

Spiritual Deepening Circles: May- Endings and Beginnings

Session 1

3Arriving	10 min	10 minutes before starting time
Singing	2 min	Gathered Here Light the chalice
On our hearts	5 min	Each person can say if something is on their heart tonight. Limit 1-2 sentences This is not a time for extended check-in
Gathering	3 min	Reading – For Shiva Maija Beattie
Connecting Go round	5 min	Propose this question, then one minute of silence. What is different today? 1-2 sentences
Activity Endings	10 min	<i>Screen share the instructions for the Activity or make sure they have a copy. Check to see if everyone has paper and pen or pens. Read through the instructions. Ask if there are questions. Then mute everyone. Give them ten minutes for working on the activity and then check to see if anyone needs more time.</i>
Sharing	45 min	Popcorn style, time limits controlled by facilitators, no dialogue, questions or comments
Silence	1 min	May use bell or sound (or 12 deep breaths)
Responding	10-15 min	Second opportunity for sharing, responding to others, no questions or dialogue. No one speaks twice before everyone who wants to, speaks once.
Take Away	10 min	Go around – one or two words -one thing that you will take away from tonight’s session in a few words. For example: what moved you or what insights did you have.
Closing Reading	3 min	O Dane
Business	10 min	Reminder of next meeting (last one)
Singing	2 min	Trust the Light Within Your Heart Extinguish the chalice

Session 1 Gathering reading

For Shiva Maija Beattie

I must have said
Teach me of loss.

I must have said
Teach me of change
that winnows out the essential
while all else falls away.

Teach me of devastation
of the fire that clears a forest and
leaves it scorched,
preparing it to grow again.

I must have said
Teach me of surrender
to let go of a beautiful life
in search of an authentic one.

Teach me of patience
to carefully dismantle that life like a
well-crafted old home
salvaging pieces to recycle into
something new.

Teach me of the reckoning
of facing truth and accepting the
cost.

I must have said
Teach me of kindness
in the eyes of those who listen,
confident that all will be well.

Teach me of joy
that moves like water
finding its way through the cracks
of a life.

Teach me of love
of a heart that opens to embrace
it all sheltering even me.

I must have said
I am ready,
teach me.

Because you came like a winter
storm,
whose approach I had long
watched and feared,

and left me scoured and shaken
and ready to begin again.

Reading

The Gift of Grief

By Monica

Ever since the beginning of this school year, I've had a hard time getting ready in the morning. Hard time getting out of bed, unfocused, glued to my phone, just wasting time generally. I've easily recognized that this is weird behavior for me—I'm a morning person and a go-getter overall—but couldn't put my finger on why I was doing this.

This morning, it finally dawned on me: it's grief. I've been unconsciously grieving the fact that my daughter no longer needs my help getting ready for school. She gets up by her alarm, gets dressed by herself, makes her own breakfast and lunch, and heads out the door on time and walks to school by herself.

Since she was in kindergarten, she and I have always gotten ready together, in mirror fashion, doing the same things at the same time so that she could develop an independent routine (and so that I didn't spend mornings yelling at her). It was just easier, with one kid, to do everything together. That's not happening now, and it probably won't ever again. I hadn't really processed what that means until now.

On the one hand, it means freedom: sleep later! do yoga in the morning! leave early and have coffee out somewhere! I'm looking forward to a time when I can embrace those possibilities. But first, I need to feel this grief, embrace it for a while, and then think about what life will be like as she grows in independence and wisdom. I need to think about letting go gracefully.

Sometimes grief sends notice ahead of time; sometimes, it shows up as an unwelcome, uninvited guest. Either way, I know, in my head, that grief always has love in its suitcase, and if I let it, it will unpack that love for me to look at and admire.

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Session 1 Activity – Endings

Draw on a piece of paper either a spiral, a line, or your own shape that reflects the journey of your life. Once you have a shape, choose the place to mark the beginning of your life. Then mark where you see yourself now on this path.

Next mark the times in your life when something came to an end. It may have been a relationship (through death, divorce or separation), education, job, groups that had meaning to you, many things. Next mark endings that you are anticipating.

