

Facilitator Notes for Second Chances / Turning Points

Before the Gathering

This session uses a Guided Meditation during the period of Silence. Practice reading it before the session so that you are comfortable with it. There are special Closing Words as well.

This session also has a Closing Song, “Rewrite” by Paul Simon. The facilitator should find the song on YouTube (or another source) and have it available to play at the close of the session. If you’re not sure how to do this, ask another facilitator or a tech-savvy member of your group.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UygiBWXT00> Lyrics are at the end of the Facilitator Notes.

Words of the Day

Write “Turning Point” or “Second Chance” at the top to show which sentence you are completing.

“Turning Point” Something that sparked a turning point in my life was when I ...

OR

“Second Chance” I gave myself or someone else a second chance when I ...

Chalice Lighting

We light this chalice to shine on our time together. In its light we celebrate the relationships and understanding we are creating in this place and time. May our sharing be deep. (*Light chalice*)

The Basket

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

The facilitator reads this guided meditation, with pauses between the lines.

Enter with me that still place within, the center, where we find not only our inmost selves, but also our connection to the farthest reaches of the universe.

Here we confront our aspirations and our failings.

Though we seek always for our lives to be full of goodness, we sometimes lack courage to right the injustices that confront us.

Though we seek always to be generous, sometimes our fears cause us to be greedy.

Though we seek always to walk the moral high ground, sometimes we judge others too quickly and too harshly.

Though we seek always to understand the larger mysteries, sometimes doubt causes us to lose faith in our purpose.

Here, in this space made sacred by our shared lives and our shared yearnings, may we find new courage, new generosity of spirit, forgiveness given and received, and rededication to the higher purposes of our lives.

By Rev. Linda J Hoddy, UU Minister

Shared Readings

We must be willing to get rid of the life we planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us. The old skin has to be shed before the new one can come. *Joseph Campbell*

Like a welcome summer rain, humor may suddenly cleanse and cool the earth, the air, and you. *Langston Hughes*

The thing is to love life, to love it even when you have no stomach for it, and everything you've held dear crumbles like burnt paper in your hands, your throat filled with the silt of it ... Then you hold life like a face between your palms, a plain face, no charming smile, no violet eyes, and you say, yes, I will take you, I will love you again. *Ellen Bass (adapted to prose)*

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference. *Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken"*

What you're supposed to do when you don't like a thing is change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it. Don't complain. *Maya Angelou*

Every single cell in the human body replaces itself over a period of seven years. That means there's not even the smallest part of you now that was part of you seven years ago. *Steven Hall*

What we call beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.
T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"

We believe faith should come across us like a blinding light, transforming us, subsuming us in divine rapture ... But faith is not always so dramatic. It is sometimes a quiet shaping –an edifice built, stone by stone, from the hard labors of our heart. *Kent Nerburn*

Deep Sharing / Deep Listening and the Closing are on the next page.

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round 1: Share your reflections on turning points and second chances, based on the preparation.

Round 2: Share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared.

Closing Circle

Closing Words for Extinguishing the Chalice

If you are who you were,
and if the person next to you is who he or she was,
if none of us has changed since the day we came in here –
we have failed.

The purpose of this community – of any church, temple, zendo, mosque –
is to help its people grow.

We do this through encounters with the unknown –
in ourselves, in one another, in “The Other” –
whoever that might be for us, however hard that might be –
because these encounters have many gifts to offer.

So may you go forth from here this morning
not who you were, but who you could be.

So may we all.

*Rev. Erik Walker Wikstrom, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church
(Extinguish the chalice.)*

Song

“**Rewrite**” by Paul Simon

Announcements

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 facilitator know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the facilitator 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, giving advice, or advocating a specific view
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn and to stay on the “I-message.”

Rewrite by Paul Simon

I've been working on my rewrite, that's right
I'm gonna change the ending
Gonna throw away my title
And toss it in the trash
Every minute after midnight
All the time I'm spending
It's just for working on my rewrite
Gonna turn it into cash
I've been working at the carwash
I consider it my day job
Cause it's really not a pay job
But that's where I am
Everybody says the old guy working at the carwash
Hasn't got a brain cell left since Vietnam
But I say help me, help me, help me, help me
Thank you!
I'd no idea
That you were there
When I said help me, help me, help me, help me
Thank you, for listening to my prayer
I'm working on my rewrite, that's right
I'm gonna change the ending
Gonna throw away my title
And toss it in the trash
Every minute after midnight
All the time I'm spending
Is just for working on my rewrite, that's right
I'm gonna turn it into cash
I'll eliminate the pages
Where the father has a breakdown
And he has to leave the family
But he really meant no harm
Gonna substitute a car chase
And a race across the rooftops
When the father saves the children
And he holds them in his arms
And I say help me, help me, help me, help me
Thank you!
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Preparation for Second Chances / Turning Points

