

Healing Conversations 2011 – Session Six

How do I take Care of Myself?

The task after loss:

*To develop tools for physical, emotional & spiritual
self-care on the journey to WHOLENESS*

1. Chalice Lighting/Opening Words: 2 minutes.

Because we spill not only milk
Knocking it over with an elbow
When we reach to wipe a small face
But also spill seed on soil we thought was fertile but isn't,
And also spill whole lives, and only later see in fading light
How much is gone and we hadn't intended it
Because we tear not only cloth
Thinking to find a true edge and instead making only a hole
But also tear friendships when we grow
And whole mountainsides because we are so many
And we want to live right where black oaks lived,
Once very quietly and still
Because we forget not only what we are doing in the kitchen
And have to go back to the room we were in before,
Remember why it was we left
But also forget entire lexicons of joy
And how we lost ourselves for hours
Yet all that time were clearly found and held
And also forget the hungry not at our table
Because we weep not only at jade plants caught in freeze
And precious papers left in rain
But also at legs that no longer walk
Or never did, although from the outside they look like most others
And also weep at words said once as though
They might be rearranged but which
Once loose, refuse to return and we are helpless
Because we are imperfect and love so
Deeply we will never have enough days,
We need the gift of starting over, beginning
Again: just this constant good, this
Saving hope. ~ Nancy Shaffer ~ (*Instructions in Joy*)

2. Check-in/Sharing: up to 20 minutes. *(Time shorter here to allow for more time for checkout at the end)*

Is there something that has changed for you since the group began?

3. Topic: TOTAL TIME 60 minutes.

How do I take Care of Myself?

As I move forward, how do I develop the tools that I need for physical, emotional & spiritual self-care on the journey to WHOLENESS

A. Readings & Questions: 10 minutes.

1. YOUR JOURNEY by Susan Squellati Florence

There is a journey awaiting you
It comes in truth and promise
When you reach the point of not knowing who you are or where to go
This most precious but often painful passage is the journey of yourself

You will travel to places never before visited,
Where you meet unspoken fears and unearth buried truths
You will climb high and perilous mountains...those that rise up from inside yourself

You will explore forgotten waters held deep in the sea of your soul
You will be stranded in the wilderness and find a way through pathless land
You will be lost before you are found...
You will be empty before you are full

You will cry the deep sobs of the earth and tears of rain will cleanse the house around
your heart
In time...because life, like birth and death, knows its own time
Your fears and struggles and unknowing will be transformed

You will become a mountain place where eagles soar
You will become a reflecting pool which sees and knows the mysteries of your life
Your heart will be light like a butterfly as you follow the currents of its true desires
The flight of the honeybee will be yours as you seek the nectar of what brings sweetness
to your daily life

Most of all you will become who you truly are
Your life will hold truth and promise and meaning
And the heart of the heavens will hold your heart.

2. In Blackwater Woods, by Mary Oliver

Look, the trees
are turning
their own bodies
into pillars

of light,
are giving off the rich
fragrance of cinnamon
and fulfillment,

the long tapers
of cattails
are bursting and floating away over
the blue shoulders

of the ponds,
and every pond,
no matter what its
name is, is

nameless now.
Every year
everything
I have ever learned

in my lifetime
leads back to this: the fires
and the black river of loss
whose other side

is salvation
whose meaning
none of us will ever know.
To live in this world

you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it

against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

3. Antonio Machado: Traveller, There Is No Path

Everything passes on and everything remains,
But our lot is to pass on,
To go on making paths,
Paths across the sea.

I never sought glory,
Nor to leave my song
In the memory of man;
I love those subtle worlds,
Weightless and graceful,
As bubbles of soap.

I like to watch as they paint themselves
In sunlight and scarlet, floating
Beneath the blue sky, trembling
Suddenly then popping...

I never sought glory.

Traveller, your footprints
Are the path and nothing more;
Traveller, there is no path,
The path is made by walking.

By walking the path is made
And when you look back
You'll see a road
Never to be trodden again.

Traveller, there is no path,
Only trails across the sea...

Some time past in that place
Where today the forests are dressed in barbs
A poet was heard to cry
"Traveller, there is no path,
The path is made by walking..."

Beat by beat, verse by verse...

The poet died far from home.
He lies beneath the dust of a neighbouring land.

As he walked away he was seen to weep.
"Traveller, there is no path,
The path is made by walking..."

Beat by beat, verse by verse...

When the goldfinch cannot sing,
When the poet is a pilgrim,
When prayer will do us no good.
"Traveller, there is no path,
The path is made by walking..."

Beat by beat, verse by verse.

