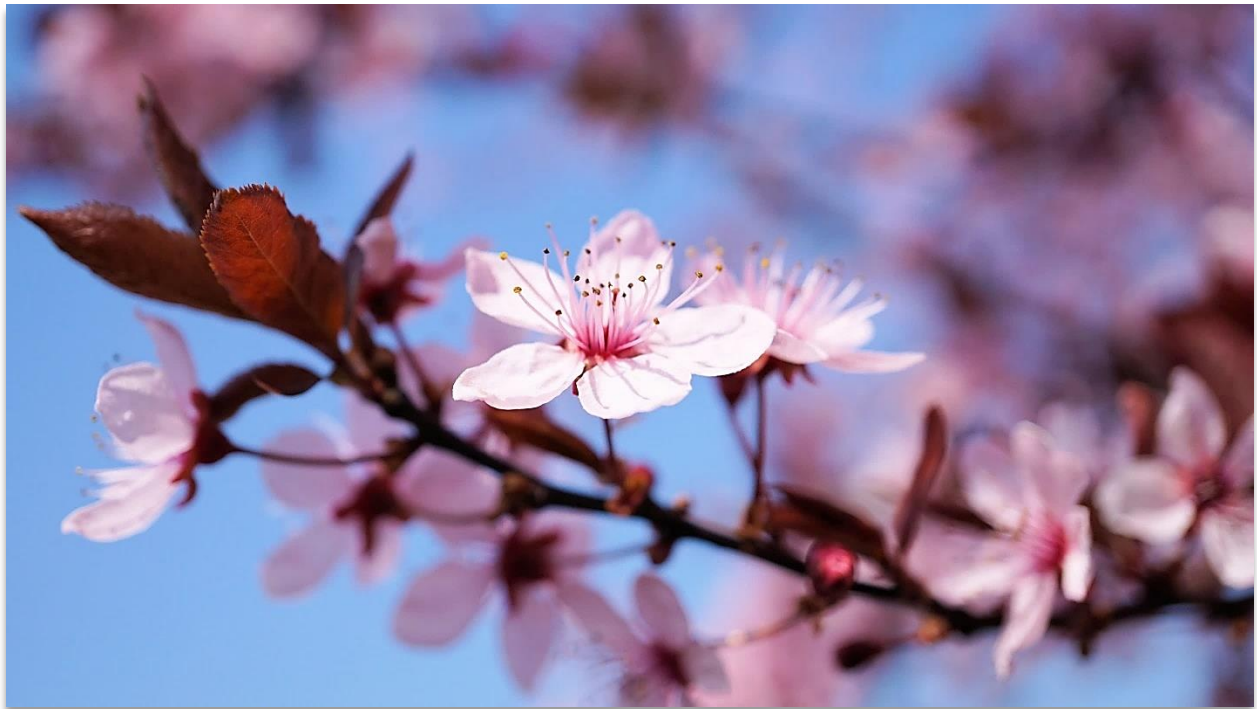


The Lenten Season: Journey to Transcendence Guide



Unity of Fairfax

2854 Hunter Mill Road
Oakton VA 22124

www.UnityOfFairfax.org

February 2021



Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Foreward – Journey to Transcendence	5
Lent and Unity	6
Lent – So How Did This Practice Evolve Anyway?	7
Week 1 – Kindness	9
Week 2 – Generosity.....	16
Week 3 – Curiosity.....	24
Week 4 – Trust.....	30
Week 5 – Forgiveness.....	36
Week 6 – Equanimity	47
Easter	53
Gratitudes	55



Introduction

February 2021

Dear Friends,

As we continue with this unprecedented time of social distancing, what have you learned? How do you express your Divinity? I believe we can all express a higher level of consciousness and grace and have created this Lenten Journey to Transcendence to assist you on your path.

Let's start with a definition.

Transcendence is the act of rising above something to a superior state. ... **Transcendence** comes from the Latin prefix *trans-*, meaning "beyond," and the word *scandare*, meaning "to climb." When you achieve **transcendence**, you have gone beyond ordinary limitations. The word is often used to describe a spiritual or religious state, or a condition of moving beyond physical needs and realities. (Source: vocabulary.com)



The Rev. Eric Butterworth in an Easter talk said:

Jesus proved the divinity of man, the law of transcendence, and this you see is the basis of what we call spiritual healing. It's the basis of overcoming of any kind. The reason that we can achieve and rise above our limitations today is because there is a fundamental law of transcendence. Jesus understood that, demonstrated it, saw it in its highest extent. This is the key to success in your life and mine.

<https://www.truthunity.net/ebup/the-easter-perspective>

Our Lenten Journey to Transcendence will consider six qualities to cultivate: Kindness, Generosity, Curiosity, Trust, Forgiveness and Equanimity.

We hope you find this Journey transformative.

Our discussion guide has been a collaborative effort with many contributors including Rev. Russell Heiland, Fran Patchett, Linda Powell and Cathy Kurvers. I thank them all for their enthusiasm and wisdom.

Let us begin.

Blessings

Donna N. Lee

Donna N. Lee
Small Groups Ministry Leader
Unity of Fairfax

Foreward – Journey to Transcendence

February 2021

Dear Friends,

Though Unity and New Thought don't place as strong an emphasis on the traditional liturgical calendar as mainstream Christianity, there is still great value for us in incorporating and interpreting this holy season in light of our metaphysical teachings. The season of Lent offers great opportunities for us to grow spiritually if we are willing to take them. And if you're reading this letter, you've answered the call to take the Journey to Transcendence.

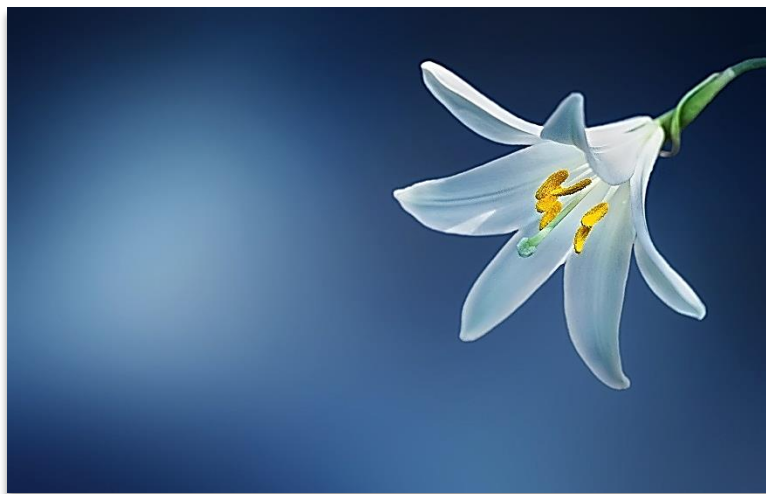
This small group study guide can serve as a catalyst for you to dive deeply into to six themes, each of which, on their own is powerful – but when put together can facilitate a transformation of consciousness that not only feels, but is, transcendent. You'll find your capacity to engage life augmented while at the same time your capacity to maintain serenity enhanced. And what is transcendence if not the ability be present to life as it is and still maintain peacefulness in your soul?

Each lesson has been curated as a gift for you, friend. So please explore the resources offered, share their wisdom with those around you, and claim a transformative and transcendent Easter for yourself!

Peace be with you and Namaste,

Rev. Russ

Rev. Russell Heiland
Senior Minister
Unity of Fairfax



Lent and Unity

The season of Lent is an important part of the Christian liturgical calendar. In traditional churches, it is often celebrated by giving up something (like chocolate or meat) or by taking up something in order to be a better person (like volunteering at a soup kitchen). It is time of reflection and asking for forgiveness for shortcomings.



These actions are done during this time period to reflect the actions of Jesus, who went into the desert to pray and fast for the 40 days before he entered Jerusalem and was crucified. By giving up something, a person tests their own self-discipline and draw their thoughts back to spiritual ones when they remember their sacrifice.

Unity founder Charles Fillmore wrote a book called ***Keep a True Lent***. It is probably my favorite Unity book because it was the first that I read. It is a wonderful collection of Unity lessons and Bible verses that are provided for each day of Lent.

In that book, Fillmore is quoted as saying that “Lent is a season of spiritual growth, a time for progressive unfoldment. When we can blend and merge our mind with God-Mind, the way is open for the Lord to glorify us and to lift us into a higher, purer, more spiritual state.”

In the foreword of the book, Rev. Georgia Tree West tells us that metaphysically, “forty suggests the idea of a foundation for something to follow, an idea of completeness.” In Unity, we consider this a time of reflection on spiritual matters to make our minds more receptive to Christ ideas. And, instead of giving up physical things, we give up negative thinking and false beliefs. Rev. West tells us “to observe Lent according to the spirit rather than the letter [of Biblical law], we must fast from criticism and condemnation and feast in brotherly love.”

This monitoring of our thoughts is a very important belief in Unity and speaks to our third principle that states “Human beings create their experiences by the activity of our thinking. Everything in the manifest realm has its beginning in thought.”¹ So, by dedicating 40 days to concentrating on our thoughts, we are likely to become more conscious of how often our thoughts have negative tone.

For all of us who meditate, we know how frequently our thoughts can stray from the path we set, so don’t think that the Unity way of celebrating Lent is easier than the more traditional sacrifice of abstaining from some well-loved food. It will take persistence to undertake this practice for 6 weeks. The practice of recognizing our negative thought patterns is not meant to condemn our thoughts, but rather to give us an opportunity to realize that the thought can be replaced with a more constructive or positive thought. This spiritual practice is not meant to make us all “Pollyannas.” It is meant to help us to become more conscious and to create more positive life experiences.

Be blessed this Lent! If you replace even one negative thought with a blessing, you too will be blessed!

Namaste,

Linda Powell

Licensed Unity Teacher

¹ The Five Principles, by Ellen Debenport

Lent – So How Did This Practice Evolve Anyway?

Briefly, not even "scholars" are sure! The concept of Lent, its solemnity and rituals, expanded over time. There are many sources available that give details and dates relative to the expansion of the Lenten Season. These sources also inform on how practices, like fasting and abstinence, are reflected in different religions. The sources referenced below are simply a snapshot of the history.



Br. Silas Henderson in an essay, [The Purpose of Lent](#), March 19, 2019, provides reasonable answers to the question of how Lent evolved.

The word lent itself "comes from the Old English word for springtime."

Br. Silas suggests "this gives us a wonderful insight into what the days between Ash Wednesday and Holy Thursday are all about:

"A season when faith and the virtues of the Christian life grow and flower in our hearts and souls."

In the early centuries, after the death and Resurrection of Jesus, those who wanted to be baptized as Christians in the ceremony held Holy Saturday evening, had days and sometimes years of preparation. Fasting and prayer were elements of the preparation. These hopeful converts were known as catechumens. The preparation time made them worthy, not only to be Baptized, but also to receive the gifts of Confirmation and Eucharist.

Br. Silas concludes: "This is the origin of Lent."

In Fr. Norman Tanner, SJ article "[A Short History of Lent](#)" (March 15, 2011), Fr. Tanner gives us additional historical perspective. He suggests that the very first time the *existence* of Lent is acknowledged is 325 A.D. at a church council held in Nicaea, an ancient Greek city, which is now in Turkey.

The *importance* of Lent was made official at Vatican II (1961-1965). Under the guidance of Pope John XXIII, the Lenten focus became Joy and Preparation.

For those of us who may have been raised and or educated in the Catholic way, Fr. Tanner offers, "The older among us may remember a more negative emphasis. As boys we were urged to give up sweets during lent. The months of February and March were quite a bleak time."

Fr. Tanner, however, returns to the message of Joy:

Just as the sun was thought to do the work of "lengthening" the days of early Springtime, so it is the sun--in the sense of God's warmth and light-- that does this work of our lengthening and growing in Christ.

Our role during Lent is to cooperate with God's grace and initiatives, in a sense to relax in the presence of God, rather than force the pace with our own efforts.

A Prayer Read at Mass During Lent

Each year you give us this joyful season
when we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery
with mind and heart renewed
You give us a spirit of loving reverence for you, Our God
and a willing service to our neighbor.

