

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network

Group Session Plan

I Want to Help, BUT.....

Opening Words:* Select the original or alternate version here and for Closing Words

Original Version

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.

Alternate Version

*Lord, make me a channel of thy peace;
that where there is hatred, I may bring love;
that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit
of forgiveness;
that where there is discord, I may bring
harmony;
that where there is error, I may bring truth;
that where there is doubt, I may bring faith;
that where there is despair, I may bring hope;
that where there are shadows, I may bring light;
that where there is sadness, I may bring joy.*

Check in: How is it with your spirit today?

Topic/Activity There is expectation in our culture and within Unitarian Universalism that we will be involved in service of some kind to those around us.

“Often we reach out to help one another and succeed. The expression of our natural compassion comes easily and we’re equal to the challenge. But clearly these deep internal questions of identity and relationship are going to arise much of the time we are caring for one another. The more wrenching the situation, the more likely such issues will be central. Who *are* we to ourselves and to one another? – it will all come down to that.

“*Will we look within?* Can we see that to be of most service to others we must face our own doubts, needs, and resistances? We’ve never grown without having done so. This wouldn’t be the first time we’ve fought the inertia of conditioning.” *How Can I Help*, Tam Das and Paul Gorman, 1985, p. 14-15.

Take time to reflect and share about these situations:

1. How can I help when my experiences are so *different* from those I would help?
How do I understand what is needed?
How do I engage without seeing pejorative?
How do I comprehend what I do not know firsthand?
2. How can I help when my experiences are *similar* to those I would help?
How do I accept that each a situation is unique to the person facing it, and that presence, not advice or opinion, what is needed?
How can I be with someone without judging how they approach the situation?
How can I sense what is needed without presuming that I have the answers?
3. How can I help when I feel that I have failed at helping?
How do I forgive myself when I do not do as well in my helping as I wish I had, or when I say or do something that is unintentionally hurtful?
How do I keep on helping, even when my help seems insignificant to me?
How can I persist in looking behind my hesitations to the gifts that I have to offer?

Check-out/Likes and Wishes: How was the session for you?

Closing Words*

Original Version	Alternate Version
O Divine Master,	<i>Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort</i>
grant that I may not so much seek to be	<i>than to be comforted;</i>
consoled, as to console;	<i>to understand, than to be understood;</i>
to be understood, as to understand;	<i>to love, than to be loved.</i>
to be loved, as to love.	<i>For it is by self-forgetting that one finds.</i>
For it is in giving that we receive.	<i>It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.</i>
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,	<i>It is by dying that one awakens to eternal life.</i>
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal	<i>Amen.</i>
Life. Amen.	

*Note: Opening and Closing Words were from the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi.
Alternate words, from Alcoholics Anonymous

Note: The essence of this session can be used as MEDITATION in other settings.

I want to help, but sometimes feel too distant or too close from the situation of others.

Grant me *humility*, when my experiences are so different from those I would help.

Help me understand what is needed.

May I engage without seeing pejorative.

Let me comprehend from my heart what I do not know firsthand.

Grant me *patience* when my experiences are similar to those I would help.

Help me accept that each a situation is unique to the person facing it, and that presence is what is needed

May I be with a person without guessing how he or she should approach the situation.

Let me sense of the struggle without needing to have answers.

Grant me *compassion* when I feel that I have failed at helping.

Help me forgive myself when I do not do as well as I wish I had, or when I say or do something that is unintentionally less than helpful.

May I keep on helping, even when my help seems insignificant to me.

Let me persist in looking behind my hesitations to the gifts that I have to offer.