(Translated by Asa Cusack)

Questions

1. What do you need to do to take better care of yourself?
 - Physically?
 - Emotionally?
 - Spirituality?
2. What brings you a sense of hope, a sense of "aliveness?"

B. Silence for Reflection/Writing/Drawing: up to 10 minutes.

C. Sharing: 40 minutes.

4. Check-out: 20 minutes.

Now that the group is coming to a close, do you have a sense of what you would like your "next steps" to be? A sense of where you want to focus your time and energy? A sense of how you want to continue on this journey of healing?

5. Closing Words (provided) and Extinguish the Chalice 2 minutes.

Blessing to Summon Rejoicing

~~ by Jan Richardson

When your weeping
has watered
the earth.

When the storm
has been long
and the night
and the season
of your sorrowing.

When you have seemed
an exile
from your life
lost in the far country
a long way from where
your comfort lies.

When the sound
of splintering
and fracture
haunts you.

When despair
attends you.

When lack.
When trouble.

When fear.
When pain.

When empty.
When lonely.
When too much
of what depletes you
and not enough
of what restores
and rests you.

Then let there be
rejoicing.

Then let there be
dreaming.

Let there be
laughter in your mouth
and on your tongue
shouts of joy.

Let the seeds
soaked by tears
turn to grain,
to bread,
to feasting.

Let there be
coming home.

HANDOUTS: 1. HEALING CONVERSATIONS, SELF CARE

2. WHAT I NEED

HEALING CONVERSATIONS SELF CARE

Physical Caring -

Exercise - Walking, swimming, jogging, calisthenics - what else?

Rest & relaxation - picking times for resting.

Nutrition - regular eating times and balanced meals.

Massage - try it, you'll like it.

Emotional Caring -

Becoming aware of your emotional and feeling beings.

Keeping a journal of feelings.

Giving yourself permission to express your emotions - holler, scream, cry, curse, laugh.

Develop a friend who you can share anything with.

Intellectual Caring

Take an adult education course -

Read a book every month - any book - just read.

Go to the library one day/evening every week - just browse.

Spiritual

Take a weekend trip to the mountains or beach Spend some time walking a trail

Keep a journal on feelings and thoughts.

Go on a retreat

Take a spiritual workshop.

Revisit the religion of your childhood – or try a new one!

WHAT I NEED

TIME

Time alone; and time with others whom I can trust and who will listen when I need to talk. Months and years of time to feel and understand the feelings which go along with loss.

REST

I may need extra amounts of things I needed before. Relaxation, exercise, nourishment, diversion, hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a cause to work for to help others, any of these may give me a lift. Grief is an emotionally exhausting process. I need to replenish myself - to follow what feels healing and what connects me to the people and things I love.

SECURITY

I need to reduce, or find help for financial or other stresses in my life. I need to allow myself to be close to ones I can trust. It helps when I allow myself to get back into a routine, and to do things at my own pace.

HOPE

I find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them, and realizing that they have recovered and that time does help, gives me hope that sometime in the future my grief will be less raw and less painful.

CARING

I try to allow myself to accept the expressions of caring from others, even though they may be uneasy and awkward. Helping a friend or relative also suffering from the same loss often brings me a feeling of closeness with that person.

GOALS

It often feels that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Something to look forward to, like playing tennis with a friend next week, a movie tomorrow night, a trip next month, helps me get through the time in the immediate future. Living one day at a time is a good rule of thumb. At first, my enjoyment of these things just isn't the same. I know this is normal. As time passes, I will need to work on some longer-range goals to give some structure and direction to my life. It is OK to get some guidance or counseling to help with this.

SMALL PLEASURE

I no longer underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food - all are small steps toward regaining my pleasure in life itself.

BACK- SLIDING

Sometimes after a period of feeling good, I find myself back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair or anger. Intellectually, I know this is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for a time. I'm told, this is because as humans, we cannot take in all of the pain and the meaning of death all at once. So, I give myself permission to let it in a little at a time.

DRUGS?

Drugs are not always helpful. Sometimes, even medication intended to help me get through periods of shock may prolong and delay the necessary process of grieving. I cannot prevent or cure grief. The only way OUT is THROUGH.

Adapted by Alan Taplow from Judy Tatelbaum's book, THE COURAGE TO GRIEVE

HEALING CONVERSATIONS – SESSION SIX

QUESTIONS

You are welcome to respond to one, all or any of the questions. If none of these questions speak to your experience, please create your own question and respond to that.

1. What do you need to do to take better care of yourself?

- Physically?

- Emotionally?

- Spirituality?

2. What brings you a sense of hope, a sense of “aliveness?”