

Wisdom Circle – Becoming Resilient
May 2018



Chalice Lighting , by Nadine McSpadden

During our darkest moments, still, there is light.
When facing our biggest challenges, still, there is light.
When all we can do is put one foot in front of the other, still, there is light.
When we can't see the way out, still, there is light.
When all we can do to help is hold someone's hand as they cry, still, there is light.
We are the light— for ourselves and for one another.
Always, there is light.

Check-In

As you feel comfortable, take 2-3 minutes to share whatever you need to share with this group in order to be fully present. This is a time for sharing, but not for discussion.

Business (approx. 10 min)

Use this time for any new business: Welcoming new members; Scheduling future meetings; Revisiting the Covenant; Answering questions about Wisdom Circle processes; Etc...

Spiritual Exercise

Share any insight, learning, lesson gained from doing or resisting this month's spiritual exercise. (Focus on your heart/emotions/spirit/personal experience). Because this is a section for personal sharing, attentive listening and no-crosstalk is recommended.

Choose one of the following spiritual exercises:

- a) **Find resilience** – the world around us is filled with examples of resiliency. Pay attention; where do you see it? In a person, a being, a community, and institution? How do you imagine that came to be?

- b) **Lectio Divina**- Choose one the quote from the words of wisdom.
Read it a couple of times in silence.
Reflect about what stands out for you; a word, a message, an image.
Respond or pray, what is this quote bringing up for you, engage with it.
Rest in that space: spend a few minutes in quiet contemplation.

How was this experience for you? What insight did you gain?

Discussion of Reading and Words of Wisdom

Take turns reading the words of wisdom. Share about the one(s) that caught your attention. Discuss the reading and the questions below. Crosstalk can enrich your conversation here (avoid judging or wanting to “fix” things, and speak from your own experience, avoiding generalizations, and identifying who you mean when/if you use the word “we”).

Words of Wisdom

“Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.” -**Nelson Mandela**

“Rock bottom became the solid foundation in which I rebuilt my life.” -**J.K. Rowling**

“Resilience is all about being able to overcome the unexpected. Sustainability is about survival. The goal of resilience is to thrive.” -**Jamais Cascio**

“Obstacles, of course, are developmentally necessary: they teach kids strategy, patience, critical thinking, resilience and resourcefulness.” -**Naomi Wolf**

“When I stand before thee at the day's end, thou shalt see my scars and know that I had my wounds and also my healing.” -**Rabindranath Tagore**

Fall seven times, rise eight.” — **Japanese Proverb**

“They tried to bury me, but didn't know that I'm a seed.” — **Mexican proverb**

“The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the broken places.”
-**Ernest Hemingway**

“Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.”
-**Helen Keller**

“In the midst of winter, I finally learned there was in me an invincible summer.”
-**Albert Camus**

“I thought resilience was the capacity to endure pain, so I asked Adam how I could figure out how much I had. He explained that our amount of resilience isn't fixed, so I should be asking instead how I could become resilient. Resilience is the strength and speed of our response to adversity—and we can build it. It isn't about having a backbone. It's about strengthening the muscles around our backbone.” — **Sheryl Sandberg**,

“And here you are living despite it all.” -**Rupi Kaur**

Resiliency

“Have you experienced something like this before? What did you do? What helps you get through difficult times?”

These are typical questions of chaplains. When a person is facing a difficult situation, these questions, at the appropriate time, can invite them to think about what tools and resources they have to face their current difficulties. The immediacy of the pain, difficulty, and suffering most of the time makes it difficult for people to see beyond it. And sometimes it is hard to remember that they have been in a difficult place before and that they made it through.

In the past, I've seen resiliency defined as someone's ability to “bounce back” and I knew that wasn't entirely correct. Typically, people who experience a period of disruption,

don't just go back to the way they were in the past. The disruption created a new awareness of vulnerabilities and the opportunity to creatively respond to the situation. I like the idea of "bouncing forward" instead. That is, that after a disruption, people have the ability to adapt to the new reality or circumstances and continue on with their lives. This term I learned from Sheryl Sandberg's book "Option B" where she describes her life after the loss of her husband. The disruption, she explains, creates an option B that cause us to live a reality we never imagined and that we would have never chosen. Yet, despite the grief, the pain or the trauma, the individual adapts to different way of being. Lucille Clifton's "won't you celebrate with me" poem tells her own story of resiliency:

won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge between
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight
my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.

Resiliency is more than mere survival or persistence. Resiliency requires that we take a close look at that which is hurting us and that we respond. The resilient person finds ways to continue living their lives in wholeness, even amidst the brokenness. It's about making meaning of the disruption and integrating the experience in a way that allows them to grow. In an interview at the end of his life, and after suffering a stroke, spiritual teacher Ram Dass says "I don't wish you the stroke, but I wish you the grace of the stroke".

But resiliency is not exclusive to individuals. Communities, countries, and institutions can also become resilient. Knowing their vulnerabilities, preparing for change, and adapting to change are ways in which they cultivate resiliency.

For example, the building codes in states like California that have identified a vulnerability (earthquakes) and created buildings that are more likely to resist them.

But what about you? What is your story of resiliency? Are there parts of you that need to become resilient?

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. What is needed in order to become resilient?
2. In your life, what allowed you to become resilient?
3. How can we help others become resilient?
4. How can we create resilient communities?

Silence: You may take a minute of silence to reflect on the group's session.

Gratitude: Share 1-2 things that have been meaningful to you from this session.

Extinguishing of the Chalice:

Words by Chris Martenson

“I am only as secure as my neighbor is, and we are only as secure as our town, and our town is only as secure as the next town over. But it all begins at the center, like a fractal pattern, with resilient households determining how the future unfolds.”