

Gulf Coast Grandmothers' Gathering 2025

Illumination: Shining Our Divine Light

Small Circle Questions



Day 1- Connecting Hearts

LAKOTA PRAYER

Great Mystery,
teach me how to trust
my heart,
my mind,
my intuition,
my inner knowing,
the senses of my body,
the blessing of my spirit.
Teach me to trust these things so that I may enter my Sacred Space
and love beyond my fear,
And thus Walk in Balance
with the passing of each glorious Sun.

1. THE CIRCLE WAY

2. INTRODUCE YOURSELF by sharing a little about where you live, how many Gatherings you have attended, your experience with Peer Spirit Circles and your expectation of this Gathering.

3. TELL US YOUR STORY as we begin CONNECTING HEARTS. What would you like your small circle friends to know about you? You might share your family/living situation, any work you do or have done, your special interests or hobbies, something else?

Topic:

“Do you know what it means to learn? When you are really learning you are learning throughout your life and there is no one special teacher to learn from. Then everything teaches you – a dead leaf, a bird in flight, a smell, a tear, the rich, and the poor. Life itself is your teacher, and you are in a state of constant learning.”

Krishnamurti - Think on These Things, 1964

“Teaching is more than imparting knowledge; it is inspiring change. Learning is more than absorbing facts; it is acquiring understanding”

William Arthur Ward

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“Those who live passionately teach us how to love. Those who love passionately teach us how to live.”

Yogananda

Life's teachers can be found in many forms, from formal educators to mentors, coaches, and even life experiences themselves. Reflecting on these influences can reveal valuable insights into personal growth and development. Some examples include teachers who inspired a love of learning, those who encouraged leadership, or even those who taught valuable life lessons through challenging times. Life's greatest teachers are not always found in classrooms; they can be found in experiences, relationships, and even in the lessons we learn from setbacks. Historical figures, individuals who have overcome adversity, pursued their passions, or made significant impact on the world can also serve as inspiring role models.

Question 1: Who or what have been the significant teachers/influences in your life? What are the important lessons that you've learned?

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Day 2: Everything and everyone teaches. Therefore, you, too, are a teacher.

“There is a way of giving – when the left hand doesn’t know what the right hand is doing. You don’t have self image of yourself giving, but there is an outflow of energy – in whatever form – and it’s not yours. You are not giving anything that is “yours”, because ultimately nothing is yours. You are giving energy, because the energy, in whatever form, comes from the Source of all energy...you allow yourself to be the vehicle through which this energy flows out to the world. Then the sense of “me the doer” isn’t there...To be of service, then, is a beautiful spiritual practice too...because the ego is out of the way. It’s universal energy that comes through.” Eckhart Tolle

Teaching and influencing others are crucial life skills. They involve understanding how to effectively share knowledge and inspire action in others. Trust and rapport are essential for influence. A teacher/influencer affects eternity; she can never tell where her influence will stop. If you are in a position of positive influence, your faith gives you power – a hidden power – that will allow you to make an enduring difference in the lives of other people and organizations.

“Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in the mind of another.” Napoleon Hill

“I know clearly and fully that to move any human being, I must touch, within the person, rhythms of life itself, rhythms that will create a shift with reference to movement, energy, and actions.” Clark Moustakas

Question 1: Who have you had the opportunity to teach or influence?

Question 2: What have you learned about teaching or sharing information with others? What works for you? What doesn’t work for you?

Day 3: Weekly Story by Betsey Grady

"For my Weekly Story, I decided once again to share what came through with a conversation I had with my own Guides. Last week I shared how they suggested we look at the times we are in right now similar to how we view Covid. If you didn't get to read it, then I strongly encourage you to do so now. The feedback and response to that viewpoint has been wonderful and I am told has been a most helpful perspective to hold. One thing I noticed during sessions last week is that this perspective softened attitudes and anxieties and even opened the door to consider new possibilities. It's funny how when we face the fears of losing something or anything, we start to realize what's important and how we want our lives to look. I can't tell you how often the theme of gardens and community gardens came up last week. I realized that the drastic changes the new administration is making have made people wonder if and where they'll get their vegetables and fruits and food in general. Questioning what will be available six months from now has brought the idea of gardening back to the masses. I personally think this is a good thing. What if we all grew our own gardens and shared with our neighbors? What if the fear of no food creates more food and more importantly a sense of community? I would absolutely love to see some of the "old days" resurrected because it could honestly do our country and society some real good. Facing an absence of something or the uncertainty of something creates new ideas and new bonds and I am open to what it fosters.

