

# Spiritual Explorations Lesson Plans

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The following pages present lesson plans for spirituality groups. Each plan is meant for a single session. I use the definition of spirituality presented in *Making Health Care Whole*, by Doctors Christina Pulchalski and Betty Farrell: “ Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose, and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature and to the significant or sacred.” (*Making Healthcare Whole*, p25)

Each session explores a theme that is somehow related to finding meaning or purpose or the human encounters that arise from our experience of connectedness to (or feeling cut-off from) to self, other, nature, the moment, the significant or sacred.

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# WHICH WOLF

## Theme

How do we respond to difficult situations and people? How are we in general – relaxed, kind, happy? Or frustrated, defensive and angry? A story attributed to a Native American tradition explores the reality that we sometimes find different parts of ourselves in conflict. Which wolf? I wrote an interpretation of the story that goes beyond the dichotomy of the two wolves to the further growth and development of integrating them in one, whole self. When I use this with the adolescents I use just the first section. The group in the addiction recovery program are often ready for further integration, so with them I return to the second part of the story after exploring the first part.

## Check-in

(going around the circle or table) Please share your name and then a moment of appreciation. Think back over the past 24 hours and see if you have a moment of appreciation. It could be something simple like chocolate cake for dinner last night. Or it could be something much bigger like last night you got a good night's sleep for the first time in weeks. Or you had a good conversation with someone in your family. Or today you feel happy to be alive.

## Story

*Which Wolf*, Chaplain Ann's retelling

Read the part through Wise Bob aloud / . . . . *The circle grew quiet again as each person thought about what Wise Bob had said.*

## Explore through discussion

Everything in this story is symbolic: an action, object, event, etc., that expresses or represents a particular idea or quality

- What do the wolves represent or stand for?
  - A part of yourself.
- What does “feeding the wolf” represent or stand for?
  - Reinforcing a habit. Every time you respond in the same way, you are reinforcing the habit. Making it stronger. That is feeding the wolf.

**What are the two wolves within Wise Bob?**

Peaceful  
Aggressive

**What would be some other pairs of wolves?**

Friendly, trusting wolf  
Suspicious, guarded wolf

Peaceful, harmonious wolf  
Impatient, aggressive wolf

Happy, content wolf  
Sad, dissatisfied, disappointed wolf

**What does Wise Bob mean by “feeding the wolves?”**

How do you think Wise Bob would feed the aggressive wolf, or aggressive part of himself?  
How do you reinforce anger?

**How do you think Wise Bob would feed the peaceful wolf, or the peaceful, harmonious part of himself?**

**Can you apply this notion of 2 wolves inside to your life?**

If you are going to work with only this part of the story, go on to the drawing activity. If you want to work with the whole story, skip the drawing and go on to part 2.

**Integration through drawing:**

*Give each person a piece of drawing paper  
Marker, crayons etc. on table*

At the top of one side of the paper write the name of one of your two wolves  
At the top of the other side of your piece of paper write the name of the other wolf.

List the ways you feed each wolf in a column along the side

Draw a picture of each wolf

As the group is drawing you might invite them to think about these questions:  
Which wolf is winning inside of you?

Does that lead to feeling happy with yourself and your life? If yes, how can you go on feeding that wolf? If not, how can you feed the other wolf?

At the end, invite anyone who is willing to share their pictures.

**Story, part 2** (That has worked best with the addiction recovery group)

Read the Old Shanti part of the story.

Old Shanti has a different approach. What is it?

*Really listening to the angry wolf to hear what it really needs.*

*What does that wolf need?*

Pay attention to your “harmful” wolf. . . What does she or he need? What does she or he really want? . . . . .

Old Shanti also says that both wolves are a part of her and each one gives her a gift. What gift does each give?

Do you have a sense of what gift each of your wolves gives you?

### **Conclusion**

Working with your inner wolves is a spiritual journey and it is beneficial to take it one step at a time. In the beginning the wolves may be out of balance:

Self-loathing                  deep acceptance

Addictive, impulsive    patient, deciding thoughtfully

Strengthening one wolf might involve paying more attention to one and a less attention to the other.

Old Shanti tells us that we have two wolves within us and it is necessary to relate to each, to nourish each, to include each in our overall sense of self. And that each wolf brings a gift.

### **Closing**

Which wolf will you feed today and how?

