



The Path

Introduction from Soul Matters Collective

What does it mean to live a life of imagination?

“We tend to consider imagination too lightly, forgetting that the life we make, for ourselves individually and for the world as a whole, is shaped and limited only by the perimeters of our imagination. Things are as we imagine them to be, as we imagine them into existence.”

—Thomas Moore, *The Re-enchantment of Everyday Life*

Thomas Moore places imagination at the center of human experience. Our Unitarian Universalist faith agrees. Indeed it places imagination at the center of the theological idea of “salvation.”

So this month, we wrestle with the idea that “Imagination Saves!” As we take a closer look at our lives, we notice that imagination is the thing that helps us break out of self-centeredness and see ourselves as connected to the greater whole. It is what allows us to put ourselves in other people’s shoes and bring empathy and compassion back into our lives. It is what allows us to trust and assume good intentions with others, even when people seem threatening or of ill intent. It is what allows us to – as the saying goes – turn lemons into lemonade. It is what helps us paint the picture of what the world could be and thus inspires us to work for that better world. It helps us paint a picture of what we might become and then lures us toward that goal of a different self and a new life. One of the most precious gifts others give to us is when they use imagination to paint a picture of what’s possible and talk us out of all those negative voices in our heads that tell us “things



What Does It Mean To Live A Life Of Imagination?

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will never change.” All this is a way of saying that when it comes to imagination, we need reminders of how deeply it is woven through the fabric of our lives, even our daily living.

Thus this packet of materials is designed to help us step back and take another look. The exercises will push us to notice how imagination has made us who we are, and in doing so hopefully inspire us to risk acts of imagination more often. Our Questions for Reflection are designed to help us think more deeply about how we might use imagination in a new or better way. And the gift will hopefully be the one that Thomas Moore lifts up: The gift of noticing that nothing is as limited and set in stone as we sometimes believe. To say that, “things are as we imagine them to be,” is an incredible reminder of the power we all have, not only to see that life and we are so much more than we sometimes believe, but that life and we CAN BE so much more than we sometimes imagine.

We have the ability to remind each other that life is so much more than it seems at first blush.

Imagine that!

Self-Care for the Spiritual Journey

When we go deeper into spiritual exploration together and individually, there’s always a chance we will encounter some tender spots in our own spirits and stories. Therefore, it is important, when doing deep spiritual work, to have trusted companions and adequate support on the journey, and to know you are welcome to care for yourself and your spirit along the way, engaging in the theme to the level that’s comfortable for you.



Likewise, please know that we are here to offer support if you find yourself struggling with something surfaced by the monthly theme. Rev. Mara is our first point of contact for pastoral care. She may be able to set up a time to meet you, or refer you to **Andre Mol**, our ministerial intern, caring lay leaders through our **Care Network**, or outside resources. She can be reached at revmara@uusociety.org or 802-862-5630 x. 24.

2016/2017 Themes

- September – Connection
- October – Deep Listening
- November – Hospitality
- December – Expectation
- January – Inheritance
- February – Perception
- March – Imagination
- April – Resistance
- May – Growth
- June – Delight

Seeking Submissions for *The Path*

The Path introduces each month’s spiritual theme, which we then explore in greater depth through our Sunday worship services and other programming. We welcome (and need!) your submissions of readings, stories, videos, books and movies for any of our upcoming themes.

For theme submissions to be included in the relevant edition of *The Path*, please send them no later than one month prior to publication. Do feel free to send materials in for upcoming themes at any point up until the one-month-prior deadline.

This month, we especially welcome submissions on our April and May themes, **Resistance** and **Growth**. Please send them to themecircles@uusociety.org.

How has imagination showed up in your life?

As mentioned in the introduction, we need to remind each other how central imagination is to our lives. So for our spiritual exercise this month, we invite you to reflect on the role imagination has played in your own life. Then, if you are in a Theme Circle, please bring with you a personal story that demonstrates that.

The options below speak to different ways that imagination can make a difference in our lives. They are offered as inspiration to help you remember a particular way imagination has shown up in your life. If none of these fit your unique experience, that's fine. Under each option/category listed below are some video and web links to help you remember a story about imagination that you might have forgotten or overlooked. In addition to bringing one story to your group meeting, you might also consider bringing an object that somehow symbolizes or captures the impact imagination has made on you.

