

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Session Plan  
**Courage and Flourishing – the work of Martin Seligman**  
Marc Silling, Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Durham, NC Jan. 2019

## Group Business

## Chalice Lighting/Chime/Silence/Chime

## Opening Words

Courage is undertaking action when one is frightened and unsure of how things will turn out. Grit is a willingness to persevere through adversity towards a goal. Courage and grit are components of character.

*Character has long since gone out of fashion in social science. (Seligman)*

*Grit is at least as important as intelligence when it comes to success. (Seligman)*

## Check-in

## Topic Introduction

Martin Seligman is considered the founder of positive psychology. He conducted studies about how people could live happily. This became quite popular because the point of therapy focused on managing misery, but seldom was there talk of exactly what one does to be happy. There are a number of books out that cover these studies such as “The How of Happiness”, and include kindness, being thankful, and other behaviors.

Seligman is a scientist though, and as is typical of a good scientist, he continued with his research and found that his original work on happiness was incomplete and shallow. Several theories later he wrote the book *Flourish*. To flourish is much broader model than happiness – in fact one can “flourish” yet also be unhappy. His Flourish model included five factors that make up wellbeing:

- Positive Emotion which to some degree is genetic but also largely what one makes of life. This is what is left of the happiness perspective. “An entire life led successfully around this element would be called the ‘pleasant’ life”
- Engagement means working at something with total involvement. This means to be “in the flow” where there is little sense of self or time. Ask persons what they are thinking and feeling when in a state of flow and they would typically say “nothing.”
- Relationships means sharing one’s life with others.
- Meaning is belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self.
- Achievement is a sense of mastery for its own sake.
- **These are the components of flourishing. Grit and courage are what it takes to develop a life where these are fulfilled.**

## • **Questions for Group Reflection**

1. How has your life been impacted by your sense of having or not having grit? If you think you have a lot of grit how did you learn this?
2. Do you feel that you have the courage to act when you are afraid?
3. Of the five factors that Seligman mentions in his model, which ones stand out as one's that you have been particularly successful in mastering?
4. Of the five factors where do you feel you need to do more work?
5. Have you ever flourished as Seligman defines it yet also been unhappy (not living a pleasant life)?

## **Open Discussion**

### **Closing Words and Chalice Extinguishing**

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear. Nelson Mandela

Grit is that 'extra something' that separates successful people from the rest. It's the passion, perseverance, and stamina that we must channel in order to stick with our dreams until they become a reality. Travis Bradberry

I think that that's why artists make art - it is difficult to put into words unless you are a poet. What it takes is being open to the flow of universal creativity. The Zen artists knew this. Alex Grey

### **Likes and wishes**

### **Who does the next group?**

### **Extinguish chalice/chime ringing**