



Stories of People Respect, Earth Respect

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Open Our Hearts

Stories to Grow By

Alycia Davis (longriver)

My deepest thanks to Jan Hively for helping this book's journey start. Thanks also to Native elders met for sharing time, wisdom and inspiration, and to the spunky, feisty, dedicated women of WILPF-Cape Cod Branch (Women's International League of Peace and Freedom) who inspire me with support and friendship.

Deep appreciation is given to deer Sullivan. deer has created the activity sections herein for use within Unitarian and like-minded spiritual, peace-teaching communities. Many thanks to the Unitarian Sunday School Society for giving a grant to help in the production of this book.

I also give appreciation to a woman, known as Peace Pilgrim, whose life gave me the courage to undertake a cross-country walk for earth and people respect. Peace Pilgrim walked roads for twenty-eight years sharing messages of peace.

Appreciation also to Mark Barry, who helped with means for travel after cross-country walk where I was gifted with the creation of these stories during these travels.

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Open Our Hearts: Stories to Grow By

These are short teaching stories of people respect, earth respect, peaceful paths, healing, and personal growth. The stories are in a mostly Native American teaching style, where teachers are often elders or animals. In traditional Native culture, older people ('gray hairs') are considered Elders and referred to as Grandmother or Grandfather, even if not blood related. Aunt and Uncle are often used by children, for adults not grayed hair yet. Gender neutrality or balance has been used where possible. Some activity suggestions are included.

Most stories have multiple facets for learning, awareness, growing or healing. It is hoped they are shared and read with children. After reading the story, it can be talked about as to its meanings. What did the child think? How does the story relate to modern life? How can it be used in daily character traits and daily life? Print/use stories individually. Feel free to share book/stories with others.

All were written after a 3,150-mile cross-country Native Elder guided walk for earth and people respect. I made up the prayer/chant below to say to myself walking each day. After putting it on the web in 1996, I recently found it has been used diversely for over twenty years by: prayer groups, recovery groups, addiction groups, churches, a State Legislature, a Reggae newsletter, various conference openings, Native sites, and many others. *One never knows what will happen when seeds are planted.* The prayer/chant was:

Creator...Open our hearts to peace and healing between all people.

Open our hearts to protect and provide for all children of the earth.

Open our hearts to respect the earth and all gifts of the earth.

Open our hearts to end exclusion, violence and fear among all.

Thank-you for the gifts of this day and every day.

It is hoped the seeds of the stories grow many healthy open hearts.

Alycia Davis (longriver)

II.

‘Open Our Hearts’ Activity Pages

Introduction: The Activity Pages herein were created so that the ‘Open Our Heart’ stories can be expanded into a program for use in Unitarian Universalist settings and any other religious/spiritual community where the values of love, truth, fairness, diversity, justice and unity are practiced. This book would be a wonderful Sunday morning spring program choice. This could also be a vacation camp program, multigenerational program or summer program. These Activity Pages give you a structure to build upon, and leave room for you to substitute in your own ideas, stories, art projects, songs...etc. They are designed for multi-age groups of children and can be adapted to meet the needs of youth and or a multigenerational/family programming.

Descriptions of Parts of the Activity Section Structure

Opening Circle: A precious time to welcome all; set the tone of the time together; get a sense of who is in the group today; remind group of the covenant...etc.

Cooperative Games: A wonderful way to develop a sense of connection between participants. Most games I play are where there are no winners and no losers, games where we are all in it together and it takes all of us to succeed. Some games can be just for fun! Here are a few websites to go to for game ideas (you can google ‘cooperative games’ and get a ton of ideas!):

- <http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activities/cooperative-games.page-1.html>
- http://www2.peacefirst.org/digitalactivitycenter/files/top_ten_games_for_families_0.pdf
- <https://www.uua.org/youth/library/adults-ministry/deepfun>

Song/Music: Singing can build community. I’ve included some song ideas. You can also find some from the hymnal. I like to find simple, easy to sing ones that don’t require needing to read music. There is so much great music out there. Incorporating a few good songs or having music playing while your group arrives can be a welcoming gesture that helps set the tone of the day. Singing uplifting music can re-enforce the messages you are trying to convey. III

Activities: Many of the activities included are what I call ‘Spirit Art’ that focus on the process not the product- though there may indeed be a product. I like to make art right along with the group to model ease and non-judgement as well as joy with art making.

Be full of care to avoid comments like ‘beautiful’. Though positive, it’s a judgement and not necessary. The goal is to let the participant enjoy themselves and learn a little more about themselves, others or the world through the creative process.

Tune in Time: Opportunities to tune in to self, group, world, Spirit of Life, the Divine. We have privilege of helping people cultivate peace and ease in their beings. Mindfulness can be a life-saving tool, so giving our participants lots of examples and ways to do that is essential.

Move It: These are exercises to get the group moving. Sometimes participants can seem really lethargic and the temptation is to sit down but the antidote to that lethargy is usually movement. Also, many of us need to move in order to learn or process information, so keeping things moving or providing opportunities to move the body can be key.

Closing Circle: The way we close our time together matters. We have the chance to send the Participants out into the worlds again, feeling grounded, connected and loved. Don’t skip this.

End with a lively song, or a yoga posture or a mindful moment, or an affirmation!

Choosing the parts of the program with care, taking the time to weave love and attention into the small details will make a much better experience for your group. People learn and grow and connect with the Spirit of Life in many ways, and creating a diverse experiential atmosphere and plan means creating a space where all of your participants can thrive!

May all our children and youth be well. May these stories and activities support your work in your community.

With connection and kindness,
deer Sullivan

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Garden Section 1:

People Teachings, Diversity & Respect



Colorful People

One day a small circle of children was watching a Grandmother prepare corn for grinding. One child asked, “Grandmother, why are people of different colors?”

After a few moments, the Grandmother told this child to put an ear of corn into the fire. The child asked again, but again she did not answer. After a few more moments, she told another child to put another ear of corn in the fire. The first child impatiently waited for an answer. Grandmother ignored and told a third child to put an ear of corn in the fire, and after more time, a fourth child was told to do the same. Then she told the first child to take the fire sticks and lift the four ears of corn from the fire. After the child did so, placing them on the ground, she said....

“Look at these ears of corn Young Ones. They all came from the same seeds, grew in the same ground and were picked from the same plants, and yet now they are different in color and looks. They changed from being in the fire and their time in the fire, but underneath the outside color they are the same inside.

People are the same. Our outside clay shells have changed by the amount of time our ancestors spent in the heat of the sun, and how close their place on earth was to the sun. The more time spent outdoors, the heat of the outdoors changed skin color so people could live. Most people in the north where it is cooler and farther from the sun were lighter in color of skin, hair and eyes. People living further south where it is warmer and closer to the sun were darker. We may look white, yellow, red, brown or black on the outside, but inside we are all the same, from the same human seeds.”

Now understanding, the children thanked the Grandmother.



Many Names, Many Ways

“Grandmother, why do some people pray to God, some to the Creator, and others to other gods? How many gods are there?”

“Young One, if a group of people look at a tree, some may say it is tall. Some may say it is so green. Others may say it is old with age, and still others will regard the shapes of its leaves. All are looking at the same tree, but each sees it differently, describes it differently, and it feels differently to each. Each person sees the tree in the way that it is meaningful for them

People who pray, pray to the same One, for all the same reasons, but in ways they feel is right for them, in whatever way feels special and connects for them. You call me one way, and your brother calls me in a way that feels right for him. I do not love either of you more or less by what you call me. One way is no better than any other, if done with respect and love. It is what is in your heart, and in your thoughts, words and deeds that is important, not what name is called to the One we pray to. It is nothing to be mad or fight about.”

God, Goddess, Father, Mother, Creator, Great Spirit, Great Mystery, Jesus, Allah, Yahweh, Buddha.....there are many names the One is called by and prayed to.

One Creator, One Earth, One People. Respect our diversity. Rejoice in unity.



Interesting Differences

OOO O “It is so hard and scary to be different. Most are afraid to let me into their circle. It hurts to always be on the outside and never fully part of anything. People make fun of me, exclude me, think I am less than they are somehow. Why can’t I look and be like everyone else, all the same?”

