



Being the Authentic Self
Covenant Group Session
Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Chalice Lighting: *Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a holy place. We light the chalice of Unitarian Universalism in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world.*

Personal Check In: Share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Words

You must have control of the authorship of your own destiny. The pen that writes your life story must be held in your own hand. ~Irene C. Kassorla

Questions for sharing and for discussion:

1. Share an experience where you have felt your culture requiring or pressuring you to conform. How have you been affected by cultural norms and standards?
2. How have you experienced being true to yourself in your relationships with others? What impact has that had on your interdependence?
3. In what ways have you experienced being true or untrue to your inner self? What happened? How did you feel?

Sitting in Silence (Reflect on questions just posed as you prepare to hear the readings)

Readings – see below

Sharing: This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Please share one or more of your responses to the session questions.

(This is usually a good time to take a brief break)

Discussion: This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice deep listening.

Closing reading:

To be strong does not mean to sprout muscles and flex. It means meeting one's own numinosity without fleeing, actively living with the wild nature in one's own way. It means to be able to learn, to be able to stand what we know. It means to stand and live.

~Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *Women Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*

Announcements/Plans

Personal Check Out: As we close today, how are you feeling now?

Extinguish the Chalice

Readings

To be nobody but yourself in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight; and never stop fighting. It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are. ~e.e. cummings

You are your best thing. ~ Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

All my life I had been looking for something, and everywhere I turned someone tried to tell me what it was. I accepted their answers too, though they were often in contradiction and even self-contradictory. I was naïve. I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I, and only I, could answer. It took me a long time and much painful boomeranging of my expectations to achieve a realization everyone else appears to have been born with: that I am nobody but myself. ~Ralph Ellison, "*Battle Royal*"

Always be a first-rate version of yourself, never a second-rate version of somebody else. ~Judy Garland

The great majority of us are required to live a life of constant duplicity. Your health is bound to be affected if, day after day, you say the opposite of what you feel, if you grovel before what you dislike, and rejoice at what brings you nothing but misfortune. ~Boris Pasternak

I think of life itself now as a wonderful play that I've written for myself, and so my purpose is to have the utmost fun playing my part. ~Shirley MacLaine

Today you are you, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is youer than you. ~ Dr. Seuss

Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself. I am large; I contain multitudes. ~Walt Whitman

This is a very important practice. Live your daily life in a way that you never lose yourself. When you are carried away with your worries, fears, cravings, anger, and desire, or with the need to please others, you run away from yourself and you lose yourself. The practice is always to go back to oneself. ~Thich Nhat Hanh

Never, "for the sake of peace and quiet," deny your own experience or convictions. ~Dag Hammarskjold

Whatever you have forgotten, you can remember. Whatever you have buried you can unearth. If you are willing to look deep into your own nature, if you are willing to peel away the layers of not-self you have adopted in making your way through the tribulations of life, you will find that your true self is not as far removed as you think. ~Meredith Jordan

Remember always that you not only have the right to be an individual, you have an obligation to be one. ~Eleanor Roosevelt

Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else. ~Margaret Mead

Every time you don't follow your inner guidance, you feel a loss of energy, loss of power, a sense of spiritual deadness. ~Shakti Gawain

What an immense rip in my life, and what mending, in all things in order to be with my entire self in everything; in order to never cease being with my entire self, in everything. ~Juan Ramón Jiménez

We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be. ~Kurt Vonnegut

Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go who we think we are supposed to be and embracing who we are. ~Brene Brown