



Unitarian Universalists love puzzles. We proudly announce that we are the religion that loves questions and questioning. Or to put it another way, we love figuring out life's mysteries. But what if mystery isn't just something to figure out? What if it's also something to be listened to? This is the lesser recognized call of our faith. Being a people of mystery isn't just about engaging life as a marvelous puzzle. It's also about allowing yourself to be spoken to by life's wonder.

Indeed the more you pursue the answers to life's mysteries; the more distant they become. If we want mystery to speak, it seems we have to be willing to be caught off guard. UU humanist minister and poet, David Breeden, captures this beautifully when he writes,

I dug and dug  
Deeper into the earth  
Looking for blue heaven  
Choking always  
On piles of dust rising  
Then once  
At midnight  
I slipped  
And fell into the sky

We fall into mystery and it falls into us. Its voice is one that whispers, "I am you and you are me." Mystery doesn't put up barriers; it dissolves them. Haven't all of us faced the wonder and mystery of a sunset, the stars, a baby's first cry or a lover's wet kiss and thought to ourselves, "Who I am does not end at the barrier of my skin?"

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### **Spiritual Exercise:**

#### **Return to an Ordinary Moment of Deep Meaning**

We've all experienced it: the mystery of an ordinary moment that suddenly unfolds and offers deep meaning. The everyday becomes luminous. This exercise invites you to remember some of those luminous moments and revisit the gift they gave. Take 4 minutes and watch and meditate on the following video:

The Moment: [https://youtu.be/jNVPaINZD\\_I](https://youtu.be/jNVPaINZD_I)

Think of moments you've experienced when life suddenly and mysteriously lit up and reminded you of the marvel and preciousness of being alive. How do these moments move you from a feeling of "the same old, same old" to a feeling of dancing with the sacred? Imagine images from your own life that you'd include if you were making your own video, then keep watch during the following hours and days to see if this meditation changes the way you perceive or dance with your "ordinary" days. Come to your group ready to share what the exercise opens up in you or the gift it gave.

### **Session Plan**

#### **Chalice Lighting**

"But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed. And I laughed, and I cried, and I run all around the house. I knew just what it was. In fact, when it happens, you can't miss it."

- Alice Walker in *The Color Purple*

**Check-in** *Share briefly what's been on your mind lately or your highs and lows 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/Readings**

"Let mystery have its place in you; do not be always turning up your whole soil with the plowshare of self-examination, but leave a little fallow corner in your heart ready for any seed the winds may bring, and reserve a nook of shadow for the passing bird; keep a place in your heart for the unexpected guests, an altar for an unknown God."  
- Henri-Frederic Ariel

"I have a friend who speaks of knowledge as an island in a sea of mystery. Let this then, be the ground of my faith: All that we know, now and forever, all scientific knowledge that we have of this world, or ever will have, is as an island in the sea. Still the mystery surrounds us." - Chet Raymo

"In a true encounter with another human being, we come face to face with the mystery of life. In some way, every other person, no matter how well we know them, will remain as mysterious to us as a country across the ocean we only read about in books... whenever we encounter another human being with respect for this essential unknown, we create the possibility for something genuinely new to emerge. In every interaction, whether it is with a stranger or our longtime partner, we can be surprised by what we have not yet seen or even imagined." - David Rynick

**Questions** *Pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of mystery means for you and your daily living.*

1. What's the most unprovable thing you place your faith in?
2. What mysterious experience still nags at your disbelief?
3. Has mysterious "meaningful coincidence" (synchronicity) ever pointed you in the direction you needed to go, right when you were not sure of your way?
4. Do you spend more time treating life like a problem to be solved, a game to be won, a struggle to be survived or a mystery to be lived?
5. It's said that we stop struggling to feel at peace once we experience the mysterious and transcendent "love that will not let us go." Has this been true for you? Maybe more importantly, what if it is true?

**Sitting in Silence** *Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

**Sharing/Deep Listening** *Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We 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 and gratitude** *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared. Consider lifting up one comment or experience for which you are particularly grateful.*

### **Extinguishing the Chalice**

"The opposite of knowledge isn't always ignorance. It can be wonder. Or mystery. Possibility. And in my life, I've found it's the things I don't know that have lifted me up and pushed me forwards, much more than the things I do know." - Pico Iyer

**Packets are for use only by member congregations of the Soul Matters Sharing Circle.** *Learn how to join at <http://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com>*

