

"Thank You for Your Loving Hands"

Thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart, your loving ways—
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.
And if you ever doubt yourself, remember us, who love you well—
We know all the gifts you bring into the world each day.
So thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart, your loving ways,
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.
—by Judy Fjell and Lisa Bregger

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent, and to come to the group one last time and say good-bye if I need to quit
- to avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and not tell other people's stories
- to listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn

Covenant Groups

ADDICTIONS



The essence of addiction is craving for an experience or object to make yourself feel all right. It's the craving for something other than the self, even if that's within the realm of the mind.

—Andrew Weil

ADDICTIONS

Chalice Lighting

For every time we make a mistake and we decide to start again:

We light this chalice.

For every time we are lonely and we let someone be our friend:

We light this chalice.

For every time we are disappointed and we choose to hope:

We light this chalice.

—M. Maureen Killoran

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings

A moderate addiction to money may not always be hurtful; but when taken in excess it is nearly always bad for the health.

—Clarence Day

When the desire to see and feel the world differently becomes intent enough, the search begins, fed by emptiness. What will fill me? For a while, of course, the drink or drug or overeating or gambling or an affair or 20-hour workdays fill us up, depending on our makeup. We do not become addicted to something that is not deeply pleasurable at some level at some times. Then, as it becomes more deeply engrained in our consciousness and/or our chemical bodies, the obsession to get enough, to have more, to get the right stuff, grows and edges into the center of our concerns. The thought of giving it up, as life problems begin to grow as a result of its use, creates fear and resistance.

—Rev. Barry Bloom in sermon “Addiction as a Spiritual Metaphor”

The Ten Commandments of Addiction

1. Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.
2. Thou shalt honor me before thy father and mother.
3. Thou shalt not question me.
4. Thou shalt suspect everyone but me.
5. Thou shalt kill any who threatens me.

6. Thou shalt set aside time to worship me.
7. Thou shalt make large financial offerings to me.
8. Thou shalt sacrifice thy children to me.
9. Thou shalt seek forgiveness only through me.
10. Thou shalt not ever forget me.

—Rev. Sam Trumbore, “Addiction and Recovery”

Americans are variously addicted to many things, among them wealth, sex, food, work, alcohol, and tobacco. By attacking addiction in others, we can feel good about ourselves without coming to any insight about our own addictions.

—Walter Wink, *The Christian Century*

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening

Remind the group of our covenant; read it from the back of the bulletin

Round 1: Share briefly your understanding of the meaning of addiction.

Round 2: Share your personal experience of what you may understand as one of your addictions or dependencies; share your personal experience of the effects of another’s addiction or dependency on you.

Round 3: Share what you have learned from the experiences of the other members in the group about addictions, your own or those of others.

Closing Words

That which is worthy of doing, create with your hands.

That which is worthy of repeating, speak with a clear voice.

That which is worthy of remembering, hold in your hearts.

And that which is worthy of living, go and live it now.

—Steve J. Crump

Closing Song

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

Group Business

Homework for the next meeting.

Homework: Addictions

This session focuses on understanding our relation to addictions in a broader sense than is often considered. Addictions can exist in many aspects of our lives, some of which may seem less important than those that lead to DUIs, drug arrests, or bankruptcy.

Buddhist nun Pema Chödrön, author of *Start Where You Are*, agrees with Anne Wilson Schaef—we all *are* addicted to something. But she doesn't blame it on American culture; she says it's simply part and parcel of our human nature. Chodron explains that we are restless, irritable, and discontent—we find it impossible to just sit still and BE.

—BJ Gallegher

Every form of addiction is bad, no matter whether the narcotic be alcohol or morphine or idealism.

—Carl Gustav Jung

I maintain that the essence of addiction is craving for an experience or object to make yourself feel all right. It's the craving for something other than the self, even if that's within the realm of the mind.

—Andrew Weil

We've observed that people who stall in their personal growth work often have counterproductive soft addictions that stand in their way of growth and having the life they say they want. It can be a simple thing, such as watching TV instead of finishing a project.

—Judith Wright

I also feel very strongly that addiction is a universal problem. All of us are taken up in addictive behavior. Hopefully, we are in a process of change now where we are beginning to see the universality of addiction. But still there is a tendency to focus on some kinds of addictions as the ones that are serious and to ignore others either because they are socially acceptable or because they don't fit our conceptual model of what addiction is.

—Andrew Weil

Are we all addicted to something? And if we are, does this lessen the impact of “addiction” in our lives or does it reflect something about what we are seeking and not finding? Buddhist thought suggests that the human condition of life is incomplete and unfulfilled and our craving leads us to suffering. Writer Scott Peck theorizes that at birth humans experience a separation from the holy, experienced as a “hole in their soul.” Something is missing, and we may decide at some point that sugar, drugs, alcohol, sex, work, gambling, or something else feels like the answer to what we have been missing.

Andrew Weil proposes two strategies in relation to addictions. Assuming that addictions—using the term broadly—are a fundamental part of our humanness, then we can try to move or shift the form of the expression of our addiction to things that are less harmful. For example, perhaps it would be better to be addicted to exercise than to smoking, to reading than to eating cookies.

The second strategy he suggests is to use introspection and meditation to try to discover the origin of our cravings, which he admits may be difficult at best. Above all, Weil encourages us to face our addictions, identify them and try to understand them. “The biggest mistake we can make is trying to disown [them].”

Questions to Ponder

- Are there any addictions it is okay to have?
- What addictions am I aware of in my life?
- How has addiction (mine or those of others) affected my life?
- Has someone mentioned to me that I might be addicted to something, something about which I may be in denial?
- Why do I love my computer games/TV/compulsive worrying to the exclusion of personal interactions with my family and friends?
- Is there someone in my life who needs to get help for an addiction?

Leader's Guide: Addictions

This session focuses on understanding our relation to addictions in a broader sense than is often considered. Addictions can exist in many aspects of our lives, some of which may seem less important than those that lead to DUIs, drug arrests, or bankruptcy.

Chalice Lighting (2 min)

Ask someone to read the chalice lighting words and someone to light the chalice.

For every time we make a mistake and we decide to start again:

We light this chalice.

For every time we are lonely and we let someone be our friend:

We light this chalice.

For every time we are disappointed and we choose to hope:

We light this chalice.

—M. Maureen Killoran

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows (10 min)

Invite group members to speak of what is on top of their minds, what is going on in their lives, what they would like to share that might otherwise keep them from being fully present for the group session.

Silence (3 min)

Invite the group into a time of silence, using the full time allotted.

Shared Readings (3–5 min)

Invite group members to read from the bulletin until all the readings have been finished.

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening (65 min)

Remind the group of our covenant; read it from the back of the bulletin. Be aware of the time each member uses.

Round 1 (10 min): Share briefly your understanding of the meaning of addiction.

Round 2 (40 min): Share your personal experience of what you may understand as one of your addictions or dependencies; share your personal experience of the effects of another's addiction or dependency on you.

Round 3 (15 min): Share what you have learned from the experiences of the other members in the group about addictions, your own or those of others.

Closing Words (1 min)

That which is worthy of doing, create with your hands.

That which is worthy of repeating, speak with a clear voice.

That which is worthy of remembering, hold in your hearts.

And that which is worthy of living, go and live it now.

—Steve J. Crump

Closing Song (1 min)

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

Group Business (5 min)

Pass out the homework for next time.