



Unitarian Universalist
Small Group Ministry
Network Website



Wednesday Evening Small Group (via ZOOM!)

Behaving Mindfully During CV Lockdown

Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church, Hayward, CA, Kathryn LaMar, 22 April 2020

CHALICE LIGHTING

0.5 min

Each place is the right place--the place where I now am can be a sacred space.

Ravi Ravindra

SILENT MEDITATION / CENTERING

2 min

The first sound of the gong brings us to silence. Please take time to center yourself, and temporarily push aside whatever might be preventing you from participating fully in tonight's session. The second sound of the gong returns us to each other's presence.

OPENING WORDS:

0.5 min

Social distance makes it all the easier to focus on small differences between groups and to put a negative spin on the ways of others and a positive spin on our own. *Daniel Goleman*

CHECK-IN (2 ROUNDS)

36 min

Please share some thing(s) about your life since last we met. How are managing your life, and how has it been affected by the Coronavirus "shelter in place" policies?

INTRODUCTION:

5 min

How Are We Coping?

The following article by Rick McDaniel, an evangelical minister in Richmond, VA, appeared on the BeliefNet website

Not everyone is dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak the same. Different people look at situations differently. Our differences influence our opinions and behaviors about many things, including this pandemic we are experiencing.

Our differences explain why we do certain things, why we react in particular ways and why others act the way they do. I see these differences as styles--distinct styles reflected in how we are reacting to this Coronavirus pandemic. Understanding these styles can help us to reduce conflict and improve communication, and identifying the styles of family members and others can help us get along better and make it through this challenging season.

Let's examine these various styles and see if we can identify our style and the styles of those we know and love.

Information Hound

Information Hounds simply can't get enough knowledge about anything and everything involving the pandemic. When they're not watching the television news they're reading all kinds of articles on the internet. They want to know about possible treatments and new vaccines. How many people have the virus and how many people have died. What areas in America are hot spots and where the virus will expand next. They want to know about health care workers and hospital bed availability. How many ventilators and respirators are needed. They simply want to know as much as possible about all things Coronavirus related.

Worry Wart

These people are overwhelmed with worry about this situation, and can't stop thinking about what might happen in the future. Their mind just keeps racing with thoughts about all the terrible things that might happen, and they think about the changes that have happened and the ones to come. They are overwhelmed with fear about how their life may be different than it was before. Worry warts are especially concerned about their family; they wonder if their jobs are safe and worry about financial difficulties that may come. They worry their loved ones could get the virus and possibly even die. They simply can't stop worrying about all of it.

Scientist

These people are totally centered on what science tells them about this pandemic. They want to listen to Dr. Fauci, Dr. Birx and Surgeon General Adams. They don't really care what the President or Vice-President have to say. Their focus is on what the scientists and doctors prescribe, and what they tell us about our future reality. They want all decisions to be made by scientists not by those who have been elected or chosen to lead in this crisis time.

Pessimist

These folks see this pandemic forever changing our way of life. From their perspective the outbreak will continue and last longer than many believe it will. The economy will not recover anytime soon. Businesses will close and never reopen. They see hardship and pain for many people as their financial lives are ruined. By the time a vaccine is developed and in full use it will be too late save us from hundreds of thousands of deaths. These people believe mistakes were made that created an even bigger crisis. They see lack of medical supplies like masks, shields, and ventilators as symptomatic of our problems, and think we should have taken drastic measures like a national shutdown early on to stem the tide of this pandemic.

Rule Follower

These people are adamant about following all of the Coronavirus guidelines. They are letter-of-the-law more than spirit-of-the-law people. They have sheltered in place and not left their homes; they get their groceries delivered, work from home, and home school their kids. If they ever do leave home they keep at least six feet away from any other person, wear a mask, and when they get back home wash their hands for at least twenty seconds. They do not pick-up restaurant food. They exercise in the home, only going outside to walk the dog. Their home situation is organized, and they see themselves as good citizens.

Optimist

These folks see light at the end of the tunnel--it's not an oncoming train but a ray of sunshine. They believe we will get through this crisis and actually come out better on the other side. They believe there are already hopeful therapeutics that can save lives and shorten the length of illness, and see a vaccine being developed in record time that will cure this virus forever. They believe that this crisis will end sooner than many think it will with not nearly as many lives being lost, and that our economy will come roaring back, making this challenging season a distant memory.

