



***What does it mean to be a people of
Brokenness?***



What Does It Mean To Be A People of Brokenness?

Brokenness. It can mean a lot of things. It may imply messiness and imperfection. It may mean heartbreak. It may mean physical weakness or our aging bodies. For some, it's a reason to demand pity; for others, it's motivation to stay "true to themselves" in their flawed humanity and not attempt to appear all put together in a nice, neat package. And there are also things in our society that absolutely need to break: the glass ceiling, the chains of oppression, a society that values its gun laws more than its children's lives, and the startling revelations from the Me Too movement.

The fact is, we all face the consequences of our flawed humanity – individually and collectively. Some of our suffering may bring us to the breaking point – I think of those teenagers pleading with the President to do something about Gun laws after seventeen of their classmates were killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Valentine's Day. I think of the parent who has lost a child, those coping with addiction or mental illness and the millions who scramble to make ends meet, feel desperate and who wake and are unsure how to face another day.

Ernest Hemingway said, "the world breaks everyone, and some become strong at the broken places." The Japanese have an art dedicated to honoring brokenness: kintsugi. It is the art of repairing broken pottery with a lacquer resin containing powdered gold. Most find that the pottery is more beautiful after it's been broken and repaired in this way. This orientation towards repair tells one story about brokenness. It suggests that in the breaking there is something positive, some growth or change on the other side of suffering.

In all of life's most miserable and devastating experiences, we can hang on to the fact that we are not alone. In the concentration camps, there were those who walked among others and comforted them, sharing bread or even a single wild strawberry. Out of the horror of murder in a school arises the tenacity of youth traveling to their State Capitol demanding change and organizing a national march to Washington DC. There is gold to mend the damage if we can persevere. We can mend our life with hope and friends; with patience and persistence and perhaps most of all with our collective imagination. To paraphrase Baby Suggs in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, "the only grace we can have is the grace we can imagine. If we can't see it we can't imagine it." As Arif Mamdani explains in this month's theme article: "We are on the verge of something. Our task is to sit in the brokenness of the world, awaken our collective prophetic imagination, and help to cast a new way ahead."

May we embrace our broken selves and our broken world and love them immensely this month.

In Faith,

Andrea Johnson

Our Spiritual Exercises

Option A:

Try the Buddhist Practice of Maitri: Sympathy for Ourselves

Buddhism teaches a form of meditative practices that helps us become aware of how compassion for both ourselves and for others can help us deal with our feelings of pain and anger. Buddhist Nun, Pema Chodron describes one Buddhist practice called “maitri” which is an attitude of having sympathy for ourselves. The meditation teaches us to develop our unconditional love for ourselves as a practice for healing. See video for more explanation

<https://www.google.com/search?q=pema+chodron+maitri+youtube&og=pema+ch&ags=chrome.0.69i59j0l2j69i57j69i61j0.4566j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

Our brokenness allows us to begin to care for and soothe ourselves. When we begin to love ourselves unconditionally, we begin to know that even our brokenness is a part of who we are and that we can live with that. That we are still whole, even though parts of ourselves are wounded. Maitri offers us a meditation of compassion for ourselves that encompasses all our experiences in life even the most painful ones. It allows us to practice acceptance of all of the parts of our lives, knowing that while we may not be healed, we can move on. We can love again. We can stop blaming others for our difficulties and can start moving ahead as people with the realities of both pain and joy in our life history.

The Practice:

1. Think about a time in your life when your feelings were hurt – someone said something to you and you felt hurt, stupid, ugly, weird, or out of step because of something you said or did and you got some kind of reaction from someone. You felt hurt and had a hard time accepting yourself afterwards. Spend a few minutes thinking about such a time.
2. Now take a minute to sit in a comfortable seat with your feet planted firmly on the floor. Close your eyes if that feels comfortable or gaze at the floor softly. Begin with a minute of silence – just focusing on your breathing, in and out.
3. As you breathe, begin to feel what you are feeling as a result of the experience you identified. Name the difficult feelings, the sadness, the pain that this experience brought you. See your pain and hurt as an object within your body. Imagine it as something real, and begin to send this object your love. Love your pain as if it were another being. Love yourself and send yourself soothing and relaxing messages of love.
4. Spend a couple of minutes just sending yourself messages of love. Say, “You are beautiful. You are loveable. I love you.” Say it again: “You are beautiful. You are loveable. I love you.”
5. As you end your meditation, ask yourself if you can keep loving this hurt and vulnerable place in yourself. This place that needs your love. And if you can, promise yourself that you will keep sending yourself this acceptance and this love for yourself. Commit to this meditation daily if you can. Keep a journal and share your experiences with the group.

