



CANADIAN CONSEIL
UNITARIAN UNITARIEN
COUNCIL DU CANADA

The Wise Elders' Circle

A Spiritual Journey



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Table of Contents

The Wise Elders' Circle: A Spiritual Journey	2
Session 1: Welcome & Introduction.....	4
Session 2: Memories	9
Session 3: Loss	12
Session 4a: Becoming and Getting Deeper	15
Session 4b: Power & Becoming	20
Session 5: Service Project (Optional Session).....	22
Appendix A	25
Appendix B	27
Appendix C.....	31
Appendix D	35
Appendix E.....	36



The Wise Elders' Circle: A Spiritual Journey

Introduction

This curriculum is designed to encourage participants and leaders to look at their pasts. Participants will hear similar experiences others have had. Individuals will learn that they share problems in common with many other people. There will be time to share coping skills and learn new skills from others. The hope is that this work will help all involved find their life paths. Finally, participants will have time to honour the values and experiences they have lived.

The curriculum is short, only four to six sessions – depending on how you choose to proceed - to make it as accessible as possible. As leaders you may find you wish to take more time with each topic and therefore spread the curriculum out over eight or twelve sessions. Please feel free to adapt this curriculum as it works for you. The only stipulation is that you conduct at least four sessions as they build on one another and culminate in a special ceremony – that ceremony may be the Croning/Saging Ceremony in session 4a or the closing ceremony in session 4b. You are more than welcome to conduct both sessions 4a and 4b or one and not the other. The last session –the Service Project – is an additional session. This session will most likely require planning followed by execution at a later date. Though, depending on the will of the group, the leaders may plan something that can be executed during a fifth session at the regular time and place of the previous sessions. It may be best to poll the participants during the first session in order to determine whether you will conduct this final session and how you'll conduct it should you choose to do it.

Journalling is an important part of this program. Please make sure you purchase enough journals/notebooks for each participant. Participants ought to bring their journals with them to each session.

Humour

It is important to the creator of this curriculum that humour be used as often as possible throughout the sessions. Many of the topics covered – memories, loss, power – can be big and scary and heavy. It is important to remember that life is full of fun and joy and light as well. Please peruse the light and humourous quotes and images in Appendix C as you're planning the program. We hope you will use as many of these as you like throughout the sessions. And, of course, find your own jokes, humourous stories and cartoons to use as well.

Preparation

Preparation is extremely important for the leaders of this curriculum. Of course, it is almost taken for granted that you will book the appropriate space with your congregation's office administrator, that you'll work with your minister and/or Director of Religious Education (DRE), and you'll have all the necessary equipment on hand for each session. You will probably find it valuable to get a copy of [From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older](#) by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Ronald S. Miller. This is a book that will ground you in the principles of "Sage-ing/Eldering". This is all important preparation. Another type of preparation is also very important – spiritual preparation. As the leaders of this you will have to be grounded, as best you can, in your own being. You ought to have a good understanding of who you are, where you come from (physically, spiritually, etc.), and where you are going. You ought to be aware that many of the topics covered in the curriculum can stir up powerful, and possibly negative, emotions for participants. You may wish to meet with your minister or DRE to discuss the kinds of issues that may come up for participants that you will need to address during and/or following the sessions. If your congregation does not have a minister or DRE please contact your Canadian Unitarian Council regional staff member for help with this. You may wish to meditate or otherwise prepare spiritually for each session.

Learning Objectives

The curriculum as a whole has four overarching learning objectives. Upon completion of this program participants will, or should:

- See themselves as Wise Elders with wisdom to share;
- Have a deeper understanding, respect and appreciation for their life's journey;
- Have a deeper understanding and appreciation for the role Unitarian Universalism plays in their lives and the role they play in their congregation;
- Have made new friendships and deepened existing friendships.



In addition to the general learning objectives, each session has specific learning objectives as well.

- Following Session 1, participants should:
 - Have an understanding of the overall objectives of the program;
 - Begin to develop a sense of what a Wise Elder is.

- Following Session 2, participants should:
 - Understand how life experiences make each person who he/she is today.

- Following Session 3, participants should:
 - Understand how loss has shaped his/her life journey.

- Following Session 4a, participants should:
 - Understand that he/she remains powerful;
 - Understand that he/she is a Wise Elder;
 - Understand what wisdom he/she has to pass on.

- Following Session 4b, participants should:
 - Understand what wisdom he/she has to pass on.
 - Understand the value participating in this program has had in his/her life

- Following Session 5, if you choose to do this session, participants should:
 - Understand that his/her wisdom has value in this community/congregation.

Session 1: Welcome & Introduction		2.5 hours total session time
Preparation	• Gather supplies:	As much time as



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Snacks, coffee, juice○ Chalice, candle, matches○ Decoration (if desired) for chalice's table○ Journals and pens for participants○ Flip chart and markers/white board and markers <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Decorate room/table● Set up flip chart● Set out snacks; put coffee on● Go through session plan together	needed
Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Welcome everyone to the space and the program● It is good that we can all be together for a few sessions to deepen our understanding of what it means to become Wise Elders.	5 minutes
Chalice Lighting & Opening Words	<p>Remind everyone that we are here as Unitarian Universalists. Therefore we will open our session with a chalice lighting and some opening words:</p> <p>We live with much noise in our lives We take this moment to sit in silence.... To give thanks for another day Let us open ourselves here, now To the process of living more fully Of giving and forgiving more freely Of understanding more completely the Meaning of our lives here on this earth. ~ Author unknown</p>	5 minutes
Personal Introductions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Leaders briefly introduce themselves2. Group divides into twos – threes, if necessary<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Each member interviews the other<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Nameii. Birthplaceiii. What makes you laugh?b. Each presents the other to the groupc. Leaders begin the introductions	20 minutes
Introduction to the Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduce learning objectives for the program as a whole:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Upon completion of this program participants will:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. See themselves as Wise Elders with wisdom to shareii. Have a deeper understanding, respect and appreciation for their life's journey	20 minutes



