



# Soulful Home

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Finding the Sacred in  
Our Everyday Spaces

April 2020 - Liberation

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# The Welcome Mat

## What Does it Mean to be a Family of Liberation?

Educator [Cosmo Fujiyama, in her TED talk, “Learning as Liberation,”](#) advocates consciously building in “pause-and-get-perspective moments” into one’s life. Coming from a family of avid snow skiers, she calls these “lift moments,” inspired by the ski-lift rides between runs, when she and her dad would look down on the slopes below from high above, reflecting on the run they’d just had before rushing down the slope again. For Fujiyama, these “lift moments” liberate one from the feelings of overwhelm, stuckness, and disengagement, because they allow one to focus instead on the learning, freeing one’s self to think and act differently next time.

Fujiyama asks those of us who are facing a struggle to consider three questions: What am I learning right now, invisibly? What is the gift here? What am I committed to learning? As a people of spirit, we have plenty of struggles, and together, we can learn how to find liberation *within* them. The secret lies in the “lift moment” - taking a moment to step back from the struggle and putting down the question, “What is there here to fear?” and picking up the question, “What is here to learn?”

When we face fears and confess our shames and misdeeds to a trusted friend or to the Divine, dedicating ourselves to atonement, we learn that we don’t always need to hide our fault and there is space to begin again. t. When we willingly accept the responsibility to adapt language and practices that promote inclusion rather than harm and oppression, we learn that our liberation is tied up in the liberation of others. When we adopt practices that ground us in the here and now so that we may stay engaged and thoughtful, even when triggered, even when distraction and fear tempt us away, we learn that freedom within is attainable. It’s one of life’s great lessons and gifts: learning always leads to liberation.

With you this month as we learn to better recognize and effect the cool, clear rush of liberation,

Teresa, on behalf of the whole Soul Matters team



# At the Table

## Exploring Liberation 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.

1. When was a time you got stuck and needed help getting unstuck?
2. Are children more free, or adults?
3. Which animal is most free, cats, dogs, birds, or fish?
4. In what space in your home do you feel most free to be yourself?
5. Can you find the word “liberty” on a U.S. coin? What do you think that means, and why is it there?
6. Do you think having a lot of money helps you feel free?
7. Would you rather be free to wake up any time you want in the morning, or go to bed any time you want at night?
8. Sometimes being afraid feels like being trapped. What scary things leave feeling frozen?
9. Is there something you really want to try, but you haven’t yet? What might be holding you back?
10. Do you know what it means to be a “free spirit”? [If not, spend a moment describing this concept.] Who do you know who is a free spirit? (You might consider people you know, or characters from books or movies.)

### Ways to 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 your well-known world in new ways. Take our monthly treasure hunt list with you on your trips to the grocery, walks around the neighborhood or bike rides, and transform your everyday travel into a family adventure.*

## A Treasure Hunt for Liberation

Remembering our liberation as “ski lift” metaphor from this month’s introduction, we’re going to look for things that are high up, aloft, untethered, or free:

1. A bird of prey in a high treetop
2. A pair of shoes slung up over a powerline
3. A steeple
4. A weathervane
5. A piece of litter lifted by a breeze
6. A hot air balloon
7. A bat
8. A plane
9. A window washer
10. A crane or cherry-picker
11. A flying disk, or Frisbee
12. Someone dancing in public



# At Play

## Playing Games with Liberation

*At Play activities and questions are a way to joyfully, playfully, and imaginatively experience the theme. We offer a brief framework to introduce the game and another to reflect upon it, so that the insights learned in play can stay with us throughout the month and beyond.*

### Option A: Bound-up Liberation--Blob Tag

80-year old Murri activist and scholar Lilla Watson famously said, “If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because **your liberation is bound up with mine**, then let us work together.”

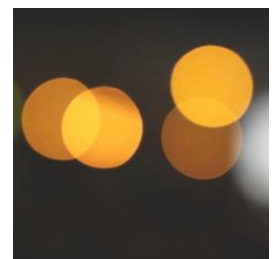
In blob tag, players begin each for themselves, scampering out of the single tagger’s way as a mass of individuals. But one after another, as people get tagged, they attach to one another (either by elbows or holding hands) and approach the task as a group. Working together is hard, at first, until the group establishes a strategy together and a willingness to work with the unique features that each newly tagged member adds to the group.

So, in a way, as each player gets “caught,” they get “liberated” from individualism at the same time, bound together with others and focused on a single goal.