This practice was adapted from a sermon titled: *Out of Brokenness* by Rev. Amy Russell
<https://mvuuf.org/worship/sermon-archive/out-of-our-brokenness/>

Option B: What Breaks Need Enhancing in Your life?

By repairing broken ceramics it is possible to give a new lease of life to pottery that becomes even more refined thanks to its “scars”. The Japanese art of kintsugi teaches that broken objects are not something to hide but to display with pride. This traditional Japanese art uses a precious metal – liquid gold, liquid silver or lacquer dusted with powdered gold – to bring together the pieces of a broken pottery item and at the same time enhance the breaks. But consider the metaphor: the broken pottery does not get repaired by magic. It requires attention – someone to notice the brokenness, to collect the pieces, and then to do the painstaking work of repairing. It requires an artist’s mind to believe that the piece can both be repaired, and be more beautiful afterwards.

Kintsugi can be an approach to the suffering of our own lives. We may be broken by this world – we may have a mental breakdown. We may lose everything we hold dear; our health, a job; a relationship we profoundly want. But this is not the last word. The question then becomes: how do I get up and write a new page? How do I mix gold into a mortar to repair my world? How will I grow stronger in the broken bone of my life?

So this exercise asks you to find your own way of making something beautiful from what’s been broken. For inspiration, visit the kintsugi website. <https://www.lifeqate.com/people/lifestyle/kintsugi>

Think about something that was “broken,” lost or painful in your own experience and then do something to pull the grace from it. **Bring an object to your group meeting that helps tell the story of your efforts.** Maybe you’ve already had an experience of creating or discovering beauty out of what was broken. If that’s true, then *honor* that experience once again by bringing to your group an object that symbolizes the beauty you discovered or created.

This practice was adapted from a sermon titled: *The Breaking Point...and After* by Rev. Audette Fullbright
<file:///Users/andreajohnson/Downloads/sermon-2014-03-16-TheBreakingPoint.pdf>

Option C: Admit Exhaustion

One way we allow healing into our lives is to widen our view of what it means to be broken or in pain. Too often pain is equated only with dramatic ruptures such as sudden loss or a devastating diagnosis. But often – maybe even more often than we all admit – it’s about the slow creeping of us never allowing ourselves to rest and replenish. So this month, finally do it: **Admit to yourself that you are exhausted! And do something about it!**

To get you there, carry John O’Donohue’s poem, A Blessing For One Who Is Exhausted (found in the poetry section of this packet) with you throughout this month. Read it regularly. Meditate on it whenever you can.

In the first part of his poem, he offers numerous phrases to capture the nature of exhaustion. In the second half he offers phrases that describe many ways to rescue yourself from it.

Come to your group ready to share one line from the poem that captures the nature of your exhaustion and one line that captures the way out you are committing to.

Maybe even consider committing yourself to doing *each* of the healing tasks that O’Donohue recommends. In other words, make it a checklist and do each of them (in your own way) before your group meets:

- take refuge in your senses
- open up to small miracles
- watch the way of rain
- imitate the habit of twilight
- draw alongside the silence of stone
- stay clear of those vexed in spirit

Option D: Open Your Eyes to a Politics of Healing

With the results of last year's election and the divisions that exist in American politics, maybe it's time to start focusing on *understanding* the other side as a way towards healing our democracy.

So this month, you are invited to engage one particular person's quest toward political healing: psychologist, Jonathan Haidt. He offers a unique frame for understanding the Left-Right political divide. Your assignment: **Explore Jonathan Haidt's way of framing the political divide, then see if it heals a real life political divide in your life!**

Here's a list of works by and about Haidt for you to read (choose a few – you do not have to read everything). Remember, your task is not to come to your group with a book report or analysis of Haidt's theory. It is a story, not an analysis, you are asked to share. A story about how looking anew at “the other side” healed an actual relationship in your life.

Resources:

- **Book:** *The Righteous Mind*, by Jonathan Haidt (How misunderstanding political mindsets divides us and how understanding them can heal us! - <https://www.amazon.com/Righteous-Mind-Divided-Politics-Religion-ebook/dp/B0052FF7YM#nav-subnav>)
- **Interviews:** <http://righteousmind.com/about-the-author/interviews/>
- **Articles/Ted Talks** by or referencing Haidt:
 - <http://www.vox.com/2016/2/5/10918164/donald-trump-morality>
 - <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/calling-truce-political-wars/>
 - <http://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-07-20/the-republican-convention-translated-for-liberals>
 - <http://freitashugo.blogspot.com.br/2016/03/howtomakeaconservative.html>
 - https://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_on_the_moral_mind
- **Haidt's personal website:** <http://people.stern.nyu.edu/jhaidt/>