OOOO “Why does everyone look the same? It’s hard to tell where one begins, and another leaves off. We all look alike, sound alike, do alike, think alike. We’re just a big pile of the same. How Boring !! Why bother talking to someone else, since we all look alike and think and say the same things.”

OORO “Well, isn’t this interesting? **Now this is a fun group to be part of. We all have different looks, gifts, and things to say, think and do, and no one is excluded. All are welcome to join in, being ourselves but part of the group also. Each of us has something to share.**”

A potluck is always fun. Celebrate our diversity and be thankful for it. We would be very bored without it.

Diversity

The business was on lunch break. The workers in the cafeteria were mostly eating food they brought from home. At one table, a group of women happened to be of different colors and cultural heritages.

“Look at us,” an Asian-American woman said. “We are each eating foods of our cultures. Does anyone want to share some of my seasoned rice and vegetables?” And so, they all started exchanging and sharing the variety of foods, sampling new tastes, some sweet, some crunchy, some spicy, some really hot on the inside. As they ate and looked at each other with smiles, they began to talk.

An African-American woman said, “We are different from each other. We each have experiences that the others do not. We eat different foods. Our music, dance, art, stories, clothing and hairstyles are all different.”

A Latin-American woman said, “We even speak the same language differently. We have much to share, talk about, and learn from the gifts of each other.”

A Euro-American woman said, “But we also share much in common. We have the same hopes and dreams of a peaceful, healthy, good life for our families, and our children. We share the same fears, know many of the same problems. We breathe the same air and drink the same water.”

A Native-American woman said, “Yes, we are different and yet the same. We have nothing to fear from each other. We have so many gifts to exchange. There is so much in common we share. These are good reasons to know one another. I am glad we have realized the gift of this circle.”

As flowers cannot flourish in a field of weeds, neither can peace flourish in a field of fear.





She – Wolf

(for all who have felt excluded, alone)

Ah, my She-Wolf. They do not know you. Your gifts and spirit are special if they only knew. They only listen to false tales they hear. What people don't know, they fear. Neither do they understand me. Afraid to let me really live. Afraid if I am free to live openly and fully.

Cast off...rejected...driven away, stripped of what was ours, stripped of our ways. Like you, I must be careful where I roam, and not wander too close to their lives and homes. If we stay outside and do not come near, they forget their fear. They forget we are here.

Wandering forests, mountains and streams, being with others only in our dreams.

If we come too close, they might shoot, we'll die.

They do not understand our lonely cry.

Ah, She-Wolf, you are like me. Cautious, wise, in our struggle to be free.

Staying alive the best we know how.

Will we ever be welcome? How long from now?

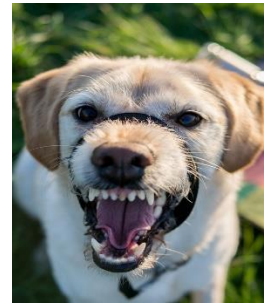
Ah, She-Wolf, come run with me.

We'll toss back our heads, run wild and free.

We'll greet the sun, from the mountains up high.

And pierce the night, with our lonely cry.

Prejudice and fear of others who are different comes from ignorance, of not knowing, of not talking, listening, and learning from each other.



Tale of Two Dogs

“Father why are some dogs friendly and some mean and scary?”

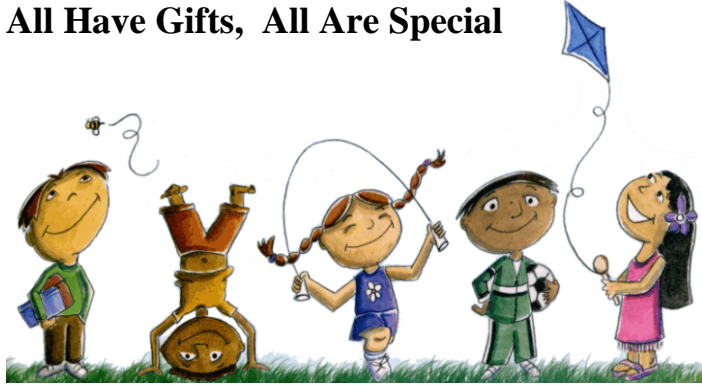
“Child, dogs are not so different from people. Whether they are happy, sad, friendly or angry, mostly depends on what their life is like or has been. Some dogs live indoors, having clean water, good food, shelter from the weather, and most of all, receive and give love and attention with the people they share their lives with.

Some dogs are homeless, trying to find water, food and shelter every day. Others are chained to trees, doghouses, or fences, left out in the heat of summer suns, the rains, or the cold of winter winds. Their food is not good, and their water can be too old, too hot or too cold from weather. Sometimes they are provoked and trained to be mean or attack anyone who comes near. If a dog is beaten, never touched by friendly caring hands and left to suffer in bad weather, why would they not be angry and fearful of anyone who comes near? Why would they not stand ready to attack to defend themselves or make mean growling sounds?

Most are born with the desire to be friendly, to be loved and give love. It is what is done to them or poor living conditions, that can make them not friendly or to be fearful of.”

What of the chains of exclusion and poverty placed upon children and adults through unequal access to education and employment? What do we allow those in power to place upon them? What of equal needs of decent food, water, shelter, education and environments that provide a sense of nurturing and hope for all? Will children denied these things grow to be friendly or angry? These exclusions cannot exist unless we all allow them to exist.

All Have Gifts, All Are Special



Eagle can powerfully fly high above the clouds. Eagle can screech but cannot sing beautiful songs like smaller birds who cannot fly as high.

Peacock has a beautiful tail, but no beautiful song.

Butterfly is delicate but starts out as a slow lumpy crawler.

Fish has no legs, but swims in grace through rivers and oceans.

Owl can fly swiftly through the darkness of night.

Fly has eyes to see up and down and all around.

Ant is tiny but has great strength to move things much larger than itself.

Some people can run far. Other people can paint pictures, or play musical instruments, write poetry, make scientific discoveries, treat illness, nurture others, or teach others. Some understand the deepness of numbers and formulas. Some understand the deepness of people. Some understand the languages of other people. Some know the language of animals or the winds and skies. Some understand the language of machines, wire, wood or pipe.

Everyone can do something, but no one can do everything.

Do not despair over what cannot be done.

Be thankful for what we each have a gift to do.

We each have gifts that we, and no others have.

Appreciate and respect the gifts we each bring to share with the world.



W A S P

SLAP !

“Young One, why did you try to kill that wasp?”

“Because it might sting me, Grandmother.”

“If I stung you, would you kill me?”

“No, of course not, but you are human, an elder to be respected. Wasps are pests, annoying and they can hurt me.”

“Oh, Young One. We all meet children and adults who might feel annoying, or be pests, or could hurt us at times. It does not mean that they are or would, but only that they seem to be at the time. We may feel some may bite or sting with their words or actions. We certainly should not strike or harm them but walk away or shoo them away. Wasp deserves no less. Life was given to Wasp with purpose, as with all upon earth. It is not up to us to harm or destroy. Wasp means us no intentional harm but is only being a wasp.

As with any confrontation before us, we have the choice to walk away, to shoo or gently brush Wasp to encourage a new direction for Wasp. If you patiently learn your center of calmness, Wasp will not attack you, or threaten in any way. If you do not respect the life of all others on earth, you will not respect your own life. Nothing is insignificant or small to be swatted because it may seem annoying at the time. How would we treat children who feel annoying or act like pests at a moment? Young One, regard all life as precious and with purpose. Give respect to all life. If you feel annoyed, pestered, threatened, bitten or stung, brush it away, walk away. Let it go. The bite will go away. Do not harm another for being who they are.”

“I will try my best to learn this, Grandmother. Thank-you.”



A Place For All

Butterflies of rainbows, fields of wildflowers,
Rivers flowing wild and free.
Trees standing proud and tall. Bears eating blackberries.
Life giving life to all.
Whales crashing with great flair. Dolphins grinning fun smiles.
Hawk and Eagle flying high in the air.
Mustangs running prairies until out of sight.
Fish jumping waves through diamond sunlight.
Owls flying swiftly through the dark night.

Each deserves a space. Each deserves a place.
Those of fin, web, wing and fur.
The two-legged of human him and her.
There is room enough for all to share.
If we are wise, living with peace and care.



