

USG SGM ~ Presence ~ December 2024

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



Chalice Lighting

In an age of speed, I began to think, nothing could be more invigorating than going slow. In an age of distraction, nothing can feel more luxurious than paying attention. And in an age of constant movement, nothing is more urgent than sitting still. - Pico Iyer

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 Exercises

1) Be Present with the Day You Just Had (The Practice of One Sentence Diaries)

Our days can easily drift by us, and sometimes steamroll us. Either way, we lose hold of them, and they lose hold of us. Holding on and being present to our days is what diary writing has long been about. But complex and extensive diary entries are a hard commitment to keep, that's why one-sentence diaries are so helpful. They enable us to be present with our days in a manageable and sustainable way. Give this practice of one-sentence diaries a try, either by testing it out for a month or by using this month to begin a long-term commitment to the process. Here are some guides to get you started:

<https://dayoneapp.com/blog/one-sentence-a-day/>

<https://gretchenrubin.com/articles/spotlight-on-the-one-sentence-journal/>

Come to your group ready to share not only how doing one sentence a day was meaningful, but also why you were drawn to it in the first place. Enjoy holding on to your days!

2) The Absence that Feels Most Present

There's something about winter and the holidays within it that invite back into our awareness the presence of those we have loved and lost. So many things become doorways through which these beloveds return: an ornament, a Christmas carol, the lights of the menorah or a simple candle flickering in a window, or just everyone laughing and you noticing the absence of theirs. Whose absence feels most present to you during the holiday season? And, maybe more important, what can you do this month to honor them and feel their presence more deeply? Consider engaging with this presence by choosing a meaningful object that brings your loved one's presence to mind; spend some time going through old photos or recalling memories of them; wear or use something that belonged to them (like jewelry, clothing, a quilt); prepare their favorite meal and talk about why they loved it. Open yourself to what comes with engaging with these activities.

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

I didn't know I would be
the kind of woman

who talks to the dead,
who narrates the day,
who believes they hear me
after midnight when I whisper
I miss you...
How strangely wondrous

life can be after a loss.
I feel their presence in the listening,
feel how the listening wraps
its tender arms around me,
feel how gently the listening
leans in to cradle my face
with silence.
- Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

At the end of the day: do others feel loved in your presence? This is the spiritual bottom line.
- Masin Kipp

You could ask what would be a good use of my life, thinking the answer is going to be a career choice or something, but I would say the most important thing is using your life to train in being present—in being here with an open heart. Synchronizing your mind with your body—having them be in the same place at the same time with a brave, honest, but also gentle attitude towards yourself and towards what you see. - Pema Chödrön

There must be in every [person's] life some place for the singing of angels, some place for that which... throws all the rest of life into a new and creative relatedness... The commonplace is shot through with new glory; old burdens become lighter, deep and ancient wounds lose much of their old, old hurting. - Howard Thurman

Beauty and grace are performed whether or not we will or sense them. The least we can do is try to be there. - Annie Dillard

Most of us have spent our lives caught up in plans, expectations, ambitions for the future; in regrets, guilt or shame about the past. To come into the present is to stop the war.
- Jack Kornfield

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 Presence means for you and your daily living.

- 1) How do regularly practice remaining present to the injustice and suffering of others? How do you intentionally let it touch you, even as our culture tells you, in a thousand tricky ways, that it's ok to ignore it and shut it out?
- 2) What do you know now about being in the present moment that you didn't know when you were younger?
- 3) Do reminders about the brevity of our lives and calls to "live every day as if it were your last" help or get in the way of you being present to the preciousness of your days?
- 4) Has the absence of a loved one ever felt as powerful as their presence was?
- 5) Do you long to be more comfortable with solitude and with being in the presence of just yourself?

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)

Joe Pug, Hymn #35: <https://youtu.be/GITHINyoOVc>

Extinguishing the Chalice

Stop measuring days by degree of productivity and start experiencing them by degree of presence. - Alan Watts