Contributed by Fran Patchett

Week 1 – Kindness

Kind: adjective

1. Of a good or benevolent nature or disposition
2. As a person to having, showing or proceeding from benevolence
3. Indulgent, considerate or helpful, humane
4. Mild, gentle

(David Friedman, *How to Be Kind*, page 5)

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 1 Corinthians 13:4

Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind. Henry James

Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless. Mother Theresa
Be kinder to yourself. And then let your kindness flood the world. Pema Chodron.

The simplest acts of kindness are by far more powerful than one thousand heads bowed in prayer. Mahatma Gandhi

Imagine what our neighborhoods would be like if each of us offered, as a matter of course, just one kind word to another person. Mister Rogers



Let's start by watching this video:

BEING KIND: The Music Video that Circled the World by Nimesh "Nimo" Patel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJhZ64BvvFU>

Kindness 101: What Is Kindness and How Do You Teach It?

Author: *Inspire Kindness Team*

We can easily look up the definition of kindness, but the meaning of kindness goes far beyond just that.

What is the meaning of kindness?

According to the dictionary ...

Kindness is defined as the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate.

But kindness means so much more ...

Kindness can mean different things to different people. The meaning is in how YOU choose to show it. Be it through empathy, acceptance, kind gestures, thoughtfulness, the possibilities are entirely up to you. Kindness might look like being helpful or showing empathy. It may mean doing nice things without expecting nice things in return.

Kindness is more than being nice.

Kindness goes beyond merely being nice. Think about it - would you prefer people to describe you to be "kind" or "nice"? There can be a lack of sincerity in just being nice; there is often a perception of

Be kind to yourself.

It's in our nature to learn by watching others, which is why it is so important to be kind to yourself and show kindness to those around you. People, and kids especially, can learn kindness just by seeing what you do!

Practice, practice, practice.

One of the best ways to teach kindness to others is by being intentional about it! Volunteer, give compliments, donate to charity, hold the door for someone; there are so many ways to be an example of kindness. What better way to teach kindness than to show it?

Say thank you.

People are continually learning right and wrong through associative learning. When you see someone being kind or notice it from a family member or friend, make sure to tell them you appreciate what they did. Positive reinforcement helps people want to do more good deeds and reminds people to act with intention.



What are some kindness synonyms?

What are some other words for kindness? For reference, when you hear or see the following words, think of kindness. They are just synonyms for this powerful word:

- Benevolence
- Care
- Compassion
- Concern
- Courtesy
- Friendliness
- Gentleness
- Goodness
- Goodwill
- Grace
- Gracious
- Heart
- Helpfulness
- Hospitality
- Loving
- Neighborly
- Patience
- Philanthropic
- Sweetness
- Sympathy
- Tenderness
- Thoughtfulness
- Tolerance
- Understanding
- Unselfishness

Questions to Reflect on Kindness

When you think of what kindness means to you, what words or actions come to mind?

What was the last act of kindness that you saw? How did it make you feel?

What was the last act of kindness that you received? How did it make you feel?

Now, can you think of the last act of kindness you completed? How were you kind to someone else? How did it make you feel?

What would happen if you committed to performing at least one act of kindness every day?

Now, be kind and change the world!

Source: <https://inspirekindness.com/blog/kindness-101>

How do you express kindness?

Why are you willing to commit to one act of kindness each day?

How may your acts of kindness make a difference to you and others?

Create and share your list of ways you can be kind and commit to acting on it.

Consider the famous advice from Socrates – “Is it true; is it kind, or is it necessary?”

Bernard Meltzer was a Twentieth Century radio host who expanded on this with

“Before you speak ask yourself if what you are going to say is true, is kind, is necessary, is helpful? If the answer is no, maybe what you are about to say should be left unsaid.”

Try using these words of wisdom in all your communications: in person, zoom, texts, emails, and social feeds. How did it or would it make a difference?

Maitri or LovingKindness is a key meditation in Buddhism.

Maitrī (Sanskrit; Pali: mettā) means benevolence, **loving-kindness**, friendliness, amity, good will, and active interest in others. ... The cultivation of benevolence (mettā bhāvanā) is a popular form of **Buddhist meditation**. It is a part of the four immeasurables in Brahmavihara (divine abidings) **meditation**. Source: [Wikipedia](#)

There are many versions of the LovingKindness meditation and you can find many recordings online. Here is an excerpt from **Comfortable with Uncertainty: 108 Teachings on Cultivating Fearlessness and Compassion** by Pema Chodron. (<https://www.shambhala.com/comfortable-with-uncertainty-15045.html>)

To move from aggression to unconditional loving-kindness can seem like a daunting task. But we start with what's familiar. The instruction for cultivating limitless maitri is to first find the tenderness that we already have. We touch in with our gratitude or appreciation—our current ability to feel goodwill. In a very nontheoretical way we contact the soft spot of bodhichitta. Whether we find it in the tenderness of feeling love or the vulnerability of feeling lonely is immaterial. If we look for that soft, unguarded place, we can always find it.

This formal seven-step practice uses the first line of the Four Limitless Ones chant. You can also put the aspiration in your own words.

1. Awaken loving-kindness for yourself. "May I enjoy happiness and the root of happiness," or use your own words.
2. Awaken it for someone for whom you spontaneously feel unequivocal goodwill and tenderness, such as your mother, your child, your spouse, your dog. "May (name) enjoy happiness and the root of happiness."
3. Awaken loving-kindness for someone slightly more distant, such as a friend or neighbor, again saying their name and aspiring for their happiness, using the same words.
4. Awaken loving-kindness for someone about whom you feel neutral or indifferent, using the same words.
5. Awaken loving-kindness for someone you find difficult or offensive.
6. Let the loving-kindness grow big enough to include all the beings in the five steps above. (This step is called "dissolving the barriers.") Say, "May I, my beloved, my friend, the neutral person, the difficult person all together enjoy happiness and the root of happiness."
7. Extend loving-kindness toward all beings throughout the universe. You can start close to home and widen the circle even bigger. "May all beings enjoy happiness and the root of happiness."

At the end of the practice, drop the words, drop the wishes, and simply come back to the nonconceptual simplicity of sitting meditation.

For further exploration:

Consider a 21 Kindness Challenge <https://www.kindspring.org/>

Consider and do research on the choices you make each day- what you eat, what you wear, what you consume, what you support and what you invest in. Are your choices kind? Do they reflect an awareness of the consequences of your daily choices? What steps may you commit to so as to make kinder choices?

Read **We Can Be Kind: Healing Our World One Kindness at a Time** by David Friedman. This book was inspired by the song below which David Friedman wrote.

Consider joining Unity of Fairfax's EarthCare or Compassionate Community Service ministries.

- <https://www.unityoffairfax.org/earthcare>
- <https://www.unityoffairfax.org/serve/compassionate-community-service>

Songs

My Religion is Kindness by Karen Drucker: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rC_T0vDZto

We Can Be Kind sung by Nancy LaMott and written by David Friedman:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49mo--Wsk6E>

Treat People with Kindness by Harry Styles:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LoX03zRorQk>

Week 2 – Generosity



Generous- adjective

1. liberal in giving or sharing; unselfish: *a generous patron of the arts; a generous gift.*
2. free from meanness or smallness of mind or character; magnanimous.
3. large; abundant; ample: *a generous portion of pie.*
4. rich or strong in flavor: *a generous wine.*
5. fertile; prolific: *generous soil.*

Source: [dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com)

Generosity (also called largess) is the virtue of being liberal in giving, often as gifts. Generosity is regarded as a virtue by various world religions and is often celebrated in cultural and religious ceremonies. Scientific investigation into generosity has examined the effect of a number of scenarios and games on individuals' generosity, and potential links with neurochemicals such as oxytocin, and relationship with similar feelings, such as that of empathy.

The modern English word *generosity* derives from the Latin word *generōsus*, which means "of noble birth", which itself was passed down to English through the Old French word *généreux*.

Source: [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org)

They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. Psalm 36:8

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. Luke 6:38

Generosity is the most natural outward expression of an inner attitude of compassion and loving-kindness. The Dalai Lama XIV

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. Winston Churchill

The value of a man resides in what he gives and not in what he is capable of receiving. Albert Einstein

We should give as we would receive, cheerfully, quickly, and without hesitation; for there is no grace in a benefit that sticks to the fingers. Seneca

Excerpt from Charles Fillmore, co-founder of Unity.

"Freely ye received, freely give." True giving is the love and generosity of the Spirit-quicken heart responding to the love and generosity of the Father's heart.

Perhaps no simpler way to begin one's growth in the grace of giving can be suggested for our own day. Those who have followed this method have usually found that they had more money to give than they had thought possible.

In order that the plan of giving may be successful there are several things that must be observed. First there must be a willing mind. "If the readiness is there, it is acceptable according as a man hath, not according as he hath not" (II Cor.8:12). "God loveth a cheerful

giver" (II Cor. 9:7). Secondly, the giving must be done in faith, and there must be no withholding because the offering seems small. Many of the instances of giving that are recorded in the Bible as worthy of special mention, commendation, and blessing are instances where the gift itself was small. The widow who fed Elijah in his time of famine gave him a cake made with her last handful of meal. For her faith and her generous spirit, she was rewarded with a plentiful daily supply of food for herself and her sons, as well as for Elijah. "The jar of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail."

This same truth is set forth beautifully in the New Testament, where it is clearly shown that not the amount of the offering but the spirit in which it is given determines its value and power.

Charles Fillmore, *Prosperity*, pages 133-134

In what way is giving a divine grace?

How can faith be exercised in giving?

What effect does a willing and cheerful spirit have on the giver, the gift, and the receiver?

Source: <https://www.truthunity.net/books/charles-fillmore-prosperity-131-144>

The Gifts of Generosity: Why giving more than you receive can lead to greater health and happiness



By Melanie Haiken | December 2016

For those who want to improve their lives by virtually every measure, social scientists offer surprising advice: Give away as much as possible.

People who generously contribute their time, money, and kindness are healthier, happier, and more confident than those who do not, according to research from the University of Notre Dame; the University of California, Berkeley; and other academic institutions.

“Being generous has a host of positive effects — everything from making you more socially networked and physically active to preventing depression,” says Notre Dame sociologist Hilary Davidson, PhD, coauthor of *The Paradox of Generosity*. Written with sociology professor Christian Smith, PhD, the book compiles insights gleaned from the Science of Generosity Initiative, which tracked the spending habits and lifestyles of 40 families from different classes and races over a five-year period.

“Acting generously causes neurochemical changes in the brain, increasing the pleasure response,” Davidson explains. The result is circular: The more satisfied and directed you feel in life, the more generous you are. “It becomes an upward spiral.”

The relationship between generosity and well-being is so strong that the opposite is also true: Selfishness can be self-destructive, says Smith. When University of Queensland researchers asked study participants to play a bargaining game that tested the effects of selfish decision-making, they found stingy players had higher stress levels than those who acted generously. “As we say in the book, it’s no accident that the word ‘miserly’ and the word ‘miserable’ are related,” says Smith.

According to researchers, generosity can improve your life in some surprising, health-enhancing ways.

Health Booster

“When people act from compassion to care for others, they live longer, have better health, and are happier rather than the reverse,” says Dacher Keltner, PhD, codirector of the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley and author of *Born to Be Good* and *The Power Paradox: How We Gain and Lose Influence*. Keltner cites studies showing that caring for others in need activates the vagus nerve, a key

neural pathway that slows the heart rate, boosts immune function, and decreases the inflammatory response.

Generosity can also reduce the negative effects of stress. In a recent study published in the journal *Health Psychology*, researchers gave participants a sum of money and instructed them to spend it on themselves or on others. The results were convincing: Those who gave generously to others experienced a significant lowering of blood pressure. “The drop in blood pressure was the equivalent of what you might see from starting a new aerobic-exercise program,” says lead author Ashley Whillans, a PhD student at the University of British Columbia.

While this was just one small study, it was the first to demonstrate a causal effect, says Whillans.

