

Soul Matters

A kaleidoscope of thoughts, images, stories, poetry, podcasts, and videos to engage hands, hearts, and minds.

October 2016

What Does It Mean To Be A People Of Healing?



Well, this question seems easy to answer: it takes work. To be a community of healing requires dedication and a willingness to dig in— to fix what's been broken, to listen away each others' pain, to battle the bad guys and gals, to ask forgiveness when we are not the good guys and gals we so want to be. So yes, it is easy to remember that being a people of healing takes work.

But what if we remember that it takes perception and sight as well? Or to be more exact, what if we remember that healing always *begins* with perception and sight?

Would we more easily remember that time we were blessed with the experience of looking through each other's eyes? It wasn't a perfect view. We weren't able to see or understand "the other" completely. But we were at least able to see them differently, and in doing so, the healing began.

Would we more easily remember the first time we felt seen? And how that made us want to give that gift to others?

Would we more easily call to mind those moments when we were able to see our "enemies" in their wholeness? Those moments when our frames of them as 'all bad' and us as 'all good' gave way to the truth that they are as complex, fragile, and flawed as we are.

Would we more easily tell the story of when we first realized that we were part of propping up the system? The system that subtly—and not so subtly—gives some a hand while keeping the hands of others so securely tied behind their back?

Would we more easily remember what happened when we confessed our lie or admitted our addiction? How, when we stopped trying to hide it from the sight of others, it somehow loosened its hold on us?

There was a magic in all this looking, seeing and being seen. Remember that? In each case, we learned that healing is not entirely up to us. There was an otherness at work. We just got the ball rolling. We weren't "the healers;" our wider view simply set the stage, opened the door. Healing then slowly made its way in and joined us as a partner.

And seeing healing as a partner—rather than solely as a product of our will and work—we were able to be gentler with ourselves. We realized that manageable steps and doing what we can were just fine; heroics didn't always have to be the way. We were able to put down the weight of the world for a while, knowing and trusting that healing had a life of its own—that healing has the ability to take root and grow even while we rest, maybe because we took the time to rest.

In the end, maybe the most important thing to remember this month, besides beginning with a wider view, is that healing also means making room for rest. Too often, being a community of healing gets reduced to a matter of work, vigilance, and never letting up. We need reminders that healing is a partner, not simply a product of our work.

Healing may be trying to partner with us right now...



This Soul Matters packet was prepared by Rev. Carie Johnsen at Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Augusta, ME. Thoughts within were gleaned from the Soul Matters Network, the UUCS Resource Circle, and other sources. If you would like to share your experience and wisdom for future packets, please email minister@augustauu.org. To receive an electronic copy, please email info@augustauu.org. To learn more about Unitarian Universalist Community Church, please visit our website www.augustauu.org.

QUESTIONS TO WALK WITH



Below is a list of questions to open the mind's gateway to reveal the wisdom that is right below the surface of our ordinary, everyday lives. Pick one question, any, the one that grabs you and won't let go, then walk with it.



1. **Have you been trying to change what can only be healed by embrace?** (“Cure seeks to change reality; healing embraces reality.” - Fred Recklau)
2. **When was the last time you visited your “healing place?”** When in pain, sometimes we need to be around people who love us. Other times, we need to be surrounded by places we love.
3. **Are you ready to let yourself be forgiven?** Is it possible that you are the only one who thinks you don't deserve healing?
4. **Are you exhausted?** Have you been running on empty for so long that you no longer notice? Is it time to notice? Is it time to rest and restore, and let yourself heal?
5. **Is it time to admit to yourself that you are in pain?** Is it time to stop pretending? Is it time to tell others you are in pain?
6. **What one small step can you make today toward healing your broken heart?** It won't happen all at once. And, it won't happen on its own.
7. **What would happen if you admitted it wasn't just their fault?**
8. **Is taking on the care of the broken things of the world breaking you?**
9. **Are you looking for love in all the wrong places?** Is love's power to heal and make whole eluding you because it's left the building or because your definition of it is too narrow?
10. **Are you ready to heal from your failure?** (“Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead end. Failure is something we can avoid only by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing.” - Denis Waitley)
11. **What if talk of healing needs to wait?** (“Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound.” - Dr. Yolanda Pierce)
12. **What is your question?** As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to what is calling you.

Opening Words

Let us listen to the shattering glass
and let us smell the purifying fires,
for it is the language of the unheard.

~ Dr. Yolanda Pierce, excerpt from
A Litany for Those Who Aren't Ready for Healing

Closing Words

Let us be silent when we don't know what to say.
Let us be humble and listen to the pain, rage, and
grief pouring from the lips of neighbors and friends.

~ Dr. Yolanda Pierce, excerpt from
A Litany for Those Who Aren't Ready for Healing

Spiritual Practice - Deepening Experiences

A new way of being for all ages

Option A:

Admit Exhaustion

One way we allow healing into our lives is to widen our view of what it means to be in pain. Too often pain is equated only with dramatic ruptures such as sudden loss or a devastating diagnosis. But often—maybe even more often than we admit—we don't allow ourselves to rest and replenish. So this month, finally do it:

Admit to yourself that you are exhausted! And do something about it!

To get you there, carry John O'Donohue's poem, A Blessing For One Who Is Exhausted (<http://www.dailygood.org/story/734/a-blessing-for-one-who-is-exhausted-john-o-donohue/>) with you throughout this month. Read it regularly. Meditate on it whenever you can.

