

USG SGM ~ Finding Our Center ~ January, 2023

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

www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com



Chalice Lighting: At the center of your being, you have the answer; you know who you are, and you know what you want. - Lao Tzu

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: Root Word: "Amen" — can be traced to the ancient Egyptian sacred word "ament," which can be translated as "the ground of being" or "by the earth on which I stand." The roots point to the sensation of the earth supporting one from underneath, so they express "I stand on what I have said."

Spiritual Exercises Pick Purposeful Pauses

In our culture of faster, better and never enough, it is easy to live our lives on autopilot. Taking one or two intentional pauses throughout our day allows us to challenge and correct that. It enables us to stay close to our center and be more fully present. It is a practice of mindfulness that all spiritual traditions embrace in one form or another.

With this in mind, you are invited to take a week and weave in at least one purposeful pause into your day. Don't overcomplicate it. This can be as simple as taking a walk or pausing for a few minutes of deep breathing. One useful technique is to stop what you are doing, look around and ask yourself, "What do I notice around me?" or "What is going on in my body right now?" (You can also write down what you notice and then look back over it at the end of the week for connections) For those who want to explore a slightly more involved practice, try making time for one of these online guided mindful meditations each day: <https://reset.thriveglobal.com/>.

During and after the week, note how these purposeful pauses altered or enhanced your emotional state and/or the patterns of your day. Come to your group ready to share the most impactful insight you gained.

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

We do not become writers... dancers...musicians...helpers...peacemakers. We came as such. We are. Some of us are still catching up to what we are. - Clarissa Pinkola Estes

It took many years of vomiting up all the filth I'd been taught about myself, and half-believed, before I was able to walk on the earth as though I had a right to be here. - James Baldwin

I believe that deep wisdom resides within each of us. Some call this voice by different sacred names—Spirit, God, Jesus, Allah, Om, Buddha-nature, Waheguru. Others think of this voice as the intuition one hears when in a calm state of mind...

Whatever name we choose, listening to our deepest wisdom requires disciplined practice. The loudest voices in the world right now are ones running on the energy of fear, criticism, and cruelty... But I must not lose myself at the feet of others. My most vigilant spiritual practice is finding the seconds of solitude to get quiet enough to hear the Wise Woman in me. - Valarie Kaur

Dear Black America — We are many things, aren't we? We are hair. God yes, we are hair. And song. And memory. We are a language so deep it has no need for words.

And we are words that feint, dart, and wheel like birds. Like James Brown, we feel good. Like Fannie Lou Hamer, we are sick and tired. We are fearsome. We are fire. Like God, we are that we are.

- Tracy K. Smith

Here's what I discovered about the Wise Woman [within]: Her voice is quiet... I have to get really quiet in order to hear her. How do I know when I am hearing her voice? She is tender and truthful. She is not afraid of anything or anyone. She does not give me all the answers, but she does know what I need to do in this moment—to wonder, grieve, fight, rage, listen, reimagine, breathe, or push. - Valarie Kaur

We all find ourselves bouncing around three very human lies that we believe about our identity: I am what I have, I am what I do, and I am what other people say or think about me.

- Christopher L. Heuertz

Inner peace doesn't come from getting what we want, but from remembering who we are.

– Marianne Williamson

When the inner walls to your soul are graffitied with advertisements, commercials, and the opinions of everyone who has ever known and labeled you, turning inwards requires nothing less than a major clean-up. - Dawna Markova

If one is not faithful to his own individuality, then they cannot be loyal to anything. - Claude McKay

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 Finding Your Center means for you and your daily living.*

1. Who first helped you find your true self?
2. Who first helped you find “the fire in your belly”?
3. What do you do to stay in touch with the fire in your belly?
4. What if you find your center when remembering the nicest thing someone ever said to you?
5. When was the last time someone asked you about that which lies at the deepest center of who you are?
7. Who were you before others told you “You’re too much!” or “You’re not good enough!”?
8. Does the idea of “following your bliss” play a role in your life right now?

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: Click [here](#) for YouTube Playlist

Extinguishing the Chalice: When someone deeply listens to you, your bare feet are on the earth and a beloved land that seemed distant is now at home within you. - John Fox