# Which Wolf

**A retelling by Chaplain Ann Tyndall**

Gundersen Health System

December 2015

There was once a village that was blessed with a circle of wise elders and a group of curious, deep feeling and energetic young people. They met together the evening of each new moon. In the cold months they sat in a big circle around a fire in the lodge and in the warm weather, they sat in a circle outside on a hilltop. They met in the dark so they could see the stars. The young people liked the elders. They always seemed so relaxed and eager to hear from the young people.

At one gathering the young people were upset. It felt to them like everywhere they looked there was violence and hatred. Everyone was fighting. Everyone was hurting others. No one could agree on anything. People always seemed ready for a fight. Closer to home, a friend was so depressed by the strife in her own family that seemed just like that in the world that she wanted to kill herself. None of her friends who had talked with her could find anything to say that would make her feel better or give her hope.

After the young people had spoken there everyone in the circle grew quiet for a few moments. Then one of the elders spoke, a man everyone called Wise Bob.

“Well, it’s like I have two wolves fighting inside me. One is patient, kind, peaceful and lives in harmony. The other wolf is impatient and only wants to argue and fight.” One teen asked, “Hey Wise Bob, which one will win?”

Wise Bob replied, “The one I feed.”

The circle grew quiet again as each person thought about what Wise Bob had said. After a while another elder spoke. She was called Old Shanti and was the oldest living person in the village. Everyone leaned in because her voice was so quiet.

She said, “yes, I have known those two wolves since I was a girl. I spent many years feeding the peaceful wolf. But over time I felt the pull of the other wolf. Only I experienced that wolf’s sadness. It was like each wolf had a need to be fed something that is truly nourishing. Not feeding the angry wolf’s anger made more room for the patient one, but the angry wolf also needed to be fed.

“So I began to listen to that wolf. I would say, “Wolf, what do you want.” And the wolf would bare it’s teeth and say “I want to bite this guy or that because they made me mad.” “I know, wolf, but is that what you really want? This stopped the angry wolf for a while. I had never asked her what she

really wanted? “I want to be seen,” the wolf said after a while. “I want you to see that I am worthy just like the patient wolf.”

Now her reply stopped me for a few moments. “I’m so sorry. Please let me get to know you better. Let me look at you and hear your voice. I will try not to be scared.” So slowly, I began to make friends with the angry wolf and learned lots of things. She was lonely. She was sad. But she was also really intelligent. And she had a big, brave heart.

“So I learned that I have to feed both wolves. But I needed to listen and learn what each one really needed. What I know now is that each wolf is part of me. Each one needs to be nourished. And also, each wolf gives a gift. The patient wolf has taught me to be kind. To remember that everyone carries hurts and sorrows in their hearts and I can either be kind and make their burden a little lighter or I can be impatient, or aggressive or even violent and make their burdens heavier. This wolf has given me the gift of feeling connected to everybody and to feel like my heart is big enough to hold the whole universe.

“And the angry wolf has given me a gift I wouldn’t have imagined. I have learned to see things clearly without piling my own thoughts and feelings on tops. And I was even more surprised to learn that when I see things clearly, I am flooded with love and compassion and joy.

“So my advice it to make friends with each of the wolves that live inside you. Find out what each one needs and feed them what will nourish them. And don’t be surprised to discover that each will be an ally and bless you in ways that you can’t imagine now.

Everyone in the circle was quiet for a long, long time. No doubt, listening to their wolves.

# Serenity Prayer

## THEME

My lineage of Tibetan Buddhism has brief verses from longer texts that are referred to as *Pith Instructions*. Like a hologram the pith instruction encapsulates the whole of the teaching in a few, memorable lines. I think of the Serenity Prayer as a Pith Instruction, a basic instruction about how to navigate the journey of life.

## OPENING

Invite participants to go around the circle and give their names and then share a moment of appreciation from the past 24 hours.

## PRESENTATION

**Liz Murray:** *How a Gift from a Drug Dealer Changed My Life*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yW9DMGoexkA>

Liz Murray's parents were drug addicts. While Liz never doubted their love, and she understood that they were troubled, by the time she was in high school, she was living homeless on the streets of NY. In this brief video clip, she tells the story of how she took charge of her life, returning to high school, getting A's and then getting a full scholarship to Harvard. The turning point was taking in the understanding of the Serenity Prayer.

