”

Christians use Jesus, Father, Abba, Yahweh, Jehovah, Lord, Holy Spirit, Holy Mother, Mother Mary, and many of the Jewish names that came before.

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