

SPIRITUAL *Origins*

WHAT, IF ANY, PRACTICES, TRADITIONS,
BELIEFS OR RITUALS DO I STILL FIND MEANING
IN OR TAKE COMFORT IN FROM THAT TIME?

HAVE I CLEANSED MYSELF OF
THIS? IF NOT, WHAT COULD I
TRY TO BE ABLE TO CLEANSE
MYSELF OF THAT PAIN?

WHAT WOUNDING
OR PAIN DID THIS
UPBRINGING CAUSE?

WHAT WAS THE RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL
UPBRINGING OF MY CHILDHOOD?

WE DON'T WANT TO BE STARS

EMBODIMENT & LIBERATION

[2 HOURS]

OVERVIEW

This session is devoted to spiritual strength training. It is an invitation to cultivate communal and individual practices for spiritual grounding, to identify and revisit old wounds, and to invoke and remind ourselves that this work is spiritual work, that we are all spiritual beings and that without the recognition of this, we likely will not be able to sustain the work or design the strategies to get us to the other side.

GOALS

- To get shared clarity on concepts around spiritual self-work, self-care, and growth
- To allow time for significant contemplation and reflection
- To hold space for individuals to share with the collective

TIME NEEDED

2 hours

MATERIALS NEEDED

Flip charts, markers, index cards for blessing exercise

Handouts: **Spiritual Origins** (p. 84), **Recipe for Resiliency** (p. 88), and **Self-Inventory & Health Check** (p. 87)

READINGS/RESOURCES

- *When Things Fall Apart* by Pema Chodron
- *Emergent Strategy* by adrienne maree brown
- *The Cancer Journals* by Audre Lorde
- *Beloved* by Toni Morrison

FRAMING

The writer and thinker Joanna Macy has referred to this time as the 'Great Turning,' forecasting a much-needed mass turning away from millenia-old worldviews and practices of domination and extraction, and towards an era of recalling ancient wisdom and aligning it with new insights and methods for being together with other humans and the whole community of life. We know for sure that **we are now living in times that are unprecedented:** environmentally, socially, economically, spiritually, and in terms of public health.

People lead organizations and movements. **We are only as grounded, balanced, and well as our people are.**

Therefore, it is critical to take seriously our own wellness, grounding, balance, perspective, and ability to self-reflect and grow. Our ability to be embodied in our own selves and world is key to achieving this. **In order to feel creative, interdependent, generative, and adaptive, we have to experience enough liberation from oppression to move around.** This session is a starting place, an offering of tools around our development in embodiment and liberation. Begin by inviting folks to work through the Spiritual Origins worksheet opposite (this could also be prep work).

WHAT'S SPIRIT GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Break folks out into groups of three or four. Invite groups to discuss and then make a skit addressing the question: *what does spirit have to do with social change and transformation?* Groups should perform their skits for all.

Self-Inventory and Health Check:

Give everyone time to work through the questions on the sheet opposite. Then, invite people to share reflections on their answers with a small group (this could be the same group as before, or a new configuration).

SPIRITUAL STRENGTH TRAINING

Spiritual strength, grounding, and fortitude are not linear. We do not 'bulk up' once and then stay strong in these ways. Instead, we are always in a cycle of moving through being able to access our best self and feeling far away from it. Therefore, the process of building these capacities also does not move in a linear way.

Solo write, then pair share:

- *What experiences in life have strengthened you the most spiritually? How?*
- *What people come to mind when you think of spiritual strength? Why?*
- *Who do you want to be in relationship with to deepen your spiritual strength?*

SIDE WITH LOVE: PRACTICING SPIRITUAL FORTITUDE IN OURSELVES AND OUR RELATIONSHIPS

These are activities developed and brought together as part of a project originally designed for the Unitarian Universalist Association's Side with Love (formerly Standing on the Side of Love) campaign.

