

The Growing Edge Conversation Starter
& Questions of the Month

EPISODE 39:
THE GIFT OF PRESENCE WITH POET NAOMI SHIHAB NYE



For each Growing Edge Podcast episode, we offer a conversation starter that you can download from our website for use with a small group or for your own meditation or journaling. Here are some questions and probes for this podcast with Naomi Shihab Nye.

1. In her poem “Shoulders,” Naomi reflects on a scene where a father carries his fragile and precious young son through a field of dangers. Are you caring for something fragile in these challenging times? If so, what are you learning from the experience?
2. Naomi spoke about being open to the small moments that present themselves in our lives. She told of the experience of seeing a man muttering on the street. She spoke about how that chance encounter moved her, and how she carried that experience. Have you had memorable chance encounters that you still think about with gratitude for the experience?
3. Naomi told about seeing her young grandson kissing a glass door, and describes this experience as being akin to a poem. Try going through a day looking at life through those lenses. Did you see anything that felt akin to a poem?
4. Parker spoke about the importance of noticing and honoring our own small successes rather than counting only the “big stuff.” How might this help you or someone you know when it comes to self-care?
5. Naomi spoke about the importance of listening and tapping into the “hum” that is always present in the world. Do you sense something luminous in life that you catch when you focus on it? What are those moments like for you?
6. Naomi spoke about honoring truth and practicing integrity in speech. How do you assess yourself on that count? What encourages that “habit of the heart” and what pushes back?

Some Approaches to this Month’s Questions

You may want to explore the podcast and Questions of the Month privately, via journaling and silent reflection. But please consider gathering online for an exploration with one or more family members or friends. If that idea appeals to you, look into using Zoom, Facetime, Skype or some other video platform or talk with each other while practicing safe social distancing. Of course, we are grateful that with the availability of Covid-19 vaccines it is sometimes possible to gather safely and have these conversations in person.

SHOULDERS



A man crosses the street in rain,
stepping gently, looking two times north and south,
because his son is asleep on his shoulder.
No car must splash him.
No car drive too near to his shadow.
This man carries the world's most sensitive cargo
but he's not marked.
Nowhere does his jacket say **FRAGILE,**
HANDLE WITH CARE.
His ear fills up with breathing.
He hears the hum of a boy's dream
deep inside him.
We're not going to be able
to live in this world
if we're not willing to do what he's doing
with one another.
The road will only be wide.
The rain will never stop falling.

By Naomi Shihab Nye