

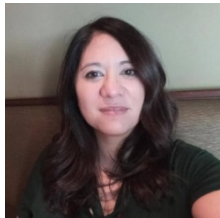
SWUUWCon 2026: “Spirit of the Woods”



Workshop Descriptions

AM1 Workshops

Discussion with Keynote Speaker Natalie Briscoe



Natalie Aguila Briscoe received her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of Texas at Austin in 2000 where her focus was on learning and perception across the lifespan and her Master's Degree in counseling and human development from the University of North Texas in 2002. She has amassed over a decade as a Religious Educator, serving congregations in the Southern and Pacific Western Regions. Natalie joined the Unitarian Universalist Association's Congregational Life Staff in 2013, began serving as the Co-Lead of the Southern Region in 2018, and transitioned to the sole Lead of the Region in 2021. She is the recipient of the Norma Veridan Award for unique and outstanding service in Religious Education and the Ruth Clark Award for Excellence in Service to Unitarian Universalism. Natalie is a proud Queer Pinay woman whose ministry is to help congregations become the best institutional incarnation of Unitarian Universalism that they can be.

“Discovering Nonviolent Communication in the Magic Field” by Lilybet Wasson

Introduction to how the Magic Field can transform violent energy into compassionate energy. Participants will have a better understanding of how the 4 Components of NVC and 2 Goals of NVC can bring healing to relationships.

Lilybet Wasson has been sharing NVC for 17 years. She has certification for the completion of 3 International Intensive NVC trainings in the past 3 years. It is her belief that learning to recognize violence in our lives is important. It is possible to live a more peaceful life, once we learn how to transform the violent energy we carry — into a compassionate energy.

“Voices of the Earth: Remembering Margot Adler”, by Jane Kittner

Workshop will discuss the UU Wiccan High Priestess Margo Adler. Participants will learn some of the earth chants and songs Adler taught.

Jane Kittner is a long-time UU, who served as music director at UU Waco for many years, helped to lead the women's group, and has attended more than 20 SWUUW conferences. At the 2005 conference, Margot Adler was the keynote speaker and lead a well-attended workshop teaching us pagan/earth centered chants. Jane still has her handouts. It was transcendent! Music and gardening with native plants are Jane's major spiritual practices, and singing with others is part of that.

"Kundalini Yoga: Nourishing the Tree of Life Within Us" by Kallie Hansen

Kundalini originates from the ancient wisdom of the Upanishads, a collection of ancient Sanskrit texts central to Hinduism. They focus on spiritual knowledge. In the Hindu tradition, Kundalini represents a divine dormant feminine energy, a power that lies at the very core of our being and consciousness, acting as a bridge to the divine realms. Often visualized as a coiled serpent resting at the base of the spine, Kundalini symbolizes an immense potential and divine energy awaiting its awakening. The serpent symbol associated with Kundalini symbolizes rebirth, transformation, and the cyclic nature of the universe. Experience the practice of kundalini, a combination of breathwork, meditation and postures to connect the self to the surrounding nature.

“As a music therapist, I am drawn to kundalini yoga as it uniquely combines music and body to increase spiritual awareness.”

PM1 Workshops

"Breathing with the Trees: A Spiritual Path to Justice and Wholeness" by Toia Phillips

In a world that often feels divided and disconnected, Breathing with the Trees invites participants to slow down, listen deeply, and remember our shared belonging—to the Earth and to one another. This reflective workshop intertwines the principles of social justice with the spiritual wisdom of the natural world, offering a sacred space to explore how personal healing and collective liberation are rooted in the same soil. Through guided reflection, intentional dialogue, participants will: Reconnect with the rhythms of nature as a source of grounding and renewal. Cultivate practices of presence, compassion, and community rooted in both spirituality and social awareness. The intention is participants will leave with a deeper sense of connection—to themselves, to others, and to the living world—and a renewed commitment to breathing justice and peace into all spaces they inhabit.

Toia Phillips is a native of Omaha, NE and has resided in Texas since 2018. She earned her undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice and Psychology with a minor in Black Studies from University of Nebraska at Omaha, and her Master of Science in Educational Leadership for Higher Education. Toia has over 10 years of experience in Higher Education. Toia currently serves on the following committees and boards. Inclusive Communities Table Talk Facilitator 2015-2022. T-3 Scholars Content and Curriculum Work Team and Bridge Orientation Emcee 3/2021- 7/2020. Pathways Anti Racism Committee Member 2021- current. PATHS FORWARD Leadership Academy Graduate Cohort 2022. Fly Girlz Board Member December 2022 – Current. The topic is important to me because I have spent most of my life promoting justice and equity amongst marginalized populations.