Your Question

*As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, **simply pick the one question** that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is not to analyze what "brokenness" means in the abstract, but to figure out what being a part of a people of brokenness means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?*

1. What part of you is broken? How do you deal with that? Do you ignore it, hide it or gently acknowledge it?
2. What breaks your heart? What are you going to do about it? Who are you going to ask to help you?
3. C.S. Lewis writes, "Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable." How unbreakable have you become?
4. Ian McEwan writes, "A person is, among all else, a material thing, easily torn and not easily mended." What have you recently "easily torn" that you wish were "easily mended"? Does it feel too difficult to try to mend it? What will continue to be or feel torn, if you continue not to try?
5. Is that broken thing you keep trying to put back together keeping you from the beautiful thing that is waiting to be built?
6. Is taking on the care of the broken things of the world breaking you?
7. Are you ready to heal from your failure? ("Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead end. Failure is something we can avoid only by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing." - Denis Waitley)
8. What if talk of healing needs to wait? ("Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound." - *Dr. Yolanda Pierce*)
9. Are you the one who needs to be more gentle with yourself? Is it time to forgive yourself for the mistakes that were made in the past?
10. When was the last time you visited your "healing place"? When in pain, sometimes we need to be around people who love us. Other times we need to be surrounded by places we love.
11. Is it time to admit to yourself that you are in pain? Is it time to stop pretending? Is it time to tell others you are in pain?
12. What's your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

Recommended Resources

As always, this is not required reading. We will not analyze these pieces in our group. Instead they are here to companion you on your journey this month, get your thinking started, and maybe open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be part of a people of brokenness.

Word Roots

Brokenness (n).

Reduced to fragments; ruptured; torn; fractured; shattered. Infringed or violated. Disrupted by change. Made weak or infirm. Riven, separated, disintegrated, disconnected, crushed, sorrowful.

Brainstorm: broken heart, breaking records, breaking bread, breaking the glass ceiling, breaking the chains of oppression, breaking through to the other side, break free, breaking barriers, break of dawn, break the fast, break records, spring break, put on the brakes, break dance, the breaking point.

Wise Words

I've never been very good at feasting on the daily newspaper. It turns bitter in my mouth. And yet, this is my world. This face of suffering I must embrace as part of my responsibility. Part of the feast is becoming aware of the world that is mine. Part of the feast is owning this broken world as my own brokenness. I clasp the newspaper to my heart and ask once again in the stillness of the night, "What are we doing to the image of God in one another?"

-Nikos Kazantzakis in A Tree Full of Angels by Macrina Wiederkehr

Our inability to tolerate material brokenness inundates us with debris. Unique to our time and culture is the preoccupation with the cost of waste disposal, the phenomenon of automobile graveyards, and odysseys of barges towing garbage out to sea. As computers rapidly become obsolete, to be replaced by new and ever better models, I read that we face a crisis: what to do with the millions of tons and cubic feet of discarded and now worthless technology.

-Margaret Guenther in Toward Holy Ground

Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid.

-Frederick Buechner

I believe in the sun even when it's not shining. I believe in love even when I don't feel it. I believe in God even when...silent.

-Anonymously written on a wall at Auschwitz

As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "There is a crack in everything God has made." As we age, the cracks begin to show. Are they just about darkness and brokenness? Or are they also a place for the light of Spirit to stream through? The truth is they're both. Let's embrace it all.

— Drew Leder in Spiritual Passages

A haunting sense of incompleteness, a yearning for completion, an uncertainty craving for certainty, a brokenness hungering for wholeness. These things seem to lie at the bottom of our human spirituality. Human beings are, as Karen Armstrong says; "compelled to search for hidden meaning and to achieve an ecstasy that makes them feel fully alive."

— James B. Nelson in Thirst: God and the Alcoholic Experience

When things are shaky and nothing is working, we might realize that we are on the verge of something.

-Pema Chodron

Now if you listen closely
I'll tell you what I know.
Storm clouds are gathering
The wind is going to blow
The human race is suffering
And I can hear the moan,
Cause nobody, But nobody
Can make it out here alone.

-Maya Angelou

Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet shed on the heel that has crushed it.

—Mark Twain

Trauma victims cannot recover until they become familiar with and befriend the sensations in their bodies. Being frightened means that you live in a body that is always on guard. Angry people live in angry bodies. The bodies of child-abuse victims are tense and defensive until they find a way to relax and feel safe. In order to change, people need to become aware of their sensations and the way that their bodies interact with the world around them. Physical self-awareness is the first step in releasing the tyranny of the past... As I often tell my students, the two most important phrases in therapy, as in yoga, are “Notice that” and “What happens next?” Once you start approaching your body with curiosity rather than with fear, everything shifts.”

—Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*

The world breaks everyone, and some become strong at the broken places.

—Ernest Hemingway

Broken things have been on my mind as the year lurches to an end, because so much broke and broke down this year in my life, and in the lives of the people I love. Lives broke, hearts broke, health broke, minds broke. On the first Sunday of Advent our preacher, Veronica, said that this is life’s nature, that lives and hearts get broken, those of people we love, those of people we’ll never meet. She said the world sometimes feels like the waiting room of the emergency ward, and that we, who are more or less OK for now, need to take the tenderest possible care of the more wounded people in the waiting room, until the healer comes. You sit with people, she said, you bring them juice and graham crackers. ~

—Anne Lamott, *Traveling Mercies*

Poems

Song of the Shattering Vessels

Peter Cole

Spoken:

<https://vimeopro.com/vtvt/vtpol2015/video/126091373>

“Either the world is coming together or else the world is falling apart...”

Today, tomorrow, within its weather, the end or beginning’s about to start...

The image, gradually, is growing sharper; now the sound is like a dart:

It seemed their world was coming together, but in fact it was falling apart.

That’s the nightmare, that’s the terror, that’s the Isaac of this art— which sees that the world might come together if only we’re willing to take it apart....”

A Blessing for One Who is Exhausted

John O’ Donohue

When the rhythm of the heart becomes hectic, Time takes on the strain until it breaks; Then all the unattended stress falls in On the mind like an endless, increasing weight,

The light in the mind becomes dim. Things you could take in your stride before Now become laborsome events of will.

Weariness invades your spirit. Gravity begins falling inside you, Dragging down every bone.

The tide you never valued has gone out. And you are marooned on unsure ground. Something within you has closed down; And you cannot push yourself back to life.

You have been forced to enter empty time. The desire that drove you has relinquished. There is nothing else to do now but rest And patiently learn to receive the self You have forsaken for the race of days.

At first your thinking will darken And sadness take over like listless weather. The flow of unwept tears will frighten you.

You have traveled too fast over false ground; Now your soul has come to take you back.

Take refuge in your senses, open up To all the small miracles you rushed through.

Become inclined to watch the way of rain When it falls slow and free.

Imitate the habit of twilight,
Taking time to open the well of color
That fostered the brightness of day.

Draw alongside the silence of stone
Until its calmness can claim you.
Be excessively gentle with yourself.

Stay clear of those vexed in spirit.
Learn to linger around someone of ease
Who feels they have all the time in the world.

Gradually, you will return to yourself,
Having learned a new respect for your heart
And the joy that dwells far within slow time.

Vast Blue Sky

Rick Fields

Behind the hardness there is fear
And if you touch the heart of the fear
You find sadness
And if you touch the sadness
You find the vast blue sky

Healing

Adam Lawrence Dyer

Don't speak to me of "healing" racism,
or "wounded souls" or the "painful hurt"
until you are willing to feel the scars
on my great-great-grandmother Laury's back.
Don't speak to me of "values"
or "justice" or "righting wrongs"
until you are able to feel the heartache
of my great-grandfather Graham
whose father may have been his master.
Don't speak to me of "equity"
or "opportunity" or the "common good"
until you are able to hear the fear
from my grandmother Mae
as the only black woman in her college.
Don't speak to me of "passion"
or "longing" or "standing on the side of love"
until you know the shame
felt by my mother Edwina
mocked by teachers for the curve of her back.
Don't speak to me of "together"
or "understanding" or "empathy"
until you know my rage
as a young actor hearing the direction
to "be more black . . . more male."

The pain you are trying to heal has no real
name.

This "pain" you speak of has no story;
it is anonymous, vague, and empty.
Don't speak to me of "healing"
for I heal the second I am ripped apart.
My wounds self-suture,
and like the clever creature I am,
I just grow new legs to outrun the pain ever
faster.

It is something I have had to practice for
generations,
that feel like an eternity.
So, please don't speak to me of "healing"
because you cannot know what healing means
until you know the hurt.

Inexplicable

Karen G. Johnston

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/inexplicable>

Inexplicable.
How we rise each morning,
instead of burying our heads
under bedcovers,
sewing them shut.
Why we keep on
welcoming babies
with bone-deep joy
to this sordid world.
How we fill burlap sacks
with grit and gratitude,
our hands shredded
as we drag one over the other.
How we refuse the daily pull
towards greedy dark,
keeping at least one toe,
some of us whole torso,
in the light.
Inexplicable.
It's what makes a poem
worth writing, worth reading,
worth flooding the world
with redundant, flawed attempts
at explanation.
It's just the way it is.
There is no other way.
Stumbling every time,
practice or no.
Just part of the bargain...

the unavoidable,
intractable,
inexplicable
bargain.

