

USG USG ~ Redefining Ourselves ~ August, 2024

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

The journey of reinvention is one of	Alone
raw emotions	Damaged
Emerging from dormancy	Broken
Surprising as a paper cut	And finding a new Self
Overwhelming as a hailstorm	Slowly
One part vulnerability	Different
One part rage	Healing
One part surrender	Humble
Uncomfortable	Present
Unfamiliar	Open
Unsure	Longing
Fearful	Free – Dave Rudbarg

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.*

Introduction Change is a constant in our lives, occurring every day. We are never exactly the same people as we were yesterday. Yet at many times in our lives, each day feels very similar to the one before.

Then a more significant change occurs or is discovered. It might be something that happens to us or something we made happen: an accident, the end or beginning of a relationship or a job, a birth or a death. It might be our perception of ourselves that changes: perhaps we realize that a change over time has already occurred without being noticed, or perhaps something (a conversation, something read, heard or seen, a previously-unasked question) triggers a realization in ourselves. When this occurs—when our very conception of self or life changes—we redefine ourselves.

Quotes for Inspiration

I think it's called my destiny that I am changing, changing, changing, changing. – Suzanne Vega

Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world. – Harriet Tubman

Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself. – George Bernard Shaw

You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete. – R. Buckminster Fuller

There's always hurdles. So I just keep moving, just constantly redefining myself. That's how you stay in the race. – Isaac Hayes

I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination. – Jimmy Dean

When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be. – Lao Tzu

When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down 'happy'. They told me I didn't understand the assignment, then I told them they didn't understand life.

– John Lennon

To change the world around us, we need to change ourselves first. – Santosh Joshi

Each of us has the right and the responsibility to assess the roads which lie ahead, and those over which we have traveled, and if the future road looms ominous or unpromising, and the roads back uninviting, then we need to gather our resolve and, carrying only the necessary baggage, step off that road into another direction. If the new choice is also unpalatable, without embarrassment, we must be ready to change that as well.

– Maya Angelou, *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now*

Questions

1. What times in your life stand out as redefining?
2. To what extent did you cause your redefinition? To what extent was a redefinition caused by things happening to you?
3. Have you ever taken advantage of an external change such as a relationship, job, role, situation, new location, etc. to redefine yourself?
4. Have any of your redefinitions happened despite, or because of, problems or difficulties in your life at the time?
5. Has redefining yourself ever been a mistake? If so, how did you learn from it?
6. Are there ways you have reframed your self-image or made small changes?
7. In trying to redefine yourself, have you found any people's responses, situations or other things that made it easier or harder to change?

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.*

Extinguishing the Chalice

Each morning we are born again. What we do today is what matters most. – Buddha

This session was adapted from one submitted to the Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website Small Group Ministry by First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA