

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Web
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY Plan for Facilitators
Failure/Success
Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA April 2004

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

“There is no failure. Only feedback.” Anonymous

“Only those who do nothing make no mistakes.” Anonymous

“Success is the ability to go from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm.”
Winston Churchill

Reflection/Personal Sharing/Prayer (approximately 30 minutes)

(The facilitator should briefly remind the group of confidentiality/anonymity, that this is not the time for cross conversation, etc.)

Focus Reading: From Charles Stephens, Jr.

How can we lose when we are so sincere? Charlie Brown

“It is easy to enjoy the feeling of winning. It is easy to cheer the winning team, to cheer the Celtics through another winning season. But we are unsure how to behave when our team loses.

“I have a friend who played on a college basketball team that lost 21 straight games. He said once: ‘I didn't have the emotional equipment to handle those defeats with much agility’

“How could he? How could any of us? We have been taught the importance of winning: how to win at games, how to have a winning personality, how to succeed. We have not been taught how to lose, or the importance of losing, or the inevitability of it.

“Losing is as important as winning, and as common. Why aren't we taught how to fail? Everybody does it. Some people, perfectionists, for instance, tend to lose badly. They are harsh on themselves -and on others -and sometimes, in order to avoid defeat, they refuse to try anything new or risky. A character in Dr. Zhivago says: ‘I don't like people who have never fallen or stumbled; their virtue is lifeless and of little value.’

“It was Chesterton, I think, who said: ‘If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly.’ Failure and defeat are parts of our lives, necessary parts. Those who are willing to try and to lose are confident about life. They know that a defeat can be borne. Confident people are people who have lost and discovered that they survived, that they were flexible, that they were still standing.

“‘There is no sun without shadows,’ said Camus. There are no victories without defeats. There are hurts and losses in life. After confronting them we can usually pick ourselves up again, and try again, not because we know we shall win next time, but because we know the struggle is worth it. By learning to lose we learn to live.”

Focus Questions:

What experiences of personal failure have most affected you and how?

What have you learned from your experiences of failure?

What theological lessons have you drawn from these experiences?

Focus Reading: From *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* by Tom Robbins

“So you think you are a failure? Well, you probably are. What’s wrong with that? In the first place, if you have any sense at all you must have learned by now that we pay just as dearly for our triumphs as we do for our defeats. (So) Go ahead and fail. Embrace failure! Seek it out! Learn to love it. That may be the only way any of us will ever be free.”

Focus Questions:

What price, if any, have you paid for your successes?

What have you learned from your successes?

What connections, if any do you see between your successes and failures?

What helps you feel free?

Checkout/Likes and Wishes

(This is the time for facilitators to ask participants what they liked about this meeting and what they might wish for future meetings. This is also the time for any discussion of logistics.)

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice: From Alexander Graham Bell

“When one door closes another one opens; but we so often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door, that we do not see the ones which open for us.”