



New Participant Guide

There is a quality of listening that is possible among a circle of human beings, who by their attentiveness to one another create a space in which each person is able to give voice to the truth of his or her life. There is the miracle of authentic narrative, made possible by listening that holds still long enough to let the truth be told. Where there is this kind of listening and speaking, a new kind of community is born - a community of life.

- Rebecca Parker, Unitarian Theologian

I pin my hopes to quiet processes and small circles, in which vital and transforming events take place.

- Rufus Jones, Quaker historian & theologian

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PART I: Helping Each Other Become The People We Most Want To Be

Unitarian Universalism is about connection. We are a religion that sees people struggling, not against our own sinful souls, but against a shallow, frantic and materialistic world that all-too-often leaves us disconnected from our deepest selves, life's gifts and needs greater than one's own. And so our congregations work to heal that divide by helping each other listen to our deepest selves, open to life's gifts and serve needs greater than our own. Soul Matters supports this mission of helping people listen, open, and serve by offering its participants:

- Formative space & circles of learning, support and challenge
- Opportunities for spiritual deepening and practice
- An intimate home within a larger church community

...so they become the people they want to be.

In other words, Soul Matters is about *becoming*.

PART II: We Create ~ Formative Space

The core purpose of Soul Matters is to create formative space for individuals. This is a space of acceptance and safety in which group members can explore their deepest values and inner voice without judgement or coercion. The below reading explains the power and importance of this sacred space.

The Soul is Shy: The Importance of Deep Listening and Formative Space

Parker J. Palmer, from *A Hidden Wholeness*

So what do we do in a circle of trust? We speak our own truth; we listen receptively to the truth of others; we ask each other honest, open questions instead of giving counsel; and we offer each other the healing and empowering gifts of silence and laughter... Our purpose is not to teach anyone anything but to give the inner teacher a chance to teach us.

Spaces designed to welcome the soul and support the inner journey are rare. But the principles and practices that shape such spaces are neither new nor untested. Some are embedded in monastic tradition, for the monastery is the archetypal "community of solitudes." Some emerged over four hundred years of Quaker faith and practice. Some were revived in the transpersonal psychology movement of the mid-twentieth century. And some are embodied in the processes of spiritual formation that can be found at the heart of most of the world's great wisdom traditions.

"Formation" may be the best name for what happens in a circle of trust, because the word refers, historically, to soul-work done in a communal setting. But a quick disclaimer is in order, since "formation" sometimes means a process in which the pressure of orthodox doctrine, sacred text, and institutional authority is applied to the misshapen soul in order to conform it to the shape dictated by some theology. This approach is rooted in the idea that we are born with souls deformed by sin, and our situation is hopeless until the authorities "form" us properly.

But all of that is turned upside down by the principles of a circle of trust. In a circle of trust, formation flows from the belief that we are born with souls in perfect form. As time goes on, we are subject to powers of deformation, from within as well as without, that twist us into shapes quite different from the shape of the soul. But the soul never loses its original form, and never stops calling us back to our birthright integrity.

In a circle of trust, the powers of deformation are held at bay long enough for the soul to emerge and speak its truth. Here, we are not required to conform ourselves to some external template. Instead, we are invited to conform our lives to the shape of our own souls. In a circle of trust we can grow our selfhood like a plant—from the potential within the seed of the soul, in ground made fertile by the quality of our relationships, toward the light of our own wholeness—trusting the soul to know its own shape better than any external authority ever can.

PART III: We Embrace ~ A Theology of Connection

The Soul Matters approach is central to our Unitarian Universalist Theology

Our Unitarian Universalist theology is complex and yet at the same time it can also be boiled down to a single focus on healing spiritual disconnection. To put it simply, our congregations gather to heal disconnection by listening to our deepest selves, opening to life's gifts and serving needs greater than our own. Soul Matters is a container in which we explore the genuine meaning of this theology in our lives. Below are five distinctive attributes of our Soul Matters program. They are our way of supporting this journey toward a deeper connection with ourselves, the mystery of life, and others.

