

Reconnecting with Purpose
October, 2021
Program Arc

WEDNESDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20

8:50 Arrival on the Zoom call
9:00 – 11:00 Session I: Welcome, Introductions and Easing In
 Session II: Those Rocks We're Pushing

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

1:00 – 3:30 Session III: The Art of Facing Things

THURSDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 21

9:00 – 11:45 Session IV: Watering the Seeds of True Self

THURSDAY AFTERNOON

1:30 – 4:15 Session V: Reflection on My Project: Triads

FRIDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 22

9:00 – 11:15 Session VI: My Work: What is Apparent Now

Some guidance for online retreating

Because our homes or places of work are filled with reminders of the fullness of our lives, some effort is needed to set aside time for the deeper work that makes it possible for us to slow down and listen at a deeper level than our everyday attentiveness allows.

The guidelines listed here may begin to sound like a list of rules. Please keep in mind, they are listed as ways to help you and others make the most of our retreat time online.

Considerations for Staying “In Retreat”

- Try to arrive 5-10 minutes in advance so that you can settle yourself before the session begins. We will begin promptly and thank you for respecting this.
- Keep retreat time free from other appointments, meetings, discussions, phone calls, texts etc.
- Turn off all other applications and notifications that connect to the web (like Skype, Facebook, texting on your phone, etc.) to get the best connectivity and to avoid the distractions of texts, email, social media, etc.
- To maintain confidentiality of all participants, please find a private space. If this is impossible please use earbuds or headphones.
- Let your family, partner, other housemates, colleagues (or others with whom you share a space) know in advance what you are doing and the quiet reflective time you will require in between calls.
- If your home situation allows, limit contact and discussion with other household members when not online. This can be helpful for you to keep your focus on the retreat experience.
- Make your space comfortable, clear your space of papers. You may want to light a candle, have a view to the outdoors, plant or other special object with you that will help you stay present and attentive to the center of the circle.
- Ensure you have what you need for a comfortable session: location, chair, water, etc.
- If available and safe, locate an outdoor space in advance for possible spaces for reflection and movement when not sitting in the circle. If this is not possible consider bringing items from nature into your meeting space.

First some technical considerations:

Hardware & Software Requirements

- **An Internet connection** – WiFi (a/g/n/ac) or wireless (3G or 4G/LTE) with bandwidths of 600kbps/1.2Mbps (up/down)
 - to test your internet connection speed: <https://fast.com/>, <https://www.spectrum.com/internet/speed-test>, or any other “speed test” you find on Google
- **Webcam** - most laptops, tablets and phones have a webcam built-in, but you can purchase a webcam from any number of online retailers: <https://products.bestreviews.com/best-web-cameras>

- (Optional) Bluetooth wireless speakers and microphone
- **Headphones or earbuds** (optional if you are in a private space; otherwise needed if you are sharing space to assure confidentiality)
- If you join by computer as well as phone, please sync the two by going to your audio settings and selecting “Switch to phone audio” and follow the prompts by dialing the number and inserting the call ID and password.
- You may wish to ‘hide self view’ so you don’t see yourself, which can be distracting. When we are in gallery mode, right click on the three little blue dots in the upper right. A drop down menu will appear, and hide self view is at the bottom.
- If you haven’t spent time on Zoom, given the length of time we will use it for this retreat, you may want to set up a Zoom session for practice.

How to Join a Zoom Meeting: <https://youtu.be/vFhAEoCF7jg>

Zoom Features: During the retreat, here are some additional features that we may be using:

- **Audio Settings and Video settings:** Clicking on the audio settings will help if you are not hearing us correctly. Video settings will help if your video is not enabled.
- **Chat:** Though we will use it minimally, and discourage constant ‘chatting,’ there will be a couple of occasions in which we invite you to use the chat box. Clicking on the chat box will bring up a sidebar to write in questions/comments and read what others are saying. If you must ask a question or make a comment to a facilitator during the circle session, please communicate directly with Violet or Marcia. If your question or comment can wait until after the session, we prefer that, so everyone can remain present and attentive. For the same reason, we discourage you from sending other chat messages during this time beyond when the facilitator invites this with an invitation to ‘speak’ into the chat box. If the chat screen takes up your full computer screen and you can’t navigate to other windows, go up to the very top of your screen to the bar titled “View” and click the little down arrow to the right of that word. Then click “Exit Full Screen” and the chat window will be minimized so you can navigate to other parts of your computer.
- **Screen share:** At times we will share our facilitator screen to show a poem or other handout, though as a general rule, we will invite you to pull those from your packet, so we can see more faces on the screen.

