



Soulful Home

Finding the Sacred in
Our Everyday Spaces

September 2021
Embracing Possibility

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The Welcome Mat

What Does it Mean to be a Family Embracing Possibility?

When our children first come to us, we do nothing but embrace possibility. It seems as if our futures together can hold anything! After a little while, as we get to know our children, and get to know ourselves a bit better, and as our circumstances begin to unfold, we move from the possible to the probable. There's still so much that might happen, but we begin to tell ourselves stories about what is more and less likely to occur. And sometimes, a while after we shift from possible to probable, we land on a version of "This is how it is. This is reality."

There is great value in acceptance as a parent: "I accept my child for exactly the person they are in this moment." That is a beautiful sentiment. But this month, we're going to challenge ourselves to go further: "I accept my child for exactly the person they are in this moment, AND I embrace the possibilities of who they are still discovering themselves to be!" It's about reaching back to our earlier potential-filled days as parents, back to that magical space of expectant surprise, back to that almost electric time of constantly wondering, "What might they become?!"

Speaking of possibilities together, do you tithe, or give a portion of your income each month to an organization that puts your values to work in the world, such as your local Unitarian Universalist church, or an affiliated social justice group such as [Side with Love](#)? Knowing that many of us are on the lookout for additional organizations to support, in each month's From the Mailbox section, we're going to lift up one or two organizations whose work--directly or indirectly--is dismantling white supremacy in North America. Giving them money, when and if you're able, would be a great use for a portion of your monthly tithe. Pooling our resources and supporting good work in the world is one way we embrace possibility together. When we give money, it's like saying, "I believe that the world you are working for is possible, too, and I'm going to help you make it happen."

Yours in our shared embrace of possibility,

Teresa, on behalf of the Soul Matters team



At the Table

Embracing Possibility 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.

Discussion Questions

1. What is possible to do with friends that is not possible to do alone?
2. In the family, who is most likely to take the words, "It's impossible!" as a challenge?
3. What possibility are you looking forward to this coming fall?
4. If your family could host an exchange student from one country, which country would you most like it to be?
5. What's one thing you did today that would not have been possible five years ago?
6. Does having a lot of possible choices about something excite you or stress you out?
7. What makes forgiveness possible between two people, even when they're really mad at one another?
8. The actual working laws of physics aside, which would you rather were possible, being able to control fire, or water?
9. Have you ever seen an animal do "the impossible"?
10. What advice would you give a friend who wanted to do something but was also scared about it and telling themselves, "No, I could never do that"?
11. What other people's efforts made it possible for your family to share the meal you're eating together? [If you don't do your At the Table questions at mealtime, have everyone describe the last meal they ate, and talk about them individually.]

Return to the Discussion Throughout the Week

Thoughts develop with time. So here are some questions to continue your discussion about possibility as the month progresses:

- Are there questions that you would answer differently than you did at first?
- Are there things you want to add to your initial thoughts?
- Did someone say something that made you think your own new thought?
- Did your family discussion lead to similar discussions with friends?



Around the Neighborhood

Around the Neighborhood activities engage families with their surroundings through the lens of the theme. It's about perceiving our well-known world in new ways. As you safely move around your neighborhood during this time of Covid, these suggestions help you transform your everyday backs-and-forths into a family adventure!

Treasure Hunt for Other Possible Ways to Hug!

Ok, it's not completely about hugs, but then again, sort of! Because of the Covid virus, we're all being very careful about hugging, embracing and sharing affection with each other. But that doesn't mean it's impossible to show affection. So this month, for our treasure hunt we're going to look out for and come up with new and creative ways to embrace the possibility of connecting--with each other, with the natural world, with non-human creatures--in ways that minimize our risk, but maximize contact!