Confidence Builder

If you’ve been going through life feeling like you aren’t making much of a difference in the world, focusing on helping someone else or a cause can boost your self-esteem. “When you put some elbow grease into something, you realize you’re someone who can get things done, and it’s very gratifying,” says Davidson.

And because generous behavior often entails moving beyond your comfort zone and developing new skills — whether that’s coaching soccer, helping in a community garden, or becoming a museum docent — it increases your sense of self-efficacy. “We know that learning and expanding our knowledge is also deeply connected with happiness and mental satisfaction,” Davidson adds.

Finally, giving helps you see -yourself as an agent of change; it builds confidence and increases optimism. It also helps you meet new people and develop new connections in your community. “One of the things we know for certain is that the wider and broader our social networks are, the more positive we feel and the more satisfied we are with our lives,” she says.

Joy Maker

Research has consistently found that generosity can be a powerful tool for improving moods and even combating depression. “Imaging studies have shown that the same pleasure centers in the brain that are activated by sex and food are activated by giving,” explains Keltner.

In a 2008 study exploring the emotional health benefits of donating money, researchers from Harvard Business School and the University of British Columbia gave participants cash, instructing half of the group to spend it on themselves and the other half to purchase gifts for others. Those who shopped for others consistently reported more joy than those who spent the money on themselves.

Giving doesn’t just feel good; it also gets you out of your own head, which can help when you’re feeling down. “A surefire way to feel better when you’re blue is to shift the focus away from yourself and onto others, and that’s what generosity does,” says Keltner.

You also gain a different outlook when you see inside the lives of others, Davidson says, pointing to one of her interview subjects who suffered from fibromyalgia. “Pain was quite present in her life, but in volunteering she was able to take a step away from it and put it in perspective,” she says.

Grow Your Generosity

Being motivated by the needs of others — rather than the personal benefits of being charitable — is a key factor in enjoying the many perks of generosity. In other words, you can’t fake it and still reap its rewards.

You can, however, more genuinely contribute your time, money, and talents. “Generous impulses can be learned, and it’s exhilarating when you just get out there and try it,” says Notre Dame sociologist Hilary Davidson, PhD, coauthor of *The Paradox of Generosity*. To get started, she suggests taking stock of your resources – looking at time as much as money – and finding small ways these resources might be used for the good of others. Consider these ideas:

Start small. Make an extra pan of lasagna for a sick friend, buy a cup of coffee for the next person in line, share your pocket change, or just give someone a hug or pat on the back. (Touch is a powerful, direct way to give; it releases oxytocin, which promotes trust, cooperation, and sharing.)

Join a team. Paint the sets for a school play, coach a Little League team, get involved in a community improvement organization, work a phone bank, or team up with others to clean up a beach or local park.

Support a cause. Volunteer at a soup kitchen, run a 5K to fight cancer, walk dogs at a local shelter, attend (or chair!) a fundraiser for your child’s school, collect groceries for a local food bank, or make an annual pledge to a charity close to your heart.

Spread the love. Trumpet the arrival of a friend’s book or gallery show, be understanding with a cranky spouse, give a coworker credit for a good idea, organize a party for a friend, or drum up support for a local event.

Melanie Haiken is a San Francisco–based journalist specializing in health, science, travel, and the environment.

Source: <https://experiencelife.com/article/the-gifts-of-generosity/>

What do you do and what can you do to be generous with your time, talents and money? How do you feel when you are generous? What creative new things can you do?

A Collection of Inspirational Thoughts

Excerpts from *The Spiritual Practice of Generosity*

A Collection of Inspirational Thoughts

What spiritual teachers of our times and earlier say about the value of generosity.

Spiritual Practice Feature by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

Warren Buffett, one of the world's richest men, announced in June 2006 that he is giving 85% of his fortune to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to help the foundation pursue its longstanding goal of curing the globe's most fatal diseases and improving American education. This is a \$31 billion gift, certainly one of the largest acts of generosity in world history.

Two thoughts came to mind when we heard this news. First, we recalled something Bill Gates, chairman of the Microsoft Corporation, said three years ago. It came near the end of an interview with

by Bill Moyers on the PBS series *Now*. Moyers and Gates were discussing his philanthropic activities, and Gates recounted a litany of reasons why some people think addressing global health problems is a good idea. Some use economic arguments. If we cure something like malaria in an African country, say, then that country's Gross National Product will be higher (and presumably they will buy more things). Some use security arguments: "If we don't cure these diseases, the instability in these countries will be bad." Others use the neighborhood arguments; "Somebody could get on a plane from one of these places and you might get sick."

None of these arguments, Gates said matter-of-factly, is the right one. "The right argument is this mother's child is sick. And that child's life is no less valuable than the life of anyone else. And the world has plenty of resources to go solve these problems."

We have never forgotten that statement. On the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation website, they restate it as the "two simple values that lie at the core of the foundation's work": (1) "All lives – no matter where they are being led – have equal value." (2) "To whom much has been given, much is expected."

The second thought that came to mind when we heard of Warren Buffett's gift is that generosity is for everyone. If this is how we honor and express human value, than any act of kindness counts in the bigger picture. We can all be kind. We can all be generous. This is one of the key teachings of all the world's religions. "You can share even if you have a little," according to a Lungundan (East African) proverb.

So, we decided to look into our databases of quotes collected from our reading and see what teachers of our times and earlier ones have said about the spiritual practice of generosity. We encourage you to take them to heart, as we have, and to share them with others.

- Wendy Lustbader, a mental health counselor, writes in *Counting on Kindness*: "The words 'genius' and 'generous' come from the Latin root 'genere' meaning 'to beget.' To have a genius for life is to possess the ability to generate warmth and well-being in others. Largess literally enlarges our lives."
- In *Simple Truths*, Kent Nerburn states: "Giving is a miracle that can transform the heaviest of hearts. Two people, who moments before lived in separate worlds of private concerns, suddenly meet each other over a simple act of sharing. The world expands, a moment of goodness is created, and something new comes into being where before there was nothing. . . . But true giving is not an economic exchange; it is a generative act. It does not subtract from what we have; it multiplies the effect we can have in the world."
- Buddhist teacher Sharon Salzberg writes in *Lovingkindness*: "The Buddha said that no true spiritual life is possible without a generous heart... Generosity allies itself with an inner feeling of abundance – the feeling that we have enough to share."
- Matthew Fox in *Sins of the Spirit, Blessings of the Flesh* writes: "Generosity is about giving without a guaranteed return – it is about the 'giveaway.' I believe that the true moral path of the twenty-first century will be very different from the path of the modern era because it will be marked by generosity."
- Anglican Archbishop and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Desmond Tutu writes in *God Has a Dream*: "Like humility, generosity comes from seeing that everything we have and everything we accomplish comes from God's grace and God's love for us. In the African understanding of *ubuntu*, our humility and generosity also come from realizing that we could not be alive, nor

could we accomplish anything, without the support, love, and generosity of all the people who have helped us to become the people we are today. Certainly, it is from experiencing this generosity of God and the generosity of those in our life that we learn gratitude and to be generous to others."

- Christian author Tony Campolo in *Spiritual Perspectives on America's Role as a Superpower* points out how far many of us are from being generous. He notes: "Americans do not realize that the wealth we have gained since the middle of the twentieth century has slowly made us into a very selfish people. We know that after World War II we helped rebuild Europe under the Marshall Plan, and we still think that the same kind of generosity marks our present-day foreign policy. That is not the case. Of the twenty-two industrial nations of the world, the United States is dead last on per-capita giving to the poor peoples of the world. By way of comparison, let me point out that on a per-capita-basis, for every dollar that America gives to the world, the people of Norway give seventy."
- Editor Rebecca Laird in *The Heart of Henri Nouwen* quotes from this Catholic contemplative's book *Sabbatical Journey*: "I think that generosity has many levels. We have to think generously, speak generously, and act generously. Thinking well of others and speaking well of others is the basis for generous giving. It means that we relate to others as part of our 'gen' or 'kin' and treat them as family. Generosity cannot come from guilt or pity. It has to come from hearts that are fearless and free and are willing to share abundantly all that is given to us."

How do we think generously, speak generously and act generously?

Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield in *The Faces of Buddhism in America* says: "To cultivate generosity directly is another fundamental part of living a spiritual life. Like the training precepts and like our inner meditations, generosity can actually be practiced. With practice, its spirit forms our actions, and our hearts will grow stronger and lighter. It can lead to new levels of letting go and great happiness."

How could someone cultivate generosity?

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/features/view/15783/the-spiritual-practice-of-generosity>

For further exploration

Read the whole article referenced above from Spirituality and Practice.

To explore prosperity and generosity, consider tithing to your source of spiritual nourishment. Tithing is part of most of the world's spiritual traditions.

Read the classic Unity book on prosperity: *The Four Spiritual Laws of Prosperity: A Simple Guide to Unlimited Abundance* by Edwene Gaines.

Songs

Generosity by Jerome Collins: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nF3yJg45NZY>

All the Good by Jana Stanfield: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hE6cZelzapE>

If Not for Love by Karen Taylor-Good: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCTWrIFIM78>

Week 3 – Curiosity

Curiosity – noun

noun, plural cu·ri·os·i·ties.

the desire to learn or know about anything; inquisitiveness.

a curious, rare, or novel thing.

a strange, curious, or interesting quality.

Archaic. carefulness; fastidiousness.

Source: [dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com)



So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”
– Exodus 3:3

I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious. – *Albert Einstein*

Be curious, not judgmental. – *Walt Whitman*

The best spiritual instruction is when you wake up in the morning and say, 'I wonder what's going to happen today.' And then carry that kind of curiosity through your life. – *Pema Chodron*

The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity. – *Albert Einstein*

How do you define curiosity? Why is it important? Do you consider yourself a curious person?

Video of Charles Fillmore poem on Curiosity:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60gXSYzSscU>

Embracing Curiosity

By Melissa Eisler

Curiosity can be defined as “the desire to learn or know about anything.” When I think of curious individuals, I think of people who are not just interested in learning facts and knowledge, but as those who are hungry for new interpretations and perspectives – even if they think they might already know about something. They question everything and yearn to know how things work, how they can work better, how others think, and wonder constantly *if... what... when... why... how...*

Curious individuals get excited to ask questions and hear different answers. Anything from A to Z. If you’re a particularly curious person, you’ve probably asked yourself (and others) questions like these:

- If you could be any animal, what would you be?
- Why do you fail to do the things you know you should be doing?
- How do people live in Ecuador, Tunisia, or Malaysia?
- If you had no fear in life, what would you be doing?
- How do magnets work?
- If you had three wishes, what would they be?
- What would happen if you didn't have to worry about money for the rest of your life?

Being curious has its benefits. For example, when you're curious, problem solving becomes easier because you see more options, paths, and ways of solving a problem than your non-curious counterparts. You question more; you gather more opinions; you don't stop at the first solution – which can lead to greater possibilities.

I'd be remiss to mention that curiosity can have drawbacks, too. As the saying goes, "curiosity killed the cat," there are some things that are just not your business, and your curiosity may lead you to want to find out anyway. Use your judgment, always, as being curious about other people's personal affairs can get you into trouble.

An Attitude of Curiosity

To truly embrace an attitude of curiosity means you begin to question things in your life and the world around you *with no attachment to the answer*. This last part is the key. Even if the subject at hand is something you know a lot about – yourself, for example – pretend like you are getting to know it (in this example, "it" being yourself) for the first time and with wonder, begin to inquire, observe and learn. To do this without judgment requires an incredibly high degree of openness.

With practice, you may find that it is really difficult to remain closed off to other people or ideas when you're in a state of curiosity. If you're genuinely curious about something, you really want to explore it from all angles – not just explore with the hope of proving yourself right in the end. You explore, simply to learn.

The important thing to remember is that you don't have to be innately curious to adopt an attitude of curiosity. Here are three exercises to practice developing your curiosity muscles.

Curiosity Exercise 1: Observe Someone Who's Curious

Identify someone in your life who embodies curiosity, and plan to spend a few hours with them observing their behavior and language. It could be an adult you consider particularly open-minded and inquisitive, or it could be a child. Some of the best role models of curiosity are between the ages of 2 and 5 – they are typically curious about anything and everything, without any ideas or knowing about it beforehand. They ask questions, smell, taste, try on, experiment, and play with things to discover how they work and whether or not they like them.

