

USG SGM ~ Paying Attention ~ March 2026

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



Chalice Lighting Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity. -Simone Weil

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

Savor: Another way to pay closer attention to the world around you comes from master looker, Rob Walker, the author of the completely absorbing blog, [The Art of Noticing](#). One of his more recent efforts is what he calls Savor of the Month. In short, at the start of every month, he announces one specific type of thing or general idea for his blog followers to look out for and document by taking pictures. The goal is to find as many examples of that thing/theme you can. The idea, as he puts it, is “to convert something everyday and taken for granted into something we might, yes, savor.” So this month, make up a savor adventure of your own!

- **Start by picking your own one-word thing or theme** to look out for all month. Here are some examples to choose from or inspire a selection of your own: Reflections, Shadows, Circles, Stripes, Signs, Wind, Benches, Piles, Locks, Trash, Stickers, Repetition, Hubcaps, Rust, Cracks.
- **Keep your theme in mind all month.** The gift of this part of the exercise is recognizing the power we have to train our attention and become more intentional about how we use our precious and limited focus.
- **Compile your collection of photos and notice the details** of each version of the thing/theme you choose. Soon it will become apparent that these are not “the same thing.” While they share general qualities, each is its own unique expression of existence. This will become a reminder of how often we see things and people as categories and thus don’t really see them at all.
- **Extra Credit:** Do something creative with all the photos. Make them into a collage, video, booklet or calendar; Something that will allow you to revisit this exercise and remember the insights and invitations it offered you.

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

Distraction gives you plenty of stimulation, but very little chosen experience. You don’t decide what matters; you drift into what is loud, new, frictionless, and emotionally sticky. And drift becomes a worldview — an unconscious credo: nothing deserves full presence; everything can be interrupted. The deeper problem is not that you miss a few minutes. It’s that you slowly lose the thread of your own life. You become someone who is always “around,” but rarely here. -J.W. Bertolotti

If we were not so single-minded about keeping our lives moving, and for once could do nothing, perhaps a huge silence might interrupt this sadness of never understanding ourselves. -Pablo Neruda

Tell me what you pay attention to and I will tell you who you are. -José Ortega y Gasset

I once had a garden filled with flowers that grew only on dark thoughts but they needed constant attention and one day I decided I had better things to do. -StoryPeople

Shake the scales from your imagination. Reach. Stretch. Rise. There is no more time for pretending that everything can be all right without your care, without your attention. -Rev. Julián Jamaica Soto

All winter long I overlooked three uninhabited nests... What else is there in this world that my hustling and bustling have barred me from sensing and seeing?... My guess is that it is not only delights, such as these nests but violence, too, that's within perception's range, if only I gave it my true attention. Acts of exclusion, discrimination, and the impacts of systemic oppression are all there, right before me... I have been taught to not see them—but they are there. -Rev. Karen G. Johnston

If we want to support each other's inner lives, we must remember a simple truth: the human soul does not want to be fixed, it wants simply to be seen and heard. -Parker J. Palmer

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 Paying Attention means for you and your daily living.

- 1) When growing up, what one or two things, above all others, did your family communicate that were worthy of attention? Beauty? Duty? Kindness? Humility? Honesty? Reputation? Education? Loyalty? Success? God?
- 2) Tell a story about a time you purposely avoided paying attention to something painful or hard. Often our avoidance involves a mix of both healthy and not-do-healthy motives. How was that true for you?
- 3) What do you turn your attention to when you want to find yourself again?
- 4) As you've aged, what new things have grabbed your attention in a way they haven't before? How are you a different kind of person because of this?

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)

Be Here Now - Ray LaMontagne:  [Ray LaMontagne - Be Here Now \(Official Audio\)](#)

Extinguishing the Chalice

Instructions for living a life: Pay attention Be astonished. Tell about it. -Mary Oliver