



Soulful Home

Finding the Sacred in
Our Everyday Spaces

May 2020 - Thresholds

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The Welcome Mat

What Does it Mean to be a Family of Thresholds?

Knock Knock.

Who's there?

Adore.

Adore who?

Adore is between you and me. Could you please open up?

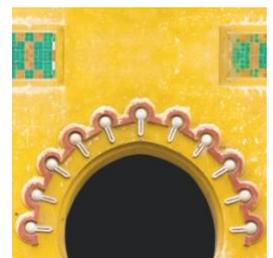
This month, we're approaching thresholds with curiosity, a little silliness, and a compassionate acknowledgement that thresholds cost something; they are edges and limits that we traverse with risk and with sacrifice.

We're recognizing, too, that as a global people still moving through the stages of a pandemic, we are arriving at a brink, collectively, and for many, personally. In a [recent article](#), celebrated author Arundhati Roy wrote of our moment, "Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next." She urges readers to walk through this threshold carrying little, ready to imagine much--a world with more justice, more care, more sharing, more loving acceptance.

This month, feel free to wander around in your packet. We've taken a different angle on some of our sections, but the familiar elements you've made part of your home life are still here. There are games to play together that invite movement and joy. (Two inside options.) There are deep questions to consider along with a parenting partner or trusted friend. And there is a very familiar story that we may now, as a people, be able to see and hear and feel in a new way.

Your traveling buddy,

Teresa, on behalf of the whole Soul Matters team



At the Table

Exploring Thresholds 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: Who's Knocking at the Door?

In each At the Table encounter, we attempt to get to know one another a bit better, prompt critical thinking, surprise ourselves and one another with new thoughts or ideas, and share a bit of laughter. This month, as we explore thresholds together, we'll attempt the above through the ageless art of...knock-knock jokes!

Use this riff on our usual discussion questions to have a bit of fun this month and freshen up your family gatherings. There are enough jokes below for each family member to choose a few to offer the group. Or, you could pre-select a couple of dozen and print them out for others to choose from. And of course, once your family members discover the fun, they can bring their own!

Add to the fun by adding your own twists. How about a contest to tell the WORST knock-knock joke? Or a challenge to make your most stoic family member laugh? Or challenge family members to find a knock-knock joke around a theme, such as dogs, or snow?

<https://bestlifeonline.com/knock-knock-jokes/>



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. Usually, we ask you to take our monthly treasure hunt list with you on your trips to the grocery, jaunts around the neighborhood, walks and rides, etc. to transform your everyday travel into a family adventure. This month, we're adventuring from the safety of our own homes, going farther than we ever could before!

A Treasure Hunt Using Virtual Thresholds

This month, we are opening a new window to the world outside and adopting the global "neighborhood" as our treasure-hunting grounds! Below you'll find a selection of some of the Internet's best live cams. Below each website, we've listed a few things we think have a good chance of showing up if you're tuning in during daylight hours in the late spring/early summer.

Note that we've included real live stream videos here, not highlight reels, even though that may mean there isn't action every time you sign on. Inaction offers a great opportunity to talk about how all creatures experience their lives in cycles: rest, work/play, feeding, digesting, etc., and when we get a glimpse into another being's life, we only get a tiny sense of what it's like to be that other creature, human or animal.

Bird Watching HQ's backyard bird cam, from Northeast Ohio, USA:

<https://birdwatchinghq.com/live-bird-cams/#akronfeeder>

See if you can spot: doves, cardinals, goldfinches, and a woodpecker

Note: Need some help IDing common feeder birds? Check out [this post](#) from the Audubon Society.

The Miami Zoo's Meerkat enclosure, Miami, Florida, USA:

<https://www.zoomiami.org/animals#item=429890>

See if you can find a meerkat looking up, scurrying, digging, and climbing. (Note that you can click on the image and zoom in and out.)

The Monterey Bay Aquarium's Coral Reef habitat, Monterey, California, USA:

<https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams/coral-reef-cam/>

Can you find a bright pink fish? A bright orange fish? A fish with a yellow stripe?

As a challenge, you might try and learn some names of Pacific coral reef fish here. And, the Monterey Bay Aquarium has several webcams including penguins, otters, and jellyfish! Have fun exploring!

