



*Soul Matters*

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# Embracing Possibility



Small Group  
April 2026

# Welcome to Embracing Possibility

Of all our themes this year, Embracing Possibility is arguably most central to our faith. It has distinguished Unitarian Universalists from our beginning. Historically, when others saw depravity and sin at the core of human identity, we saw potential. When many were preaching that this world is fallen, we fell in love with the possibility of heaven on earth. Theologically, you might say we were the people who believed that God hadn't given up on us and so we shouldn't give up on each other or this world. Psychologically, it's led to us being a people of "why not?" Why not give people another chance? Why not fight what seems like a losing battle? Why not risk a little failure? Or forgiveness? Why not trust in the possibility of a new dawn?

So that's our religion. But what about us personally? How open have you been recently to "Why not?" How's your faith in possibility doing? As we honor our religion's unwavering faith in what's possible, we need to allow space for the reality that trusting possibility isn't so easy for many of us. Here's how one Soul Matters group member put the challenge:

*"When I think of possibility, I think of all the people and opportunities I've closed the door on. I've let myself believe that I would never see eye to eye with my sister. I stayed way too long at a ho-hum job because I was scared about starting my own business. And I spent two very lonely years in a new town because I convinced myself that I could never find close friends like I had where I used to live."*

Who of us can't relate? We all tell ourselves so many small stories about who we and others are. We all - at one time or another - have lived in tiny tales of what the world could be. Part of it has to do with real life defeats. But often a bigger part of it is about imagined fear and protecting ourselves. There's comfort in convincing yourself that the effort is hopeless; that way you don't have to try and risk failure, hurt or disappointment, yet again.

All of which is to say that maybe embracing possibility has more to do with being able to embrace vulnerability and courage than we've thought. The work isn't just about *believing* in possibility. It's about being willing to endure a few wounds along the way. It can hurt to be hopeful.

And if that's true, then it seems that the core question this month isn't simply "Are you ready to embrace possibility?" but "Who binds up your wounds and tends to your hurt when you risk possibility?" And a whole host of clarifying questions spill out from there, such as: Who have you gathered around you to pick you up and patch you up when the path of possibility gets bumpy and knocks you down? Whose faith can you lean on when yours grows dim? Have you placed yourself in the orbit of someone who consistently tells bigger stories than you? And maybe most important: Have you found a friend or partner that sees more possibility in you than you do yourself?

The thread woven through all these questions is, of course, the fundamental truth that no one makes it down the road of possibility alone.

And perhaps that's the real secret: remembering that "Why not?" is something we all have to say and sing *together*. It's not a solo act. For "Why not?" to sink in - and better yet, take flight - it needs to be at least a duet. Of course a quartet is even better. And just imagine what we might pull off if we can gather a choir, all singing the tune of "Why not?!" at the top of our lungs!

# Spiritual Exercises

It's one thing to analyze a theme; it's quite another to experience it. By pulling us out of the space of *thinking* and into the space of *doing*, our spiritual exercises invite us to figure out not just what we have to say about life, but also what life has to say *to us*! With that in mind, pick and complete the one exercise that speaks to you the most. **Come to your group ready to share why you picked the exercise you did, how it surprised you and what gift it gave you.**

## Option A

### ***Which Possibility Quote is Trying to Speak to You?***

Sometimes we read a quote and it perfectly captures what's going on for us right now. It puts into words what we've felt but been struggling to articulate. Suddenly everything falls into place.

With this in mind, spend some time this month reading through the quotes in the Companion Pieces section below to **find the one that offers you the message of comfort or challenge that you need to hear right now.**

Come to your group ready to share what it was like when that special quote "lit up" for you and how exactly that quote offered you a gift.

## Option B

### ***What Needs Unlocked?***

For many of us who live in a place with four seasons, March and April are mostly about disappointment. After suffering through the cold and darkness of winter, we expect spring to start springing in March and April. But it just doesn't happen. We expect flowers and warmth and instead what we usually get is mud!