<p>Introduction to the Program (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">iii. Have a deeper understanding and appreciation for the role Unitarian Universalism plays in their lives and the role they play in their congregation.iv. Have made new friendships and deepened existing friendships <p>2. Introduce learning objectives for this session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Have an understanding of the overall objectives of the programb. Begin to develop a sense of what a Wise Elder is <p>3. Introduce program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Sessions<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Give a brief description of the Croning/Saging Ceremonyii. Be clear that the group will have to meet a seventh time to complete the Service Project, even though there are only six sessions<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. The service project can be anything the group wants to do, so can be done at any time. There shouldn't be too much time between planning it and completing it, though.b. Expectations<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. How participants are expected to contributeii. How regular is attendance expected?iii. Etc.c. Participants Expectations for the program<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. List on flip chart/white boardii. Leaders need to be realistic when responding to participants' expectations<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. What cannot be met?2. What may be met over the course of the program?<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Can some expectations be met somehow?3. What will definitely be met?	
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Setting Ground Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examples from which to begin are found in Appendix A	15 minutes
Energy/ Bio Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide snacks, coffee, tea and juice• Ask participants to sign up to provide snacks for the next sessions	15 minutes
How does one become an honoured Elder?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read quotation in <i>From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older</i>, pages 52-53:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. “In some places in the world today, people cherish a wrinkled face and even look forward to their first gray hairs. In the village of Vilacabamba in the Ecuadorian Andes, where people have exceptionally long life spans, some elders exaggerate their age to gain greater respect. In India, men and women look forward to old age as a time to detach from the obligations of work and family life to seek knowledge of the inner Self. The Japanese, who regard old age as a source of prestige, celebrate a national holiday called “Honor the Aged Day”. Native Americans think of their elders as wisdom keepers whose contemplative skills help safeguard tribal survival.”2. Discuss how people become honoured elders.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. All lives are about growth and change and it is important to reflect on how that change can lead to a person's greater knowledge and understanding.b. The group may wish to reflect on how they feel about aging and how their ideas have changed as they have aged.	35 minutes
What wisdom do you have to pass on?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Explain that each session will involve thinking about what wisdom each participant has to pass on.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. These ideas will become part of the Croning/Sageing ceremony and the service project.b. Participants will be asked to share one or more of their pieces of wisdom on paper with the leaders at the end of the fourth session; the leaders will incorporate them into the ceremony for the fifth session.c. Participants may wish to meditate on this question sometime during the week as well as the homework assignment.2. Lead a brief discussion regarding how one might celebrate the wisdom garnered from life and pass it along?	15 minutes



Homework Assignment	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Explain how the homework assignment works for each session<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Participants may be given a small journal in which to do their 'homework'2. Memories<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Ask some questions to get people thinking about memories that are important to them. Memories that shape who they are today.<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. When did you first experience a feeling of independence?ii. What was your first job like?iii. What memories do you have about childhood, teens, and young adulthood?b. Have participants think about these ideas within the culture they were raised; the changes in society during their lifetime and the problems these changes may have created in ageing.c. Ask participants to think about and/or meditate on these important memories sometime during the week. They can keep notes in their journals and bring back their thoughts, impressions and memories to the group next week/session.	15 minutes
Closing Words & Chalice Extinguishing	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In your own words, let everyone know that the formal session is ending and that after the closing words and chalice extinguishing they can stay for about X minutes to chat and have coffee2. Closing Words As we leave this friendly place, Love give light to every face May the kindness which we learn Light our heart till we return	5 minutes
Coffee Time/Home Time		30 – 60 minutes
Leader Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take time to debrief this session• Make notes about what worked well and what you might change or improve• Prepare for the next session• Do this at someone's home or a coffee shop if you can; it will create a different atmosphere and can do wonders to bond the leadership team	As much time as available and necessary



Session 2: Memories		2.5 hours total session time
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather supplies:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Snacks, coffee, juice○ Chalice, candle, matches○ Decoration (if desired) for chalice's table○ Flip chart and markers/white board and markers• Decorate room/table• Set up flip chart• Put coffee on• Go through session plan together	As much time as needed
Welcome	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduce this session<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Learning objective for this session:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Understand how life experiences make each person who he/she is todayb. Go over the plan for the session2. Remind everyone of the covenant to which they agreed last week<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Post it each week, if possible	5 minutes
Chalice Lighting & Opening Words	Each morning we must hold out the Chalice of our being To receive, to carry, and to give back. by Dag Hammarskjold	5 minutes
Check In	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read quotation from Erma Bombeck; ask people to check in with a short sentence about what first came to mind when they heard those words.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. “Maybe age is kinder to us than we think. With my bad eyes, I can't see how bad I look, and with my rotten memory, I have a good excuse for getting out of a lot of stuff.” — <u>Erma Bombeck, <i>Family - The Ties that Bind...And Gag!</i></u>	20 minutes
Activity #1: Sharing from Last Week's Homework & Sharing New Memories	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sharing thoughts from last week's homework assignment;<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Ask the group:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Did this exercise bring up memories you thought were buried deep?ii. Did anyone have a past memory that was a soft and warm memory?iii. Were there any uncomfortable memories?iv. Were there any memories that surprised	30 minutes