Rainbow Crossing

Where it starts, no one knows. Where it ends, or where it goes.
With its bands of reds and blues, with its softly faded hues.
Rainbow crossing calls to me.
Rainbow crossing reaching out. Like a bridge proud and high.
Bridge of wonder, bridge striped light. A majestic, mystical sight.
Rainbow crossing calls to me.
Rainbow crossing back and forth. Colors warm, colors cold.
Touched by light, the sun unfolds. Find the end, the pot of gold.
Rainbow crossing calls to me.
Touched by clouds, high and free. Light clouds west, dark clouds east.
Golden sunlight filters through. Mixed with gray, splashed with blue.
Rainbow crossing calls to me.
Rainbow people, happy and free. Red, yellow, brown, black and white.
Rainbow people from all seas. Rainbow people, a family to be.
Rainbow people. Thankful are we.

There is room for all colors of the rainbow of people.

Section 1- People Teachings, Diversity and Respect

Activity Pages – deer Sullivan

Goals:

- Help participants develop empathy for one another, all people and the earth and all its beings.
- Grow understanding about the importance and value of diversity as well as help participants learn about all the ways human beings are similar.
- Give participants opportunities to plant seeds, tend to them, watch them grow and use that process as a metaphor for life.
- Encourage participants to celebrate their connections with others and the earth, make new friends and expand their community of living beings.
- Develop the art of listening and meaning making through story.

Overview: This Section introduces the concept of People Respect. The messages of the stories teach respect between people, celebrate the diversity among us and lift up our similarities, unity and oneness.

Group Lesson Plan:

This Sample Lesson Plan can be used as the structure of your group time for as many weeks as you can dedicate to the Section, weaving in new songs and games, focusing on a different story/stories and plugging in alternate activities for each group meeting.

Opening Circle:

1. Read the Chant at the start of each group. Ring a chime when beginning and when done. (Include this prayer)

Open our hearts to peace and healing between all people.

Open our hearts to protect and provide for all children of the earth.

Open our hearts to respect the earth and all gifts of the earth.

Open our hearts to end exclusion, violence and fear among all.

I am thankful for the gifts of this day and every day.

2. **Check In:** Gather group in a circle, welcome all and invite participants to check in, in some way- with their name, one word, how their week was, last wild animal they say, share a favorite landscape, or the name of someone they respect) something that invites connection- some people love this, some don't- so doing it and moving it along fairly quickly is a good balance for most.
3. Read your **Group Covenant** every week. If you don't have a group covenant, we suggest you make one for your time together. For help in creating a Group Covenant, go here:

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/wonder/session1/276306.shtml>

Cooperative Game: Begin with a game to bring the group together in the spirit of play!

Song: Planting Seeds, by Nimo Patel-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AmqYcWjBmc>

Storytime:

1. **Tune in Time:** Settle group back in. Invite a moment of quiet by ringing a chime or a gong and asking participants to raise their hands when they hear the sound and slowly bring their hand to their hearts when they can no longer hear it. Do this once or twice or until you have the attention and focus of whole group.

2. Share the story of the day- one of the ones from Section 1- People Respect. (option to have paper and colored pencils, crayons, chalks, pipe cleaners...etc... in center of space in case participants want to doodle, express, make meaning with art)
3. **Story Questions and Sharing:** Ask a few questions: What did you relate to in that story? What was that story about for you? Where did you find yourself in that story? And then invite brief sharing. Participants can doodle while listening and then show doodle.

Activity Ideas:

Activity 1. Community Mural

Have large sheets of paper ready for each participant to lay down (in fun shapes if possible) on a be traced by a partner. Use bright colored chalk or crayons to trace with. Each participant can then fill in their own shape with words, colors, images from magazines, paint...etc. Focus on what's inside of each of us- not so much about putting the eyes, nose, clothes on the shape but filling it in with the participants gifts, interests, details of their lives. Once everyone has finished, cut them out and arrange them on a blank wall- overlap them, have them touching in some way. A great project to bring out the stories of who is in the group and what they care about, to show differences and similarities.

Activity 2. Human Rainbow

(Prepare at least 10 different colors of brown paint in small dishes, ahead of time. Get washcloths, water bowl, brushes, smocks, etc...set up a painting station, also make a big sign of the first UU Principle- We believe that each and every person is important.)

Create a Human Rainbow. Invite children to paint the human rainbow- with all the colors/shades of brown- from very light to very dark. Name them as you go. Pay special attention to how children are naming colors and make sure it is with a language of respect. All skin color is beautiful. As participants are creating, share the first UU Principle and discuss what that means.)

Activity 3. Papier Mache Hearts

(Prepare materials ahead of time: cardboard, masking tape, newspaper, papier Mache (I like to use wheat paste the best, but any papier Mache product will do) buckets of water for hand washing, hand towels etc.... if you need visual help: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksjl7XikQbU> (Note: If you watch this on YouTube, I'd use newspaper- not a towel as filler, and paint or paper- not fabric, as the outer layer)

Create Open Hearts. Begin with cutting out a cardboard heart. Tape crunched up balls of newspaper to the heart to make it puffy. Once taped down, begin papier Mache-ing the heart. Let it dry. Can paint it or decorate it with collage on another group meeting. Find a way to make it 'open'. Can have a little 'lift here' spot with a message within. The participants will come up with ideas, go with those. This project can be one big heart for the group space or individuals can make their own to eventually take home when group is over or both. As the group is working, discuss what 'open' hearts mean and how that can lead to respect between people.

Move It: The Moving Bundle- Have the group stand in a circle. Ask group to just start moving around the room (set the boundaries of the space if needed). Just walk around slowly. Ring a chime and invite participants to pair up and ask them to share: What makes them laugh? You want to keep this moving, so invite a quick sharing. Ring the bell again when you get a sense that most have shared. Invite them to move around again and when you ring the chime, pair up with someone new. This time ask them to share: What is their favorite food? Keep them moving and sharing with questions that are easy and quick and help participants get to know each other.

Closing Circle: Bring group together for a closing circle.

1. **Tune in Time:** Have group close eyes if comfortable inviting them to visualize themselves as a tree, with roots reaching down into earth and branches reaching up into the sky and beyond. Invite them to imagine the sun on their trunk, the cool earth beneath them, the air all around them and a spark within their hearts...beating strong, pumping life energy from the earth through their entire being. Or substitute this with any other mindful exercise.

2. **Open Our Hearts Chant:** Read together to close.

**Open our hearts to peace and healing between all people.
Open our hearts to protect and provide for all children of
the earth.**

**Open our hearts to respect the earth and all gifts of the
earth.**

**Open our hearts to end exclusion, violence and fear among
all.**

I am thankful for the gifts of this day and every day.

Garden Section 2:

Earth Teachings & Respect



C Y C L E S

The sun and rain nourish the earth.

The earth nourishes roots.

The roots nourish green grass, trees and plants.

The green 'people' nourish the air with oxygen.

The air rises with the winds to nourish clouds,

To once again become rain nourishing the earth.



The cycles of life...back to rebirth...to renewal.

The spirit of the plant becomes one with the rabbit.

The spirit of the fallen rabbit becomes one with the wolf.

The spirit of the fallen wolf becomes one with the earth.

The spirit of the earth becomes one with the plant.

The cycle of nature's death...back to rebirth...to renewal.

Life...Death...Life...the cycles go on. Beginning to end to new beginning.

Nothing lives forever. Nothing ever dies. The earth is one with the cloud.

The rabbit is one with the wolf. The wolf is one with the plant.

We are one with the plants and animals.

There is nothing on earth that is new. Everything that is here has always been here. Televisions were once rocks, minerals and sand that came from other composition transition of elements. Dinosaurs, knights' armor, castle walls, covered wagons, are all still here as something else.

Everything is One. One is part of Everthing.



A Little Place on The River

“Father isn’t the river beautiful?”

“Yes Child, it is.....”

Look out in the open. See the diamonds splashing across, reflecting the summer sun, where those geese are floating.

Look across in the shade. See the reflection of the trees and bushes, and the reflection of the clouds creating the mirrors of the physical and mystical worlds, reminding us of the two natures of all in the world.

