

WINTER SOLSTICE





WINTER SOLSTICE



DEAR ONES,

HELLO, hello a warm hello to each one of you!

This is an invitation to share an evening together
on a special day coming soon,
The Winter Solstice.

As the seasons change and autumn moves into winter,
the sun sets a bit earlier each afternoon.

Darkness begins falling before dinnertime.

With busy lives, full days, and the electronic world so bright around us,
there is hardly time to notice this seasonal shift
or slow down to take in the quiet beauty of winter.

Often at this time of year, holiday preparations and year-end activities,
leave a scarcity of time for resting, little room to appreciate, reflect,
and listen deeply within our hearts.

Sometimes, though we are near in proximity,
without a place to deliberately connect in meaningful and gentle ways,
we feel a bit distant from the people closest to us.

So, I invite you to use this gift bundle as a way
for your family to spend a cozy evening together.

Each year on the winter solstice, December twenty-first,
the sun is the farthest away from those of us living in the north,
bringing these very short days and long nights.

Solstice literally means Sun Standing Still.
So, like the sun, I invite you to stop, and set aside a time,
for pausing in the company and comfort of each other.

All you need is some curiosity and a bit
of sincere openness for trying something new.

All the best & bright wishes to each of you,



NOTES

Notes

This gift bundle includes everything you need to create a Winter Solstice Gathering. The solstice falls on December twenty-first, but you can celebrate on or near that time, whenever it works best for your family.

Supplies Included:

These instructions to guide you.
A plain, white candle for each person.
A box of colorful sheets of wax to use for decorating.
One taller red candle taper, to help light the other candles.

You will also need: simple candle holders, cutting boards and something to cut the wax with.

The Process:

Pick a late afternoon/evening time for the gathering.
Plan ahead, make a meal to share as you light your candles.
Gather and decorate your candles together.
Light your special candles and share your meal.
Tell each other what you love and appreciate about each other.



STEP 1

Step One: Decorate Candles

At the chosen time, once everyone is present,
decorate the candles in the late afternoon before dinner.

While you work on the candles,
if it helps you feel creative, play some quiet music.
But be sure to turn off and put away all distractions like phones
and computers, so you can really take a break
and sink into this time to focus together.

After you open the box of wax, spread the sheets out to see all the colors.

Cut out shapes with a knife, pull apart the wax,
or stretch it to decorate and make patterns and pictures.

You can press the thin wax pieces to stick them onto the candles.

It's easy to make colorful, geometric shapes or create symbols
of what you are grateful for, favorite images, or wishes for the year ahead.

Take as long as you need so that everyone present completes the process.

Even if it has been a while since you decorated anything,
all it takes is a little willingness.

Remember, you cannot do it wrong.

Go ahead and explore.

When everyone finishes, place all the candles in a circle
in the middle of the table, but don't light them yet.

Place a candle holder or protection under the candles to catch any drips.

Set the tall red candle in the very center of the circle.

Place some matches on the table so you will be able to find them.

Turn off all the lights in the rest of the house.

Keep one small light on to read the directions.

STEP 2

Step Two: Begin the Gathering

Stand or sit in a circle around the table,
while someone reads the part below (in *italics*) out loud to the group:

Welcome Everyone to the Longest Night, the Winter Solstice.

Let's take a few moments to notice the quiet darkness. For many, many hundreds of years there was no electricity. Imagine what it was like to have only firelight, candles and lanterns.

Not so long ago, this vast expanse of winter night would have been much more palpable, present and possibly even threatening.

However, with all of our modern conveniences including lights and heat, we all still have times when we feel isolated, anxious or discouraged, when life feels hard or painful.

It is not only the winter season that causes us to feel vulnerable and fragile, there are many situations in life that contribute to the feeling that we are all alone in the dark.

Yet, when we slow down to notice, appreciate and take care of each other, we make those rough times easier. When we lean into each other in a safe haven, the light inside of our hearts helps to sustain and to carry us through these places.

Each one of us also holds, in the center of our beings, the bright shining light of the people who came before us: our parents, grandparents, and long-ago ancestors, all the way back over the years. We also remember the ones we have loved and been loved by in this lifetime that have died. All these dear beloveds are joined to us in enduring and countless ways. The particular flavor of each one of them is a part of us, surrounding everything we do. So, on this night, we dedicate the tall, red candle to represent those special ones who encircle us now and always.

In just a minute, we are going to turn off all the lights and hold hands in the dark. We will take this moment to feel the quiet, dark together and then I will light the red candle.

Notice that it only takes one flame to bring light into darkness. After that each of us can say out loud the names of our closest ancestors or beloved mentors, consciously inviting their memory and presence to be with us in the circle of light.

Then everyone will, one by one, light their candle from the tall taper. Each candle shows the strength of our presence shining brightly, in the vast, dark night.

