

# *Inner Journey*

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This program is designed to lead small groups of interested Emma Willard Students in the exploration of their life journey and personal belief development. Each session is composed of exercises and questions that investigate how we become who we are, how we live out who we want to be.

*How did I get here? What experiences have shaped me? Where does my perspective come from? What is important to me as a human being? What makes me different from others? What do I gain in my relationships with others? Are there universal human values? How does society challenge or shape those ideas? Are my surroundings important? What do I value about my community? What exists which is greater than myself? When have I felt a sense of loss? How do I view the challenges I have faced? What do I do when my beliefs conflict with others?*

Participants gather together for an hour and a half, once a week, for ten weeks. The group shares the process of creative investigation, while maintaining and honoring the individuality of spiritual life. Each person will be challenged to look closely at her own perspective, while also developing respect for the perspective of others.

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| <i>Session 1</i>  | <i>Introductions</i>                          |
| <i>Session 2</i>  | <i>Looking Back (and Forward) on the Self</i> |
| <i>Session 3</i>  | <i>Unraveling Human Nature</i>                |
| <i>Session 4</i>  | <i>The Influence of Society and Culture</i>   |
| <i>Session 5</i>  | <i>Connections to our Surroundings</i>        |
| <i>Session 6</i>  | <i>Contemplating Something Greater</i>        |
| <i>Session 7</i>  | <i>Growing through Conflict and Crisis</i>    |
| <i>Session 8</i>  | <i>Rising to Life's Challenges</i>            |
| <i>Session 9</i>  | <i>"Peacing" it Together</i>                  |
| <i>Session 10</i> | <i>Credo and Closure</i>                      |

In the last three weeks of the program the participants are focusing on the creative expression of their thoughts and ideas, and how they fit together. In examining their ideas on the themes and the relationships between these ideas, participants generate a

statement of their current beliefs. This statement, their personal credo, is shared with the group at the final session.

### Overarching Program Goals

- To provide an opportunity for interested students to explore their thoughts and ideas on spirituality, religion, faith, and the search for meaning.
- To initiate a safe environment for shared reflection and introspection on life questions.
- To help students develop the language and ability to communicate respectfully and effectively with others, regarding belief development.
- To facilitate exercises which explore the dynamic between life experience and personal belief development.
- To provide tools for creative self assessment of one's own belief system.
- To validate to the students that our school sees this journey as something beneficial and potentially important to a young woman's development.

### Session Structure

Each session has roughly seven parts:

- I. **Opening** – We open with a group check-in where the girls each have a chance to share their high and low of the week, to clear the air and get ready to enter a new space. Then we welcome them with the week's theme, light a center candle, read a quote, ring the Tibetan singing bowl, and practice up to three minutes of centering silence.
- II. **Journal** - The students are given time to journal on the previous session's points to ponder questions or to review what they wrote during the week. They are invited to share from either question with the group.
- III. **Activity and Debrief** - Each session includes creative activities or exercises that relates to the week's theme. Each activity is followed up with debriefing, a time to process, share insights or questions.
- IV. **Further Discussion** - The first six sessions have themes that build on one another. These are followed by four sessions of processing and creative synthesis. As the group builds more trust in each session there is more material to extend and deepen the discussion.
- V. **Reflection Card** - Each student is given an index card for her to write an "I believe..." take-away statement. These are kept in separate reflection envelopes for each student. They serve as a record of progress that will help each girl organize her thoughts for her creed statement.
- VI. **Points to Ponder** - The points to ponder are two questions developed by the facilitators, based on the group discussion. They help bridge from one session to the next and function as journal prompts if the girls feel inspired to write during the week.

- VII. **Closure** - The session is concluded with a quote or reading, ringing of the singing bowl, observing a minute of silence to prepare to re-enter the school world, and extinguishing the candle.