As you are with your curiosity role model, observe their way of being and ask yourself:

- What can I learn from the way they hold themselves?
- How do they speak?
- How do they react to others and the world around them?
- How can I apply some of my findings to my own attitude of curiosity?

When you are done, try to emulate some of their behavior and language and see how it feels.

Curiosity Exercise 2: Embrace Beginner's Mind

In Buddhism, the term “Beginner’s Mind” refers to stepping into a state of unknowing. Whether you know how to do something or not, you are unattached to your way of doing it.

“In the Beginner’s Mind there are many possibilities. In the expert’s mind there are few.”

In his book, *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind: Informal Talks on Zen Meditation and Practice*, Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki said, “In the Beginner’s Mind there are many possibilities. In the expert’s mind there are few.” Meaning, if you are an expert at something, you likely do it the same way every time. But if you are a beginner, you try, test, and experiment with different strategies. If you can step into this attitude of “not knowing,” you will be pleasantly surprised by what you might ask – and what you might discover. Even if you are already good at the task at hand, pretend like you aren’t and be inquisitive.

The idea of Beginner’s Mind works especially well in matters of self-inquiry. If you are trying to solve a problem in your life, pretend like you know nothing about it, and take an objective look. Notice if you are resisting a sense of openness or feeling tied to certain strategies or outcomes in your life. Notice when the voice in your head is saying “I already know I’m best at X.” or “I’ve always been a night owl, so that’s how I plan to be moving forward.” Or “My dad always said my biggest weakness was my sensitivity.” Pretend like you have no preconceived notions about yourself or this issue – and see what you can learn.

Being curious about yourself means you get to know yourself again – your strengths, weaknesses, passions, and talents. You will discover things about yourself you didn’t already know, or thought you knew. The perspective you discover may be different than what you previously thought, or what your parents, teachers, previous bosses, or friends may have thought. You get to decide what you’ll do with your new awareness – and see how it fits in with your values and goals.

Curiosity Exercise 3: Try Something New

Choose a new activity or subject you are curious about but have no experience with. Then ... set aside some time to figure it out. If it’s a type of dance you’ve always wanted to learn, sign up for a class. If you’ve always wanted to know about a culture or country, plan a trip. If it’s a language or subject you’ve always found intriguing, enroll in a course.

As you learn about the new subject or activity, study the way you are as a beginner and learn from the style of questions you ask and the mood you bring to the new activity. Often when you are a curious beginner, you bring a sense of wonder and awe that is harder to bring to conversations where you are experienced. And you may notice that sense of wonder can be *really fun*.

Give yourself permission to enjoy these exercises. Embracing curiosity involves playfulness, lightness, and openness – all fun qualities to practice. You may also find that it’s difficult to be in a bad mood and be in a curious mood at the same time. So not only is it fun to practice, but you’ll be also delightful to be around when you’re embodying curiosity.

Source: <https://melissaeisler.com/embracing-curiosity/>

What did you learn about curiosity from observing others? List at least three things you want to learn more about and something new you want to try.

Curiosity and Beginner's Mind

By Diane Law

“In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities; in the expert’s mind there are few.” —
Shunryu Suzuki

Think about something you consider yourself to be an expert in. When that particular topic comes up, you are confident that you know just what to do without even having to think about it. It’s a great feeling. And surely, it’s good to be relied upon to use your expertise to solve problems, create strategies, or design solutions.

Contrast that with “shoshin,” a word from Zen Buddhism meaning beginner’s mind. The beginner’s mind releases us from preconceived ideas and helps us see things with an open mind and fresh eyes, just like a beginner. It refers to having an attitude of openness, eagerness, and lack of presumptions when studying a subject, even when studying at an advanced level, and approaching it just as a beginner would. You’re looking at everything as if it’s brand new, with curiosity and wonder.

Sydney Finkelstein, professor at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College, says that being the most knowledgeable and experienced person isn’t always a good thing. Expertise can steer you wrong in two important ways. It can stop you from being curious about new developments in your field, and it can make you overconfident about your ability to solve problems in different areas. You may be incurious about different perspectives.

How to cultivate a beginner's mind

Be curious. Asking questions and observing is at the heart of beginner's mind. Even if you believe you already know the answer, open yourself up to new perspectives and approaches. Probe and delve deep. Be inquisitive and go beyond the obvious. A beginner’s mind also gives us a sense of gentle humility by letting go of being the one who knows everything. Seek first to understand, not to explain. Are there different ways to approach the topic? Who else can be consulted? What would happen if you did this instead of that?

Pause your autopilot. When you have a task ahead of you or find yourself in the middle of doing something you’ve done a million times before, make a point of pausing. When you give yourself a moment, you can find newness within your circumstance. Habitual ways of thinking and behaving can be useful, but they can also get in the way when we need more awareness. Bring a sense of wonder to the situation, the same as what children bring to the world around them.

Be non-judgmental. Non-judgment means observing the events of your situation without judging them as good or bad, so you stick to the facts. Many times, we react to our judgments about situations rather than the facts themselves. Think with an open mind. What are you missing? What assumptions are you making? Don’t be stuck in your own narrative but instead seek out alternative views, without labeling them as right or wrong.

We need to be curious and know how to ask the questions that lead to new ideas. The beginner's mind enables us to move from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset and paves the way for enthusiasm, which is really the driving force for accomplishing anything.

Source: <https://www.td.org/newsletters/atd-links/curiosity-and-the-beginners-mind>

What does Beginner's Mind mean to you? Why is it important?

What is the relationship between curiosity and non-judgment? Consider someone you disagree with and get curious about their beliefs. What new insights do you have? Can you see them or their beliefs differently?

What have you always done the same way when being curious might have created a different experience? What can you change or do differently?

What other ways can you cultivate curiosity?

For further exploration:

<https://www.unity.org/prayer/14-questions-improve-your-outlook?PromotionCode=WK9C0011>

Songs

Let's Get Curious by Rosie Emery: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K14dF91Jv2I>

Upside Down by Jack Johnson from the soundtrack of Curious George:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kC3JOuZFdJU>

I Believe in Fireflies by Karen Drucker: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxZma2ybJHw>

Week 4 – Trust

Trust – noun, verb

Noun: An assured reliance on someone or something; or one in whom confidence is placed.

Verb: To actively place confidence in.

(adapted from Merriam-Webster dictionary)

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.*

- Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV

The people when rightly and fully trusted will return the trust. Abraham Lincoln

He who does not trust enough, will not be trusted. Lao Tzu

Trust is the gateway to happiness. Jack Kornfield

Learn to trust the journey, even when you do not understand it. Lolly Daskal

I believe in trusting. Trust begets trust. Suspicion is fetid and only stinks. He who trusts has never yet lost in the world. Mahatma Gandhi

The world is made of faith, and trust, and pixie dust. J.M. Barrie (Peter Pan)

What is your understanding of Trust? Please share with the group.



Living a Soul-Hearted Life: 5 Spiritual Practices to Strengthen Your Trust Muscles

by Dr Debra Reble



“The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.” –Joseph Campbell

Trusting ourselves and our connection to source is the foundation of living a soul-hearted life. Fierce, radical, and absolute trust comes from knowing that we are all connected to a divine energy that flows through each of us—also known as light energy, higher power, universal energy, divine intelligence, or God, depending on one’s point of view. We can consciously tune into this energy source through prayer or meditation, being in nature, or simple mindfulness. Through this connection to our source, we are in touch with our infinite nature as love, and live each day as a sacred meditation.

When you align with this natural flow of energy, you realize that you are stronger than any situation you can possibly face and with every setback comes even greater transformation. With such a spiritual perspective, you perceive problems, challenges, and difficulties as stepping stones for such change. You embrace every situation not as a source of fear or upset but as an opportunity for spiritual growth, even when it unravels the fabric of your life, such as losing a job, ending a relationship, suffering from an illness, or grieving the loss of a loved one. As a channel of spiritual information, you know that you are the co-creator of your reality and capable of manifesting your heart’s desires.

With such “all in” trust, you know deep within your heart that what happens in your life is consciously and divinely orchestrated for your greater growth and good. From this perspective, you see the divine order that exists in everything around and within you. You let go of trying to control your life and allow the simple unfolding of it.

Trusting yourself requires more than taking deep breaths and saying positive mantras; it takes a conscious connection to your divine source. Like having a safety net while walking on a high wire, it takes a sense of innate security no matter what is happening in your life. Even if you feel like you are operating without backup, your connection to your divine source is in fact your safety net. When you trust this connection, you realize that you are not alone because the divine always has your back and most importantly, your heart.

Here’s another way to look at it: Trusting yourself and your inner guidance is like getting into an express elevator to an observation deck, rather than taking the stairs and overanalyzing every step. Trusting yourself governs how you perceive and respond to all challenges in life. It affords you the personal power to express love, flow with the stream of life, and transcend even the most difficult circumstances.

Many of us are looking for trust outside ourselves instead of looking within. We lack trust because we fear that by letting go we will lose everything, most of all ourselves. Instead, we try to micromanage everyone and everything around us. We continually check our bank accounts to see if we are financially secure. We obsess about our physical symptoms, thinking we may be ill. We stay in a familiar job even if it causes us misery. We remain in unhealthy relationships to avoid being alone and maintain toxic social connections to feel like we belong. Above all, we live in a perpetually guarded state, with locks on our hearts as well as our doors—all in an effort to feel safe and secure.

In *When Things Fall Apart*, Pema Chödrön describes such fear as “our natural reaction to moving closer to the truth.” She states, “We often find that the present moment is a pretty vulnerable place, and that this can be completely unnerving and completely tender at the same time.” While such fearful behavior can temporarily make us feel like our desired outcomes are certain, this is a false sense of security.

Trust is the energetic space between your fear and everything working out well. For example, imagine crossing a deep chasm with no bridge to get to the other side. On the side you are standing is fear and on the other side is what you want to create in your life. When you step out into thin air, you are stepping in the space of trust. By being bold hearted, you co-create the invisible trust bridge that gets you to the other side of fear.

When you open your heart and let go of fear, uncertainty, and self-doubt, you create the energetic space for the universe to assist you. Trust kicks in and opens you to all the possibilities on your soul's path. The spiritual information coming through this channel whether it's an intuition, idea, or vision guides your choices. These moments when you trust and let go, something bigger and better than you can imagine comes your way.

Trust is a whole and complete energy such as love and light. So there are no steps to take, only experiences that strengthen your trust muscles. Every time you follow your heart whether it's an intuition, idea, or inner knowing, you build trust in yourself. When you make a choice, the universe guides you to know whether you are in trust or not.

To trust is to boldly lead with your heart, and reveal your truth—your inner thoughts, feelings, and experiences—honestly and openly. When you trust yourself, you venture into the unknown territory of your own being. It doesn't necessarily mean performing feats of external bravery and strength, but rather acknowledging your internal fears, hurts, and imperfections, and acting in the face of them. Trusting yourself to let go and embrace your vulnerabilities is one of the most courageous choices you can make.

Here are 5 Spiritual Practices to Build Your Trust Muscles:

- **Reflect back on a time in your life where you were afraid to make a change.** You may have changed jobs, entered a new relationship, or let go of someone or something. Make a list of all those moments where you were fearful, you let go into trust, and it turned out well for you. When you find you are having difficulty trusting yourself and making a choice, review your list and remind yourself of all the times you made a leap of trust
- **Create a divine validation list in your journal.** Every time you get a divine sign from the universe that supports an intention or gives you the guidance you need, write it down. Then when you doubt yourself or feel uncertain, review your list. This will open your conscious awareness to the signs that are all around you right now.
- **Notice when you are afraid of making a choice or stepping into your light.** Create a quiet place and ask yourself these questions: What is my fear-based ego saying no to that is blocking my soul's path? Where are the energy blocks in my body? What are they telling me to let go of?
- **Acknowledge yourself as a strong, loving, and confident person connected to your source.** Close your eyes, open your heart, and trust the spiritual information that comes through you as a divine download. Repeat these mantras to yourself:
 1. I trust that everything always works out for my highest good.
 2. I am strong enough to handle any challenge that comes my way.
 3. I embrace any challenges as they are opportunities for transformation.
- **Breathe in deeply and slowly to ground yourself in moments of anxiety.** Breathe in and look within with love of yourself, breathe out, and look out to the world with love of others. Do this until your breath is rhythmic, and you feel calm and centered. Trust yourself and all you've created that led you to who you are today...the people, events, and challenges.

