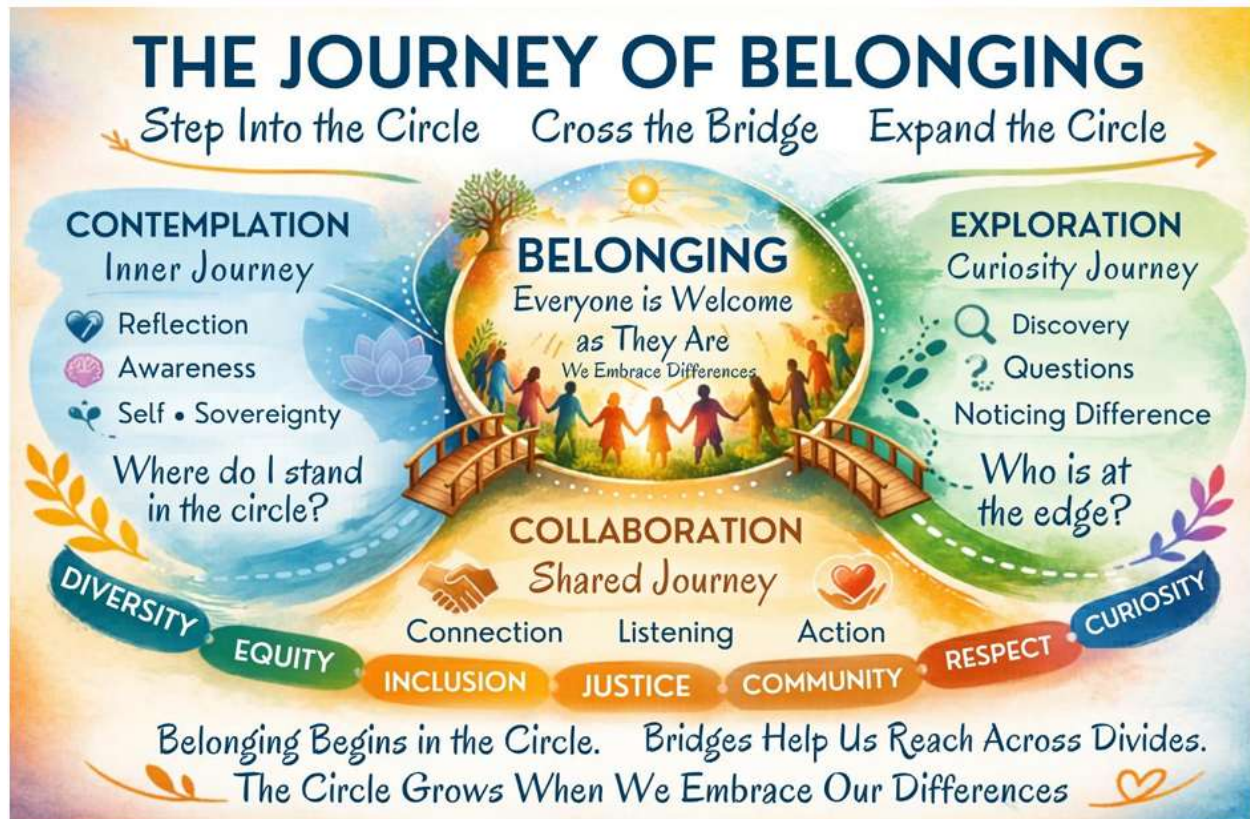




Week Two Handout

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Committee of the Centers for Spiritual Living invites you to continue on a Journey of Belonging.

This Program offers three paths: Contemplation, Exploration, and Collaboration. We begin by looking within ourselves and opening ourselves to explore paths that widen our sense of Belonging. Connecting with each other gives us new insights and ideas on building bridges, embracing our differences and giving curiosity and respect to every one we meet.

We encourage you to continue to interact with friends you haven't met yet. We invite you to expand your circle and become an ambassador of Belonging.

THE THREE PATHWAYS OF THE JOURNEY OF BELONGING

CONTEMPLATION • EXPLORATION • COLLABORATION

The Journey of Belonging is organized around three distinct but interconnected pathways:

CONTEMPLATION — INNER AWARENESS

Me with myself

What is happening within me?

↓

EXPLORATION — OUTER AWARENESS

Me observing and learning about the world

What am I noticing and learning beyond myself?

↓

COLLABORATION — OUTER INTERACTION

Me engaging with others

How am I engaging with others, and what are we creating together?

Together, the pathways create a movement that can be remembered as:

INWARD → OUTWARD → TOGETHER

The pathways are distinct because each asks something different of the participant. They are interconnected because what we discover within ourselves influences what we notice in the world, what we notice influences how we engage with others, and our encounters with others continually reveal something new about ourselves.

The Journey is therefore not linear. Participants may move among the pathways many times and continue to experience deeper understanding and a deeper sense of belonging.

Connecting the Dots- Principles of DEIJB and CSL's Global Vision

We invite you to begin exploring how the Centers for Spiritual Living (CSL) Global Vision aligns with the principles of DEIJB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Belonging).

The Centers for Spiritual Living has a Global Vision, which aims to support a world that works for everyone and all of creation. As you begin this exercise, consider: How does this vision align with the principles of DEIJB?

1. Review the definitions from **Journey of Belonging Week One Handout**.
2. Read through the CSL Global Vision from **Week One Handout** and identify which part(s) support or reflect each principle of DEIJB. How might you embody these concepts in your life? This is a space for exploration; there are no "right" answers. There are no "wrong" answers.
3. Take notes and, as a spokesperson, report back to your Center.

