

To: Spring 2020 Restorative Justice Group #40

Title: *Ubuntu* in our lives

Lesson 6: Believe in the Good of Everyone

“People are human beings, produced by the society in which they live.
You encourage people by seeing the good in them.” *Nelson Mandela*

Living where you live, and even living where I live, it is often difficult to think it possible that everyone has some basic good inside them. Concepts of *ubuntu* remind us that we are most likely to find the good in someone if we choose to look for it!

On a trip to Palestine a few years ago, I met two men who are members of The Parents Circle-Families Forum. One man is Palestinian the other is Israeli. The Palestinian had been in an Israeli prison for several years; the Israeli had been in the army. These men had only one thing in common ... both of them have daughters who had been killed because of the ongoing conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. They have become fast friends. The families who are members of the Parents Circle come together to share their stories in a circle. (Sound familiar??) In spite of prevailing political animosity between Palestinians and Israelis these people have found both a common harm and a common healing, a finding the good in each other.



As with all the previous lessons of *ubuntu*, believing in the good of everyone may be a process for us...something we have to work at, believing that both the work and the ends are worthwhile.

Look for the good and you will find it.

I have always accepted the people I meet as someone I want to know better; and if that acceptance is reciprocated, that person and I have a good relationship. I assume that the person is good. I may learn that there is something that person has done, or said, or believes that may cause me to be disappointed, but I still believe that there is good that can be cultivated and expanded.

Confront your bias.

Most of us are guilty of making a judgment about someone else based on appearance at one time or another. Wow! How isolated we can become if this is the way we look at others. This is when we have to make a decision will we look beyond the obvious to find a person we should get to know better? “*Ubuntu* teaches us not to feel threatened by the good of others, we should seek it out and encourage those people to shine. That way we bring out the best in one another.”

When you choose to see the good in others, you end up finding the good in yourself.

Anonymous

Smile! (My mother would understand this!)

Smiling sends a message to others that we are approachable, friendly and want to make a connection. What a great beginning for finding the good in the other person! And for letting another person sense the good in you.

Lesson 7: Choose Hope

We must accept finite disappointment but not lose infinite hope.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ubuntu in our lives helps us to stay positive, to trust (or begin to trust) in others, and our own abilities. Hope means we haven't given up. Life isn't always easy, but in times of darkness, we are still human and deserving of the light.

As with other *ubuntu* qualities, hope is something we need to nurture. We can seek out others, seek out the positive, be inspired by the way others put hope in action.

In recent years I have learned more about Palestine and the challenge of its people living on land claimed by the Israeli government. (You can tell that I experienced and learned a lot on that trip to Palestine!)

The man who personifies, for me, the hope of Palestine is the Rev. Mitri Raheb, a Lutheran pastor in Bethlehem. What Rev. Raheb keeps saying is "Hope is what we do!" In Bethlehem Rev. Raheb has led his congregation and others in the community to create Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture for students from Palestine, regardless of their religious faith. His work has also led to a large school for the youngest children and a sports program that includes soccer for girls. In a recent Christmas program Rev. Raheb said, "Hope doesn't wait for vision to appear. Hope is vision in action today."

So how do we find, and work, hope in our own lives? I work in Restorative Justice because I have hope in the lives of the people who must live behind bars. I believe that you who choose to participate in Restorative Justice are nurturing the hope you have for your lives, wherever you may be living. Working the Restorative Justice program is putting your hope into action.

In the midst of a time of hopelessness, these activities can help re-orient our view of the world around us:

- Accept the situation: naming it will help release your feelings
- Take action: one step, two steps tell yourself, "I won't give up!"
- Live in the present moment: do something you enjoy, if only for a few minutes
- Write a gratitude list: there are always small (or big) things to be grateful for
- Set goals: easy steps, small ones that are easy to achieve
- Find your faith: have faith in something you can trust

Notice that all these ideas begin with an action, something that you do. It is hope in action.

~ Ms. Pugh, Restorative Justice volunteer