Murry wrote about her life in *Breaking Night*, which was made into a movie called *Homeless to Harvard*, which is available in its entirety on YouTube.

My one caveat is that the teens can have different reactions. Some find her story inspiring but some find it troubling and overwhelming. Certainly, I have met kids who have lived a version of her life.

Use the film clip as a springboard for exploring the sections of the Serenity Prayer.

## EXPLORATION

What struck you about Liz Murray's story?

(Take time to process responses to the video clip. Then transition to the exploration of the Serenity Prayer.)

What things have you learned you can't change or control in your life?

Why do you think the prayer asks for the "serenity" to accept the things you cannot change?

What things in your life are you learning that you can change?

Why do you think the prayer asks for "courage" to change the things you can? Why would you need courage?

Is there something in your life right now that you are not sure about whether you can change or need to accept? What would help you figure out this situation?

How do you understand or know God?

In your experience, where is God in your life?

If a belief in God is not a part of your life, can the Serenity Prayer be helpful anyway? Maybe as an aspiration: *May I have the serenity to accept the things I cannot change?* and so on.

### **Serenity Prayer**

God grant me the Serenity

To accept the things I cannot change

Courage to change the things I can:

And Wisdom to know the difference

### **CLOSING**

Thank you for being willing to think about the things in your life that you have found challenging. I hope that over the next few days, you will come to understand one thing in your life right now that you either can't change or can. And depending upon what you figure out, I hope you feel enough at peace that you can accept it. Or, if it is something that you realize you can change, I hope you feel the courage to risk working on that change.



# You Are Worthy & Loved

**Theme** This is a guided meditation meant for adolescents but can be used with adults as well. My intention is to give participants the possibility of a felt experience of being worthy and loved. I lead participants to an encounter with a being that I intentionally keep vague or mysterious so that participants can project upon this being their own understanding.

**Check-in** Name and moment of appreciation from the past 24 hours

## Preparation for guided meditation

Participants can be seated. It's helpful to have feet flat on the floor and hands resting, palm down, on the lap. Emphasize that there is not right or wrong way to do this. Follow along and see what happens. Also, although it's easier to do a guided meditation with eyes closed, participants should be given the option to keep eyes open if that feels safer.

**Guided Imagery: you are worthy and loved** (read slowly, leaving spaces for participants to imagine the scene.)

Rest quietly with eyes closed or open, whatever is most relaxing and safe.

Feel your body breathing, letting your attention gently rest on breathing in and breathing out.

Move your attention from the top of your head, slowly, to the bottoms of your feet. Notice any place where you feel tension. Breathe in through the tense place and then breathe out, maybe letting go. Feel your whole body relax.

Now imagine that you are standing at a trail head at the edge of a meadow. The sun is shining. It is comfortably warm. There are a few puffy white clouds against a deep blue sky, and as you look up you see an eagle flying overhead. You feel a ripple of excitement and blessing at seeing the eagle.

You start down the pathway and follow it as it meanders into a forest. The sunlight falls through the leaf-cover overhead, making patterns of dancing light on the forest floor. You can smell the rich soil beside the path. You don't know where the path is taking you but you feel safe and curious.

Overhead you see squirrels chasing each up and down tree tops. You hear birds. It is cooler in the forest except when you step into a patch of sunlight which bathes you in warmth briefly.

Now, up ahead, you see what looks like an opening in the forest canopy. The light is so bright you can't quite see what you are heading toward. But you feel safe and curious. Your pace picks up a bit as you head toward the opening.

The path leads out of the forest into another meadow. You find yourself standing on lush, soft grasses. You feel bathed in the sun's warmth.

Now you notice that someone is coming toward you. You can't quite make out who it is because they seem to be reflecting the bright sunlight. You catch glimpses, though: Now you flash on eyes light dark pools. Now a flash of a smile. Now a sense of great warmth and friendliness. Now a hand extending out toward you, reaching out in welcome.

When you are about 6 feet away, you stop. You're not sure why, but it feels like the right thing to do. You still can't see all of the person before you, but you have a sense that this person knows you well and cares deeply about you. It's like this person is radiating warmth right to your heart center. It is such a powerful sensation that you place your hand on your heart and feel the warmth.