<p>Sharing from Last Week's Homework & Sharing New Memories (continued)</p>	<p>you?</p> <p>2. Sharing new memories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Let participants know that they can respond aloud or simply write their reflections to the following questions in their journal:<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Were there times in your lives that were especially meaningful? It could be a personal event, a period of timeii. What is your strongest memory?iii. How did this event make you the person you are now?b. Discuss with Group	
<p>Energy/Bio Break</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide coffee, tea and juice• Snacks provided by group member<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Remind the next person about their responsibility next session	<p>15 minutes</p>
<p>Activity #2: Your Past Shapes Your Future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Divide participants into groups of three, if the group is large enough.2. Within the group of three have the participants choose a personal story from young adulthood, that they are comfortable sharing with their two partners.<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Each small group will choose one story to share with the larger group.3. After each group has shared its story, lead a discussion based on any or all of the following questions. The questions can be posted on a flip chart and participants can choose which question to answer:<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Do you think children of today will have similar memories?b. How do you feel about life changes as you grow older?c. Have you remembered any events in your memories that helped you to become who you are today?d. What made you strong?e. What made you determined?f. What made you proud?g. What wisdom has made this journey easier for you?h. Has being U.U. affected your journey?	<p>60 minutes</p>



What wisdom do you have to pass on?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Instruct each participant to take a few minutes to write in his/her journal one piece of wisdom that he/she would like to pass on based on today's session.2. Remind people that they will have two more opportunities to write down a piece of wisdom during sessions, and they are welcome to write more at home.	5 minutes
Homework Assignment	<p>Harvest and Loss</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ask participants to think about the significant events or highlights in their lives that increased knowledge or changed their life path? Think of some way to illustrate this. It could be a timeline, a picture, a poem or a story. It should be something that reflects some of the strengths or highlights of their life through stories.2. Ask them to include some memories of loss as next week's session is about loss and how loss shapes us.3. Let people know that next week there will be time for art. They are welcome to bring their own art supplies if they choose.4. Remind people that they will have one more opportunity to write down a piece of wisdom during the next session, and they are welcome to write more at home. Next week they'll be asked to share their "best" piece of wisdom on piece of paper to be used in the ceremony in session four	5 minutes
Closing Words & Chalice Extinguishing	<p>As our time together ends May our action match our words May our thought be with love, And warm memories. May we always share and listen to one another's stories.</p>	5 minutes
Coffee Time/Home Time		30 – 60 minutes
Leader Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take time to debrief this session• Make notes about what worked well and what you might change or improve• Prepare for the next session	As much time as available and necessary



Session 3: Loss		2.5 hours total session time
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather supplies:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Snacks, coffee, juice○ Chalice, candle, matches○ Decoration (if desired) for chalice's table○ Art supplies: paints, markers, crayons, scissors, fabric, glue, clay, music (CDs and CD player), colourful paper, magazines, pipe cleaners, wire ...• Decorate room/table• Set up art supplies• Put coffee on• Go through session plan together	As much time as needed
Welcome	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduce this session<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Learning objective for this session:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Understand how loss has shaped his/her journeyb. Go over the plan for the session2. Remind everyone of the covenant to which they agreed<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Post it each week, if possible	5 minutes
Chalice Lighting & Opening Words	<p>"Life Tides" by Elizabeth Tarbox</p> <p>When I see you with worry on your brow and shadows in your eyes, and I say to you, "What's up?" remind me gently that I was not there when you made that journey to the centre of your soul. Tell me as kindly as you can that I am sleeping when night clutches at you and you are driven to a place in your heart which is ever night. Do not let me say, "Don't worry", when worry is all you know and it feels as if worry is all you'll ever know.</p> <p>For none of us ever really walks in another's shoes or knows the innermost rooms of a person's heart. None of us truly knows the lonely places of another's journey or the causes of the lines around another's eyes. Therefore, let us be gentle with one another. Let us listen more than we speak and accept more than we judge. Let us open our outstretched hands to reach and touch that we may walk along together for a little while in friendship and in trust.</p>	5 minutes



Activity #1 Sharing from Last Week's Homework & Thoughts About Loss	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ask participants to share, if comfortable, the picture, story, poem, etcetera they created this week to represent their life story.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. How did losses figure into their life story?2. We have losses all our lives, but it seems that some parts of life are like an era of coping with losses, loss of mobility and flexibility, loss of memory, loss of hearing or smell or sight, loss of loved one, ...and the older you get, the more the losses pile up.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. How do you deal with that? Do you feel less in control of daily life?b. Reflect on the losses that have affected your life or direction?c. How did your family handle loss? Do you feel it would be different in this generation?	50 minutes
Energy/Bio Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide coffee, tea and juice• Snacks provided by group member<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Remind the next person about their responsibility next session	15 minutes
Activity #2 Dealing with Loss through Art	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sometimes strong emotions are best left to the heart. The following activity gives participants the chance to deal with loss in general or one particular loss through art.2. Instruct participants that there are many kinds of art supplies – drawing, painting, sculpting, collage, music for dance – available and they have 60 minutes in which to begin, maybe even finish, an art project that helps them deal with loss.3. Participants are, of course, welcome to take the time to write in their journals also – perhaps they could try more creative style of writing for this exercise.4. If art is not a preferred mode for one or more members of the group allow for a discussion to help those participants explore the topic verbally instead.	60 minutes
What wisdom do you have to pass on?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Instruct each participant to take a few minutes to write on a piece of paper the piece of wisdom they have to offer that is most important to them. Collect these, with their names, they will be incorporated into the Croning/Saging Ceremony.2. Of course, they are more than welcome to continue journaling and writing the wisdom they have to offer.	5 minutes



