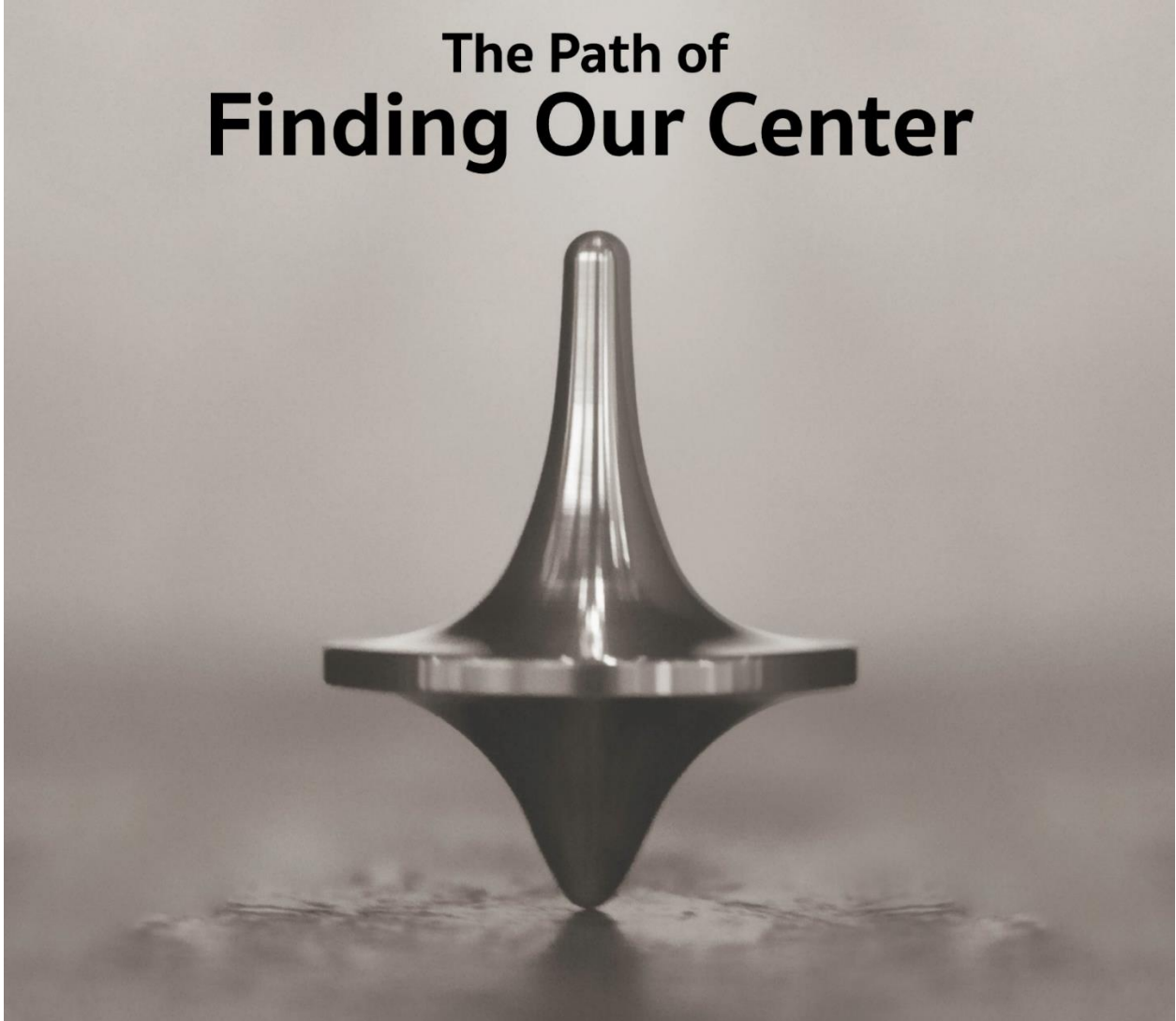


The Path of Finding Our Center



*Inner peace doesn't come from getting what we want, but from remembering who we are.
- Marianne Williamson*