But what if we've got March and April all wrong? What if those two months are not about blooming, but noticing what wants to bloom? What if they are not about celebrating the flowers bursting through the soil, but about trying to support the seeds stirring beneath the surface?

According to the inimitable writer, Kurt Vonnegut, the answer to all of these questions is, yes! For him, March and April are not part of the season of spring, but a separate season nestled between winter and spring called "the unlocking season." This new understanding of March and April is part of his [argument](#) that there are six seasons, not four: summer (July & August), fall (September & October), locking (November and December), winter (January & February), unlocking (March & April), spring (May & June). In short, Vonnegut is honoring how March and April are all about the moment when the ice of winter loosens its grip just enough for whatever has been trapped underground to begin to stir.

So, with this in mind, this exercise asks you to set aside some time this month to notice where "the ice" in your life is "loosening its grip."

Start by focusing on these three questions:

- *What is awakening in my life?*
- *What in me wants to unfold?*
- *What needs "unlocked" in my life so possibility can emerge?*

Then move on to how you can support this seed that longs to emerge, asking yourself:

- *"Where do I need to loosen, soften, or crack open a closed door so that what is stirring inside me has room to grow?"*

## Option C

### *The Possibility of Putting it Down*

In his possibility drenched poem, [Things to Think](#), Robert Bly writes,

When someone knocks on the door, think that they're about  
To give you something large: tell you you're forgiven,  
Or that it's not necessary to work all the time, or that it's  
Been decided that if you lie down no one will die.

Bly's words are an urgent reminder that it's possible for us to let go of many of the things that drain our spirit. It's also a reminder that putting things down opens up space for the possible.

So what's draining your spirit? Working all the time? A friendship that's well beyond its shelf life? Always picking up after everyone (literally or figuratively)? Daily workouts that could be reduced to every other day? Having to be the one who always organizes all the family events? The self-imposed expectation that you are "the responsible one"? The worry-soaked assumption that your life or retirement savings need to be bullet-proof before you can lean into enjoyment?

Whatever it is, this month try putting it down or letting it go. And if fully letting it go feels overwhelming, then just figure out how to take a first step toward it. Or just tackle the task of clearly naming what you need to let go of.

And then step back and watch what that putting down makes possible!

## Option D

### *If Any Life Was Possible*

Spiritual and religious traditions encourage and help us love the life we have. But it is fun - and often instructive - to imagine the life we would live if anything was possible.

So, for this month's exercise, lean into your imagination and **write a poem or journal-sized reflection on what you would be if another life was possible**. Be as silly or serious, playful or profound as you like. And remember, sometimes it helps to revisit what you dreamed about becoming when you were a child.

So what will it be? A trapeze artist? An impressionist painter? A member of King Aurther's court? A costume designer for movies set in the Victorian era? The owner of your own restaurant? The first person to walk on Mars? A death doula? A hermit? A circus clown? An urban planner of the first zero emission city? Spiderman?

Whether you take the playful or profound route, be sure to dedicate part of your writing to reflecting on the longing that lies at the center of your choice. This is where the deeper work lies. Because while you may not really be able to be a trapeze artist, it's certainly possible to satisfy that longing to escape the "gravity" of worry that sits at the center of that high-flying choice. Or to put it another way, you do not need to become that imagined version of yourself to access what it represents.

## Option E

### ***Grieving & Learning From Your Unlived Lives***

We all grieve the possible lives we didn't get or that could have been. But do we fully understand what that grief is about?

What if that grief isn't just calling us to work through our sadness about the past? What if it's also trying to [send us a message](#) about the present?

In other words, the sadness someone feels about not getting to travel around the world isn't just about not getting to see the Eiffel Tower; it's also about their *current* longing for freedom. Or their desire to run away from the social expectations weighing them down.

How about the regret people feel around the relationships they failed to pursue or let go of too easily? Maybe it's about that person in their past. But it's more likely about how they long for more passion or a sense of feeling fully seen *in their current relationship*.

So what message might your grief over an unlived life be trying to send you? How might your regret over letting a past possibility slip by be trying to shake you awake to what's still possible today?

