

UUW Reads Crises of Life 3

Session 3: The Crises of Life, Surviving

Email to Participants

Dear Friends,

I'm looking forward to being together for our next session on _____ at (location) (on-line).

During our last session we considered the role various communities play in our lives and contribute to our general wellbeing. In this session, we will focus on what supports and sustains us in difficult times.

It is inevitable that each of us has survived some difficult times or even trauma in our lives. Surviving these challenges is hard and painful, and yet our mere survival provides us with tools we can call upon when faced with additional trials.

Crises can be personal, a loss or illness, a tragedy like a house fire. Or a crisis can be more global such as violence in our communities, racism and oppression, political turmoil that ravages our country, or climate change-the crisis that threatens our world. All trauma requires our attention, survival tools help us cope. These tools are lifelines we can put into our crisis "savings account" and withdraw if we need them.

In this session we will explore our personal tools, our community tools, and we will discuss how our UU Faith is or can be one of our most enduring lifelines.

Read and View

For this session, we'll be reviewing chapters 4 & 5 of the book *Take What You Need*. Pay close attention to pages 48 and 49. Also focus on pages 69-72 in chapter 5 which we will read aloud in our session.

Additionally, please review the resources below and allow plenty of time to answer the reflection questions and engage the writing prompts.

Resources: Please note that they are listed in a prioritized order, so if you are unable to engage all of them, focus on the first 2-3.

- [**"The Revolutionary Power of Black Joy,"**](#) by Miracle Jones, a community organizer and queer activist who works in the Pittsburgh area to advocate for equity along the intersections of gender, race, and class.
- [**"A Small Needful Act"**](#) by poet Ross Gay.
- [**"The Healing Power of Trees"**](#) presented by American Forests.

- [Quotes](#) by angel Kyodo williams, author of *Being Black*
- [“Climate Crisis and Faith-Unitarian Universalist Ministry For Earth”](#) by The Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth.

Reflections:

1. What survival tools were useful during the crises of your life? How can you keep them handy, like a survival toolbox to bring out even in the midst of a crisis?
2. How do you find equilibrium even when you feel groundless?
3. What big and small things are lifelines or comforts for you?
4. In the video by Miracle Jones, she explains why this sense of pride and hope is another crucial component of the racial justice movement, "Part of it is a hope that things will soon get better and part of it is a celebration of still being here." How do you find hope and joy in the midst of a crisis or a time of oppression?
5. How do you find your grounding as you work for justice in what seems like insurmountable situations?
6. How does your UU Faith support you during times of crises?

Optional Journal Questions:

1. What roles do your identities play in your ability to take risks, to survive, and to come back from a crisis?
2. What risks have you taken in order to be true to yourself? Have you ever had to weigh the consequences of taking those risks with your safety or well being?
3. What risks have you taken - or need to take - to support greater health, freedom, or wholeness for yourself or the larger community? What might help you do that? What barriers exist to that goal, including systemic, etc? What systemic changes might be necessary to allow you to take those risks? What risks do your communities, especially your UU Communities, need to take to allow you to be true to yourself?
4. Who inspires you to be more fully yourself, to survive, to thrive?
5. When it doesn't go well, when all others fail you, does the holy show up for you? How?
6. Which of your survival skills come to the forefront in a crisis?

Your Soul Story-A Narrative Inspiration Board:

Continue to build the visual representation of your personal narrative by adding items that represent the tools you use during times of challenge. This might also be a time to consider how music soothes or charges your soul.

Begin to create a playlist that can accompany your narrative. Perhaps consider starting with [“Rise Up”](#) by Audra Day

It will be good to be together.

Blessings,

[Your name and contact information.]

Session 3 Facilitator Plan

Facilitator Notes

This session moves from understanding the importance of community to exploring what else (music, therapy, dance, conversation, nature, writing, etc.) sustains each of us during our most challenging life experiences. It asks participants to consider creating a toolbox to utilize when they are overwhelmed by circumstance.