Option A: A Time When Your Imagination Helped You Turn "Junk" into "Music"

For Inspiration:

- Landfill Harmonic: <http://vimeo.com/52711779>
- Rainy Wedding: Three Minute Fiction series on NPR <http://www.npr.org/2012/05/20/153116028/rainy-wedding>

Option B: A Time When Your Imagination Helped Save the World

For Inspiration:

- Gaming can make a better world-TED talk: http://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_gaming_can_make_a_better_world.html
- Fun Theory Case Study: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ihai50diA7o>

Option C: A Time When Your Imagination Expanded Your Heart and Put You in Others' Shoes

For Inspiration:

- Suburban-Homicide: A local Rochester artist imagines what it would look like if the 54 homicides that took place in the city of Rochester occurred in a Rochester suburb instead. <https://heather-layton-aipv.squarespace.com/stories/#/suburban-homicide/>

Option D: How My Mother's Imagination Made Me

For Inspiration:

Sarah Kay: If I should have a daughter ...: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0snNB1yS3IE&feature=relmfu>

Questions for Reflection

As you reflect on these questions, don't feel you need to engage every single one! We invite you to find or two that speak most to you, then let live with it for a while. Don't rush to answers, but let the questions deepen over the course of a few days, allow it to regularly break into your ordinary thoughts. If you are in a Theme Circle, come prepared to share both about your question(s) and the process of engaging them:

1. What does imagination mean to you?
2. Have you become more or less imaginative with age? Many of us feel less connected to our imaginations as adults than we did as children: If that's the case for you, how might you bring some child-like imagination back into your life?
3. Are you more imaginative than you think? Some of us would never dream of describing ourselves as creative or imaginative, yet we nonetheless use our imagination on a daily basis in a variety of ways. What are some of the ways you use your imagination in the course of an average week?
4. Has imagination ever lead you astray?
5. Do you use your imagination to enhance reality or to flee from it?
6. Imagination can allow us to be "artists of our own lives." What comes up for you when you consider yourself as the artist of your life?
7. When you apply imagination to your own future, what emerges? Are there things you imagine for yourself? Are there things you have a hard time imagining?
8. Albert Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." Really? Has this been true for you? Is it the challenge you need to take more seriously?
9. Author, Brenda Veland writes: "So you see, imagination needs noodling — long, inefficient, happy idling, dawdling, and puttering." Might Veland be onto something?

Resources

Definition

im·ag·i·na·tion n.

1. the faculty of imagining, or of forming mental images or concepts of what is not actually present to the senses.
2. the action or process of forming such images or concepts.
3. the faculty of producing ideal creations consistent with reality, as in literature, as distinct from the power of creating illustrative or decorative imagery.

Synonyms: fancy, fantasy, idea, vision

Words for Inspiration

“The most interesting people are the people with the most interesting pictures in their minds.”

- Earl Nightingale

“Our imagination flies -- we are its shadow on the earth.”

- Vladimir Nabokov

"Imagination is a warehouse of facts, with poet and liar in joint ownership."

-Ambrose Bierce

“My deafness has been my greatest blessing. It has saved me from having to listen to reasons why things couldn’t be done.”

-Thomas Edison

"I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells. Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living, it's a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope. Which is what I do, and that enables you to laugh at life's realities."

-Theodore Geisel/Dr. Seuss

“The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease for ever to be able to do it.”

- J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*

“Imagination is more important than knowledge.”

-Albert Einstein, *On Science*

“If you will imagine yourself as coming out of the earth, rather than having been thrown in here from somewhere else, you see that we are the earth, we are the consciousness of the earth. These are the eyes of the earth. And this is the voice of the earth.”

-Joseph Campbell

Resources

“Though I personally will defend the value of bedtime stories to my last gasp, I have learned to value imagination in a much broader sense. Imagination is not only the uniquely human capacity to envision that which is not, and therefore the fount of all invention and innovation. In its arguably most transformative and revelatory capacity, it is the power that enables us to empathize with humans whose experiences we have never shared.”

-J.K Rowling's 2008 Harvard Commencement Address

“If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundation under them.”

-Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

“...if something is there, you can only see it with your eyes open, but if it isn't there, you can see it just as well with your eyes closed. That's why imaginary things are often easier to see than real ones.”