With this in mind, read [this article](#) and work through the steps it lays out. Come to your group ready to share the action/change the article led you to. (Or the action/change you *plan to do* because of the article)

## Option F

### ***The Many Possible Names of God!***

For a number of us, talk about God has shut down possibilities in our life. But author and religious innovator, [Casper ter Kuile](#), urges us to reclaim and expand [our sense of what's possible](#) when it comes to our understanding of God. To do this he invites us to "experiment with creative divine naming." For instance, he lifts up the fact that Muslims have ninety-nine names for God, including the Most Merciful, the Patient, the Enricher, the Shaper of Beauty, the Opener, and the Constrictor. Asking himself what kind of God contemporary Americans might need, Casper comes up with and names these Gods: Screen-Shutter, Air-Breather, Heart-Healer, Body-Lover, Anxiety-Shedder.

So how about you? Might you be up for playing with the possible names for God?

If so, start by reading [Casper's essay](#) and then consider one (or all) of these options:

- **The God of Your Chapters:** Look back over the chapters of your life and list the name of the particular God that was accompanying and supporting you during those chapters of your life. For instance, those of us who had a childhood marked by freedom and play, might come up with "The God of Delight." Turning to the chapter when our first child was born, we might identify the God of that time as "the Emissary of Joyful Beginnings." The goal is to create a long list of the *many* "Gods" we encountered. And then once that list is complete, step back and see what that list as a whole has to say about your life and/or your understanding of the human journey.

- **Postcards to the Gods You Have Known:** Write a bunch of short “postcard-sized” paragraphs to all the Gods you have encountered. For instance, the God you were given as a child, the God that wounded you, the God you left behind, the God who saved you, the God who surprised you, etc. Basically, “send” each of the Gods from your life a post-card, letting them know what they meant to or what harm they caused or how they helped you get to where you are. Oh, and you might also let them know what you liked most (or didn’t like most) about them!
- **Let the Names of God Come to You:** In his essay, Casper points to [an AI tool](#) that comes up with names of Gods for you based on “the context” that you type in. For instance, when “my spouse just died” is typed in, it generates and invites you to look out for a God named “Veil Keeper.” When you type in “I just retired” it lists and invites you to connect with two gods called “Restoria” and “Tranquilith.” The point of this tool is to open up your imagination and help you think about your life situation in new ways. With that in mind you might consider writing a short reflection on how this [God Name Generator](#) offered you a new perspective on your situation or on life in general (or on your understanding of God!).

## Option G

### *Ask Them About Possibility*

One of the best ways to explore our monthly themes is to have conversations about them with people who are close to you. It’s also a great way to deepen our relationships! Below is a list of questions to guide your conversation. Be sure to let your conversation partner know in advance that this won’t be a typical conversation. Telling them a bit about Soul Matters will help set the stage. *Remember to also answer the questions yourself as they are meant to support a conversation, not just a time of quizzing them.*

Come to your group ready to share what surprised you about the conversation and what gift or insight it gave you. As always, keep a lookout for how your inner voice is trying to send you a message of comfort or challenge through these conversions with others.

#### **Possibility Questions:**

- What book from your childhood convinced you that life was full of possibility?
- If you could go back in time and expand your family of origin’s sense of possibility in just one way, what would it be?
- Has anyone ever made you feel that possibilities were closed for you?
- At what stage of life did you have the greatest sense of possibility?
- We all tell ourselves, “One day I will...” What “One day I will” sentence has been with you the longest?
- Has your belief in the possibility of a better world grown or shrunk over the past couple of years? What event was a turning point for you?
- What possible or unlived life do you think about the most?

# Finding Your Question

This list of questions is an aid for [deep reflection](#). How you answer them is often less important than the journey they take you on.

So, read through the list of questions 2-3 times until **one question** sticks out for you and captures your attention, or as some faith traditions say, until one of the questions "[shimmers](#)." Or as we like to say, "Read over them until one of the questions **picks you**."