Homework Assignment	<p>Harvest and Power</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ask participants to finish their art project about loss as part of their homework.2. The second part of the homework is to think and journal about the loss of power, as next week's session is about power:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. In what way does aging lead to loss of power in our society? In what ways have participants personally felt a loss of power as they aged?	5 minutes
Closing Words & Chalice Extinguishing	<p>Go in peace</p> <p>Hold in your heart the certainty That the spirit of life is with you always. when your heart is torn asunder Or when you soar with sweet joy, You are never alone, never apart, From the spirit that resides within us, That guides our lives and cherishes us always. Take comfort. Blessed be.</p> <p>By Enid A. Virago Source: 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection; altered http://www.uua.org/worship/words/closings/submissions/5973.shtml</p>	5 minutes
Coffee Time/Home Time		30 – 60 minutes
Leader Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take time to debrief this session• Make notes about what worked well and what you might change or improve• Prepare for the next session<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ This may take more time as you will be preparing for the Croning/Sageing ceremony	As much time as available and necessary



Session 4a: Becoming and Getting Deeper		2.5 hours total session time
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather supplies:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Snacks, coffee, juice○ Chalice, candle, matches○ Decoration (if desired) for chalice's table○ Oversized index cards (i.e. bigger than 3 x 5) and pens; stamps if you are going to mail the cards to participants in 3 months• Decorate room/table• Set up flip chart• Put coffee on• Go through session plan together	As much time as needed
Welcome	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Learning Objectives<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Understand what wisdom he/she has to pass on.2. Understand the value participating in this program has had in his/her life	5 minutes
Chalice Lighting & Opening Words	<p>#519 in Singing the Living Tradition</p> <p>Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers, But to be fearless in facing them.</p> <p>Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain, But for the heart to conquer it.</p> <p>Let me not look for allies in life's battle-field, But to my own strength.</p> <p>Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved, But hope for the patience to win my freedom.</p> <p>Grant me that I may not be a coward, feeling your mercy in my success alone; But let me find the grasp of your hand in my failure.</p> <p>~ Rabindranath Tagore</p>	5 minutes
Sharing this Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share with the group these quotations from other people about aging: "I seem to have an awful lot of people inside me" -- Dame Edith Evans	60 minutes



<p>Sharing this Experience (continued)</p>	<p>"I want to find out who I am and give up letting everyone else define me".—Judith</p> <p>"Wanna fly, you got to give up the shit that weighs you down" -- Toni Morrison</p> <p>"I create my own prisons. No one else is putting these walls around me"--Michelle</p> <p>"Take your life in your own hands, and what happens? A terrible thing: no one to blame." -- Erica Jong</p> <p>Quotes are from <u>Meditations for Women Who Do Too Much</u> by Anne Wilson Schaef.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask if these quotations resonated with participants. • Explain that each participant will now have the opportunity to share with the group what he/she has experienced through this program and if he/she feels it has enhanced his/her life. Give everyone sometime to gather thoughts. They may wish to go through their journals and find things or write new things. Remember you only have 60 minutes for this activity, so this gathering of thoughts might take only 15 minutes • Take the remaining time to go around the circle and give each participant the opportunity to share aloud what they found most valuable, what feelings they felt most profoundly, how this program has enhanced his/her life, etc. Give everyone the opportunity to pass if he/she doesn't feel comfortable sharing. 	
<p>Energy/Bio Break</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide coffee, tea and juice • Snacks provided by group member 	<p>15 minutes</p>
<p>Wisdom & Positive Affirmation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand out the index cards; ask each person to address it to themselves, like a postcard, on one side • Ask them to turn it over and draw a line down the middle • On one side ask them to write down one positive and/or new thing they learned about themselves over the course of this program • On the other side ask them to respond to the following question: <p style="margin-left: 40px;">"If there was one thing you could teach about life's journey, knowing that it would be truly learned and valued, what would you want that to be?"</p> 	<p>30 minutes</p>



<p>Wisdom & Positive Affirmation (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once people have finished writing introduce the positive affirmation piece with the following words:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wisdom is characterized by deep understanding, keen discernment and a capacity for sound judgements. You may not feel as if you are wise. We may still make mistakes as we experience life. Let's look at the positives we shared in knowing one another.• Give each participant the opportunity to share the one new and/or positive thing they learned about themselves.• Collect the cards from everyone once they have finished writing. Let everyone know you will be mailing them out in three months. This may be a nice reminder of the program and friends and things learned at a time when they may have forgotten about it. Make sure to put stamps on them and put them somewhere you'll remember to mail them to everyone in three months time.	
<p>Meditation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remind participants that they have taken some time over the course of this program to gather memories and stories from their own lives. They have remembered the people who are/were special in their lives, and named the qualities that have inspired them. They have learned from others and from the wisdom that comes from having lived to be elders. Finally they have named the life messages they felt were the most important to pass along. Ask people to have their journals ready as they will be given the opportunity to write• Remember to read the meditation very slowly. Giving each participant enough time to visualize, remember and process each piece of the meditation. Now move into the meditation: <p>Now let us take a moment to reflect on how all these aspects can come together to give us rejuvenation for new beginnings and new strength. This can provide us with some peace and pleasure in our lives.</p> <p>I invite you to close your eyes for a moment. Get yourself into a comfortable position, and take a few cleansing deep breathes, in through your nose and out through your mouth.</p> <p>We are going to take an imaginary journey from this space forward to five years in the future. You have done this before I'm sure, but this time do it using the experiences we have just shared to guide your thoughts.</p> <p>You are enjoying a pleasant summer day.</p>	<p>30 minutes</p>