Look down into the water. See the fish in their circles, as they eat, swim, and live in their water universe. Some can follow the water paths around the entire world. I wonder what they think looking up at us?

Look at the turtle lying on the north ledge of that rock, staying cool in the shade, but the small lizard lies on the south side to be warmed by the sun.

Look at all the wonders before us, just in this little place on the river. Yes, Child, it is beautiful. I am thankful for this day and being here to share it with you.”



Walking the Woods

One day, an Uncle said to his nephew and niece, *“Go into the woods. Walk through then come tell me what was there.”*

The nephew thought of it as a race contest, and he quickly set off, running through the woods, trampling over everything, thrashing and crackling branches every which way. He ran back and told the Uncle he saw trees, plants, rocks and some water. He was proud.

The niece returned much later. Uncle asked, *“Niece, what did you see?”* The niece said.....”There were families of birds in the trees, some flying out for food, others tending young in the nests, with much beautiful singing. There were caterpillars on the leaves of plants, with colorful stripes, inching their way along stems and others who had changed their shapes to butterflies floating lightly among the wildflowers of many colors. Along the riverbank, I stopped to watch the fish swimming just below the bank so gracefully, and there was a beaver working on a dam, bringing fallen branches into the water to pack her shelter with mud for the coming cool winter. I sat on the warm south hillside, out of the wind, feeling the golden warmth of the sun, and saw a bear in the woods below gathering berries from the bushes. I recognized plants you have picked for healing medicines. I saw a straight path of deer tracks and knew it was a path to the deer’s drinking water and not the wandering path of deer when they graze.”

How do you walk the paths you follow each day, whether it be shoreline, woodland, plains, or concrete? Open your heart, eyes, ears, to all of life around you. There is so much to see, feel, and be thankful for. There is wonder everywhere if we open our hearts to it.



GIFTS AROUND US

As child and father were riding, the child asked, *“Father, why don’t we move to the city like others have done? The cities have so many things we don’t have here.”*

“Child, there are many things here that the cities do not have. In the city, you would not be close to all your relatives like here. Many people who lived in the same building with you, would not even know your name or care to know. Here we all know each other. It is true the cities have many things, but those are things made and sold. Here we have what is made and give by creation and Mother Earth. We have the eagles, hawks and other birds in the skies, not seen in the cities. We can see deer, coyote, bear and fox. We have the running rivers and this water we are riding near, filled with fish. There are majestic mountains behind our house, forests of trees and valleys of waving grasses. Look at the sky. It is not cluttered or hidden. We can see the sun, the moon, the clouds and the breath of stars that light the night-sky.

In the cities, there is none of this. The tall buildings hide the very sun and sky. The things men make, and sell are nothing compared to the gifts freely around us here. Many children in the cities have never even walked on grass, ever. We would not be riding our horses on this beach in the sunset.”

“Father, I do not want to move to the city.”

City or country, there are gifts around us if we look for them and are open to their beauty. Having walked across the country, through many States, through cities, suburbs, farmland, shorelines, forests, mountains, prairies, and deserts, there was beauty everywhere, each with its own gifts of energy, people, places and nature. Look for the beauty around you.

The Ant



One spring day, my friend and I were playing and saw some ants on the ground. We were going to step on them, but Grandmother stopped us and said:

“Why do you want to step on the ants? You cannot kill the ants. The ants are stronger than we are.”

I kind of smirked and asked, “*How can such a tiny ant be stronger than we are?*”

And she told us:

“Young Ones, the giant animals that once roamed the earth are long gone, but the ant remains.

The giant ice that once covered much of the earth is gone, but the ant remains.

The giant wood boats that brought human foreigners from across the wide seas to this land are gone, but the ant remains.

The giant herds with millions of buffalo across the Plains are gone, but the ant remains.

Giant buildings built by the human foreigners come and go, but the ant remains.

Giant governments of humans around the world, come and go, but the ant remains.

Look at the ants, Young Ones. Learn from them.

Watch how well they cooperate with each other and work together.

Learn what they teach us about cooperation and working together.”



Dumb Is as Dumb Does

“Eeech! Ouch!! Oohh!!”

Coyote yelped jumping down the lane, lifting his paws as soon as they touched the hot road.

“What’s wrong?” asked Bird, sitting on a branch nearby singing.

“What’s wrong? I’ll tell you what’s wrong. The ground in summer is getting hotter and hotter every year. It is no wonder. Look around Bird, you should know. There are less and less trees to cool, or help breezes along their way. Most of the soft, moist top earth is long gone from the plows of the two-leggeds. The humans smother the earth with flat gray stone to walk upon or black rock trails to ride upon, so the earth has hardly any place left to breathe. Look over there at the brown clouds hanging over their gray village of giant stone towers. How can they breathe that poison? I know I can’t.”

“You should try flying through it,” Bird said. *“My eyes burn for hours and the grime gets all over my wings.”*

“I can’t even imagine,” replied Coyote. “And the river! PHEW! I won’t even try to drink the green, oily muck that used to be clear, running water. And some call us dumb animals.”

“Or bird-brains,” laughed Bird. *“Maybe we are smarter than they. We don’t destroy that which we need to survive.”*

It is time to respect and restore Mother Earth. She and we need clean waters, clean air, trees and plants to live and provide life for us all and all the generations to come.



Animal Teachers

The children sat huddled by the Grandmother's wikiup (tent), to hear the ancient teaching stories of crow, coyote, eagle, bear, deer, fox, buffalo, turtle, spider, snake and many others of the forest, sky and water. She then reminded the children.....

“There is much to learn from the animals and birds, when you come upon them, besides the stories I and others tell you. Creatures are not confused like most of us humans are. They know their purpose and follow their path every day, never questioning it. They live in each moment, without any regrets of yesterdays, nor any fears of the tomorrows. They know the only thing for sure is each moment as it happens.

Humans live more confusing and challenging by the gifts of greater emotions, which can make us worry, fear, and envy over silly things that often do not matter, if we allow it. There are enough meaningful concerns without all the silly ones clouding our minds. Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow isn't here yet.

Some people do not understand or believe in the animal teachers and guides that have been part of our traditional ways since ancient times, passed from age to age, from our beginning until now. But, most of their children have learned from Big Bird, Elmo, Barney, Dory, and other ‘modern’ creatures. Humans are not so different from each other if we think about it with good hearts.

We will share more stories, but for today, turn on the TV in the wikiup, and learn from Barney.”



On and On

The cloud becomes the rain.

The rain becomes the plant.

The plant becomes the caterpillar.

The caterpillar becomes the butterfly.

The butterfly becomes the spider.

The spider becomes the grasshopper.

The grasshopper becomes the frog.

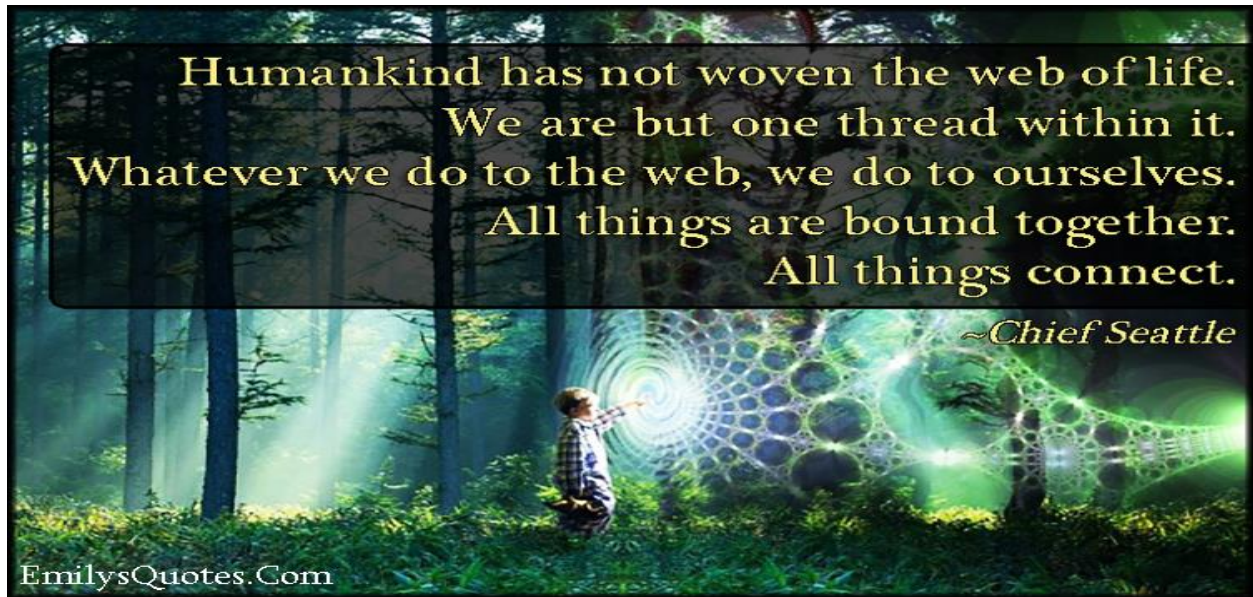
The frog becomes the pond.