You find that a deep communication is happening although you can't quite say how. You feel yourself taking in a great truth about yourself: You are worthy of the life that you have. You are loved, and nothing painful or harmful that has happened to you has changed that truth: you are loved. No mistake that you have made, nothing that you have done that might have harmed yourself or another, cut you off from that love. You are worthy and you are loved. For just a moment something startling happens. You see yourself the way this being does. You see bright intelligence and kindness in your eyes. You see a warm smile. You see inner strength, too. As you look at yourself you see a faint, golden glow radiating out from your heart. Then, just as suddenly, you see the being standing there once again.

You feel this communication going directly to your heart, and from there you feel it radiating out to all parts of your body. You feel gently strong in your body and you feel yourself standing a little taller; you are instinctively expressing your worthiness. You feel your heart open, feeling all of the emotions swirling within, feeling the life all around you – its joy and sorrow, its longing and gratitude. You feel fiercely tender hearted toward yourself and all that is in your world.

You face this mysterious being across from you. You continue to feel the warmth and worthiness streaming into your heart center. But you also feel love streaming from your heart center to this luminous, mysterious being.

Then you bow to each other.

And now you know that it is time to leave. You turn back toward the path into the woods. You drink in everything you see, everything you hear, everything you feel. You feel gently confident as you begin to walk back to your life. You whisper to yourself, “I am worthy of being here. I am worthy.” You feel warmth radiating from your heart center. You feel quietly confident as you continue to walk along the path. You feel surges of energy as you wonder what comes next. . . . .

Now return your attention to the feeling of breathing, feeling the breath go in and out.

Slowly, bring your attention back to the room.

### **Process**

Begin by thanking the participants for being willing to try the guided meditation. It can be risky to try something like this, so affirm their courage. Invite people to share their experience if they feel comfortable, once again saying that there is no right or wrong experience of a guided meditation. In my experience the teens have been more forthcoming about their experience of walking through the woods or feeling the sun than sharing their encounter with the being. I will ask a general question about whether they were able to feel their worthiness or feel being loved.

### **Closing**

Lift up something you found significant from the group to send participants on their way.

# 365 Days of Thank You

**THEME** An exploration of gratitude arising from a brush with death.

**CHECK IN** Name & a moment of appreciation from the past 24 hours

## PRESENTATION

**TEDxYouth** 365 Days of Thank You: Brian Doyle

Inspired by the spirit of gratitude that is amplified each Thanksgiving day, Brian Doyle set out to extend the power of gratitude beyond one holiday in his unique social experiment. Learn how two words can change your world and world view. (8 minutes 35 seconds)

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

## EXPLORATION

What popped for you? What grabbed your attention?

Have you ever had a brush with death? A situation where you realized that things could have been so much worse?

Have you ever spontaneously said thank you to someone? Or in some other way shared your appreciation with them?

If a faith in God is part of your life, do you find yourself saying Thank You to God?

Lets imagine that today we are launching an experiment in 30 days of thank you. Who is the first person you would thank?

Brian talks about how hard it was for him to thank his dad – harder than coming out to him. Can you think of a thank you that would be really hard for you to say?

What did Brian learn from his year of thank you? If you were to do this every day for a month, what kind of a difference do you think it would make in your life?

## CLOSING

I invite each of us to say thank you to someone at least one time before we go to bed tonight.

# Appreciation

## Theme

Appreciation nourishes a life-affirming attitude and a regular experience of gratitude by developing a habitual pattern of noticing and responding to moments of beauty, kindness, delight, awe, wonder, inspiration, love, blessing and even hardship or trauma (in the sense of appreciating the severity or impact of an event)

## Opening

(going around the circle) Please share your name and a moment of appreciation from the past 24 hours. It can be something simple like a bite of chocolate cake that was moist and delicious, or it could be something bigger – last night you slept for the first time in weeks; you have a good conversation with someone close to you; you had a moment insight into what's being going on for you.

## Definition

Feeling of gratitude for something

Ability to understand the worth, quality, or importance of something

## Presentation

We are going to explore appreciation by watching and discussing two videos: a clip from the 2015 Kennedy Center Awards and a Ted Talk.

