

October Theme 2019

Worry: The Practice of Possibility

“That the birds of worry and care fly over your head, this you cannot change, but that they build nests in your hair, this you can prevent.” ~ Chinese Proverb

Let's start out with the etymology of the word worry which started out in the 1300s to mean to strangle (pertaining to thought, not the physical act). And, is that not how one feels when worried? Later definitions include how we currently think of worry - to annoy, bother, or vex and later, to cause mental distress or trouble.

As we all know, worry is part of the human experience. Most likely, each of us experiences it daily. Some worry or anxiety may actually be good for us. They may be the practice of self-preservation. These are usually fleeting moments of worry and once we see them, we can let go of them.

However, most worry does indeed produce a stranglehold on people. When active, worry will usually let us see just one possible outcome, one that is not advantageous. Also, worry is never about the present - it is always about something that may or may not occur in the future. While we may know this intellectually, the vexing continues until we find a way out of it.

This theme will not prescribe a way out of worry. Perhaps some direction can come from a couple of other religions. The following is attributed to Jesus, “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?”

From a Buddhist perspective: “If it can be remedied, why be upset about it? If it cannot be remedied, what is the use of being upset about it?” The Buddhists look at all in life as being impermanent and only when we see things as permanent, when we become attached to life's situations does worry set in. A way to gain some insight on stopping worry is to become more mindful through meditation.

The word possible comes from Old French and Latin and means, “that can be done” or “be able”. As mentioned earlier, when one is worried there is no chance of possibility. One of our Unitarian Universalist principles actually addresses this not as a commandment but as a guide. The fourth principle calls for a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

If we can recall this principle and act on it just as stated to go on a search for truth and meaning, we may see new possibilities. A free search implies that there may be a letting go called for. Letting go of the one possibility may open the listening for others to emerge. Also, the search need not be done only by ourselves; we can ask for help from others to gain insight and possibility.

This month's theme was composed by Alan Cantor and the Worship Associates.

Questions to Explore:

1. What do you consider to be the opposite of worry? (faith, hope, certainty, etc.) Does this displace worry in your life?
2. What do you not worry about? Why?
3. Where do you turn for new possibilities?
4. What do you experience as the times you are more likely to worry...tired...hungry...overwhelmed...ill?
5. How do you foreclose possibility because you close people off?
6. When worried about worldly issues, what actions do you take?
7. Is more worry propagated if you listen to dissenting views?

Quotes:

“If you are depressed you are living in the past. If you are anxious you are living in the future. If you are at peace you are living in the present.” ~ Lao Tzu

“A warrior never worries about his fear.”- Carlos Castenda,

“Don’t believe every worry you have. Worried thoughts are notoriously inaccurate.” ~ Renee Jain

“If the problem can be solved, why worry? If the problem cannot be solved, worrying will do you no good.” ~ Buddha

"In healthy cultures one person's wound is an opportunity for another to bring medicine. But if you are silent about your suffering, then your friends stay spiritually unemployed." ~ Francis Weller

“Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy.” ~ Leo F. Buscaglia

“When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened.”
~ Winston Churchill

If a person lost would conclude that after all he is not lost, he is not beside himself, but standing in his own old shoes on the very spot where he is, and that for the time being he will live there; but the places that have known him, they are lost,--how much anxiety and danger would vanish.
~ Henry David Thoreau

“All the possibilities of your human destiny are asleep in your soul. You are here to realize and honor these possibilities. When love comes in to your life, unrecognized dimensions of your destiny awaken and blossom and grow. Possibility is the secret heart of time.” ~ John O’Donohue

The Worship Associates are Matt Andrus, Jeff Brown, Jen Ryan Brown, Alan Cantor, Erin Collier, Jess Jonas, and Katherine McHugh (chair).

“Worry compounds the futility of being trapped on a dead-end street. Thinking opens new avenues.” ~ Cullen Hightower

WITH LOVE OR WITHOUT LOVE? ~ Maz Iqbal

I want to share with you two distinctions ‘with love’ and ‘without love’. Why am I sharing these distinctions? Because distinctions shed light on what is so and at the same time open doorways to new possibilities.

Today, it occurred to me that everything that you and I do, is done either ‘with love’ or ‘without love’. And there is a profound difference between doing something ‘with love’ or ‘without love’.

When I listen, am I listening ‘with love’ or am I listening to you ‘without love’?

When I speak, am I speaking with love or without love?

When I write, am I writing with love or without love?

When I cook, am I cooking with love or without love?

When I serve the food that I have cooked, am I serving it with love or without love?

When I eat, am I eating with love or without love?

When I clean the house, am I cleaning with love or without love?

When I turn up to collect my children from school, am I turning up with love or without love?

When I help you with something, am I helping you with love or without love?

When I walk, am I walking with love or without love?

When I sit, am I sitting with love or without love?

When I sleep, am I sleeping with love or without love?

When I work, am I working with love or am I working without love?

It occurs to me that the default is ‘without love’. It is so much the default that I don’t see that I act ‘without love’. My acting just shows up as acting: I do that which I do as I have always done it. And I think no more of it. I do what I do mindlessly. Yet, the person on the receiving end does notice whether the action was taken with love or without love.

When I act with love the other tends to feel accepted-appreciated-loved and I also experience joy.

When I act without love, the other is left feeling that s/he does not matter.

I invite you to imagine what your experience of living would be like if you listened with love, spoke with love, and took action with love. What would show up if you brought love to all that you do?

Today, I am inventing the possibility of listening-speaking-acting ‘with love’. I invite you to join me.

The Worship Associates are Matt Andrus, Jeff Brown, Jen Ryan Brown, Alan Cantor, Erin Collier, Jess Jonas, and Katherine McHugh (chair).