Monthly Theme Resources
January 2023

UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
CHURCH OF
JACKSON



Calendar Connections: January 2023

Month	Seasonal Depression Awareness Month, infographic here Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, infographic here and news here
Jan. 1	New Year's Day The Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln (1863)
Jan. 5	Twelfth Night (Christian)
Jan. 6	Epiphany (Christian) Anniversary of the Attack on the Capitol by election deniers and insurrectionists
Jan. 7	Birthday of Millard Fillmore , Unitarian President (1800) learn more about his contradictions here and here I'm Not Going To Take it Anymore Day
Jan. 15	World Religion Day (Baha'i) - more found here and here
Jan.15 - Feb.14	Thirty Days of Love - Side with Love Campaign https://sidewithlove.org/30daysoflove2023
Jan. 16	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, make connections here and here
Jan. 18	Birthday of Joseph Tuckerman (1778) learn more here
Jan. 21	National Hug Day
Jan. 22	Anniversary of the Rowe vs. Wade decision, learn more here
Jan. 24	Belly Laugh Day , learn more here and here
Jan. 27	International Holocaust (Shoah) Remembrance Day , learn more here and here
Jan. 31	Birthday of Thomas Merton (1915) learn more here and here

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

Word Roots & Definitions

Finding: [Latin](#) pons (genitive *pontis*) “to bridge.”

Center: from [Ancient Greek](#) from Κεντεῖν (Kantian), “to prick, goad,” also “sting of a wasp.”

Related word root – **Amen:** can be [traced](#) to the ancient Egyptian sacred word “ament,” which can be [translated](#) as “the ground of being” or “by the earth on which I stand.” The roots point to the sensation of the earth supporting one from underneath, so they express “I stand on what I have said.”

Wise Words

When someone deeply listens to you,
your bare feet are on the earth
and a beloved land that seemed distant
is now at home within you.
John Fox

We do not become writers... dancers...
musicians...helpers...peacemakers.
We came as such. We are.
Some of us are still catching up to what we
are.

[Clarissa Pinkola Estes](#)

At the center of your being, you have the
answer; you know who you are, and you
know what you want.

Lao Tzu

We all find ourselves bouncing around three
very human lies that we believe about our
identity: I am what I have, I am what I do, and
I am what other people say or think about me.

[Christopher L. Heuertz](#)

It took many years of vomiting up all the filth
I'd been taught about myself, and half-
believed, before I was able to walk on the
earth as though I had a right to be here.

James Baldwin

I believe that deep wisdom resides within each of us. Some call this voice by different sacred names—Spirit, God, Jesus, Allah, Om, Buddha-nature, Waheguru. Others think of this voice as the intuition one hears when in a calm state of mind... Whatever name we choose, listening to our deepest wisdom requires disciplined practice. The loudest voices in the world right now are ones running on the energy of fear, criticism, and cruelty... But I must not lose myself at the feet of others. My most vigilant spiritual practice is finding the seconds of solitude to get quiet enough to hear the Wise Woman in me.

[Valarie Kaur](#)

If one is not faithful to his own individuality, then they cannot be loyal to anything.
Claude McKay

Instead of asking ourselves, 'How can I find security and happiness?' we could ask ourselves, 'Can I touch the center of my pain? Can I sit with suffering, both yours and mine, without trying to make it go away? Can I stay present to the ache of loss or disgrace -- disappointment in all its many forms -- and let it open me?'

Pema Chodron

Inner peace doesn't come from getting what we want, but from remembering who we are.
Marianne Williamson

Here's what I discovered about the Wise Woman [within]: Her voice is quiet... I have to get really quiet in order to hear her. How do I know when I am hearing her voice? She is tender and truthful. She is not afraid of anything or anyone. She does not give me all the answers, but she does know what I need to do in this moment—to wonder, grieve, fight, rage, listen, reimagine, breathe, or push.

[Valarie Kaur](#)

Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.

[Carl Jung](#)

There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the

problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of society, say, or the super-ego, or self-interest. By and large a good rule for finding out is this. The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work that you need most to do and that the world most needs to have done. The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

Frederick Buechner

Not until we are lost do we begin to understand ourselves.

Henry David Thoreau

When the inner walls to your soul are graffitied with advertisements, commercials, and the opinions of everyone who has ever known and labeled you, turning inwards requires nothing less than a major clean-up.

[Dawna Markova](#)

You are the sky.
Everything else -
it's just the weather.

[Pema Chodron](#)

Where you stumble, there lies your treasure. The very cave you are afraid to enter turns out to be the source of what you are looking for. The damned thing in the cave, that was so dreaded, has become the center.

Joseph Campbell

I am still every age that I have been. Because I was once a child, I am always a child. Because I was once a searching adolescent, given to moods and ecstasies, these are still part of me, and always will be... This does not mean that I ought to be trapped or enclosed in any of these ages – the delayed adolescent, the childish adult – but that they are in me to be drawn on... If I can retain a child's awareness and joy, and *be* fifty-one, then I will really learn what it means to be grownup.

