

USG SGM ~ Healing ~ November 2020

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



Introduction

Oh, how we want to escape our pain. Worry, loss, death, exhaustion, anxiety, Covid claustrophobia, political instability, the unraveling of our democracy, racial harm. It's all overwhelming. We want to stitch up our protective coverings as soon as we can so our exposed and tender nerves can rest. We want the pain behind us as soon as possible. But what if the work is to travel toward it? What if proximity to pain not distance from it is the real route to healing?

Spiritual Exercises

Share Your Apt Words

In 1671 John Milton wrote, "apt words have power to swage / The tumors of a troubled mind / And are as balm to festered wounds."

What words have healed you? What poem, book or music lyric helped you hold on? Gave you hope? Led you to a new you? As a way of testifying to the truth of Milton's quote, spend some time this month revisiting the words you once held on to in order to hold yourself together. And maybe it's not about *revisiting* for you. Maybe your work is *to find* your current "healing words" – the words you need *right now* to deal with today's wounds and worry. Whichever it is, remember that healing words aren't always easy or immediately comforting. Sometimes the words we need to hear the most are the ones that are hard to hear or grab us by the shoulders and shake us awake.

Bring that healing poem, quote, book or music lyric to your group and be ready to share your story of the healing it offered - or is offering - to you.

Wrestle with the Call of Reparations

Reparations: Some argue racial healing requires it; others declare it unrealistic. But no matter where one stands, all of us can at least admit that the refusal to make space for the discussion drives us even farther from healing.

Besides asking "Where do you stand?" maybe the equally important question is, "Why is America so afraid of the discussion?" Once you dive in, the answer is hard to miss: The reparations debate challenges us with hard questions: What does apology without accountability mean? How can personal reconciliation occur without structural repair? How much of our comfort are we will to sacrifice to heal others' pain? Are you willing to look honestly at the casualties of your comfort and success? Can we disagree about the efficacy of reparations and still consider each other allies?

With these challenging questions in mind, this exercise invites you to explore the diverse articles below not simply with the question of "What's my opinion?" but also "Where is my resistance coming from?" "What scares me about this topic?" and "How is the conversation itself trying to help me heal?"

Come to your group ready to share what the articles below taught you about yourself.

- [The Case for Reparations](#), Ta-Nehisi Coates ([related article](#))
- [The centuries-long fight for reparations](#)
- [The Impossibility of Reparations](#), David Frum
- [Why I Changed My Mind On The Reparations Debate](#), Julie Wittes Schlack
- [7 Key Questions in the U.S. Slavery Reparations Debate](#)
- [America Has Tried Reparations Before. Here Is How It Went.](#)
- [A Change of Heart on Reparations](#)
- [Reparations and Healing](#), a sermon by Rev. Ashley Horan

Chalice Lighting

We think that the point is to pass the test or overcome the problem, but the truth is that things don't really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again. It's just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy. – Pema Chödrön

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

- Rarely, if ever, are any of us healed in isolation. Healing is an act of communion. - bell hooks
- Life becomes easier when you learn to accept an apology you never got. -Robert Brault
- Nobody escapes being wounded. We all are wounded people, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. The main question is not “How can we hide our wounds?” so we don't have to be embarrassed, but “How can we put our woundedness in the service of others?” - Henri J. M. Nouwen
- My heart is moved by all I cannot save: so much has been destroyed I have to cast my lot with those who age after age, perversely, with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world. -Adrienne Rich
- Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. -Wendy Mass

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 Healing means for you and your daily living.*

1. Who first healed you by *not* trying to fix you?
2. Are you still letting old stories tell you who you are?
3. Do you need to heal your relationship to pleasure and play?
4. Have you been running on empty for so long that you no longer notice?
5. Are you trying to forget when healing wants you to remember?
6. Is it possible to see pain as an invitation not just an enemy?

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 *Tomorrow by Miner* <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=6L4OjI8bVdc&list=PLvXOKgQQVYP4TE2h-Wk2L9F5TI6TZSuZo>

Extinguishing the Chalice

I've had a lot of problems in my life, and most of them never happened. -Mark Twain