(Give context for Kennedy Center Awards --given annually by the Kennedy Center in Washington DC to performing artists. The recipients sit in a box with the President and First Lady and members of their families. The performer's work and tributes are presented by other performers. This is a segment of the tribute to singer, song-writer, Carol King. As you watch the video clip, notice the responses of Carol King and others in audience:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHsnZT7Z2yQ>

## Exploration

What grabbed you?

What did you notice about Carol King responding to Aretha Franklin?

What gestures did you see?

What energy did you sense?

Did you notice her reaching out to connect with others? The person behind her? George Lukas at the end?

What did you notice about the way others in the audience responded?

What do you think was going on for them?

What do you think it meant to everyone that Aretha Franklin, First Lady of Soul, was singing with President and Mrs Obama in the audience?

So based upon what we watched and our discussion, what would you say about the experience of appreciation? (I key in on the energy that is generated and that it bubbles over and needs to be shared: King reaching out to the man behind her, grabbing George Lukas' hand at the end, extending her hand to recognize Aretha, the audience on their feet and applauding for the last quarter of the song.)

### **Presentation**

Louis Swartzberg: *Gratitude*, TedX SF

Including David Steindl-Rast poem

This doesn't need much introduction.

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

### **Exploration**

What grabbed you?

What lessons do you take away?

Appreciation – Gratitude – Blessing – Overflows to bless others

### **Integration**

Is it possible to cultivate appreciation? How would you go about doing that?

### **Closing**

I hope that before you go to bed tonight you experience at least one moment of appreciation.

**A Gift Of Gratitude**  
**Brother David Steindl-Rast**

You think this is just

another day in your *life*?

It's not just another day;  
it's the one day that  
is given to you...

*today*

It's *given* to you. It's a gift.

It's the only gift that you  
have right now, and the  
one appropriate response  
is gratefulness.

If you do nothing else but to  
cultivate that response to the great  
gift that this unique day is,

if you learn to respond  
as if it were the first day  
of your life,

and the very last day,

then you will have spent  
this day *very well*.

Begin by *opening* your  
eyes and be surprised that you  
have eyes you can open,

that incredible array of colors

that is constantly offered to  
us for pure enjoyment.

Look at the sky.

We so rarely look at the sky.  
We so rarely note how different  
it is from *moment to*  
*moment* with clouds coming  
and going.

We just think of the weather, and  
even of the weather we don't think  
of all the many nuances of weather.

We just think of good weather  
and bad weather.

*This day* right now has  
unique weather, maybe a  
kind that will never exactly  
in that form come again.

That formation of clouds in the sky will  
never be the same that it is right now.

Open your eyes. Look at that.

Look at the *faces*  
of people whom you meet.

Each one has an *incredible*  
*story* behind their face, a story  
that you could never fully fathom,  
not only their own story,  
but the story of their ancestors.

We all go back so far.

And in this *present*  
*moment* on this day, all the  
people you meet, all that life  
from generations and from so  
many places all over the world,  
flows together and meets you  
here like a life-giving



water, if you only open your heart and drink.

*Open your heart*  
to the incredible gifts that civilization gives to us.

You flip a switch  
and there is  
electric light.

You turn a faucet and  
there is warm water and cold water—  
and drinkable water.

It's a gift that millions and millions  
in the world will never experience.

So these are just a few of  
an enormous number  
of gifts to which you can  
*open your heart*.

And so I wish for you that  
you would open your heart  
to all these blessings and let  
them *flow* through you,  
that everyone whom you will meet  
on this day will be blessed by you;  
just by your eyes,  
by your smile, by your touch—  
just by your presence.

Let the gratefulness overflow  
into blessing all around you,

and then it will really be  
a good day.

## Two Lessons for Control Freaks

### Theme

Human beings live our lives along a continuum ranging from fear & control to trust & faith. We will explore two stories, one Christian and one Buddhist to investigate some of the issues involved in moving from fear and control to trust and faith.

**Fear & Control** \_\_\_\_\_ **Trust & Faith**

### Check in

Name and moment of gratitude or appreciation over the past 24 hours

### Presentation

Introduce the theme.

### First Story

Matthew 6: 25 – 34 (Eugene Peterson, *The Message*//Remix)

If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count for more to him than birds.

Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time an money wasted on fashion—do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them.

If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.

**(supplemental material:**

What do you think is the more to your *life* that Jesus is talking about?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fijtM1VS-1w>

Nick Vujicic – life without limbs – Psalm 139)

**Exploration**

We tend to focus on *not getting* what we want and *getting* what we *don't want*. How does Jesus recommend that we focus our attention and energies?

