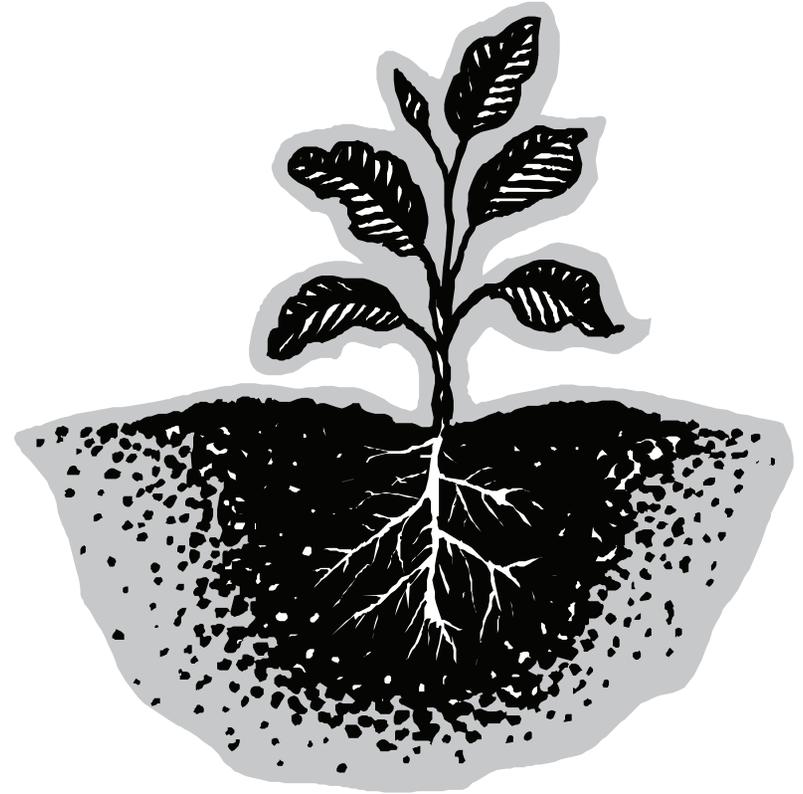


The Covenant

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 goodbye if I need to quit.
- 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 avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- 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.

New Beginnings



New Beginnings

Chalice Lighting

*We gather together in this time of year
knowing that life includes good and bad,
endings and beginnings.*

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings:

*Sometimes when you think you are done, it is just the edge of beginning.
Probably that's why we decide we're done. It's getting too scary. We are
touching down onto something real. It is beyond the point when you
think you are done that often something strong comes out.*

-Natalie Goldberg

*The ultimate wisdom which deals with beginnings, remains locked in a
seed. There it lies, the simplest fact of the universe and at the same time
the one which calls faith rather than reason.*

-Hal Borland

*No mirror ever became iron again;
no bread ever became wheat;
no ripened grape ever became sour fruit.
Mature yourself and be secure
from a change for the worse. Become the Light.*

-Rumi

The beginnings and endings of all human undertakings are untidy.

-John Galsworthy

*There are times to cultivate and create, when you nurture your world
and give birth to new ideas and ventures. There are times of flourishing
and abundance, when life feels in full bloom, energized and expanding.
And there are times of fruition, when things come to an end. They have
reached their climax and must be harvested before they begin to fade.
And finally of course, there are times that are cold, and cutting and
empty, times when the spring of new beginnings seems like a distant
dream. Those rhythms in life are natural events. They weave into one
another as day follows night, bringing, not messages of hope and fear,
but messages of how things are.*

-Chogyam Trungpa

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round I Using Chogyam Trungpa's description of the rhythms of life, describe in just a few sentences where you see your life now.

Round II Share your reflections on the topic of New Beginnings. Use the shared readings in this bulletin or the quotes and questions from the homework if you want.

Round III What have you learned about yourself and New Beginnings?

Group Business

Closing Words

Nourish beginnings, let us nourish beginnings.

*Not all things are blest, but the
seeds of all things are blest.*

The blessing is in the seed.

-Muriel Rukeyser

Song "Go Now in Peace"

Leader's Notes for New Beginnings

Chalice Lighting: (2 min)

We gather together in this time of year
knowing that life includes good and bad,
endings and beginnings.

Sharing of Joys and Concerns: (10 min)

Silence: (3 min)

Give your group the gift of three minutes of silence. Introduce the time of silence with words such as, "Let us hold each other in silent support."

Shared Readings: (5 min)

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

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening:

Round I (15 min)

Using Chogyam Trungpa's description of the rhythms of life, describe in just a few sentences where you see your life now.

Round II (40 min)

Share your reflections on the topic of New Beginnings. Use the shared readings in this bulletin or the quotes and questions from the homework if you want.

Round III (15 min)

What have you learned about yourself and new beginnings?

Group Business: (5 min)

Pass out Q and Q (homework) for next time.

Closing ritual or Closing Words: (2 min)

Nourish beginnings, let us nourish beginnings.
Not all things are blest, but the
seeds of all things are blest.
The blessing is in the seed.
--Muriel Rukeyser

Sing: Go Now in Peace (2 min)

New Beginnings

A new beginning in life can be filled with hope, joy and enthusiasm. There can also be mixed feelings because of an ending that spurred the new beginning. Let's look at some aspects of new beginnings in our lives and discover our experience with them.

There are times to cultivate and create, when you nurture your world and give birth to new ideas and ventures. There are times of flourishing and abundance, when life feels in full bloom, energized and expanding. And there are times of fruition, when things come to an end. They have reached their climax and must be harvested before they begin to fade. And finally of course, there are times that are cold, and cutting and empty, times when the spring of new beginnings seems like a distant dream. Those rhythms in life are natural events. They weave into one another as day follows night, bringing, not messages of hope and fear, but messages of how things are.

Chogyam Trungpa

What we call beginning is often the end and to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from... We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

T. S. Elliot

When there is a start to be made, don't step over! Start where you are.

Edgar Cayce

God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

Reinhold Niebuhr

They must often change, who would be constant in happiness or wisdom. Confucius

1. If you were to give titles, like chapters in a book, to some significant new beginnings in your life so far, what would they be? If those titles included subheadings of an ending, what would they be? List the chapters and subheadings on the back of this paper, if you want.
2. What title might you give the next beginning in your life? Would there be a subheading of an ending? If so, what would it be?
3. Describe your experience starting a new chapter in your life. What were your thoughts, emotions, and actions connected to it?
4. What do the new beginnings in your life have in common? What have you learned about yourself from the big changes in your life? What do you see that remains constant for you in life?