Zoom etiquette

- Please mute when not talking, otherwise background noise will be picked up by the microphone (typing, shuffling papers, dog barking etc).
- Turn off video if you need to stand up or leave the space so your movements or absence are not distracting to the person speaking or those listening.
- Make sure you have good lighting and are not backlit by a window, otherwise your image will be in shadow.

Adapted from Courage & Renewal
Canadian Facilitator Preparation

The Practice of Asking Open & Honest Questions

*Adapted from the work of Parker Palmer, John Morefield,
Marcy Jackson and Susan Kaplan.*

Inspired by the work of Parker J. Palmer and Center for Courage & Renewal (www.couragerenewal.org) Open & Honest Questions are a thoughtful pathway for inquiry and discernment, moving us beyond our normal patterns of communication. Often our questions are laden with advice, problem solving, or meeting our needs to be a “competent leader or engaged Helping Professional.” Open & Honest Questions serve to invite a more spacious, authentic conversation. This practice enables us to:

- Create a more authentic and deeper exploration of a problem or question for both the person talking and the one listening;
- Step away from our tendency to jump to solutions, assign blame, or otherwise approach our exchanges attached to a specific end (teaching with a specific goal in mind, defend what we know, problem solve, or respond as a “good educator” would);
- Invite a person to call upon their own wisdom and knowledge of self. This builds capacity for their own leadership from within by exploring their own assets, truth, questions, and answers, inviting a discovery of their own “hidden wholeness.” A person accesses their inner teacher by thinking about the situation in new ways, applying past learning and experience to now, while listening to both feelings and thoughts.
- Support a deeper inner conversation within oneself;
- Slow down the pace of our conversation and develop a deeper mutual engagement;
- Expand and deepen an exploration rather than narrow or restrict possibilities;
- Explore and “hold” important questions or complicated issues. This practice recognizes significant value in listening without judgment with a view for understanding instead of reacting with a quick, simple or incomplete answer for an immediate direction (that may make things worse in the long run);
- Use meaningful metaphors to reframe or help “step out” of the situation;
- Invite more authentic responses rather than second guessing the “right answer”;
- Changes the dynamic of our tendency to want to fix, “save”, change or give advice. In these responses, we see the person as “broken” or with deficits. Our new role is to create a safe and meaningful process in which we help the person access their own “hidden wholeness”.

Framing Open & Honest Questions

1. The best single hallmark of an open, honest question is that the questioner could not possibly anticipate the answer to it. *What surprises you? What moves or touches you about this? What inspires you? What was easy? What was hard?*
2. Ask questions that aim at helping the person rather than satisfying your curiosity. Ask questions directed to the person as well as to the problem – about feelings as well as facts. *Have you ever had an experience that felt like your current issue? Did you learn anything from that prior experience that feels useful to you now? How do you feel about the experience you just described?*
3. Stay with the person's language --- use words the person is using not what you think they might or should be feeling. *You said this was an impossible situation -- could you say more about what this means to you? What do you mean when you said you felt frustrated? as opposed to Don't you ever feel angry?*
4. Formulate questions that are brief and to the point rather than larding them with background considerations and rationale. *What are your expectations or hopes for your project?*
5. Trust your own intuition, even if your instincts seem off the wall. Listen deeply to the story and allow questions to come from your heart rather than your head.
6. Avoid long storytelling or speech making that may draw attention to yourself.
7. Consider waiting to ask a question if you're not sure what type of question it is. If it keeps coming back to you, see if you can re-frame it into an open-ended question.
8. The best questions are simple. *How does this work for you? What questions do you have? What is the hardest aspect of this situation? What is the easiest aspect of this situation?*
9. Avoid questions with right/wrong answers. Consider re-framing *Don't you think you should do this project instead?* to *What interests you about the other approach?*
10. Use images or metaphors that the person might relate to, to open things up in ways that more direct questions do not. *If you were writing a book about this experience, how would you name this chapter? If you were using a roadmap to navigate this issue, what would be on your map – the rest stops, the destinations, the detours?*
11. Know when to use Open & Honest Questions. These questions are not appropriate for all situations. There is a time to give information, to make a decision and to share your own opinion and experience.



To move slowly and deliberately through the world, attending to one thing at a time, strikes us as radically subversive, even un-American. We cringe from the idea of relinquishing, in any moment, all but one of the infinite possibilities offered us by our culture. Plagued by a highly diffused attention, we give ourselves to everything lightly. That is our poverty. In saying yes to everything, we attend to nothing. One only can love what one stops to observe.

—from *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes* by Belden C. Lane

Perhaps It Would Eventually Erode, But...

