

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Small Group Ministry

Flexibility

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA, June 2021

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

"We come together every week

Bound not by a creed,

Or a mutual desire to please one God

Or many Gods

Yet we are drawn together

By a belief, that how we are in the world,

Who we are together

Matters.

We light this chalice,

together in the knowledge

That love, not fear, can change this world " - *Jennifer Gracen*

Check-in/Sharing:

Please share anything you are carrying into this gathering that may crowd your mind and your ability to be present here and now. Please discuss summer sessions.

Topic: Flexibility:

"A mentally flexible person looks like they've got it all under control. Which is quite ironic, because the key thing with mental flexibility is knowing that you can't control everything. As a result of this mental flexibility, you allow greater freedom and room for the unexpected in your life, thus creating the image that you can handle everything and anything." - *Roli Edema*

Aside from putting your foot behind your head, there are other types of flexibility:

Cognitive: using different thinking strategies and mental frameworks.

Emotional: varying your approach to dealing with emotions and those of others.

Dispositional: remaining optimistic and, at the same time, realistic.

Some of us are naturally flexible—thriving on the unexpected, altering routines as much as we can. Some of us aren't—appreciating good to-do lists that we hate to vary from. Flexibility (or adaptability) is often about control, change, or beliefs. When situations change, what's needed is a new way of thinking. When the usual approach doesn't work, we need a new way of looking at a problem.

“That which yields is not always weak.” - *Jacqueline Carey*

“We put terrible pressure on our minds. When we tighten them or harden our views or beliefs, we lose the softness and flexibility that makes for real shelter, belonging, and protection. Sometimes the best way of caring for the soul is to make flexible again some of the views that harden and crystalize your mind; for these alienate you from your own depth and beauty.” - *John O'Donohue*

Consider your relationship to change.

- Can you tell us about a time when you struggled with change, or when you had no control over a situation and had to adapt?
- Have you had to deal with others who were being inflexible? What did you do?
- Does your level of optimism relate to your ability to adapt to a situation?
- Have you experienced a change as positive or an opportunity?
- Is there anyone in your life that models good flexibility?

We can improve our ability to be flexible. Have you done any of these?

- Looked for positive ways to make changes work rather than identifying why change will not work (saying “yes” rather than “no” as a first instinct)
- Made suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of changes and shown a willingness to learn new methods or procedures
- Bounced back from setbacks and maintained a positive attitude

How can we use our own flexibility efforts to expand beyond the self to include interactions with others, to show a willingness to be flexible in acceptance of others, and create a more peaceful world?

Our flexibility—what we do with it—is probably the greatest catalyst for change in the world. Determining when to be flexible or to hold firm can be complicated.

- Which things demand inflexibility? When and how do you push back?
- How flexible can you be when your beliefs don't align with other's beliefs?
- Do you ever struggle with other people's flexibility or inflexibility?
- Are there limitations (physical/emotional/health/economic) that might impact your ability to be flexible?

Wrapping up: How did you like this topic and session?

Closing words: “It's easier to think outside the box if you don't draw one around yourself.” - *Jason Kravitz*