



Authenticity

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Written by: Betsy Beach, inspired by Authenticity session by First Parish Church of Stow and
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Welcome, 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: Briefly share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Words:

“I believe one of our souls' major purposes is to know, love, and express our authentic selves. To live the life and be the person we were created to be. However, our true selves only emerge when it's safe to do so. Self-condemnation, shame, and guilt send your true nature into hiding. It's only in the safety of gentle curiosity, encouragement, and self-love that your soul can bloom as it was created to do.”

- Sue Patton Thoele, author, therapist

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. How hard do you find it to be always fully authentic?
2. How do you know if you are being authentic?
3. How authentic do you feel you are?
4. Can you describe a situation in which you found it difficult to be authentic?
5. Can you share a time when you found it unwise to be fully authentic?
6. Can you identify any ritual or technique that bolsters your authenticity?

Readings- see below

Sitting in Silence (Reflect on questions and readings before sharing starts)

Sharing - This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share responses to one or more of the session questions or the readings.

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

Open 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:

This above all: To thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man. - *Hamlet*, Shakespeare

Announcements/Plans

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

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Readings

"Real isn't how you are made,' said the Skin Horse. 'It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.'

'Does it hurt?' asked the Rabbit.

'Sometimes,' said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. 'When you are Real you don't mind being hurt.'

'Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,' he asked, 'or bit by bit?'

'It doesn't happen all at once,' said the Skin Horse. 'You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.'

— Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit*

Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway. —Mother Theresa

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

Seek out that particular mental attribute which makes you feel most deeply and vitally alive, along with which comes the inner voice which says, "This is the real me," and when you have found that attitude, follow it.

—William James

What it means to be authentic:

- to be more concerned with truth than opinions
 - to be sincere and not pretend - to be free from hypocrisy: walk your talk
 - to know who you are and to be that person
 - to not fear others seeing your vulnerabilities
 - being confident to walk away from situations where you can't be yourself
 - being awake to your own feelings
 - being free from others' opinions of you
 - accepting and loving yourself
- Sue Fitzmaurice, British Linguistics Professor and writer

"Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It's about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let out true selves be seen." -Brene Brown

"We are constantly invited to be who we are." -Henry David Thoreau

"Our deepest calling is to grow into our authentic selfhood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we ought to be. As we do, we will not only find the joy that every human being seeks; we will also find our path of authentic service in the world." -Parker Palmer

"Be yourself, everyone else is taken." -Oscar Wilde

"If you seek authenticity for authenticity's sake, you are no longer authentic." -Jean Paul Sartre

"If you keepin' it real just to keep it real you ain't keepin' it real" -Snoop-Dogg