That rock that we
have been pushing up
the hill—that one

that keeps rolling back down
and we keep pushing
back up—what if

we stopped? We are not
Sisyphus. This rock
is not a punishment.

It's something we've chosen
to push. Who knows why.
I look at all the names

we once carved into
its sedimentary sides.
How important

I thought they were,
those names. How
I've clung to labels,

who's right, who's wrong,
how I've cared about
who's pushed harder

and who's been slack.
Now all I want
is to let the rock

roll back to where it belongs,
which is wherever it lands,
and you and I could,

imagine!, walk unencumbered,
all the way to the top and
walk and walk and never stop

except to discover what

our hands might do
if for once they were no longer

pushing.

Rosemerry Wahtola
Trommer, © Rosemerry
Wahtola Trommer. From:
the poet's blog, entitled *A
Hundred Falling Veils*.

Session II: Those Rocks We're Pushing: Questions for Reflection

What rock are you pushing hard during this season of your life or work? What of your current work feels like Sisyphus?

To what extent have you chosen to push the rock? What internal conditioning or societal forces fuel the pushing?

What would happen if you stopped? What might emerge? How does the thought of stopping feel?

The Art of Facing Things

Salmon have much to teach us about the art of facing things. In swimming up waterfalls, these remarkable creatures seem to defy gravity. It is an amazing thing to behold. A closer look reveals a wisdom for all beings who want to thrive.

What the salmon somehow know is how to turn their underside—from center to tail—into the powerful current coming at them, which hits them squarely and the impact then launches them out and further up the waterfall; to which their reaction is, again, to turn their underside back into the powerful current that, of course, hits again squarely; and this successive impact launches them further out and up the waterfall. Their leaning into what they face bounces them further and further along their unlikely journey.

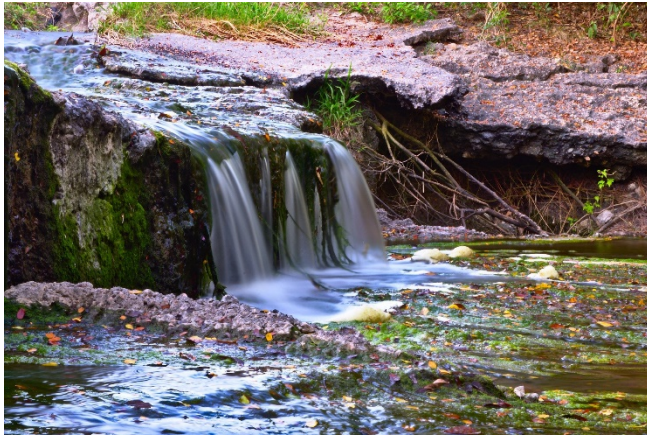
From a distance, it seems magical, as if these mighty fish are flying, conquering their element. In actuality, they are deeply at one with their element, vibrantly and thoroughly engaged in a compelling dance of turning-toward-and-being-hit-squarely that moves them through water and air to the very source of their nature.

In terms useful to the life of the spirit, the salmon are constantly faithful in exposing their underside to the current coming at them. Mysteriously, it is the physics of this courage that enables them to move through life as they know it so directly. We can learn from this very active paradox; for we, too, must be as faithful to living in the open if we are to stay real in the face of our daily experience. In order not to be swept away by what the days bring, we, too, must find a way to lean into the forces that hit us so squarely.

The salmon offer us a way to face truth without shutting down. They show us how leaning into our experience, though we don't like the hit, moves us on. Time and again, though we'd rather turn away, it is the impact of being revealed, through our willingness to be vulnerable, that enables us to experience both the mystery and grace.

From Mark Nepo (2000). *The Book of Awakening: Having the Life You Want by Being Present to the Life You Have*. Berkeley: Conari Press. P. 357-358

Looking into the Under Currents



As we look into the under currents of our lives, we invite you to explore the kinds of experiences and discoveries that represent significant moments in your life that have brought you here, particularly those events in which your identity and integrity were encouraged, tested, or established. It's important to note that these are not only things that relate to the positive and productive events in our lives. Times of change, difficulty or deep questioning are

important currents to explore. They often help us look below the surface to discover our own resources; they can signal the need for movement or transition in our lives.

