



Soulful Home

Finding the Sacred in
Everyday Spaces



Transformation

March 2024

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The Welcome Mat

Exploring the Gift of Transformation

I remember sitting in a history class years and years ago and hearing a term that instantly struck a chord in my heart. The term was Velvet Revolution. The lecture was about the peaceful transition of power from a communist government to a democratic one in Czechoslovakia in 1989, but the potential of that idea took residence in my heart as a possibility I had never formerly considered. A massive transfer of power, the cessation of nearly 50 years of status quo, a move of faith in what may lie ahead, certainties entirely absent, done nonviolently?!

When I pray for us, this is what I pray for: a velvet revolution of our society, a velvet revolution in our communities, a velvet revolution in our homes, even small, quiet velvet revolutions in our own psyches, changes that are durable and beautiful and yet, soft to the touch.

In the science of behavior change, it's believed that those who want to make a change will have an easier time swapping one habit for another or linking a new habit with an existing habit than trying to pick up a new habit cold. For example, if you want to stay in better touch with your friends, you might link it up with the habit of washing the dishes after dinner, using that last dish as your cue to text a hello or call for a quick check-in. The idea is that we humans are built for patterns, and it often feels more natural for us to continue a pattern than to veer off in a different direction. In other words, when we want or need to transform some aspect of ourselves, we'd do well to work with what we've got, first.

We'll leverage this power of patterns together this month as we explore transformation. Maybe you are one who is likely to feel overwhelmed by everything you see that's wrong with yourself, your families, your communities, our shared world. Maybe you feel stuck, or powerless to create something different. Or, maybe you are one who worked really, really hard to adapt to the world as it is, and you're resistant to starting that all over; the familiarity of the status quo—albeit imperfect—can feel inevitable, and like a respite amidst chaos.

Wherever you are on this arc of transformation, pushing or pulling, paralyzed or flailing, entrenched or untethered, know that we are all hurtling through space together, marshaling our small measures of intentionality to define our journey with acts of love and kindness, and with surety that a velvet revolution of soul and society is possible.

Teresa, on behalf of the Soul Matters team



At the Table

Exploring Transformation 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. Did you have an imaginary friend as a young child? If you did, share a story about that friend. If you didn't, describe the kind of imaginary friend you think you would have liked to have.
2. If you had one other form that you could change back and forth into—animal, mineral, or vegetable—what would it be?
3. What's your earliest memory? Do you feel as if you are the same person now as you were then?
4. How could you transform the life of an animal for the better? Have you ever done that?
5. Tell about a time that you surprised yourself with something you didn't know you could say or do.
6. Thinking ahead to the summer, what's something you look forward to year after year when the weather changes and transforms?
7. What does it take to make a big change, like a change to make a country, town or government more fair, or a change to protect the earth from pollution?
8. How would you describe your style? Do you enjoy changing up how you look and present yourself to the world, or do you tend to stick to one kind of expression?
9. What have you changed your mind about recently? (For example, maybe you decided you really are a math person, maybe you now feel that you want to live in the country when you grow up rather than in a city, or maybe you've realized something new about right and wrong.)
10. If you could go back and change something you said or did this past year, what would it be?
11. How has your family transformed in the last few years, or what transformation is right around the corner for you all?

Return to the Discussion Throughout the Week

Thoughts develop with time. Find opportunities to bring up particularly compelling questions again during the month, maybe on walks, rides home, when tucking your child into bed, etc. If thoughts grew or changed, notice together how we are all evolving beings, opening ourselves to new truths and understandings as we live our lives and connect with others.



From the Mailbox

Our “From the Mailbox” section is a monthly postcard to parents from the future world we want to create together. Each “postcard” is an invitation for families to engage in the work of dismantling white supremacy culture, and all the social and environmental harm caused by it. The postcards lift up the life of brave and prescient souls whose work has manifested the Spirit of Love and Justice. They’re meant to *inspire courage, create interest, and give adult caregivers a leaping-off point* to learn more themselves and start rich conversations at home.

This Month’s Postcard: Grace Lee Boggs

Dear Travelers and Homebodies,

I am at a window at the Boggs Center, watching children play in the yard beyond, explaining to a newcomer their imaginative game with copious rules to be sure all is fair, and everyone gets a turn. To my left is a large bedroom-turned-library packed with pamphlets, books, and audiotapes, several of them authored by Grace Lee Boggs and her husband, James Boggs. To my right, a small group of young adults study and discuss a nuance of grassroots organizing. Behind me, a printing machine gently whirs as it churns out posters announcing the revival of a long-dormant workers’ union. Grace Lee Boggs is everywhere here. Transform yourself, and you transform the world, Grace says. Don’t get stuck in old ideas; keep recognizing that reality is changing, and that your ideas have to change, too. Creativity is the key to human liberation. Expand your imagination. Reflect radically. Write and talk to each other to make your ideas as good and true as they can be.