“Who Am I?” Is A Complex Question

In her article, “The Complexity of Identity: Who Am I?” Beverly Tatum writes, "Who am I? The answer depends in large part on who the world around me says I am. Who do my parents say I am? Who do my peers say I am? What message is reflected back to me in the faces and voices of my teachers, my neighbors, store clerks? What do I learn from the media about myself? How am I represented in the cultural images around me? Or am I missing from the picture altogether?..."⁷

Our identities are complex, and they change over time. Whether our identities are valued or devalued depends on the cultural and societal context we are in.

Intent vs. Impact

The Anti-Defamation League course, “Intent vs. Impact, why does it matter?” explains:

What’s the difference between intent and impact?

Intent is what we mean by our words or actions. Impact is how those words or actions are experienced, felt or understood by either the person they are directed to, or others.

When it comes to biased language or actions, we often prioritize intent over impact. This means that when harm is caused, we tend to emphasize what we meant by our words or actions rather than how our words made another person feel or the consequences of our behavior. We might also excuse, or brush under the rug, offensive words or actions if we perceive them as unintentional. In discussing a biased incident, we might redirect the

focus to a person's intentions (i.e., "I didn't mean it like that"), rather than focusing on the feelings of the person who has been harmed. In this way, we center intention rather than the impact on others. Prioritizing intent happens every day in all aspects of our lives, in the classroom, at work, in public spaces, online, and at home.

Why is it important to prioritize impact?

Regardless of intent or whether actions and words were purposeful, the targeted or affected person is still harmed. That's why it is critical to prioritize impact and acknowledge the harm that was caused. Using the example of the sexist "joke" at the staff meeting, the staff member who told the joke may not have realized it was sexist. Perhaps they wanted to make everyone laugh or build camaraderie or intimacy. Or maybe the person is a new team member, and humor is their usual way to connect with others. But their sexist "joke" caused harm to other members of the team, particularly those who are experiencing sexism in other aspects of the job. The joke made them feel even more excluded and marginalized than they had already felt. Instead of saying "I was only kidding," the person who made the comment should have focused on the harm they caused.

Whether intentional or not, offensive and biased words, even jokes, cause harm. That harm or impact can take many forms. It can feel like a direct attack on the identity of a targeted person, on a core part of who they are. It can cause a person to feel they don't belong, that their feelings aren't important, or that they aren't respected or valued. It can cause the targeted person to stop participating in an activity or group. They might even leave a job or start skipping school. The harm can result in making the targeted person feel uncomfortable, scared or threatened because they fear that comments could be precursors to more consequential acts of bias (e.g., discrimination, violence). The harmful and offensive words and actions can also target others who identify in that same way, or other marginalized identity groups who feel their group could be next.⁸

As we do this work, we're likely to rub against things that hurt our feelings, and we are bound to hurt the feelings of others. For this reason, it's important to remember that our intent doesn't always match the impact of our words and actions. We may say or do something we believe is harmless, and yet, another person is negatively impacted. This can happen for many reasons including, but not limited to, our hidden beliefs, differing life experiences, cultural norms, political perspectives, generational gaps, or past trauma. This is often a sticking point. Reflect for a moment. When someone tells you they were hurt by your words or actions, how do you respond? Do you get defensive? Do you think, "I'm not responsible for the other person"? The truth is, no matter how careful we are, we will cause harm at some point. When that happens, spiritual maturity invites us to take responsibility

and do our best to repair the harm. Unity does not mean uniformity, and part of growing into deeper awareness is learning to own our impact and repair harm when it occurs.

Historically, Science of Mind teaching has emphasized the power of individual intention and thought. While this has offered many valuable insights, it has also led to the minimization of impact, particularly in areas involving systemic harm and interpersonal pain. Prioritizing intent over impact has caused real harm in our spiritual communities and broader society, and it's vital that we acknowledge this as we seek to embody a more compassionate, inclusive, and spiritually grounded path forward.

It is challenging to prioritize impact over intent. It requires considering how our actions and words affect others. How can we stay mindful of the possibility that our intent might not match our impact and work to prevent harm? The Anti-Defamation League advises: "First, do a gut check. If you feel unsure or uncomfortable about something you plan to say, or if you think your words could be misunderstood or harmful, take time to reconsider what you are about to say or do. Take a pause to self-reflect and ask yourself a few questions that center on the potential impact of your words and actions. It's best to err on the side of caution, especially when you are communicating in public spaces like schools and workplaces. No matter how careful we are, there will be times when we unintentionally cause harm.

When that happens, spiritual integrity calls us to take ownership, use compassion and make amends, not from guilt but from a deeper recognition of our interconnectedness and Oneness.

Finally, remember that intent vs. impact doesn't just apply to individuals. These dynamics also occur in our spiritual communities, institutions, governments, and entire systems. By holding ourselves and our communities accountable with love and humility, we participate in healing and transformation, together. and communities that need to be welcoming and inclusive."⁹

⁷Beverly Daniel Tatum, "The Complexity of Identity: Who Am I?," in *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, 4th ed., eds. Maurianne Adams, Warren J. Blumenfeld, Heather W. Hackman, Ximena Zúñiga, and Madeline L. Peters (New York: Routledge, 2018), p. 7.

⁸Anti-Defamation League. "Intent vs. Impact: Why Does It Matter?" <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-10/intent-vs-impact-why-does-it-matter.pdf>. Accessed December 20, 2024.

⁹Anti-Defamation League. *Intent vs. Impact: Why Does It Matter?* <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-10/intent-vs-impact-why-does-it-matter.pdf>. Accessed December 20, 2024.