New People Came This Time

Geoffrey Herbert

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/new-people-came-time>

New People came this time, and we shared
our stories, the familiar truths, about
shock and healing and being glad that at last
our children can say who they are,
and we know them now, love them more.
Funny stories and good news ripple around,
and smiles about lesbigay ways, and jokes,
against ourselves, taking the masks off
to show the same donkey faces underneath.
A communion of laughter.
And several dawns once more lit up among us,
the sharpness of beginning sight,
a slower sunrise over the years,
other eye-openings—painful or proud—all
good.
A communion of wisdom.
But this time—
we nearly all wept:
wept with the blinding new hurts,
winced with what we thought
had been healed—old wounds, waiting.
We put the tissue box in the middle
and passed it round.
A communion of tears.

Dreams Before Waking (excerpts)

Adrienne Rich

<http://firstthoughts.blogspot.com/2007/07/dreams-before-waking.html>

Despair falls:
the shadow of a building
raising in the direct path
of your slender ray of sunlight
slowly the steel girders grow
the skeletal framework rises
yet the western light still filters
through it all
still glances off the plastic sheeting
they wrap around it
for dead of winter.

At the end of winter something changes
a faint subtraction
from consolations you expected
an innocent brilliance that does not come
through the flower shops set out
once again on the pavement
their pots of tight-budded sprays
the bunches of jonquils still with cold
and at such a price
though someone must buy them
you study those hues as if with hunger

Despair falls
like the day you come home
from work, a summer evening
transparent with rose-blue light
and see they are filling
the framework
the girders are rising
beyond your window
that seriously you live
in a different place
though you have never moved

and will not move, not yet
but will give away your potted plants to a friend
on the other side of town
along with the cut crystal
flashing in the window-frame
will forget the evenings
of watching the street, the sky
the planes in the feathered afterglow:
will learn to feel grateful simply for this
foothold

where still you can manage
to go on paying rent
where still you can believe
it's the old neighborhood:
even the woman who sleeps at night
in the barred doorway—wasn't she always
there?
and the man glancing, darting for food in the
supermarket trash—
when did this hunger come to this?
what made the difference?
what will make it for you?

What will make it for you?
you don't want to know the stages

and those who go through them don't want to tell

You have your four locks on the door
your savings, your respectable past
your strangely querulous body, suffering
sicknesses of the city no one can name
Your have your pride, your bitterness
your memories of sunset
you think you can make it straight through
you don't speak of despair.

What would it mean to live
in a city whose people were changing
each other's despair into hope?—
You yourself must change it.—
what would it feel like to know your country
was changing?—
You yourself must change it.—
Though your life felt arduous
new and unmapped and strange
what would it mean to stand on the first
page to the end of despair?

Winter Meditation

Tess Baumberger

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/poetry/winter-meditation>

Something has changed in me this winter.
In the past I've focused on how long winter is,
How miserable I find it, and how it seems so
interminable.

This winter, I find myself thinking instead
That every day, every hour, every minute
Brings us just that much closer to spring.

We all experience wintry times,
When things seem harsh and frozen,
Or muffled by layered shrouds of snow.

It is helpful to remember that each day that
dawns bleakly,
Each night that wraps its cold cloak around our
hearts,
Brings us closer to that time of warm and
vibrant sun.

It is perhaps helpful to consider that turning
toward spring is an active thing,
The earth which seems so stable in fact flies

quickly through space,
On its path that tilts us ever towards the
Source.

So, too, each memory we lay to rest,
Each truth in ourselves that we encounter and
accept,
Each wrong act that we forgive, ushers us on
towards our renewal.

We are here because we are a people of faith

Kendell Gibbons

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/readings/5888.shtml>

We are here because we are people of faith.
Within each of us lives the conviction of a
saving faith that could restore our broken
planet and illuminate the lives of our sisters and
brothers.

Ancient wisdom teaches that we who would
save the world must first save ourselves. We
who would restore the planet must learn to
restore the broken structures of the institutions
closest to hand; to illuminate the lives of our
companions and friends.

To this end let us center ourselves,
acknowledging the trouble of mind and
vexation of spirit that accompany us even here.
Let us open ourselves to that creative mystery
which is at work in our striving, whose servants
we are and seek to be.

We are whole

Beth Lefever

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/readings/we-are-whole>

We are whole,
even in the broken places,
even where it hurts.