1. Soul Matters is Rooted in a Theology Focused on Spiritual Connection.

Many of us grew up in a Christian context galvanized around the theological idea of sin. From such a perspective, one looks out at the world and notices people struggling with a sense of themselves and the wider human community as tragically flawed, and even in some cases, impure. Thus, religious communities grounded in this perspective see their primary gift to the world as forgiveness, or in some cases, a means to purity. We Unitarian Universalists see the world from a different perspective. When we look out, what we notice most are the many people struggling with spiritual disconnection. We see ourselves and many around us hungering to re-connect with their deepest selves, life's gifts and needs greater than their own. Helping people with this struggle is the focus on Unitarian Universalism and our congregation. And so we speak of the job of the church as offering people three lifelines, captured simply in the phrase: "Listen, Open, Serve." This is what we are about: we heal spiritual disconnection by helping people listen to their deepest selves, open to life's gifts and serve needs greater than their own.

With this theology in mind, many of us are moved by the way spiritual writer and small group advocate, Parker Palmer, talks about small groups as helping people survive "the blizzard of the world." He writes,

There was a time when farmers on the Great Plains, at the first sign of a blizzard, would run a rope from the back door of their house out to the barn. They all knew stories of people who had wandered off and been frozen to death, having lost sight of home in a whiteout while still in their own backyards.

Today we live in a blizzard of another sort. It swirls around us as economic injustice, ecological ruin, physical and spiritual violence, and their inevitable outcome, war. It swirls within us as fear and frenzy, greed and deceit, and indifference to the suffering of others. We all know stories of people who have wandered off into this madness and been separated from their own souls, losing their moral bearings and even their mortal lives.

The lost ones come from every walk of life: clergy and corporate executives, politicians and people on the street, celebrities and schoolchildren. Some of us fear that we, or those we love, will become lost in the storm. Some of us are lost at this moment and are trying to find our way home. Some are lost without knowing it. Some of us have just reached for the rope. Others are in the middle of the journey trying to keep hold of our grip. Others have just arrived home.

My own experience of the blizzard, which includes getting lost in it more often than I like to admit, tells me that the soul's order and life's hope can never be destroyed. It may be obscured by the common compassion of friends, that rope is always close at hand, ...offering, time after time, the chance to regain our bearings...and find our way home again.

From A Hidden Wholeness

The gift of Parker Palmer's words is to remind us that we all on some level are struggling to find our way back home--to what we care most deeply about and who we most want to be. So Soul Matters is not just "an evening of good discussion" or "an opportunity for intellectual stimulation" or even "a chance to meet new friends." At its best, it is a path back home.

2. Soul Matters is an Opportunity to Explore the Worship Themes in More Depth. (and get the bonus of spiritual connection to the church as a whole)

Soul Matters is not a "stand alone" program. It is inextricably connected to the worship life of our congregation by providing group members with opportunities to explore our congregation's monthly worship themes in more depth. Besides helping us go deeper, this has the added benefit of connecting us to the wider church community. I may not be in your Soul Matters group, but since we are dealing with the same theme, we have a point of connection that allows us to feel part of the same journey (and even strike up a conversation a bit more easily!)

It is important to stress that Soul Matters groups are *not* sermon discussion groups. The goal is not to explore *the sermons* in more depth, but to explore *the monthly theme* in more depth. Having the sermons in the background enriches the experience, but they are not the focus. The focus is on the monthly questions and a spiritual exercises, which provide a different kind of experience than worship offers.

And that leads us to the next distinctive aspect of Soul Matters:

3. Soul Matters is an Invitation to Experience the Worship Theme, Not Just Talk about It.

Unitarian Universalists want to do more than just read and talk about spiritual topics. Provocative readings are important. Thinking about and discussing a topic is important. But there is nothing like experiential learning. Indeed many of us learn and process concepts best through direct experience.

Given this, group members are given a "spiritual exercise" each month to engage prior to the meeting. For instance, when we wrestled with the concept of grace, we didn't just read what theologians had to say about it, we also challenged ourselves to find a way to bring grace (a gift one doesn't expect, earn or even deserve) into another person's life. We did the same with the topic of prayer; we didn't just read theories and perspectives on prayer, we challenged ourselves to find a new way to pray (or even try prayer for the first time!). These spiritual exercises differ radically month to month. Sometimes they are profound and involved. Other times, simple and playful. Sometimes members report having "the most moving experience of my life." Other times, they come in and say "I'm not sure that worked for me, but it did make me realize..." No matter what, we ask members to try the exercises, believing that—whether you

“enjoyed” it or not—the experience of doing it will help you learn something about life and yourself—something that sitting in a room just thinking about the topic never could.

