

## USG SGM ~Opening to Joy ~ December, 2021

drawn from Soul Matters materials, this session plan contains only those elements that are by or about people of color, see the full packet for more of all of these elements

[www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com](http://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com)



### Chalice Lighting

Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy. Thich Nhat Hanh

**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.*

### Spiritual Exercise *Explore the Joy in Resistance*

Writer and activist, adrienne maree brown, reminds us that “Feeling good is not frivolous, it is freedom.” As many of us work to dismantle and heal from the racism around us, this vision that joy is and can be an act of resistance is indispensable. So spend some time this month learning from or being held by some of those clarifying and lifting up this vision:

\*Joy Is The Justice We Give Ourselves, J. Drew Lanham

<https://emergencemagazine.org/poem/joy-is-the-justice-we-give-ourselves/>

\*Joy As Resistance, and joy that my dignity demands, Austin Channing Brown

<https://austinchanning.substack.com/p/joy-as-resistance>

\*Pleasure Activism, interview with adrienne maree brown

<https://repeller.com/what-is-pleasure-activism/>

### Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

I dreamed a few years back that I was in a supermarket checking out when I had the stark and luminous and devastating realization—in that clear way, not that oh yeah way—that my life would end. I wept in line watching people go by with their carts, watching the cashier move items over the scanner, feeling such an absolute love for this life. And the mundane fact of buying groceries with other people whom I do not know, like all the banalities, would be no more so soon. [Ross Gay](#)

Pleasure reminds us to enjoy being alive and on purpose... Pleasure—embodied, connected pleasure—is one of the ways we know when we are free. That we are always free. That we always have the power to co-create the world. Pleasure helps us move through the times that are unfair, through grief and loneliness, through the terror of genocide, or days when the demands are just overwhelming. Pleasure heals the places where our hearts and spirit get wounded. Pleasure reminds us that even in the dark, we are alive. Pleasure is a medicine for the suffering that is absolutely promised in life... Pleasure is the point. Feeling good is not frivolous, it is freedom. [adrienne maree brown](#)

Joy is the justice,  
we give ourselves.  
It is Maya's caged bird  
sung free past the prison bars  
holding spirits bound—  
without due process  
without just cause... *J. Drew Lanham*

Full piece at <https://emergencemagazine.org/poem/joy-is-the-justice-we-give-ourselves/>

I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy. *Rabindranath Tagore*

What if we joined our sorrows, I'm saying. I'm saying: What if that is joy? [Ross Gay](#)

### Questions

1. What were you first taught about "deserving joy"?
2. How has joy surprised you during Covid?
3. How has your definition of joy changed as you've grown older?
4. Are you mostly a creator of joy, receiver of joy, notice-er of joy or spreader of joy?
5. Is it time to choose joy?

**Sitting in Silence** *Let's take three deep breaths together.*

### 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 reflect briefly on 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.*

**Song** Ain't Got No-I Got Life, Nina Simone  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5jl9I03q8E>

### Extinguishing the Chalice

Ultimately, love for the self is the deepest pleasure we deny ourselves. I work daily to be courageous enough to indulge in the purest pleasure of self-love. [adrienne maree brown](#)