Music

Music to begin the session:

“[There is More Love Somewhere](#),” African American Spiritual sung by the First Unitarian Brooklyn choir

(Note: UU Wellspring made a reparations payment for the use of Negro spirituals through UU Columbia: <https://uucolumbia.net/negro-spirituals-reparations-project/>)

Note: Cue up the music in advance that is found on YouTube or other free streaming sites to avoid playing ads.

Chalice Lighting

We gather mindfully, knowing that the ground we are on is the ancestral land of the [name the people who inhabited this land].

Mending

by Nancy Shaffer

How shall we mend you, sweet Soul?
What shall we use, and how is it
in the first place you've come to be torn?
Come sit. Come tell me.
We will find a way to mend you.

I would offer you so much, sweet Soul:
this banana, sliced in rounds of palest

yellow atop hot cereal, or these raisins
scattered through it, if you'd rather.
Would offer cellos in the background singing
melodies Vivaldi heard and wrote
for us to keep. Would hold out to you
everything colored blue or lavender
or light green. All of this I would offer you,
sweet Soul. All of it, or any piece of it,
might mend you.

I would offer you, sweet Soul,
this chair by the window, this sunlight
on the floor and the cat asleep in it.
I would offer you my silence,
my presence, all this love I have,
and my sorrow you've become torn.

How shall we mend you, sweet Soul?
With these, I think, gently
we can begin: we will mend you with a rocking
chair, some raisins,
a cat, a field of lavender beginning
now to bloom. We will mend you with songs
remembered entirely the first time
ever they are heard.

We will mend you with pieces of your own
sweet self, sweet Soul — with what you've taught
from the very beginning.

From the meditation manual, [Instructions in Joy](#), by Rev. Nancy Shaffer, published by Skinner House in 2002. Permissions granted by Skinner House Books.

End the reading by saying: "Let us honor the space we inhabit with three cleansing breaths taken together."

Check In

Remind members to be brief and model as needed.

Ask:

Where did you find joy and hope in your life since our last session?

Covenant Review

Ask members if there is anything that needs to be changed or addressed about the covenant.

1. We will practice deep listening by adhering to “No fixing, no advising, no setting each other straight” as stated by author Parker Palmer.
2. We will pause when harm occurs to examine the situation, and to hold the space for learning to occur.
3. We commit to reading, reflecting and practicing as much as we are able before each session.
4. We will keep the confidence of the group, sharing only our own stories and the general process of the program.

Reading from *Take What You Need*

Invite participants to take turns, as they feel called, reading pages aloud 48 and 49. and pages 69-72.

Questions for reflection after reading:

1. What survival tools were useful during the crises of your life? How can you keep them handy, like a survival toolbox to bring out even in the midst of a crisis?
2. How do you find equilibrium even when you feel groundless?
3. What big and small things are lifelines or comforts for you?

Reflections from Additional Resources:

1. In the video by Miracle Jones, she explains why this sense of pride and hope is another crucial component of the racial justice movement, "Part of it is a hope that things will soon get better and part of it is a celebration of still being here."
How do you find hope and joy in the midst of a crisis or a time of oppression?
2. How do you find your grounding as you work for justice in what seems like insurmountable situations?
3. How does your UU Faith support you during times of crises?

Your Soul Story-A Narrative Inspiration Board:

Say:

Share how you are experiencing your work on your narrative board. If you like, share some of the items you added as a result of this session.

So What?

Ask:

How does this reflection relate to your spiritual journey? What are you inspired or challenged to do next?

Gratitude Moment

Have everyone focus on the chalice. Each person, as moved, says one or two words about something from this session for which they are grateful or how they are feeling in this moment. After everyone has said a word, close with a brief statement of thanks and appreciation.

Closing

"As powerfully painful as that may be — with all due respect to Gandhi — we can no longer afford to just be the change. We actually have to be the transformation, which is to say we have to transcend the form, the construct that we find ourselves in."