Bitterness Purge Ritual

"When we face pain in relationships, our first response is often to sever bonds rather than to maintain commitment." -bell hooks

Bitterness often stems from disappointment and pain in this work. Structures, organizations, and people have deeply betrayed many of us, and let us down. When we do not purge that bitterness, it follows us into the work. We spread it to other people. The intention here is not to vent, but rather to let baggage go and move forward by naming our disappointment and pain – and the bitterness that grows from it – within a ceremonial container. Do this in pairs. After the purging, each partner offers gratitude for the other's willingness to trust, share, and grow.

Are you willing to be transformed in the service of the work?

Being honest about our own willingness and capacity can be hard. Getting feedback can also be hard. Working in pairs, each person should take a turn asking the other: 'Are you willing to be transformed in the service of the work?' If both people answer yes, they can then take turns suggesting ways that each person can transform and grow in the coming year to more deeply serve the work of justice. Adapted from SONG.

SELF-INVENTORY AND HEALTH CHECK

ON A SCALE OF 1-10, HOW AM I DOING IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE FOLLOWING:

FINDING A VISION OR HOPE FOR THE WORLD

1-----5-----10

NOTES:

ENGAGING AND WORKING WITH MY DESPAIR AND CYNICISM

1-----5-----10

NOTES:

CONNECTION TO MEANING AND JOY

1-----5-----10

NOTES:

CULTIVATING PRACTICES AND TRADITIONS THAT CONNECT ME TO SPIRIT

1-----5-----10

NOTES:

RELATIONSHIP TO MY BODY

1-----5-----10

NOTES:

RELATIONSHIP TO THE EROTIC

1-----5-----10

NOTES:

RELATIONSHIP TO MOTHER EARTH

1-----5-----10

NOTES:

RELATIONSHIP TO MY BLOOD ANCESTORS

1-----5-----10

NOTES:

RELATIONSHIP TO MY CHOSEN ANCESTORS

1-----5-----10

NOTES:

CONNECTION AND INTIMACY

1-----5-----10

NOTES:

Recipe for RESILIENCY

NAME OF RECIPE:

TIME NEEDED:

WHERE IT COMES FROM:

LIST INGREDIENTS:

PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS:

DRAWING OF RESULTS OR PROCESS:

WHAT ELSE?

RECIPES FOR RESILIENCY

This has been adapted from work we developed at Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective and SONG.

Invite people to share recipes from their lives, traditions, or lineages that help them bounce back. Using a Story Circle format (p. 8), ask participants to break into groups of four or five.

1. (15 mins) Using the recipe card opposite, have participants silently doodle, draw, or write about a recipe from their own life, tradition, and/or lineage that helps them bounce back.
2. (20 min) Put four minutes on the clock for each person to share what they wrote about, what it brought up, and how they learned of this recipe.
3. (10 min) Gallery walk: Ask folks to tape up their recipes on a wall and review what people have made. Put on some music!
4. (20 min) Have folks return to their seats and debrief. *What are some themes, patterns, or surprises you noticed?*

BLESSINGS/INTENTIONS

Ask the group to sit in a large circle, close enough to pass cards to each other. Then, frame for the group: in many communities and cultures, people bless each other, or intentionally wish upon each other, when they part. This can mean they put towards each other the energy of their God, faith, or tradition. It could also mean that they recognize that the strength oppressed people give each other is real and has meaning. This is a closing for any gathering or session you have together, and usually lasts about 15 minutes. Everyone should engage the activity according to their own beliefs.

Write: Ask each person to take an index card and a pen and to write an intention that they would want wished upon them as they go out into the world to lead in our liberation struggles. Give each person 2 minutes to write.

Pass: Pass cards three times to the left as a group, so that each person ends up with the blessing written by the person three people to the right of them.

Read: Have a few people read the blessing they received as they are moved to do so, popcorn style. Have at least five blessings read outloud.

Close: Close with a general intention to the group: "Go with the power of our history, the sheer pleasure of our collective company, and the will and courage to push forward our work."

Suggest that people keep their blessing card if they want.