1. Find a tree to hug. The Icelandic Forestry Service suggests going a bit off the footpath so that you are less likely to be hugging a tree that another person may have just hugged.
2. Put both hands into a body of water in your neighborhood. A creek or pond would work, but so might a saucer left out in the rain or a puddle. Some studies have shown that sending loving thoughts to the water molecules actually has an effect on them. (Other studies show that it doesn't; this idea has a bit of a mystery to it!)
3. Blow kisses! This even works through a mask.
4. Find family and friend baby pictures! This might mean a hunt through a closet, a rummage through an online archive, or a scroll through a cell phone's picture folders.
5. Learn how the letters I and L and U come together for [this very special sign](#) in American Sign Language, and then use it to connect with a loved one!
6. Leave a secret gift on the porch of a neighbor or friend (Maybe that secret gift can be your drawing of hugging hearts from our Extra Mile section!)
7. Cook up a family secret mission to go do a nice thing for someone you care about, such as weeding their garden.
8. What else can you think of?



From the Mailbox

Our literal mailboxes connect us to the wide world outside, sometimes with messages asking things from us (a donation letter or flyer encouraging us to vote), sometimes with messages offering us gifts (a letter from a friend or a special delivery). Our "From the Mailbox" section applies this metaphor to today's call for families to engage in the work of dismantling white supremacy culture. Together each month, as a Soulful Home community, we open and accept these "invitations" to join some of the many brave, inspiring and wise leaders and organizations who are co-creating a future that is actively anti-racist.

"Non-Zero Probabilities" for older teens and adults

[N.K. Jemisin](#) is a popular and multiple-award winning fantasy and science fiction author whose story, "Non-Zero Probabilities," imagines a section of New York City in which an uncommon run of *suerte*--or luck--makes the improbable happen every day.

Adults, [listen to this story](#) alone, or include older teens; there is some strong language, and a few details leading up to a consensual, safer-sex scene among young adults (a great reinforcement of the ideas presented in *Our Whole Lives 10-12!*). Without spoiling the ending, pay attention to how you feel after hearing the whole story. Where do you find hope? Where do you find acceptance? Where does your faith--or trust--in the Universe and its mysterious workings land?

N.K. Jemisin was part of a weekly writer's group in New York City when she was just starting out. The nonprofit [WNDB--We Need Diverse Books--](#) has a scholarship that support emerging Black authors through funding, workshops, and mentorships. You can check out [their work here](#), and if your means allow, make a donation as part of this month's tithing.



Embracing the Possibility of Anti-Racism

Dr. Ibrahim Kendi, the anti-racism author, professor, and historian, talks about how not being a racist is not enough. He challenges us to go further and become actively anti-racist. From that idea, the nonprofit group [The Conscious Kid](#) made its mission promoting healthy racial identity in kids, and supporting groups, educators, and families who are disrupting racism in today's youth. This group has gone beyond imagining that an anti-racist world might someday exist, and instead is embracing the possibility that an anti-racist world could exist in our lifetime!

Their [Instagram](#) and webpage are excellent places to find ideas and inspiration. And I want to lift up [a particularly inspired fundraising partnership](#) between The Conscious Kid and Andis Foundation, through which they are providing identity-affirming children's books for barbershops, which often function as social and cultural centers in the neighborhoods around them. You can donate to The Conscious Kid [here](#). And as a way to carry this great mission forward, see if you can identify local businesses who might welcome the addition of diverse books in their waiting rooms. Strike up a conversation with the proprietors, and either donate a book yourself, or pool resources with a few friends to do this.



At Play

Embracing Possibility with Play

At Play activities and questions are a way to joyfully, playfully, and imaginatively experience the theme.

Option A: What If?

What if... is a zany word game that embraces possibilities, no matter how odd or mismatched! Read the full description of the game [here](#). The gist is that everyone in your family or group comes up with a “What if...” question and writes it down, then someone else answers the question anonymously (maybe humorously!), and finally questions and answers are mismatched to great comedic effect!

Pair not-yet readers or -writers with confident readers and writers so that everyone can participate fully.

This works well with a group of 4 or more. If your family unit is smaller than that, save this game for when you have someone over for dinner, or are playing together outside, etc.

Option B: Paper Airplanes

Paper airplanes are perfect symbols for embracing possibility. From a simple, common piece of paper comes a joy-producing, gliding machine!