[Madeleine L'Engle](#)

You are an aperture through which the universe is looking at and exploring itself.

Alan Watts

If we want to support each other's inner lives, we must remember a simple truth: the human soul does not want to be fixed, it wants simply to be seen and heard. If we want to see and hear a person's soul, there is another truth we must remember: the soul is like a wild animal -- tough, resilient, and yet shy. When we go crashing through the woods shouting for it to come out so we can help it, the soul will stay in hiding. But if we are willing to sit quietly and wait for a while, the soul may show itself.

Parker Palmer

Dear Black America — We are many things, aren't we? We are hair. God yes, we are hair. And song. And memory. We are a language so deep it has no need for words. And we are words that feint, dart, and wheel like birds. Like James Brown, we feel good. Like Fannie Lou Hamer, we are sick and tired. We are fearsome. We are fire. Like God, we are that we are.

Tracy K. Smith

Poetry

The Journey, Mary Oliver

Full poem at

<https://emilyspoetryblog.com/2013/04/09/the-journey-by-mary-oliver/>

"But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice,
which you slowly
recognized as your own..."

Remember. Joy Harjo

Full poem at

<https://poets.org/poem/remember-0>

Remember the sky that you were born
under...
Remember the sun's birth at dawn...
Remember your birth, how your mother
struggled...
Remember the earth whose skin you are...

Remember you are all people and all people
are you...

Videos & Podcasts

Famous, Naomi Shihab Nye

<https://poets.org/poem/famous>

Have the Courage to Stand Alone, Brené
Brown

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_sYCThUQc8

Whirling Dervishes and The Dance that Centers Oneself in the Connection with the Divine

Video of the dance:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28lWYVV5f_4

What's Your Center (Not just for kids!)

From *Rise of the Guardians*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHABdkw8eMg>

Who Am I?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJm2UQHSoV&list=RDCMUCCPPUszZ4-7yzZNgAAYwJjg&index=22>

Live With Intention

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbPWvQW_ISk

Music

Check out these songs about finding center:

- *This Feeling* - Alabama Shakes
- *Unwritten* - Natasha Bedingfield
- *A Maker of My Time* - Paper Kites
- *Finding Home* - Mindy Glendhill
- *Born This Way* - Lady Gaga
- *A Place in this World* - Taylor Swift
- *Sound of Silence* - Simon & Garfunkel
- *Take Me Home Country Roads* - John Denver
- [Return Again](#) covered by Neshama Carlebach
- [Return Again](#) covered by Green Pastures Baptist Church

Each month playlists are organized as a journey of sorts, so consider listening from beginning to end as musical meditations.

- Spotify playlist on [Finding Our Center](#)
- YouTube playlist on [Finding Our Center](#).

Articles

How to Find Your Bliss: Joseph Campbell on What It Takes to Have a Fulfilling Life
<https://www.themarginalian.org/2015/04/09/find-your-bliss-joseph-campbell-power-of-myth/>

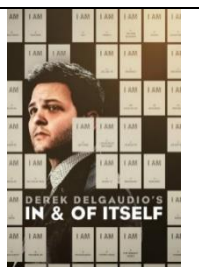

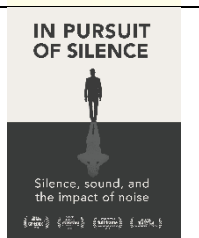
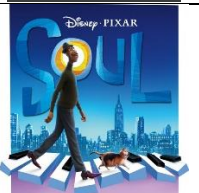
Books

[Journal of Radical Permission: A Daily Guide for Following Your Soul's Calling](#)
[adrienne maree brown](#) & Sonya Renee Taylor

[The Enneagram for Black Liberation: Return to Who You Are Beneath the Armor You Carry](#), Chichi Agorom
 Related podcast found [here](#).