How many times have you wished you could start over, hit the “reset” button in your life? A specific event – a devastating loss or unexpected gift – may bring an opportunity to reexamine and reevaluate circumstances and future actions. Or a gradual increasing restlessness or unease with a living situation or level of (un)happiness in life may precipitate a “turning point.” This can be a crucial time to reflect and draw on our inner resources of strength, courage, and hope for a better life to move us toward that goal. Reflection may also result in the realization that help is necessary to provide insight and direction, physical resources, or emotional support.

Many spiritual traditions include the concept of turning points. Most Christians believe that accepting Christ offers the promise of salvation, quoting Jesus: “You must be born again.” The Buddhist Eightfold Path promises liberation from the cycle of rebirth, while pagan and nature-centered traditions include rituals and celebrations of the changing of the seasons. We reference these spiritual traditions when we acknowledge sources for redemption and renewal in our lives. Since many UU’s come from other churches that impose specific beliefs and discourage questioning, the fourth principle, “A free and responsible search for truth and meaning,” may be viewed as a second opportunity to regain a faith foundation or reestablish a spiritual connection with others.

As narrators of our own stories, we can edit them at any time, removing meaningless parts and focusing on the lessons we’ve learned or the blessings we’ve received. In his song “Working on my Rewrite,” Paul Simon sings of someone attempting to change his life story:

I’ll eliminate the pages
Where the father has a breakdown
And he has to leave the family
But he really meant no harm

Gonna substitute a car chase
And a race across the rooftops
Where the father saves the children
And he holds them in his arms

Disabling mental illness may mean that relationships cannot endure without change. Situations such as abuse, criminal behavior, or dissolution of trust may mean that no second chance is advisable. In such situations, individuals may have to move on in their lives for another chance for themselves.

Every second a seeker can start over,
For his life’s mistakes
Are initial drafts
And not the final version.
Sri Chinmoy

Every second we have a second chance to do something we haven’t done yet. That’s why it’s called a second and not a first. *Robert J. Braathe*

We cannot start over, but we can begin now, and make a new ending. *Zig Ziglar*

All my life, I have been a celebrant of Halloween. For me, it is the most important day of the year, the turning point in the old pagan calendar. *John Burnside*

At Jupiter, we're surprised in many, many different ways, and we overturn a lot of our long-held beliefs. But ... we, as scientists, don't bemoan overturning a long-held belief. We, instead, celebrate the success of a new understanding. *Jack Connerney, NASA scientist on the Juno mission*

I've learned that making a "living" is not the same thing as making a life. I've learned that life sometimes gives you a second chance. I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw some things back. *Maya Angelou*

I believe in second chances, I just don't think everyone deserves one. *Author unknown*

In a chronically leaking boat, energy devoted to changing vessels is more productive than energy devoted to patching leaks. *Warren Buffett*

Questions to Ponder

1. In a "rewrite" of your own story, what chapters would you be tempted to "throw in the trash?" What might keep you from doing so? Which parts of your story are you ready to let go of to make room for new pages?
2. What second chances have you granted yourself or others? How have these results influenced subsequent decisions you have made about second chances?
3. Close relationships typically go through ups and downs and sometimes must be ended. Think of a time someone close to you has crossed a line you thought "unforgiveable." Reflect on what made you think a second chance was or was not possible.
4. Many personal turning points are stimulated by specific points in time: "milestone" birthdays, historical events, family crises or celebrations. What events in your life have helped shape your outlook on life or offered a different perspective of yourself or others?
5. Perhaps your family has stories of second chances or turning points, stories that have passed through generations. How have you been affected by the expectations attached to such stories? What is a second chance story that you wish future generations to learn from?
6. If you are looking for a second chance or turning point in your life now, what is it?

Words of the Day

Before coming to the gathering, think of a few words, phrases or metaphors to describe turning points in your life. Or think of a second chance you have given someone else or yourself. The prompt for the Words of the Day activity will be to complete either or both of these sentences:

"Something that sparked a turning point in my life was when I ..."

"I gave myself or someone else a second chance when I ..."

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