



Wednesday Evening Small Group
SESSION 49: BELONGING
25 September 2019, 7:15 PM

CHALICE LIGHTING

1 min

We all belong here equally...Just by being born onto the earth we are accepted and the earth supports us. We don't have to be especially good. We don't have to accomplish anything. We don't even have to be healthy.

Polly Horvath

SILENT MEDITATION / CENTERING

2 min

The first sound of the gong brings us to silence. Please take time to center yourself, and temporarily push aside whatever might be preventing you from participating fully in tonight's session. The second sound of the gong returns us to each other's presence.

OPENING WORDS:

1 min

A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all people. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong. When those needs are not met, we don't function as we were meant to. We break. We fall apart. We numb. We ache. We hurt others. We get sick.

Brené Brown

CHECK-IN (2 ROUNDS)

36 min

Please share some thing(s) about your life since last we met. If you feel comfortable about it, mention something that may have helped you to feel as though you truly belonged to a group, family, congregation, or other community.

INTRODUCTION:

10 min

In her book *Hold Me Tight* Sally Johnson talks about the nature of connection in relationships. Her research shows that a healthy feeling of connection forms when an interdependent relationship develops with other people. At the deepest level this describes a relationship between parent and child. However, she has found that for emotional wellbeing, this same interdependency exists between all people in relationships--lovers, friends, family, etc. To feel connection means that when one meets with others, they can be counted on to attend to one's needs, to make one feel like part of the group (connected) and thus "belonging." It is becoming clear that the idea that the goal for attaining emotional health resting on being independent and not needing others was largely wrong.

The following is adapted from the website

<http://helpyourselftherapy.com/topics/belong.html>

We all want to have the sense that we belong among people we know. Where do we really belong? What makes us feel more or less like we belong?

You belong where you say you belong! The decision about whether you belong with others is your decision, not theirs. In the adult world, we are seldom "kicked out" or excluded from any groups. People from a certain group might mistreat us, and this might help us decide to leave. But, even then, it is our decision, not theirs.

The question of whether we feel like we belong should be based on how we are treated while we are actually with the group. People who fear that they don't belong usually feel excluded before they've spent any time at all with that group! "I'd never be good enough for them." "They'd never let anyone like me in." "People like them don't care what people like us have to say." "I'm just too [dumb, wise, fat, skinny, sick, healthy, young, old, etc.] for those people." "They're just too [dumb, wise, fat, skinny, sick, healthy, young, old, etc.] for me."

Look back on your life and ask yourself "Who have I decided that I belong with?" "Who have I accepted into my world?" Then look back again and ask "Who have I decided I don't belong with?" "Who have I excluded from my world?"

We decide whether we belong based on both our experience and on our beliefs.

If some people in a group mistreat you, deciding to leave them can be a good decision, especially if you objected to the mistreatment but nothing changed.

But if you haven't been mistreated by people in a certain group and you only think you will be mistreated, your beliefs are keeping you from the feeling of belonging. Such beliefs are both bigoted against the group and terribly restrictive for you! It's bad enough to restrict yourself because of your own beliefs. It's even worse to exclude yourself because of someone else's beliefs. When deciding whether or not to cut a whole group of human beings out of your life, it's best to base the decision on your own experience. Did you speak up for yourself about being treated well? What did you decide, and are those decisions working for you?

If you are *actually* mistreated by some people in a certain group, don't judge the group. Judge the individuals. Tell the people who are mistreating you that it has to stop. If they stop for a long while, stay with them. If they only stop for a short while, consider leaving. If they don't stop, leave. Join a better group, and congratulate yourself for trying! Whether you stay or leave, remember that some of these people did treat you well.

If you are only *thinking* that you will be mistreated, ask yourself where your opinion came from. Is it based on what you heard from someone else? Is it based on your experience with a few [or many] similar people? Admit that you fear being mistreated by the people in this group. Then ask yourself the following questions. What kind of mistreatment do I fear? If it did happen, how bad would it actually be? Most importantly, how would you treat yourself after you got home

from being mistreated? Is the biggest problem what they think of you, or what you think of you?

Other questions to consider: If I exclude another group, where will I get the feeling of belonging that I need? Which group will I try next? Can I think in terms of individuals instead of whole groups?

You belong where you say you belong!