<p>Meditation (continued)</p>	<p>What joys do you feel? Will you be meeting people of different ages?</p> <p>What will you be working on that brings you joy? Are you sitting in the sun, reading, working, playing, and planning a party? Are you talking with people, teaching someone, listening to music?</p> <p>Are you alone or with friends?</p> <p>Reflect for a few moments on all you have seen and thought about, in the past few minutes. Take a deep breath and open your eyes as you feel ready.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give people the opportunity to write down their thoughts and feelings about the meditation in their journals. • Ask everyone to reflect on the feelings they had during the meditation. Did these feelings lead them to think about goals to pursue or changes to make in their lives? Give time to write these down, too. 	
<p>Closing Words & Chalice Extinguishing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close with the words of Stephen Mitchell • # 669 in Singing the Living Tradition <p>Psalm I Blessed are the man and the woman who have grown beyond their greed and have put an end to their hatred and no longer nourish illusions.</p> <p>But they delight in the way things are and keep their hearts open, day and night.</p> <p>They are like trees planted near flowing rivers, which bear fruit when they are ready.</p> <p>Their leaves will not fall or wither.</p> <p>Everything they do will succeed.~ Stephen Mitchell</p>	
<p>Coffee Time/Home Time</p>		<p>30 – 60 minutes</p>
<p>Leader Time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time to debrief this session 	<p>As much time as available and</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make notes about what worked well and what you might change or improve• Prepare for and do the follow up work necessary to organize the Service Project– if this is something you’ve decided to do.	necessary
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Session 4b: Power & Becoming		2.5 hours total session time
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather supplies:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Snacks, coffee, juice○ Chalice, candle, matches○ Decoration (if desired) for chalice's table○ Flip chart and markers/white board and markers• Decorate room/table• Set up flip chart• Put coffee on• Go through session plan together	As much time as needed
Welcome	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Learning Objectives<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Understand that he/she remains powerful	5 minutes
Chalice Lighting & Opening Words	<p>We are bogged down by the details of life. We are smothered by details. Our bodies fill up with knots of anxiety. Our throats are dry. We would weep, but our eyes have no tears. We could cry out, but we have no passion. Who has done this to us? We confess the pain we cause ourselves. We confess the pain we cause others. May we accept our limitations: We cannot do everything. May we affirm our power: We can do something. May we open ourselves to larger hope, In the silence, in the silence.</p> <p>By Richard F. Boeke Source: 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection http://www.uua.org/worship/words/readings/submissions/5883.shtml</p>	5 minutes
Activity #1 Sharing from Last Week's Homework and Thoughts about Power	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ask participants to share, if comfortable, the work of art they created this week to work through their feelings of loss.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. How much of the loss in their lives involved loss of power?2. In what way does aging lead to loss of power in our society? In what ways have participants personally felt a loss of power as they aged?<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Have you ever had to reclaim your power? How did you do that? Is there anything from that experience that you have kept with you since? Is there anything	50 minutes



	<p>you'd change if you ever have to reclaim your power again?</p> <p>3. Have you ever thought about issues of planning for the future, and decision-making in your life, especially as you experience physical, mental and energy changes? How do we continue to claim our power?</p>	
Energy/Bio Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide coffee, tea and juice• Snacks provided by group member<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Remind the next person about their responsibility next session	15 minutes
Activity #2 Croning/Saging Ceremony	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ceremony is Appendix B	75 minutes
Coffee Time/Home Time		30 – 60 minutes
Leader Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take time to debrief this session• Make notes about what worked well and what you might change or improve• Prepare for the Service Project planning session, if your group has chosen to do this.	As much time as available and necessary



Session 5: Service Project (Optional Session)		2.5 hours total session time
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather supplies:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Snacks, coffee, juice○ Chalice, candle, matches○ Decoration (if desired) for chalice's table○ Flip chart and markers/white board and markers• Decorate room/table• Set up flip chart• Put coffee on• Go through session plan together	As much time as needed
Welcome	2. Learning Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Understand that his/her wisdom has value in this community/congregation	5 minutes
Chalice Lighting & Opening Words	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• #609 in Singing the Living Tradition <p>To Serve the People</p> <p>To worship God is nothing other than to serve the people. It does not need rosaries, prayer carpets, or robes. All peoples are members of the same body, created from one essence. If fate brings suffering to one member The others cannot stay at rest</p> <p>~ Saadi</p>	5 minutes
Planning Service Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In this time the group will either plan the service project it wishes to accomplish in the near future OR this will be time for the first part of the service project the leaders have planned.• Remember to decide early in the program how the group wishes to proceed with this part of the program.• This service project can take on many forms, just remember it is important that it be meaningful to the program participants and meet the learning objectives of the program and this session in particular – Understand that his/her wisdom has value in this community/congregation	60 minutes