We are whole,
even in the broken places,
the places where fear impedes our full
engagement with life;
where self-doubt corrupts our self-love;
where shame makes our faces hot and our souls
cold.

We are whole,
even in those places where perfectionism
blunts the joy
of full immersion into person, place, activity;

where “good enough” does not reside except in
our silent longings;
where our gaps must be fast-filled
with substance, accomplishment, or frenzied
activity
lest they gape open and disgust.
We are whole
where we would doubt our own goodness,
richness, fullness and depth,
where we would doubt our own significance,
our own profoundness.
We are whole,
even in our fragility;
even where we feel fragmented, alone,
insubstantial, insufficient.
We are whole,
even as we are in process,
even as we stumble,
even as we pick ourselves up again,
for we are whole.
We are whole.

Breakage

Mary Oliver

<https://onbeing.org/blog/a-new-way-to-hold-our-brokenness>

I go down to the edge of the sea.
How everything shines in the morning light!
The cusp of the whelk,
the broken cupboard of the clam,
the opened, blue mussels,
moon snails, pale pink and barnacle scarred—
and nothing at all whole or shut, but tattered,
split,
dropped by the gulls onto the gray rocks and all
the
 moisture gone.
It's like a schoolhouse
of little words,
thousands of words.
First you figure out what each one means by
itself,
the jingle, the periwinkle, the scallop
 full of moonlight.

Then you begin, slowly, to read the whole story.

Videos and Podcasts

Podcast: L'Arche: A Community of Brokenness and Beauty

Jean Vanier and Jo Anne Horstmann

<https://onbeing.org/blog/the-paradox-of-suffering-and-love-kate-braestrup/>

Forty years ago in France, philosopher Jean Vanier founded an international movement, L'Arche. The L'Arche community in Clinton, Iowa is part of this movement — people of faith living and worshipping alongside developmentally handicapped adults. There are now over 120 L'Arche communities in 18 countries. The community in Clinton is one of the oldest and most rural of the 14 American communities. In this "radio pilgrimage," we take listeners into a radically different faith community that confronts our assumptions about service and diversity, and the worth of individuals.

Podcast: Restoring the Body: Yoga, EMDR, and Treating Trauma

Bessel van der Volk

<http://www.onbeing.org/program/restoring-thebody-bessel-van-der-kolk-on-y>

Through his longtime research and innovation in trauma treatment, psychiatrist, Bessel van der Kolk, shares what he's learning about how bodywork like yoga or eye movement therapy can restore a sense of goodness and safety.

Ted Talks on Brokenness:

Suddenly my Body

Eve Ensler

https://www.ted.com/talks/eve_ensler

Poet, writer, activist Eve Ensler lived in her head. In this powerful talk from TEDWomen, she talks about her lifelong disconnection from her body -- and how two shocking events helped her to connect with the reality, the physicality of being human.

What really matters at the end of life

BJ Miller

https://www.ted.com/talks/bj_miller_what_really_matters_at_the_end_of_life

At the end of our lives, what do we most wish for? For many, it's simply comfort, respect, love. BJ Miller is a hospice and palliative medicine physician who thinks deeply about how to create a dignified, graceful end of life for his patients. Take the time to savor this moving talk, which asks big questions about how we think on death and honor life.

On Humanity

Chris Abani

https://www.ted.com/talks/chris_abani_muses_on_humanity

Chris Abani tells stories of people: People standing up to soldiers. People being compassionate. People being human and reclaiming their humanity. It's "ubuntu," he says: the only way for me to be human is for you to reflect my humanity back at me.

What we don't know about Europe's Muslim Kids

Deeyah Kahn

https://www.ted.com/talks/deeyah_khan_what_we_don_t_know_about_europe_s_muslim_kids

As the child of an Afghan mother and Pakistani father raised in Norway, Deeyah Khan knows what it's like to be a young person stuck between your community and your country. In this powerful, emotional talk, the filmmaker unearths the rejection and isolation felt by many Muslim kids growing up in the West -- and the deadly consequences of not embracing our youth before extremist groups do.

Articles

Kintsugi: the art of precious scars

Steffano Carnazzi

<https://www.lifeqate.com/people/lifestyle/kintsugi>

By repairing broken ceramics it's possible to give a new lease of life to pottery that becomes even more refined thanks to its "scars". The Japanese art of kintsugi teaches that broken objects are not something to hide but to display with pride. This traditional Japanese art uses a precious metal – liquid gold, liquid silver or lacquer dusted with powdered gold – to bring

together the pieces of a broken pottery item and at the same time enhance the breaks.