In the first part of his poem, he offers numerous phrases to capture the nature of exhaustion. In the second half, he offers phrases that describe many ways to rescue yourself from it.

Come to your group ready to share: one line from the poem that captures the nature of your exhaustion, and, one line that captures the way out you are committing to.

Consider committing yourself to doing *each* of the healing tasks that O'Donohue recommends. Make a checklist and do each of them, in your own way, before your group meets:

take refuge in your senses
imitate the habit of twilight

open up to small miracles
draw alongside the silence of stone

watch the way of rain
stay clear of those vexed in spirit

Option B:

Open Your Eyes to a Politics of Healing

As the political race rushes into its last leg, everyone is focused on winning. It's a "race" after all; so taking sides and beating the other side becomes the frame. But with a winner right around the corner, maybe it's time to start focusing on *understanding* the other side. In fact, none of us will "win" if we fail to find the healing that comes with understanding.

So this month, you are invited to engage one particular person's quest toward political healing: psychologist, Jonathan Haidt. He offers a unique frame for understanding the Left-Right political divide. Your assignment:

Explore Jonathan Haidt's way of framing the political divide, and then see if it heals a real life political divide in your life!

Here's a list of works by and about Haidt for you to read. Your task is not to come to your group with a book report or analysis of Haidt's theory. It is a story, not an analysis, you are asked to share. A story about how looking anew at "the other side" healed an actual relationship in your life.

The Righteous Mind, by Jonathan Haidt (How misunderstanding political mindsets divides us and how understanding them can heal us! - <https://www.amazon.com/Righteous-Mind-Divided-Politics-Religion-ebook/dp/B0052FF7YM#nav-subnav>)

Articles by or referencing Haidt:

- <http://www.vox.com/2016/2/5/10918164/donald-trump-morality>
- <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/calling-truce-political-wars/>
- <http://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-07-20/the-republican-convention-translated-for-liberals>
- <http://freitashugo.blogspot.com.br/2016/03/howtomakeaconservative.html>



Other Wise Words...

from **A Litany for Those Who Aren't Ready for Healing** By Dr. Yolanda Pierce

Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound.

Let us not rush to offer a band-aid, when the gaping wound requires surgery and complete reconstruction.

Let us not offer false equivalencies, thereby diminishing the particular pain being felt in a particular circumstance in a particular historical moment.

Let us not rush past the loss of this mother's child, this father's child, someone's beloved son.

Instead

Let us mourn black and brown men and women, those killed extrajudicially every 28 hours.

Let us be silent when we don't know what to say.

Let us be humble and listen to the pain, rage, and grief pouring from the lips of our neighbors and friends.

Full litany here: <http://kineticlive.com/2014/11/28/a-litany-for-those-who-arent-ready-for-healing%e2%80%8f/>

from **Kindness** By Naomi Shihab Nye

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,

you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.

You must wake up with sorrow.

You must speak to it till your voice

catches the thread of all sorrows

and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,

only kindness that ties your shoes

and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,

only kindness that raises its head

from the crowd of the world to say

It is I you have been looking for,

and then goes with you everywhere

like a shadow or a friend.

Full poem here:

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/kindness>

Broken things have been on my mind as the year lurches to an end, because so much broke and broke down this year in my life, and in the lives of the people I love. Lives broke, hearts broke, health broke, minds broke. On the first Sunday of Advent our preacher, Veronica, said that this is life's nature, that lives and hearts get broken, those of people we love, those of people we'll never meet. She said the world sometimes feels like the waiting room of the emergency ward, and that we, who are more or less OK for now, need to take the tenderest possible care of the more wounded people in the waiting room, until the healer comes. You sit with people, she said, you bring them juice and graham crackers. ~ **Anne Lamott, *Traveling Mercies***

To heal means to rediscover that divine idea, that place of wholeness, within each of us. Our task in recovery or in the spiritual journey is to peel away the layers between us and the deeper Self. We can use the image of a vast ocean that is barricaded away by a dam that keeps us from knowing it exists. Even though our intellect may learn there is an ocean, we cannot conceive of it because we have never directly experienced it. And then, for an instant, we transcend the barrier, and we see and feel the ocean directly. Once this has happened, we become strongly motivated to experience it again. ~ **Christina Grof**

Trauma victims cannot recover until they become familiar with and befriend the sensations in their bodies. Being frightened means that you live in a body that is always on guard. Angry people live in angry bodies. The bodies of child-abuse victims are tense and defensive until they find a way to relax and feel safe. In order to change, people need to become aware of their sensations and the way that their bodies interact with the world around them. Physical self-awareness is the first step in releasing the tyranny of the past... As I often tell my students, the two most important phrases in therapy, as in yoga, are "Notice that" and "What happens next?" Once you start approaching your body with curiosity rather than with fear, everything shifts." ~ **Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma***

ARTICLE: After a Century In Decline, Black Farmers Are Back And On the Rise

These Black farmers don't stop at healthy food. They're healing trauma, instilling collective values, and changing the way their communities think about the land.

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/after-a-century-in-decline-black-farmers-are-back-and-on-the-rise-20160505>

BOOK: Restored to Sanity: Essays on the Twelve Steps by Unitarian Universalists

Unitarian Universalist writers reflect on their healing while walking the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and other Twelve-Step programs. All tell their stories with great honesty and humility, providing inspiration and hope for those who struggle with addiction and for their friends and family members. Each Step is explored with two separate heartfelt essays, plus a meditation or prayer.

<http://www.uuabookstore.org/Restored-to-Sanity-P17542.aspx>