The pond becomes the cloud.

The cloud becomes the rain.....

On and on. Each is part of all. All is part of each.

Nothing lives forever. Nothing ever dies forever.



Web of Life

There is a Lakota Sioux expression of *mitakuye oyasin*, meaning ‘for all my relations’ or ‘all is related’ depending on usage. It reminds we are all related: people, creatures and all of earth, sky and water. Each is connected to and affects the whole.

Changes in the water ‘there’ will affect water ‘here.’ A fire in the west will carry its smoke to the east. Land developed ‘there’ will move creatures ‘here’. A war over ‘there’ will bring refugees ‘here’. Fracking the earth ‘there’ will bring quakes and tremors ‘here’. Nothing happens ‘there’ without affecting something elsewhere.

Another traditional Native consideration is: *do not do anything without thinking of how it may or will affect the next seven generations*. Too often in our modern consumer world people, businesses and governments think only of today’s gain or loss, without regard to the future generations.

We must think of our children and all the children to follow. They must have a healthy Mother Earth to survive. We are one people sharing one home of Earth.

Understand we are all one, and all is part of the Web of Life.

Section 2- Earth Teachings and Respect

Activity Pages – deer Sullivan

Goals:

- Help participants develop empathy for one another, all people and the earth and all its beings.
- Grow understanding about the importance and value of diversity as well as help participants learn about all the ways human beings are similar.
- Give participants opportunities to plant seeds, tend to them, watch them grow and use that process as a metaphor for life.
- Encourage participants to celebrate their connections with others and the earth, make new friends and expand their community of living beings.
- Develop the art of listening and meaning making through story.

Overview: This Section introduces the concept of Earth Respect. The messages of the stories teach the earth is a living being and all is connected. We can learn from all the earth's creatures and their life cycles as well as the life cycle of the earth.

Group Lesson Plan:

This Sample Lesson Plan can be used as the structure of your group time for as many weeks as you can dedicate to the Section, weaving in new songs and games, focusing on a different story/stories and plugging in alternate activities for each group meeting.

Opening Circle

1. Read the Chant at the start of each group. Ring a chime when beginning and when done (or have a volunteer participant ring chime and or read).

Open our hearts to peace and healing between all people.

Open our hearts to protect and provide for all children of the earth.

Open our hearts to respect the earth and all gifts of the earth.

Open our hearts to end exclusion, violence and fear among all.

I am thankful for the gifts of this day and every day.

- 2. Check In:** Gather group in a circle, welcome all and invite participants to check in, in some way- with their name, one word, how their week was, last wild animal they say, share a favorite landscape, or the name of someone they respect) something that invites connection- some people love this, some don't- so doing it and moving it along fairly quickly is a good balance for most.
- 3. Read your Group Covenant** every week. If you don't have a group covenant, we suggest you make one for your time together. For help in creating a Group Covenant, go here:
<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/wonder/session1/276306.shtml>

Cooperative Game: Begin with a game to bring the group together in the spirit of joy.

Song: The Mosaic Project Theme Song, by The Mosaic Project:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaUcryYS0PY>

Storytime: Settle group back in. Invite a moment of quiet by ringing a chime or a gong and asking participants to raise their hands when they hear the sound and slowly bring their hand to their hearts when they can no longer hear it. Do this once or twice or until you have the attention and focus of whole group. Share the story of the day- one of the ones from Section 1- People Respect. (option to have paper and colored pencils, crayons, chalks, pipe cleaners...etc... in center of space in case participants want to doodle, express, make meaning with art).

Story Questions and Sharing: Ask a few questions: What did you relate to in that story? What was that story about for you? And then invite brief sharing. Participants can doodle while listening and then show doodle.

Move It: Invite the group to move to the Activity area/table like their favorite animal. As they are doing this invite them to do it in slow motion. As they are doing that, invite them to move like it's their birthday. As they do that invite them to move like the wind, fire, water, the earth...just have fun with it!

Activity Ideas:

Activity 1. Watch the Earth-

Bring the group outside- to a field, yard, courtyard, corner of the parking lot...etc. Give each participant something to sit on and a small notebook and a pencil/pen. Invite them to find a spot where they are just going to sit and notice the earth around them for 3-5 minutes. Once everyone has found a spot to sit, ask them to just look at the ground directly around them with their eyes for 2 minutes (time this). Ask them to notice everything they can- colors, shapes, sounds, smells, bugs, life. For the next 1-2 minutes, invite them to jot down everything they notice. There is so much to the earth- to even a small area right around us on the ground- this exercise will help them to understand this. Bring the group together to share what they found, noticed, experienced...

Activity 2- Creature Teachings: (from Alycia)

Have children become different creatures. Who are they? What are their characteristics? What can they teach us? When outdoors with children, watch for the creatures (different birds, squirrels, deer, ants, etc...) Be still and watch what the creatures do. If near woods, deer can often be seen around dawn or dusk. Mimic bird whistles or keep a log to identify different types. If a group of ants is seen, watch how they work together. Watch horses in a field if there is one nearby. Herds have a pecking order of who goes first, second, third, etc. Watch horses ears. Turned back they are wary,

forward they are comfortable. If approaching horses in a field do it slowly without staring into its eyes, slowly nudge into its shoulder (it is a safe greeting horses use with each other). Creatures can teach us a lot about nature and ourselves if we pay attention.

Activity 3 - Life Circles: (from Alycia)

Pick a creature, living being or item and trace it backwards. (Example: A dress: cotton fabric> cotton plant> seed> rain> cloud> new rain> new plant> fruit.) Everything is connected. What happens here, affects there.

Activity 4- The Web of Life:

Create a web of yarn between a few trees to show the web of life and how everything is connected. Use colorful yarns, have fun with it. Imagine the intelligence of the spiders and the intricacy of their web designs! Group can also make them inside between posts or beams, or with circles of vines for individual webs.

Closing: Bring group together for a closing circle.

Tune in Time: The Raisin meditation: <http://blissfulkids.com/mindfulness-meditation-for-children-raisin-meditation/>

Open Our Hearts Chant:

Open our hearts to peace and healing between all people.

Open our hearts to protect and provide for all children of the earth.

Open our hearts to respect the earth and all gifts of the earth.

Open our hearts to end exclusion, violence and fear among all.

I am thankful for the gifts of this day and every day.

Garden Section 3:

Planting Seeds to Grow By



TOTEMS

In a traditional Native way, as children grow up they will seek or be found by a totem guide. It will usually be a creature that is special to them. The totem is simply a sort of teacher that brings lessons or guidance at times, as the cunning fox, or the strong bear for example.



A 'Grandmother' was curious and asked four children, *"Which creatures do you seek for your totems?"*

The first child said, "I seek the Eagle, who can fly above and beyond all." The second child said, "I seek the Buffalo, of great strength, who can outrun all." The third child said, "I seek the mighty Wolf, who is feared and respected by all." The fourth child shyly said, "Grandmother, the squirrel is with me."

The Grandmother asked, *"Young one, why the small squirrel?"*

The child answered, "Grandmother, the Eagle was nearly gone from the skies, so was not able to fly above and beyond all there is. The great Buffalo was nearly gone from the Plains, so was not able to outrun all. Wolf was chased far into the lands of the long cold and so was not feared and respected by all. Squirrel has remained and has spread through all the lands, even the lands of tall buildings and noise. The squirrel has no great power or majesty others seek to take or destroy. Squirrel is just squirrel."

