

Spiritual Deepening Circles: February 2019 – Secrets and Lies

Session 1

Arriving	10 min	10 minutes before starting time
Singing	2 min	Gathered Here Light the chalice
On our hearts	5 min	Each person can say if something is on their heart. Limit 1-2 sentences This is not a time for extended check-in
Gathering reading	3 min	
Connecting Go round	5 min	Propose this question, then one minute of silence. Do you have any secrets? 1-2 sentences answers
Reading	5 min	From Post Secret
Activity Reflecting on Secrets	15 min	Pass out activity instructions. Read front page. <i>Are there any questions? We have as much time as we need for everyone to look at all the cards. We will do this in silence, as we did with the images last month.</i> Distribute cards, circulate. When cards have gone all the way around: <i>Now let's turn over the instruction sheet and read the second part together.</i> Read. <i>We will take 5 minutes to silently consider the questions in preparation for sharing.</i>
Silence	2 min	May use bell or sound, timer or 12 deep breaths
Sharing	45 min	Popcorn style, time limits controlled by facilitators, no dialogue, questions or comments
Silence	2 min	May use bell or sound (or 12 deep breaths)
Responding	10-15 min	Second opportunity for sharing, responding to others, no questions or dialogue. No one speaks twice before everyone who wants to, speaks once.
Take Away	10 min	Go around – one or two words -one thing that you will take away from tonight's session in a few words. For example: what moved you or what insights did you have.
Closing Reading	3 min	
Business	10 min	Final comments by facilitators, reminder of confidentiality and no unsolicited comments/advice. Date of next meeting
Singing	2 min	Trust the Light Within Your Heart Extinguish the chalice

February Secrets and Lies
Session 1 Gathering reading

Snowflakes by Longfellow

Out of the bosom of the Air,
Out of the cloud-folds of her garments shaken,
Over the woodlands brown and bare,
Over the harvest-fields forsaken,
Silent, and soft, and slow
Descends the snow.

even as our cloudy fancies take
Suddenly shape in some divine expression,
Even as the troubled heart doth make
In the white countenance confession,
The troubled sky reveals
The grief it feels.

This is the poem of the air,
Slowly in silent syllables recorded;
this is the secret of despair,
Long in its cloudy bosom hoarded,
now whispered and revealed
to wood and field.

February Secrets and Lies

Session 1 Reading

From the Introduction to PostSecret By Frank Warren

In November 2004 I printed 3,000 postcards inviting people to share a secret with me: something they had never told anyone. I handed out the cards at subway stations, I left them in art galleries, and I slipped them between the pages of library books. Then, slowly, the secrets began to find their way to my mailbox. After several weeks I stopped passing out postcards, but the secrets kept coming. Homemade postcards made from cardboard, old photographs, wedding invitations, and other personal items artfully decorated from all over the world. Some of the secrets were written in Portuguese, French, German, Hebrew and even Braille.

One of the first PostSecrets I received looked like nothing more than a worn postcard filled with two shopping lists. But squeezed into the corner was a soulful admission, "I am still struggling with what I've become." From the clues on this card, I imagined that this person had an internal struggle about sharing the secret. It was so difficult that they tried to use the postcard as a shopping list, twice. But the urge to reconcile with the painful personal truth was so strong that they were ultimately able to find the courage to share it.

As you read these postcards try to imagine the stories behind the personal revelations and to search for the meaning they hold. You may not only be surprised by what you learn about others, but also reminded of your own secrets that have been hiding.

We all have secrets: fears, regrets, hopes, beliefs, fantasies, betrayals, humiliations. We may not always recognize them, but they are a part of us- like the dreams we can't always recall in the morning light. Some of the most beautiful postcards in this collection come from very painful feelings and memories. I believe that each one of us has the ability to discover, share and grow our own dark secrets into something meaningful and beautiful.

Spiritual Deepening Circle
February Secrets and Lies
Session 1 Activity – Part One

We are going to pass around facsimiles of some of the post cards received by Frank Warren in the Post Secret project. These post cards represent actual words and drawing that were sent in.

Each person should start out with 8-15 postcards depending on the size of the circle. As you peruse the post cards, take note of any that you respond to strongly. You are going to choose one or two cards to reflect on more deeply. There are 100 cards, so there should be plenty for each of you to discover. Look through each group of cards, and then pass them to the person on your right – keeping no more than two at any time. If you find another one that is more compelling, keep that one and pass the others on to the next person. At the end you should have looked at most of the cards and chosen one of two for further reflection.

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Session 1 Activity – Part Two

Once the review of cards is complete and you have chosen one of two for reflection, consider the following questions:

How would you describe this card?

What is the secret that the writer is sharing?

What emotions do you feel in response to this card?