<p>Planning Service Project (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be creative! Here are a few suggestions of what this project might be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elders in the group meet with some young people in the congregation to create a visual history of the congregation and/or the city • Elders decorate a room in the congregation's building with words of wisdom – painting, embroidery/cross-stitch, calligraphy, etc. • Elders craft a service for the congregation in which they pass along their wisdom • Elders plant a garden in which there are plaques/wooden signs with words of wisdom • Elders host a coffee house to showcase their talents • Elders volunteer to be mentors to the Coming of Age youth in the congregation; this would be a significant commitment; the fifth session could involve having the DRE and Coming of Age leaders introduce the program and talk about what it means to be a mentor • Elders plan, and then start, an all-ages/multigenerational book club, movie club, social action club, etc. • Anything goes! 	
<p>Energy/Bio Break</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide coffee, tea and juice • Snacks provided by group member 	<p>15 minutes</p>
<p>Planning Service Project</p>		<p>60 minutes</p>
<p>Closing Words & Chalice Extinguishing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # 649 in Singing the Living Tradition <p>From Generation to Generation</p> <p>In a house which becomes a home, one hands down and another takes up the heritage of mind and heart, laughter and tears, musings and deeds. Love, like a carefully loaded ship, crosses the gulf between the generations. Therefore we do not neglect the ceremonies of our passage: when we wed, when we die, and when we are blessed with a child; When we depart and when we return; when we plant</p>	



	<p>and when we harvest. Let us bring up our children. It is not the place of some official to hand to them their heritage. If others impart to our children our knowledge and ideals, they will lose all of us that is wordless and full of wonder. Let us build memories in our children, lest they drag out joyless lives, lest they allow treasures to be lost because they have not been given the keys. We live, not by things, but by the meanings of things. It is needful to transmit the passwords from generation to generation.</p> <p>~ Antoine de St. Exupéry</p>	
Coffee Time/Home Time		30 – 60 minutes
Leader Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take time to debrief this session• Make notes about what worked well and what you might change or improve• Prepare for and do the follow up work necessary to organize the Service Project the group has chosen to do.	As much time as available and necessary



Appendix A

Sample Covenants/Ground Rules for Session One

Sample Covenants – from Small Group Ministry

<http://www.smallgroupministry.net/public/covenants.html>

We each have the right to pass
What is shared here, stays here (confidentiality)
We will share time equally
We will be attentive listeners and not interrupt each other
We will not use this group as a therapy session
We will respect diversity and value our differences
We will remain quiet until all have finished their reflection guides
We will value all questions
We will start and end on time
Anyone is free to take a time out from any of the exercises

We will listen from the heart.
We will speak personally, using "I" statements.
We will speak honestly from the heart.
We will not engage in cross talk.
We will try not to judge others by what they say.
We will allow space for everyone who wishes to speak.
We will be brief.
We will respect the confidentiality of what is shared here
We will listen from the heart.

(Going around the circle, each of us speaks one line)

I will listen with my heart
I will try to speak from my heart.
I have the right to pass.
What is shared here, stays here. I will respect confidentiality.
I will not treat this as group therapy, although our time here may well be therapeutic.
I will not interrupt. I will not give unasked-for advice.
I will share our time together. I will allow space for everyone who wishes to speak.
I will not treat others people's problems lightly.
I will honor the diversity of thought and feeling among us.



I will honor the times for reflection with quietness.
(together)

I will speak from my heart.
I have the right to pass.
I will listen with my heart.

We will listen from the heart.
We will speak honestly from the heart.
We will respect the confidentiality of what is shared here.
We will not interrupt.
We will not give unasked-for advice.
We will not judge others by what they say.
We will not treat others people's problems lightly.
We will honor the diversity of thoughts and feelings.
We will honor the times for reflection with quietness.
We will honor and respect our time together.





Appendix B

Saging/Croning/Eldering Ceremony

Saging/Croning Ceremony – Alternative Title: Eldering Ceremony

Adapted and created from ceremonies conducted by Brandis Purcell, Verna Pollock, and Karl Meyer, all members of the Unitarian Church of Calgary.

Preparation:

- The week before the ceremony, collect from each participant his/her most important piece of wisdom to share with family, friends, congregation, etc; Print each one on cardstock or a piece of fancy paper to be presented during the ceremony.
- Purchase or collect small gifts/tokens for each participant – flowers, stones, leaves, etc. – one per participant should be sufficient. You may wish to have different gifts for the men and the women.
- Ensure you have a candle for each participant (tealights will likely be fine)
- Decorate the space and altar in any way you feel is appropriate; it will likely be best to arrange chairs in a circle around the main altar/table; though it is probably obvious, you will want to make sure you have a chalice with matches. Sometimes we forget the obvious items!
- Ensure you have copies of the songs or hymnals for everyone. And, that you'll have enough light to read them. You may wish to practice the songs before hand, if necessary, so you won't need a musician/pianist. Of course, if you can provide the music, that'll be great!
- You may wish to play music quietly. Karl Meyer suggests some drumming.

Ceremony

- Chalice Lighting
 - “Divine Spark” by Rev. Kathy Huff in *Side by Side: Fulfilling the Dream*

Divine spark from sacred dark,
Symbol of our holy intent,
Illuminate this hour.

- Opening Words

“A man’s age is something impressive, it sums up his life: maturity reached slowly and against many obstacles, illnesses cured, griefs and despairs overcome, and unconscious risks taken; maturity formed through so many desires, hopes, regrets, forgotten things, loves. A man’s age represents a fine cargo of experiences and memories.”
~ Antoine de St. Exupéry
- Opening Chant
 - *Singing the Living Tradition* #389 “Gathered Here”
- “What is a Sage? Who is a Crone?” By Verna Pollock, adapted by Laura McNaughton



What is a Sage?