The Grandmother was pleased by this child's respect, wisdom and humility. She felt she might have found which child to receive her medicine teachings and bundle when it is time.

The true human trail is not to look up or down at others, but to look into all with common respect.

Tides

A child and his father stood on the shore rocks, watching the gulls as they stood facing the winds on sandbar seaweed.

The child was troubled and asked, *“Father, why is life so hard? So much seems to be wrong and not fair or right. Sometimes it makes me sad.”*



“Child look out to the sea. It is now low tide, but it will soon be in-between, then it will high, then low tide again. This is the way of the sea and all life. At times low, at times high, and most times in-between, when neither low nor high.”

“One thing is true. It never stays the same. It is always in a state of change, of ebb and flow. Nothing remains the same forever. If you are in a low tide, do not worry. Be calm. Be patient. The tide will change, just as night’s darkness always becomes day’s light with dawn and dusk being in-between times, signaling a change coming. Winter’s cold becomes summer’s warmth, with the in-between times of spring and fall that are neither too hot nor too cold.”

“The moon waxes and wanes. The snake gets a new skin each year. The buck gets new antlers each year. The slow caterpillar transforms to the light, beautiful butterfly. Be patient Child, the tide will always change.”



The Compass

The Uncle asked, “Nephew, what is that you have?”

“It is a compass Uncle, so I do not get lost.”

“But Nephew, what if the compass becomes lost? Do not rely on things to find your way. Follow what you know to be true, what you feel, what you see, what you hear, what you sense, and you will never be lost. Does not Grandfather Sun awake in the East and travel South to sleep in the West? Does not Grandmother Moon do the same? Does not the bright star point the way north?”

“I know these things you and others have taught Uncle, but what if it is cloudy or gray, and the sun, moon and stars cannot be seen?”

“Nephew look at the rocks and trees. The moist, mossy side will be North. The dry side of the hill will be South. The hot, sticky winds come from the Southwest. The dry cold winds come down from the North of the White Bear. Look at the waters you see often. Which direction does it always flow from or to? Watch the animals and birds. Which way do they stand or roost to feel warmth from the sun, or reduce the cold winds or storms? All around you will tell you the directions and tell you the time of day.

No matter where or how you feel lost, calmly look with open eyes, feel with open heart, sense with inner knowing, and you will find your way from the forest, or from any of life’s fears. Use the inner compass that is always within you, but remember, wherever you stand, there are always four directions to choose between. Listen to your guides and choose with your heart. Shiny metal things are an unnecessary burden to possess and carry. They can lead you astray.”

“Thank-you Uncle.”

The Tree

“Father, I tried to climb a tall tree today, but could not get up the trunk to climb it.”

“Child, it is good that you tried. Try again tomorrow.

Look deeply at the trunk. You will find the way.”

“Father, I used small notches in the tree’s trunk,

But the branches were slippery.

I could not climb far up.”

“It is good you got as far as you did. Try again tomorrow. Look closely for what the tree provides. You will find the way.”



“Father, I found sap on the tree, and used it to make my hands sticky. Today, I climbed to the very top of the tree.”

“You have done well Child. It is good you found your way to the top of that tree. Tomorrow, find a taller tree.”

There is much in this little story...difficulty, support, perseverance, guidance, letting go, observation, creativity and more. Look deeply at blockages, find the way around them. There is always a way if we look carefully and calmly.



Above and Below

“Mother, you are quiet. What are you thinking about?”

“I am not thinking Child. I am quietly listening.”

“To what, Mother?”

“To my inner voice, Child. The one that knows best about things. We all have an inner guiding voice, but it usually speaks in whispers, below our awake talk. It is like Tree. We can see the tall trunk, its spreading branches and the leaves it grows. We do not see its roots below the ground, and its roots are what keeps Tree healthy, strong and growing straight. Without the hidden roots below, Tree could not be. Tree would wither away to nothingness.

Our inner voice is what some people call the subconscious. It is below our surface, below our chatter and the noise of the outer conscious world, the awake world. Without the inner voice to guide us, we would wither to a state of nothingness. The inner below voice comes from our dream world within. It creates our thoughts, which creates what we do in the outer awake world. Like Tree, it helps us to stand. Hear the voice of your roots within.”

Wildflowers



A rainbow of wildflowers,

Each delicate in her beauty,

Each graceful in the movement of her dance.

But beyond her wind dance of grace, beneath the beauty of her face,

Is her strength, deep within her roots.

She pulls food from the depths of the earth, and drinks water from the sky.

She stands to the aggression of the fire sun,

And bends to the powerful winds of storms, standing upright as they pass by.

She conceals herself under the blanket of heavy winter snowfalls,

Then lifts herself up through the earth of spring showers.

For she is Wildflower, beautiful, delicate, resilient, and strong.

One does not have to be big with muscles to be strong.



Beyond the Obvious



“Look at that swan Mother. Isn’t she beautiful?”

“Swan is beautiful Young One, but also very strong and very powerful. “

“How can that be? She is so delicate and fluffy?”

“Look at her wings, Young One. If Swan feels threatened, one beat of her wing is strong enough to break a human’s leg as easily as snapping a twig. One can be soft, gentle and graceful in movement, but still be very strong and powerful at the same time. One part does not exclude another.

It is the same with Bear. Bear is big and very powerful without doubt, but watch Bear dig for roots to eat or gather honey from a beehive or pluck a fish from the river. Bear can move powerful claws ever so lightly and delicately.

What one appears to be is not all that one is, among all creature people and human people. Everyone is much more than appearance or perceptions. We all have many parts of who we are, and many different gifts to call upon in different situations. Look and enjoy the beauty of Swan, but do not get too close or you will find out how powerful Swan is.”

“Thank-you for this wisdom, Mother.”



FORGIVENESS

One time, Raccoon was mad at Beaver. Beaver felt she had done nothing wrong, so would not apologize.



Raccoon is so mad, that he is very moody all the time and angry around others in the forest, making all feel uncomfortable to be around him. The other creatures ask peaceful Deer to speak to Raccoon, but Raccoon tells Deer, *“I will not forgive Beaver until she apologizes. Then I may forgive her.”*



“Brother Raccoon, withholding your forgiveness is not harming Beaver. It is harming you and those who are close to you. Your anger and bad moods have replaced your smile and playfulness. Forgiveness withheld for any time is not a good or positive virtue. It is a judgment, ‘I judge you to have wronged me, and maybe I’ll forgive you, maybe I won’t.’ The longer we withhold forgiveness, the more we harm ourselves and others in our circle. Do not judge, for we are often wrong about another’s intention, or do not understand who they are, what they have said or done, or why. You and Beaver were good friends. I know you must miss each other’s company. Your other friends miss your smile and friendship too. Let go of this judgment, so that all will know your smile again, including Beaver. Your anger not only harms you, but it divides all who live around you, choosing sides for you or Beaver. The price of holding forgiveness is not worth all the harm it brings to ourselves and others.”

And so, Raccoon thought for a few moments, then smiled, thanked Deer, and the next day said hello to Beaver. All in the forest circle were happy again.

HEALING

“Mother, I cut my finger,” cried the child.

“Oh, let me see. I’ll get medicine to put on it.”

“No Mother, it will hurt and sting.”

“For just a little bit. Then it will get better. If we do not treat it, it will not heal. If it does not heal, it could get infected and spread.”

So it is with our inner hurts, fears, angers, envies, and prejudices. Everyone on earth has been ‘cut’ by something or someone, at some time. If we let it go, it will only hurt and sting for a little while. If we hold on to it, we will not heal. We will become infected. Infections are poison, building up, swelling with pain, until the infection bursts.

The medicines of courage, instant forgiveness, humility, and respect for all are the healing medicines for our inner ‘cuts’, preventing infection and bringing inner peace.

Forgiveness

Respect



Humility

Courage



BALANCE

It has been told once there was an eagle, who lived on the cliffs in lands of rising rocks and little grass. Each day, Eagle would lift from the cliff, catch the wind from

the West, and circle towards the East. Eagle used the right wing and ignored the left, just gliding with it. The right wing became very strong, very powerful and Eagle was proud, circling high over the canyons, and all that was below.

One day, Eagle left the cliff catching the West wind as usual and circled high and far. All of a sudden, the familiar wind changed. It stopped from the West, gaining great speed from the East and Northeast. Eagle became confused. The right wing was not working in this wind. Eagle tried using the left wing, but it was not strong enough. It was weak because Eagle ignored the left, never thinking it had value, and never used its gifts and strengths, so the left wing had weakened.

Eagle crashed to the ground badly shaken. It was a long time before Eagle could fly as far again. As Eagle recovered, Eagle learned to use both wings, understanding and appreciating the gifts of balance, wholeness, and the gifts and strengths of both sides working together in harmony. Ever since, all eagles can be seen gliding with both wings perfectly straight, each used equally with the other.

There are many forms of balance, such as all the dualities within each person: the balance between our material need and spiritual purpose; the balance between the male/female energies, between man and woman, using the strengths and gifts of both sides of humanity, neither in power over, exclusion, or limitation of the other. Balance is a harmony, a partnership, a wholeness. Without balance, like Eagle in this story, we will crash from imbalance.

Be aware of your balance, your harmony within yourself, using all your gifts.

To Have A Dream

It is good to have a dream,
Without a dream.... there is no path to follow.
Without a path, we cannot travel anywhere.
We remain wherever we have been.

Without a dream.....we see the same things today we saw yesterday.



We hear the same words today, we heard yesterday.
We have the same thoughts and feelings today as
yesterday.

Without a dream...today is the same as yesterday.
Tomorrow will be the same as today.
Why trouble to greet a new day?
It is good to have a dream. We all have a dream.
It is better yet to follow such a dream.

Dream....Listen....Follow your dream.
Our dreams tell us what we need to know,
even if we do not want to know it at times.



Hear Your Song

There is a special song for each of us. Our path is to listen for it, hear it when it comes, make it our choice to follow its tune, and sing it in our daily lives as best we can.

For some the song is to nurture children, nurturing the next generation of songs. For some it may be to ease the loneliness of elders.

It may be to share daily kindness, a smile or a listening heart towards others. For some it is to stand in peace against powers of greed, fear or injustice. It may be a song for the earth, to protect plants, waters, and creatures of the earth. It may be to sing for others who are without voice to be heard. It may be to paint, sculpt, or write. Every song is different, but each is a gift of beauty, value and spirit, enhancing life for self and all.

Some songs are long with many verses. Others may be very brief, as a teaching to open ears and hearts so other songs may be heard and sung. At times, a spirit is physically born with a purpose to affect, enhance, and lift the potential of others. Sometimes it is difficult to understand and accept the unique song of others.

Most songs come with challenge, and always the choice to sing it or not. It is not always easy. Some songs may be more difficult than others. This is the way of our songs, giving us the choice to raise our voice in spite of challenge, discomfort, or obstacles in our way. Whatever the degree of difficulty our song has, we also have been given whatever gifts we need to sing it well, but we must choose to or not.

Do we hear our song? Have we listened for it? Are we ready to hear it, follow it, even if may mean letting go of what seems comfortable, but is really stagnation, or the fear to follow the unknown, or to stand alone singing in front of others?

The singing of our song is the harmony of our earthwalk. It is the harmony of our spirit to be and our physical to do. It is the fullness of our being. Listen for and hear your song, then choose to sing it every day. Live it every day.



Everything Is Relative

Consider the vastness of our Sun and its planets, but it is a small part of the universe of other galaxies, other solar systems, other planets, yet part of the whole.

Consider the vastness of Earth, its continents and oceans. Each community is a small part of it, yet part of the whole.

Consider each community of many homes and people. Each home and each person is a small part of the community, but part of the whole.

Consider our bodies. Upon them millions of organisms live. To these living cells, we are as vast as the universe seems to us.

Our solar system lives in universal space. The earth lives in the universe of the solar system. Each community lives in the universe of earth. Each person lives in the universe of community.

Everything is vast and small. Everything is part of something larger and smaller. Everything is part of the whole. Everything is related and part of each other.

For us to look up into the sky or even up to a mountaintop, is the same for an ant to be at our feet, looking up to our head. Imagine the wonder of it all.

A Lakota Sioux saying is, “Mitakuye Oyasin”, which expresses:

“For all my relations.” What affects one, affects all.



CIRCLES

A circle is good, for all are equal in a circle.

A circle is good, for all can see all in a circle.

A circle is good, for all can hear all in a circle.

A circle is good, for all can share with all in a circle.

A circle is good, for all can connect with all in a circle.

A circle is good, for it has harmony and balance.

A circle has no head to bark, nor tail to wag.

It has no beginning. It has no ending.

Come. Share the Circle.

Family Stories



Your grandparents have stories of their lives, and of those before theirs. What was their childhood like, their schools, their work, their fun, their family get-togethers?

If you still have them, they have much to share with you.

Your aunts, uncles and cousins have stories your parents do not know, or have forgotten. Older brothers and sisters may have stories you do not know.

Your mother and father have their stories, and the stories of your beginning years that you do not know or do not remember.

Each story links the yesterdays, today, and tomorrows, in an unbroken chain.

Each story is special. Each story is part of who you are.

Do you know the stories of your family?

Woven into the stories are your roots, your history, your strengths and challenges.

Ask of them. Hear them. Record or write them. Remember them.

Save them and pass them on.

Family stories can be one of life's most precious gifts.



S H A R I N G

The harvest of beans, squash and corn had been picked. As usual with the tribe, portions went to families and some to the tribal cache.

A young child asked, *“Why do we give some of the crops to the Longhouse (community building)?”*

The mother explained the food was to give thanks for what was grown and to provide food for the tribe members if there is need. Someone may be hurt or ill and not able to grow food or hunt. The tribal food is to provide for all who may need, but the child still had questions in her eyes.

The mother further explained, *“As a school of fish swims, the fish at the front will eat as they swim, while the fish at the sides and back stay alert for any dangers. Then the fish at the front go to the back and all the others move up. Each takes its turn at the front to eat. Each takes its turn watching out for the others. All are fed. All contribute as best they can. This is how it is among our People. No one is hungry while others eat well. We all watch out for and take care of each other. The same sharing happens among many groups of animals and some humans.”*

This is how it was with most traditional Native tribes and bands. These ways have been changed by the ones who came from across the big sea. Some documented excerpts from U.S. Congress officials of the late 1800's are:

“The common fields (tribal lands) are the seat of barbarism. The separate farm (small land allotments) is the door to Indian civilization.”

“The Indian must be imbued with the exalting egotism of American civilization, so that he will say I instead of we, and this is mine instead of this is ours.”

“We must make the Indian more intelligently selfish.”

Which is the way of barbarism?



WARRIORS

There are many kinds of warriors. Many are peaceful, non-violent warriors. We each choose what kind we will be.

Warriors fight for nations, for men they'll never know. With weapons of destruction, killing peaceful people they do not even know.

Warriors fight for peace, for children they'll never know. With weapons forged of words, saving children they'll never know.

Warriors fight for the earth and creatures they'll never know. With weapons of the laws, saving creatures and places they'll never know.

Warriors fight for the poor, the poor they'll never know. With weapons made of giving, saving the poor they'll never know.

Warriors fight diseases, for the sick they'll never know. With weapons made of healing, curing the sick they'll never know.

Warriors fight for the old ones, the elders they'll never know. With weapons made of comfort, helping the elders they'll never know.

Though weapons may be different, though the goals be not the same.

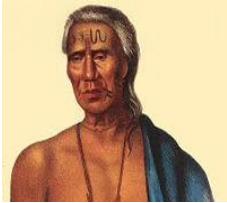
Though a warrior is a warrior, the wars are not the same.

There are some that fight to kill. There are some who fight for life.

There are some that fight to save. There are some that fight to help.

There are some that fight to teach. There are some that fight to heal.

May we all walk the path of the gentle, peaceful warrior who helps others.



Walking the Gentle Path

(for 'Grandfather' Grey Wolf Carry Away, Comanche/Choctaw elder)

"Grandfather Grey Wolf, you say for us to walk the gentle path, but what is the gentle path?"

"It is a path of peace but may not be peaceful for those who follow it. It can be difficult. Courage and spirit are needed to walk it. Eating bitter roots may create bitter words and bitter hearts, that cut the hearts of others.

Do no harm by thought, word or deed. Avoid harming all others, including those of the forest, sky and sea. All life is precious and not to be spilled or wasted through malice or greed. There is only one bread we eat from and if we eat more than we need, then someone else has far less and goes hungry.

Honor and respect all people, even those you do not understand or agree with. Understand, even if hard to at times, everyone is doing the best they can at that moment. Recognize that every person here has a purpose and gifts to contribute, if allowed *and willing to do so*. We can get lost from our purpose, or choose to remain blind to it, but it is there, a light waiting to shine brightly.

Honor and respect all the earth. Recognize the gifts of earth, air, water and fire, to be used thoughtfully in good ways. Be aware that all of, and upon, earth is related, that we are one family of earth, sharing our home of earth. Give thanks and respect for the many gifts we receive from the Creator who is called by many names or thought of as a mystery we do not understand yet by some."

This is how to 'Walk the Gentle Path.'



The Path of Peace

By feeling satisfied with what i have, i feel no envy.

By giving freely to those who need, i feel no loss.

By understanding the fears of others, i feel no anger nor hate.

By accepting the differences of others, i feel no judgment.

By recognizing the specialness of all, i feel no self-importance.

By seeing the wonders of Mother Earth, i feel humble.

By knowing all that i can do, i feel my worth.

By recognizing all i cannot do, i feel humility.

By giving love, sharing and caring, i feel loved and cared for.

By living peaceful thoughts, words and deeds, i am at peace.

By these steps, i walk the path of peace.

When i write you, you is not capitalized, so i write i small, because i am no more important than you. Why should writing i make it seem that i am? The world is whatever we each give to its energy individually and collectively...peace, violence, love, hate, generosity, greed, forgiveness, anger, caring, indifference...We choose what the world is. We each choose what the world will be daily by what we say, do and feel.

Walk in Peace

Section 3- Planting Seeds to Grow By

Activity Pages – deer Sullivan

Goals: These Activity pages will:

- Help participants develop empathy for one another, all people and the earth and all its beings.
- Grow understanding about the importance and value of diversity as well as help participants learn about all the ways human beings are similar.
- Give participants opportunities to plant seeds, tend to them, watch them grow and use that process as a metaphor for life.
- Encourage participants to celebrate their connections with others and the earth, make new friends and expand their community of living beings.
- Develop the art of listening and meaning making through story

Overview: This Section introduces the concept of each of us as planters of seeds. We are all on the path of growth to becoming a true human being, focuses on concepts and values that support that growth.

Group Lesson Plan:

This Sample Lesson Plan can be used as the structure of your group time for as many weeks as you can dedicate to the Section, weaving in new songs and games, focusing on a different story/stories and plugging in alternate activities for each group meeting.

Opening Circle:

1. Read the Chant at the start of each group. Ring a chime when beginning and when done (or have a volunteer participant ring one).

Open our hearts to peace and healing between all people.

Open our hearts to protect and provide for all children of the earth.

Open our hearts to respect the earth and all gifts of the earth.

Open our hearts to end exclusion, violence and fear among all.

I am thankful for the gifts of this day and every day.

- 2. Check In:** Gather group in a circle, welcome all and invite participants to check in, in some way- with their name, one word, how their week was, last wild animal they say, share a favorite landscape, or the name of someone they respect) something that invites connection- some people love this, some don't- so doing it and moving it along fairly quickly is a good balance for most.
- 3. Read your Group Covenant** every week. If you don't have a group covenant, we suggest you make one for your time together. For help in creating a Group Covenant, go here:

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/wonder/session1/276306.shtml>

Game: Begin with a Cooperative Game to bring the group together in the spirit of joy. Play is a very important part of our time together.

Song: Free To Be Me- by Bunny Hull-

<https://www.shazam.com/track/84806668/free-to-be-me>

Storytime: Settle group back in. Invite a moment of quiet by ringing a chime or a gong and asking participants to raise their hands when they hear the sound and slowly bring their hand to their hearts when they can no longer hear it. Do this once or twice or until you have the attention and focus of whole group. Share the story of the day- one of the ones from Section 1- People Respect. (option to have paper and colored pencils, crayons, chinks, pipe cleaners...etc... in center of space in case participants want to doodle, express, make meaning with art)

Story Questions and Sharing: Ask a few questions: What did you relate to in that story? What was that story about for you? And then invite brief sharing.

Participants can doodle while listening and then show doodle.

Activity Ideas:

Activity 1. Planting Seeds

(Set up a station for planting seeds ahead of time. You will need to purchase soil-organic planting mix is the best, seeds -something edible for people or animals- Nasturtiums, Sunflowers...etc, and biodegradable seed planters/starting pots.)

Invite children to fill a get a little pot and put soil in in, then pick up a seed and hold it and think of something they'd like to plant in their hearts, their family, community or world, then plant the seed. Bless the planted seed with water and put it in a sunny spot designated ahead of time. As the group is planting, share about the choice of soil, seed and pots (in alignment with our Green Sanctuary mission UU Principle 7). Clean up.

Activity 2. The Wheel of the Water

Invite the group to draw, or make with pipe cleaners, or imagine the wheel of the water as you listen to this story (start it at 2 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hGAo3hWBmk> can also make rain like is shown on this video clip.

Activity 3. Compass

Create a large Compass in your space. Bring is a real compass and show how it works. If you can gather a few compasses, divide the group into pairs, spread them out around the space and then give them directions to move- ie- 5 steps north, 2 backwards to the east, one giant leap south...etc. Then bring them to the center and map the directions out on your walls or floor to help orient you to the earth.

If outside, look at the sun. Try to tell the time and the directions by its position.

Activity 3. Walking the Gentle Path Mural-

Invite the group to move across the room/space to express various emotions- anger, joy, sorrow, nervousness...end with 'gentleness'...invite each to go to a large piece of mural paper and write words, sensations...to describe the 'gentle path'. Have small squares of colorful paper that each participant can trace their feet on.

Cut out the feet shapes. These can be turned that a reminder to walk the gentle path, they can take one foot home and put one on the community mural.

Closing Circle:

1. **Tune in Time/Move it:** Invite the group to do the 'Breath of Joy' - you can google this and get many versions, here is one example (start at 2 mins)- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PqViyd8Dcc>

2. **Open Our Hearts Chant:**

Open our hearts to peace and healing between all people.

Open our hearts to protect and provide for all children of the earth.

Open our hearts to respect the earth and all gifts of the earth.

Open our hearts to end exclusion, violence and fear among all.

I am thankful for the gifts of this day and every day.

Author---- Alycia (longriver) Davis



After a successful career in corporate business and as an entrepreneur, I faced a deep, difficult situation. Being part Native American (Mi'kmaq), I lamented (cried) and prayed for a 'vision', asking Creator what to do. That night a very specific 'dream vision' came to walk from Cape Cod to Arizona, showing routes to follow and messages of earth respect and people respect to share along the way. This was crazy! Having bad leg injuries from an old car accident, I was not a 'walker' and would never have 'picked' a cross-country walk to do. It made no sense at all. Traditionally, if gifted a vision, you can't ask for something else to do. You either do it or refuse to. Contemplating a few weeks and being given several confirming validations, I decided to do it. Training and setting off alone, I miraculously met up with a Native American guided walk doing the same thing, over the same routes, with the same messages. It was good to be with a group versus walking alone. "Something" mysterious was guiding this. After the walk, these teaching stories, and others, just came to me from within very quickly. I've always felt the stories have paths to travel and hope you enjoy and find them helpful, especially the children who hopefully take these seeds to grow with.

Activity Sections Creator: deer Sullivan

I have been a Unitarian Universalist Religious Educator for 20 years in the New England Region and presently serve as Director of Lifespan Ministries at the Unitarian Church of Barnstable. I identify as an Earth Centered person and much of my work involves helping children, youth and people of all ages connect to the nature, wilderness, and the earth. Through that connection, people can: build a sense of security/belonging; grow faith and soul; learn mindfulness/kindfulness/respect and more. Storytelling is central to my work and I am always looking for stories to support the messages I want to learn/teach/share, which is how I came upon Alycia and her work.

Peace to all. Follow a good path.

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