We at Soul Matters have tried the Internet’s panoply of free foldable flyers, and we can tell you [this is our favorite](#) for its combination of simplicity and loooooong glide. Have each family member make one, and then enjoy a contest to see whose goes the farthest! If it’s safe to do so, see if you can launch from a decently high location (top of a park slide? from a treehouse? somewhere higher?!) to make it even more interesting!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PVA2nPU60U>

Bonus: And why not add on a [paper boat project](#) as well?! And remember, you don’t need a river to race your paper boats. Just wait for a rainy day and try it in your street, like this family did: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkPr5j_RJmo



On the Message Board

A Monthly Reminder

The On the Message Board section lifts up a theme-related mantra, graphic, quote, or gesture for your family to carry with them throughout the month. Think of these “family sayings” or “family signs” 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.

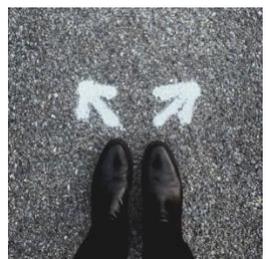
September’s Message: “I have options.”

There are few feelings so unpleasant as helplessness. This month’s message reminds us that in almost all situations, even very difficult ones, we can embrace the possibilities we do have.

When confronted with rudeness, animosity, or aggression, we have options in the ways we respond. Would we want to take deep breaths? State our feelings? Move away and ask a friend to give us support? Tell a teacher or manager? Fight back? Knowing we have options helps us to better claim the one we choose, and afterward assists our psyches in processing and integrating what happened.

If you don’t happen to catch the conflict-in-process that your child is experiencing, you might want to do some role-playing afterward, with you taking on your child’s role in the scenario and speaking the internal dialog out loud: “Hmm. I am really so mad right now, because Max blamed me for something that he did. I have options. I can yell at him. I can push him. I can tell him I feel really angry that he’s blaming me for something I did not do. I can ignore him and tell Ms. Richards that I will help clean it up anyway, but it was definitely Max’s mess. Hmm. Which will I choose?”

This technique works for adults, too. So very few of us muster the “perfect” response in challenging moments. But silently whispering to ourselves that we have options reminds us that we don’t have to react from autopilot mode. We can embrace the possibilities in front of us and respond in a way that we can later feel ok (if still not great!) about.



At the Bedside

At 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 Dragon's Gate

In this month's story, which comes from China, we travel with a little koi fish who imagines bigger and different possibilities for herself. The story is sometimes called The Dragon's Gate. The origin of the story is unknown, though it may once have been a teaching story used to help aspiring members of the imperial government better understand the challenges that awaited them when they took their exams.

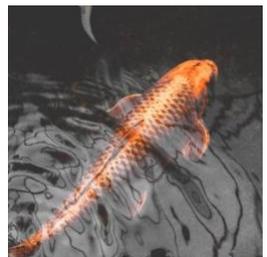
Here is a full-text version online:

<https://www.waldorflibrary.org/journals/15-gateways/234-fallwinter-2003-issue-45-the-dragons-gate>

There is also a version in Margaret Silf's book, [One Hundred Wisdom Stories](#). We have used a couple of stories from this collection in the past, and likely will use a few more, so it's worth buying a copy of this book if you don't already have it.

For Discussion:

- Did you find yourself rooting for the little fish's big effort? Why do you think you felt that way?
- What did you feel when the dragon taunted the plucky little fish?
- When we embrace possibilities, we also leave our old realities behind. What, if anything, do you think the dragon missed about being a fish?
- Not everyone in our lives is always supportive of us when we attempt something big and ambitious. How do you handle discouragement from others? (Note: parents, ponder this question ahead of time and have a story or two handy.)
- If the fish had stayed in their little pond their whole life, and never knew about the waterfall, do you think they would have been happy?



On the Porch

Raising a Child of Story 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 (online or in person) over the soulful parts of parenthood. The “A Sip of Something New” section invites you and your discussion partner to take in a new idea shared by someone else. The “Spiritual Snacks” section stimulates personal storytelling and the sharing of your own wisdom and experience.

