



Soulful Home

Finding the Sacred in
Our Everyday Spaces



November 2020 - Healing

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The Welcome Mat

What Does it Mean to be a Community of Healing

The best description of healing I ever heard had to do with healing being not a matter of reaching a fixed state called “cured” or “healthy,” but rather engaging in a dynamic and multi-faceted process of restoring one’s self to a new kind of wholeness.

I cherish this idea as a parent. When my children make mistakes, or suffer, or discover their own limitations, I remember that it is truly through these gaffs and disappointments that they are able to build themselves into the people they are meant to be. To protect them from all suffering is to deny them the crucial experience of learning to heal. Seen in this light, what a disadvantage, to never experience setback or trouble!

Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen writes, “Living well is not about eradicating our wounds and weaknesses but understanding how they complete our identity and equip us to help others.” This is where we place our focus this month as Families of Healing.

We know that this is tender terrain. As Soul Matters partner, Lea Morris, puts it in [her monthly song](#), “In every place/that I can feel/I might get hurt/but I can heal.” We cannot heal without suffering a hurt, first. So, actually, it is only through our conflicts (within ourselves, and with others) that we are able to practice that crucial skill of resilience-- learning how to heal.

Don’t do this work alone this month. If you haven’t connected with a trusted friend, parenting partner, or small cohort of buddies in a while, do check out our On the Porch section, where we’ll be making metaphorical maps together as well as asking and answering some really juicy questions. Also, we are three months into our new From the Mailbox section, where we lift up work from BIPOC healers, philosophers, organizers, and other agents of love-change who are helping us to live into the promise of a whole and vibrant society. We’d love to hear your feedback on this new offering!

Take good care this month, friends.

-- Teresa, on behalf of the whole Soul Matters team



At the Table

Exploring Healing Through Discussions

At the Table questions explore the monthly theme through a discussion for all ages. They are designed for a family gathering - maybe during a Friday night meal, a quiet moment in the living room or before a board game night.

Introducing the Activity

Family members who are readers can alternate who reads the questions. Those who are not readers are invited to share their own impromptu questions. Discussion partners might answer as thoughts come to them or take turns in a circle.

Discussion Questions

1. How many broken-and-healed bones are there in our family?
2. How do animals heal in the wild? How is that different from how we humans heal?
3. When you have hurt a friend or family member, what is your favorite way of helping them heal?
4. Name a place where you have experienced healing. (Encourage each other to think outside the box here--doctors' offices or first-aid stations, sure, but maybe also swimming holes, a grandparent's home, playing with a friend's kitten, etc.)
5. How is healing now different from what it was a long time ago?
6. How do you heal a friendship that has suffered some damage?
7. Do you think creatures other than humans can experience a broken heart?
8. Do we all heal in the same way, and on the same timeline?
9. What kinds of food do you eat when you are sick and want to get well?
10. If you have experienced the same kind of hurt as a friend, how can you use that experience to help them begin to heal?
11. Are some things better left broken? Does everything need to be healed?
12. Are you hurting right now, in your body, mind, or heart? What kind of healing might you most need?
13. Broken bones heal stronger than before they were broken. What other things are stronger after being broken?
14. If you could heal one part of our society, what would you heal? How would you start?

Return to the Discussion Throughout the Week

Thoughts develop with time. Find opportunities to bring up particularly compelling questions again during the month, maybe on walks, rides home, when tucking your child in to bed, etc. If thoughts grew or changed, notice that together, how we are all evolving beings, opening ourselves to new truths and understandings as we live our lives and connect with others.



Around the Neighborhood

Around the Neighborhood activities engage families with their surroundings through the lens of the theme. It's about perceiving our well-known world in new ways. As you safely move around your neighborhood during this time of Covid, these suggestions help you transform your everyday backs-and-forths into a family adventure!

