

USG SGM ~ Cultivating Relationship ~ October 2021

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

www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com



Chalice Lighting

Rarely, if ever, are any of us healed in isolation. Healing is an act of communion. [bell hooks](#)

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.*

Intro

When we are engaged in acts of love, we humans are at our best and most resilient. The love in romance that makes us want to be better people, the love of children that makes us change our whole lives to meet their needs, the love of family that makes us drop everything to take care of them, the love of community that makes us work tirelessly with broken hearts... If love were the central practice of a new generation of organizers and spiritual leaders, it would have a massive impact... If the goal was to increase the love, rather than winning or dominating a constant opponent, I think we could actually imagine liberation from constant oppression. We would suddenly be seeing everything we do, everyone we meet, not through the tactical eyes of war, but through eyes of love. We would see that there's no such thing as a blank canvas, an empty land or a new idea — but everywhere there is complex, ancient, fertile ground full of potential... We would understand that the strength of our movement is in the strength of our relationships, which could only be measured by their depth. [Adrienne Maree Brown](#)

Spiritual Exercise: Childhood Questions That Cultivate

It's often surprising how little we know about our partner's or close friend's childhoods. Yet awareness of that early part of one's life adds depth to our relationships in ways that little else can. So, for your exercise this month: **Fill in the childhood blanks!** With the below list of questions as your guide, have a conversation of depth with your partner or a close friend sometime this month. Come to your group with the story of your favorite moment from the conversation.

Questions List

1. Who was your childhood best friend, and what is your favorite memory with that person?
2. What was your favorite childhood activity?
3. What was your favorite childhood toy?
4. What was your favorite movie growing up?
5. What was your first screen name?
6. Who was your first kiss? Do you think they remember you?
7. What sort of rules did you have in your house growing up?
8. What was your best family vacation?
9. Were you closer with one parent over the other? Why?
10. Were you closer with one sibling over the other? Why?
11. What caused you to get into the most trouble with your parents?
12. How did you and your family celebrate holidays?
13. What the best thing one of siblings did for you? What was the worst thing?
14. What kind of student were you?
15. Is there a childhood achievement you were particularly proud of?
16. What is your favorite childhood memory?
17. What was your childhood dream? Is there a particular reason you stopped pursuing it?
18. What was your most embarrassing childhood moment?

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

I believe every inch of America is sacred, from sea to shining sea. I believe we make it holy by who we welcome and by how we relate to each other. Call it my Muslim eyes on the American project. "We made you different nations and tribes that you may come to know one another," says the Qur'an.

Eboo Patel

Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world.

[bell hooks](#)

My friend is one who knows my song and sings it to me when I forget.

Anonymous

Out
of a great need
we are all holding hands
and climbing.
Not loving is a letting go.
Listen,
the terrain around here
is
far too
dangerous
for
that.
Hafiz

We must remember to go slow. It's the secret so rarely mentioned. Simply put, relationships are hard to build when we are running.

Rev. Scott Tayler

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 **cultivating relationship** means for you and your daily living.*

1. How far are you willing to let empathy take you?
2. When did you first realize there was something called "a chosen family"?
3. What "unnoticed" sacred relationship is our country most in danger of severing? What unacknowledged tearing of threads scares you the most?
4. Are you owed an apology, but afraid to ask for it?
5. Do you ever feel that the push to cultivate relationships is overblown? Do you ever wish our culture (or those around you) had a greater appreciation of aloneness? What is it about aloneness that others around you don't understand?

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 (or watching a video of someone else singing) Stand by Me (Live)

Tracy Chapman <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=8XL6C3vY0jM&feature=share>

Extinguishing the Chalice The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us, and the light goes out. James Baldwin