

USG SGM ~ Resistance ~ July 2019

drawn from Soul Matters materials, see the full packet for more of all of these elements

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Spiritual Exercises

- A. **Give Thanks:** Who made resistance possible for you? Who stood beside you as you stood against the status quo? Who helped remind you that the arc really can be bent? Who invited you into a vision of an entirely new day? Who made you feel like a one of a kind rather than a misfit? Someone stood beside you. Someone picked you up for the protests. Someone taught the class that opened your eyes. Someone wrote the poem that inspired you. Someone's sacrifice moved your heart. Someone's courage rubbed off on you. Someone told you that you were precious. Someone made you feel like you aren't in the fight alone. Thank them! That's it. Your assignment: Find a way to thank them and tell them how they made your resistance possible. Let them know what a gift it was.
- B. **Resolution Partners:** This could be a month of new resolutions. Don't just pick a resolution; pick a partner! Honoring the spiritual practice of accountability, tell a trusted friend about your resolution and then ask them to help hold you to it. Choose whatever accountability strategy that works best for both of you. And don't just ask them to hold you accountable. Ask them to help you reflect on the experience itself. Sit down for at least one conversation before your small group meeting to talk with your "resolution partner" about how it felt to be held accountable and to hold one accountable. What did it teach you - and them - about the power of resisting together?
- C. **Poetry:** The following poem challenges us to face those "impenetrable places" in a new way. Instead of pushing against or running away from those inner "steel doors" right away, it asks us to just "stay there" and "breathe." In that spirit of sitting still, use this poem as your guide and companion this month. Weave it into your daily meditation or reflective practice. Pay attention to the way a new line will stand out each day. Come to your group ready to share the journey, where it took you and what it taught you about the resistance we wrestle with inside.

"Resistance" by Peter Fricrichs, Soul Matters Minister

Press the tender flesh of your knowing
Against the steel door of your fear.
Stay there, breathing,
as its icy skin draws out the heat
of your racing heart.
Feel its resistance
to the yes of your hopes,
the imminent expiration
of your dreams.
You could have avoided this pain.
You could have stayed safely cradled,
blind, in the womb of your ignorance.
But in the silence of a moonless night
something called you here,

to this impenetrable place.
At the edge of sleep, or death,
you heard a sound
from beyond this door:
A prisoner, past all hope of release,
tapping his bent spoon
against the cell wall
that divides you,
desperate to be heard and known.
This is your life calling.
And now, having heard its cry,
you have no choice but
to find a way through.

- D. **In his book Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now**, Walter Brueggemann invites us to resist our culture of busyness and anxiety. To him, striving is one of our greatest spiritual diseases. Resisting it needs to become one of everyone's core spiritual practices. Here are his Sabbath "instructions": You do not have to do more. You do not have to sell more. You do not have to control more. You do not have to know more. You do not have to be younger or more beautiful.

Pick one of these as your challenge or guide. Make it your mantra for the month. Find as many ways as you can to honor its goal of giving you rest and release. Report to your group what this counter-cultural act of resistance was like for you. (List taken from this review of Brueggemann's book: <http://tinyurl.com/hjonned>)

Chalice Lighting

I choose love because the burden of hate is too heavy to carry. — **Martin Luther King**

Check-in *Share your highs and lows since we last met focusing on what drains you and what lifts you up. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.*

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

Definition: the refusal to accept or comply with something; the attempt to prevent something by action or argument. From the Latin verb resistere, “to hold back.” Synonyms: defiance, refusal, struggle, obstruction, opposition

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. -- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

In these downbeat times, we need as much hope and courage as we do vision and analysis. We must accent the best of each other even as we point out the vicious effects of our racial divide and the pernicious consequences of our maldistribution of wealth and power. We simply cannot enter the future at each other's throats, even as we acknowledge the weighty forces of racism, patriarchy, economic inequality, homophobia and ecological abuse on our necks. We are at a crucial crossroad in the history of this nation. And we either hang together by combating these forces that divide and degrade us or we hang separately. -- **Cornell West from “Race Matters”**

If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito. -- **The Dalai Lama**

Questions

Pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of resistance means for you and your daily living.

1. What would happen if you saw praise, joy or the creation of beauty as your primary form of resistance? What if the world needs your praise as much as your picket signs? What if it needs the creation of beauty as much as the elimination of injustice?
2. Is it possible that your refusal to give up and give in may be a way of avoiding the pain?
3. Is labeling them the enemy defeating both them *and you*?
4. What would happen if you saw your justice work not as saving the world or bending the arc of the universe towards justice, but simply as “being a pest”? (Inspired by the quote above, from the Dalai Lama.)

Sitting in Silence *Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

Sharing/Deep Listening *Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.*

Reflection and Gratitude *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared. Consider lifting up one comment or experience for which you are particularly grateful.*

Singing “Ella's Song” by Sweet Honey in the Rock <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2T216Xgi00>

Extinguishing the Chalice

“We who believe in freedom cannot rest / We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes” — **Sweet Honey in the Rock**