

USG SGM ~ Perseverance ~ 2020

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



Intro

“People cry not because they are weak. It’s because they’ve been strong too long.” - *Shane Koyczan*

The standard recipe is well known: Buck up! Grin and bear it! But maybe Koyczan is right. Maybe this typical roadmap isn’t the path to perseverance; maybe it’s just the path to breakdown. That dominant myth of Sisyphus pushing his rock up that endless hill hasn’t done us any favors. We assume that Sisyphus is suffering because his work is endless, but maybe it’s his isolation and lack of a place to rest that is his true torment.

Rabbi David Wolf tells a story that we all should carry with us this month:

A boy and his father were walking along a road when they came across a large stone. “Do you think if I use all of my strength, I can move this rock?” the child asked. His father answered, “If you use all of your strength, I am sure you can do it.” The boy began to push the rock. Exerting himself as much as he could, he pushed and pushed. The rock did not move. Discouraged, he said to his father, “You were wrong. I can’t do it.” His father put his arm around the boy’s shoulder and said, “No son. You didn’t use all your strength – you didn’t ask me to help.”

Spiritual Exercise - What Props Up Your Perseverance?

So forget that image of Sisyphus pushing his rock up the hill all by his lonesome. It is a myth after all. In real life we rarely push or carry our boulders on our own. Our perseverance is always propped up by something or someone. This exercise invites you to celebrate and share that which enabled -and enables - you to carry on through tough times.

But here’s the catch: In order to help your other group members expand their view of possible sources of sustenance, try to think of the unexpected thing that propped or props you up. For instance, maybe it was the relative you least expected that stepped forward in your time of need. Or maybe it was the person who gave you gifts of beauty when everyone else was telling you how they got through so you can too. In short, pick a surprising person, song, book, quote, insight, spiritual practice or experience that propped up your perseverance and come to your group ready to share its story. And if there is an object connected to it, consider bringing that in as well.

Chalice Lighting

Defeat, my Defeat, my bold companion,
You shall hear my songs and my cries and my silences,
And none but you shall speak to me of the beating of wings,
And urging of seas,
And of mountains that burn in the night,
And you alone shall climb my steep and rocky soul
- Kahlil Gibran, *Defeat*

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

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise...

-Maya Angelou, *Still I Rise*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qviM_GnJbOM
(Full reading by Maya Angelou)

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

When you feel like quitting, think about why you
started. - *Aly Juma*

The Three Stonecutters - a parable

A man came across three stonecutters and asked them what they were doing. The first replied, "I am making a living." The second kept on hammering while he said, "I am doing the best job of stonecutting in the entire county." The third looked up with a visionary gleam in his eye and said, "I am building a cathedral."

I promise to love you through it all.
Through all the pain and distance
Through the emptiness and fear
Through the nothing that feels like everything
And through the everything that feels like love
I will love you - *prttybrd, The Long Haul*

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 Perseverance means for you and your daily living.*

1. We all fall down. Very few of us pick ourselves up on our own. Perseverance is rarely a solo act. Who in your life needs a bit of help getting back up off the mat?
2. Have you made friends with defeat? Do you still resent it? Or have you figured out the hidden gift, lesson or blessing of your defeat?
3. It is said that mastery requires persevering through 10,000 hours of practice. If you are feeling like you are failing or not good enough, might it be time to consider that you are only 5,000 hours in?
4. Think to a time when you felt like Sisyphus rolling the boulder up the hill. Would you do it again?
5. What is your cathedral? What ignites the visionary gleam in your eye?

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

"Dear Brother" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBonY_cJXLA -*Nahko and Medicine for the People*
"At a time in our country where every 28hrs a black or brown person is shot by a police officer, it is imperative to call on our white allies to stand in solidarity with those that face state violence every day. Where is the justice? In this song, we ask our allies to remember that to be color blind is to be system blind."

Extinguishing the Chalice

I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended. - *Nelson Mandela*