

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
**Bravery**  
First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA. October 2023

**Opening Words and Chalice Lighting**

“With full hearts,  
we affirm our relationships with one another;  
we recognize our agency and our connective power;  
and we accept our responsibility to be bold and courageous.  
We light this chalice,  
symbol of all that we are, all that we have done together,  
and all that we will be as our shared ministry encourages those within, and  
beyond, our walls.” - *Erika Hewitt*

**Check-in/Sharing:** This is the time to mention any issues or events on your mind that you would like to share.

**Topic: Bravery**

The term “bravery” can evoke many images – a soldier going into battle, a firefighter rushing into (rather than out of) a burning structure, a lone figure staring down a tank at a political rally, a whistleblower daring to tell the truth at the risk of personal sacrifice. We are applauded for “being brave” at the doctor’s office, for getting on the bus the first day of school, even for tolerating a first haircut.

But bravery isn’t just physical. Humans are social animals – we are hardwired to make and maintain links with others. Doing anything that can put that in peril, that could potentially humiliate ourselves or jeopardize our connections, comes at a real risk, and overcoming that fear also requires bravery.

Bravery is also often seen as synonymous with courage. Both imply an ability to move forward in the face of danger or fear. So bravery is idiosyncratic. While big issues such as health situations, facing loss, or trying again after a feeling of failure seem to require bravery for most of us, each of us has some fears and anxieties that might seem small to others, but we might need to push ourselves to face and to overcome.

In this session we will explore what it means to us to be brave, to what extent we value bravery, what role it plays in our lives.

“Scared is what you're feeling. Brave is what you're doing.” - *Emma Donoghue*

“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave [person] is not [one] who does not feel afraid, but [...] who conquers that fear.” - *Nelson Mandela*

“It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.” - *Mark Twain*

“Courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen.” —*Brené Brown*

“There are so many ways to be brave in this world... Sometimes it is nothing more than gritting your teeth through pain, and the work of every day, the slow walk toward a better life.” - *Veronica Roth*

### **Possible Questions for Discussion:**

- How did you understand the concept of “bravery” growing up? Has that definition changed for you?
- Who do you think is brave? What qualities lead you to think that?
- Which is more difficult – being brave physically or emotionally? What helps you to be brave?
- What’s the bravest thing you’ve ever done? Conversely, can you share a moment you wish you’d been more brave?
- Can you think of any ways any of your relationships have improved because you were brave?
- Are there any situations in which you need to be brave that might not require bravery for others?
- Have you ever stood up for something you strongly believed was important despite fears and perhaps pushback from others?

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions and then share).

**Wrapping Up:** How did you like this topic and session?

### **Closing Words**

“To be brave is to behave bravely when your heart is faint. So you can be really brave only when you really ain’t.” - *Piet Hein*