Here’s a good video demonstration of the game at work:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urQld9xl\\_H0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urQld9xl_H0)

You’ll need a minimum of six people to play, so invite friends or neighbors if you’re family size is smaller than six. Also, be sure to adjust the size of your playing area, smaller area for smaller groups, bigger area for bigger groups.



## Option B: Stuck in the Mud! Dice Game

Mostly we've been exploring ways to get UNstuck in this packet about liberation, but in this game, getting stuck is part of the fun!

This is a quick-to-learn game that can be played by all the family members, youngest to oldest.

You need five dice, paper, and something to write with. The point of the game is to add up the dice to get a high score, but the trick is, 2s and 5s make the roll invalid.

Here's how it goes:

Player 1 rolls. If player 1 gets no 2s or 5s in their roll, they add up all the up-facing numbers on the dice, and that's their score. Play proceeds to the left.

If player 1 does roll a 2 or a 5, those dice have to be set aside (in the mud), and the remaining dice are rolled again. On that second role, if any 2s or 5s are rolled, those dice, too, must be set aside, and the remaining dice rerolled in an attempt to get a score of 1s, 3s, 4s, or 6s that might be added up as a valid score.

Some turns are over in a flash, and some seem to go on and on. This is a game of pure chance, so all players are on equal footing.



# On the Message Board

## A Monthly Mantra

*The On the Message Board section lifts up a theme-related mantra for your family to carry with them throughout the month. Think of these “family sayings” 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. Write them on sticky notes to put in your car, on kitchen cabinet fronts, in lunch boxes, on computer screens and, of course, on your family message board. Share them out loud at home and out in the world, where and whenever the need arises.*

### **April’s Mantra: I have arrived...**

Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh often taught walking--or moving--meditations as a way for the meditator to achieve internal liberation, even if external liberation were not possible. [He told a story](#) of a peace activist friend, Sister Tri Hai, who was imprisoned for her work, but who was able to resist her bondage inwardly through breathing and walking meditations even in the confines of her cell.

Our mantra this month is one of Thich Nhat Hanh’s walking meditations that depicts this beautiful paradox of being at once here and everywhere, of being grounded and being free, no matter what messes, dangers or worries swirl around you

Read the whole meditation a few times throughout the month. If you’re willing, memorize it along with your child. (At Plum Village, the monastery that Thich Nhat Hahn founded in France, this meditation was [put to music](#), which might help with the memorization.)

We all regularly find ourselves in situations we wish we could be free of, but that circumstantially, we can’t always leave behind. Use the first line of this mantra to cue yourself to recite the whole thing, as many times as you need to, to move from feeling stuck and trapped to free and at peace. The gentle, swaying rhythm of this meditation makes it particularly well suited to practice at bedtime. We all need a little help remembering that inner peace and freedom is always at hand.

**I have arrived**

**I am home**

**In the here**

**And in the now**

**I am solid**

**I am free**

**In the ultimate**

**I dwell.**





# At the Bedside

*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.*

## The Liberation of No Light: God is Like Darkness

In this story (adapted by the Resource Development office of the UUA, with permission, from Mary Ann Moore's [Hide and Seek with God](#)) the two characters are a child who feels anxious about the dark, and the Power-of-God-Who-Was-Darkness.

When we encounter an imagined fear, we often become trapped by circular thinking about scary and worrisome what-ifs. Reaching back to our lens of learning-as-liberation, as described by [Cosmo Fujiyama](#), we're using this bedtime story to illustrate ways that learning to perceive our situation in different ways liberates us from fear.

Here's the story:

[https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/uuworld/families/13\\_spring.pdf](https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/uuworld/families/13_spring.pdf)

If you're willing, turn off all the lights in your child's room as you tell this story, and either read the story off your cell phone screen, or use a small flashlight to illuminate only the story so you can read it.

There's great potential here to go theologically deep with your kids, so we're including some follow-up questions below that tease the theology out, but as always, pick and choose the questions that really glow for you!

- Is the darkness scary or intimidating to you, or fun and inviting?
- What's great about your room in the darkness? (Examples might include the glow of light at the bottom of the door crack, the way you can barely see the outline of furniture, the way there's no difference between eyes open and eyes closed, etc.)
- What are you free to do in the dark that you may feel silly or odd doing in the light?
- Do you ever feel a kind presence, or hear a loving voice in the darkness, like this character did?
- Have you ever said a prayer--maybe voiced a fear and asked for some help freeing yourself from it--in the dark?

