

## *"Thank You for Your Loving Hands"*

Thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart, your loving ways—  
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.  
And if you ever doubt yourself, remember us, who love you well—  
We know all the gifts you bring into the world each day.  
So thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart, your loving ways,  
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.  
—by Judy Fjell and Lisa Bregger

## The Covenant

### *I commit myself:*

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent, and to come to the group one last time and say good-bye if I need to quit
- to avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and not tell other people's stories
- to listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn

## Covenant Groups

*Ego*



*People are crying up the rich and variegated plumage of the peacock, and he is himself blushing at the sight of his ugly feet. —SáDi*

# Ego

## *Chalice Lighting*

O light of life,  
Be kindled again in our hearts  
As we meet together  
To celebrate the joy of human community  
Seeking a wholeness that extends beyond ourselves.

—Samuel A. Trumbore

## *Sharing of Joys and Sorrows*

### *Silence*

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

### *Shared Readings:*

Ego is simply an idea of who you are that you carry around with you.

—Wayne Dyer

Having a low opinion of yourself is not “modesty.” It's self-destruction.  
Holding your uniqueness in high regard is not “egotism.” It's a necessary precondition to happiness and success.

—Bobbe Sommer

This is something basic to be understood: the ego must come to a peak, it must be strong, it must have attained an integrity—only then can you dissolve it.

—Osho

The most common ego identifications have to do with possessions, the work you do, social status and recognition, knowledge and education, physical appearance, special abilities, relationships, personal and family history, belief systems, and often political, nationalistic, racial, religious, and other collective identifications. None of these is you.

—Eckhart Tolle

It is the nature of the ego to take, and the nature of the spirit to share.

—Proverb

Modern man believes he is fruitful and productive when his ego is aggressively affirmed, when he is visibly active, and when his action produces obvious results.

—Thomas Merton

All the happiness there is in this world  
Arises from wishing others to be happy.  
And all the suffering there is in this world  
Arises from wishing oneself to be happy

~Shantideva

## *Deep Sharing and Deep Listening*

**Round 1:** Share a few words that convey your understanding of ego.

**Round 2:** Reflect on the idea of ego. How have you nurtured it? When have you needed to rein it in? What other insights do you have on the topic of ego?

**Round 3:** What are a few words that you would like to tell your ego?

## *Closing Words*

Go now in peace.

Deeply regard each other.

Truly listen to each other.

Speak what each of you must speak.

Be ready in any moment to disarm your own heart,  
and always live as if a realm of love had begun.

So be it. Blessed be. Amen.

—Barbara Hamilton-Holway

## *Closing Song*

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

## *Group Business*

Homework for the next meeting.

## Homework: Ego

**ego:** The word ego was originally used by Freud to describe the part of our self that balances the demands of the id (our primitive needs) and the superego (our moral beliefs). The word has found its way into everyday English but with a much less precise meaning. In common usage it has both a positive and a negative connotation. On one hand, it is used to describe *an appropriate pride in oneself or a healthy self-esteem*. On the other hand, it is often applied to mean *an exaggerated sense of self-importance or conceit*. The word is sometimes employed to mean *our identity*; at other times it implies *a superficial sense of self*.

A healthy sense of self is important. It helps us stay centered in what is important to us. It empowers us to make sure our needs are met and to protect us from hurtful people. However, an exaggerated sense of our own significance can isolate us from meaningful contact with others as well as keep us from understanding who we really are. It also can direct us to be concerned only with our own needs and to discount the needs of the community.

As is true with many facets of life, we strive for balance. We need to know ourselves, to value ourselves, and to love ourselves. But we also must be careful not to take ourselves and our needs so seriously that we are unable to form connections with our community and with our deepest inner self.

If egotism means a terrific interest in one's self, egotism is absolutely essential to efficient living.

—Arnold Bennett

If you want to reach a state of bliss, then go beyond your ego and the internal dialogue. Make a decision to relinquish the need to control, the need to be approved, and the need to judge. Those are the three things the ego is doing all the time. It is very important to be aware of them every time they come up.

—Deepak Chopra

There is overwhelming evidence that the higher the level of self-esteem, the more likely one will be to treat others with respect, kindness, and generosity.

—Nathaniel Branden

In every part and corner of our life, to lose oneself is to be the gainer; to forget oneself is to be happy.

—Robert Louise Stevenson

One must learn to love oneself with a wholesome and healthy love, so that one can bear to be with oneself and need not roam.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

Self Esteem is different than conceit. Conceit is the weirdest disease in the world. It makes everyone sick except the one who has it.

—Hartman Rector, Jr.

I fed my ego, but not my soul.

—Yakov Smirnoff

We must be our own before we can be another's.  
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

### *Ideas to Ponder*

- How do you define the word *ego*? In what ways is it possible to have a healthy ego without having an inflated ego?
- Think of the aspects of your life that you are proud of. Which are elements of a healthy self-esteem? Which are signs of conceit?
- When someone criticizes you and you feel a “sting,” how do you tell if it is a feeling of self-protection or of conceit? What do you do about it?
- Think of a time when you lived or worked with someone who had an unhealthy ego. How did it affect you? How did you deal with it?
- When there is a conflict between acting for the good of oneself and for the good of the community, the ego is often involved. How do you balance these conflicting needs?
- Are there parts of your self that are obscured by your ego? If so what can you do to discover and develop them?

## Leader's Guide: Ego

This session focuses on our ego.

### *Chalice Lighting (2 min)*

Ask someone to read the chalice lighting reading found in the bulletin.

O light of life,  
Be kindled again in our hearts  
As we meet together  
To celebrate the joy of human community  
Seeking a wholeness that extends beyond ourselves.  
—Samuel A. Trumbore

### *Sharing of Joys and Sorrows (10 min)*

Give content. Ask group members to tell in one or two sentences, “How you are today?” Share information about absent members.

### *Silence (3 min)*

Give your group the gift of three minutes of silence. Time it!

### *Shared Readings (5 min)*

Give content. Go around your group, letting each person in turn read from the shared readings found in the bulletin until all readings are finished.

### *Deep Sharing and Deep Listening (65 min)*

Do your rounds of deep sharing and deep listening. Pay close attention to the time allotted each person to ensure all get to share at least once.

**Round 1 (10 min):** Share a few words that convey your understanding of ego.

**Round 2 (40 min):** Reflect on the idea of ego. How have you nurtured it? When have you needed to rein it in? What other insights do you have on the topic of ego?

**Round 3 (15 min):** What are a few words that you would like to tell your ego?

### *Closing Words (1 min)*

Read or ask someone to read the closing words.

Go now in peace.  
Deeply regard each other.  
Truly listen to each other.  
Speak what each of you must speak.  
Be ready in any moment to disarm your own heart,  
and always live as if a realm of love had begun.  
So be it. Blessed be. Amen.  
—Barbara Hamilton-Holway

### *Closing Song (1 min)*

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

### *Group Business (5 min)*

Pass out the homework for next time.

