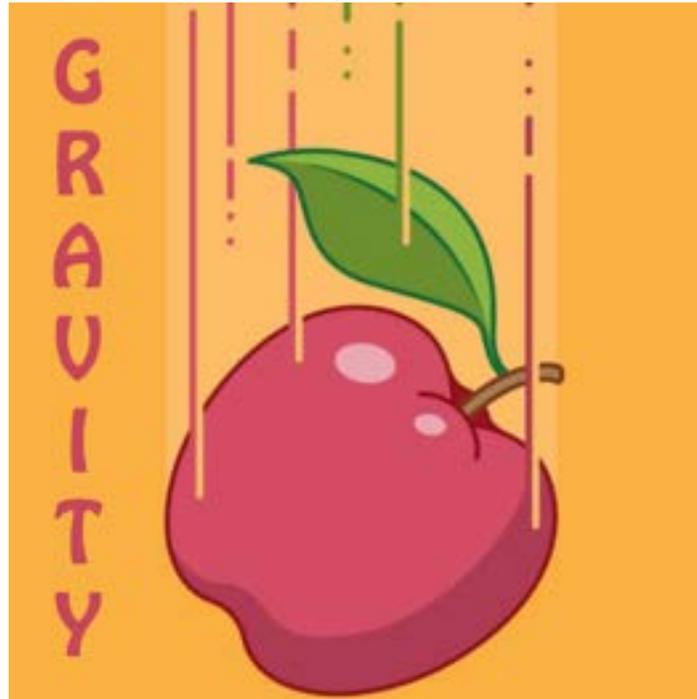


Earth Teacher

U.U. FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
SOCIETY OF BURLINGTON



JOURNALING PROMPTS

- **Wisdom:** What wisdom (caution or inspiration) does this Earth Teacher have to share with me? What do I need to do to be receptive?
- **Resilience:** What does this Earth Teacher have to offer to help me deepen my personal resilience? My community's collective resilience?

QUOTES

“when society is in such upheaval it helps me to remind myself that love is the foundation of everything, love is gravity. when we can’t see and feel it, we must uncover it, open the channels. when it’s this blocked, it can feel like imprecise work to disrupt and peel back and clear off the layers of sediment that have distorted our understanding of everything.” ~ adrienne maree brown

“When sorrow comes for us, we may want to just float. And that can be good medicine. Music, sleep, the shadow worlds of movies or books, might give us some relief for awhile. In the end, though, we are creatures of earth, and we need gravity. We must remain tethered to reality and all the pain it brings, or else float forever in a half-existence.” ~ Amy Morgenstern

“To practice five things under all circumstances constitutes perfect virtue; these five are gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness.” ~ Confucius

“Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, (humans) will have discovered fire.” ~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

JOKES / PUNS

There is no gravity. The earth sucks.

I really don’t like thinking about gravity. *It always brings me down.*

Did you hear about the activist who fought against gravity? *They started an uprising.*

I was reading a book on anti gravity last night. I found it quite difficult to put down.

POETRY

For What Binds Us by Jane Hirshfield

There are names for what binds us:
strong forces, weak forces.

Look around, you can see them:
the skin that forms in a half-empty cup,
nails rusting into the places they join,
joints dovetailed on their own weight.
The way things stay so solidly
wherever they've been set down—
and gravity, scientists say, is weak.

And see how the flesh grows back
across a wound, with a great vehemence,
more strong
than the simple, untested surface before.
There's a name for it on horses,
when it comes back darker and raised: proud flesh,

as all flesh,
is proud of its wounds, wears them
as honors given out after battle,
small triumphs pinned to the chest—

And when two people have loved each other
see how it is like a
scar between their bodies,
stronger, darker, and proud;
how the black cord makes of them a single fabric
that nothing can tear or mend.

☆☆☆

Grounding by Jess Reynolds

On my worst days, it is gravity I am most grateful for: the way the earth pulls at me from her core, yearns for me, keeps me pressed tightly against her surface. When my own core is hollowed out, when I have no more mass than a leaf dead on the branch, still this is enough for the earth to find me. She reaches for what little I have and says, stay.

Every meditation I have ever done begins by asking me to ground myself. This is not so much an action as it is inaction. Surrender. A voluntary abandonment of my own edges and tidy packaging.

Sit with me now. Press the soles of your feet back into the ground you sprang from. Feel the weight of your body and know that it is glorious. You are born of soil and sun, and all the heaviness of the earth is a call to you. The earth is reaching for you. Reach back. Reach back.

☆☆☆

Riding Bareback by Danusha Laméris

We rode all afternoon along the barren creek bed jumping boulders, kicking up dust, clutching the coarse manes. I wrapped my thin thighs around the bulging sides and hung on. It didn't matter there were horse flies, heat, the itch against our legs, the dry grass full of ticks and ready to catch fire. We were ten years old and flying past fields fringed with oak and aspen, held skyward--- the earth, its rough stones and clumps of nettle--- weightless below. For a while, we'd forget our spiral notebooks covered in glittered stickers, the careful shape of the words we etched inside, the sardine can of the yellow bus where boys elbowed us in the ribs, grazing the small cones of our breasts. Whatever it was our fathers drank from the bottles they kept above the sink, whatever our mothers cursed as they soaked the dirty dishes, straightened the sheets,

we were beyond it now, crashing down into the empty creek,
only to lift back up into the summer air.
We were that light, that far outside the laws of gravity.
Nothing could touch us.

☆☆☆

Mysteries, Yes by Mary Oliver

Truly, we live with mysteries too marvelous
to be understood.

How grass can be nourishing in the
mouths of the lambs.
How rivers and stones are forever
in allegiance with gravity
while we ourselves dream of rising.
How two hands touch and the bonds will
never be broken.
How people come, from delight or the
scars of damage,
to the comfort of a poem.

Let me keep my distance, always, from those
who think they have the answers.

Let me keep company always with those who say
“Look!” and laugh in astonishment,
and bow their heads.

☆☆☆

Gravity’s Law by Rainer Maria Rilke

How surely gravity’s law,
strong as an ocean current,
takes hold of even the smallest thing
and pulls it toward the heart of the world.

Each thing—
each stone, blossom, child—
is held in place.

Only we, in our arrogance,
push out beyond what we each belong to
for some empty freedom.
If we surrendered
to earth's intelligence
we could rise up rooted, like trees.

Instead we entangle ourselves
in knots of our own making
and struggle, lonely and confused.

So, like children, we begin again
to learn from the things,
because they are in God's heart;
they have never left [God].

This is what the things can teach us:
to fall,
patiently to trust our heaviness.
Even a bird has to do that
before he can fly.

☆☆☆

black hole by Karen G. Johnston

what if our mortal lives
were like the most elegant aspects,
just recently revealed,
of the black hole
at the center
of our galaxy?
what if the fractal nature of reality
was not mere conjecture,
but empirical truth?
by which I mean,
that macro is micro &
micro is macro.
by which I mean,
that message is method &
method is message.
by which I mean,
that as our lives approach
that point so dense

we cannot fathom it &
thus call it oblivion,
at that point,
our existence burns brightest,
shows itself for what it has always been,
part and particle of vastness
with single collective shape,
warped & wobbly, yet
an unbroken circle.
whole.
perhaps holy.
our small lives,
along with all the other stardust detritus,
essential
for the illumination
of Great Mystery,
even if it
remains beyond
our comprehension,
remains beyond
our grasp,
remains beyond

MUSIC

[“Grace in Gravity”](#) by The Story
[“Rising in Love”](#) by David Roth
[“Defying Gravity”](#) from Wicked the Musical
[“Gravity”](#) by Sara Bareilles
[“Afraid of Heights”](#) by boygenius

MEDITATION

Pascal Fiechter, under the auspices of Gravity Meditation, is an earthling whose art involves rocks in their natural habitat, arranged and re-arranged in ways that play with and against gravity. You can view a [gallery of still images of his work by clicking here](#). Consider these short (2-5 minutes) videos as a focus for meditation/contemplation: [this one](#) or [this one](#) or [this one](#).

This dancer, Yoann Bourgeois, has created this entrancing dance piece using a set of stairs, a trampoline, and gravity. [Watch it](#) as many times as you are drawn, doing so with a meditative intention.

IMAGES FOR CONTEMPLATION



