

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry Program
When Things Fall Apart
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR, April 2012

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING OR SOUND A CHIME (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

Spirit of Life and Love, we have gathered here in search of answers to hard questions. We have come in search of understanding, in search of community. We have come in search of hope and healing. Let this be a place not only of searching, but also of discovery. Let this be a place not only of learning, but also of wisdom. Let this be a place not only of meeting, but also of connection. And let this be a place where healing fosters giving, and hope fosters service.

-Adapted from Rev. Sue Ayer

CHECK-IN (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person)

TOPIC AND SHARING (up to 70 minutes for readings, questions, a few minutes for reflection and making notes if desired, individual sharing, optional open discussion at the end if the group agrees, with an optional 5 minute break about midway in the session)

READINGS

Behind my smile is a hurting heart. Behind my laugh, I'm falling apart. Look closely at me and you will see, the girl I am ... isn't me.

-Author unknown

Grief can awaken us to new values and new and deeper appreciations. Grief can cause us to reprioritize things in our lives. ... heighten our gratitude as we cease taking the gifts life bestows on us for granted. ... give us the wisdom of being with death None of this growth makes the loss good and worthwhile, but it is the good that comes out of the bad.

-Roger Bertschausen

How far you go in life depends on you being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these.

-George Washington Carver

Why do you think it's so important for me to hear other people's problems? Don't I have enough pain and suffering of my own? Of course I do. But giving to other people is what makes me feel alive... When I give my time, when I can make someone smile after they were feeling sad, it's as close to healthy as I ever feel."

-Morrie Schwartz in Tuesdays with Morrie

Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass. It's about learning how to dance in the rain.

-Author unknown

Self-compassion mantra

I am having a really hard time right now. Everyone feels this way sometimes. May I be kind to myself. May I give myself the compassion and understanding I need.

-Adapted from Kristin Neff, Ph.D., in the book Self-Compassion.

QUESTIONS (Please respond to whichever question or questions you feel moved to answer. It is not necessary to respond to all of the questions. You may also respond to any of the readings that you find to be particularly meaningful.)

1. Please share about your experience of situations where it seemed that things were falling apart, a crisis, a loss. Who and what was helpful to you during that time? To what extent were your communities helpful?
2. How did your core values or beliefs impact your reaction to a crisis or loss?
3. What do you do, or would you like to do, to prepare for when things fall apart?
4. How have you been of help to others in coping with challenging situations?

SHARING (up to 6 to 8 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with optional open discussion at the end after all have shared)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (up to 5-10 minutes)

-Confirm next meeting date, time, location, and topic.

-Consider discussing the service project.

-Other

LIKES (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and **WISHES** (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)/**CHECK-OUT** (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

CLOSING WORDS (2 minutes for words, and closing)

As we take our leave, let us pick up what we may have learned here today and hold it fast in our arms. Let us also hold gently in our hearts that which is larger than any one of our selves, the vitality of this group. Let us covenant with each other to return again as fresh selves, as new beings, to this space of pain and sorrow and of comfort and joy. Let us then refresh and nourish each other, and return to what we still must learn about our self and each other. Go in peace.

—Author unknown

EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE OR CANDLE OR SOUND A CHIME (and additional optional closing ritual if agreed to)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring the SGM Facilitator Training Manual, paper and writing implements, the lesson plan, and your calendar/date book.)

Lesson plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Laura Adams; Dick Loescher, chair; Sandy Moses; Leora White) and Rev. Alicia Forsey 1/23/12