[The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity](#)
A highly praised and radical re-telling of human development that challenges what we've assumed to be the central and driving values of human societies. [Review](#)

Movies

<p>In & Of Itself: A new kind of lyric poem, storyteller and conceptual magician Derek DelGaudio fights to see through the illusion of his own identity, only to discover that identity itself is an illusion. An intimate and powerful exploration of what it means to be and be seen, the film chronicles Derek DelGaudio's attempt to answer one deceptively simple question, "Who am I?" His personal journey expands to a collective experience that forces us to confront the boundaries of our own identities.</p>	
<p>Puzzle: A closely observed portrait of Agnes, a woman in her early 40s who has never ventured far from home, family, or the tight-knit immigrant community in which she was raised by her widowed father. That begins to change in a quietly dramatic fashion when Agnes receives a jigsaw puzzle as a birthday gift and experiences the heady thrill of not only doing something she enjoys, but being very, very good at it.</p>	
<p>In Pursuit of Silence: A meditative exploration of our relationship with silence, sound, and the impact of noise on our lives. Beginning with an ode to John Cage's ground-breaking composition 4'33", take an immersive cinematic journey – from a traditional tea ceremony in Kyoto, to the streets of the loudest city on the planet, Mumbai during the wild festival season. Be inspired to experience silence and celebrate the wonders of our world.</p>	
<p>Soul: Joe lands the gig of his life at the best jazz club in town, but one misstep lands Joe in a fantastical place: The Great Before. There, he teams up with soul 22, and together they find the answers to some of life's biggest questions.</p>	

Reflection Questions

Don't treat these questions like "homework" or try to answer everyone. Instead, make time to meditate on the list and then pick the one question that speaks to you most. The goal is to figure out which question captures the call of your inner voice? Which one contains "your work"? And what is that question trying to get you to notice or acknowledge?

Often it helps to read the list to a friend or loved one and ask them which question they think is the question you need to wrestle with!

1. Who first helped you find your true self?
2. Who first helped you find "the fire in your belly"?
3. What do you do to stay in touch with the fire in your belly?
4. What if you find your center when remembering the nicest thing someone ever said to you?
5. When was the last time someone asked you about that which lies at the deepest center of who you are?
6. Is it possible that the discovery of your deepest self lies in paying attention to the person that annoys you the most?
7. Who were you before others told you "You're too much!" or "You're not good enough!"?
8. Does the idea of "following your bliss" play a role in your life right now?
9. What three things most moved you toward your center this past year?
10. Have you ever felt like you "are finally catching up to who you are"?
11. It's said that we are every age that we have been. What younger self do you most want to tap into right now?
12. What would enable you to tell your white friends about how their behaviors keep you from or knock you off your center?
13. What happens inside you in the silent moments? What do you hear? What do you feel?
14. What have you learned about navigating those times in life when we lose track of our center?
15. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to find it.

Meditations, Prayers, & Blessings

My High Resolve

Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman

To turn into a more effective meditation, we recommend you change the singular pronouns to plural.

“Keep fresh before me the moments of my high resolve. Despite the dullness and barrenness of the days that pass, if I search with due diligence, I can always find a deposit left by some former radiance. But I had forgotten.

At the time it was full-orbed, glorious, and resplendent. I was sure that I would never forget. I had forgotten how

easy it is to forget. There was no intent to betray what seemed so sure at the time. My response was whole, clean, authentic. But little by little, there crept into my life the dust and grit of the journey. Details, lower-level demands, all kinds of cross currents -- nothing momentous, nothing overwhelming, nothing flagrant -- just wear and tear. If there had been some direct challenge -- a clear-cut issue -- I would have fought it to the end, and beyond. In the quietness of this place, surrounded by the all-pervading Presence of God, my heart whispers: Keep fresh before me the moments of my High Resolve, that in fair weather or in foul, in good times or in tempests, in the days when the darkness and the foe are nameless or familiar, I may not forget that to which my life is committed.”

Let the center hold *

Rev. Joe Cherry

This is my prayer: please let the center hold.

The center is what holds our faith together.

The strength of the center is what allows us to stretch farther into the future,

To the unknown,

the untried

the uncertain

the unnerving

the places where growth happens.

Let the center be strong.

And let the center of this living tradition move with the times.

Let the center of our living tradition LEAD the times.

May the strength of the center strengthen us as we seek,

As we embody compassion

Work for equity

Demand justice for all.

Let OUR center hold

Strong as an old Oak Tree,

Flexible as the Willow Tree

Life giving as an Orange Tree,

Ever green as the Pine tree and

As beautiful as the Almond tree in blossom.

In Quietness

Maryell Clearly

Found in Rejoice Together (pg.50), a UUA worship resource & Soul Matters "Common Shelf" Book

"Knowing that we do not always live up to our best expectations of ourselves, let us in quietness seek the good Within..."

Don't Feed the Fears *

Rev. Emilie Boggis

Do fears eat Dave's Killer toast?
Bears love marmalade, but fears...
Do they prefer butter? Almond or peanut? Smooth or crunchy?
What do you feed yours?