Tiny Kittens HQ, British Columbia, Canada:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_7wiz_IURg

This livestream is operated by a nonprofit that is attempting to bring more compassionate practices into trap-neuter-release operations for feral cats. All the kittens featured on this livestream are up for adoption (near Langley, British Columbia).

Can you find a sleeping kitten? A playful kitten? A kitten who might be hungry?

Africam, Balule & Ndlovumzi Nature Reserves & other South African locations:

<https://www.africam.com/wildlife/live-african-wildlife-safari-channels/>

Note: South Africa is six hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time in North America.

Can you spot a lion? An elephant? A hyena? A leopard? A porcupine? A crocodile?



At Play

Playing Games with Thresholds

At Play activities are a way to joyfully, playfully, and imaginatively experience the theme in one's body.

Option A: Sheet Forts!

Sheet forts (or [blanket forts](#), tablecloth forts, couch-cushion forts, etc.!) offer us the almost-magical power of being able to create inside and outside space where before, there wasn't. If you need inspiration, do an Internet search for any of the above terms and enjoy lots of pictures to help you get started.

If you're an old hat at sheet forts, think of a configuration you've never done before: Under-the-table fort? Stair fort? Two or more connected forts? Clothesline forts? [String forts](#)?

The building of the fort is more than half the fun, but if you want to extend the enjoyment, bring a board game or deck of cards into the fort, or invite some favorite stuffed animals to join you, or have a favorite snack there in your home-inside-your-home!

If you made a sheet fort as a child, share that memory with your own child. Wonder together why it's an almost universal experience to feel cozy, secure, empowered, etc. in a self-made space of one's own.

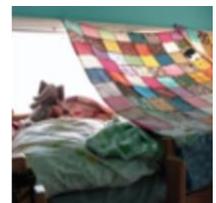
Option B: Here Come the Elephants!

This game is all about arrivals and departures. It's a way to do big movements and big noises in small spaces so that family members can get some energy moving through them.

One person begins by putting a hand to their ear and saying, "I hear elephants! But where are they?" The other players respond by saying, "They're far away!" Then, the other players very quietly stomp their feet, or raise an arm just a bit, like a faraway trunk waving hello, or make a soft elephant sound. The first person continues, "They're getting closer!" at which point the group stomps a bit louder, waves a bit bigger, makes a bit louder elephant sound. This continues a couple of times. When the elephants arrive, the movement and sound is big and loud! Then, the first person says, "Oh, they're going away now." The sound and movement slow and soften until they're gone.

You can vary this game by making the animal different (zebras, lions, monkeys) each time or, a slightly more complex option, making each family member a different animal, so that "The monkey is getting closer but the lion is farther away!" and so on.

This is a good "transition" game to play, between lessons or activities.



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 re-focus 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.

May’s Mantra:

I don’t have to move forward just yet; I can pause here.

What a gift, to be unhurried. And what a tall order!

The temptation is great, whether we encounter exciting or deeply hurtful experiences, to rush ahead. In the case of happy intensity, we are often on to the next (surely wonderful!) thing before we’ve really had a chance to enjoy our elation. And in the case of experiences that lead to big, hard hurts, we want to put as much distance as possible between us and what just happened. Rush ahead, rush ahead, rush ahead. Big emotions can do that.

What thresholds teach us is that there is great value in pausing exactly where you are, feeling exactly what you feel, acknowledging exactly what IS. Finding one’s self at a threshold is an opportunity to assess and prioritize. All of us can do this before we move forward, before we decide on the next action to take.

*My friend has just said something careless and unkind. I can zing back an insult. I can yell at them. I can say something sarcastic and cutting. ...Here I am at a threshold. **But I don’t have to move forward just yet; I can pause here.***

*I can tell that I disappointed my loved one. They are mad, and I’m ashamed, and things are terrible. I feel awful, and I don’t know what to do to fix this. Here I am at a threshold. **But I don’t have to move forward just yet; I can pause here.***

Use this month’s mantra to help you respond rather than react, savor rather than rush, consider rather than careen. We’re using the image of a threshold to remind us to pause and consider, only moving forward when we’ve had a chance to gather ourselves. This opportunity to be thoughtful and intentional about next steps is a gift of thresholds.



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.

Loaves and Fishes

This month's story is about the kind of threshold we go through when we experience something amazing and unbelievable together as a people. We are not the same after the experience as we were before. We really "went through" the powerful and transformative moment together.

