

Session Plan
Forgiveness

Sanctuary Boston, MA, May 12, 2016

Welcoming, gathering (5 minutes)

Chalice lighting & opening words (1 minute)

To err is human, to forgive, divine. --Alexander Pope

Covenant (1 minute)

We will refrain from giving advice, focus on presence and sharing

We will use the mic so everyone can participate

We will let go of our busy-ness, slow down, and be fully present together

We will be attentive to the speaker, but will not expect visual cues of that attention

We will leave space for everyone to speak, respect the silences, and give time for reflection

We will inform the facilitators of absences and late arrivals

We will keep our conversations confidential

We will show up for every session

Check-in (2–3 minutes each @ 20 minutes)

Reading (3 minutes)

Life becomes easier when you learn to accept an apology you never got. --Robert Brault

Sincere forgiveness isn't colored with expectations that the other person apologize or change.

Don't worry whether or not they finally understand you. Love them and release them. Life feeds back truth to people in its own way and time. --Sara Paddison

Forgiveness has nothing to do with absolving a criminal of his crime. It has everything to do with relieving oneself of the burden of being a victim--letting go of the pain and transforming oneself from victim to survivor. Forgiveness has nothing to do with absolving a criminal of his crime. It has everything to do with relieving oneself of the burden of being a victim--letting go of the pain and transforming oneself from victim to survivor. -- C.R. Strahan

What if I forgave myself? I thought. What if I forgave myself even though I'd done something I shouldn't have? What if I was a liar and a cheat and there was no excuse for what I'd done other than because it was what I wanted and needed to do? What if I was sorry, but if I could go back in time I wouldn't do anything differently than I had done? What if I'd actually wanted to fuck every one of those men? What if heroin taught me something? What if yes was the right answer instead of no? What if what made me do all those things everyone thought I shouldn't have done was what also had got me here? What if I was never redeemed? What if I already was?" -- Cheryl Strayed

First response (20 minutes)

Take a moment of silence to consider these questions:

1. How do you begin to forgive someone? Does it require work? Are there some things that are unforgivable?
2. What does it mean to forgive someone?
3. How does it feel to forgive yourself versus forgiving others? Which is more difficult? Why?

4. What about receiving forgiveness? Has there been a time where you received forgiveness unexpectedly, or felt the sting of withheld forgiveness?

Feel free to respond to any questions or readings that resonate with your experience, inspire you, or challenge you. Each person will have a chance to share once, fully, without interruption or response.

Snack break (5 minutes)

Cross-conversation (20 minutes)

Use this less-structured time to expand on your previous sharing or respond to what others have shared. Please share thoughtfully and leave space for everyone to be heard.

Business / feedback (5 minutes)

Closing (1 minute)