One last thought: we’ve recently begun to think of our spiritual exercises as koans. In Zen practice, koan’s are thought of as “unanswerable questions.” The point is not to “figure it out” or “find the right answer.” In fact, many spiritual questions cannot be answered by the rational mind but must be experienced. The meaning is in the engagement, wherever that engagement leads. They take us on a journey whose destination is neither right or wrong, but always enriching. At their best, this is what our spiritual exercises do for us.

It is also important to stress the difference between spiritual exercises and spiritual practice. Our monthly exercises are not intended to take the place of on-going, even daily practices that center us. They supplement our practices and ask us to delve deeper.

4. Soul Matters Offers Questions To Walk With, Not Talk Through.

Soul Matters also takes a unique approach to questions. Most small group material includes discussion questions. In this traditional model, questions serve as group tools to keep the discussion focused and structured. Soul Matters uses questions differently. We see them as tools for *individual* exploration. Instead of asking our groups to go through the questions one by one and discuss them, we invite group members to read all the questions ahead of time and find the one or two questions that “hook them”—that speak to them in some dramatic or challenging way. We then invite the group members to “live with” or “walk with” that question for the few weeks leading up to the group. One way to put this is to say: “Find the question that hooks you and let it take you on a ride.” Group members then come to the meeting, not with an answer to each of the questions on the list, but with a story about the one or two questions that spoke to them and lead to deeper, personal learning. In this sense, the questions serve as an additional spiritual exercise, another experiential exercise prior to the group that helps them connect the theme with their daily living or personal history.

5. Soul Matters is a Reminder That UUism is Distinctive, Not an “Anything Goes” Religion

Each month, our theme focuses us on a spiritual value that our faith tradition has historically honored and emphasized. So with each meeting, we are reminded that our faith dreams of a preferred way for us to be in the world, challenging each of us to ask **“What does it mean to live a life with these particular values front and center?”** There’s an important reminder here: Unitarian Universalism is *not* a religion of “anything goes.” Rather our faith has a unique vision of the good life. Yes, we affirm personal choice and individuality, but there are some core values that our faith asks all of us to engage, take seriously and apply to our daily living.

PART IV: We Create ~ Community

In Soul Matters we engage each other in a covenantal relationship. So we commit to honoring a particular format and clear relational commitments during our group meetings. Through these promises to each other, we find meaning and connection. Below is the format and covenant we use to accomplish this.

Meeting Format

Meetings usually last 2 hours and follow this structure:

- ❖ **Opening:** Chalice Lighting and Centering Words. Facilitators offer opening words from a favorite poet/writer or by using a small section of the readings that were assigned for that month. Some leaders offer meditative words or a prayer. There are lots of ways to do this. Each group finds what fits them best.
- ❖ **Brief Check-In:** Members briefly share what is going on in their lives. The goal is to get beyond chit-chat and do more than “catch up.” The technique that is most often used is to ask members to briefly share “how it is with your spirit” by commenting on one thing that is “pulling at or draining your spirit” and one thing that is “feeding, filling or lifting up your spirit.” Each member usually takes only a couple minutes to share. This part of the meeting typically it takes no more 20 minutes.
- ❖ **Discussion of the Spiritual Exercise:** Discussions start with members sharing their experience of doing the spiritual exercise. Common questions that facilitators ask are: “What was it like for you to attempt the exercise?” “Did it lead to any unexpected feelings or insights?” “Did it go as you expected?” “How did it challenge, change or deepen your understanding of this month’s theme?”

This is where we work hard to practice deep listening. To start, there is no back and forth conversation. Instead group members focus on listening and providing each other with the formative space to hear ourselves think or, as Parker Palmer puts it, to let our shy soul speak

It is only after everyone has had a chance to share, that the facilitator opens the floor and invites members into a time of reflective conversation. This is when members speak from their own experience, and comment on the connections they saw between each other’s stories and experiences. A common question at this point is: “How did listening to everyone else help you see or learn something new about your own story?”

