

Patience—UUFVB Covenant Groups—February 2016

Chalice Lighting

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings,
but connected, in mystery and miracle,
to the universe, to this community and to each other.

Check-in: How is your spirit right now?

Opening Reading

We need a new bumper sticker: FRUSTRATION HAPPENS. Every morning, noon, and night there are plenty of good reasons to be impatient. Another long line. Telemarketers. A goal isn't materializing fast enough. People don't do what they're supposed to. Rejection. Disappointment. How to deal with it all? You can drive yourself crazy, behave irritably, feel victimized, or try to force an outcome--all self-defeating reactions that alienate others and bring out the worst in them. Or, you can learn to transform frustration with patience. Patience doesn't mean passivity or resignation, but power. It's an emotionally-freeing practice of waiting, watching, and knowing when to act. Patience as an active state, a choice to hold tight until intuition says, 'make your move.' It entails trusting the flow. With patience, you're able to delay gratification, but doing so will make sense. Why? Intuition intelligently informs patience. It'll convey when to have it and if something is worth working on or waiting for. (Orloff)

Topic Exploration

What's the purpose of building patience abilities? In a word, happiness. Better relationships, more success. Developing patience is just that. Developing a skill. We aren't born with it. Think of a hungry infant, shrieking with all its impatient demand for satisfaction. After all, we can't just sit down at a piano and play it without ever learning to play and without practicing. That practicing includes 1) paying attention to when we are not patient, 2) being kind to ourselves for not being "perfect" already, and 3) changing the automatic judgmental, critical thoughts and feelings.

Patience in Religion

Patience and fortitude are prominent themes in Judaism. Patience in God, it is said, will aid believers in finding the strength to be delivered from the evils that are inherent in the physical life. In the Christian religion, increasing patience is viewed as the work of the Holy Ghost in the Christian who has accepted the gift of salvation. In Buddhism, patience is one of the "perfections" that a bodhisattva trains in and practices to realize perfect enlightenment. In Buddhism, patience refers to not returning harm, rather than merely enduring a difficult situation. In Hinduism, patience is the cheerful endurance of trying conditions and the consequence of one's action and deeds (karma). (Wikipedia)

1. Why do you think many of the world's religions emphasize the virtue of patience?
2. In your early church experience, what were you taught about patience? How do you think UUs regard patience, and how well do we practice that trait in our own congregation?

Questions / Sharing -- Some Suggestions for Developing Patience

A. Understand the addictive nature of anger, irritation, outrage

Humans still have their reptilian brains that promote our physical and emotional survival. That urge to protect ourselves and what we deem valuable is addictive. So the first step in growing patience is to get

in touch with the addictive quality of the opposites of patience--anger, irritation, blaming. For such behaviors to continue, some type of reward, or satisfaction, usually is attached to reinforce that behavior.

3. When you react with anger, irritation, or blaming, what messages do you send to yourself that justify your undesirable behavior?
4. When is the last time you lost patience when things didn't go your way? How did your response benefit the situation?

B. Upgrade your attitude towards discomfort and pain. So many of us believe that being "comfortable" is the only state we will tolerate. However, pain has its purposes. It pushes us to find solutions. Where we often go astray is that we try to change the **other** person, situation or thing that we think is causing our discomfort. But the problem is, that it is not the outside thing that's the source of our pain, but rather our mindset.

5. Describe a situation in which you think your impatience was interpreted by others as disagreement, condemnation, or disrespect.
6. How could you have reframed that story in a way that would have generated an empathetic, patient response?

C. Pay attention when the irritation or pain starts. Many of us don't really recognize the instigation of irritable feelings--we focus on fixing the perceived problem. But stop to think about what's actually happening in the moment inside YOU. Only then can you step back, analyze the origin of the discomfort, and determine if patience is the right path.

7. List some events, people, phrases, or circumstances that always seem to challenge your patience. Do you recognize patterns in your reactions?

D. Practice self talk. The main thing is to just stop the story. When you think about how wrong everything is, how wrong they are, how debilitating your state of mind is, change your state of mind. Say to yourself, "It's true, I don't like this, this is uncomfortable, but I can tolerate it," and "I can change my expectations to be more accepting and tolerant."

8. Share situations in which you might have changed your outlook to induce patience.

Closing Reading

Remember what matters. Not focusing on what matters most in this life fuels impatience. Stop holding yourself and the world around you to unattainable standards. Sure, we'd all be more patient if babies didn't cry, dishes didn't break, computers didn't crash, and people didn't make mistakes--but that's never going to happen. Expecting the world to run smoothly is like beating your head against the wall, so you do yourself and others a favor by learning to practice patience.

Check- out and reflection on today's session

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,
the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.
These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Housekeeping