How do you relate to the experience of the person in the card?

What would you like to say to the person who created this card?

Why do you think you chose this card for reflection?

February Secrets and Lies
Session 1 Closing Reading

As we depart one from another, let our hearts be secure through every human season.

Let our hearts be secure in seasons of anguish as in seasons of joy, in seasons of failure as in seasons of success, in seasons of uncertainty as in seasons of security.

Let our hearts be secure in this dual reality: we are worthy recipients of love and support we can never earn, and we are worthy providers of love and support others cannot earn.

Let our hearts be secure, for hearts know and understand and will respond if invited in.

James A. Hobart

Spiritual Deepening Circles: February Secrets and Lies

Session 2

Arriving	10 min Before start time	Greet each person
Singing	2 min	Gathered Here Light the chalice
On our hearts	5 min	Each person can say if something is on their heart Limit 1-2 sentences This is not a time for extended check-in
Gathering Reading	3 min	
Connecting Go round	5 min	Propose this question, then one minute of silence. Have you been truthful today? 1-2 sentences
Reading for Reflection	5 min	Mark Nepo
Activity Being true to yourself	10 min	(make sure that everyone has something to write with and something to write on) Tell them that they will have 10 minutes to consider the reflection questions.
Sharing	60 -75 min	Popcorn style, start with one minute of shared silence. Begin with a reminder of the covenant.
Silence	2 min	May use bell or sound, timer or 12 deep breaths
Responding	10 -15 min	(time permitting) Second opportunity for sharing, responding to others. Remind them to focus on their own feelings and experience – no questions or criticisms of others.
Silence	2 min	May use bell or sound, timer or 12 deep breaths
Take Away	5 min	Go around – one or two words -one thing that you will take away from tonight's session in a few words. For example: what moved you or what insights did you have.
Closing reading	3 min	
Business	3 min	Reminder of the covenant; next meeting time.
Singing	2 min	Trust the Light Within Your Heart
		Extinguish the chalice

February Secrets and Lies
Session 2 Gathering reading

Self Portrait

It doesn't interest me if there is one God
or many gods.

I want to know if you belong or feel
abandoned.

If you know despair or can see it in others.
I want to know
if you are prepared to live in the world
with its harsh need
to change you. If you can look back
with firm eyes
saying this is where I stand.

I want to know
if you know
how to melt into that fierce heat of living
falling toward
the center of your longing. I want to know
if you are willing
to live, day by day, with the consequence of love
and the bitter
unwanted passion of your sure defeat.

I have heard, in that fierce embrace, even
the gods speak of God.

– David Whyte

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Session 2 Reading for Reflection

The Way is Hard but Clear

Mark Nepo

The naturalist and environmentalist Kevin Scribner tells us that salmon make their way upstream by bumping repeatedly into blocked pathways until they find where the current is the strongest. Somehow, they know that the unimpeded rush of water means that there is no obstacle there, and so they enter this opening fervently, for though it is the hardest going, the way is clear.

The lesson here is as unnerving as it is helpful. In facing both inner and outer adversities, the passage of truth comes at us with a powerful momentum because it is clear and unimpeded, and so, where we sense the rush of truth is where we must give our all.

As human beings, the blocked pathways of our journeys can take on many forms, and -whether it be in avoiding conflict with others, or in not taking the risk to love, or in not accepting the call of spirit that would have us participate more fully in our days- **it is often easier to butt up continually against these blocked pathways** than to enter fervently the one passage that is so powerfully clear.

In this regard, salmon innately model a healthy persistence by showing us how to keep nosing for the unimpeded way, and once finding it, how to work even harder to make it through.

Some say it is easier for salmon, since the power of their drive to end where they begin is not compromised by the endless considerations that often keep us from the truth. Still, it is the heart's capacity to rise one more time after falling down, no matter how bruised, that verifies that such a drive lives in us too. Like salmon, our way depends not just on facing things head on, but in moving our whole being through.

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Session 2: Questions for reflection

In silence at your own pace, re-read the piece by Mark Nepo.

Consider one or more of the following questions to help frame your sharing:

Have you had a passage in your life where “The way is hard but clear?”

How has avoidance entered your life?

Have you ever “butted continuously against the blocked pathways?”

Reflect on his words, “the passage of truth comes at us with a powerful momentum because it is clear and unimpeded, and so, where we sense the rush of truth is where we must give our all.” Does this passage have any meaning for your life or for choices you have made? What do you think he means by the “rush of truth?”

Have you ever lied to yourself or avoided feelings that may have led you to a truth that you didn’t want to learn?

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Session 2 Closing reading

May the truth that makes us free,
and the hope that never dies,
and the love that casts out all fear
lead us forward together,
'till the day breaks,
and the shadows flee away.