The story is from the Christian Bible, and is a Jesus story that many people know as the "Loaves and Fishes." The version we're linking to comes from the UUA's curriculum called *Miracles*, by [Adrienne Ross](#), [Chris Jablonski](#), [Miriam Smith](#), and [Susan Lawrence](#).

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/miracles/session-6/loaves-fishes>

Here are some questions you might wonder together about afterward:

- Where do you think all those fish and loaves of bread came from?
- Do you think it's possible that all the people gathered there had each brought a little something for themselves, a snack to tide them over while Jesus spoke to them?
- And if so, do you think it's possible that when the baskets came around, each of them might have added a little bit of their extra food, so that only those in need took, and everyone else gave?
- What makes people want to share with each other?
- After a gathering like that, so many people sharing, and all of them listening to and thinking about kind ways to be to one another, how do you think they felt?
- Do you think they would feel the same about themselves, and each other, and their earth, as they did before having such a special moment together?



On the Porch

Raising a Child of Resilience 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 a parent or 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

This poem by UU minister Nancy Shaffer, “That Which Holds All,” is a poem about the different names for the divine. Names are a kind of threshold; a way that specific or new language opens up a door for us to reach through and touch a concept that before was inaccessible to us.

Read “[That Which Holds All](#)” (published as part of a free, Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association worship resource) together with your parenting partner or trusted friend.

Let the silence gather when the reading is complete. Then, if you’re so moved, share some of your own thoughts on naming:

- How do you feel about your own name?
- Is there a story about your child’s name? What thoughts or feelings does your child’s name open in you?
- Whatever your thoughts and feelings on the divine, the Holy, God, what name do you most associate with that concept?
- Have you ever taken the time to count how many times your name for God/the Holy/The Sacred has changed?



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.

Of all the thresholds you’ve gone through lately, what has surprised you most about your own responses?

What is one rite of passage that you wish you hadn’t undertaken as a younger person?

What are you in between right now, having left one stage behind, but not yet fully inhabiting the next stage?

Who or what do you need to learn to love next?

Do you have a story about a less-used room from a home in your childhood, maybe a grandparent’s basement, or family friend’s sun porch, or your own attic?

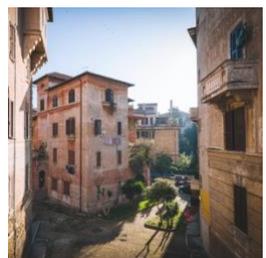
What’s easier for you, hellos or goodbyes? What’s your style of greeting? How do you typically take your leave?

What is a threshold of white supremacy culture that you’ve not yet named? Is it time to walk through that door to the other side?

In what threshold of your life do you wish you had lingered a bit longer, not rushed to go through?

Thinking of your siblings, cousins, or close friends, how has your experience of the thresholds of aging differed from theirs? (How was turning 20/30/40/50, etc. different for you than from your trusted peers?)

What have you come to appreciate about your home in the past few months? What have you come to appreciate about the area just outside your home, your apartment building, your block, your neighborhood, your road, etc.?



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!

Movies with doors, portals, passages, thresholds...

The selection of movies below run from rated G to PG-13. Preview them to be sure they’ll work for your family. In all of them, thresholds featured prominently: sometimes literally--as in Mr. Roger’s door, opening each episode with his entry and greeting, and sometimes figuratively--such as Harriet Tubman’s safe passage for hundreds of people fleeing slavery.

[The Chronicles of Narnia](#), the 2005 movie,
or the 1979 [The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe](#)

Disney’s [Alice in Wonderland](#) (1951) or [Alice Through the Looking Glass](#) (2016)

Disney/Pixar’s [Monsters, Inc.](#) from 2001

2019’s [It’s a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood](#)

2018’s [A Wrinkle in Time](#)

[The Wizard of Oz](#) (1939), [The Great and Powerful Oz](#) (2013), and [The Whiz](#) (1978)

[The Fellowship of the Ring](#), 2001

2019’s [Harriet](#)

[Sliding Doors](#), 1998

[Stardust](#), from 2007

[Interstellar](#), 2014



Blessing

Blessings of warmth and wandering to you this spring, dear families. May your months of diligence and duty drape lightly over your shoulders as you move again from one reality to another, over the thresholds between fear and grief and healing and wellbeing. However yet ahead of us that doorway may be, know that you travel with a family of faith before, behind, and all around you, all of us bearing this passage together into the hopeful unknown.



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/

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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