

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
Take Care
Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

It seems that we have it backward in our society. We tend to look up to people who are under a great deal of stress who can handle loads of stress, and those who are under a great deal of pressure. When someone says, "I've been working really hard," or "I'm really stressed out," we are taught to admire, even emulate their behavior...[But] what you want to start doing is noticing your stress early *before* it gets out of hand.

-Richard Carlson, Ph.D., Don't Sweat the Small Stuff...and it's all small stuff

Check-in: *What experience did you have this month that was especially meaningful to you?*

Focus Reading: *The Journey*

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice --
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
"Mend my life!"
each voice cried.
But you didn't stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.

It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do --
determined to save
the only life you could save.
~ *Mary Oliver* ~

Focus Questions:

Do you make an effort to pay attention to what you need in life?

How do you know when your stress is "getting out of hand"?

If you had just one hour a week for yourself, how would you choose to use it?

When does taking care of oneself go from the right thing to do to a selfish pursuit?

List some self-care activities that might help you through the winter.

Check-out/Likes & Wishes: *Has this session changed the way you think about your life priorities?*

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice:

Self-care is rooted in paying attention to what is. Paying attention to what is means we must stop and be in the present moment. It asks us to become more comfortable with not knowing, with not having a pat answer or action to take, simply noticing what is happening in our body or our mood or our relationships--to observe the world.

-Jennifer Loudon "Being With What Is"