

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry
Session Plan
Resistance

Rev. Helen Zidowecki (For theme of Jan. 2016)

Opening Words: Suggest taking turns reading the quotes.

People don't resist change. They resist being changed – Peter Senge

Where there is power, there is resistance – Michael Foucault, *The History of Sexuality 1: An Introduction*

Resistance is thought transformed into feeling. Change the thought that creates the resistance, and there is no more resistance – Robert Conklin

When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves – Victor Frankl

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude –Maya Angelou

“Most of us have two lives. The life we live, and the unlived life within us. Between the two stands Resistance.” Steven Pressfield

Check-in/Sharing: How are things with you today?

Topic: Resistance. Please take a few moments to read and reflect on one of the following: Acceptance/Assumptions, Transparency/Hypocrisy, Consistency/Inconsistency

Youth – my own and those I worked with in church and other settings--showed me the seeds of relationships, or working together in a family or community. Their teachings have become part of my interactions in all areas of my life.

Acceptance is respect for another – and myself --wherever we are in our life journeys. Respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every being allows connection, discovery, and growth.

Assumptions indicate that we know how another thinks, feels, or is going to act or react.

Assumptions are dismissive: “I can read you” or “I know you better than you know yourself!” implies influence over me. Resistance to assumptions is immediate and deep – anger from being dismissed, withdrawal from interactions, distrust that my thoughts will even be considered.

Transparency is matching actions with my beliefs and values.

Being true to myself engages me in deeper personal caring, compassion and consistency.

Hypocrisy claims a belief but allows behavior that is inconsistent with the belief or “Do as I say, not as I do.” Resistance to hypocrisy means not taking a person seriously in any interaction.

Consistency provides stability, an understanding of expectations, and basis for being.

Knowing that the process and ground rules are followed allows for community. Even consistency that may not be completely just gives predictable cause and effect.

Inconsistency fosters confusion, destabilization, and uncertainty of what to expect.

Resistance when there is confusion fosters actions that are themselves inconsistent, radical and tragic, from “acting out” to major withdrawal.

1. Share your reflections on one of the seeds of relationship and resistance. What sparks resistance in you?
2. Are these seeds of resistance –assumptions, hypocrisy, and inconsistency – also seeds of social injustice?
3. What has been your experience with resistance? The situation? Your reaction? The outcome?

Check-out/Likes and Wishes. How was the session for you?

Closing Words:

To resist – in thought and more so in action --is to acknowledge that something unacceptable needs attention.

The unacceptable that is traceable to assumptions, hypocrisy or inconsistency calls forth resistance from the very core.

Resistance in itself is neither “good” or “bad” – it is action to be taken. It is the why and how of resistance that adds the judgment.

Resistance can be a tool for change. Use it wisely and constructively.

And be willing to address the resistance inwardly as well as to use resistance outwardly.

BACKGROUND NOTES, Helen Zidowecki

I learned several critical things about resistance as I started working with youth, my own children and others in various settings. Several critical elements of interactions seemed to ignite reactions and opposition. I found that the same things caused resistance in me.

Inconsistency: Youth became frustrated when teachers, parents, and adults in general were not consistent in applying directions or expectations. This is especially true when variations seemed to be arbitrary (although “reasons” may be known to the person making the exceptions). This does not mean that things could not be changed, but rather that the operating premise is consistently acted on. Consistency gives a sense of stability; inconsistency destabilizes. Resistance comes from not knowing what to expect.

Hypocrisy or the behavior of people who do things that they tell other people not to do: behavior that does not agree with what someone claims to believe or feel. I have heard this repeatedly, especially related to religious institutions: “They go to church and learn how to live, then forget it all when they walk out the door” concept. My own children sometimes point out inconsistencies in my own living, and cause me to really look at myself.

Assumptions: I remember when we were trying to have youth-adult interactions. The youth asked for a session on play, because they felt that adults do not know how to play. At the appointed event, one of the adults interacted with the youth and engaged in play, and the other adults interacted more with each other. Or we sometimes are so anxious to involve youth in our congregational life that we suggest that “The youth might like to do.....” and invite them to do a specific task. The option of how to involve them has been made by adults, sometimes even with the assumption that youth would be delighted to undertake the suggested task.

These are but a few examples. Thanks to youth for clarity and challenge.