This is absolutely *not* a time to offer advice or argue about who’s right. We follow the guidelines of “no fixing, no saving, no advising, no setting each other straight!”
- ❖ **Discussion of the “Questions To Wrestle With”:** We don’t treat these questions like “homework.” We do not engage every single one. Instead, participants look them over a couple weeks ahead of time and find the one that “hooks” them most. Then they let that question take them “on a ride.” They live with it for a while and allow it to regularly break into--and break open--their ordinary thoughts. And then we come to our Soul Matters meeting prepared to share that journey with our group.
- ❖ **Check-Out:** Meetings end by each member briefly sharing a statement of gratitude. Facilitators ask participants to think about what they’ve experienced together that evening and then lift up one comment or experience for which they are particularly grateful.
- ❖ **Closing:** Groups end by extinguishing the chalice and sharing a closing reading or offering closing words.

Group Covenant

A covenant is a list of the ways we agree to be together as a group. The idea of covenant is central to Unitarian Universalism. Historically, we've been a covenantal religion rather than a creedal religion. In other words, we are bound by the way we promise to treat each other, rather than by common beliefs and creeds. So forming a covenant isn't just good group technique, it is a core Unitarian Universalist practice. It is the means by which we are held together in community.

When starting a new group, a group covenant is one of the first things discussed and affirmed. Facilitators also promise to have the group revisit and re-affirm the covenant yearly. The following covenant is popular among our Soul Matters groups. Most groups end up adopting it as is, but every group is encouraged to adapt it to its unique characteristics and desired ways of being together.

Soul Matters Group Covenant Template

As group members,

Before our meetings, we agree to:

- make meetings a priority, including being on time.
- contact one of the co-facilitators ahead of time if we are unable to attend.
- read the material and engage the assigned spiritual exercise.

During our meetings, we agree to:

- practice deep listening, offering each other time to share without interruption.
- the practice of “no fixing, no saving, no advising, no setting each other straight!” during times of discussion and cross-talk.
- monitor the length and frequency of our own participation so all members have opportunities to speak.
- speak for ourselves and try to speak from both the heart and the intellect.
- make time to say good bye when a member decides to leave the group.
- periodically revisit, edit and re-affirm this covenant as a group.

After our meetings, we agree to:

- follow up with other members as needed, especially anyone who miss a meeting without notice to make sure they are okay.
- respect the privacy of group members by keeping personal information confidential.
- keep each other in our prayers and hearts, reaching out to each other in tangible ways to ensure that we are a caring community for one another. *[Name your groups particular promises and strategies here]*
- actively keep a look out for other church members who might need and fit with our group, recognizing that inviting is the job of us all and a way of expressing our gratitude for the gifts we've found through our group. We will make sure potential new members are introduced to our group facilitator so they can go over the New Participant Packet with them.

As the facilitator, I will...

- start and end meetings on time.
- make sure all voices are heard.
- help the group be a circle of caring and concern.
- ensure that another group member facilitates if I cannot attend.
- ensure that the group periodically revisits and re-affirms this covenant.
- let the group know in advance that a new member will be joining the group.
- welcome new members with intentionality by personally meeting with them to go over the New Participant Packet to make sure they are comfortable with and agree to our process.
- ensure we make time for the group to say good-bye to members who leave.

PART V: An Example Monthly Packet

Soul Matters 2012-13
October

What Does It Mean To Live A Life Of Honesty?

** ** *

It's not just about telling the truth and certainly not about possessing the right truths. It's about *being* true.

Our approach to the virtue of honesty is one of our most distinctive features as a religion. Whereas many of our brother and sister faith traditions focus on the truths one believes, we Unitarian Universalists prioritize the truth of who we are. In other words, for us, to live a life of honesty is primarily about personal integrity rather than right belief. Unitarian Universalist sage, Ralph Waldo Emerson, captured this well when he said, "Whatever games are played with us, we must play no games with ourselves." I also love the way the Buddha gets at this. He said, "The only real failure in life is to not take your truth to its end, or not to begin."

So this month, we push each other to take one strong step toward living more deeply into who we are.

And that's certainly not as easy as it sounds. To live out of the truth of who you are requires first that you take an honest look at yourself. For some of us, that means confronting how empty or dispirited we feel about our jobs and facing the scary prospect of starting completely over with a brand-new career. For others of us, it requires being honest about how deeply we've been hurt in relationships and how we--consciously or unconsciously--sabotage or runaway from relationships because of that. For still others, it means looking at the way our lives don't reflect our values, leaving us to talk a good game but not look that different from the consumerist culture that surrounds us. In other words, living honestly is not for wimps! It may require giving our deepest selves a pep talk, but it also sometimes requires giving our deepest selves a good talking to.