"Another thing I noticed in myself is that I started paying more attention to the different roles and government agencies. There are some agencies I had no idea existed! There are some positions in the federal government that I didn't know existed. My background and family story doesn't have a lot of military experience on either side, so it is not something I have learned in depth, yet now I see the difference between a 3-Star, 4-Star, and 5-Star general. I am able to have even greater respect for the levels of service since this has been highlighted in news events. So for me, I may look at what is happening and, like many of you, feel a bit stunned. Yet at the same time I am observing what I am learning, noticing for the first time and truly caring about in a much different way. I do hope these changes encourage us to get back to our roots, to live off the earth, to share with our neighbors. Just think, if we start growing our own gardens, we will start caring more about the soil we are planting in. We will start composting and recycling and re-purposing. We will care more deeply about the environment and we will play a true part of the transformation. These changes the new administration are making, while having seismic effects, are waking all of us up to what matters to us the most. More people are finally paying attention to why their vote matters, to who their state congressman is. More people are getting a much needed lesson in Government 101. I understand better today the three chambers of our government than I did in all of my history classes. I think that is huge! What I love seeing is PASSION coming back to the people! New people are going to run for political offices that never paid attention before simply because they understand, they care and are passionate. We are going to see sweeping changes, there is no doubt. Yet these changes are already having some

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positive effects both on US soil and abroad. Look at European leaders coming together and realizing their own power. Look at them stepping up to the table to be agents of power and change, having voices, allowing themselves to be seen. Passion is awake everywhere and I am excited to see more and who else will step into their light.

“This is not a time to stay small, unseen or be passive. What passions within YOU are waking up? What ideas have YOU found yourself drawn to? What new bonds are YOU forming? What do you want to see started in YOUR own community and neighborhood? Like our neighbors abroad, how are you recognizing your power and becoming an agent of change?”

Weekly Tip...Betsey Grady

“Connection is important. Connection with your self first and with others next. This idea actually came to me from my Guides last week while I was driving back from Birmingham. I love that drive because it gives me concentrated time to be in my thoughts and have conversations with my Guides. The Guides dropped an idea in my head that stuck with me - Pen-Pals. They reminded me how much I enjoyed writing letters and getting letters in the mail. They reminded me that this too can be something of old, like gardening, we reach for again. So I got home and researched to see if there are any Pen-Pal websites that encourage good, old-fashioned letter writing to strangers across the globe. And guess what? There are! Talk about fostering relations with our global friends! As the US takes a bit of a nose dive in our foreign relations, we can still create positive and strong bonds as individuals with people from around the world.

Some that I found and am exploring:

Penpal.me is a site that generates postcards.

Globalpenfriends.com is a site for creating international connections.

Letterinthepost.com is another site for those of us who love writing letters.

And one site that works specifically for pen-pals to help those struggling with depression is lettersagainst.org This one you actually become a volunteer and go thru a little training because your letters are going to those in real need, those having a mental health crisis.

You might also check your public library to see if they sponsor any programs.

I can't endorse any of these as I am just beginning to play around with the idea of a pen-pal. I'd love to hear if any of you have had a positive experience with this idea!!”

Question 1: What do you want to see started in your own community and neighborhood? What are you drawn to? What passions within you are awakening? Is there something arising in you that wants to be shared with your community and neighborhood?

Question 2: What would you still like to learn? What do you need to learn? How will you go about learning this?

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Day 4: “Nothing can dim the light that shines from within.”

Maya Angelou

“Simply shine your light on the road ahead, and you are helping others see their way out of darkness.” -Katrina Mayer

“Being a star means that you just find your own special place, and that you shine where you are. To me, that’s what being a star means.” -Dolly Parton

Light is a spiritual symbol of hope. Light is one of the most universal and fundamental symbols. It is the spiritual and the divine, it is illumination and intelligence. Light is the source of goodness and the ultimate reality, and it accompanies transcendence. The metaphorical value of light is that light represents truth.

In the Bible, Jesus says that He is the “light of the world.” He also tells his disciples that they too are the light of the world, urging them to let their light shine before others. This light is your consciousness and the realization of conscious awareness.