**Note:** Global [Earth Hour](#), a time to turn out all of the lights in one's home and illuminate only with a few candles, falls on the last Saturday in March. It's a grassroots movement to bring awareness to the climate crisis. But many families enjoy the experience so much they make it a regular monthly ritual. After you read this story, consider scheduling your own Earth Hour and talk about how life would be different (and liberating) for [people](#) and [animals](#) if we embraced darkness after sundown.



# On the Porch

## Raising a Child of Liberation 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 over the soulful parts of parenthood.*

*Author and activist Parker Palmer talks about the value of bringing a “[third thing](#)” into conversations among partners or small groups--words, pictures, music, etc. that can act as catalysts for deeper sharing. We present that idea as “a sip of something more,” a monthly source of nourishment that tantalizes and brings to mind a new insight, memory, or feeling.*

### A Sip of Something More

One very persistent and often pernicious way that adults get “stuck” and need help getting liberated is around ideas of the body and sexuality. All of us absorbed harmful messages about sex and bodies, and even if we’ve done the work to name and reject those messages, they can still return and hold us back in ways that interfere with the happy enjoyment of our lives.

Together with your partner, read [this benediction](#), or blessing, from Lutheran pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber’s book, *Shameless: A Case for Not Feeling Bad About Feeling Good (About Sex)*. If Bolz-Weber’s use of the word God doesn’t resonate with you, consider subbing The Spirit of Life, The Universe, or The Divine.

### For Discussion

- What part of this reading did you most need to hear in order to feel a little more freedom in the part of your heart dedicated to self-love?
- How do you think your life would have been different if you’d heard and absorbed this message growing up? (Or maybe you heard variations of these ideas that helped you to not be bound by shame around bodies and sex?)
- Which message in this blessings are you committed to sharing with your child in the coming months and years, maybe even this coming week?



## Spiritual Snacks to Share

*In addition to your “third thing,” bring one or two of 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, using them as bite-sized opportunities to dive deeper into the role of parent, partner, and person of spirit and conscience.*

### Which of these Dichotomous Questions is “Yours”?

In what way has parenting liberated you? In what ways has it inhibited your freedom?

What are you more free to do now that you’re older? What freedom do you miss from youth?

What liberties do you experience living in our society? What liberties do you long for that you do not experience in this society?

What are you free to do, but are holding yourself back from? What do you do that would benefit from restraint or regulation?

What actions do you take to lift and liberate others around you? What behaviors and decisions keep others down and inhibit their freedoms?



# The Extra Mile

*The Extra Mile section is for families 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!*

## **Liberated from Gravity (Almost!): Flying and Floating**

In our Around the Neighborhood section, we used the metaphor of “lift” to find liberation. If that was fun for your family, consider one of these lofty options:

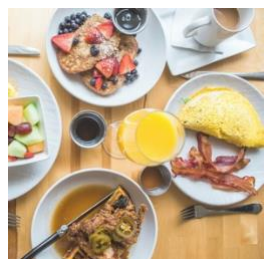
- Fly kites
- Play around with a radio-controlled helicopter
- Make parachutes for tiny dolls and action figures and see who can get the most hang time
- Have a contest to see whose paper airplane can fly the farthest
- Working as a team, try to play “keep it up” with a feather or balloon, using breath or hands

## **Liberated from Convention: Breakfast for Dinner**

Breakfast-for-Dinner is a concept that both liberates us from getting stuck in what the evening meal is “supposed” to be and frees up a bit more time around the table since breakfast usually entails simple foods prepared quickly.

Eggs or egg replacement and toast with a side of fresh fruit or veg is a quick and easy option. Bagel sliders with your favorite fillings and breakfast burritos both come together quickly, too. What favorite early meal would your family be excited to prepare and eat together at an unexpected time of day?

Use this mealtime toss-up to offer some new suggestions about how household tasks and chores might be shared differently among the family. Who usually pairs the socks out of the clean laundry? Who refills the toilet paper in the bathroom? Who gets the mail? We all get used to things just “getting done,” but the person doing them might appreciate not being tied down, and other folks might like the chance to learn how to do new things.



# Blessing

In all the ways that your beautiful body calls for freedom--freedom from violence, freedom from limiting assumptions, freedom from condemnation--may you be free. In all the ways that your loving heart longs to be liberated--liberated from the resentments it holds, liberated from feelings of unworthiness, liberated from old patterns of seeking love and approval--may you be liberated. In all the ways that your brilliant mind seeks release--release from gripping fears, release from relentlessly racing worries, release from overwhelm--may you be released. May you be delivered from these and other confinements of the spirit, and together with your families, rise to live freely and fully in the Abiding Love that unites us all.



## 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/](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

Soulful Home packets are prepared by  
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# Soul Matters

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