Trusting yourself is the most important spiritual principle on the path to a soul-hearted life. It gives you the opportunity to release whatever keeps you physically, emotionally, and spiritually disconnected from your true being—including fear, insecurity, and shame. The more you let go, the more you learn to trust yourself; and the more you trust yourself, the more you can let go. In trusting yourself and your

connection to your source, you develop a receptiveness to all life experience by resisting nothing and allowing everything.

To trust ourselves is to love ourselves even when we feel unlovable, to make loving choices for ourselves even when we feel unworthy, and to open ourselves to love even when we are afraid of being hurt. It permits us to participate fully in life without holding back any part of ourselves.

If there was ever a more pivotal time for you to TRUST yourself and the universe's constant support and inspiration, it is NOW.

Source: <https://aspiremag.net/living-soul-hearted-life-5-spiritual-practices-strengthen-trust-muscles/>

Here are a few concepts to reflect on:

1. Trust is the energetic space between fear and everything working out well.
2. When you open your heart and let go of fear, uncertainty and self-doubt, you create the energetic space for the universe to assist you.
3. Trust is a whole and complete energy such as love and light.
4. To Trust is to boldly lead with your heart and reveal your truth -your inner thoughts, feelings and experiences, honestly and openly.

Which of these concepts most resonates with you and why?

Which of these concepts is/are challenging for you to accept and why?

Please take the time to do the 5 spiritual practices and share your discoveries.

A Wisdom Moment of Trust

By Mark Nepo

*If you can't cross over alive,
How can you cross when you're dead?
- Kabir*

The need to step into what we fear and, in so doing, disperse its hold on us is powerfully brought to life by a moment in the film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. After searching everywhere within reason and memory for the Holy Grail, Jones stands on an enormous precipice, a deep chasm before him, the Grail waiting on the other side. His father, wounded and depending on the Grail to heal, cries out possible interpretations of the clues Jones has been given to reach the Grail.

After what seems a lifetime of inner debate and escalating fear, he dares, against everything he knows, to step into the void above the chasm, and as he does, an enormous stone foundation appears beneath his feet, a bridge that was there all along.

This is a moment of risk and trust, a wisdom moment that repeats itself in our lives in both small and large ways. Over and over, the cup we need to drink from, the ancient ever-healing cup of wholeness waits beyond some deep chasm we are afraid to cross.

Often we are driven to the edge by the cries and clues of elders and loved ones, only to find that nothing makes sense, that there seems nowhere to go. And then the atom of risk begins to replay itself in those brought to the edge.

Then, when all known ways of seeing have failed, we sometimes dare to step into the void. Whether that void is a chasm of purpose or self-esteem or a ravine in relationship or a canyon of addiction, this crazy-wisdom step-that begins with risk and lands in trust-reveals a foundation that was there all along, but which is only made visible by our risk to think and see in new ways and our trust to step into what we fear.

Breathe deeply and know that even the smallest moment of risk and trust is difficult.

Center yourself and meditate on a chasm of your own making. It might be a trench of stubbornness or pride that no one can cross, or the echo of your own pain that isolates you, or the vastness that builds when you are afraid to tell someone the truth of your heart, or the absence of belief that you deserve what waits on the other side.

Lean into your chasm gently until fear subsides.

Lean into your chasm and offer, through your breathing, a wordless compassion for yourself and all others in our very human struggle to step with risk and land with trust.

Source: Mark Nepo, *The Book of Awakening*, April 27, pages 127-128.

When have you stepped out in trust to build a bridge over a personal chasm?

What is a chasm of your own making?

What would it take to lean into it?

What do you imagine you may feel if you did lean into it

For Further exploration from Unity

Trust Spirit Within: <https://www.unity.org/resources/articles/trust-spirit-within>

Trust Divine Order: <https://www.unity.org/resources/articles/trust-divine-order>

Love Has Already Chosen You, Now It's Your Turn: <https://www.unity.org/resources/articles/love-has-already-chosen-you-now-it%E2%80%99s-your-turn>

Songs

I Will Surrender sung by Faith Rivera and written by David Roth, Faith Rivera, & Karen Drucker: <https://youtu.be/21WYjVKfq1U>

Sanctuary by Carrie Newcomer: <https://youtu.be/HjOioWTVAI4>

If I Were Brave by Jimmy Scott and Jana Stanfield: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF5V2PEujqs>

For something completely different... ***A Matter of Trust*** by Billy Joel: <https://youtu.be/6yYchgX1fMw>

Week 5 – Forgiveness

Forgive - verb

To cease to feel resentment against
To pardon
To absolve someone of the consequences of an offense, a debt owed or an unmet obligation

Forgiveness - noun

Act of forgiving; state of being forgiven.
Disposition or willingness to forgive.

Source: dictionary.com



Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. – *Ephesians 4:32*

I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear. – *Martin Luther King*

Inner peace can be reached only when we practice forgiveness. Forgiveness is letting go of the past, and is therefore the means for correcting our misperceptions. – *Gerald Jampolsky*

The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to the healing of the world. – *Marianne Williamson*

A part of me wants to cling to old resentments, but I know the more I forgive, the better my life works. *Courage to Change*, AlAnon, October 15, 1992.

Read and highlight key phrases in the following three articles, then answer the ensuing questions.

The Ancient Heart of Forgiveness

By Jack Kornfield | August 23, 2011

Jack Kornfield shares extraordinary stories of forgiveness--and explains how the next story could be yours.

On the train from Washington to Philadelphia, while on my way to my father's memorial funeral service, I sat down next to an interesting fellow who worked with young boys, particularly those in jail and prison, as part of an inner-city project in Washington, DC. He told me this story.

A young kid, 14 years old, wanted to get into a gang. The way that he proved himself to enter the gang was to shoot somebody—it was an initiation rite. He shot this kid he didn't know. He was apprehended, brought to trial, and at the end of the trial, convicted.



© Jessica Key

Just before he is taken away in handcuffs, the mother of the boy who was shot stands up, looks him in the eye, and says, "I'm going to kill you," and then sits down.

After being in prison for a year or so, the boy is visited by that mother, and he's kind of frightened. She says, "I've just got to talk with you." They have a little bit of conversation, and as she leaves him she says, "Do you need anything? Cigarettes?" and leaves him a little money.

She starts to visit him. She goes every few months, and over the course of three or four years, she starts visiting him more regularly, talking to him.

When he's about to get out at the age of 17 or 18, she asks, "What are you going to do?" and he says, "I have no idea. I got no family, no nothing." And she says, "Well I've got a friend who has a little factory—maybe I can help you get a job."

So she arranges that with the parole officer. Then she asks, "Where are you going to stay?" and he says, "I don't know where I'm going to go." And she says, "Well I have a spare room where you can stay with me." So he comes and stays in the spare room, takes this job, and after about six months, she says, "I really need to talk with you—come into the living room. Sit down, let's talk."

She looks at him and says, "Remember that day in court when you were convicted of murdering my son for no reason at all, to get into your gang, and I stood up and said, 'I'm going to kill you?'"

"Yes ma'am, I'll never forget that day," he says.

And she looks back and says, "Well, I have. You see, I didn't want a boy who could kill in cold blood like that to continue to exist in this world. So I set about visiting you, bringing you presents, bringing you things, and taking care of you. And now I let you come into my house and got you a job and a place to live because I don't have anybody anymore. My son is gone and he was the only person that I was living with. I set about changing you, and you're not that same person anymore.

But I don't have anybody, and I want to know if you'd stay here. I'm in need of a son, and I want to know if I can adopt you."

And he said yes and she did.

What is forgiveness?

What is this human capacity for forgiveness? What is the human capacity for dignity no matter what the circumstances of life?

As this story shows, forgiveness is not just about the other. It's really for the beauty of your soul. It's for your own capacity to fulfill your life.

Forgiveness is, in particular, the capacity to let go, to release the suffering, the sorrows, the burdens of the pains and betrayals of the past, and instead to choose the mystery of love. Forgiveness shifts us from the small separate sense of ourselves to a capacity to renew, to let go, to live in love. As the *Bhagavad Gita* says, "If you want to see the brave, look to those who can return love for hatred. If you want to see the heroic, look to those who can forgive."

With forgiveness we are unwilling to attack or wish harm on anyone, including ourselves. And without forgiveness, life would be unbearable. It's hard to imagine a world without forgiveness, because we would be chained to the suffering of the past and have only to repeat it over and over again. There would be no release.

It's not easy. "Love and forgiveness is not for the faint-hearted," wrote [the Indian mystic] Meher Baba. But someone has to stand up and say, "It stops with me. I will not pass on to my children this sorrow." Whether it's in Ireland or Israel, someone has to say, "I will accept the betrayal and the suffering, and I

will bare it, but I will not retaliate. I will not pass this onto the next generation, and to endless generations of grandchildren.”

I remember a woman coming to see me amidst a terrible divorce. Unfortunately, her ex-husband was a lawyer and a very good one, so he wangled most of the money and a lot of the custody of their children. She was just desperate and struggled in all these ways to protect herself. Finally, she said to me, “You know, I simply am not going to bequeath to my children a legacy of hate. I will not do it. I will figure a way through this and I will not hate him—the bastard.” Humor helps, it really does.

When someone betrays you, you can hate them, or at some point, you can say it’s not worth it. It’s not worth it to live day after day with hatred. Because for one thing, that person who betrayed you could be in Hawaii right now having a nice vacation—and you’re here hating them! Who’s suffering then?

As Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Laureate, writes: “Suffering confers neither privileges nor rights. It all depends on how you use it. If you use it to increase the anguish of yourself or others, you are degrading, even betraying it. Yet the day will come when we shall understand that suffering can also elevate human beings. God help us to bear our suffering well.”

Not quick or sentimental

So here is a little bit about the architecture of forgiveness. First, forgiveness does not mean that we condone what happened in the past. It’s not forgive and forget. In fact, forgiveness might also include quite understandably the resolve to protect yourself and never let this happen again.

Forgiveness doesn’t mean that you have to speak or relate to a person who betrayed you, necessarily. It’s not about them. It doesn’t condone their behavior—it can stand up for justice and say “no more.”

And forgiveness is not sentimental, or quick. You can’t paper things over and smile and say, “I forgive.” It is a deep process of the heart. And in the process, you need to honor the betrayal of yourself or others—the grief, the anger, the hurt, the fear. It can take a long time. Sometimes when you do a forgiveness practice, you realize that you’re never going to forgive that person. And never takes a while.

Forgiveness is also not for anybody else. There’s a story of two ex-prisoners of war. One says to the other, “Have you forgiven your captors yet?” And the second says “No, never.” And the first one then says “Well, they still have you in prison, don’t they?”

Similarly, I remember sitting with the Dalai Lama and some Tibetan nuns who had survived years of imprisonment and torture. We were part of a meeting that I was running of ex-prisoners from all across the United States who’d been using meditation, contemplative practices, mindfulness, compassion, and so forth to change their lives.

With us were guys who had just been released after 25 years in Texas state prison or 18 years in Ohio in a maximum security prison. And they were sitting with the Dalai Lama and these little nuns who were imprisoned during their teenagers years for saying their prayers out loud.

The nuns were asked, “Were you ever afraid?” And they answered, “Yes, we were terribly afraid. And what we were afraid of was that we would end up hating our guards—that we would lose our compassion. That is the thing we most feared.”

And they sat there, these sweet young nuns, and I remember this one guy who had been in prison for 18 years in Ohio saying, “I’ve seen some brave folks in my day, and I ain’t seen anything like you young ladies.”

