

**Wisdom Circle – Letting Go
March, 2015**

PREPARATION

Words of Wisdom

“Some people think holding on makes us strong; but sometimes it is letting go.”

~Hermann Hesse

“Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small thing as that, why do you worry about the rest?”

~Luke 12:25-26

“People have a hard time letting go of their suffering. Out of a fear of the unknown, they prefer suffering that is familiar.”

~Thich Nhat Hanh

*“Sitting silently, doing nothing,
Spring comes, and the grass grows by itself.”*

~Zen

*“And now, as the fruit gathers
All the riches of summer
Into its compact world,
I feel richer than ever before,
And breathe a larger air.*

*I am not ready to die,
But I am learning to trust death
As I have trusted life.
I am moving Toward a new freedom
Born of detachment,
And a sweeter grace—
Learning to let go.”*

~May Sarton, from “Gestalt at Sixty”

Reading and Spiritual Exercise

Read and reflect on this excerpt called “Letting Go,” from *Wherever You Go There You Are* by Jon Kabat-Zinn

The phrase “letting go” has to be high in the running for New Age cliché of the century. It is overused, abused daily. Yet it is such a powerful inward maneuver that it merits looking into, cliché or no. There is something vitally important to be learned from the practice of letting go.

Letting go means just what it says. It’s an invitation to cease clinging to anything—whether it be an idea, a thing, an event, a particular time, or view, or desire. It is a conscious decision to release with full acceptance into the stream of present moments as they are unfolding. To let go means to give up coercing, resisting, or struggling, in exchange for something more powerful and wholesome which comes out of allowing things to be as they are without getting caught up in your attraction to or rejection of them, in the intrinsic stickiness of wanting, of liking and disliking. It’s akin to letting your palm open to unhand something you have been holding on to.

But it’s not only the stickiness of our desires concerning outer events which catches us. Nor is it only a holding on with our hands. We hold on with our minds. We catch *ourselves*, get stuck *ourselves*, by holding, often desperately, to narrow views, to self-serving hopes and wishes. Letting go really refers to choosing to become transparent to the strong pull of our own likes and dislikes, and of the unawareness that draws us to cling to them. To be transparent requires that we allow fears and insecurities to play themselves out in the field of full awareness.

Letting go is only possible if we can bring awareness and acceptance to the nitty-gritty of just how stuck we can get, if we allow ourselves to recognize the lenses we slip so unconsciously between observer and observed that then filter and color, bend and shape our view. We can open in those sticky moments, especially if we are able to capture them in awareness and recognize it when we get caught up in either pursuing and clinging or condemning and rejecting in seeking our own gain.

Stillness, insight, and wisdom arise only when we can settle into being complete in this moment, without having to seek or hold on to or reject anything. This is a testable proposition. Try it out just for fun. See for yourself whether letting go when a part of you really wants to hold on doesn’t bring a deeper satisfaction than clinging.

Questions for Reflection:

- What is something you have had to let go of in your life? How did it feel to let it go?
- What is something “sticky” in your life right now—a desire, an idea, a thing, a perspective that it is hard to let go of?
- Have you ever felt completely “in this moment”? What brought about that feeling?

Wisdom Circle – Letting Go Session Plan

This session plan is a suggested guide, not a rigid set of rules. You may adjust this plan as you feel is appropriate in your group.

Gathering & Welcome (~5 min)

Chalice Lighting (~2 min)

Optional Song or Reading—if someone in the group feels comfortable doing so, they might sing the song once through and invite the rest of the group to join in singing the 2nd time:

“Meditation on Breathing”

*When I breathe in, I breathe in peace
When I breathe out, I breathe out love*

(Singing the Journey, #1009, music below, pg 5)
(YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgemxWvLFAU>)

Check-In (20-30 minutes)

As you feel comfortable, take 2-3 minutes to share one thing that is lifting your spirits, and one thing that is weighing you down. This is a time for sharing, but not for discussion.

Business (10 minutes)

Use this time for any new business: Welcoming new members; Scheduling future meetings; Revisiting the Covenant; Answering questions about Wisdom Circle processes; Etc...

Discussion (60 minutes)

Introduce Topic. Take Turns Reading aloud the “Words of Wisdom.”

- What is something you have had to let go of in your life? How did it feel to let it go?
- What is something “sticky” in your life right now—a desire, an idea, a thing, a perspective that it is hard to let go of?
- Have you ever felt completely “in this moment”? What brought about that feeling?

Silent Reflection (~2 minutes)

First Responses (Share in the order you feel moved)

Cross-Conversation (Ask questions that invite deeper reflection; Speak from personal experience, and use “I statements”; Avoid explaining or judging)

Final Thoughts (Share in the order you feel moved)

Gratitude (5-10 minutes)

Share 1-2 things that have been meaningful to you from this session.

Closing

Optional Chalice Extinguishing Reading:

To live in this world

*you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it*

*against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.*

~ Mary Oliver, from "In Backwater Woods."

Meditation on Breathing 1009

♩ = 66

(Melody) C Am F C

When I breathe in, _____ I'll breathe in peace. _____ When I breathe

(Descant)

When I breathe in, I'll breathe in peace. _____

(Drone)

Breathe in, Breathe out.

C Am F C *Fine* 

out, _____ I'll breathe out love. _____ When I breathe

Fine 

When I breathe out, I'll breathe out love. _____

Fine 

Breathe in, Breathe out

Fine 

