

For Further Exploration**Books**

- *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, by Brené Brown
- *The Exquisite Risk: Daring to Live an Authentic Life*, by Mark Nepo
- *What is the What*, by Dave Eggers

**Movies**

- *Documented* (NR), 2013
- *Fire at Sea* (NR), 2016
- *Meru* (NR), 2015

**Music**

- 'Tightrope' by Janelle Monáe
- 'Take a Chance on Love' by Ella Fitzgerald

**Articles, Videos & Podcasts**

- Courage & Risking Everything To Do the Right Thing, TED Talk by multiple speakers
- Walking Together, a story about a high school student taking a risk to make a friend (<https://themoth.org/stories/walking-together>)
- Raising Our Girls to Be Perfect and Our Boys to Be Brave, TED talk by Reshma Saujani
- Addicted to Risk, TED talk by Naomi Klein

**Children's Books**

- *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, by Robert Coles
- *I Am Jazz*, by Jessica Herthel & Jazz Jennings
- *Malala: A Brave Girl from Pakistan/Iqbal, a Brave Boy from Pakistan*, by Jeanette Winter

# March Theme

## Risk: The Practice of Daring

March 2017

To laugh is to risk appearing a fool,  
 To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.  
 To reach out to another is to risk involvement,  
 To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self.  
 To place your ideas and dreams before a crowd is to risk their loss.  
 To love is to risk not being loved in return,  
 To live is to risk dying,  
 To hope is to risk despair,  
 To try is to risk failure.

~ **William Arthur Ward**

The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing. He or she may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he or she simply cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love — live. Only a person who risks is free. ~ **Janet Rand**

Let's think about [the risk of] love. Waking up every day and loving someone who may or may not love us back, whose safety we can't ensure, who may stay in our lives or may leave without a moment's notice, who may be loyal to the day they die or betray us tomorrow — that's vulnerability. ~ **Brené Brown**

It's a shallow life that doesn't give a person a few scars. ~ **Garrison Keillor**

When I think about risk, what strikes me most is the ordinariness of it all. That's right. Most of it is pretty ordinary, everyday stuff. That's not to minimize it. I think it actually elevates it. It reminds us that risk, bravery, and boldness aren't once-in-a-lifetime things done in uniquely daring moments, but instead make up a way of life that must be lived out each and every day. Yes, there are those stories of someone pulling a stranger from the burning car. Yes, we should sit in awe of the civil rights workers who put their life on the line for justice or the soldiers who are willing to give their lives for others. But in addition to such dramatic acts that alter history, there are daily choices that prevent history from altering us. Staying centered and maintaining integrity don't happen without daily bravery. Ordinary risk is what stops us from disappearing, losing ourselves, or becoming small. ~ **Rev. Scott Taylor**

Brothers and sisters...Lose the edge and all you've got is middle middle aged middle class middle of the road middle management. Lose the edge and you're dribbling along in the uncooked vanilla pudding of life Baby, if you're not on the edge, you're sleepwalking...you're watching reruns of somebody else's life... On the edge you don't know what anybody is going to do or say or think. The edge is not available on your cell phone, iPod, satellite dish or anywhere in the googleable universe. The edge does not twitter, it THUNDERS! ~ **Lisa Martinovic**

And in all this continual risking, the most profound courage may be found in the simple willingness to allow ourselves to be



To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.

~ **C.S. Lewis**

## What Does It Mean To Be A Community of Risk?

*To act is to be committed, and to be committed is to be in danger.*

~ James Baldwin



Risk is usually associated with the dare devils and thrill seekers. The real danger, we're told, is a life of boredom. The battle is between the bland and the bold.

Yet, as James Baldwin reminds us, it's not quite that simple. He places commitment, not thrills, at the center of the game. For him, the ones to be admired are not so much the dare devils as the dedicated ones. And that Holy Grail? Well, he suggests, maybe it's not "the exciting life" as we've been told. Maybe it's the faithful life. And that turns everything wonderfully on its head.

From this perspective, the important question about risk (and about life) is not "Are you willing to jump off?" but "Are you willing to jump in?" Not "Are you willing to put yourself in danger?" but "Are you willing to give yourself to something bigger?" Not "Will you be daring?" but "Will you stay true?"

And the message changes too. Suddenly, it's not "Run to what's thrilling!" but "Don't run away!"

It's all about remembering not to let the thrilling overpower the faithful. As exciting as roller coasters and jumping out of planes might be, let's remember to remind each other that the most deeply rewarding risks are the ones that involve jumping into causes and putting our hearts in the hands of others. As the poet David Whyte puts it: "We are here essentially to risk ourselves in the world. We are meant to hazard ourselves for the right thing, for the right woman or the right man, for a son or a daughter, for the right work or for a gift given against all the odds." Bob Marley's take is equally compelling. He writes, "The truth is, everyone is going to hurt you. You just got to find the ones worth suffering for."

And here's the twist: It's not just Baldwin's dangers, Whyte's hazards and Marley's suffering that come at us when we take the risk of living faithfully. Grace and gifts slip in there too! As the Scottish writer W.H. Murray explains,

"Concerning all acts of creation, there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no one could have dreamt would have come their way."