Quotes About Isolation**5 min**

Every terrorist regime in the world uses isolation to break people's spirits.

Bell Hooks

If you wanted to invent a device that could rewire our minds, if you wanted to create a society of people who were perpetually distracted, isolated, and overtired, if you wanted to weaken our memories and damage our capacity for focus and deep thought, if you wanted to reduce empathy, encourage self-absorption, and redraw the lines of social etiquette, you'd likely end up with a smartphone.

Catherine Price

It is a rare person who can cut himself off from mediate and immediate relations with others for long spaces of time without undergoing a deterioration in personality.

Harry Stack Sullivan

I think, if you have enough inner resources, then you can live in isolation for long periods of time and not feel diminished by it.

Aung San Suu Kyi

We're all islands shouting lies to each other across seas of misunderstanding.

Rudyard Kipling

We don't heal in isolation, but in community.

S. Kelley Harrell

There is no way that writers can be tamed and rendered civilized or even cured. The only solution known to science is to provide the patient with an isolation room, where he can endure the acute stages in private and where food can be poked in to him with a stick.

Robert A. Heinlein

I believe that dialogue is the key to breaking through our tendency to separate and isolate. Dialogue changes isolation and loneliness into connection and interdependence.

Vinessa Shaw

It's not all bad. Heightened self-consciousness, apartness, an inability to join in, physical shame and self-loathing—they are not all bad. Those devils have been my angels. Without them I would never have disappeared into language, literature, the mind, laughter and all the mad intensities that made and unmade me.

Stephen Fry

SONG How Can I Keep From Singing (Cover by Enya) 4 min

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MM8mOKfxmWw>>

Practicing mindfulness**5 min****From the April 2019 Stow-Acton, MA Congregation SGM Program**

Life can quickly pass us by when we're not focused on what matters. Many of us have a habit of emphasizing the negative and overlooking the positive. Being mindful can help.

Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present. It means noticing what is happening in your mind and in your body. It means being aware of what is happening around you. When you are mindful, you carefully observe your thoughts and feelings without judging them. Your feelings aren't good or bad--they just are.

Mindfulness is about observing. You notice your life with a little distance, instead of reacting emotionally. The opposite of mindfulness is being on autopilot, when you do things without any thought or consideration. Mindfulness means living in the moment and being aware of your current experience, rather than dwelling on the past or anticipating the future.

From Psychology Today

Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present. When you're mindful, you carefully observe your thoughts and feelings without judging them good or bad. Instead of letting your life pass you by, mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to your current experience, rather than dwelling on the past or anticipating the future.

From Doug Kraft, UUA Staff

If we have too much stuff in our lives, our attention skips from one object to another without really enjoying anything. If we have too many activities, our attention jumps from past to future without settling into the present. If we have too many opinions, we end up thinking about how things should be without fully seeing how things are.

Practices that cultivate simplicity do two things. (1) They reduce the amount of stuff, activities or preferences so we have a better chance of settling into the present. They get the outward to resonate a little better with the happiness, joy and ease in our depths. And (2) they help us become more aware of our relationship to stuff, experience and thought.

Quotes About Mindfulness**5 min**

Essentially, meditation allows us to live in ways that are less automatic. This necessarily means less time spent worrying, ruminating, and trying to control things we can't control. It means we become less vulnerable to the throes of the fear-driven, older parts of our brains, and freer to use our newer and more sophisticated mental abilities: patience, compassion, acceptance and reason.

David Cain

Meditation practice isn't about trying to throw ourselves away and become something better. It's about befriending who we are already.

Pema Chödrön

What you are thinking, what shape your mind is in, is what makes the greatest difference of all.

Willie Mays

Don't just do something, sit there.

Sylvia Boorstein

The way to live in the present is to remember that 'This too shall pass.' When you experience joy, remembering that 'This too shall pass' helps you savor the here and now. When you experience pain and sorrow, remembering that 'This too shall pass' reminds you that grief, like joy, is only temporary.

Joey Green

Our minds are like crows. They pick up everything that glitters, no matter how uncomfortable our nests get with all that metal in them.