A Sip of Something New: “The Possibility of Cognitive Kindness”

Watch this TEDx talk by cognitive psychologist Dr. Karen Yu, “The Possibility of Cognitive Kindness.” In it, she invites the audience to imagine ways to relate compassionately to one another’s *minds*, to help one another free up cognitive resources to engage more fully and enjoyably in their own lives and in our society. We don’t often think about the health of our minds, not to mention protecting that for one another. But it’s definitely worth a consideration. What information is each person trying to process and juggle? How can we help people to think more clearly and efficiently? She asserts that this is a matter of inclusivity, even justice.

This paradigm holds interesting implications for parents. Watch the 18-minute lecture together with your trusted friend or parenting partner, and share first thoughts on how this might impact the ways you interact in your families. Then, write down two things: one, a cognitive kindness that you need in your life, and two, a cognitive kindness that you could offer someone in your close circle of supporters.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4lyZ0df3ks>



Spiritual Snacks to Share

Bring these sentence starters with you when the time comes to hang out with your co-parent or buddies. Don't treat them as a list to go through one by one. Instead pick the one or two that speak to you the most. Treat these sentence starters less as a quiz and more like doorways inviting you into the world of storytelling and memory.

Questions: What the Pandemic Has Made Possible

As adults, we can hold the paradox that blessings and possibilities can exist simultaneous to, and sometimes even because of, great hardships. The fill-in-the-blank questions below acknowledge the complexity of our moment and help us find and share new possibilities even in such trying times.

1. Before last year, I would have never thought I could _____.
2. Last year, I had planned to _____, but I have released/am working on releasing that goal.
3. Something new that I learned my community was capable of was _____.
4. A racial justice possibility that I am hopeful will move forward is _____.
5. My faith made _____ possible for me in the past year.
6. Because of their unique experience of the past year and a half, _____ is now possible for this generation of young people.
7. I think the pandemic has made _____ possible for our society.
8. A pattern that I was able to break free from because of our recent experiences is _____.
9. The possibility for our shared future that I'm most excited about is _____.
10. Parenting during a pandemic made _____ possible for me.



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!

Anything is Possible with Salt Dough

Salt dough is a classic d.i.y. arts and crafts supply. Because the ingredients to make it are common and inexpensive, it’s easy to be wide-open and experimental with what you might do with it.

Below is a good, basic salt dough recipe, but you may already have a favorite, and there are certainly more on the Internet. Make a rainy or too-hot afternoon of salt dough play by clearing off a surface, and simply setting out the dough (in a covered container--it dries out quickly) along with some household items that would make cutting and shaping more fun. Be the first one to sit down and play. Your company is like a magic ingredient that makes everything more fun!

4 cups all-purpose white flour
1 cup salt
1 ½ cup warm water

Add the salt to the flour in a large bowl, then slowly add the water. Mix with a large spoon until it’s too hard to work, then knead with your hands, or use the dough hook on a stand mixer. Knead until the dough is smooth.

Gather utensils and objects that might impart interesting textures. Forks, pieces of window screen, toothpicks, sturdy plant sprigs such as cedar or pine, cookie cutters, old brushes or combs, etc.

Hugging Hearts

[This simple drawing tutorial](#) results in an undeniably adorable duo in a sweet embrace! And [Art for Kids Hub’s](#) videos make great pictures feel possible for even the most reluctant artists--check them out.



Blessing of Possibility

Bless your perseverance. Bless your hope. Bless your showing up. Bless your wondering. Bless your imagination. Bless your willingness to consider others' experiences. Bless your refusal to dash another's dream. Bless the stubborn voice within that won't let you give up on yourself. Bless your faith that all will be well. And bless your strong, resilient spiritual muscles that engage again and again, even when the world we want to live in seems further and further away. Bless all these parts of you, manifest and in process, for together they make a new way possible, the principled life we dream of for our children, ourselves, and our communities.



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

Credits

Soulful Home packets are prepared by
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