

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Small Group Ministry Session Plan  
**Courageous and Heroic Actions**  
Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship of La Crosse, WI, Diane Haines, February 2014

**Chalice Lighting:**

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”

-Winston S. Churchill

**Check-in:** How are you today?

**Quotes:**

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

“It takes a lot of courage to show your dreams to someone else.” -Erma Bombeck

“Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.” -Lao Tzu

**Topic:**

Plato's four cardinal virtues are:

Prudence that is the right judgment and actions at all times,

Justice that is always giving people their rights,

Temperance that is practicing self-control and

Courage that is ability to fight fear and uncertainty.

Of the four virtues, courage is the most recognized in contemporary Western societies. Even as we value courage, we are becoming a society that prevents children from developing it.

Richard Louv, author of “Last Child in the Woods,” documents the widespread societal shift away from outdoor play. One of the reasons for the shift is parents’ preoccupation with children’s safety and the perception that nature is unsafe.

Many people think “courage” means “not being afraid.” But, courage is a quality that people can draw on when they must do something, even when they are afraid. Courage is what allows you to be yourself, to take risks, to have convictions, and to stand up for what you believe, even when it is hard to do so.

To develop a virtue, such as courage, means that facing one’s fears and learning how to overcome them is necessary. For instance, if you imagine a bear is prowling in the woods, or you find a snake on your path, or you stand up to a bully, these could be occasions for fear, and also occasions for developing courage by learning how to overcome fear.

**A sample of a heroic action:** Captain Chesley Sullenberger successfully landed US Airways Flight 1549 on the Hudson River after losing both engines shortly after takeoff. He saved the lives of 155 passengers and crew. When asked what he was thinking during the crises, he talked about going through the steps to try to restart the engines, calculating the speed and altitude required to turn back to LaGuardia, and then deciding to glide the plane to a landing on the river. He forced himself to use his many years of training and would not be distracted by fears of what could go wrong. He was not born brave; he learned how to be brave through years of practice.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

Please respond to whichever question or questions you feel moved to answer. You may also respond to a **quote** or **topic** paragraph on the previous page. Feel free to explore.

- 1) What are the moments in your life when you have felt called to take a courageous stand, or to be courageous? Reflect on what happened when you were courageous.
- 2) When do you wish you could have been more courageous? What held you back?
- 3) Over the past several days/weeks/months, have you seen examples of people being courageous?
- 4) If you would rather talk about someone else who you deem to be courageous or heroic (example above), please feel free to do so.

### **Closing Words:**

Song of the cowardly Lion The Wizard of Oz

If I only had the Nerve

Life is sad believe me Missy,  
When you're born to be a sissy,  
Without the vim and verve  
But I could change my habits/never more be scared of rabbits  
If I only had the nerve  
I'm afraid there's no denyin/ I'm just a dandelion  
A fate I don't deserve  
But I could show my prowess/ be a lion not a mouse  
If I only had the nerve