*Each individual flame comes from one flame.
Each candle is a faithful, steady presence, an essential part of the circle.*

Light the Candles

Now, turn off the last light.
Pause for a few moments to pay attention to the full darkness.

Then when you are ready, light the red candle.

Go around the circle and say the names of any ancestors
or loved ones that have passed.

Then using that tall taper, one at a time,
have each individual light their own candle from the strong, steady flame,
until all the candles are flickering and glowing on the table together.

As you light your candle, describe what your candle means to you.

Next enjoy your dinner together in the warm light of the candles.

Take extra time to notice one another's presence
and continue the thoughtful process while you eat.

Note how each candle makes the room much brighter
as you enjoy your meal together in the candlelight.

Step Three: Speak and Receive Appreciation

As soon as you finish the meal,
begin the most important part of the evening.
In the light of your circle of candles you will share affirmations.

Read the part below (in *italics*) aloud beforehand:

Now, we are going to go around the table and take turns sharing our appreciation.

Only one person will speak at a time, without interruptions.

The rest of us will listen and quietly hold the space.

Everyone will have a turn to receive appreciation from each person here.

We will each talk, one by one to them.

I have a list of ideas if you want to use suggestions about what to say.

Speakers: *Take your time when you are talking.*

There is no hurry.

Go slowly.

It is fine to pause for a minute to feel/think about what you most want to say.

As you speak, you may think of more than you expected.

Notice how it feels to look into the eyes of the person you are sharing with.

You are the only one who can say what your heart feels, from your own unique perspective.

There is no need to compare to what anyone else says.

Let yourself say what is important.

Receivers: *When it is your turn to receive, try to accept what is offered
and to really look at the speaker. When you are listening, as best you can, your only job
is to take in what you are hearing without interrupting or deflecting.*

Try your best to receive what they are giving to you.

PART 1

Part One: Pick one person to be spoken to first.

Then everybody else will speak to them,
one by one, going around the table.

The prompt is simply:

Tell this person why you love and appreciate them and give examples.

Speakers can use any of these suggestions below for ideas
or just share in any ways that feel authentic.

_____ (name of the person you are speaking to)

I love the way you_____.

I admire how you_____.

I am grateful to you for_____.

You are really good at_____.

My favorite thing about you is_____.

It is so fun when_____.

It is special when_____.

I remember when/Remember that time when we_____.

I'm so proud of you for_____.

I have wanted to tell you/I hope you know_____.

Something meaningful that I have noticed about you this year
is_____.

You have taught me so much about_____.

Thank you for_____.

PART 2

Part Two: When, one by one, everyone has told the receiver what they appreciate, at the very end of the turn, the receiver can speak too.

They might just say something simple like,
“Thank you for all the things you told me.”
or they can share more.

Receivers can use any of these suggestions below for ideas
or speak in any ways that feel right.

Thank you for sharing about_____.

I am grateful for_____.

I'd like to say more about_____.

I'm proud of_____.

I could use your help with_____.

A big challenge has been_____.

A highlight/favorite thing for me this year was_____.

I have learned so much about_____.

I hope in the year ahead_____.

I am looking forward to_____.

I have wanted to tell the rest of you_____.

Repeat Part One and Two for Each Person

After the first person, proceed one by one, to share with the next person.

Do this until everyone in the room has been spoken to individually.

Step Four: Afterward

After you finish telling each other these affirmations,
take a little time for dessert in the candlelight,
a slow cup of tea or hot cocoa, or a giant group hug.

If you can, leave the lights off for the whole night,
just to feel the stillness and the warmth in more profound ways.
(But be sure to blow them out before you go to sleep!)

After this solstice gathering,
on future nights use your candles again at the dinner table.
They will remind you of the meaningful things that were shared
and the essential, supporting words that you have received.

This light of deliberate connection
will help to carry you through any challenging times ahead.

The days will begin to lengthen once again,
as the sun returns, bringing springtime and new life.



**Now you are a part of the Solstice Circle,
a growing community of warm hearts.**

**We hope you return, along with us
to this cozy place each and every year.**

SUPPLIES YOU NEED TO MAKE YOUR OWN SOLSTICE

Letter of Invitation Packet

download & print the pdf

One tall taper candle

preferably red

3" x 3" preferably light-colored, unscented candles

(one for each participant)

the size of the candle does not need to be exact, just small enough to decorate easily

Suitable candleholders

to catch any dripping wax (in a pinch, use a plate or cookie sheet)

Stockmar Decorating Beeswax Sheets

(one box per 4 to 6 people)

available online from a variety of vendors including Bella Luna Toys & Amazon

& incorporate any other creative candle decorating medium that you imagine

Protective work surface: cutting boards or cardboard squares

Age appropriate knives, scissors or small cookie cutters