



Chalice Lighting

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. *Eboo Patel*

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: Compliments that Call Us Into Belonging

The connection between compliments and belonging is often [overlooked](#). In our culture, compliments are not talked about, or they are used to manipulate others to get something from them or to get them to do something we want them to do. Think of your boss who compliments you to keep you "motivated."

But done with authenticity and [a bit of skill](#), compliments create belonging in so many ways. For instance, they [alter the atmosphere](#) around the one we compliment, leaving them consciously or unconsciously feeling as though they now belong to a world where positivity and wishing each other well reigns rather than a world where competition and isolation rules. Compliments also alter *the self* one belongs to. When we notice and lift up someone's specific actions or qualities, we don't just help them feel seen, we wake them up to the uniqueness of who they are.

To honor this and sharpen our compliment skills, go out of your way this month to compliment strangers and friends. Remember it doesn't have to be overly complicated. Simple compliments make a big impact.

To help you on your way, here is a playful but powerful example of compliments in action:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDxTJnkOa60>

And here is some advice about how to give a compliment that connects:

- <https://www.oprahdaily.com/life/relationships-love/a28221845/how-to-give-compliments/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doisC3SD10s>
- <https://time.com/6963181/how-to-give-good-compliments/>

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

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 was so shocked to learn that the opposite of belonging is fitting in. Because fitting in is assessing a group of people and changing who you are. But true belonging never asks us to change who we are. It demands we be who we are. *Brené Brown*

I do feel life would be easy if I was like everyone else. If I conformed to everything society wanted me to be. Yes, life would be easy. But I don't think life would be colorful.

Kathleen Yap

Membership is down across unions, congregations, and voluntary organizations. It seems we're increasingly looking for belonging without membership... In a culture where authenticity is king, melting into membership feels like an attack on individual personhood... And mutuality isn't seen as a safety net, but a stone that might sink us both... I'd wager that this is why ephemeral connective experiences are so popular: think retreats, festivals, and conventions. We look for meaningful connections amidst the safety of temporality.

Casper ter Kuile

We belong to every part of our lives and every part of our lives belongs to us. Even the failures. The cruelty. The betrayals. The addictions. The cowardice. Until we embrace those scared and tender parts with the kindness and forgiveness we so generously give to others, we will never be whole. We will never be home. *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 Building Belonging means for you and your daily living.*

1. Of all the communities you have belonged to, which is your favorite? If you could say thank you to it, what would you say?
2. What aspect of your personality do you need to do a better job of embracing and welcoming in? Your judgmental self? Your lazy self? Your vulnerable self? Your bitter self? Your easily frightened self? Your quick-to-anger self? Your jealous self? Your petty self? Your selfish self?
3. What long hoped-for life do you need to let go of in order for you to belong to the life right in front of you?
4. Do you know what it is like to be in a community or relationship that requires you to [remove or deny parts](#) of yourself to belong?
5. What gift did your "[chosen family](#)" give you that your family of origin didn't or couldn't?

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)

Soil's Daughter, by Aisha Badru

<https://open.spotify.com/track/4j1lYD4UNekJim2UMh5x2X?si=d7a88c1d01754d30>

Extinguishing the Chalice

Home is where I want to be, but I guess I'm already there.

Talking Heads, "[This Must Be the Place](#)"