The sage is a man long lived, and wise in his life experiences.

Who is a Crone?

A crone is a woman long lived, and wise in her life experiences.

Here are gathered the wise men and women.

The wise ones have always known that the gods were made in *their* image.

“Look deeply into these stories be they biblical or myth and legend, and you will find yourself.”

So gentle men and Sages, I honour the divine in you.

Good women and Croness, I honour the divine in you.

- Wisdom to Share

- Notes/Directions

- *Have each person's piece of wisdom on the altar ready to be given during this part of the ceremony.*
 - *Depending on the number of people involved in the ceremony you may wish to say the words to each individual or to the gathered women, then the gathered men (or vice versa).*

Women's Ritual:

Woman of wisdom, woman of age, woman of power, Crone you shall be.

Once you danced in the flowers of springtime, once you felt the first stirrings of womanhood, once you were Maiden, crowned with the flowers of youth.

You grew to strong and passionate womanhood, you nurtured your human family, you went forth into the world and gained knowledge, and gave, and grew. You were Mother, circled by all you cared for.

Now the knowledge and experience of your life has been transformed to wisdom. You have affirmed your desire to accept the responsibility of your age, your wisdom and your power. Do you wish to be recognized as Crone? If so, please answer with “Yes, I do.”

[Individual or group] answers “Yes, I do.”

Men's Ritual:

Man of wisdom, man of age, man of power, Sage you shall be.

Once you danced in the rains of springtime, once you felt the first stirrings of manhood, once you were a Boy, awash in the fountains of youth.

You grew to strong and passionate manhood, you nurtured your human family, you went forth into the world and gained knowledge, and gave, and grew. You were Father, circled by all you cared for.

Now the knowledge and experience of your life has been transformed to wisdom. You have affirmed your desire to accept the responsibility of your age, your wisdom and your power. Do you wish to be recognized as Sage? If so, please answer with “Yes, I do.”

[Individual or group] answers “Yes, I do.”



- Notes/Directions
 - Upon finishing the preceding part of the ritual ask each person, if he/she is comfortable doing so, to state the wisdom he/she wishes to share with the world
 - Allow each person who wants to state his/her wisdom to share
 - Give each participant his/her gift
 - Close by reading this poem

On Self-Knowledge by Kahlil Gibran

*Your hearts know in silence the secrets of the days and the nights.
But your ears thirst for the sound of your heart's knowledge.
You would know in words that which you have always known in thought.
You would touch with your fingers the naked body of your dreams.*

*And it is well you should.
The hidden well-spring of your soul must needs rise and run murmuring to the sea;
And the treasure of your infinite depths would be revealed to your eyes.
But let there be no scales to weigh your unknown treasure;
And seek not the depths of your knowledge with staff or sounding line.
For self is a sea boundless and measureless.*

*Say not, "I have found the truth," but rather, "I have found a truth."
Say not, "I have found the path of the soul." Say rather, "I have met soul
walking upon my path."
For the soul walks upon all paths.
The soul walks not upon a line, neither does it grow like a reed.
The soul unfolds itself like a lotus of countless petals.*

- Power to Accept
 - Notes/Directions
 - This is an excerpt of *From Age-ing to Sage-ing*; it is most of the exercise on pages 283 – 285 "Exercise 11: Acting as an Elder of the Tribe"
 - This can be read as is and include the journaling portion, or simply as a guided meditation. You may wish to adapt it to include references to Unitarian Universalism and/or your congregational community. You may wish to use it as a template and create your own guided meditation leading participants to accept the power and authority of elderhood.

"Like tribal elders of the past, today's spiritual elders are wisdom keepers entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining the well-being of our families and communities. When they serve in the public sphere, elders bear witness to enduring values that transcend shortsighted political partisanship. Motivated by broad cultural and planetary concerns, elders call into question our overreliance on consumerism and our continued assault on the planet's ecological health. Guided by an ecological sensibility they urge us to make political and consumer decisions with the long-term consequences of our actions in mind. Serving as



stewards of the community and the environment, they champion the causes of sane consumption, social justice, and cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. The following exercise will help you get in touch with the sage within yourself who longs to make a contribution in the public sphere. By exercising your responsibility as an elder, you can serve as a leader in rebuilding our fractured communities and in safeguarding the health of our ailing planet Earth.

1. Sit in a comfortable chair and relax body and mind by taking a few deep breaths.
 2. Think back to all the animated conversations you have had with your children, relatives, friends, and colleagues at work in which you voiced solutions to world problems or to problems closer to home. Recall those occasions in which you spoke with such passion and clear-sighted vision that had you been a political leader, you would have inspired people to pursue an enlightened course of action on issues of local, national, or international importance.
 3. Now imagine that you are addressing a Parliament of World Leaders. Standing at the podium, you speak fearlessly and eloquently, expressing your concerns about ecology, world hunger, the deprivation of civil liberties around the globe, religious and political intolerance, or any other issues that deeply move you. Invoking your authority as an elder, rebuke these leaders for failing to serve the interests of the planet and the next seven generations, who may inherit a severely compromised environment and a world divided by political, economic, and religious differences.
 4. Still in touch with your moral and political convictions, open your journal and consider ways in which you can express your wisdom as an elder in the public sphere:
 - a. How can you best serve the planet?
 - b. How can you serve the nation?
 - c. How can you serve the community?
 - d. How can you be of service to your family?
 - e. How can you best serve those who are in the process of becoming elders?[...]"
- Closing Chant
 - #1003 in *Singing the Journey* (teal hymnal) "Where Do We Come From"
 - Closing Words
 - "The reason that they make us all youth-oriented and vain and try to think that if we get old we are of no use anymore is because we get wiser, and they know that. And, when I say 'they' I mean those who are fearful of change. We are getting older, and we are getting wiser, and we are getting freer. And, when you get the wisdom and the truth, the truth, then you get the freedom and you get power, and then look out. Look out."
~ Melissa Etheridge

Appendix C

Humour & Helpful Quotes

This workshop is designed to encourage you to look at your past.