Instructions:

1. Take a few minutes to "sit" with your life and reflect on the significant choices, events and life experiences that have led you to where you are currently. What are the places and times in your life that you were hit squarely by powerful currents? Let significant people come to mind as well as ideas, insights or discoveries that have been essential to your own self-understanding. See what rises to the top and don't worry about making a coherent narrative.
2. Choose five or six that feel most significant and note them. Remember, this isn't so much a chronology as it is like taking a "snapshot" of what shows up with reflection.
3. Once you've selected several, write a couple of sentences about each one that captures it and also says something about its significance.
4. Now, step back and notice if there are any threads or themes running through them (e.g. how changes have happened in your life; the kinds of strengths, qualities or values that these may have fostered; the kinds of things you care most about).
5. Here in October, as you reflect on aspects of your work that may be draining, what currents are eager to taper off? On the other hand, what new currents are bubbling that feel energizing to you?
 - o What does it feel like?
 - o What it is doing to you?
 - o Where might these new currents be taking you?
6. Finally, from this exercise what have you discovered or learned about where you are currently? See if you can put that into a sentence or two.

EVERYONE HAS A GIFT

by Mark Nepo

Each person is born with a gift. Our call is to find it and care for it. The ultimate purpose of the gift is to exercise the heart into inhabiting its aliveness. For the covenant of life is not just to stay alive, but to stay in our aliveness. And staying in aliveness depends on opening the heart and keeping it open.

Our dreams, goals, and ambitions are all kindling, fuel for the heart to exercise its aliveness, to bring our gift into the world, to discover what matters. Like a match, our light is revealed as our gift strikes against the needs of the world. When my sincerity strikes against yours, our gifts can give off their light.

We drift in and out of knowing our aliveness. Pain, worry, fear, and loss can muffle and confuse us. But finding our gift and working it will bring us back alive. It doesn't matter if we're skillful or clumsy, if we play our gift well or awkwardly, or if we make great strides or fail. Aliveness is not a judge in a talent show. Aliveness shows itself in response to wholeheartedness, when we can say yes to life, and work with what we're given, and stay in relationship—to everything.

Session IV: Birthright Gifts: Questions for Reflection

Think about a time or experience you had as a child in which you were in your element, a time of satisfaction, of competence or joy, or a time when you recognized a “Seed of True Self” coming through you. Was there someone who “saw” you as a child in your uniqueness? How did they describe you? Write a brief paragraph about this time of your life.

Secondly, think of a time when you’ve experienced this as an adult. If you can, think of a recent time related to your experiences in your work or vocation.

After you’ve written your two paragraphs, think about the gifts these brief stories reveal. Try to put these gifts in your own words and look beneath the surface of things. Then notice whether there is any connection in terms of the gifts that appeared in the story of childhood and the story in adulthood.

How are you currently using these gifts in your role as an educator or farm and food system change agent?

What gifts, if any, are you longing to use that you are not currently using in your work?

Reflection Triads Agenda

1:30 – 2:00	Large Group: preparation for lengthier triads.
2:00 – 2:30	Session 1
2:30 – 2:40	Short Break*
2:40 – 3:10	Session 2
3:10 – 3:20	Short Break*
3:20 – 3:50	Session 3
3:50 – 4:00	Short Break*

* Take a 10-minute break and when you come back, switch roles.

Timeframe for each Session:

5 minutes: Speaker describes the project they are interested in.

20 minutes: Others ask questions to help the speaker form their project more fully. No 'larding,' guiding, directing, advising, fixing, please. Our whole aim is to listen and give the speaker much needed room to discern what is most important to assist in this five-month period of 'reconnecting with purpose.'

5 minutes: Closing appreciations and celebrations. Offering appreciation to the speaker for their speaking time.

Guidelines:

- Our whole task is not to problem solve, but to provide space for the speaker to think and reflect on what they would like to do.
- Allow our focus to remain on the speaker.
- Only ask honest and open questions – no sharing of your experience or offering advice.
- Double confidentiality – not only will we never repeat what is spoken of, we will never bring it up. Imagine that someone has shared something confidential about their workplace – we would not casually bring that up at a work event, for example.
- Not about satisfying your own curiosity or putting forward any 'agenda' of your own.

My Work in the Past

My Work as Others See It

My Work as I See it Now

My Work as I Wish it To Be

Session V: My Work: Questions for Reflection

What do the images have to say to you?

What surprises you?

What seems more clear now than it did when we began this retreat?

What do you believe is important as you leave this retreat and re-enter into your work life?

What seems most important to remember when you convene in your Peer Learning Circles to continue your project focus?

Turning To One Another

There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Ask "What's possible?" not "What's wrong?" Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.

Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

Talk to people you know.

Talk to people you don't know.

Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.

Expect to be surprised.

Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what's possible.

Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.

Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don't fear people whose story you know.

Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.

Rely on human goodness. Stay together.

~ Margaret Wheatley, In: Turning to One Another by Margaret Wheatley, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.