The principles of forgiveness

One of the interesting things about forgiveness is that you find it in all different traditions. There are African indigenous practices of forgiveness. There is of course the Christian teachings of turning the other cheek and Jesus' teachings of forgiveness. There is the mercy of Allah in Islam.

What's unique about Buddhism—because Buddhism is more a science of mind than a religion, although it functions as a religion for some people—is that it offers practices in trainings. It doesn't say just "turn the other cheek" or "remember the mercy of Allah," but it offers a thousand different trainings: trainings in mindfulness, in compassion, in forgiveness, in lovingkindness, in compassion for those who are different than you, and so on.

In this way, Buddhist psychology shows an ancient understanding of "neuroplasticity," the idea that our neurosystem is always changing, even to the very end of life. So many of the modern neuroscience studies that researchers like Richard Davidson are doing, using fMRI machines and the like, validate this idea of neuroplasticity. Indeed, in Buddhism, the teaching in three words is: "Not Always So." Things are always changing.

The Buddha was a list maker: the Eightfold Path, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, the Four Noble Truths. Similarly, here are 12 principles connected with the process of forgiveness.

One: Understand what forgiveness is and what it is not. As I mentioned earlier, it's not condoning, it's not a papering over, it's not for the other person, it's not sentimental.

Two: Sense the suffering in yourself, of still holding onto this lack of forgiveness for yourself or for another. Start to feel that it's not compassionate; that you have this great suffering that's not in your own best interest. So you actually sense the weight of not forgiving.

Three: Reflect on the benefits of a loving heart. [Buddhist texts say]: Your dreams become sweeter, you waken more easily, men and women will love you, angels and devils will love you. If you lose things they will be returned. People will welcome you everywhere when you are forgiving and loving. Your thoughts become pleasant. Animals will sense this and love you. Elephants will bow as you go by—try it at the zoo!

Four: Discover that it is not necessary to be loyal to your suffering. This is a big one. We are so loyal to our suffering, focusing on the trauma and the betrayal of "what happened to me." OK, it happened. It was horrible. But is that what defines you? "Live in joy" says the Buddha. Look at the Dalai Lama, who bears the weight of the oppression in Tibet and the loss of his culture, and yet he's also a very happy and joyful person. He says, 'They have taken so much. They have destroyed temples, burned our texts, disrobed our monks and nuns, limited our culture and destroyed it in so many ways. Why should I also let them take my joy and peace of mind?'

Five: Understand that forgiveness is a process. There's a story of a man who wrote to the IRS, "I haven't been able to sleep knowing that I cheated on my taxes. Since I failed to fully disclose my earnings last year on my return, I've enclosed a bank check for \$2,000 dollars. If I still can't sleep, I'll send the rest." It's a training, it's a process, layer by layer—that is how the body and the psyche work.

Six: Set your intention. There is a whole complex and profound teaching in Buddhist psychology about the power of both short-term and long-term intention. When you set your intention, it sets the compass of your heart and your psyche. By having that intention, you make obstacles become surmountable because you know where you are going, whether it is in business, a relationship, a love affair, a creative activity, or in the work of the heart. Setting your intention is really important and powerful.

Seven: Learn the inner and outer forms of forgiveness. There are meditation practices for the inner forms, but for the outer forms, there are also certain kinds of confessions and making amends.

Eight: Start the easiest way, with whatever opens your heart. Maybe it's your dog and maybe it's the Dalai Lama and maybe it's your child which is the thing or person that you most love and can forgive. Then you bring in someone who is a little more difficult to forgive. Only when the heart is all the way open do you take on something difficult.

Nine: Be willing to grieve. And grief, as Elizabeth Kubler-Ross has spelled out, consists of bargaining, loss, fear, and anger. You have to be willing to go through this process in some honorable way, as I'm sure Nelson Mandela did. Indeed, he has described how [before he could forgive his captors] he was outraged and angry and hurt and all the things that anyone would feel. So be willing to grieve, and then to let go.

Ten: Forgiveness includes all the dimensions of our life. Forgiveness is work of the body. It's work of the emotions. It's work of the mind. And it's interpersonal work done through our relationships.

Eleven: Forgiveness involves a shift of identity. There is in us an undying capacity for love and freedom that is untouched by what happens to you. To come back to this true nature is the work of forgiveness.

Twelve: Forgiveness involves perspective. We are in this drama in life that is so much bigger than our 'little stories.' When we can open this perspective, we see it is not just your hurt, but the hurt of humanity. Everyone who loves is hurt in some way. Everyone who enters the marketplace gets betrayed. The loss is not just your pain, it is the pain of being alive. Then you feel connected to everyone in this vastness.

I'll end with this brief story about Maha Ghosananda who was the Gandhi of Cambodia—a very dear friend of mine and a good friend of the Dalai Lama's. He led peace marches through Cambodia, through the minefields, for 15 years. He would walk people back to their villages who wanted to return, chanting lovingkindness and forgiveness the whole way. Through the jungles people would shoot at them. He would have hundreds of people behind him, and he would be beating a drum or ringing a bell and singing the song of lovingkindness. He said that if we can chant lovingkindness 100 miles back to your village, you will be safe. He did it over and over again.

I worked with him in the UN refugee camp on the border of Cambodia in the early years of that genocide. These camps had 50,000 people in a horrible, hot, dry rice plain, surrounded by barbed wire, and it was the camp that had the most Khmer Rouge in it underground.

Ghosananda asked if we could build a Buddhist temple in the central square, just a simple bamboo room and a platform. The UN said OK. So we got materials together, built this temple, and then invited everyone to come. The Khmer Rouge underground said, 'If anyone goes to this temple, when we get back in Cambodia'—which was only 10 miles back across the border— 'when we get out of here, you will be shot.'

So, we didn't know if anybody would come. We went around the camp and rang a bell that morning, just as you would ring the temple bell, and 25,000 people gathered and filled the square. And Maha Ghosananda got up on this little platform—most of the monks were killed, 19 of the 20 people in his family were killed, 95 percent of the monks in the country were executed, all the intellectuals were killed. He got up and looked out at this sea of people. They hadn't seen a monk in 10 years. The faces of trauma and shock and loss—what do you say?

He began to chant in Cambodian and in Sanskrit this simple chant that is one of the first verses of the Buddhist teachings. It goes, "Hatred never ceases by hatred, but by love alone is healed." And he chanted it over and over again: Hatred never ceases by hatred, but by love alone is healed. Slowly the voices began to pick up and chant with him, and pretty soon 25,000 people were singing this and weeping because it had been 10 years since they had heard the Dharma, the Truth, the Way.

And what I saw is that he spoke a truth that was even bigger than their sufferings, even bigger than their sorrows. This is the ancient and eternal law.

Source: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_ancient_heart_of_forgiveness

Why We Forgive

By letting go of past hurts, we can heal not only ourselves, but our families, our communities, and our world.

by **Desmond Tutu & Mpho Tutu**

There were so many nights when I, as a young boy, had to watch helplessly as my father verbally and physically abused my mother. I can still recall the smell of alcohol, see the fear in my mother's eyes, and feel the hopeless despair that comes when we see people we love hurting each other in incomprehensible ways. If I dwell in those memories, I can feel myself wanting to hurt my father back, in the same ways he hurt my mother, and in ways of which I was incapable as a small boy. I see my mother's face and I see this gentle human being whom I loved so very much and who did nothing to deserve the pain inflicted upon her.

When I recall this story, I realize how difficult the process of forgiving truly is. Intellectually, I know my father caused pain because he was in pain. Spiritually, I know my faith tells me my father deserves to be forgiven as God forgives us all. But it is still difficult. The traumas we have witnessed or experienced live on in our memories. Even years later they can cause us fresh pain each time we recall them.

Are you hurt and suffering? Is the injury new, or is it an old unhealed wound? Know that what was done to you was wrong, unfair, and undeserved. You are right to be outraged. And it is perfectly normal to want to hurt back when you have been hurt. But hurting back rarely satisfies. We think it will, but it doesn't. If I slap you after you slap me, it does not lessen the sting I feel on my own face, nor does it diminish my sadness as to the fact you have struck me. Retaliation gives, at best, only momentary respite from our pain. The only way to experience healing and peace is to forgive. Until we can forgive, we remain locked in our pain and locked out of the possibility of experiencing healing and freedom, locked out of the possibility of being at peace.

Without forgiveness, we remain tethered to the person who harmed us. We are bound with chains of bitterness, tied together, trapped. Until we can forgive the person who harmed us, that person will hold the keys to our happiness; that person will be our jailor. When we forgive, we take back control of our own fate and our feelings. We become our own liberators. We don't forgive to help the other person. We don't forgive for others. We forgive for ourselves.

The Science of Forgiveness

During the past decade there has been more and more research into forgiveness. Whereas previously the discussion of forgiveness was left to the religious, it is now gaining attention as an academic discipline studied not only by philosophers and theologians, but also by psychologists and physician. Even neuroscientists are studying the biology of forgiveness and exploring evolutionary barriers in the brain that hinder the act of forgiving. Some are even looking to see if there might be a forgiveness gene somewhere in our DNA.

As modern forgiveness research evolves, the findings clearly show that forgiving transforms people mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and even physically. In *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness*, psychologist Fred Luskin writes, "In careful scientific studies, forgiveness training has been shown to reduce depression, increase hopefulness, decrease anger, improve spiritual connection, [and] increase emotional self-confidence." Research also shows that people who are more forgiving report fewer health and mental problems, and fewer physical symptoms of stress.

As more and more scientists document the healing power of forgiveness, they also look at the mentally and physically corrosive effects of not forgiving. Hanging on to anger and resentment, living in a constant state of stress, can damage the heart as well as the soul. In fact, research has shown that failure to forgive may be a risk factor for heart disease, high blood pressure, and a score of other chronic stress-related illnesses. Medical and psychological studies have also shown that a person holding on to anger and resentment is at an increased risk for anxiety, depression, and insomnia, and is more likely to suffer from high blood pressure, ulcers, migraines, backaches, heart attack, and even cancer. The reverse is also true. Genuine forgiveness can transform these ailments.

In the end, science will prove what people have known for millennia: forgiving is good for you. Health benefits are only the beginning. To forgive is also to release yourself from whatever trauma and hardship you have experienced and reclaim your life as your own.

Healing the Whole

When we are uncaring, when we lack compassion, when we are unforgiving, we will always pay the price for it. It is not, however, we alone who suffer. Our whole community suffers, and ultimately our whole world suffers. We are made to exist in a delicate network of interdependence. We are sisters and brothers, whether we like it or not. To treat anyone as if they were less than human, less than a brother or a sister, no matter what they have done, is to contravene the very laws of our humanity.

In my own family, sibling squabbles have spilled into intergenerational alienations. When adult siblings refuse to speak to each other because of some offense, recent or long past, their children and grandchildren can lose out on the joy of strong family relationships. The children and grandchildren may never know what occasioned the freeze. They know only that “We don’t visit this aunt” or “We don’t really know those cousins.” Forgiveness among the members of older generations could open the door to healthy and supportive relationships among younger generations.

If your own well-being—your physical, emotional, and mental health—is not enough, if your life and your future are not enough, then perhaps you will forgive for the benefit of those you love, the family that is precious to you. Anger and bitterness do not just poison you, they poison all your relationships, including those with your children.

Freeing Ourselves

Forgiveness is not dependent on the actions of others. Yes, it is certainly easier to offer forgiveness when the perpetrator expresses remorse and offers some sort of reparation or restitution. Then, you can feel as if you have been paid back in some way. You can say, “I am willing to forgive you for stealing my pen, and after you give me my pen back, I shall forgive you.” This is the most familiar pattern of forgiveness. In this understanding, forgiveness is something we offer to another, a gift we bestow upon someone, but it is a gift that has strings attached.

The problem is that the strings we attach to the gift of forgiveness become the chains that bind us to the person who harmed us. Those are chains to which the perpetrator holds the key. We may set the conditions for granting our forgiveness, but the person who harmed us decides whether or not the conditions are too onerous to fulfill. We continue to be that person’s victim.

