

Living With Fear

Chalice Lighting

I light this candle to light our way to the return of the sun, to the birth of a baby under a special star, to Hanukkah, and to Kwanzaa--all festivals of hope in the darkest time of the year.

Sharing Joys and Concerns

Silence

Readings

The other side of fear is freedom. And freedom is driven, finally, by faith in the future.

Neil Shister

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.

Barbara Wells

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

The challenge that Gandhi laid down was that fear, hypocrisy, and hatred had to be overcome with non-violent means – violence leads only to more fear, hypocrisy, and hatred.

Howard Thurman

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

We now know that the human animal has two great fears that other animals are protected from: the fear of life and the fear of death ...Heidegger brought these fears to the center of his existential philosophy. He argued that the basic anxiety of humanity is anxiety about not being-in-the-world, as well as anxiety of being-in-the-world. That is, both fear of death and fear of life, of experience and individuation.

Ernest Becker

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

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 change in response to the homework questions.

Round III General discussion

Business

Pass out homework. Look over together.

Light Ritual

Song "Go Now in Peace"

Covenant Groups

Living With Fear

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group.
- to honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent and to come to the group one last time and say goodbye if I 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 not gossip about what is shared in the group, and not tell other people's stories.
- to listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn.



Leader's Notes for Living With Fear

**Read over the 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.

**(Try to allow time for the third round – the discussion time. After the input of the two previous rounds, the discussion is likely to be very rich.)

Chalice Lighting: (2 min) 7:00-7:15
Ask a group member to read the chalice lighting reading in the bulletin.

Sharing of Joys and Concerns: (10 min)
Share any information you have about absent members. Ask group members to tell in one or two sentences...How you are today? **Or you might say...**What do you need to let go of to be fully present here?

Silence: (3 min)
Give your group the gift of three minutes of silence. Time it!

Shared Readings: (5 min) 7:15-7:20
Go around your group, letting persons in turn read one of the readings.

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening: Do your rounds of deep sharing/deep listening.

Round I (15 min) 7:20-7:35
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 (40 min) 7:35-8:15
Each person will have a chance to share more deeply feelings and experiences of change in response to the homework questions.

Round III As time permits
A more general discussion

Group Business: (5 min) 8:20-8:25
Pass out Q and Q (homework) for next time. Preview it with the group by going over it. Tell them: Read over the homework, then respond to the questions you are drawn to. It is intended to give you fertile ground for thinking about this subject. You don't need to answer every question. You may want to respond to just one or two questions.

Closing ritual: (10 min)

8:25-8:35

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. ****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.

Sing: Go Now in Peace (2 min)

Quotes & Questions – Living With Fear

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

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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

2. It seems to be easier to embrace fear rather than its opposite. 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.

Fear takes many forms -- dread, worry, panic, anxiety, self-consciousness, superstition, and negativity -- and manifests itself in many ways -- avoidance, procrastination, judgment, control, agitation, and perfectionism, to name just a few. Fear is our constant companion. It haunts us day and night and prevents us from living to our potential. Whether we are afraid of the dark or of being alone, failure or commitment, public speaking or flying, fear dominates our lives, affecting nearly every decision we make.

Thom Rutledge

4. How does fear manifest in you? Whether or not you think fear is a constant companion, as Rutledge states, what form does it take most often as it stands beside you?

*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

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

Miriam Greenspan

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