This Isn't About Bad Apples; It's about our Broken Sexual Culture

Courtney Martin

<https://onbeing.org/blog/courtney-martin-this-isnt-about-bad-apples-its-about-our-broken-sexual-culture>

This is not about bad apples but a root system that is insufficient to grow healthy sexual humans. I've been thinking about this a lot lately as I have been reading Jaclyn Friedman's insanely timely book, [**Unscrewed: Women, Sex, Power, and How to Stop Letting the System Screw Us All.**](#)

The basis of Jaclyn's argument is that we have been living through an "era of fauxpowerment" — "a time when shiny pictures of individual women wielding some symbol of sexual power are used to distract us from our still mostly retrograde and misogynist status quo."

Think Kerry Washington in her sexy outfits tromping all over D.C. to fix what's broken.

Think Kim Kardashian posting naked pictures of herself and calling it feminist. Think Melania Trump, who was a model before she was first lady, making money off of her sex appeal was a direct path to the White House.

America only gets outraged about gun violence in white neighborhoods

Mia McKenzie

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/29/us-gun-crime-race-disparity>

There's a racial double standard about the horrors of US gun crimes. Even President Obama has succumbed to it

Truths about adulthood that no one tells You

Courtney Martin

<https://onbeing.org/blog/courtney-martin-a-couple-of-truths-about-adulthood-that-no-one-tells-you>

The organizations and institutions you admire from afar are riddled with problems — and still worth admiring.

What is true in micro is true in macro. All of the organizations and institutions that are [**run by these imperfect humans**](#) are also imperfect. Sometimes fatally flawed (in which case, don't

walk, run), but sometimes just broken in various, potentially fixable ways for various, complex reasons, and this, too, can become a testing ground for wisdom.

The Role of Spirit in the #blacklivesmatter Movement: A Conversation with Activist and Artist Patrisse Cullors

<http://religiondispatches.org/the-role-of-spirit-in-the-blacklivesmatter-movement-a-conversation-with-activist-and-artist-patrisse-cullors/>

Black Lives Matter chapters and affiliated groups are expressing a type of spiritual practice that makes use of the language of health and wellness to impart meaning, heal grief and trauma, combat burn-out and encourage organizational efficiency.

Music

Hallelujah

Leonard Cohen

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

Baby I've been here before
I've seen this room and I've walked this floor
I used to live alone before I knew you
And I've seen your flag on the marble arch
And love is not a victory march
It's a cold and it's a broken Hallelujah

The Sound of Silence

Simon and Garfunkel

<https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/5638866/Simon+%26+Garfunkel/The+Sound+of+Silence>

Hello darkness, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains
Within the sound of silence

Swing Low Sail High

The Wailin Jennys

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3e3lwXpyYo>

I have failed you, I have failed you
I have lost my way, lost my nerve
I've failed you
But I love you, how I love you

I have turned my back, left you last
but I love you

Storm Comin'

The Wailin Jennys

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDY12Pcb9v8>

When that storm comes
Don't run for cover
When that storm comes
Don't run for cover
When that storm comes
Don't run for cover
Don't run from the comin' storm cause there ain't no use in runnin'

Shatter

Dolly Parton

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7sNWMvLLI4>

Shatter my image with the rocks I'd
throw **Shatter** my image with the rocks I'd
throw Long time gone and a long time ago
When I shattered my image with the rocks I'd
throw The world is cruel and people are cold
Now they **shatter** my image with the rocks they
throw

Beautiful Pain

Eminem

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKdYs6xhnhU>

I'm standin' in the flames
It's a beautiful kind of pain
Settin' fire to yesterday
Find the light, find the light, find the light

Today

Alanis Morsette

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TG_5OyoZmJw

Smile upside-down
Rupture is rising, families are scrambling for
custody
Faithlessly drowned
The chase of this dollar is tilting my altar toward
apathy

King of Pain

The Police

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFN5DveQH0o>

There's a little black spot on the sun today
It's the same old thing as yesterday
There's a black hat caught in a high tree top
There's a flag pole rag and the wind won't stop

Pain (contains profane language)

Tupac

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSqkBF6LjH4>

I couldn't help but see your pain

Pilgrim of Sorrow

Sam Cooke with Soul Stirrers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHt3DaquqCM>

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen

Mahalia Jackson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHt3DaquqCM>

Magic and Loss

Lou Reed

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96o5XXMAumo>

Movies

Dead Poet's Society

In 1959, the Welton Academy is a staid but well-respected prep school where education is a pragmatic and rather dull affair. Several of the students, however, have their thoughts on the learning process (and life itself) changed when a new teacher comes to the school. John Keating (Williams) is an unconventional educator who tears chapters of his textbooks and asks his students to stand on their desks to see the world from a new angle and live their lives boldly; but when this philosophy leads to an unexpected tragedy, headmaster Mr. Nolan (Norman Lloyd) fires Keating, and his students leap to his defense.