To hear of similar experiences others may have had.

To see you are not the only one who has dealt with problems.

To share your coping skills and hear about other coping skills.

The hope is that this will help us all to clarify the life path we are on. Lastly to allow a time for honouring the values and experiences we have lived.

A fault recognized is half corrected.

Time is like the ocean,

Always there –

Always different.

~ Ogden Nash

Most of today's worries are like puddles:

Tomorrow they will have evaporated.

Worry is a thin steam of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.

~ Arthur S. Roche

Life is made up of many changes;

And no state, be it bright or clouded, will always continue.

~ Spurgeon

"I am like that" does not help anything. "I can be different" does.

You can't alter the course that life takes

You can only later take what you expect from it

Forget things as they once were, accept them as they are.

More Humour & Helpful Quotes

Hail to Hugging

Hugging is Healthy:

It helps the body's immunity system, it keeps you healthier, it cures depression, it reduces stress, it induces sleep, it's invigorating, it's rejuvenating, it has no unpleasant side effects, and hugging is nothing less than a miracle drug.

Hugging is all-natural:

It is organic, naturally sweet, no pesticides, no preservatives, no artificial ingredients and 100 percent wholesome.

Hugging is practically perfect:

There are no movable parts, no batteries to wear out, no periodic checkups, low energy consumption, high energy yield, inflation-proof, non-fattening, no monthly payments, theft-proof, nontaxable, non-polluting and of course, fully returnable.

I'm Special

Open the Skies and I'll soar
To new heights.
Awaken me in the twilight
And I'll turn on the light
Offer me a challenge
And I'll take a chance.
Bless me with Music
And together we'll dance
There is nothing I can't do
When I make up my mind
I'm Special I know it...
I'm one of a kind.

~ Author Unknown

A laugh is like sunshine. It freshens the day

A little laughter will support a person through great fatigue.

Life is hard by the yard but a cinch by the inch.

We should be patient with everyone, but above all with ourselves.

She who laughs, lasts.

Happiness is like jam. You can't spread even a little bit without getting some on yourself.

Take a little time to do whatever makes a happy you.

Most worries are re-runs.

Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face.

~ *Victor Hugo*

You have achieved success if you have lived well, laughed often, and loved much.

~ *Bessie Stanley*

If you can start the day without caffeine,

If you can always be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains,

If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles,

If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it,

If you can understand when your loved ones are too busy to give you any time,

If you can take criticism and blame without resentment,

If you can conquer tension without medical help,

If you can relax without liquor,

If you can sleep without the aid of drugs,

...Then You Are Probably The Family Dog!

Musings

1. I signed up for an exercise class and was told to wear loose fitting clothing. Hell, if I had any loose fitting clothing I wouldn't have signed up for the class in the first place.
2. When I was young we used to go "skinny dipping". Now I call it chunky dunking.
3. Wouldn't it be nice if whenever we messed up our life we could simply press "delete and then copy/paste" to do the really great parts again.
4. My husband says I never listen to him. At least I think that's what he said.



A friend is someone who thinks you're a good egg
even though you're slightly cracked!...Or Sometimes Slightly Scrambled!

May you always have Love to Share,
Health to spare, and Friends who Care.
From your slightly cracked friend.

Snapdragons

I just wanted you to know I have entered the snapdragon part of my life.
Part of me has snapped...
And the rest of me is draggin'!

Send this to the snapdragons you know!
This so positive and there is nothing attached. Let's continue to send this along.
Have a bright sunny day!

To live is to learn
To learn is to live.

Life is not meant to be perfect,
But to be lived.

Recognition of our situation, sometimes frees it from its external forces.

Remember growing older is mandatory,
Growing up is optional.

We make a living by what we get
We make a life by what we give.

Life promises a safe landing.
Not a calm passage.

Old age is not a disease: it is strength and survivorship, triumph over all kinds of vicissitudes and disappointments, trials and illnesses...*Maggie Kuhn US Activist*

The secret to staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly and lie about your age...*Lucille Ball*
I believe every woman, over forty, needs the rejuvenation that a few minutes alone can provide
~ *Sophia Loren*

To know how to grow old is the master-work of wisdom, and one of the most difficult chapters in the great art of living
~ *Henri Frederick Amiel*

We all have our "good old days" tucked away inside our hearts, and we return to them in daydreams like cats to favourite armchairs
~ *Brian Carter*

We need old friends to help us grow old and new friends to help us stay young
~ *Letty Cottin Pogrebin*

Sooner or later we all discover that the important moments in life are not the advertised ones, not the birthdays, the graduations, the weddings not the great goals achieved. The real mile stones are less prepossessing. They come to the door of memory. ~ *Susan B. Anthony*

Appendix D

Program Evaluation

Please add your own comments to the questions listed:

1. Overall did you find the workshop helpful?

2. Did you find the content relevant, helpful?

3. Did you find the facilitators responsive, sensitive to participants' needs?

4. Was the space satisfactory?

Appendix E

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