Then reflect on that question using one or all of these questions:

- What is going on in my life right now that makes this question so pronounced for me?
- What might my inner wisdom be trying to [say to me](#) through this question?
- How might this question be trying to wake me up or get me to realize something through this question?
- How might Life or my inner wisdom be trying to offer me a word of comfort or challenge through this question?



1. What book from your childhood convinced you that life was full of possibility? What would change in your life if that childhood sense of possibility returned to you today?
2. If you could go back in time and expand your family of origin's sense of possibility in just one way, what would it be?
3. How would your life be different if you had trusted in possibility earlier in life?
4. If you believe that saving the world is no longer possible, might you still find hope in the work of creating [islands of sanity](#) - smaller circles of community dedicated to helping people stay sane and rooted in their values even as the world around them grows harsh and grim.
5. We all tell ourselves, "One day I will..." What "One day I will" sentence has been with you the longest? And what would need to change for you to start turning that dream into a reality?
6. Who helped you find your way back to possibility when all the doors in front of you felt closed? If you were to thank them, what would you say now that you didn't or couldn't back then?
7. What have you learned about finding the possibilities that live on the other side of grief?
8. We're told to live each day as if it were our last. But what if, instead, we lived each day as if it were [our very first](#)?
9. What if we're built to have *many* lives in this lifetime of ours? What if we become fully human by pursuing and becoming *many* of our possible selves, rather than just one of them?
10. Are you sure it's too late to do it, or become it?
11. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to find it.

# Companion Pieces

## Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

*The following resources are not required reading. Nor are they intended to be analyzed in your group. Instead, they are here to companion you on your personal journey this month, get you thinking and open you up to new ways of embodying this month's theme in your living and loving.*

### Word Roots

Possibility comes from the Latin, *posse*, meaning “to have power.” A reminder that embracing possibility is not just about believing something can happen or “having faith,” but also a matter of being empowered and gathering power.

### Wise Words

It is never too late to be what you might have been.  
*Adelaide Anne Procter*

I know some people crack their gifts open early. And others of us spent decades wondering around thinking we got skipped. But we didn't. Some doors only open when we are ready to walk through them. Some magic only wakes up when we've lived enough to use it right. So don't get down on yourself. We're not forgotten. We're just on a different clock!

*Author Unknown*

As the saying goes, it's the silence in between the notes that makes the music. So if you're in between projects or jobs—or even romantic relationships—resist the tendency to immediately fill the void with the next thing. Great new things are happening quietly inside of you. Give them the time they need to bloom.

[Ozan Varol](#)

Next comes winter, January and February. Boy! Are they ever cold! What comes next? Not spring. 'Unlocking' comes next. What else could cruel March and only slightly less cruel April be? March and April are not spring. They're the season of Unlocking.

[Kurt Vonnegut](#)

It may be that when we no longer know what to do we have come to our real work...

The mind that is not baffled is not employed.

The impeded stream is the one that sings.

[Wendell Berry](#)

I still believe that we can overcome... When our days become dreary with low hovering clouds and our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, we will know that we are living in the creative turmoil of a genuine civilization struggling to be born.

[Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.](#)

There is more to see in myself than just what I look for. There is more to see in my enemies than just what I look for. There is more to see in this country than just what I look for. I need this to be true.

[Nadia Bolz-Weber](#)

If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate. Give in to it. There are plenty of lives and whole towns destroyed or about to be. We are not wise, and not very often kind. And much can never be redeemed. Still, life has some possibility left.

[Mary Oliver](#)

Hope [and possibility] locates itself in the premises that we don't know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act. When you recognize uncertainty, you recognize that you may be able to influence the outcome.

[Rebecca Solnit](#)

The most meaningful futures rarely arrive because we forced them into existence. They emerge because we noticed something true and stayed with it. A question that would not let us go. A grief that clarified what mattered. A longing that persisted beneath distraction. A quiet conviction that shaped

our choices over time... The invitation is not to perfect your plans, but to tend your attention; not to demand transformation, but to notice what is already changing; not to rush toward the future, but to stand here long enough to hear what it is asking of you.

