

Coping Skills

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA March 2024

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:

Here, today, in this place and with these people,
May we listen so that we can hear;
May we hear so that we can feel;
May we feel so that we can know; and
May we know so that we can change ourselves and this world.
May this chalice we light,
Light our Way. - *Erik Walker Wikstrom*

Check-in/Sharing:

Let's each take a couple minutes to check in with how we are feeling and any thing we would like to share. Agree to Covenant. Please read aloud together "Deep Listening" (appended).

Topic: Coping Skills

Coping often involves dealing with and attempting to overcome problems and difficulties. There are so many external things that can be hard to cope with, from challenging situations or physical challenges to dealing with change or with difficult people. Our own emotions such as feeling frustrated, depressed, anxious, overwhelmed, afraid or uncertain can also be challenging.

From our earliest years, we have been developing ways to cope. Watch a child learning to walk, share a toy or deal with tiredness. As adolescents most of us faced challenges in things we found hard to master, rejection by other people, and dealing with new emotions. As adults, we add stresses about job security, relationships and responsibilities. Along the way, we have developed tools and techniques that help us to cope with situations, with people and even with our feelings. These coping skills can range from learning self-care, to people skills, to using our feelings as clues that we need to turn to others, to seek help or to change the external situation.

"One of life's best coping mechanisms is to know the difference between an inconvenience and a problem." - *Robert Fulghum*

"Humor can make a serious difference. In the workplace, at home, in all areas of life – looking for a reason to laugh is necessary. A sense of humor helps us to get through the dull times, cope with the difficult times, enjoy the good times and manage the scary times." - *Steve Goodier*

“Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment.” - *Buddha*

“Food became my coping mechanism and I've never been able to break that cycle. -- *Gemma Collins*

“I'm still coping with my trauma, but coping by trying to find different ways to heal it rather than hide it.” - *Clemantine Wamariya*

“We're lousy at recognizing when our normal coping mechanisms aren't working. Our response is usually to do it five times more, instead of thinking, maybe it's time to try something new.” - *Robert Sapolsky*

Possible Questions for Discussion:

- Under what conditions do you find it harder to cope? Could you share any tools, techniques or practices that make it easier for you to cope with difficulties?
- What are some of the ways that you cope with the situations or challenges that arise in your life? Have they changed over time?
- How did you learn to cope in various situations? What role did family, friends, counselors, and others play for you?
- How have you helped others learn to cope? Can you think of times when others helped you cope?
- Have you any coping mechanisms that maybe used to work but don't work as well anymore or approaches that work in some situations but not in others?
- How do you balance accepting 'what is' with the need to work to change it?

(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:

“Trust yourself. You've survived a lot, and you'll survive whatever is coming.” - *Robert Tew*

Deep Listening Mary-Elizabeth Cotton

Let us listen...

Just for a while
let us silence our minds
and open our hearts.

Just for a while
let us listen from within.

Listen...

Not to gain knowledge,
not to formulate questions,

rather to chance upon
sacred bonds and
profound wisdom.

Just for a while
let us not seek information
or answers.

Let us not rouse the intellect
but embrace the spirit.

If thoughts cloud the brain
may we let them pass.

If replies tingle on the tongue,
let us breathe them away silently.

Return to them later
but here...

Here in this precious time of

sharing
Let us listen...

Let the words wash over us
and seep into a still quiet pool.

Let us listen.