Give people a chance to treat you well. Accept them and spend your time with them.

You belong with good people.

You belong wherever you say you belong!

QUOTES TO PONDER

10 min

We all want to feel a sense of belonging. This isn't a character flaw. It's fundamental to the human experience. Our finest achievements are possible when people come together to work for a common cause. School spirit, the rightful pride we feel in our community, our heritage, our religion, and our families, all come from the value we place on belonging to a group. *Rosalind Wiseman*

Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy—the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light. *Brené Brown*

The truth is: Belonging starts with self-acceptance. Your level of belonging, in fact, can never be greater than your level of self-acceptance, because believing that you're enough is what gives you the courage to be authentic, vulnerable and imperfect. *Brené Brown*

Hypocrisy is the essence of snobbery, but all snobbery is about the problem of belonging. *Alexander Theroux*

When you get to a place where you understand that love and belonging, your worthiness, is a birthright and not something you have to earn, anything is possible. *Brené Brown*

The really wonderful thing that happened to me when I was in space was this feeling of belonging to the entire universe. *Mae Jamison*

We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. *Aldo Leopold*

Besides individual things like thunder and gunshots, what dogs fear most is not belonging, being alone. *Elizabeth Marshall Thomas*

We can never get a re-creation of community and heal our society without giving our citizens a sense of belonging. *Patch Adams*

Some of us aren't meant to belong. Some of us have to turn the world upside down and shake the hell out of it until we make our own place in it.

Elizabeth Lowell

A job provides so much more than a paycheck. It provides a sense of dignity and belonging. It gives you the opportunity to learn, grow, and be part of a team-- or, in my case, part of a band.

Arnel Pineda

I have an idea that some men are born out of their due place. Accident has cast them amid certain surroundings, but they have always a nostalgia for a home they know not. They are strangers in their birthplace, and the leafy lanes they have known from childhood or the populous streets in which they have played, remain but a place of passage. They may spend their whole lives aliens among their kindred and remain aloof among the only scenes they have ever known. Perhaps it is this sense of strangeness that sends men far and wide in the search for something permanent, to which they may attach themselves. Perhaps some deep-rooted atavism urges the wanderer back to lands which his ancestors left in the dim beginnings of history.

W. Somerset Maugham

A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.

Desmond Tutu

We will live with racism for ever. But senses of self, senses of belonging, senses of us and of others? Those are up for grabs.

Richard Powers

Home is ultimately not about a place to live but about the people with whom you are most fully alive. Home is about love, relationship, community, and belonging, and we are all searching for home.

Erwin McManus

Within each of us there is an intense need to feel that we belong. This feeling of unity and togetherness comes through the warmth of a smile, a handshake, or a hug, through laughter and unspoken demonstrations of love. It comes in the quiet, reverent moments of soft conversation and in listening.

William R. Bradford

Although I am a typical loner in my daily life, my awareness of belonging to the invisible community of those who strive for truth, beauty, and justice has prevented me from feelings of isolation.

Albert Einstein

Each person with his or her history of being accepted or rejected, with his or her past history of inner pain and difficulties in relationships, is different. But in each one there is a yearning for communion and belonging, but at the same time a fear of it. Love is what we most want, yet it is what we fear the most

Jean Vanier

We joined a Conservative synagogue. I began learning through engagement, rote and reading. Suddenly, I belonged... well, to the extent that a novelist can ever feel she is part of a group; we may be part of a minyan, but we're not fully merged into the community.

Susan Isaacs

I have the greatest love for the rituals of organised religion--the sense of community and belonging it can confer to people. But me, I'm more a questioner than a follower; not by whim or fashion, but as a decision painfully arrived at after much, much thought.

Kabir Bedi

Skaters, I think they tend to be outsiders who seek a sense of belonging, but belonging on their own terms, and real respect is given by how much we take what other guys do, these basic tricks, 360 flips, we take that, we make it our own, and then we contribute back to the community the inner way that edifies the community itself.

Rodney Mullen

Society, as we have constituted it, will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt: she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole.

Oscar Wilde

I will sing a new song. As difficult as it is, I must learn the new song ... capable of meeting the new need. I must fashion new words born of all the new growth of my life, my mind and my spirit. I must prepare for new melodies that have never been mine before ... How I love the old familiarity of the wearied melody--how I shrink from the harsh discords of the new untried harmonies. [May I] rejoice with each new day and delight my spirit in each fresh unfolding. I will sing, this day, a new song ...