Focus on God's giving

Focus on what's going on right now & what God is giving right now rather than on worrying about what might happen tomorrow.

Notice that it says *God will help you deal* not *God will make all the difficult stuff go away*.

**Second Story**

This is a teaching story out of the Buddhist tradition.

Once two Buddhist monks were traveling a mountain trail between villages. They were walking along in comfortable silence when up ahead they saw another monk, someone they didn't know, who was down on his hands and knees. As they got closer they saw that he was covering the trail with leather.

This monk rose to his feet as the other monks approach. The monks placed their hands in Anjali and bowed to each other. After exchanging greetings, the two monks asked the other monk what he was doing.

The monk replied that the sharp stones, tree roots, and pine needles hurt his feet as he walked along, so he was covering the path with leather.

The two monks were dumbfounded by this project. Spontaneously, the two monks looked at each other, then looked at their feet, and then each monk raised a foot and pointed to it. They said, "You could wear shoes!"

**Exploration**

What's the point of this story?

What's the difference between wearing shoes and paving the trail with leather?

What are other ways we pave the road rather than wearing shoes?

Trying to manage or control others when we can only manage ourselves

What are some metaphoric shoes?

## Responding vs automatic reactivity

Sometimes the group will be pretty literal in their thinking so you might have to interpret the stories a little more and then ask questions to invite their own experiences of being a control freak vs being a little more trusting and having a little more faith.

**Closing** Summarize what has been shared and fashion a blessing such as, *I hope that sometime today, you find yourself reassuring your inner control freak and experimenting with being a little more relaxed and trusting in a situation.*

# Forgiveness

Based upon research of Dr Fred Luskin, Stanford University

**Theme** Religious and Spiritual traditions have long taught the practice of forgiving, and this ancient wisdom is now confirmed by modern scientific research. Fred Luskin, one such researcher, defines forgiveness as “the ability to make peace with the word ‘no.’” “The essence of forgiveness is being resilient when things don’t go the way you want – to be at peace with ‘no,’ be at peace with what is, be at peace with the vulnerability inherent in human life. Then you have to move forward to live your life without prejudice.” (Greater Good website.)

**Check-in** Going round the circle, invite each participant to give their name and invite them to share a moment of appreciation from the past 24 hours.

## Presentation

**2 video clips within an article: *What is Forgiveness?* Fred Luskin, Great Good Magazine, Great Good Science Center, UC Berkeley: [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what\\_is\\_forgiveness](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_is_forgiveness)**

- First video is  
*Wanting Yes and Getting No*
- Second Video is  
*Resolution of Grief*

**Process:** Show first video and then discuss:

First response -- What grabbed you?

Anything not fit for you?

“The essence of forgiveness is being resilient when things don’t go the way you want – to be a peace with “no,” be at peace with what is, be at peace with the vulnerability inherent in human life. Then you have to move forward with your life without prejudice.”

Forgiveness – ability to make peace with the word “no”  
Not getting something we wanted  
(Getting something that we didn’t want)  
Can you connect something in your life to this?

Being at peace with “what is”  
What’s your understanding of this? He lumps a lot of stuff together: natural disasters, human-inflicted harm, small slights, large acts of violence under the label “what is” How do you make sense of this?

Is it helpful for you?

Being at peace with the vulnerability inherent in human life

What does that mean to you?

What does Luskin mean about “moving ahead without prejudice”

Realizing that nobody owes you

You don’t have to take the hurt you suffered and pay it forward to someone else.

With an open heart, you move forward and accept what is, without prejudice

**Process:** Show second video

First Response -- What grabbed you?

Anything that didn’t fit?

Grief \_\_\_\_\_ Forgiveness

1<sup>st</sup> step: fully acknowledge the hard done, whether by you or somebody else, and to own the fact that you’ve lost something – that you didn’t get something you wanted, and it hurts.

2<sup>nd</sup> step: experience the feelings normally associated with the negative experience. Range of emotions – sad, mad, scared. If you have experience your grief, you begin to see that there are other options besides continued suffering.

Not letting go of the event, that’s immutable

You are transforming your emotional response to it.

