

Small Group Exercise: Being a Force of Nature

Timing: about an hour

Opening

Facilitator welcomes participants.

Welcome and Purpose of the Group

Facilitator: This is an opportunity to get to know each other, to create a safe place to explore how becoming aware that you are part of nature can strengthen and sustain your work for peace and justice.

Chalice Lighting: *The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.* —Rabindranath Tagore

Brief Check-In: Facilitator asks participants to introduce themselves by saying their names and briefly how they are feeling right now about the topic to be considered in this group.

Topic: Being a Force of Nature

Facilitator: Nature provides ready metaphors for peace and justice. But it takes more than mere words to join nature to action. Truly experiencing ourselves as a force of nature in all its varied circumstances is something beyond symbolism. The next breath I take is not a metaphor. It is, if I am mindful, a reminder that I am a force of nature, linked to all that exists on our living, breathing planet.

Facilitator asks participants to take turns reading aloud the following quotations:

*As long as the sky exists
and as long as there are sentient beings,
may I remain to help
relieve them of all their pain.*

—The Dalai Lama

Whatever peace I know rests in the natural world, in feeling myself part of it. —May Sarton

I will be the gladdest thing

*Under the sun!
I will touch a hundred flowers
And not pick one.*
—Edna St. Vincent Millay

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. —Gloria Anzaldua

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; ... the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances.... —George Bernard Shaw

Reverence for life comprises the whole ethic of love in its deepest and highest sense. It is the source of constant renewal for the individual and for mankind [sic]. —Albert Schweitzer

Questions for Reflection

Facilitator asks participants to take turns reading aloud the following questions:

- Which, if any, of the above quotes do you like and why?
- What can you do (or do you do) on a regular basis that will help you consider yourself a force of nature?
- What connection do you see between awareness of your place in nature and your work for peace and justice?

Facilitator invites participants to sit silently together for a minute.

Discussion

Facilitator then leads a discussion of both the quotations and questions, making sure that participants share the time fairly. Each person will have the chance to speak uninterrupted for up to three minutes. Facilitator lets people speak when they're ready, popcorn style, and doesn't call on them. If a person doesn't speak for the whole three minutes, that's okay. When they're done, Facilitator goes on to the next person who wishes to speak. When each person who wants to speak has had an opportunity, Facilitator opens the floor for discussion. Facilitator ends the discussion leaving about five minutes for check-out and closing.

Brief check-out: Facilitator asks participants what they liked in the session and what is their most important “take-away.”

Closing

*The great doors remain closed,
But spring fragrance comes inside anyway,
And no one sees what takes place there.*

—Kabir

Session by Stephen Shick, November 2014

Quotations from his book *Be the Change: Poems, Prayers and Meditations for Peacemakers and Justice Seekers*. Boston: Skinner House (2009). Available at www.uuabookstore.org or 800-215-9076 and wherever books are sold.

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