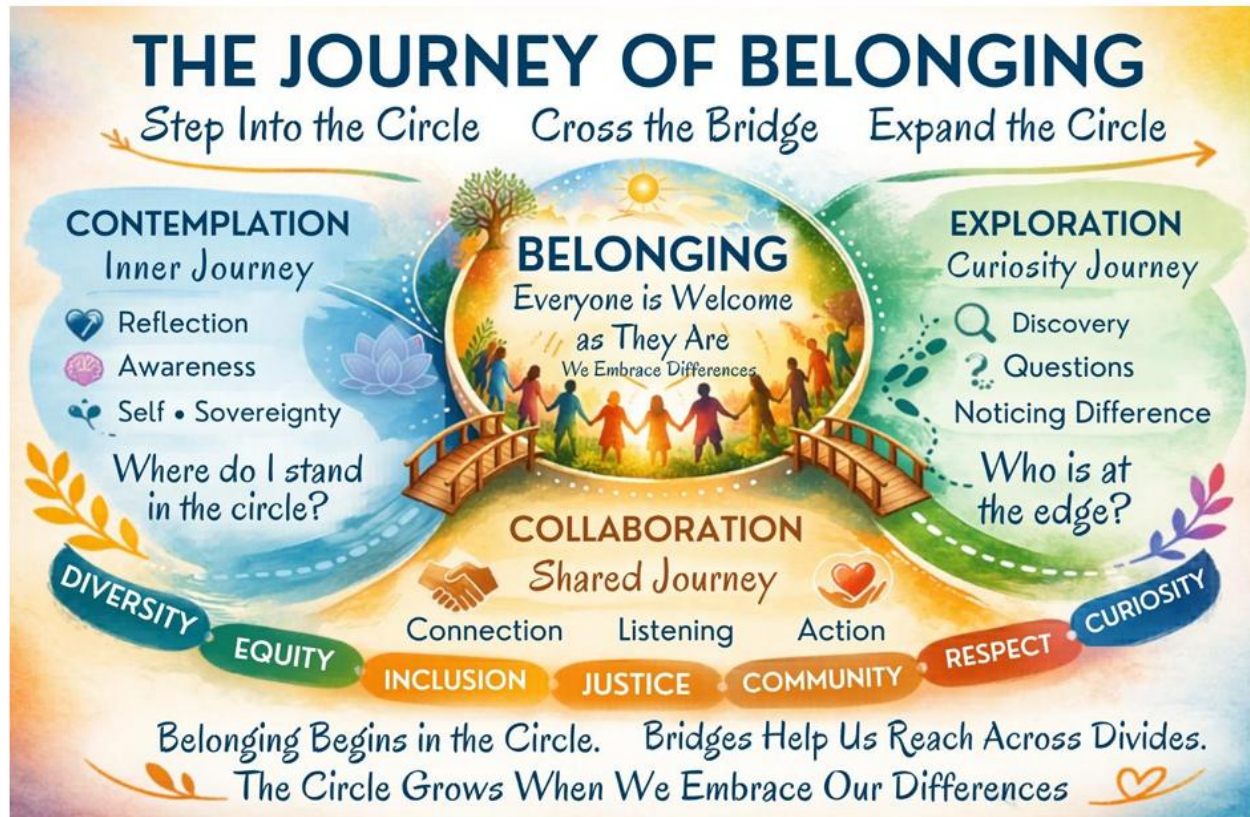




Week Four Handout

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

Exploration may involve listening to or learning about others, but its primary purpose is *awareness and understanding, not shared action*.

Whenever possible, keep the focus on lived experience, careful observation, and genuine curiosity.

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.

Shared Agreements

Be as present as you can.

Extend and receive welcome- keep your heart soft to support learning.

Participation is always an invitation- it's never an imposition- you are in charge.

Use "I" statements when sharing- speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.

Honor confidentiality here and beyond- what's shared here stays here; what's learned here may be freely shared.

Accept non-closure- trust the process and accept that we don't control what others receive.

No fixing, saving, advising, or correcting others.

When feelings of discomfort grow – turn to wonder and compassionate inquiry or curiosity.

Set aside judgement to listen to others -and to yourself- more deeply.

