



## **Beyond Resilience**

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, SC

Based on session from First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA, November 2020

**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:** Briefly share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

### **Opening Words**

Someday, the universe will throw a wrench in the works and your well-oiled machine of a life will grind to a halt. And then it will keep going. Because after you got bored of crying and worrying, you took a deep breath and pushed it back into motion. — Nora McInerney Purmort

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. Have you ever emerged from tough times better prepared to deal with future challenges? If yes, do you know why? If no, do you know why not?
2. When do you take time to mentally hit 'pause' and check in with yourself? Could you share any ways you work with your strengths to get a better outcome?
3. What parts of your life protect you in crises? What areas have your choices left you more vulnerable?
4. What changes or struggles in your life affected your sense of identity or understanding of yourself? What helped you regain/define your sense of self?
5. Were there any people in your life that showed you how you can fail and then get up and try again? Have you helped teach or role model that for anyone else? Tell us about this.
6. Share about a time when you found or helped to create an environment that made it safe to respond emotionally in tough times, or easier to be resilient and effectively respond to challenges.

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

**Readings- Words from the Common Bowl: Quotes/Readings – see below**

**Sharing** - This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share one or more responses to the session questions.

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

**Open Discussion** -This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice deep listening.

### **Closing Words**

Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again. - Nelson Mandela

### **Announcements/Plans**

**Check out:** As we close today, how are you feeling now?

**Extinguish the Chalice**

## Readings

Good news: Research shows that everybody has resilience. We're born with it. You are not "a resilient person" – or not - through some quirk of fate. Our ability to bounce back can be encouraged or discouraged by the environments in which we've grown up and lived. But the seeds of resilience are right there inside us, and guess what? Tough times really DO make us stronger and better equipped to adapt to changes in circumstance. There are dozens of rigorous studies that show that the more we've endured, the greater the possibility that we'll emerge better able to address our needs in volatile environments. We now know that "stressors, shocks, volatility, noise, mistakes, faults, attacks and failures" bestow the property of "antifragility." "Antifragility is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better," writes Nassim Taleb, defining the idea of "antifragility" in a book that first mentioned the idea. This applies to individuals as well as organizations. Expose a human being or a church community to tough times, and we don't just survive, we change for the better, more able to thrive when tough times continue, or come along again. Stress might turn us into gelatinous blobs for a short time, but we WILL eventually return to our own, recognizable form. Not exactly the same as we were. And quite likely, better for the experience. "Persistence and resilience only come from having been given the chance to work through difficult problems."

— Gever Tulley

Our greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising every time we fall. – Confucius

I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it. — Maya Angelou

On the face of it, resilience is not a bad idea at all. That is, if all we want to do is return to our original shape. But what that definition of resilience ignores is a deep psychological need that is inherent in us for growth and self-actualization.  
—Clair Nana

Life doesn't get easier or more forgiving, we get stronger and more resilient.  
— Steve Maraboli

I really don't think life is about the I-could-have-beens. Life is only about the I-tried-to-do. I don't mind the failure but I can't imagine that I'd forgive myself if I didn't try.  
— Nikki Giovanni

In my own worst seasons, I've come back from the colorless world of despair by forcing myself to look hard, for a long time, at a single glorious thing: a flame of red geranium outside my bedroom window. And then another: my daughter in a yellow dress. And another: the perfect outline of a full, dark sphere behind the crescent moon... until I learned to be in love with my life again. Like a stroke victim retraining new parts of the brain to grasp lost skills, I have taught myself joy, over and over again.  
— Barbara Kingsolver