



Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Small Group Ministry Session

## **CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS**

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, SC

Written by Francine Proulx and Kathleen Anderson, October 30, 2018

**Welcome, Chalice Lighting:** Today we can remind one another to rest for a moment on the forming edge of our lives, to claim awareness and strength, to feel gratitude for the love and community we find together.

~Kathleen McTigue, adapted

**Check In:** Briefly share something from your life and how you are feeling today

### **Opening Reading:**

There are no insignificant relationships. Every experience that we have contains purpose and meaning. Each event, each person in our lives embodies an energetic fragment of our own psyche and soul. Our individual spiritual task is to recognize and integrate all of them into our awareness so that the greater pattern of our mission can shine forth in its full dimensions. ~Carolyn Myss, [\*Defy Gravity: Healing Beyond the Bounds of Reason\*](#)

### **Questions to Prompt and Guide Discussion:**

1. What do your relationships with others reveal about you?
2. Describe your most important relationship and how it has changed since it began.
3. Many close relationships are based on hidden rules and assumptions, and they can falter or be seriously damaged when someone unintentionally violates unseen boundaries or the hidden rules. What do you think about the need to have an explicit covenant in your close relationships, and how do you view the periodic “renegotiation of the contract”?
4. What do you consider reasonable expectations in a long-term relationship? What happens to the relationship if the expectations are not met?
5. What would you change about an important relationship in your life?

### **Readings (see below)**

#### **Sharing with deep listening**

This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share one or more responses to the session questions.

**Break** for breathing, bathroom, or a stretch

**Open Discussion:** This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice deep listening.

#### **Closing reading**

No relationship in life will or should stay the same as time passes. One of the greatest gifts of life well lived is that we continue to grow and evolve as the years go by. Some changes will be good, and others maybe not so good. The important thing is learning to accept variety while maintaining constancy, because good relationships truly need both. ~Dr. Tiffany Davis Henry, Psychologist

### **Announcements / Plans**

**Check Out:** As we close our time together, how are you feeling now?

**Extinguish the Chalice**

## Readings:

Wisdom knows that relationships change over time; courage knows when it's time to change the relationship.  
~Mark Amend

When people are ready to change, they change. They never do it before then, and sometimes they die before they get around to it. You can't make anyone change if they don't want to, just like when they are ready, you can't stop them. ~Andy Warhol

I believe that everything happens for a reason. People change so that you can learn to let go, things go wrong so that you appreciate them when they're right, you believe lies so you eventually can learn to trust no one but yourself, and sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together. ~Marilyn Monroe

You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with. ~Tim Ferris

Lots of things can be fixed. But many times, relationships between people cannot be fixed, and they shouldn't be. There is nothing wrong. You're aboard a ship setting sail, and the other person has joined the inland circus, or is boarding a different ship, and you just can't be with each other anymore. What once was has taught you, maybe hurt you, or given you gifts, but now your paths have diverged. ~ C. Joy Bell C.

Some people we just outgrow. Relationships might end with no real explanation as to why. And when that happens, respect the shift. Honor the growth and understand that not all roots can stay planted in the same soil forever. ~Alex Elle

When you love someone, you don't feel love for them all the time, or in exactly the same way from moment to moment. That is an impossibility, and it is a lie to pretend so. And yet, this is what many of us expect or demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationship. We leap at the flow of the tide, and resist in terror at its ebb. We are afraid the joy and closeness may never return. We insist instead on permanence and duration, when the only continuity truly possible is in growth and fluidity—in freedom, in the sense that dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but still partners in a pattern. The only real security is not in owing or possession, not in demands or expectation, not in hoping, even. Security in relationship lies neither in looking back to what was with nostalgia, nor forward to what might be with dread or anticipation. Love is about living in the present relationship and fully accepting what it is right now.

~Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *A Gift from the Sea*

Over time, people's relationships with each other change. Friends are no longer friends. It's not necessarily a mean thing. They get married, have kids, move away, or maybe they don't, and you do. Children grow up. Parents get old. Maybe your parents break up. Maybe someone gets sick or hurt. Maybe they find religion. People get divorced. Somebody dies. Context changes. You can't get mad about change because it's always going to happen. Maybe your relationship will morph into something new, or maybe it won't. The best thing is to be grateful for the love and the good times you had and either let things shift or move on. You never know what life will bring. ~Gary Smith