Unconditional forgiveness is a different model of forgiveness than the gift with strings. This is forgiveness as a grace, a free gift freely given. In this model, forgiveness frees the person who inflicted the harm from the weight of the victim’s whim—what the victim may demand in order to grant forgiveness—and the victim’s threat of vengeance. But it also frees the one who forgives. The one who offers forgiveness as a grace is immediately untethered from the yoke that bound him or her to the person who caused the harm. When you forgive, you are free to move on in life, to grow, to no longer be a victim. When you forgive, you slip the yoke, and your future is unshackled from your past.

Our Shared Humanity

Ultimately, forgiveness is a choice we make, and the ability to forgive others comes from the recognition that we are all flawed and all human. We all have made mistakes and harmed others. We will again. We find it easier to practice forgiveness when we can recognize that the roles could have been reversed. Each of us could have been the perpetrator rather than the victim. Each of us has the capacity to commit the wrongs against others that were committed against us. Although I might say, "I would never . . ." genuine humility will answer, "Never say never." Rather say, "I hope that, given the same set of circumstances, I would not . . ." But can we ever really know?

Truthfully, this is not a dichotomy. No person will always stand in the camp of the perpetrator. No person will always be the one who is the victim. In some situations we have been harmed, and in others we have harmed. And sometimes we straddle both camps, as when, in the heat of a marital spat, we trade hurts with our partners. Not all harms are equivalent, but this is really not the issue. Those who wish to compare how much they have wronged to how much they have been wronged will find themselves drowning in a whirlpool of victimization and denial. Those who think they are beyond reproach have not taken an honest look in the mirror.

People are not born hating each other and wishing to cause harm. It is a learned condition. Children do not dream of growing up to be rapists or murderers, and yet every rapist and every murderer was once a child. And there are times when I look at some of those who are described as "monsters" and I honestly believe that there, but for the grace of God, go I. I do not say this because I am some singular saint. I say this because I have sat with condemned men on death row, I have spoken with former police officers who have admitted inflicting the cruelest torture, I have visited child soldiers who have committed acts of nauseating depravity, and I have recognized in each of them a depth of humanity that was a mirror of my own.

Forgiveness is truly the grace by which we enable another person to get up, and get up with dignity, to begin anew.

The Invitation to Forgive

The invitation to forgive is not an invitation to forget. Nor is it an invitation to claim that an injury is less hurtful than it really is. Nor is it a request to paper over the fissure in a relationship, to say it's okay when it's not. It's not okay to be injured. It's not okay to be abused. It's not okay to be violated. It's not okay to be betrayed.

The invitation to forgive is an invitation to find healing and peace. In my native language, Xhosa, one asks forgiveness by saying, Ndicel' uxolo—"I ask for peace." Forgiveness opens the door to peace between people and opens the space for peace within each person. The victim cannot have peace without forgiving. The perpetrator will not have genuine peace while unforgiven. There cannot be peace between victim and perpetrator while the injury lies between them. The invitation to forgive is an invitation to search out the perpetrator's humanity. When we forgive, we recognize the reality that there, but for the grace of God, go I.

If I traded lives with my father, if I had experienced the stresses and pressures my father faced, if I had to bear the burdens he bore, would I have behaved as he did? I do not know. I hope I would have been different, but I do not know.

My father has long since died, but if I could speak to him today, I would want to tell him that I had forgiven him. What would I say to him? I would begin by thanking him for all the wonderful things he did for me as my father, but then I would tell him that there was this one thing that hurt me very much. I would tell him how what he did to my mother affected me, how it pained me.

Perhaps he would hear me out; perhaps he would not. But still I would forgive him. Since I cannot speak to him, I have had to forgive him in my heart. If my father were here today, whether he asked for forgiveness or not, and even if he refused to admit that what he had done was wrong or could not explain why he had done what he did, I would still forgive him. Why? Because I know it is the only way to heal the pain in my boyhood heart. Forgiving my father frees me. When I no longer hold his offenses against him, my memory of him no longer exerts any control over my moods or my disposition. His violence and my inability to protect my mother no longer define me. I am not the small boy cowering in fear of his drunken rage. I have a new and different story. Forgiveness has liberated both of us. We are free.

Meditation: Opening to the Light

1. Close your eyes and follow your breath.
2. When you feel centered, imagine yourself in a safe place.
3. In the center of your safe space is a box with many drawers.
4. The drawers are labeled. The inscriptions show hurts you have yet to forgive.
5. Choose a drawer and open it. Rolled or folded or crumpled up inside it are all the thoughts and feelings the incident evokes.
6. You can choose to empty out this drawer.
7. Bring your hurt into the light and examine it.
8. Unfold the resentment you have felt and set it aside.
9. Smooth out the ache and let it drift up into the sunlight and disappear.
10. If any feeling seems too big or too unbearable, set it aside to look at later.
11. When the drawer is empty, sit for a moment with it on your lap.
12. Then remove the label from this drawer.
13. As the label comes off, you will see the drawer turn to sand. The wind will sweep it away. You don't need it anymore.
14. There will be no space left for that hurt in the box. That space is not needed anymore.
15. If there are more drawers still to be emptied, you can repeat this meditation now or later.

Acknowledging the Harm

Listen.
Do not try to fix the pain.
Do not minimize the loss.
Do not offer advice.
Do not respond with your own loss or grief.
Keep confidentiality.
Offer your love and your caring.
Empathize and offer comfort.

Excerpted from *The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World*, by Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu. Harper One, 2014 Reprinted with permission. Archbishop Desmond Tutu won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984; his daughter, Mpho A. Tutu, is executive director of The Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityhealth.com/articles/2014/02/17/why-we-forgive>

Living Originally by Robert Brumet

Practice 3: Unlimited Forgiveness

After many years of teaching and counseling, I have identified the following seven steps in the forgiveness process.

1. See the Need for Forgiveness

As your practice self-awareness and self-acceptance recognize some of the symptoms of unforgiveness: desire for revenge; harsh criticism; avoidance or rejection of another person; a feeling that someone is “bad” or “wrong”; joy at someone else’s difficulties. (Remember to apply this to self as well.)

2. Be Willing to Forgive

Forgiveness begins with a choice. See that forgiveness is about me; is not about the other person. I may not be able to forgive completely right now but I can be willing to begin the process. (However, it must come from choice, not from any sense of moral or spiritual obligation.)

3. Ask for Help from Your Higher Power

The ego does not want to forgive; it wants to hold onto the story, so we call upon our Higher Power, the God of our understanding. Perhaps this is what Jesus did when he was being nailed to the cross, when he said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). This is a good prayer to remember when we encounter circumstances or events beyond our personal power to understand.

4. Give Up Condemnation

This is the key. By being able to give up condemnation, we begin the process of forgiveness. We may have to face an internal lobbyist who tries to convince us we should never let go of our resentment! This is simply a part of the ego defense system attempting to protect us from feeling the pain hidden by our condemnation. Remember, we choose forgiveness for our own healing. It does not matter whether or not the other person (or myself) “deserves” to be forgiven.

5. Face and Feel the Underlying Pain

This is typically the most difficult step. Very often the event that triggered our pain is not the real cause of it. Don’t judge the intensity of your emotion by the nature of the triggering event. The triggering event may simply be a catalyst that fires up some dormant pain. Feelings will rarely make sense to the rational mind.

It can be very helpful to have a skillful method and a support system to help you work with strong emotions. Examples of a skillful method might be journaling, physical exercise, or being in nature. Learn to nurture yourself and to protect yourself when you feel raw or vulnerable. Examples of a support system might be confiding in a trusted friend, a counselor, or a recovery group. Spiritually-based teachings may be especially helpful at these times.

6. Know the Truth

This is where you turn to your highest truth, whatever that may be, and however you may do that. Prayer, meditation, affirmations, chanting, sacred reading, and journal writing are some examples of ways to access your highest truth.

You may not be able to completely feel the truth you believe in, but that’s not a problem. Just know there is a greater reality than your present experience may be presenting to you. It can be very helpful to have spiritual friends, teachers, and teachings available to help you remember at those times when it is easy to forget.

7. Repeat Steps 2-6 as Often as Necessary.

Remember the teaching of “seventy-seven times”. Be patient with yourself; the more intense the pain, the deeper the healing. And the deeper the healing, the more time it may take.

Source: Brumet, *Living Originally*, pages 69-70

Link to Robert Brumet’s meditation on Unlimited Forgiveness:

https://www.unity.org/sites/unity.org/files/files/audio/Brumet-Living-Originally-Mediation/Brumet_3-Unlimited-Forgiveness.mp3

Rev. Robert Brumet is an ordained Unity Minister who was on the faculty of the Unity Institute and Seminary and is one of the leading authors of the Unity Movement.

Discuss the idea from the second step from the Living Originally article; *Forgiveness is about me, not the other person.*

Choose a simple situation where you would like to experience forgiveness of yourself or another person and use these steps and the meditation. What did you discover or experience? Are you willing to forgive? What story are you telling yourself? What emotions are coming up? What are your underlying needs? How do you nurture yourself and get in touch with your highest truth? After you are comfortable with this process you can use it on more painful situations when you are ready.

For Further Exploration

Radical Forgiveness by Colin Tipping is an excellent book and outstanding program. To get a taste of the concept, download and use the worksheet.

<http://www.radicalforgiveness.com/free-tools/>

Learn about Ho’oponopono, a Hawaiian practice of reconciliation and forgiveness.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ho%CA%BBoponopono>

Songs

Ho’oponopono (Hawaiian Forgiveness Chant) by Karen Drucker: https://youtu.be/_9vvKc5aWTK

It’s Up to Me by Sue Riley, Glen Roethel, Nathen Aswell: <https://youtu.be/IKLt-8auU60>

Love Is My Decision by Daniel Nahmod: <https://youtu.be/Ru5VTN88B0U>

Heart of the Matter by Don Henley: https://youtu.be/Rxni_lcyjj8

Week 6 – Equanimity

Equanimity - noun

The state of being calm, stable and composed, especially under stress.

Source: [Wiktionary](#)

Equanimity

(**Latin:** *æquanimitas*, having an even mind; *aequus* even; *animus* mind/soul) is a state of psychological stability and composure which is undisturbed by experience of or exposure to emotions, pain, or other phenomena that may cause others to lose the balance of their mind. The virtue and value of equanimity is extolled and advocated by a number of major religions and ancient philosophies.

Source: [Wikipedia](#)



With Equanimity, you can deal with situations with calm and reason while keeping your inner happiness. – Dalai Lama

Equanimity is the hallmark of spirituality. It is neither chasing nor avoiding but just being in the middle. – Amit Ray

There is a huge amount of freedom that comes to you when you take nothing personally. – Don Miguel Ruiz

Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word happy would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness. It is far better to take things as they come along with patience and equanimity. – Carl Jung

Gratitude, not understanding, is the secret to joy and equanimity. – Anne Lamott

Serenity, regularity, absence of vanity, sincerity, simplicity, veracity, equanimity, fixity, non-irritability, adaptability, humility, tenacity, integrity, nobility, magnanimity, charity, generosity, purity. Practice daily these eighteen "ities" You will soon attain immortality. – Socrates

From your personal experience and observations, how do you define equanimity?

Buddhism and Equanimity

Why Equanimity Is an Essential Buddhist Virtue

By Barbara O'Brien, Updated June 25, 2019

The English word *equanimity* refers to a state of being calm and balanced, especially in the midst of difficulty. In Buddhism, equanimity (in Pali, *upekkha*; in Sanskrit, *upeksha*) is one of the Four Immeasurables or four great virtues (along with compassion, loving kindness, and sympathetic joy) that the Buddha taught his disciples to cultivate.

But is being calm and balanced all there is to equanimity? And how does one develop equanimity?

Definitions of Upekkha

Although translated as "equanimity," the precise meaning of *upekkha* seems hard to pin down. According to Gil Fronsdal, who teaches at the Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City, California, the word *upekkha* literally means "to look over." However, a Pali/Sanskrit glossary I consulted says it means "not taking notice; to disregard."