Reflect on these questions to share with the circle:

- How have endings affected your life?
- Are there endings that stand out for you as something which made a significant difference in your life? (good, challenging, or difficult)
- Were some endings a greater struggle than others?
- What is ending for you now?
- What endings are you anticipating and what feelings do you have about them?

Pick a few of these endings to share with your circle.

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Session 1 Closing Reading

May our time together renew our hope.
May the stories we share refresh our courage.
May the songs we sing lift our spirits.
May the words we speak invigorate us.
May the sound of laughter and
the sight of familiar faces
restore us in faith.

Calvin O Dame

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Session 2

Arriving	10 min Before start time	Greet each person
Singing	2 min	Gathered Here Light the chalice
On our hearts	5 min	Each person can say if something is on their heart tonight. Limit 1-2 sentences This is not a time for extended check-in
Gathering	3 min	Imagine Lynn Ungar
Connecting Go round	5 min	Propose this question, then one minute of silence. What began today? 1-2 sentences
Activity What's beginning in you?	15 min	<i>Screen share the instructions for the Activity. Check to see if everyone has paper and pen or pens. Read through the instructions. Ask if there are questions. Then mute everyone. Give them ten minutes for working on the activity and then check to see if anyone needs more time.</i>
Sharing	60 -75 min	Popcorn style, start with one minute of shared silence. Begin with a reminder of the covenant.
Silence	2 min	May use bell or sound, timer or 12 deep breaths
Responding	10 -15 min	(time permitting) Second opportunity for sharing, responding to others. Remind them to focus on their own feelings and experience – no questions or criticisms of others.
Silence	2 min	May use bell or sound, timer or 12 deep breaths
Take Away for the last time	5 min	Go around – Read - Take away for the Last Time <i>Let this go as long as it needs to no sentence restriction.</i>
Closing	3 min	T.S. Eliot
Singing	2 min	Trust the Light Within Your Heart Extinguish the chalice

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Imagine

Imagine with me for a moment—
don't worry, I'm not saying it's real.
Imagine, if you can, that there has been
not a calamity, but a great awakening.
Pretend, just for a moment,
that we all so loved our threatened earth
that we stopped going on cruises,
limited international flights,
worked on cherishing the places
where we already are.
In this pretty fantasy, everyone who possibly can
stops commuting. Spends the extra time
with their kids or pets or garden.
We have the revelation that everyone
needs health care, sick leave, steady work.
It occurs to us that health care workers
are heroes. Also teachers.
Not to mention the artists of all kinds
who teach us resilience and joy.
Imagine, if you will,
that we turned to our neighbors
in mutual aid, trading eggs for milk,
checking in on those who are elderly
or alone. Imagine that each of us
felt suddenly called to wonder
*In this moment, what does the world
need from me? What are my gifts?*
Yes, I know it's just a fantasy.
The world could never change
so radically overnight.
But imagine.

Lynn Ungar 3-20-20

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Photo by Luis Maniquet on Unsplash

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Session 2 Activity - Beginnings

Like new life emerging from lava covered ground, we will emerge from this time of pandemic. Last session we reflected on what has ended in our lives, and this session we will consider what is beginning – what is beginning in our lives and beginning in the world. What possibilities are gestating at this time that may come into fruition at the end of the crisis?

Reflect on the following questions in preparation for sharing with you circle.

- How have you changed during this time of sheltering in place?
- Is there any awareness or behavior that you want to continue when this ends?
- Are there any good things that can come of this?
- What if we consider the end of this pandemic as a new beginning? What lessons have we learned? Have you learned?
- What are the possibilities for how things might be different when we return?

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If your circle is ending with this session, do this instead of Take Away

Take Away for the last time

Now we have some time for each of us to share what has been meaningful about our time in the circle. This is our take-away for the last time with this group. What has this circle meant to you? What will you take away from our eight months together?

We will share popcorn style and will begin by sitting in silence until the first person speaks. After each person speaks, we will say together:

“We bless you and thank you for sharing this circle with us.”

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Session 2 Closing reading

What we call a beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning
The end is where we start from.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started and
Know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot