

Bulletin for Inclusion/Exclusion

Business

Chalice Lighting

This is the mission of our faith:
To teach the fragile art of hospitality;
To revere both the critical mind and the generous heart;
To prove that diversity need not mean divisiveness;
And to witness to all that we must hold the whole world in our hands.

—*William Schulz*

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence

Shared Readings

Gender is not a category upon which we should (or can) judge people's worth. Not only because that kind of prejudice is wrong, but because gender itself is fluid.—*Rev. Sean Parker Dennison*

...any time we discriminate against anyone and any time we allow crude jokes or bigoted actions on the part of others to occur, we have betrayed our own selves.—*Rev. Elizabeth McMaster*

...our theology, our faith, calls us to a standard higher than tolerance. Affirming the inherent worth and dignity of every person, even those who make us uncomfortable, calls us to examine our assumptions, to recognize our prejudices and preconceptions, to gather information we need, and to move into honest relationship with "the other." Our goal is to live as one human family on this small blue planet. We have much to be proud of. But our work is not done.

—*Rev. William G. Sinkford*

The test of courage comes when we are in the minority. The test of tolerance comes when we are in the majority.—*Ralph W. Sockman*

We dare not forget that inclusion, not exclusion, is the way of grace.—*Denise Ackerman*

Those at the edge of any system and those excluded from any system ironically and invariably hold the secret for the conversion and wholeness of the group's soul.—*Richard Rohr*

He drew a circle that shut me out –
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in.—*Edwin Markham*

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round I Drawing exercise.

Round II Share deeply from readings and questions in the preparation material. Tell a story about an instance of exclusion or inclusion from your life.

Round III As time allows share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared.

Closing Words

Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty. —*Mother Teresa*

Song

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group.
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit.
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others.
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time.
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others.
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart.
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, or giving advice.
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

Leader's Notes for Inclusion/Exclusion

Before the Session

You will need a sheet of paper, a pen, or pencil for each group member. This session examines the experience of being included or excluded in family, work, or social groups. Read the instructions for Round I below ahead of time to familiarize yourself with the exercise.

Business

Chalice Lighting

Ask someone to read the chalice lighting reading found in the bulletin.

Sharing of Joys and Concerns (each person about 2 min.)

Silence (3 min.)

Shared Readings

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening During your rounds of deep sharing/deep listening, pay close attention to the time allotted each person to ensure all get to share at least once.

Round I (about 15 min. total)

Read the following instructions to your group members:

Most of us have had some sort of experience with being excluded, ranging from overt rejection in a family setting, to workplace discrimination, to a subtle sense that we are not welcome in a social setting. We have also had the benefit of being welcome and being part of a group, be it family, friends, sports teams, or a church.

Using this sheet of paper draw a circle to represent a family, work, or social group in which you are involved. Use "m" to represent yourself and "x" for other members. Who is at the core? Who is on the outskirts? Who is outside of the circle? In one sentence, tell something you learned from drawing the circle.

Round II (each person about 5 min.) Share deeply from readings and questions in the preparation material. Tell a story about an instance of exclusion or inclusion from your life.

Round III (each person about 2 min.)

As time allows, share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared.

Closing Words

Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty.

—*Mother Teresa*

Song

Preparation for Inclusion/Exclusion

“We believe that each and every person is important. We affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. We believe that all people should be treated fairly. We affirm and promote acceptance of one another...” *Reading #594, Singing the Living Tradition Adapted from the Unitarian Universalist Association Principles and Purposes*

The words above illustrate values that many of us share. These words also suggest what could be achieved in a world where everyone is included in family, community, and work life and none are excluded. But we know that the world we live in is not like that. We know that people face exclusion in their families, in our communities, and in our places of employment because of race, gender, sexual preference, age, economic status, religion, disability, personal history, or even political point of view.

Questions to Ponder

This session is about your experience with inclusion and exclusion. There are a large number of questions offered in this session's homework. You do not have to address each of them. Choose those that have the most meaning for you.

1. Think of a time when you felt unwelcome. How did you handle it? What was your view of the group that made you feel unwelcome?
2. If you have ever noticed someone who appeared to be feeling unwelcome, how did you feel and what did you do?
3. Do you believe that people who feel comfortable with themselves are more welcoming to those who are very different from them? Why or why not?
4. In what groups have you felt most comfortable with yourself? Why do you think you were?
5. In what groups have you felt the least comfortable with yourself? Why do you think you were?
6. What is your personal history with inclusion and exclusion? Did you grow up in a family with biases against certain groups? Did you assume those biases into your own view of the world? If not, when and how did you separate from your family's views?
7. If you have heard offensive jokes about people or negative generalizations made about groups, how have you handled the situation? What did it feel like to speak up or stay silent? If the jokes or generalizations were about a group you belong to, how did you feel?
8. How has your background denied or opened opportunities for you?

Live together, talk together, walk together. We are all One.—*Swami Satyananda*