And that's not to say that the point is to feel bad about ourselves. Rather living honestly is about getting on with the business of *real* living. To live falsely and out of alignment with your core values removes yourself from life; it keeps our real selves out of the game. It's to not truly be there! And life is too short for that!

So maybe the best way to sum up the message of this month is this: Be here! Get yourself in the game, your *true* self, your *whole* self!

There is a quote by the poet, David Whyte, that I'm planning to tape on my bathroom mirror this entire month. It is this:

"It doesn't interest me if there is one God or many gods... I want to know if you are prepared to live in the world with its harsh need to change you. If you can look back with firm eyes saying this is where I stand. I want to know if you know how to melt into that fierce heat of living, falling toward the center of your longing."

Maybe you want to put this quote in a visible place too. But in the end, my greatest hope is that you put it in your heart... and get it into your life.

Looking forward to us all falling a little closer to the center of ourselves,

Rev. Scott

Our Spiritual Exercise:

Catch Yourself in a Lie... and Listen to What That Lie is Trying to Tell You.

We all do it. Every single day. We lie. Big lies, little lies, white lies, well-intended lies and sometimes, not so well-intended lies. Often there is a pattern. And that pattern tells us something about ourselves. In school, some of us cheated a little here, a little there. For some of us, this was about laziness and just not wanting to do the work. But for others, it likely had something to do with a deep fear of not being perfect and thus not deemed “good enough.” As parents, maybe your most prominent pattern of lying involves protecting your kids from the harsher realities of life. I have a friend who still tells her child that Santa and angels are real because she wants her daughter to “hold onto magic” for just a little while longer. I have another friend who hasn’t yet told her son that she has cancer. For her, this is about not wanting her son to look at her with pity or feel she has to take care of her mom.

You get the point: Our lies don’t just tell us what we’re trying to get away with; they also tell us what we’re wrestling with. So how do your lies speak to what you’re wrestling with? Do they say you’re scared? kind? protective? distrustful? lazy? driven? too driven?

That’s what this exercise is all about. Here are your instructions:

- 1. Spend a few days--maybe even a week--paying extra attention to when, how and how often you lie.**
- 2. Identify a pattern.**
- 3. Figure out what that says about you and what your wrestling with.**
- 4. Try to boil that down into one word or sentence. (“I figured out I’m scared to trust people with my truth” or “I realized that I’m more conflict-avoidant than I thought” or “I thought this was about me being compassionate, but now I’m not so sure.”)**
- 5. Come to your meeting ready to talk about this sentence and the insight connected to it.**

Questions To Live With:

*As always, don't treat these questions like "homework." You do not need to engage every single one. Instead, simply look them over and find **the one** that "hooks" you most. Then let it take you on a ride. Live with it for a while. Allow it to regularly break into--and break open--your ordinary thoughts. And then come to your Soul Matters meeting prepared to share that journey with your group.*

1. What is the most honest thing you need to do right now?

2. What percentage of your "true self" is living?

How much of the real you do people actually see? 80%? 60%? 20%? Seriously, try to put a percentage on it and then figure out how you feel about that?

3. Who gets the real you? And is it the person you want to get the real you?

4. As you get older, are you more honest with yourself or less?

5. Did your parents steer you rightly or wrongly when it comes to lying and telling the truth?

Were their example and lessons good ones or bad ones? And most importantly, what have you done with that legacy?

6. How is your body dealing with your lies?

There's no getting around it: our relationship with honesty and lies affects our body. Our honesty or lack thereof leads to smoking, drinking, buying too much, eating too much, even paying doctors to surgically alter

how we look. How's your body holding up in the midst of your dance with inner truth?

7. Do you need to be more honest about death?

8. What truths do your kids need to hear that you haven't told them yet?

9. What truth does your spouse need to hear that you haven't told him/her yet?

10. Is your life really true to your values?

Are you really walking your talk? And could someone tell by comparing you to your neighbors?

11. Is there a liar in your life that you need to confront?

A coworker? A neighbor? A family member? A politician? A social injustice in your back yard? And when are you going to get to it?

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Recommended Resources:

*As always, this is not “required reading.” We will not analyze or dissect these pieces in our group. They are simply meant to get your thinking started--and maybe to open you to **new ways** of thinking about what it means to “live a life of awakening.”*

First Thoughts:

The following are initial reactions to this month's theme by some of our Soul Matters facilitators. As always, their willingness to share is a gift, as it helps stimulate and open up our own thinking!