Howard Thurman

Song: This Is Not My Tribe (Jez Lowe)

5 min

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lqr3TM_XaSo

PREPARATION FOR GROUP REFLECTION

1 min

BREAK

10 min

GROUP REFLECTION / FEEDBACK

36 min

Two rounds. Take a moment of silence and consider your response to one of these questions:

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON BELONGING

1. Where or with whom do you feel like you have a sense of belonging? What messages do these people and/or communities send to make you feel like you belong?
2. One of our founding principles in Unitarian Universalism is the acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations. How do you feel SKUUC, this community promotes spiritual growth and your sense that you belong with this spiritual group? What activities throughout the year encourage your sense of worth in our spiritual community?
3. What actions do you initiate to feel you belong? Can you do anything else to develop a feeling of belonging?

4. What makes some places better for finding belonging than others?
5. What are some specific places where you have a strong sense of belonging?
6. Have you had the experience of being in a group where you didn't feel you belonged? What was that like for you? What got in the way?
7. Have you ever experienced an end to a place where you once belonged? How did you resolve your feelings about this?

SONG: COMIN' HOME (Tom Hunter) 4 min

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ciX-07f6RQ&list=PL1IA3FWU1EebBptEvokvDb7ZRBw3IqQxc&index=22>

ANNOUNCEMENTS, FUTURE SESSIONS, SERVICE PROJECT 5 min

SESSION FEEDBACK 5 min

What worked for you, didn't work for you, might require revisiting our covenant?

EXTINGUISH CHALICE / CLOSING WORDS 1 min

If the colors of our skin or the lands of our ancestors are different,
It need not divide us.

If the genders we claim are different,
It need not divide us.

If the stages in our lives are different,
It need not divide us.

If our means of achieving the common good are different,
It need not divide us.

If who we love and how we love are different,
It need not divide us.

If the spiritual paths we follow are different,
It need not divide us.

If our abilities to think and do are different,
It need not divide us.

If our resources are different,
It need not divide us.

If we join spirits and hearts,
Our differences will not divide us, but deeply bind us together.

Michael Sallwasser



SONG LYRICS FOR SKUUC WEDNESDAY EVENING SGM SESSION ON BELONGING

THIS IS NOT MY TRIBE (Jez Lowe)

Don't paint me with the colors of the day
That they locked up democracy and threw the key away
Don't tar me with the brush that the flag-boys wave
I am lost in the land where I belong

And don't ask me to tell the teacher tales
Or to worship at the cross while you hammer in the nails
Or to trust in you just because you're a whiter shade of pale
I am lost in the land where I belong

Chorus:

This is not my tribe, not my tribe, this is not my tribe
They pillory their saviors and they ridicule their sages and their scribes
This is not my tribe, not my tribe, this is not my tribe
Can't you hear the voices callin' we are lost in the land where we belong

And don't tell me who used to rule the waves
Tell it to the souls who lie bewildered in their graves
Don't tell me I'd be happier if only I'd behave
I am lost in the land where I belong

Chorus

And don't scold me with how grateful I should feel
And break my guilty heart with your charity appeals
To pay for the dignities you swindle and you steal
I am lost in the land where I belong

Chorus x 2

COMIN' HOME (Tom Hunter)

Come on in from the storm, come and listen to my song
It's the song of a lost soul comin' home
Maybe you've sung it too when you thought that you were through
And you didn't think you had anything left to do

CHORUS:

We're comin' home, we're comin' home
With a laugh and tears of joy we're comin' home
Knowin' everything's not gone, the night time has a dawn
And it sings another song comin' home

Maybe something's goin' on that makes you feel alone
You wonder if you'll find another home
Well it doesn't go away quite as easily as they say
But just remember, we're around and we're gonna stay

CHORUS

Last week this friend came round, said these days she's feels so down
Seems that everything secure has come unwound
She says the only thing to do is to get together with you
To let things grow and to pull each other through

CHORUS

So come on in from the storm and listen to our song
It's the song of some lost souls comin' home
Maybe you've sung it too when you thought that you were through
And you didn't think you had anything left to do