3<sup>rd</sup>: Can’t be a secret. Grief needs to be share, not kept a secret. Plus, silence and secrecy make the feelings much stronger. Best practice, share your feelings with a few, select, caring people, over time. (Don’t spew to everyone.) “The human connection is central to healing.”

If you take these steps you can reach a point with your grief where you are ready to forgive. BUT IT TAKES TIME

Invite personal illustrations.

**Closing** Summarize what has been explored in the time.

## Notes from Fred Luskin's talks:

### Video clip about being at peace with “no.”

[http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/gg\\_live/science\\_meaningful\\_life\\_videos/speaker/fred\\_luskin/wanting\\_yes\\_getting\\_no/](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/gg_live/science_meaningful_life_videos/speaker/fred_luskin/wanting_yes_getting_no/)

“The essence of forgiveness is being resilient when things don’t go the way you want – to be at peace with “no,” be at peace with what is, be at peace with the vulnerability inherent in human life. Then you have to move forward with your life without prejudice.”

Forgiveness – ability to make peace with the word “no”  
Not getting something we wanted  
(Getting something that we didn’t want)  
Can you connect something in your life to this?

Being at peace with “what is”  
What’s your understanding of this? He lumps a lot of stuff together: natural disasters, human-inflicted harm, small slights, large acts of violence under the label “what is”

Being at peace with the vulnerability inherent in human life

What does Luskin mean about “moving ahead without prejudice”  
Realizing that nobody owes you  
You don’t have to take the hurt you suffered and pay it forward to someone else.  
With an open heart, you move forward and accept what is, without prejudice

### Video before you can forgive you have to grieve

[http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/gg\\_live/science\\_meaningful\\_life\\_videos/speaker/fred\\_luskin/the\\_resolution\\_of\\_grief/](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/gg_live/science_meaningful_life_videos/speaker/fred_luskin/the_resolution_of_grief/)

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## Brene Brown's Manifesto of the Brave & Brokenhearted

**THEME** “We will not be characters in our stories. Not villains, not victims, not even heroes. We are the authors of our lives. “ In a Hassidic story a rebe tells his congregation that when he dies the Almighty will not ask him, “why were you not more like Moses. He will say Zusya! Why were you not more like Zusya?” How do we go about being ourselves? How do we become authors of our own lives rather than acting out a script that doesn't quite fit?

### OPENING

Introduce yourself and share a moment of appreciation from the past 24 hours.

### PRESENTATION

**Zusya story** (*my telling is what I remember from reading it in – I think – Martin Buber's Between Man and Man*) Rebe Zusya was teaching the community one day and he said, “you know, when I die and go before the Almighty, he will not ask me why I was not more like Moses. He will ask me, “Zusya! Why were you not more like Zusya?”

*Explore the story if you want. Why would God even need to remind us to be ourselves?*

### **Brene Brown Manifesto of the Brave & Brokenhearted**

*(Manifesto definition, a public declaration of intentions, opinions, objectives, or motives, as one issued by a government, sovereign, or organization. See more.)*

### EXPLORATION

1. What popped?
2. Go through sections and invite interpretations and discussion
3. Is there anything that you have trouble connecting with?
4. Tell a story from your own life that illustrates one of the passages from the Manifesto

### CLOSING

I thank you for showing up today. For taking the risk of sharing some of your story. You gave us all a gift of your truth. I encourage you to continue to tell you story, your truth, and that you also listen deeply to the stories of others. And I hope you feel the blessing in this kind of sharing.

# MANIFESTO OF THE BRAVE AND BROKENHEARTED

*There is no greater threat to the critics  
and cynics and fearmongers  
Than those of us who are willing to fall  
Because we have learned how to rise.  
With skinned knees and bruised hearts;  
We choose owning our stories of struggle,  
Over hiding, over hustling, over pretending.  
When we deny our stories, they define us.  
When we run from struggle, we are never free.  
So we turn toward truth and look it in the eye.  
We will not be characters in our stories.  
Not villains, not victims, not even heroes.  
We are the authors of our lives.  
We write our own daring endings.  
We craft love from heartbreak,  
Compassion from shame,  
Grace from disappointment,  
Courage from failure.  
Showing up is our power.  
Story is our way home. Truth is our song.  
We are the brave and brokenhearted.  
We are rising strong.*

*-Brené Brown*  
**#RISING STRONG**