

Bulletin for Living with Fear

Business

Chalice Lighting

Come in with all your vulnerabilities and strengths, fears and anxieties, loves and hopes. For here you need not hide, nor pretend, nor be anything other than who you are and are called to be.

Come into this place where we can touch and be touched, heal and be healed, forgive and be forgiven.

Come into this place, where the ordinary is sanctified, the human is celebrated, the compassionate is expected.

Come into this place. Together we make it a holy place.

—*Rebecca A. Edmiston-Lange*

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Silence

Shared Readings

Fear is not easy to talk about...we try to keep our fears out of other people's sight.—*Neil Shister*

The disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake. It was dark, and a strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. They saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. He said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid."—*John 6: 16-21*

There are times when fear is good. It must keep its watchful place at the heart's controls. There is advantage in the wisdom won from pain.—*Aeschylus*

People have a hard time letting go of their suffering. Out of a fear of the unknown, they prefer suffering that is familiar.—*Thich Nhat Hanh*

Never let the fear of striking out get in your way.—*Babe Ruth*

I don't want to choose between love and fear. I want to sit on the fence. I want to live but I don't want to take risks – especially in these times.....but in order to be fully alive and aware, I have to reach out in love to others.—*Alan Jones*

Death is not the biggest fear we have; our biggest fear is taking the risk to be alive – the risk to be alive and express what we really are.—*Don Miguel Ruiz*

The root of so much fear is fear of rejection and banishment. We so desperately need each other's approval.—*Francis Moore Lappé*

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round I Share around the circle in a few sentences, “Over the past couple of weeks, some of the things that have made me fearful are ...”

Round II Each person will have a chance to share more deeply about feelings and experiences of fear in response to the preparation materials.

Round III As time allows share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared.

Closing Ritual

Song

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group.
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit.
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others.
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time.
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others.
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart.
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, or giving advice.
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

Leader's Notes for Living with Fear

Before the Session

Read over the closing light ritual at the end of the session. Do it several times on your own before the session. Let the (pause) be about 3 breaths in and out in time. Too slow is better than too fast. Many find this visualization very empowering and hope-bringing.

Business

Chalice Lighting

Ask a group member to read the chalice lighting reading in the bulletin.

Sharing of Joys and Concerns (each person about 2 min.)

Silence (3 min.)

Shared Readings

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening During your rounds of deep sharing/deep listening, pay close attention to the time allotted each person to ensure all get to share at least once.

Round I (each person about 2 min.)

Share around the circle in a sentence or two, "Over the past couple of weeks, some of the things that have made me fearful are..." Give them a minute to think about their response.

Round II (each person about 5 min.)

Each person will have a chance to share more deeply feelings and experiences of fear in response to the preparation materials.

Round III (each person about 2 min.)

As time allows, share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared

The **Closing Ritual** is on the next page so that it can be read without page-turning.

Closing Ritual (10 min)

Tell the group: we are going to do a visualization about bringing light into this most dark time of the year. Some people use this visualization as a form of prayer. It is a meditation from the Buddhist tradition. If this is making you uneasy, you might want to give it a try and see what happens or you may want to just enjoy the quiet restful time. It will take about 5 minutes. In a visualization some people can see things during the visualization, others are just thinking. Both ways are ok. For some people this is a boring experience, for others it is very exciting. For others it is very restful and deeply meaningful. All ways are ok. We will start here in this room and end here. (pause) **For the leader: Let the (pause) be about 3 breaths in and out in time.**

“Everyone get comfortable with your hands and legs relaxed, and with your eyes closed if that is comfortable for you. Spend a minute or two breathing in a relaxed way. Feel the breath going in and out through your nostrils or your mouth. Relax your neck...(pause) , relax your shoulders...(pause)

Now imagine a light coming into your body through the top of your head. It may be different for each of you: white light, sparkly gold, a honey like flowing feeling (pause). Let it fill your head...(pause), move through your neck...(pause) Let it move through your shoulders and through your whole body...(pause).

Now imagine the light moving out of your body through your heart. Let it flow to those in this circle...(pause). You may want to let it flow out to those you love, your family, your friends...(pause), and on into the world...(pause). Let the light fade and focus on your breathing, in and out...(pause) Now slowly open your eyes and come back into this space. End with holding hands around the chalice and say a word or two about how you are feeling.

Song

Preparation for Living with Fear

Fear is an essential part of our nature... an alarm system. It is there to get our attention, to push us in one direction or another, out of harm's way. Fear is not pathological; it is part of our intelligence, part of an ingenious guidance system to help ensure our survival.

—*Thom Rutledge*

Unhealthy fear is another story all together, and it is what concerns me more. Unhealthy fear is the kind that keeps us from being fully ourselves, that stops us in our tracks when we try to take a risk, that whispers in our ear that the world is just too dangerous for us to try something new or make a change... This bully is the inner voice inside us that tells us we aren't good enough or smart enough or together enough to be whole. This bully is fear run amok; it is Chicken Little and the boy who cried wolf. But like real bullies, the best way to approach this unhealthy fear is to face up to it. And then learn to embrace it as a part of who we are.—*Sermon by Barbara Wells*

We have great fear inside ourselves. We are afraid of everything: of our death, of being alone, of change. Fear is born from our concepts regarding life, death, being, and nonbeing.

—*Thich Nhat Hanh*

Ultimately, we know deeply that the other side of fear is freedom.—*Marilyn Ferguson*

What I'd most like to do with my fear is use it to wisely serve and protect those I love.

—*Miriam Greenspan*

Instead of showing ourselves as we truly are, we show ourselves as we believe others want us to be. We wear masks, and with practice we do it better and better, and they serve us well – except that it gets very lonely inside the mask, because inside the mask that each of us wears there is a person who both longs to be known and fears to be known.—*Frederick Buechner*

Questions to Ponder

1. What are you living in fear of? Start listing them. This is for your eyes only.

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2. When have you been fearful for yourself or your world in the past few weeks?

3. When you feel like you need to escape fear or distract yourself from fear, list some strategies you employ. List both positive and negative strategies. Positive strategies might be things like: take the dog for a walk, playing a computer game. Negative strategies might be: drink too much, kick the dog, or an addiction to a computer game.

4. In which situations in your life has fear affected you positively?