

## Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network CGN May 2010

### **Supporting Each Other Through Personal Loss**

*Anonymous*

My SGM experience has always been a positive one and I have looked forward to our bi-weekly meetings for about four years now. Seven of us have been together that entire time.

About a year ago, we shared a deep personal loss with one of our members when he received a phone call during our meeting telling him his adult son had died in a tragic accident.

This grieving father has always been the leader of our group not only in discussions, but as a caring friend who had often reached out to each of us in our own times of emotional need.

We struggled with ways to support him and the SGM process and our own group's covenant helped us do that. The "check-in" process that we follow does not allow for any "counseling" or suggestions unless the speaker asks for help. As the weeks progressed, this allowed him to vent his sorrow, talk openly about his son and their relationship and feel comfort from a group of close friends who are committed to the process and to supporting each other.

In recognition of the anniversary of that horrific night recently, he asked if we could use the next meeting to honor loved ones whom we have lost. We agreed but I know that I, at least, felt unsure about how the evening would go.

I should not have been worried. Through the process of supporting his request, we each reached into our hearts to share our own stories of loss. From those stories we all found new comfort and learned a lot about our shared human experience.

One of the values of small group discussions for me is to gain a clearer understanding of who I am. That evening we discovered that several of us had lost parents at a young age and we were able to talk about how that had felt. Others talked about the passing of friends or loved ones who were young and in the prime of life, or the loss of respected grandparents.

As the session came to a close I realized that everyone in the room had shared an important story in a very authentic manner and it had been a truly cathartic conversation for each and every one of us.

One of the directives for the SGM process is to speak from your own experience in a deeply personal way. I think we have always done that, but I doubt that we will ever have another session as touching as that one. As a group we have gained a love and understanding of each other that also serves to deepen our understanding of ourselves.