Which of your long-held ideas are you willing to transform? With whom are you willing to be in conversation to transform them?

Love, the Awaiting World

P.S. You can watch a PBS documentary about Grace’s life [here](#), written and directed by another person named Grace Lee (no relation):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DV1YBqANZY8&t=63s>



At Play

Playing Games with Transformation

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

Option A: Freeze! And Change the Scene

[This game](#) is a staple in improv groups. The idea is that you set up a situation, two actors engage, and then a third person yells, “Freeze!,” and jumps in to become one of the two actors, taking over the role.

Play this game when you have a few friends over. The more fully the third actor becomes the role, the funnier and more convincing the scene is! It’s playful and silly, but also allows players to really embody one another’s context.

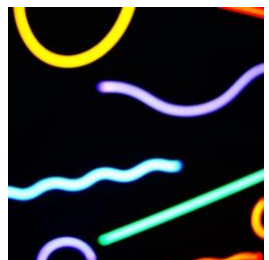
Option B: Add-a-line-each-day drawing

Get a large sheet of good-quality drawing paper, 11x14 or so, if you can find it. (But if not, a blank sheet of office paper will do just fine.) Clear off space right on the front of your refrigerator where everyone can reach and put a jar or box of markers or colored pencils nearby. Start the family off with an artful squiggle or single box or an ambiguous shape. Each morning for a week, each family member will add one more line or element to the picture. The only rule is that each new line or shape has to touch what’s been made already.

For family members who are more likely to add something zany and take the drawing in a totally different direction, encourage them to think about how they can contribute to the whole. For family members who are more likely to get attached to one particular image, encourage them to explore the unexpected. There’s no agenda here, just an opportunity to change and be changed by other members’ contributions!

One variation you might try is assigning each family member a different color so you can see whose addition is whose.

When you’re finished, you might make an activity of adding some details to the final picture, coloring it in and perhaps adding a frame out of cardstock to display again on the fridge in its finished form.



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. Each month, write this mantra on your family message board, or on a sticky note to put on your bathroom mirror, or the fridge. Make it part of your routine to share the mantra each morning so that it becomes something you all carry with you throughout the day.

March’s Mantra:

“As I transform myself,
I transform the world.”

This mantra is a paraphrase from Detroit-based social justice advocate and author Grace Lee Boggs. Lee Boggs’ context for this idea was consciousness raising and paradigm shifting in the realm of social justice; in modern terms, if one can do the work of dismantling white supremacy culture in one’s own psyche, one is then able to act in anti-racist ways in the world, creating ripples of right action beyond them.

So this mantra can be an excellent tool exactly as offered. As we go about breaking down our conditioning and rebuilding our world view based on justice and equity, we can offer these words to both encourage ourselves and offer ourselves grace throughout that very difficult and painful process.

And this mantra extends even farther. The work of raising ourselves is lifelong, and the process of self-acceptance is recursive and unending. Further, the problems of the world are overwhelming in scope and number. Rather than letting ourselves get seduced by navel-gazing, these words move the import of our self-work outward. Rather than becoming paralyzed with the hugeness of the task of making the world a better place, these words remind us that small, personal actions do have an impact.

Teens may be ready for this kind of idea, simplified: the work you’re doing now to build your worldview is important, both for your current self and your current social circle, but also your future self and all the people you’ll encounter along the way.



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.

Babies in the River: Transforming Systems, Not Just Circumstances

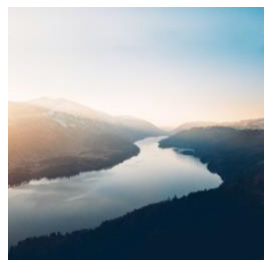
What can one person do? One person can do something very, very powerful. One person can change the conversation. One person can move the question from symptom to source. Doing so lays bare the bad actors who use distraction and obfuscation to keep people from demanding change. Doing so changes systems instead of just current circumstances.

