

First Parish Church of Groton, Small Group Ministry

Session 4: Vulnerability

Facilitator: _____

Date: _____

Supplies: Chalice, matches, printed questions for each participant, pencils, pens

1. Chalice Lighting/Opening Words: 5 min

Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it.

Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy—the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.

~Brené Brown

2. Check-in/Sharing: up to 30 min (Divide the time by number of participants, allowing for short interval of silence in between sharing.) Invite people to check in by sharing:

- *How is it with your spirit? –or—What has stirred your passion this week?*

- *And/or: Did you have any further thoughts about last week's topic?*

3. Topic: TOTAL TIME 60 min

A. Introduction and Questions: 5 min

vulnerable (Dictionary definition)

1. without adequate protection: open to physical or emotional harm.
2. Synonyms: exposed, unprotected, defenseless, unsafe, wide open.
3. Antonyms: closed, guarded, protected, safe, secure.
4. vulnerary: plants used for or useful in healing wounds

Vulnerability is the only authentic state.

Being vulnerable means being open, for wounding, but also for pleasure.

Being open to the wounds of life means also being open to the bounty and beauty.

~Stephen Russell~

When we were children, we used to think that when we were grown-up we would no longer be vulnerable. But to grow up is to accept vulnerability... To be alive is to be vulnerable.

~Madeleine L'Engle~

If we are going to find our way out of shame and back to each other,
vulnerability is the path, and courage is the light.

To set down those lists of "what we're supposed to be" is brave.

To love ourselves and support each other in the process of becoming real
is perhaps the greatest single act of daring greatly.

~Brené Brown~

We hide our vulnerability because it's quite a journey to find the 'grown ups' who can hold the space and sit in the discomfort with you.

~Pema Chödrön~

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless - it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.

~C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves~

(Distribute Questions, last page, & Read out loud)

B. Silence for Reflection/Writing/Drawing: 10 min

Invite group into 5-10 minutes of silence during which they are asked to reflect on the questions. Participants are invited to use this time for writing and drawing their responses if they wish.

C. Sharing: 40 min

Invite each person to share their response as they feel moved, rather than clockwise. Give each person equal time to share. *If time* after each person has shared, invite people into a more free flowing discussion of the theme. Coaches may need to direct the conversation back to the questions.

4. Check-out: 10 min

Encourage people to check out with a final thought or reflection about the theme (or any other thoughts about the session) and how the session might shape or impact their life in any way in the week ahead.

5. Introduction of Next Week's Topic 1 min

Encourage people to check out with a final thought or reflection about the theme (or any other thoughts about the session) and how the session might shape or impact their life in any way in the week ahead.

6. Closing Words 1 min

Come to the edge

He said. They said:

We are afraid.

Come to the edge

He said. They came.

He pushed them, and

they flew...

~Guillaume Apollinaire~

7. Blessing to Extinguish the Chalice 1 min

May the efforts we have made here today to listen with caring and compassion sustain us in the days ahead. May these efforts bring peace into our lives and into the lives of all those whom we touch.

And now, may love surround us, may joy gladden us, may peace lie deep within.

May our lives and the lives of all those we love go well.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What is it like when you allow yourself to be vulnerable? Think of a time when this has happened and how it altered your experience and that of others.

How do you protect and take care of yourself and allow yourself to be vulnerable at the same time?

Think of a time when you transcended who you were *supposed to be* and dared to become real, when you disclosed the hidden person you really were or are. How did you feel as you were making that decision? How did people respond to your disclosure? How did that feel? What have been the ripples in your life since then?

Discuss a time in your life when you tried to resist being vulnerable. What were the circumstances? How were you affected mentally and emotionally? What was the outcome?

What is it like to watch loved-ones when they are vulnerable?