

Lent 1
Week of March 6

LISTEN: With Holy Listening Stones







Jesus listened for the Holy Spirit for 40 days and nights. This kind of listening isn't only done with our ears. It can often be more of a feeling than a sound. All of our five senses can contribute to feelings. And we all have something we could call a sixth sense, and that is our sense of a holy spirit. It is not physiological, but we can do things with our minds and bodies to help to keep those "receptors" open and healthy. Some of these things are called *practices*.

Children feel things as deeply as adults. But in the rush of daily life, we don't often spend a lot of time acknowledging or naming our feelings, especially the ones that don't feel good or pleasurable. But when children have the chance to regularly talk about their feelings, their capacity for empathy and compassion for themselves and others can expand as well.

Try this at mealtimes or bedtime with the whole family. All of us, especially children need some intentional help and support with our feelings sometimes. An external focus for identifying feelings can be a helpful tool, like symbols. Most important, is to be a listening presence in a holy way: without judgement or solution; but with trust, acceptance, and compassion.

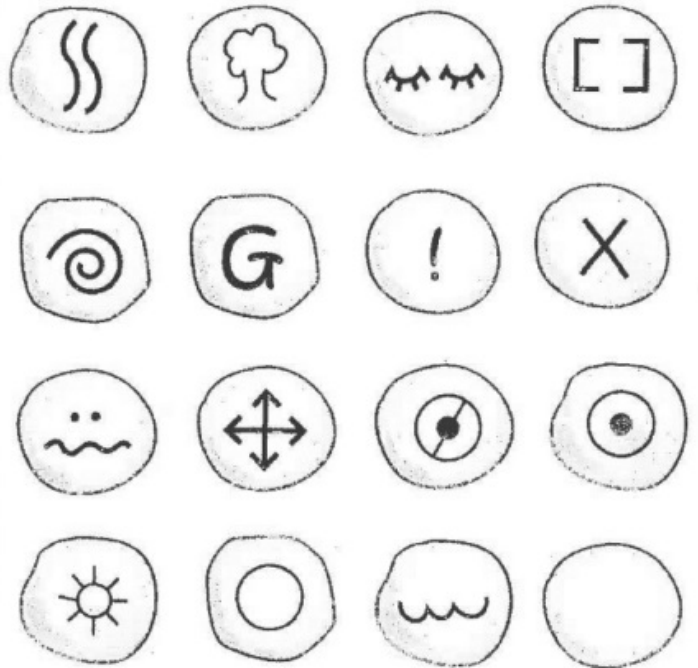
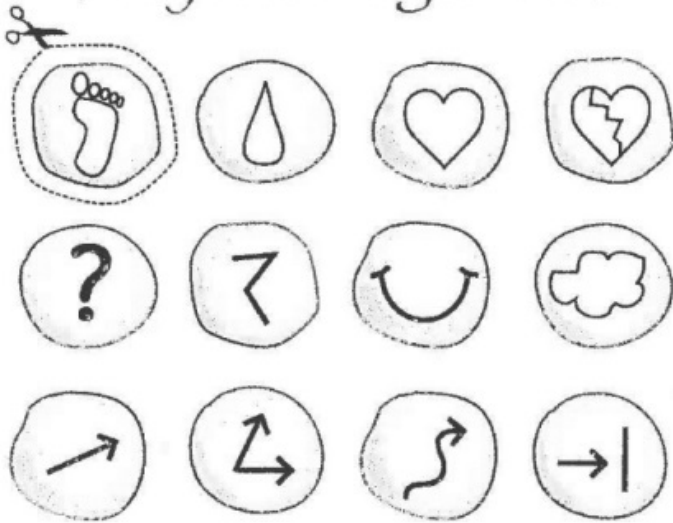
Spend intentional time listening to one another every day, or once per week during Lent. Older children could talk and listen to themselves, or God, or a friend if they prefer.

Holy Listening Stones

-  This exercise is for two or more people who feel safe and comfortable with one another.
-  One asks another to pick a stone with a symbol that best represents how they are feeling in that moment. Ask them to describe why they chose that symbol.
-  You don't need to respond, but if you do, just affirm that you are listening, and that God is present. You could say, "God is here, and you are beloved."
-  If they feel some way that they wish they didn't, ask them to pick another stone that best represents what they would like to happen, or how they would like to feel.
-  Same response, if any.
-  Then ask them to pick another stone that best represents something they might be able to do, or someone who can help or be a companion in whatever they plan to do.

These can be used simply to spend quiet time together, or prompt conversation. Or they can be helpful in times of anxiety or difficult feelings. Often, anxiety arises from feeling "stuck". If s/he is so stuck that s/he can't visualize or articulate anything to correspond with the symbols, it could make things worse to pressure them. At the same time, allow them to take their time. Be with them without talking while they ponder the symbols. If they aren't exhibiting stress over it, it is okay to just rest in that space together.

Holy Listening Stones



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These are made with smooth river rocks which can be found in hobby and gardening supplies. The symbols are drawn with a fine point permanent marker or paint pen. Feel free to make up your own! If you don't have stones, you could cut out small cards, or circles on paper for the symbols.