

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Session Plan
Authenticity
First Parish Church of Stow and Action, MA, April 2016

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:

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

- *Sue Patton Thoele*

Check-in/ Sharing: This is a time to mention briefly any major issue or event on your mind that you would like to share.

Topic: Authenticity

No one man can, for any considerable time, wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which is the true one. - *Nathaniel Hawthorne*

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

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

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

“You’ll never know who you are unless you shed who you pretend to be.” — *Vironika Tugaleva*

What it means to be authentic:

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

Questions for Discussion:

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

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions followed by sharing)

Wrapping Up: How did you like this topic and session?

Closing Words:

This above all:

To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

- *Hamlet, Shakespeare*

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

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

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

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

— *Margery Williams, The Velveteen Rabbit*