Thomas Merton

Mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening right now without wishing it were different; enjoying the pleasant without holding on when it changes (which it will); being with the unpleasant without fearing it will always be this way (which it won't).

James Baraz

In meditation we discover our inherent restlessness. Sometimes we get up and leave. Sometimes we sit there but our bodies wiggle and squirm and our minds go far away. This can be so uncomfortable that we feel it's impossible to stay. Yet this feeling can teach us not just about ourselves but what it is to be human...we really don't want to stay with the nakedness of our present experience. It goes against the grain to stay present. These are the times when only gentleness and a sense of humor can give us the strength to settle down...so whenever we wander off, we gently encourage ourselves to "stay" and settle down. Are we experiencing restlessness? Stay! Are fear and loathing out of control? Stay! Aching knees and throbbing back? Stay! What's for lunch?

Stay! I can't stand this another minute! Stay!

Pema Chödrön,

A MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

5 min

This exercise was taken verbatim from the April 2019 Mindfulness session plan of First Parish Church of Stow and Acton MA.

Let's engage in a brief mindfulness exercise--a simple five-minute breathing meditation.

(Facilitator reads the following words)

First, choose a relaxed and comfortable position.

Close your eyes if you wish and relax your body. Notice how your body feels where you are; take a moment to notice any external distractions, like background sounds or the temperature of the room.

Then become aware of your breath and notice the sensation of your breath going in and out. Pay attention to the sensations of your breath, one at a time – when one ends, another begins.

Your mind is likely to start flitting from one thought to another. Whenever you notice that your mind has wandered, just gently bring your attention back to the feeling of your breath going in and out. Keep focusing on your breath, in silence.

(Facilitator times 5 minutes, then reads the following words.)

Once again take note of your whole body and the sensations you are feeling. Then come back to the group.

PREPARATION FOR GROUP REFLECTION

1 min

Read the questions for reflection, one by one.

BREAK

10 min

GROUP REFLECTION / FEEDBACK

36 min

Two rounds. Take a moment of silence and consider your response to one or more of the following questions.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON COPING WITH CORONAVIRUS

- Which of McDaniel's styles seems to be yours? If more than one, which others do you tend toward?
- Do the coping styles of the people with whom you are sheltering in place conflict with yours? How do you deal with that conflict?
- Are your coping styles serving you well? How have you tried to change your behaviors, and has that helped?
- What habits do you bring to thinking about the past? Describe times when you thought about the past in ways that weren't helpful or ways that were helpful.
- "Mindfulness" can mean many things. What does it mean to you?
- Did you have a mindfulness practice before the lockdown? Describe it, and how it has changed since the lockdown began.



SONG LYRICS USED IN SGM SESSION

HOW CAN I KEEP FROM SINGING (Enya Lyrics)

My life goes on in endless song
Above earth's lamentation
I hear the real, though far-off hymn
That hails a new creation

Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear its music ringing
It sounds an echo in my soul
How can I keep from singing?

While though the tempest loudly roars
I hear the truth, it liveth
And though the darkness 'round me close
Songs in the night it giveth

No storm can shake my inmost calm
While to that rock I'm clinging
Since love is Lord of heaven and earth
How can I keep from singing?

When tyrants tremble in their fear
And hear their death knell ringing
When friends rejoice both far and near
How can I keep from singing?

In prison cell and dungeon vile
Our thoughts to them are winging
When friends by shame are undefiled
How can I keep from singing?

Come Together Mindfully

Beatles Parody by Monastics of Deer Park Monastery

Here come the Buddha,
He come walking up slowly
He got Sangha eyeball
He one holy roller
He takes each step mindfully.
Got to be awakened, he just do what he please.
She wear no shoe shine,
She got earth-dyed garment
She got mudra finger,
She send loving kindness
She say, I'm in you, you're in me.
One thing I can tell you is you got to be free.
Come together, right now, mindfully
He bagged one Mara,
He got paramitas

He got full awareness,
He one meditator
He got feet crossed above his knees.
Hold you in his presence,
You can feel total ease.
Come together, right now, mindfully.
She dedicated,
She sits early morning
She got muddy water, to plant lotus flowers
She say,
One and all they inter-be.
Got to be the real thing 'cause she's inside of me
Come together, right now, mindfully.