Consciousness, or awareness, is akin to light, and this light illuminates the world and our experiences within it. Consciousness is a fundamental aspect of reality, linking ALL. It is the universal force connecting all beings and even being the source of the universe itself. Consciousness illuminates our thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and memories.

“Shine your light” is a metaphor that encourages us to let our positive qualities, inner strength, and good deeds be seen by others.

Shining your light means actively contributing to a positive and supportive community by being kind, compassionate, and engaged. This can be done through many actions, such as being an encourager, advocating for those in need, and simply being present and helpful to others. It can also mean active involvement in community outreach programs. How will you shine your light?

Question 1: What new bonds are you forming? How are you recognizing YOUR power (light consciousness) and becoming an agent of change? What new actions will you take to shine your light in your community? How do you know who needs your light today?

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50 Ideas to Share Your Light...Who needs your light today?

1. Laugh with a friend	26. Watch your favorite movie with a friend
2. Call someone you miss	27. Send a funny meme or video to a friend
3. Carry an extra snack for someone in need	28. Give your favorite book to a loved one
4. Send a homemade card to a friend	29. Make a meal with a family member
5. Plan some 1-on-1 time with a loved one	30. Donate cans to your local food bank
6. Let a stranger go ahead of you in line	31. Be kind to yourself. Practice self-care
7. Smile at someone	32. Text someone "I'm grateful for you"
8. Learn to say "have a nice day" in another language	33. Leave a kind note for your mail carrier
9. Share a link to a song you love	34. Invite a neighbor to lunch
10. Apologize to someone	35. Leave an uplifting comment on social media
11. Pay for the person behind you in line	36. Visit with an elderly neighbor
12. Complete an item on a loved ones "to do" list	37. Tell a loved one they matter to you
13. Make a spiritual playlist and share it with a friend	38. Clean up trash in your community
14. Send a thank-you note to a healthcare worker	39. Ask a coworker how you can lighten their load
15. Help someone research their family genealogy	40. Offer to help someone who is having trouble
16. Support a local small business	41. Take a friend to lunch for their birthday
17. Text a photo of a fond memory to a family member	42. Take a walk with a friend
18. Give your neighbor a compliment	43. Post about a loved one on social media
19. Let someone else be kind to you	44. Offer to teach someone a new skill
20. Learn how another culture celebrates a holiday	45. Hold the door open for a stranger
21. Be patient with wait staff and customer service	46. Host a family game night
22. Help a loved one clean their home	47. Pray for someone by name
23. Contribute to a local charity	48. Volunteer at your local library
24. Invite someone to your home for coffee/tea	49. Give a hug to a friend
25. Leave a gift on your neighbor's doorstep	50. Forgive someone

THE GIVEAWAY CEREMONY: SACRED GIVING, SACRED RECEIVING

IN THE NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS: One of the very common practices of virtually every American Indian Nation is some form of “A Giveaway Ceremony.”

Giving, in a sacred way, has always been a central component of the Ceremony. It may have been a means of giving thanks, of bringing the people together, of gaining honor or distributing material goods so that all might survive, or a means of teaching. It was thought to maintain the balance that was needed to hold a nation together and to keep an individual in the right relationship with him or herself and with the community – a community that was not just composed of humans, but also of animals, plants, even the stones – for all things were thought to be alive.

IN THE GRANDMOTHER GATHERING TRADITION: We begin by placing the various gifts that have been brought for the Ceremony on the altar in our small circle. Everyone will ultimately be invited to come and take one gift. You are encouraged to choose the gift you accept by allowing the Spirit to guide you, focusing on the gesture of giving and receiving.

It is also said that we should think of the gifts we receive as having come from Spirit. Thus, it is to Spirit, the Great Mystery, that thanks should be given for the gift. We say “Please” to each other and “Thank You” to Spirit. This helps to ensure that those who give do so with humility, with an awareness of the sacred nature of all gifts.

The giver is not calling attention to herself, but to the spiritual power behind the giving and receiving. Thus both remain sacred.

IN OUR TRADITION WE PROCEED BY:

Placing the gifts on the altar in our small circle.

The eldest Grandmother present selects the first gift.

She then states why she was drawn to that gift.

The giver explains her reason for selecting this particular gift and then selects a gift for herself.

The giver then continues the process.

In the event the giver or receiver has already participated, the next eldest Grandmother will proceed with the process until all gifts have been received.