Review:

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/dead_poets_society

Cries from Syria

At the end of this watershed documentary masterpiece, seven-year-old Bana Alabed, who describes herself as a "peace preacher" on her Twitter account (@AlabedBana), is being interviewed about her hometown of Aleppo. Saying she wants to speak for the children of that besieged city, she ends with "We shall overcome someday." It is a remarkable statement, full of courage and hope, considering all that she and the people of her country have been through in the last six years.

Review:

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/reviews/view/28383/cries-from-syria>

Felicité

The city is the perfect place to listen to the blues. After being worn and torn by the sharp edges of financial peril or an undercurrent of violence, it makes sense to retreat to your local bar and let the music take you away.

Review:

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/reviews/view/28524/felicit>

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri

Mildred is angry because she is still in a deep and unsettling state of grief after the murder of her teenage daughter Angela (Kathryn Newton) nine months ago. She has taken \$5000 and rented three billboards near her house so she can vent her spleen on the police for not solving this terrible crime. A sturdy depiction of the grace that accompanies turning an enemy into a friend.

Review:

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/reviews/view/28524/felicit>

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/reviews/view/28539/three-billboards-outside-ebbing-missouri>

God Said, Ha! Sweeney proves that humor is a lifesaver in the midst of pain, suffering, and setbacks -- including her brother's terminal cancer and her own cervical cancer diagnosis.

https://www.amazon.com/God-Said-Ha-Julia-Sweeney/dp/B000089795/ref=sr_1_2?s=movie&ie=UTF8&qid=1470365688&sr=1-2&keywords=god+said+ha

Books

When Things Fall Apart

Pema Chodron

https://www.amazon.com/When-Things-Fall-Apart-Anniversary/dp/1611803438/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1518533142&sr=8-1&keywords=when+things+fall+apart

A collection of talks she gave between 1987 and 1994, the book is a treasury of wisdom for going on living when we are overcome by pain and difficulties. Chödrön discusses:

- Using painful emotions to cultivate wisdom, compassion, and courage
- Communicating so as to encourage others to open up rather than shut down
- Practices for reversing habitual patterns
- Methods for working with chaotic situations
- Ways for creating effective social action

When Bad Things Happen to Good People

Harold Kushner

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/46676.When_Bad_Things_Happen_to_Good_People?from_search=true

When Harold Kushner's three-year-old son was diagnosed with a degenerative disease and that he would only live until his early teens, he was faced with one of life's most difficult questions: Why, God? Years later, Rabbi Kushner wrote this straightforward, elegant contemplation of the doubts and fears that arise when tragedy strikes. Kushner shares his wisdom as a rabbi, a parent, a reader, and a human being.

Repair: The Impulse to Restore in a Fragile World

Elizabeth Spelman

https://www.amazon.com/Repair-Impulse-Restore-Fragile-World/dp/0807020117/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1518533985&sr=1-2

We live in a world constantly in need of repair. Our cars break down. Marriages weaken, friendships sour, ties between nations are rent. Yet we fix things and relationships all the time, without giving these activities much thought. *Repair* is the first book to offer an in-

depth exploration of this core aspect of human life.

Things Fall Apart (Novel)

Chinua Achebe

https://www.amazon.com/Things-Fall-Apart-Chinua-Achebe/dp/0385474547/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1518118610&sr=8-2&keywords=when+things+fall+apart

Things Fall Apart is the first of three novels in Chinua Achebe's critically acclaimed African Trilogy. It is a classic narrative about Africa's cataclysmic encounter with Europe as it establishes a colonial presence on the continent. Told through the fictional experiences of Okonkwo, a wealthy and fearless Igbo warrior of Umuofia in the late 1800s, *Things Fall Apart* explores one man's futile resistance to the devaluing of his Igbo traditions by British political and religious forces and his despair as his community capitulates to the powerful new order.

Broken For You (Novel)

Stephanie Kallos

https://www.amazon.com/Broken-You-Stephanie-Kallos/dp/0802142109/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1518118943&sr=1-1&keywords=broken+for+you

Broken for You is the story of two women in self-imposed exile whose lives are transformed when their paths intersect. Both women are guarding dark secrets and have spent many years building up protective armor against the outside world. As their tentative friendship evolves, the armor begins to fall away.

This packet was created based on the Soul Matters Sharing Circle model of small groups. It should only be used within Unity Church Unitarian.



<https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle>