-Norton Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*

"Our problems with unhappiness are rooted in the imagination . . . For instance, we can interpret someone's accidental sharp tone of voice as an unfriendly reaction to ourselves, begin to give that person life in our imagination as someone who doesn't like us, therefore be on the lookout for subsequent evidence of hostility, be ready to interpret everything that happens in that light, and of course ourselves show distrust and unfriendliness in turn, which naturally have their effect on the other person; and so by building this thing up in our imagination we can develop a whole atmosphere and relationship of hostility that may be completely false and unnecessary because it all began from something quite accidental. Similarly, by persistently thinking well of persons, looking for good traits in them, imagining them as pleasant and agreeable, well-disposed toward ourselves, we will enable ourselves to behave in a naturally friendly way to them and elicit friendly responses.”

-Beatrice Bruteau, from *Radical Optimism: Rooting Ourselves in Reality*

"One day Gandhi stepped aboard a train as it started to move, and one of his shoes slipped off and dropped on the tracks. Unable to retrieve it, he calmly took off his other shoe and threw it back along the track to land close to the first. When an amazed passenger asked why he had done that, Gandhi smiled and said, 'The poor man who finds the shoe lying on the track will now have a pair he can use.' With the eyes of his imagination, Gandhi saw a man with bare feet, saw him coming across a lone shoe and desperately searching for the other, and saw the disappointment on his face when he didn't find it; seeing these things, Gandhi did what he could to help."

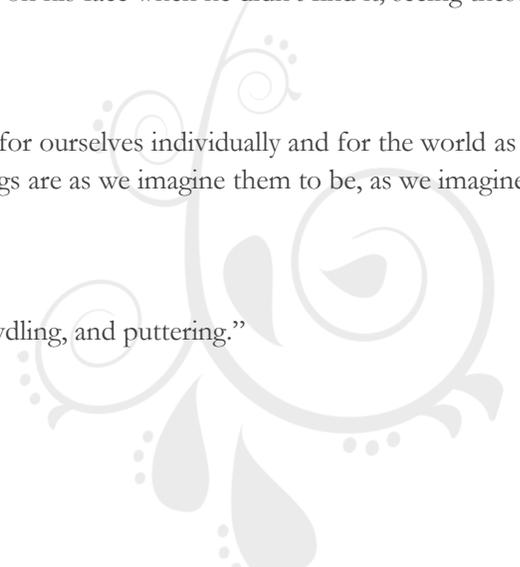
-Donald McCullough, from *Say Please, Say Thank You*

“We tend to consider imagination too lightly, forgetting that the life we make, for ourselves individually and for the world as a whole, is shaped and limited only by the perimeters of our imagination. Things are as we imagine them to be, as we imagine them into existence.”

-Thomas Moore, *The Re-enchantment of Everyday Life*

“So you see, imagination needs noodling — long, inefficient, happy idling, dawdling, and puttering.”

- Brenda Veland



Mixed Media: Articles, Books, Movies, Videos

“Fear and Loss of Imagination”

<http://workingstiffs.blogspot.com/2008/05/fear-and-loss-of-imagination.html>

“Never Underestimate the Value of Imagination — It’s Behind Every Great Idea”

<http://www.bizjournals.com/kansascity/print-edition/2012/12/07/never-underestimate-the-value-of.html?page=all>

J.K Rowling, 2008 Harvard Commencement: “Fringe Benefits of Failure and the Importance of Imagination”

<http://harvardmagazine.com/2008/06/the-fringe-benefits-failure-the-importance-imagination>

Videos

“Imagine a World Without Hate”

By the Anti-Defamation League

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KyvIMJefR4>

“Experience the Walker Library of Human Imagination”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOCqVm2yz2c>

“VW: The Fun Theory Case Study”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ihai50diA7o>

Ted Talk: “Taking Imagination Seriously”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YekkGz1E2k>

“Andrew Bird’s One Man Orchestra of the Imagination,” TED performance

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

“Projected dance: The Grey Ones”

Performance by WIFE at TEDxSoCal

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IZG6qELYgY>

Radio

“How Creativity Works: It’s All in Your Imagination”

NPR, All Things Considered

<http://www.npr.org/2012/03/19/148777350/how-creativity-works-its-all-in-your-imagination>

“What makes people creative? What gives some of us the ability to create work that captivates the eyes, minds and hearts of others? Jonah Lehrer, a writer specializing in neuroscience, addresses that question in his new book, *Imagine: How Creativity Works*.”