This story is published in the UUA's Tapestry of Faith story collection, and presents an unforgettable narrative about changing the focus, and thus, changing the power of a response:

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/call/workshop1/171686.shtml>

Stretching the Story:

- The story as written puts the onus on the listener to provide the ending. Try a thought experiment where you find the both/and (as many likely will), but also discuss the implications of choosing one strategy over the other. How does that inability to compromise change the feel of the decision? This is a good primer for further conversation about relativistic versus absolutist approaches to problem-solving.
- The ending of the story alludes to the intense and immediate care that all infants need. If a baby isn't already in your child's life, offer to babysit an infant in your social circle to give your child a sense of what kind and how much care babies actually need before you read this story. Also talk about how much change happens from infant and toddlerhood to where your child is now. That will be a powerful personal connection to help the urgency of the story's circumstances translate.



On the Porch

Raising a Child of Transformation Together

On the Porch supports sharing realizations 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) about soulful parenting. The “A Sip of Something New” section invites you to engage 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: A New You (for a little while)

Separately, you and your conversation partner will come up with a list of at least ten activities that are available to you, but that you are very unlikely to do. For example, maybe you don’t really see yourself as the kind of person who would go ziplining, but there is a zip line park nearby, and you don’t have any physical limitations that would prevent you from trying it. So put ziplining on the list.

Bring your list to your set-aside time for this conversation and choose one activity from each list to do together, as mutual support. The point is to create little chinks in the walls that we all build around our identities in order to create more permeability in our senses of self. Trying one new activity is a low-stakes (and maybe even fun?) way to remind ourselves not to take ourselves too seriously, and that our lived experiences to date don’t predict or define our future selves. Remember, this isn’t about listing things you’d like to do or have always wanted to do, but rather, things that you see as “not for you” (but to which you are not morally opposed!).

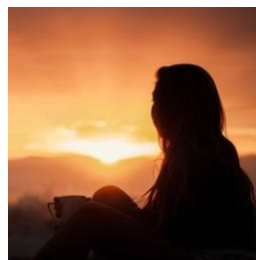


Spiritual Snacks to Share

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

Questions

1. In 3 words, describe how your life has transformed since you turned 18.
2. What pieces of your parenting have you consciously changed from your own experience of being raising to how you raise your child?
3. How do you believe you're perceived by others around you? Do you consciously shape those perceptions, or do you mostly disregard them?
4. How many lives have you lived by this age? In other words, how many different major phases or identities have you experienced? What were the dividing lines between them?
5. Is your child the same person now that you first understood them to be, when they were much younger, or are they turning out very differently up to this point?
6. Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius is attributed with the quote, "Change is the nature of the Universe." How has the consistency of change encouraged and challenged you recently?
7. What were you told as a child when you resisted change or expressed fear of it?
8. What have you learned about the relationship between transformation [and pain](#)?
9. What have you learned about the relationship between transformation and joy?
10. What is the thing in your life about which you tell yourself, "If only I could do this thing, I would feel complete/accomplished/whole/as if I finally fulfilled my potential?" How would your life be different if you felt that way now, just as you are?
11. What part of the transformations that lie ahead—as you move into or further through middle age and elderhood—are you looking forward to, and what part intimidates or saddens you?



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!

Raising Butterflies

This is an involved project, and there is some cost to it, but few symbols so powerfully represent transformation in our collective imagination as the butterfly.

Reach out to your local naturalist association first, to learn if there are local people raising native-to-you species that would benefit from your care and release. But if not, you can find continent-wide species kits [online](#).

If you want to expand your activity to your religious education group at church, you can find butterfly-themed inspiration here, on the UUA’s [Tapestry of Faith](#).



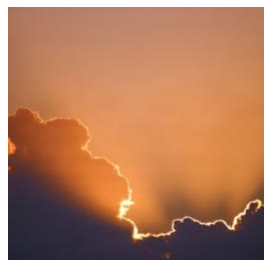
Blessing of Transformation

*You, who are simultaneously exactly who and where you are,
and also in a constant state of becoming and moving,
be blessed, and be a blessing unto others and our shared,
beautiful planet.*

*May you delight in and grow into all the goodness that has shaped
you to date—all those kind words, helpful deeds, favors, bail-outs,
unflinching reflections, hugs, handholds, meals, opportunities,
challenges, and faith in your abilities and in the forces for good in
the world. And may you also be that transformative presence for
the children, youth, age-peers, and other adults in your life.*

*May you release—again and again—that which you’ve left behind
and learned from, accept and appreciate the you that’s here now,
and eagerly anticipate the you that is yet ahead.*

*May the journey change and strengthen you. And may your
travels shape the path for all who come after.*



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 [YouTube](#) music playlist on the monthly theme.

Credits

Soulful Home packets are prepared by
Teresa Youngblood,
Our Soul Matters [Family Ministry Coordinator](#)

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