

To: Spring 2020 Restorative Justice Group #9

Title: *Unplanned Unfoldings*

In this season of COVID 19, there have been many lists of suggestions about how to survive. You have been making masks, reading paper substitutions for Restorative Justice, worrying about your friends and family, worrying about yourself.

This spring falls into one of the “unplanned unfoldings” that H.W. Whitcomb describes in her book *The Practice of Finding: How Gratitude Leads the Way to Enough*.

Unplanned unfoldings can come in many forms, though we might usually think of them as being difficult and painful. Other kinds of unplanned unfoldings can be wondrous and good, minor curveballs or totally lifechanging. These are things that happen that we do not, or cannot anticipate; and they almost always create turbulence in our lives.

How we respond to these events can help us recognize our own strength and resilience. The author says, “If we embrace our unplanned unfoldings, we won’t waste our suffering. We can value our survival tactics as the currency of maturity and can affirm that what we’ve gleaned through pain is gold.”

Here are some lessons from her life’s unplanned unfoldings:

- 1. Accept that you can’t figure certain things out and that there are some things you’ll never know.** Not-knowing is hard. She offers up the 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.*
- 2. Find friends and accept their help.** We can’t navigate unplanned unfoldings alone. Sometimes we need to be held up for a while; and often we need to learn how to receive.
- 3. Know that reorientation will take time.** Don’t let ourselves be rushed or be victims of others’ expectations. Healing is not predictably linear. We need enough time to heal and reorient to a new reality.
- 4. Trust that you are actually tougher than you give yourself credit for.** There is a certain credibility and confidence that come from being tested and becoming stronger.
- 5. Let yourself be distracted.** If you discover activities that bring you joy for a while, let yourself participate in them; they give you rest from anxiety or pain. It could be a new book, learning how to crochet or bead, trying a new physical activity.
- 6. Embrace gratitude and give thanks.** Stop and be grateful for something, however small.
- 7. Consider the notion that “despair is presumptuous.”** Even when it seems that despair is the only thing possible, light and healing will come with time and the help of others. Our deepest pain may also lead to our deepest transformation.

Ask yourself:

- *What word or phrase makes sense to me or challenges me?*
- *What sensations do I notice in my body?*
- *What is mine to do?*

~ Ms. Pugh, Restorative Justice volunteer