"Improv Games for Community-Building" by Wendi Bernau

Participants will play very simple improv games (no experience necessary) in a fun and safe environment. Boost your energy, improve your listening skills, have some laughs, make a few friends and create some memories.

Wendi is a spiritual companion, coach, hypnotist, workshop facilitator and stage performer. She believes strongly in experiential learning and creates safe spaces for people to explore and discover; using improv, art, music, poetry, movement and other modalities in pursuit of introspective wisdom, communication skills, strategic visioning, and community-building.

"Introduction to Basic Beading" by Gerry Carr and Darcy Truehan

Participants will be making a gemstone power bracelet. All supplies are included.



Darcy Truehan is a Master Beader and Gerry Carr is a newby! Beading is a great way to relax, be creative and learn about yourself.

"Dancing for Joy" by Shana Hormann, MSW, PhD

The dances are spiritual practices that strengthen our embodiment of unity, presence, and compassion. We will come together in circle, putting simple dance steps to chants and songs from several spiritual traditions. May joy and peace flow through us and out into the world.



"I have been a dance leader for the Dances of Universal Peace since the 1980s. My work in the world has been a combination of academia and trauma work with individuals, organizations, communities, and Tribal Nations. Sacred dance helps me to come home to my heart."

PM2 Workshops

"Remembering the Gifts of the Woods" by Molly Hagan-Ward

What gifts are Earth trying to give us every day in the form of wild plants? We'll learn specific wild plants you can find in your own environment and the benefits of foraging, even in small amounts. Reminding ourselves, we can call on the healing energies of a plant at any time once we've connected with it. In addition we'll focus on the importance of natives, planting edibles just everywhere, and how to move away from the current modern grass lawn, and into the woods.

"My foraging switch was flipped on about 20 years ago, and since then I've been studying and learning how we can use all the plants that the Earth is trying to gift us with everyday. I'm currently a landscaper who helps people make the most of their landscape to create a healing and edible space. I still have so much to learn, but I truly feel called to be in service this way."

"Spirit Doll Making" by Grace Valery Guignon

Make your own spirit doll. I'll bring all the materials and it's a hodgepodge of intriguing, fabrics, textures shells... And glue and wire. We start with nothing and end up with a beautiful little doll, a reminder of our brilliant spirit. .

"I started making dolls as a child and now that I have several Art Studios in my home and lots of materials, It's really easy for me, when I'm having feelings or trouble accepting something — to make a doll about it. I love sharing that technique with other artists - and non-artists - who want to just play- because it is just play."

Val was inspired by Clarice Pinola Estes who wrote: "Women Who Run with the Wolves", a 1992 book about reclaiming the fierce, healthy, instinctual, intuitive visionary attributes of the "wild woman" archetype. Since that book came out Val has been using that inspiration in her teaching around the country, in local arts centers, and in her own studio."

"Lavenders--A study of their spiritual, mental, emotional components" by Darcy Truehan

This class is an interactive lecture-discussion physical workshop. You will learn about the many lavenders that are available. You will also learn the basics, you will make a body spray/ room spray. Attendees will learn contraindications and valuable therapeutic as well as recreational uses of lavenders, such as perfumes. This is also an opportunity to obtain an educational background on lavenders along with fun information that enhances your possible use of them.



A licensed massage therapist for thirty nine years, her main focus is on women's issues and physical difficulties. She has been a Certified Essential Oil practitioner for sixteen years. With an Associates degree in Psychology. Darcy is a scholar of women's studies, natural sciences, healing emotions, and a mental health survivor and advocate. She is a twenty five year member of Nami (National Alliance on Mental Illness). She has been a student of life for seventy plus years and has overcome many mental, emotional and physical difficulties.

"Art as a Spiritual Practice" by Wendi Bernau

"Art as a Spiritual Practice" is a contemplative meditation process that utilizes creative play with art materials to listen to the Divine with one's own intuition and wisdom. This collage session will be a safe space where delight, wonder, and self-reflection are encouraged. No art skills necessary, just curiosity and a willingness to participate.

Wendi is a spiritual companion, coach, hypnotist, workshop facilitator and stage performer. She believes strongly in experiential learning and creates safe spaces for people to explore and discover; using improv, art, music, poetry, movement and other modalities in pursuit of introspective wisdom, communication skills, strategic visioning, and community-building.