I am trying to keep my fears well-fed,
mostly on carbs,
maybe with a slather of protein,
so they won't come a-howling
as I'm attempting something I've never done before,
as I'm taking seriously what appears to be a crazy idea,
as I'm risking removing another piece of armor from my heart.

For too long, I've fed them my dreams:
Ripped edges of colorful paper,
jotted down words in moments of clarity,
messages sent from a source beyond time,
to the shores of my fear-fed life:
THIS is possible.

So, it's time for a new diet.
Dave's Killer toast it is.

May the Spirit of Courage fill our beings
so that when the fears come a-howling
we will not feed them our dreams.
Amen.

Listening for Our Song *

Rev. David S Blanchard

Full piece at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/listening-to-our-song>

"Our songs sing back to us something of our essence, something of our truth, something of our uniqueness. When our songs are sung back to us, it is not about approval, but about recognizing our being and our belonging in the human family..."

Sunset Meditation: Labyrinth *

Rev. Emilie Boggis

Full piece and spoken version found at <https://loveprophet.substack.com/p/sunset-meditation-labyrinth>

"With each step through the labyrinth, silently affirm: "Be still and know that I am Love..."

Like pendulums we swing *

Don W Vaughn-Foerster

Full piece found at <http://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/5497.shtml>

...life pulls us and we swing from Truth to truths, from cosmos to self, from mystery to clarity, from out to in. It is our state to swing and to be drawn ever into another swing...
May the great gravity of life which pulls us along an unknown, holy axis never let the pendulums we are cease swinging until the Truth we seek and the truths we are, are one.

To Savor the World or Save It *

Rev. Richard S. Gilbert

Full piece found at <http://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/savor-world-or-save-it>

I rise in the morning torn between the desire...
To save the world or to savor it—to serve life or to enjoy it...
God of justice... What is that you say?...
The one will not stand without the other?

Even This Is Enough *

Rev. Vanessa Southern

Full prayer at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/even-enough>

The world won't stop spinning on her axis if you don't rise to all occasions today...
Rest, if you must, then, like the swimmer lying on her back who floats...
Perhaps then you will feel in your bones,
in your weary heart,
the aching, healing sense that
this is enough—
even this.
That we are enough.
You are enough.

Finding Your Center *

Rev. Jone Johnson Lewis

Full meditation at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hfcKCmkKi-pSb6wzLj9VFKAJXD-uTGpl/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101245613595157190644&rtpof=true&sd=true>

A guided meditation exploring the thread from the present moment to your future.

A Calm, Clear Place

Jezebell Anat

Found in [Falling into the Sky](#), UUA worship resource & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)" Book

All the you need lies within you

Rev. Angela Herrera

Found at

<https://www.facebook.com/skinner.house/photos/a.358111530959702/5032578430179632/?type=3> and in [Reaching for the Sun](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters "[Common Shelf](#)" Book

Peace: A Meditation Through the Chakras

Marcia Tucker

Full piece found in [To Wake, To Rise](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters “[Common Shelf](#)” Book

How Good To Center Down!

Howard Thurman

Full piece at <https://backfromtheborderlands.blog/2016/02/09/how-good-to-center-down-by-howard-thurman/>

How good it is to center down!...

something deep within hungers and thirsts for the still moment...

A direction, a strong sure purpose that will structure our confusion and bring meaning in our chaos...

As we listen, floating up through all the jangling echoes of our turbulence, there is a sound of another kind –

A deeper note...

Our questions are answered...

Our spirits refreshed...

Oriented Times Three

Rev. Karen Hering

Found in [With or Without Candlelight](#), UUA meditation manual & Soul Matters “[Common Shelf](#)” Book

Video reading/meditation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DltrejEwlu8>

Stories For All Ages

Picture Books

The Me I Chose To Be

Natasha Anastasia Tarpley (Author), Regis and Kahran Bethencourt (Artist)

“This story is about all of the beautiful choices we can make in our lives. It is a “call for self-love that highlights the inherent beauty of all black and brown children.” - Amazon. We can see the beautiful ways that we can find our multicultural center when we decenter whiteness.

- **Book:** <https://www.amazon.com/Me-I-Choose-Be/dp/0316461547>
- **Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzcnnVxX8WA>

Let the Children March

Monica Clark-Robinson (Author), Frank Morrison (Illustrator)

“In 1963 Birmingham, Alabama, thousands of African American children volunteered to march for their civil rights after hearing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speak. They protested the laws that kept black people separate from white people. Facing fear, hate, and danger, these children used their voices to change the world...”