THE PATHWAYS OF THE JOURNEY OF BELONGING

The Journey of Belonging is an experiential learning process designed to help us move beyond intellectual discussions about diversity and inclusion into authentic relationship, curiosity, compassion, and community. Rather than telling us what to think, Journey of Belonging creates opportunities to:

- Reflect upon identity
- Recognize privilege and marginalization
- Hear and honor diverse stories
- Develop empathy
- Cultivate courageous conversations
- Strengthen spiritual community
- Broaden understanding of belonging
- Consider how we participate in creating belonging for ourselves and others

THE EXPLORATION PATH

The Exploration Path invites participants to turn their attention outward. Building upon the awareness that may emerge through Contemplation, participants are invited to become curious about experiences, perspectives, identities, communities, and systems beyond their own immediate experience. Exploration is not about assuming we understand another person's experience. It is about a willingness to notice what we may not have noticed before. Exploration creates space to notice:

- Experiences and perspectives different from our own
- Similarities and differences without needing to erase either
- How identity may shape experiences of belonging and not belonging
- Where privilege, access, marginalization, and exclusion may be present
- Assumptions or biases that influence what we notice
- Stories and experiences that challenge what we thought we knew
- The systems, environments, and communities in which belonging occurs
- What awakens our curiosity and invites deeper understanding

The central question of the Exploration Path is: **What am I noticing and learning beyond myself? What does this awaken or challenge within me?**

The invitation is to **encounter what is beyond our own experience without immediately judging, explaining, or trying to change it.**

Notice what you notice — Then Look Again

*These pages are reprinted from CSL's "**Embodying Our Global Vision Student Guide**" pages 45-46, 48-49*

We envision a world where personal responsibility joins with social conscience in every area of the political, corporate, academic, and social sectors, providing sustainable structures to further the emerging global consciousness.

How do you interpret these words? This is a powerful vision for the world, but how do we apply it? What actions can we take to bring this vision into our daily lives? How can we ensure that our spiritual communities actively support equity and justice?

A key challenge faced by our communities is how to embody this philosophy beyond our individual experience. Are we here simply focusing on our own journey of awareness, spiritual mind treatment, and personal growth? Is it enough to deepen our connection to the Divine for ourselves, trusting that our individual transformation will ripple outward? Or is there a greater calling, to not only better ourselves but to actively stand for the betterment of others?

Should we remain silent, or is it our responsibility to shine a light on the inequities and systemic barriers that prevent everyone from thriving? Can our spiritual practice be truly complete if it stops at personal awareness, or does it find its fullest expression when it fuels advocacy, justice, and community transformation?

These questions invite us to consider whether individual learning and growth alone are sufficient to change the world, or if our spiritual path also calls us to engage with and transform the greater community. By wrestling with these questions, we deepen our understanding of what it means to live this philosophy and its potential to create a more just and equitable world.

The gift of equity and justice work lies in its power to bring awareness, spark awakening, and open the door to choosing something new. This happens because equity and justice work requires us to examine systems, relationships, and beliefs that often operate unconsciously. By shining a light on these hidden dynamics, we are invited to see the world and ourselves more clearly. Awareness is the first step toward transformation.

Multiple Intersecting Identities

Justice and equity are woven into the many layers of our lived experiences, what this course refers to as multiple intersecting identities. Highlighting multiple intersecting identities is important because it helps us recognize that everyone holds more than one identity. A person is not just tall; they may be a tall, Asian, lesbian woman who uses a walker to get around.

Considering multiple intersecting identities can support our understanding and embracing of equity and justice. The multiple intersecting identities of our lives can make this a complex process. It is important to consider race, but not only race. It is important to consider sexual orientation but not only sexual orientation. It is important to consider ability but not only ability. When a community takes into consideration the multiple identities of its members, there is a greater chance for inclusion and a felt sense of belonging.

The greatest gift we can bring into our world and communities is to remember that equity and justice do not just happen. Equity and justice require attention, listening, patience, compassion, love, but most importantly awareness. We must balance and rebalance the wheels and alignment of our community regularly. As we continue to uphold equity and justice, we open ourselves and our communities to greater inclusion and belonging. When communities, systems and organizations are not equitable, exclusion is a byproduct.

We are brilliant expressions of life, free to make our own choices. At the same time, we see how the systems of our world create advantages or disadvantages, regardless of whether they are earned? Given this reality, we are called to be accountable, not only for ourselves but also for our beloved spiritual family and the world around us. This accountability includes a responsibility to live as allies.

The most terrible loneliness is not the kind that comes from being alone, but the kind that comes from being misunderstood. It is the loneliness of standing in a crowded room, surrounded by people who do not see you, who do not hear you, who do not know the true essence of who you are. And in that loneliness, you feel as though you are fading, disappearing into the background, until you are nothing more than a ghost, a shadow of your former self.

George Orwell, 1984