

USG SGM ~ Expectation ~ September, 2019

drawn from Soul Matters materials, see the full packet for more of all of these elements
www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com



Intro

Sometimes we become so focused on taking hold of life that we lose the spiritual skill of allowing life to hold us. And there's a lot at stake in being able to do both. We human beings weren't just made to manifest our power; we were born to learn we are part of a greater whole. Yes, we are strong, but we also tire. And so the question at the core of our souls is not just "Can I expect to make an imprint on life?" but "Can I trust life to carry me if I let go and rest?"

So how about you? What are your expectations of this sacred but stormy sea in which we all swim? Do you have faith that this wildly unpredictable life of ours won't lead you astray? When your expectations get turned on their head, do you see that as a threat or are you willing to lean in? Are you willing to let life's currents lead you where they will?

Spiritual Exercises

1. Dig Into and Defend Your Defensive Pessimism

There are many of us who are proud of being Eeyores and believe that our pessimistic dance with expectations is sorely misunderstood. If this is true of you, take some time this month to explore the concept of "defensive pessimism" in order to better explain your way of being in the world to others. And if you have an Eeyore in your life and want to better understand them, maybe this is your work this month too.

Here are four great places to begin...

- Defensive Pessimism Questionnaire - <http://academics.wellesley.edu/Psychology/Norem/Quiz/quiz.html>
- Are You a 'Defensive Pessimist' or a 'Strategic Optimist'? - <https://www.thecut.com/2015/12/are-you-a-defensive-pessimist.html>
- The Upside of Defensive Pessimism - <https://positivepsychology.com/defensive-pessimism/>
- [The Positive Power Of Negative Thinking](#) - by Julie Norem

2. Take a Penny Hike or Drive

Sometimes the best journeys are those without destinations. Letting a hike or a drive unfold in unexpected ways is a reminder that we don't always have to be in control or bend our paths to fit our exact desires.

As a child, Rev. Jan Taddeo and her family became masters at this spiritual discipline by taking what they called "penny hikes," which involved flipping a coin at every fork in the trail or road to determine which way they would go. You can read about the impact this left on Rev. Taddeo by following the link below. With her story as inspiration, make time this month to take your own Penny Hike or Drive!

Crossing Bridges, Rev. Jan Taddeo

Full reflection at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/crossing-bridges>

"Creating adventure was a theme in my family. My father would take us out on Sunday drives just to "get lost." He would say things like, "Let's just turn down this road and see where it takes us." My mother would take us on penny hikes, flipping a coin at each fork in the trail to see which direction to walk next. We explored trails, creeks, and went bushwhacking a few times, always looking for new adventures. Growing up with an appreciation for the unknown and creating adventures in unexpected ways has served me well..."

Chalice Lighting

When we put down ideas of what life should be like, we are free to wholeheartedly say yes to our life as it is. ~ *Tara Brach*

Check-in *Share your highs and lows since we last met focusing on what drains you and what lifts you up. 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

We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are. ~ *Anaïs Nin & the Talmud*

Be careful what you water your dreams with. Water them with worry and fear and you will produce weeds that choke life. ~ *Lao Tzu*

As we release the hold of expectations and disappointments, as we stop trying to live into the imagined life and live the one we have been given, we discover a profound inner freedom to make choices out of love, rather than obligation or resentment.
~ *Christine Valters Paintner*

My expectations were reduced to zero when I was 21. Everything since then has been a bonus. ~ *Stephen Hawking*

Anyone who loves in the expectation of being loved in return is wasting their time. ~ *Paulo Coelho*

I would love to live like a river flows, carried by the surprise of its own unfolding. ~ *John O'Donohue*

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 Expectation means for you and your daily living.*

1. Who helps you remember that people really can change?
2. Do you have a spiritual practice that helps you lean into life's unexpected twists and turns? Is it time to get one?
3. Do you know what your fellow black and brown UUs expect of you? Do you know if you've met their expectations? (from Brittany Packnett in the 2018 Ware Lecture: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkV2fNuN1C4>)
4. Do you expect life to give you what you deserve? Is that belief one that gets in your way or helps you make your way?

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.

Singing You Can't Always Get What You Want (Rolling Stones) cover by Rusted Root
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19LqYQa7N2I>

Extinguishing the Chalice

Life is not under my management. It is free, and dappled, not pure. Life is this, not something else...Even God does not yet know what's in store before unfolding in it.
~ *Steve Garnaas-Holmes*