Resources

“Sorry for Your Loss”

Three Minute Fiction series on NPR

<http://www.npr.org/2013/03/09/173722517/sorry-for-your-loss>

“Rainy Wedding”

Three Minute Fiction series on NPR

<http://www.npr.org/2012/05/20/153116028/rainy-wedding>

Books

The Phantom Tollbooth

By Norton Juster

A children’s classic exploring the power, danger, and importance of imagination.

Sector 7

By David Weisner

A wordless picture book

“[This] tale...begins with a school trip to the Empire State Building. There a boy makes friends with a mischievous little cloud, who whisks him away to the Cloud Dispatch Center for Sector 7 (the region that includes New York City). The clouds are bored with their everyday shapes, so the boy obligingly starts to sketch some new ones. The wordless yet eloquent account of this unparalleled adventure is a funny, touching story about art, friendship, and the weather, as well as a visual tour de force.”

Hint Fiction: An Anthology of Stories in 25 Words or Fewer

Edited by Robert Swartwood

“The stories in this collection run the gamut from playful to tragic, conservative to experimental, but they all have one thing in common: they are no more than 25 words long. Robert Swartwood was inspired by Ernest Hemingway’s possibly apocryphal six-word story—“For Sale: baby shoes, never worn”—to foster the writing of these incredibly short-short stories. He termed them “hint fiction” because the few chosen words suggest a larger, more complex chain of events. Spare and evocative, these stories prove that a brilliantly honed narrative can be as startling and powerful as a story of traditional length. The 125 gemlike stories in this collection come from such best-selling and award-winning authors as Joyce Carol Oates, Ha Jin, Peter Straub, and James Frey, as well as emerging writers.”

Imagine: How Creativity Works

By Jonah Lehrer

“Did you know that the most creative companies have centralized bathrooms? That brainstorming meetings are a terrible idea? That the color blue can help you double your creative output? From the best-selling author of *How We Decide* comes a sparkling and revelatory look at the new science of creativity. Shattering the myth of muses, higher powers, even creative ‘types,’ Jonah Lehrer demonstrates that creativity is not a single gift possessed by the lucky few...”



The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life

By Twyla Tharp

“All it takes to make creativity a part of your life is the willingness to make it a habit. It is the product of preparation and effort, and is within reach of everyone. Whether you are a painter, musician, businessperson, or simply an individual yearning to put your creativity to use, *The Creative Habit* provides you with thirty-two practical exercises based on the lessons Twyla Tharp has learned in her remarkable thirty-five-year career.”

The Artist's Way

By Julia Cameron

“With the basic principle that creative expression is the natural direction of life, Julia Cameron and Mark Bryan lead you through a comprehensive twelve-week program to recover your creativity from a variety of blocks, including limiting beliefs, fear, self-sabotage, jealousy, guilt, addictions, and other inhibiting forces, replacing them with artistic confidence and productivity. This book links creativity to spirituality by showing how to connect with the creative energies of the universe, and has, in the four years since its publication, spawned a remarkable number of support groups for artists dedicated to practicing the exercises it contains.”

Movies

Life of Pi

“A young man who survives a disaster at sea is hurtled into an epic journey of adventure and discovery. While cast away, he forms an unexpected connection with another survivor: a fearsome Bengal tiger.”

Shakespeare in Love

A beautifully realized tribute to the rush of imagination as one of the great creative forces in the universe.

Finding Neverland

The story of how James Barre came to write Peter Pan. It is a convincing and tender depiction of the ties between imagination, play, and creativity.

The Fall

“In a hospital on the outskirts of 1920s Los Angeles, an injured stuntman begins to tell a fellow patient, a little girl with a broken arm, a fantastic story of five mythical heroes. Thanks to his fractured state of mind and her vivid imagination, the line between fiction and reality blurs as the tale advances.”

Big Fish

“A son tries to learn more about his dying father by reliving stories and myths he told about his life.”

The Never Ending Story

“A troubled boy dives into a wondrous fantasy world through the pages of a mysterious book.”



Use this section to write, doodle, and create!

AHA! Moments



Notes