Honesty is so often painful, inconvenient, and does not get you what you want. Think of the saying: More flies with sugar, or how you'd answer, “How do you like my new haircut?” I feign interest or approval for many things that candidly I don't think so well of. I'm not even sure that The Truth is ever known. Of course there are many instances where honesty is called for, the best policy, and to be promoted in your children. but...

For me the critical path to honesty starts with being honest with myself. The 5th chapter of the book Alcoholics Anonymous, titled “ How it Works” has a passage at the beginning which is part of daily readings at most meetings around the world. It deals with people who are unable to recover as being “constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves”. I believe this wisdom extends far beyond the world of alcoholism. What happens is that we recognize in someone else what we don't want to be honest about in ourselves and we take it out on the other person – we find it convenient to blame others for our own shortcomings. The result is a life that is “restless, irritable and discontented” (another quote from the AA book) and is frequently led in semi or complete isolation.

Self honesty enables me to trust my perceptions and listen to my feelings.

Honesty is seeing myself not as better or worse than I am.

Mental health is really about seeing the world in an honest way--not the way you expect, wish for, hope for or desire.

Is there really grace in silence, when silence means the truth is not told?

My only hope for ever trusting anyone fully again, is to follow my own truths fully. This gives me hope that

there is someone out there who will, someday, possibly have been doing the same. I always put in my dating profile “no veils and mirrors.”

I never even lied to my kids about santa.

I have this sense that the more honest I am, the more afraid people are to be honest with me.

Gandhi said it right when he came to the understanding that his life at a certain point became an experiment in truth. What I think he meant was that he wanted to see how congruent he could be with what he knew as true and how he was living.

I have always been amazed at humans who scientifically have known so many things to be true and proven, this is good for your body, for example. If we know this to be true, and we spent years of our human energy figuring out the exact ways in which we can be super healthy—we live up and try to get inside the head of a society with obesity, self-abuse of every kind being an issue. Whats up w that? You would think we would have evolved mentally to a place where we would as a culture want to set up something that ought to honor what we know. The fact that children are suffering from diabetes at a higher rate than ever before makes me wonder, are we not deceiving them on a level that is abusive?

Other Wise Words:

"In human relationships, kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths."
- Graehm Greene

"The easiest thing of all is to deceive one's self; for what a man wishes he generally believes to be true."
- Demosthenes

"Being entirely honest with oneself is good exercise"
- Sigmund Freud

"Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth."
- Alfred Lord Tennyson

"The truth shall make you free" - The Bible

Believe those who are seeking the truth. Doubt those who find it.
- Andre Gilde

The pure and simple truth is rarely pure and never simple.
- Oscar Wilde

Lying is the most simple form of self-defense.
- Susan Sontag

"Whatever games are played with us, we must play no games with ourselves but deal in our privacy with the last honesty and truth."
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

"This above all: to thine own self be true" Shakespeare

"The only failure is to not take truth to its end, or not to begin."
- The Buddha

It Doesn't Interest Me

It doesn't interest me if there is one God
Or many gods.
I want to know if you belong or feel
Abandoned.
If you know despair or can see it in others.
I want to know if you are prepared to live in the world
With its harsh need
To change you. If you can look back
With firm eyes
Saying this is where I stand. I want to know
If you know
How to melt into that fierce heat of living
Falling toward
The center of your longing. I want to know
If you are willing
To live, day by day with the consequence of love
And the bitter
Unwanted passion of your . . . defeat.
-- David Whyte

We see in the Gospels that it's the lame, the poor, the blind, the prostitutes, the drunkards, the tax collectors, the sinners, the outsiders, and the foreigners who tend to follow Jesus. It is those on the inside and the top who crucify him (elders, chief priests, teachers of the Law, and Roman occupiers). Shouldn't that tell us something really important about perspective? Every viewpoint is a view from a point, and we need to critique our own perspective and privilege if we are to see truth.

- Richard Rohr, Catholic theologian

I try to use unconditional love in small amounts, she said, so People really appreciate it. The rest of the time, I just try not to yell.