A Treasure Hunt for Healing

Some people think of healing as putting broken pieces back together. Others think of it as replacing a piece of a puzzle that's gone missing. Either way, we are reminded of the important role that "pieces" play in healing. To honor that, let's use our treasure hunt this month to look for and keep track of treasures that are pieces!

Here are some suggestions. We're sure you can think of more!

1. A slice of pie or cake
2. A panel of stained glass
3. Petals or leaves fallen to the ground
4. A game piece (such as a chess piece, a pair of dice, or a timer)
5. A puzzle piece
6. A mosaic
7. A scrap piece of paper
8. A piece of pizza
9. A Lego piece
10. M&M's or Reese's Pieces



From the Mailbox

Our mailboxes connect us to the wide world outside our Soulful Homes. Sometimes, these connections ask things of us (a donation letter or flyer encouraging us to vote), sometimes these connections offer things to us (a letter from a friend or a special delivery), and often, they do both. This new section applies this metaphor to today's call for families to engage in the work of dismantling white supremacy culture. There are so many brave, inspiring and wise leaders "sending" us messages of hope and "delivering" us ideas about what we can do to fight racism. So each month, this section will contain two "notes" from these leaders in the field of anti-racism. Every family will relate to them differently. Engage them in whatever way connects with your family best.

Healing Through Self-care

Are you following Balanced Black Girl on [Instagram](#) or listening to [the podcast](#)? The Instagram feed includes beautiful infographics for quick reminders of ways to find and create healing in one's life ([this one](#) is a favorite!), and the podcast includes episodes such as, "Democratizing Wellness with Sinikiwe Dhliwayo," "Bodyful Healing with Jennifer Sterling," and "Nourishing Our Bodies and Making Healthy Eating Equitable with Dr. Akua Woolbright."

Invitation: Set aside some time to explore this resource! What resonates most with you? Where did you find healing of the spirit? With whom can you share your new or reminded wisdom?

Supporting Healing Spaces in Our Communities

Healing spaces in our communities take many forms. Sometimes they are yoga studios or touch-therapy offices such as massage or reiki. But other times, they are places where people gather to be together with purpose and in mutual support.

[KVIBE](#) is a bike repair center that combines cultural connection, camaraderie, service to the community, and physical movement in Honolulu, Hawaii. They log 9,000 youth service hours per year in this dynamic healing environment.

The Hub is a community room for boys and young men hosted by the [United Women of East Africa](#), who serve the East African-descendent communities of the San Diego area. The Hub is a multi-purpose space for healing through connection with mentors, sports, cooking together, playing video games, and simply sharing time.

Invitation: Where are the healing spaces in your own community? Who is running those spaces and whom do they serve? What kind of support do they most need? How can you leverage your influence and resources to help them thrive? Make a commitment to answering these questions and taking action to invest in your community in this way in the coming month.

(Thanks to [Abena Asare](#) of the Prevention Institute for pointing us toward the two examples of community healing spaces above.)



At Play

Playing Games with Healing

At Play activities and questions are a way to joyfully, playfully, and imaginatively experience the theme.

Option A:

Play pretend healer (doctor, herbalist, massage therapist)

For younger children, set up a play-pretend healer station, box, or basket for one or more modalities that apply to your family's healthcare. You might make a special time for this kind of play or have the ideas in mind if there are any minor injuries that might be allayed by a big show of help and healing.

A doctor might use a stethoscope or craft-stick tongue depressor.

To simulate an acupuncturist, you might collect tiny twigs or pine needles to lay flat on the body.

A paramedic might use lots of bandages (always a hit with kids) for wraps and splints. ACE bandages are fun, but so is toilet paper.

For an herbalist, you might use the mortar and pestle to grind up kitchen spices into a healing tea blend or make a bruised-leaf poultice for a surface wound.

As a physical therapist, you might go through a few stretches and exercises together.

A traditional healer might use incense smoke to carry prayers for healing, as a way to acknowledge the spirit-body connection.