[Cameron Trimble](#)

I think it is healing behavior, to look at something so broken and see the possibility and wholeness in it.

[adrienne maree brown](#)

Ask what's possible, not what's wrong. Keep asking.

[Margaret J. Wheatley](#)

Don't ask what will happen; Be what happens.

[Rebecca Solnit](#)

Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare.

[Aimee Lehto, honoring Muhammad Ali](#)

This beginning has been quietly forming

Waiting until you were ready to emerge...

It watched you play with the seduction of safety...

Wondered would you always live like this.

[John O'Donahue](#)

## Videos & Podcasts

**Beginners, Denise Levertov**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp\\_tlbm2xVw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp_tlbm2xVw)

**Calling Us Back to Possibility, Debbie Nargi-Brown**

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1950439535760986>

**Wright Brothers, Rudy Francisco**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecDRI\\_pn5LI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecDRI_pn5LI)

**On the Grief and Gifts of Shrinking Possibilities as We Age**

<https://www.turningtowards.life/home/no-no-there-is-no-going-back> (start listening at minute 4:30)

**On Remembering It's Never Too Late and Always Possible to Begin Again**

<https://www.turningtowards.life/home/never-too-late-8th-anniversary> (start listening at minute 6:43)

**Is it Possible to Escape that Feeling of "I'm Stuck"?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QBrX3IkMfo>

**On What is Still Possible in a Collapsing World**

<https://shows.acast.com/wild-with-sarah-wilson/episodes/collapse-series-meg-wheatley>

**From Despair to Possibility with Rebecca Solnit**

<https://www.patheos.com/editorial/podcasts/tricycle-talks/2023/from-despair-to-possibility-with-rebecca-solnit>

**The Possibilities of Our Quickly Coming AI Future**

- **3 Possible Futures for AI**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnPfz0WXLIM>
- **AI Companies Are A Return of the Empires of Old**  
<https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2025/may/29/the-openai-empire-podcast>
- **Warnings from the AI Godfather**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KmopXwjXik>
- **A Less Scary Vision of Our AI Future**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQ5wO1lznCQ>

**Does an audience contain the possibility of becoming the choir? Jacob Collier thinks so!**

## Articles

**Trust Your Eyes, Not the Lies, Rev. Cameron Trimble**

*On resisting the possibility that we acclimate to authoritarianism's unreality!*

<https://www.pilotingfaith.org/p/trust-your-eyes-not-the-lies>

## Books

**[The Other Side of Change](#): Who We Become When Life Makes Other Plans, Maya Shankar**

**[The Deluge](#)**, Stephen Markley

**[The Overstory](#)**, Richard Powers

**[Not Too Late](#): Changing the Climate Story from Despair to Possibility**

Rebecca Solnit & Thelma Young Lutunatabua

**[What If We Get It Right?](#)**, Ayana Elizabeth Johnson

## Movies

### [The Testament of Ann Lee](#)

*On an unwavering faith in the possibility of creating a [utopian community](#).*

### [Honey Boy](#)

*On the possibility of not repeating our parents' patterns*

### [Land](#)

*On the possibilities that lie on the other side of grief and loss.*

### [Happyend](#)

*On the possibility of [friendship and resistance](#) in an authoritarian world.*

### [Humans in the Loop](#)

*On whether AI will narrow or expand the amount of possible worldviews and human knowledge.*

### [Derek DelGaudio's In & Of Itself](#)

*On the possibility of "being fully seen" and escaping single stories about who we are.*

## Music

*Our thematic playlists - on [Spotify](#) and [YouTube](#) - are organized as a journey, so consider listening from beginning to end and using them as a personal musical meditation.*

Click [here](#) for the **Spotify playlist** on Embracing Possibility

Click [here](#) for the **YouTube playlist** on Embracing Possibility

## More Monthly Inspiration from Soul Matters!

Our Facebook Inspiration Page: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Our Instagram Page: Find us as "soul\_matters\_circle"

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