- Brian Andreas

Bertolt Brecht lamented that he lived in an age when it was almost a crime to talk about trees, because that meant being silent about so much evil. Walking past a stand of tall, still healthy elms along Chicago's lakefront, I think of what Brecht said. I want to celebrate these elms which have been

spared by the plague, these survivors of a once flourishing tribe commemorated by all the Elm Streets in America. But to celebrate them is to be silent about the people who sit and sleep underneath them, the homeless poor who are hauled away by the city like trash, except it has no place to dump them. To speak of one thing is to suppress another. When I talk about myself, I cannot talk about you. You know this as you listen to me, disappointment settling in your face.
- Lisel Mueller

Online Videos & Podcasts:

The Truth About Dishonesty

Dan Ariely

http://comment.rsablogs.org.uk/2012/09/14/rsa-animate-truth-dishonesty/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+RSAcomment+%28RSA+Comment%29

Pamela Meyer: How to spot a liar (TED Talk)

http://www.ted.com/talks/pamela_meyer_how_to_spot_a_liar.html

Meet JR

A must watch video/interview about a street artist that uses art to tell and confront people with the truth
<http://blog.ted.com/2010/10/20/meet-jr/>
more about him at

<http://www.drugrehabtreatmenthelp.com/blog/Healing+through+Honesty+and+Creativity%3A+TED+Talk+4/>

Marco Tempest: The magic of truth and lies (and iPods)

A magician's take on honesty

http://www.ted.com/talks/marco_tempest_the_magic_of_truth_and_lies_on_ipods.html

The 'Truth' About Why We Lie, Cheat And Steal

<http://www.npr.org/2012/06/04/154287476/honest-truth-about-why-we-lie-cheat-and-steal>

Writing That's Too Honest Can Be "Devastating"

Annie Lamott

<http://bigthink.com/ideas/19814>

The Empty Pot (A Chinese Fable)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emt08NorRU8>

Books:

Lying (Kindle Single)

Sam Harris

Albeit with tongue in cheek, Mark Twain once wrote: "No fact is more firmly established than that lying is a necessity of our circumstance--the deduction that it is then a Virtue goes without saying." Well, Sam Harris begs to differ. And differ he does, with an impassioned, straight-shooting argument not only that lies are "the social equivalent of toxic waste," but also that each of us is capable of, and would benefit from, a life led free of the lie.

The Grace of Silence: A Family Memoir

Michele Norris

While exploring the hidden conversation on race unfolding throughout America in the wake of President Obama's election, Michele Norris discovered that there were painful secrets within her own family that had been willfully withheld. These revelations—from her father's shooting by a Birmingham police officer to her maternal grandmother's job as an itinerant Aunt Jemima in the Midwest—inspired a bracing journey into her family's past, from her childhood home in Minneapolis to her ancestral roots in the Deep South. The result is a rich and extraordinary family memoir—filled with stories that elegantly explore the power of silence and secrets—that boldly examines racial legacy and what it means to be an American.

When Your Lover Is a Liar: Healing the Wounds of Deception and Betrayal

by Susan Forward, PhD.

Getting Real: Ten Truth Skills You Need to Live an Authentic Life

Susan Campbell

Meeting the Shadow: The Hidden Power of the Dark Side of Human Nature

Connie Zweig, editor

A Little Book on the Human Shadow

Robert Bly

Dance of Deception

Harriet Lerner

The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion

Jonathan Haidt

Articles

Tell the Truth, and Live Longer. (No Lie!)

<http://bigthink.com/risk-reason-and-reality/tell-the-truth-and-live-longer-no-lie>

The GOP's Ponochio's Politics

Septmeber issue of The Nation

<http://www.thenation.com/issue/september-24-2012>

The Liberal Lie, The Conservative Truth (blog)

<http://theliberalslies.blogspot.com>

How Lies Work

by [weeklysift](http://weeklysift.com)

<http://weeklysift.com/2012/08/20/how-lies-work/>

We Are Writing the Epilogue to the World We Knew

by John Atcheson

An essay about the truth of where global warming is taking us

<https://www.commondreams.org/view/2012/08/31>

Movies

Slumdog Millionaire (2008)

Danny Boyle, Loveleen Tandan

Big Fish (2003)

Tim Burton

Sex, Lies, and Videotape (1989)

Steven Soderbergh

Pickpocket (1959)

Robert Bresson

An Inconvenient Truth (2006)

Movie directed by Davis Guggenheim

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