This would make a great rainy-day activity, or after-doctor-visit activity, or a way to introduce some extra precautions your family might be taking heading into cold and flu season. Be ready for some thoughts and feelings around Covid-19 surfacing, too. Children often work out their concerns through play, and these scenarios would be likely fits.



Option B:

Laughter medicine--Laughter Yoga and Turtle Wushu

My mom told me a story recently about getting take-out food with her sister, my aunt, in my hometown. She said as she pulled up to the restaurant, an almost identical vehicle pulled up in the spot opposite her. My aunt got out of my mom's car, and the passenger got out of the other car. My aunt picked up their take-out, and then--you guessed it--got back into the wrong vehicle, chatting the whole while without looking up, strapping herself in, placing the containers on the back seat, and oblivious to her mistake for a full thirty seconds. My mom said she and the man in the other car noticed what was happening, but both were so surprised that neither one was able to correct her. All at once, all three of them came to their senses and burst out laughing! What a gift that was, in this scary time, for three people to be surprised into guffaws behind their masks!

This month, we have two choices for you to share a good, hearty laugh with your family members.

- 1) Laughter yoga. While some laughter yoga is based on specific techniques (ho-ho-ha-ha is one you may have seen), [this is a nice article](#) that describes setting up improvisational silly situations designed to dissipate stress and get people laughing together. (Pretend you're driving a bumpety school bus, walking on hot sand, traversing a tightrope, pretend there's a spider in your hair, etc.) Think improv, but with big potential for exaggerated physicality that's sure to bring on the giggles!
- 2) Alternatively, you could play a wonderfully funny game called [Turtle Wushu](#). Watch how the game is played, and then grab a handful of [small, flattish toys](#) to balance on the back of your hands to test your skills at keep-away! This game is especially popular with teenagers. If competition keeps it from being belly-laugh worthy in your family, do away with that part and just focus on the goal of trying to knock off the turtles.



On the Message Board

A Monthly Reminder

The On the Message Board section lifts up a theme-related mantra, graphic, or gesture for your family to carry with them throughout the month. Think of these “family sayings” or “family signs” as tools for the journey, reminders that help us refocus and steady ourselves and our kids as we navigate through life’s challenges and opportunities.

November’s Message:



Though experience has often taught us otherwise, many of us, whether experiencing a broken heart or a broken hip, expect healing to be swift and linear. This month, we remind one another that these expectations seldom align with reality. Much more often, our path of healing is messy and rambling, and we wonder whether we are making progress at all.

Keep this one on your message board so that you don’t become too discouraged in one of those unwelcome downturns, or when it seems like you “should” be so much further along in your healing than you are. Sometimes, looking at the big picture helps. It’s a great reminder that even when things feel like they are going “down” or “backward,” we can trust that, most of the time, “things are looking up.”

Remember, too, the healing that is simply calling a trusted friend or family member and asking for support. Having our fears and frustrations held for a time by another can often be just the buoy a weary spirit needs to keep moving along the winding healing path.

At the Bedside

At The Bedside activities engage the theme through storytelling. This takes place during the dreamy, almost otherworldly hour or so before children or youth drift off to sleep. Through stories and the questions and realizations that they prompt, we come to understand the nature of and our own place in the cosmos. But also, these selections invite you to remember, shape, and share stories from your own past, using thoughtful narratives to help your child weave the tale of who they are and whose they are.

Zen Heaven and Hell

[This Buddhist wisdom tale](#), author unknown but hosted on Unitarian Universalist Kat Liu's page, Wizduum.net, helps us understand one piece of healing that is within our control, and that is our response. Suffering ends, and healing begins, when we stop letting our emotions control us.

Read the story together, and answer some of the questions together. If you like, the day after reading, you can take a stab at our Extra Mile project--making an origami samurai sword!

What was the lesson that the samurai learned through the monk's lesson?

What did the monk mean when he said that the samurai had experienced heaven when he let go of his rage and instead made room for gratitude?

Some image hell as a place full of fire. In a similar way, the story invites us to think of anger as a fiery feeling. Is that how it feels to you? If so, what's your favorite way of "cooling down"?