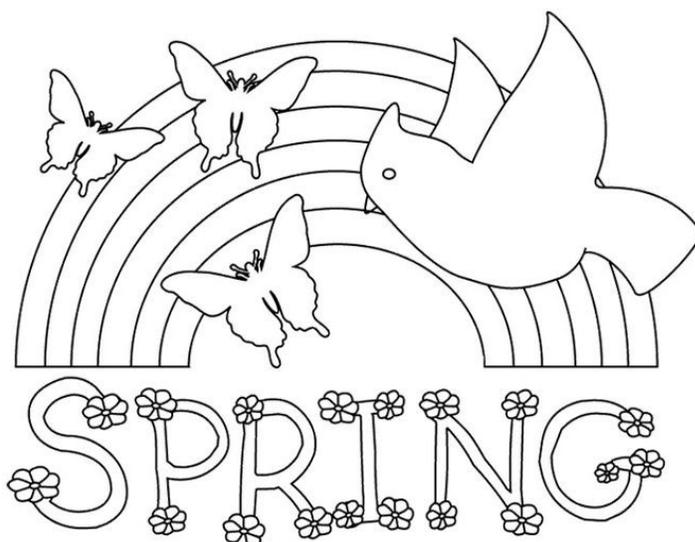
How thrilling is that?!

~ *From the Soul Matters Sharing Circle. Author not cited.*

...the most deeply rewarding risks are the ones that involve jumping into causes and putting our hearts in the hands of others.

## Kids' Corner

Spring Equinox, known to pagans as Ostara, takes place on March 20 this year. It is when the earth starts coming back to life after its winter hibernation. Everything is starting to bloom and trees are getting ready to grow leaves again. After you color this picture, start to notice what's coming back to life around you as you go from place to place each day. Look out your window — what's blooming?

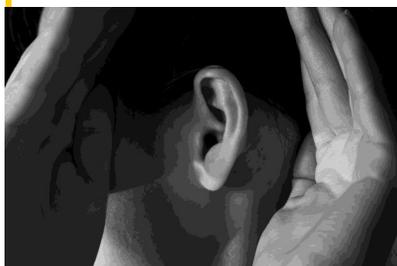


## Resist Standing Up and Risk Sitting Down

*"Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak;  
courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen."  
- Winston Churchill*



Winston Churchill's words are indeed a celebration of the "quieter" acts of courage. Yes, the more assertive risks get most of the attention: speaking up, defending, pushing back, demanding your voice be heard. And yet, sometimes that instinct to "let them have it" isn't the brave thing to do; it's just the easiest. Sometimes speaking up is simply a way to avoid courageously listening to the other side. Sometimes putting yourself on the line to "change them" is just a sneaky way to avoid them changing us. Or a tragic missed opportunity to grow. Yes, we should urge each other to "bravely keep going" and "courageously take control." Yet, there are also times when what's most needed is the risk of letting go of control and just sitting with unknowing.



And so, maybe a bit more space is needed. Maybe it would do us some good to make some room for a "spiritual time out" before we leap into the louder acts of bravery. Maybe it's good to risk "letting a little more in" before we "let them have it." And so, here's what this spiritual assignment invites us to do:

**Find three opportunities to "sit down and listen"  
when your first instinct is to "stand up and speak."**

Notice not only what it was like to try to listen better, but also (and maybe more importantly) what it was like to better monitor (and understand) your instinct to stand up and speak.

## Personal Reflection

*Don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Pick the one question that "hooks" you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal of these questions is not to help you analyze what story means in the abstract, but to figure out what a deeper awareness of story means for your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?*



**Are your commitments deep and big enough to put you in danger?** (To act is to be committed, and to be committed is to be in danger. ~ James Baldwin)

**Who in your life needs their vulnerability affirmed? Who near you is taking a risk and needs reminding that others are watching with admiration and awe? Who needs help seeing that they aren't simply exposed, but radiant?** ("What makes you vulnerable, makes you beautiful." – Brené Brown)

**How breakable is that heart of yours? Is it more "carefully wrapped" than you noticed? What one small risk this month might help it get some "air"?** (Refer to C.S. Lewis quote on first page)

**How might it hurt less if you reminded yourself you picked well? If you took the time to remember that you've "found one worth suffering for"?** ("The truth is, everyone is going to hurt you. You just got to find the ones worth suffering for." – Bob Marley)

**Have the adventures gotten a bit out of hand?** Is there a bit too much "living boldly" going on for you right now? Might it be time to take the risk of turning some adventures down?

**How might that struggle of yours change if you took the risk of sitting down and listening rather than the risk of standing up and speaking?** ("Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen." - Winston Churchill)

**Are you (or someone you love) being reckless and calling it "freedom"?** ("We mistook violence for passion, indolence for leisure, and thought recklessness was freedom." – Toni Morrison)

**When was the last time you referred to life using the phrase: "The thrill of it all?" Where is there room this month to make life a bit more thrilling?**

**What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

*All contents adapted from  
the Soul Matters Sharing  
Circle resource materials for  
March 2017.*

## Justice Corner

### Unitarian Universalist Association Declaration of Conscience

Have you signed yet?? (If not, look it up at [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org))

Sign your name to the Declaration of Conscience to commit to putting Unitarian Universalist values into action to resist hate, fear and bigotry. Get regular email updates, opportunities and stories from this joint initiative of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

By signing the declaration, individuals and congregations will be affirming our core values and declaring our willingness to put them into action. Please read it and, with your signature, join us in standing on the side of love, protecting the most vulnerable among us, and defending core values that are under attack.

After you've signed, get your friends to sign. And then talk together about what you are going to do to fulfill your commitment and put your faith into action!



**FAITH  
IN ACTION**



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