



Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Tears

Greenville UU Fellowship – Greenville, South Carolina

Small Group Ministry Session

Written by Kris Seitz, based on suggestions from Circle members. Date: March 2023

Welcome, Chalice Lighting: Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a holy place. We light the chalice of Unitarian Universalism in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world.

Personal Check In: Share something from your life since we last met & how you are feeling now.

Opening Reading

There is an ancient tribal proverb I once heard in India. It says that before we can see properly, we must first shed our tears to clear the way.

~ Libba Bray, American writer, b.1964, *The Sweet Far Thing*

Questions to prompt and guide discussion

1. What causes you to cry? Do you have some consistent tear triggers?
2. What gets in the way of your tears? Are there times when you feel you “should” cry but can’t or won’t?
3. What were your childhood or cultural messages about tears and crying? Were they the same for boys and girls?
4. What is the difference between tears of sadness, grief, fear, anger, anxiety, joy? What others can you identify?

Sitting in Silence (Reflect on questions just posed as you prepare to hear the readings)

Readings (See below)

Sharing: This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Please share one or more of your responses to the session questions or the readings.

(This is usually a good time to take a brief break)

Open Discussion: This is a time to respond to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.

Closing Reading:

There is sacredness in tears. They are not a mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love.

~ Washington Irving, American writer, b.1783

Announcements/Plans

Personal Check Out: As we close today, how are you feeling now?

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we meet again.

Readings:

When your heart cries and the lips are unable to express the pain, you have chosen tears as your medium of expression of your sufferings. ~ Paulomi Roy, American Indian writer, *Wings to the Broken Soul*

Maybe this was now normal for Olivier. Maybe every now and then he simply wept. Not in pain or sadness. The tears were just overwhelming memories, rendered into water, seeping out.

~ Louise Penny, Canadian mystery writer, b. 1958, *The Long Way Home*

Uncried tears have a way of filling the well of sadness even more deeply.

~ Robert J. Grover and Susan Fowler, *Helping Those Experiencing Loss*

The heart is frozen... and the tears are the beginning of its melting.

~ Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Osho, Indian philosopher/ mystic

Tears are a safety valve of the heart when too much pressure is laid upon it.

~ Dale E. Turner, priest and columnist, b.1917, *Different Seasons*

The cure for anything is salt water — sweat, tears, or the sea.

~ Karen Blixen, Danish author, b.1885 (Isak Dinesen)

Tears come from the heart and not from the brain. ~ Leonardo Da Vinci, polymath, 1452-1519

Tears are a form of communication – like speech – and require a listener.

~ Erica Jong, American writer, b.1942

Don't be afraid to cry. It will free your mind of sorrowful thoughts. ~ American Indian proverb - *Hopi*

Life is like an onion; you peel it off one layer at a time, and sometimes you weep. ~Carl Sandburg, American poet/ journalist/ editor, 1878-1967

Do not apologize for crying. Without this emotion, we are only robots.

~ Elizabeth Gilbert, American writer, b.1969

Heaven knows we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth, overlying our hard hearts. I was better after I had cried, than before—more sorry, more aware of my own ingratitude, more gentle.

~ Pip, in *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens, b.1812

No matter how big you get, it's still okay to cry because everybody's got a right to their own tears.

~ Jacqueline Woodson, American writer, b.1963

To cry was to release all sorts of ugly little pressures and tensions. Like waking out of a long, dark dream to a sun-filled day. ~ Anne McCaffrey, American/Irish Science fiction writer, b.1926-2011, *Nerilka's Story*

Crying is cleansing. There's a reason for tears, happiness or sadness. ~ Dionne Warwick, American singer, b.1940

What soap is for the body, tears are for the soul. ~ Jewish Proverb

My body needs laughter as much as it needs tears. Both are cleansers of stress.

~ Mahogany SilverRain, American writer

Laughter through tears is my favorite emotion. ~ Truvy Jones, in Broadway play *Steel Magnolias*, written by Robert Harling.