Do you think anger is something that happens to you or that you choose?

What does it feel like for you when you lose your temper? When you *don't* lose your temper?



On the Porch

Raising a Child of Healing Together

On the Porch supports sharing realizations, challenges and hopes around the theme with other supportive adults. Perhaps this happens on a literal porch or front stoop, but it could happen wherever parents and their circle of support gather and talk (online or in person) over the soulful parts of parenthood. The “A Sip of Something New” section invites you and your discussion partner to take in a new idea shared by someone else. The “Spiritual Snacks” section stimulates personal storytelling and the sharing of your own wisdom and experience.

A Sip of Something New

Bring some art supplies--paper, pens, pencils, crayons--and the quote below to a space where you and your trusted companion can have some quiet time and a drawing surface. Read this quote together from American Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron:

“We think that the point is to pass the test or overcome the problem, but the truth is that things don't really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again. It's just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy.”

Now, imagine this healing space is a literal room. Draw this healing room--big--on your paper. What is in that room? What does one need or order for grief, relief, misery, and joy to be fully expressed? Spend about five minutes filling your healing room with what you'd most want or need, knowing that over and over again, we'll be visiting this room as things come together and fall apart.

Afterward, spend another five minutes sharing your drawing with your companion. What's included, and what's left out? What surprised you to see in the other's drawing? What are you considering bringing off the page and into your life in order to more fully experience healing?



Spiritual Snacks to Share

Bring these questions with you when the time comes to hang out with your co-parent or buddies. Don't treat the questions as a list to go through one by one. Instead pick the one or two that speak to you the most. Treat the questions less as a quiz and more like doorways inviting you into the world of storytelling and memory.

Questions

- How is it for you to watch your loved ones go through the process of healing?
- What role do you play in your family's/communities healing?
- What collective harm or hurt does your family still need to heal from?
- What gets in the way of our healing?
- How does your faith feature in your healing?
- Whose healing is a priority for you?
- What healed when/if you became a parent?
- What healing work did you do that spared your children a harm or hurt?
- Is there a childhood wound that you're still working to heal?



The Extra Mile

The Extra Mile section is for families and communities who want to continue exploring the theme of the month through larger adventures, more complex projects or simply through additional modalities not otherwise included in the packets. The Extra Mile suggestions often surpass what is considered an “everyday moment” in a family, and may involve more preparation, planning, or time to accomplish. A bit more effort, but well worth it!

Healing Touch to the Family’s Feet

There is an art to a foot massage, and we challenge you to learn it!

[This video](#) shows how to use three different foot massage techniques in conjunction with foot reflexology (applying pressure to strategic points on the hands and feet) to offer real, deep, physical healing in the form of connection and relaxation.

Not everybody likes their feet messed with, and it might be new for some people, so be sure to offer this lightly, so the other person knows they are free to say no. If your person says yes, check in with them frequently during the massage to be sure they’re enjoying it.

Origami Samurai Sword

This [origami tutorial](#) can be a fun extension of this month’s bedtime story, which features a samurai learning the role of self-regulation in healing. Take a look at the story, and decide you’d like to do this craft together before or after telling it!



Blessing of Healing

Blessing of healing to you, dear ones. May your body, whatever its state, gift you with vivacity, power, and strength. May your mind, whatever its state, offer you presence and peace. May your heart, whatever its state, know joy, peace, and trust. May all of your wounds and worries be assuaged by the healing presence of your loving family and good friends. And may the grievous ills of our hurting world be healed by our love and ceaseless--but shared--work.



Connect with more Inspiration for your family, and for you!

Parents can Join our Facebook and Instagram pages for
daily inspiration on our themes:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/?ref=settings>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/soul_matters_circle/

Parents and youth will want to check out our music playlists on the monthly themes.
One playlist is one [Spotify](#) and another on our [YouTube](#) channel

Credits

Soulful Home packets are prepared by
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