**Soul Matters - Being a People of Awe**

**Eno River UU Fellowship**

**Group Business**

**Chalice Lighting**

**Opening Words**

Awe imbues people with a different sense of themselves, one that is smaller, more humble and part of something larger… Even brief experiences of awe, such as being amid beautiful tall trees, lead people to feel less narcissistic and entitled and more attuned to the common humanity people share with one another. In the great balancing act of our social lives, between the gratification of self-interest and a concern for others, fleeting experiences of awe redefine the self in terms of the collective. [Paul Piff and Dacher Keltner](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/24/opinion/sunday/why-do-we-experience-awe.html?_r=1)

**Check-in** – what was important for you this week

**Topic Introduction**

Not all of us can take a daily trip to the Grand Canyon. Stunning sunrises don’t happen every morning. Clouds and city lights cut us off from nightly views of the stars. Then again there are other moments of awe – witnessing the profound love as a new mother holds her baby for the first time. Another may be witnessing a person speaking truly from the heart, revealing with complete honesty his or her deepest secrets.

Moments of awe enrichen our lives. The difficulty is that what is awe inspiring at first, over time may become the mundane. (adapted from Soul Matters, December)

**Response to the topic with no crosstalk**

1. Has age impeded or assisted awe for you?
2. How as the *location* of awe changed for you over time? Has it shifted from the stars to the woods? From the birth of planets to the birth of your child? From the physical feats your body allows to the storied wrinkles of your hand? What now leaves you most in awe when you look at it?
3. Have you ever sat in the middle of nature and it suddenly came to life? What gift did that experience leave you with?
4. Do you most often complain about your body or stand in awe of it?
5. When was the last time you stood in awe of another person?
6. Can you imagine someone standing in awe of you?

**Open Discussion with crosstalk**

**Closing Words and Chalice Extinguishing**

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. They to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: Their eyes are closed.  [Albert Einstein](https://sciphilos.info/docs_pages/docs_Einstein_fulltext_css.html)

**Likes and wishes**

**Extinguish chalice/chime ringing**

**Extra readings you may wish to include:**

### Word Roots & Definitions

Our expression “awe” is rooted in the Greek word *áchos* which also gives us the word ache. That vastness we experience in awe opens an ache in the heart, and by doing so, expands it.

“Awe is the feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your understanding of the world.”

[Dacher Keltner](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_do_we_feel_awe)

“Awe: An experience of such perceptual vastness you literally have to reconfigure your mental models of the world to assimilate it”

[Nicholas Humphrey](https://www.finerminds.com/consciousness-awareness/awestruck/)

### Wise Words

On the way to the play, we stopped to look at the stars.

I felt in awe.

And then I felt even deeper in awe at this capacity we have to be

in awe about something.

Then I became even more awestruck

at the thought that I was,

in some small way,

a part of that which I was in awe about.

[Lily Tomlin](http://immasmartypants.blogspot.com/2008/03/reclaiming-awe.html)

Seven to eleven is a huge chunk of life, full of dulling and forgetting. It is fabled that we slowly lose the gift of speech with animals, that birds no longer visit our windowsills to converse. As our eyes grow accustomed to sight they armor themselves against wonder.

Leonard Cohen