

SGM December 2017 ~ Empowerment

Chalice Lighting

By telling our personal stories of challenges we have faced, choices we have made, and what we learned from the outcomes we inspire others and share our own wisdom. Because stories allow us to express our values not as abstract principles, but as lived experience, they have the power to move others. - Marshall Ganz

Check In

Time to share briefly the highs/lows we have carried in our minds and hearts since we last met. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.

Quotes for Inspiration/Thoughts to Ponder/Readings

Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment. - Mahatma Ghandi

Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions, and may involve increasing emotional, spiritual, physical, educational, economic, political, and social resources and skills. - Unity Temple, Empowerment curriculum

Incredible change happens in your life when you decide to take control of what you do have power over instead of craving control over what you don't. - Steve Mariboli

The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any. -Alice Walker

A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves. - Lao Tzu

When spider webs unite they can tie up a lion. - Ethiopian proverb

Empowerment depends on collective solidarity in the public arena as well as individual assertiveness in the private. - United Nations Research institute, Women's Project

I want you to remember...That we need to change people's environment if we want to change their future. That we are so much more than our past. That people need community, not condemnation..... That we are powerful! – From The Preamble to the Reentry Bill of Rights, By the Reentry Think Tank

Readings

From Power and Privilege; To Patronize? By Marque Mathias Jensen

What are danger signs that a relationship is patronizing rather than empowering?

- It is clear who is in power, who makes decisions and who is the recipient of “charity”
- The “recipient” is unwilling to express their true feelings for fear of losing financial or emotional support – or because they doubt their own ability to make sound decisions. (often as a result of internalized racism)
- The one in power determines what will be done, when and where – without significantly consulting the ones they desire to help.

...Many of you also have the power of racial privilege and class, how can you create checks to limit your patronizing and increase your empowerment?

- Ask questions before you declare your desire.
- Never make plans FOR others WITHOUT others
 - REMEMBER: “Nothing ABOUT us, WITHOUT us, is FOR us!” – *slogan used by oppressed people around the world*
- Leave room for others to disagree, invite disagreement and criticism – and leave room to change the plan as needed.

From The Empowerment Diary, Psychology Today on-line (5/17/15) by Dianna Raab

When empowerment begins at the personal level, it can easily expand to the collective. Basically, empowerment comes from within, however, according to Starhawk in the book, *The Empowerment Manual* “the structures around us can evoke inner strength and support it, or deny and suppress it.” Whether it is evoked or supported, it is couched in a passionate desire for change. When we have the desire to empower or change the world, Starhawk goes on to say, “We have a desire to bring about greater freedom, justice, peace, and equality.”...The individual might become empowered by a vision that they want to share with the world, and their empowerment becomes contagious. The rewards are twofold—the empowering of the self and the empowerment of others.

Questions

1. An empowered community is one that is confident, inclusive, organized, cooperative, and influential. How do these attributes show up in yourself when in community with others?
2. When have you felt empowered? Who or what facilitated that experience?
3. How does your age, ethnicity, class, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, gender expression, and educational background impact how you think about empowerment?

Spiritual Exercises

1. Volunteer your time, effort, skills, and/or resources to serve others. Have you empowered those you have helped or yourself? Or both? How?
2. What structures around you support or suppress your inner strength? Who has influence over these structures? Write a letter, petition, or letter the editor directed at those who can influence these structures. It can be a letter of thanks or a call for change.

Sitting In Silence

Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon the readings and spiritual exercises.

Sharing/Deep Listening

Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. It is a spiritual practice to create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.

Reflection

This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.

Singing Gathered Here, 389 Singing the Living Tradition

Gathered here in the mystery of the hour. Gathered here in one strong body.
Gathered here in the struggle and the power. Spirit draw near.

Extinguishing the Chalice

If you have dreamed dreams, help one another, that they may come true! If you have known love, give some back to a bruised and hurting world. If here you have found freedom, take it with you into the world. If you have found comfort, go and share it with others. -Lauralyn Bellamy