According to Theravadin monk and scholar, Bhikkhu Bodhi, the word *upekkha* in the past has been mistranslated as "indifference," which has caused many in the West to believe, mistakenly, that Buddhists are supposed to be detached and unconcerned with other beings. What it really means is to not be ruled by passions, desires, likes, and dislikes. The Bhikkhu continues,

"It is evenness of mind, unshakeable freedom of mind, a state of inner equipoise that cannot be upset by gain and loss, honor and dishonor, praise and blame, pleasure and pain. Upekkha is freedom from all points of self-reference; it is indifference only to the demands of the ego-self with its craving for pleasure and position, not to the well-being of one's fellow human beings."

Gil Fronsdal says the Buddha described *upekkha* as "abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill-will." Not the same thing as "indifference," is it?

Thich Nhat Hanh says (in *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*, p. 161) that the Sanskrit word *upeksha* means "equanimity, nonattachment, nondiscrimination, even-mindedness, or letting go. *Upa* means 'over,' and *iksh* means 'to look.' You climb the mountain to be able to look over the whole situation, not bound by one side or the other."

We also can look to the life of the Buddha for guidance. After his enlightenment, he certainly did not live in a state of indifference. Instead, he spent 45 years actively teaching the dharma to others. For more on this subject, see "Why Do Buddhists Avoid Attachment?" and "Why Detachment Is the Wrong Word."

Standing in the Middle

Another Pali word that is usually translated into English as "equanimity" is *tatramajjhata*, which means "to stand in the middle." Gil Fronsdal says this "standing in the middle" refers to a balance that comes from inner stability--remaining centered when surrounded by turmoil.

The Buddha taught that we are constantly being pulled in one direction or another by things or conditions we either want or hope to avoid. These include praise and blame, pleasure and pain, success and failure, gain and loss. The wise person, the Buddha said, accepts all without approval or disapproval. This forms the core of the "The Middle Way" that forms the core of Buddhist practice.

Cultivating Equanimity

In her book *Comfortable with Uncertainty*, Tibetan Kagyu teacher Pema Chodron said, "To cultivate equanimity we practice catching ourselves when we feel attraction or aversion before it hardens into grasping or negativity."

This, of course, connects to mindfulness. The Buddha taught that there are four frames of reference in mindfulness. These are also called the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. These are:

1. Mindfulness of body (*kayasati*).
2. Mindfulness of feelings or sensations (*vedanasati*).
3. Mindfulness of mind or mental processes (*cittasati*).
4. Mindfulness of mental objects or qualities; or, mindfulness of dharma (*dhammasati*).

Here, we have a very good example of working with mindfulness of feelings and mental processes. People who are not mindful are perpetually being jerked around by their emotions and biases. But with mindfulness, you recognize and acknowledge feelings without letting them control you.

Pema Chodron says that when feelings of attraction or aversion arise, we can "use our biases as stepping-stones for connecting with the confusion of others." When we become intimate with and accepting of our own feelings, we see more clearly how everyone gets hooked by their hopes and fears. From this, "a bigger perspective can emerge."

Thich Nhat Hanh says that Buddhist equanimity includes the ability to see everyone as equal. "We shed all discrimination and prejudice, and remove all boundaries between ourselves and others," he writes. "In a conflict, even though we are deeply concerned, we remain impartial, able to love and to understand both sides." [*The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*, p. 162].

Source: <https://www.learnreligions.com/buddhism-and-equanimity-449701>

What is the relationship between Mindfulness and Equanimity?

How can you cultivate Equanimity?

Balance

By Rev. Dr. Patricia Keel

Everything comes to us in Divine Order, and for our highest good, and is the best for all concerned. This means that what we might feel is a “burden,” a problem, a challenge or an issue, is part of the divine plan of our lives. We are being called to a higher consciousness to experience [each] situation from a different point of view and to bring into spiritual activity our divine capabilities and powers.

Following are four ways to create and maintain balance in our everyday lives.

Awareness

Noticing when you are off-balance provides the opportunity to retune to your spiritual center. Without this awareness, you might spend the whole day grumbling and complaining, judging and reacting or worrying and fretting, and miss out on the richness of life. As soon as you notice that your ego, thoughts or emotional reactions have taken charge, choose to center within by bringing all of your attention into the center of your head, the center of your body, the center of your being.

Neutrality

Judgments and defensive reactions keep us separate from our soul. They are a sign that our ego is in control. Practice viewing situations from a place of neutrality and non-resistance. Buddhist philosophy refers to this as equanimity; a nonreactive viewpoint where you see what is happening without getting caught in it. It's realizing that thoughts, emotions, situations and circumstances come and go, so there is no need to become attached or reactive. This state of being is calm and empowering. Reciting the mantra, “This too shall pass,” will help you to stay neutral.

Be Present in the Now

It's easy to get caught in rehashing the past or rehearsing the future and miss out on the fullness of this present moment. Practice being present with each activity, person, sensation and emotion that comes before you. Try an easy meditation technique such as focusing on your breath, your thoughts or some internal physical sensation for a few minutes as a way to connect to the power of the present moment.

Love

When you are feeling full of love, you are spiritually balanced. Life becomes sweeter, lighter and more joyful. Love emanates from the spiritual center within each of us so it is easy to access. Simply focus on what you love about your family, friends, pets, the outdoors or the God of your heart to ignite this spark within you. Look for the love within others, behind their façade of control, seriousness or grumpiness, as a way to connect to the soul in each person you encounter.

Rev. Dr. Patricia Keel recently retired as the minister at Unity of Berkeley in California. She is the host of *The Oneness Program* on Unity Online Radio. The following article was first published as a blog on the Unity of Berkeley website.

Source: <https://www.unity.org/resources/articles/balance>

How is balance the same or different from your understanding of equanimity?

What other mantras can you use to stay neutral?

How could the development of equanimity impact your capacity to resolve conflict?

What is one practice you will commit to that will enhance your ability to be in a place of equanimity?

Cultivating Equanimity

Spiritual Practice by Sharon Salzberg

I was once speaking to a group of people and said, "I think that if I was in charge of the universe, it would be a lot better world." Someone in the group called out, "Are you sure?" I considered that for a moment then firmly replied, "I am really sure!" But alas, one of the great poignancies in life is that we're not ultimately in control. Because of that, what we are looking for is the balance between compassion and equanimity. Compassion can be thought of as the heart's moving toward suffering to see if we can be of help. Equanimity is a spacious stillness that can accept things as they are. The balance of compassion and equanimity allows us to care and yet not get overwhelmed and unable to cope because of that caring.

The phrases we use reflect this balance. Choose one or two phrases that are personally meaningful to you. There are some options offered below. You can alter them in any way or use others that you create.

To begin the practice, take as comfortable a position as possible, sitting or lying down. Take a few deep, soft breaths to let your body settle. Bring your attention to your breath to begin with. When you feel ready you can switch your attention to the silent repetition of the phrases you've chosen. Begin to silently say your chosen phrases over and over again.

Feel the meaning of what you are saying, yet without trying to force anything. Let the practice carry you along. You can call a particular person to mind -- get an image of them or say their name to yourself, get a feeling for their presence, and see what happens as you silently repeat the phrases you've chosen, such as:

*I care about your pain yet cannot control it.
I will care for you and cannot keep you from suffering.
May I offer love, knowing I can't control the course of life, suffering, or death.
I wish you happiness and peace yet cannot make your choices for you.*

And then move on to consider the boundlessness of life -- people, creatures -- as you silently repeat one or two phrases that express our capacity to connect to and care for all of life and also know peace:

*I will work to alleviate suffering in the world, and I know I'm not in control of the unfolding of the universe.
May I recognize my limits compassionately, just as I recognize the limitations of others.
May I remember compassion as I work to be undisturbed by the comings and goings of events.*

When you feel ready, you can open your eyes. See if you can bring some of this sense of spaciousness and compassion into your day.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/practices/view/28516/cultivating-equanimity>

Create and share phrases that reflect balance for you. How does this practice resonate with you? What feelings do you have when you do this practice?

For further exploration

HeartMath's State of Ease: <https://www.heartmath.com/state-of-ease/>

Songs

Equanimity by Betsy Rose, aka Calm Down Boogie: https://youtu.be/R_al-JC4Shs

Call of Love by Peter Kater: <https://youtu.be/hbWVHRbIAAnA>
Beautiful calming music with gorgeous video of nature.

I Know God by Denise Rosier: <https://youtu.be/4q3x0wGnKZo>

Easter

Dear Friends,

A favorite Easter poem of mine is entitled *Easter is Breaking* by Rev. Katherine Rolenz. I would like to share it here:

Easter Is Breaking
by Rev. Katherine Rolenz

Somewhere across the world,
Easter is breaking
not the Easter we may think of,
with arms upraised and "he is risen" echoing from canyons,
but a much quieter, less dramatic Easter.
Somewhere in the world -perhaps not this day, but some day soon,
a woman and a man rise from their beds,
shaking the sleep from their eyes,
and find their children already awake and
preparing for their morning prayers
There has been no gunfire, no drug wars, no yelling or shouting or screaming,
only the quiet of the night and the peace of silence around them.
And somewhere in the world, perhaps not this morning, but soon, very soon
A soldier is packing his duffle bag,
has emptied out all his bullets,
is changing into civilian clothes,
and is coming home, for peace has long been established,
and there is no need for his presence.
And somewhere in the world, Easter dawn breaks over the earth,
not only on this day, but every day,
and the familiar pulse in our veins throbs of "peace, peace, peace."

When I think about our Lenten "Journey to Transcendence" these are the images that comes to mind; these are the images that correspond with my image of "the Beloved Community"; these are the images that contain my concept of "the Kingdom of God" of which Jesus spoke - a world where men, women, and children live in peace. And isn't that the lived experience of transcendence?

Prior to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus he shared with his disciples as recorded in the book of John, "take courage, I have overcome the world." What did this mean? The inspiration that comes to me from these words is that it is possible "to live life on life's terms" and not be overwhelmed; to be at peace in the midst of chaos; to transcend the temptation to panic and unconscious acting out; to be present to both the facts and the Truth. The capacity to hold these tensions of opposites is developed

and maintained in one's spiritual practice. Throughout his ministry, Jesus often went off by himself to pray. A similar trajectory was experienced by the Buddha on his path to enlightenment.

In post-resurrection accounts of Jesus as recorded in John, he shared repeatedly the words, "Peace be with you." Even though he endured violence, betrayal, and injustice, he never lost his consciousness of peace. Not even in death. These words surely were a healing balm to those he left behind which compelled them to maintain hope as they continued the work of expressing the Kingdom of God.

There are multiple interpretations of the Easter experience. It is not a "one size fits all experience"; however, our intention in creating this Journey to Transcendence small group study has been to invite you to deepen your understanding and practice of the six values highlighted in the text. By doing so, you will have elevated your capacity to be a peacemaker in the world, thereby through your example of living these ideals, inviting others to do the same and set the stage for Easter to break not on one day, but every day. Thank you for taking this journey with us.

Christ is risen, and so are we!

Peace be with you and Namaste.

Rev. Russ

Rev. Russell Heiland
Senior Minister
Unity of Fairfax
Easter 2021



Gratitudes

Rev. Russell Heiland, Senior Minister, Unity of Fairfax, for the inspiration and direction of this Journey and for writing the Foreword and Easter sections of the guide.

Fran Patchett, for writing the “Lent --- So How Did This Practice Evolve Anyway?” section and editing.

Cathy Kurvers, for design, formatting and editing.

Linda Powell, LUT, for writing the “Unity and Lent” section and for facilitating a discussion group.

Sam Lee, for facilitating a discussion group.

Tony Rogers, for administrative support.

Cindy Atlee, for source material on equanimity.

Steve Marcom, for the Socrates reference.

For all the Discussion Group participants.

And for Unity of Fairfax for creatively fulfilling its mission of being a vibrant spiritual community awakening each life to the Christ within, while we are a virtual church.

Thank you!

Donna N. Lee

Donna N. Lee
Small Groups Ministry Leader
Unity of Fairfax

For more information on Unity of Fairfax, see our website <https://www.UnityOfFairfax.org>