- **Book:** <https://www.amazon.com/Let-Children-March-Monica-Clark-Robinson/dp/0544704525>
- **Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnptqGnM4xQ>

Aaron Slater, Illustrator

Andrea Beaty (Author), David Roberts (Illustrator)

“Aaron Slater loves listening to stories and dreams of one day writing them himself. But when it comes to reading, the letters just look like squiggles to him, and it soon becomes clear he struggles more than his peers. . . . Aaron can’t get a single word down. He is sure his dream of being a storyteller is out of reach . . . until inspiration strikes, and Aaron finds a way to spin a tale in a way that is uniquely his.

It’s a story of a boy with dyslexia who discovers that his learning disability may inform who he is, but it does not define who he is, and that there are many ways to be a gifted communicator.”

- **Book:** <https://www.amazon.com/Aaron-Slater-Illustrator-Questioners-Andrea/dp/1419753967>
- **Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbNYk1IRtWM>

Potatoes, Eggs and Coffee Beans

“In life, things happen around us, and things happen to us. Life swirls around us. Finding our center during these experiences means understanding your choice about how you react to it and what you make of it. Learn, adapt and choose to make the best of each experience.”

- **Story:** <https://beginwithyes.com/potatoes-eggs-and-coffee-beans/>
- **Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFHlxLWdeTQ>

Yo-Yo Maker: Pedro Flores

Paige V. Polinsky (Author)

Pedro Flores was born in the Philippines in 1896, when Spain still ruled his country. After the US took over, Pedro traveled to California, received an education, and looked for ways to go into business for himself. Then he remembered a toy from his childhood called the yo-yo, which means “come back” in Tagalog. He kept his balance, founded a company and found his center, which was to share his [delight of the Yo-Yo with children](#).

- **Book:** <https://www.amazon.com/Yo-Yo-Maker-Pedro-Flores-Trailblazers/dp/1532110995>
- (Another book about Pedro Flores is due to be released 2/23 [HERE](#))
- **Video:**
 - Part I <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJkGtRb0Kqs> (6:54 min)
 - Part II <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEFXBUHUhMY> (6:30 min)
 - Part III <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0riNZikA59w> (8:11 min)
- **Intro about Pedro Flores** (1:58 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCQacYzovvs>

The Day You Begin

Jacqueline Woodson (Author), Rafael López (Illustrator)

Staying balanced with our differences to find our center.

- **Book:** <https://www.amazon.com/Day-You-Begin-Jacqueline-Woodson/dp/0399246533>
- **Video:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDs5d_qFbEs

The Marvelous Doctors for Magical Creatures

Jodie Lancet Grant

The unicorn tries to fit in, but her choices and center are different from others.

- **Book:** <https://www.bookdepository.com/Marvellous-Doctors-for-Magical-Creatures-Jodie-Lancet-Grant/9780192777836>
- **Video:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddV7_FF7er0&t=1s (not great, but for story)

Perfectly Norman

Tom Percival

Norman chooses not to be perfect, and finds his center

- **Book:** <https://www.amazon.com/Perfectly-Norman-Tom-Percival/dp/1681197855>
- **Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r30vfuO2jrs>

Wisdom Tales

- **The Red and Blue Coat (Congoese Tale)**
 - https://www.worldoftales.com/African_folktales/African_Folktale_7.html#gsc.tab=0
- **The Monk Who Carried the Woman (Buddhist Tale)**
 - <https://www.kindspring.org/story/view.php?sid=63753>
- **Finding Our Way Home (Christian Tale)**
 - <https://www.dialhope.org/finding-our-way-home-2/>
- **Zusya, why were you not more like Zusya?’ (Jewish Tale)**
 - <https://rabbisylviarothschild.com/tag/why-were-you-not-zusya/>
- **The Fisherman and the Businessman (Brazilian Tale)**
 - <https://paulocoelhoblog.com/2015/09/04/the-fisherman-and-the-businessman/>
- **The Monk and the Scorpion (Zen Tale)**
 - *Doorways to the Soul* by Elisa Davy Pearmain: <https://www.amazon.com/Doorways-Soul-Wisdom-Tales-Around/dp/1556357400>
 - **Story:** <https://medium.com/@mattimore/parable-of-the-monk-and-the-scorpion-1dcbc77891c3#:~:text=Knowing%20that%20scorpions%20cannot%20swim,again%20to%20save%20the%20Scorpion.>