

# **AGING & SPIRITUALITY: FINDING COURAGE AND RESILIENCE – June 13-14, 2019**

## **Aging: Setting the conditions for resiliency and courage – led by Teresa Bryant**

*How did the rose ever open its heart and give to the world all its beauty?*

*It felt the encouragement of light against its being. – Hafiz*

Throughout life we are confronted with a myriad of challenges, each causing varying degrees of suffering. As we age, suffering due to illness and loss is often compounded by an emotional weariness resulting from the accumulation of past suffering and the natural acceleration and intensification of change and chaos inherent at the later stage of life. What is helpful?

In this workshop, participants will be guided to consider the conditions necessary to lessen anxiety and melancholy and to nurture resiliency and courage.

## **Life-Review: a practice for cultivating gratitude and recognizing grace – led by Teresa Bryant**

This workshop will present Naikan, an evidence-based life-review practice, developed to help the elderly and those facing adversity to experience gratitude and develop trust in the process of life's unfolding.

Come experience Naikan for yourself.

## **Accompanying Dementia – led by Celia McBride**

Accompanying people living with dementia can often feel like accompanying dementia itself. Dementia takes over and the person we once knew seemingly disappears. How do we resist the urge to improve or change the person? How do we wholeheartedly accept the person from moment-to-moment?

In this workshop we will explore a few key elements that allow for a richer experience of accompaniment when walking alongside those living with dementia: deep listening, unconditional support, gentle validation and the simple act of 'being with'.

## **Self-Care for the Caregiver – led by Celia McBride**

Caregivers often find self-care difficult for two reasons: we feel guilty about taking time for ourselves when our dependents are suffering and we feel unworthy of taking that time in the first place. That's why we're caregivers: it's easier to focus on helping others than it is to look at our own insecurities. Yet when we take time to attend to our own inner lives we build the kind of resilience necessary to rise to the challenges of caregiving.

In this workshop we will explore the guilt feelings that come up when we decide to take time for ourselves and the sense of unworthiness we may feel around self-care. We will discuss the concept of 'being enough' and explore what self-care actually looks like for each of us. Finally, we will create realistic self-care actions to practice in our daily lives.

### **Living the Best Till Last: Important conversations in the face of mortality – led by Dale Guenter**

Most of us will live years of our lives with illness or frailty. Our health care paradigm is bent toward prolonging life, regardless of how well we are living. We wish for confidence to communicate what we hope for in a life well lived, and what kind of health care could be a threat to achieving that. Participants will explore ways to share with loved ones or professionals their own values about life as it draws to a close, or to lead others to explore their values. These conversations might transform fear into love, and uncertainty into assurance.

### **The Struggle of Prayer – led by Maureen McDonnell**

At times we are in an uncomfortable situation where the practice of prayer feels complicated for the caregiver(s) and/or the person receiving care. Might the reality of differing beliefs, styles of prayer or the absence of any desire for prayer be calling us into a deep silence and stillness? Is there an invitation for each to be surrendered into a place of unfolding mystery? This workshop invites participants to explore their own stories of 'prayer' in the context of care giving and in receiving care; we will have the opportunity to share experiences and insights so as to build inner resiliency and courage for our various circumstances.

### **Letting your Spirit Arise through Gazing on Art – led by Maureen McDonnell**

An experiential opportunity of choosing a piece of art that calls to us as we engage a contemplative process. "*Visio Divina*" is an ancient spiritual practice that invites us to surrender ourselves into silence, to allow our minds to engage the piece of art, then to quiet ourselves so that we may receive the gifts that arise for us. Then in small groups we will have the opportunity to share the insights and feelings that touched us. This workshop utilizes "*Visio Divina*" as a spiritual resource to connect us to our resiliency and courage in a gentle, and often surprising, way.

### **The Art of Sacred Story Listening – led by Miriam Frey**

"The art of listening sacred stories into speech is a core activity in the spiritual direction process." (Janet Ruffing, *To Tell the Sacred Tale*)

By listening to what is already sacred and present in the other's story, we honour the sacred within that person. By compassionately listening to our own needs, we honour the sacred within ourselves. Through sharing our own story and listening to another's story, we will explore the skills and qualities that are important for effective sacred story listening. Together we will experience the power that stories have to offer resilience and hope.

### **Spiritual Resources for aging, illness and dying – led by Jane Kuepfer**

A participatory talk, introducing the idea of spiritual resources (as those things, internal and external, that are available to address our deep human need for such spiritual values as love, hope, peace and joy). You will be invited to discern and value your own spiritual resources: where they have come from, how you nurture them, and what further resources you might seek out for what lies ahead. Opportunity to individually create a collage will be part of this reflective process.