

PATIENCE, VULNERABILITY AND THE PATH FORWARD

Week #3 of the 5-Week Series, "The Practice of Groundedness"

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So I have some... Okay, just as an aside here, everyone. So, two years ago, when I was telling all my friends in California and around the country that I'm moving to Arizona ... And what do they say to you when you say you're moving to Arizona? *"It's hot there."* And so I just... Many of them watch my videos, my talks, later. So, I just want it on record right now: I'm wearing a turtleneck and a sweater. Okay? It's not hot all the time here in Arizona. It's a little hot right now on stage ...

Okay, everyone. So, we're halfway through our study on how to be more grounded or centered. It's a series based on Brad Stulberg's book, "The Practice of Groundedness." Love this book! You can go back and watch all the previous Wednesdays that started on January , because it's a great series.

But just to review: what is groundedness? And Brad defines it for us. So, we have it here on the screen for you: *"Groundedness is the internal strength and confidence that sustains you through life's ups and downs. It's a sense of deep and heartfelt self-confidence. It's a feeling that you have a reservoir of integrity and wholeness within you. It's about having deep inner peace so that we are less prone to buckle under the challenges of daily life."* That's how Brad defines groundedness for us.

And the three principles of groundedness that we've already discussed were:

1) Accept where you are to get to where you want to go. In other words, telling yourself, *"I'm right here right now, doing the best I can."*

2) Last week, Reverend Jimmy talked about being present so you can own your own attention and energy. I think the subtitle there is "Get yourself out of the distraction candy store," right?

And so then today/tonight we are going to be looking at Chapter #4 -- which is "Be patient and You'll Get There Faster" and Chapter #5, which is "Embracing Vulnerability in Order to Develop Genuine Strength and Confidence."

So, Chapter #4: Being Patient. Now, I mentioned at our White Stone Ceremony on January 4 that my word the previous year ... You know, a lot of times in the White Stone Ceremony, where we take a spiritual name or attribute ... And I often say we step into the building thinking, *"I know what my name's going to be."* And then we go into meditation, and oftentimes we get a different word that comes to us.

So, last year my word was patience, and I thought, *"I don't have any patience for patience."* And now here we are again, my friends, back at patience. Being patient to get to where you want to be faster.

When I was a kid -- I was remembering -- when I was a child, we'd go out to eat kind of often. And as soon as we would order and the waitress stepped away, I would be asking, *"Where's our food? Where's our food?"* And my parents would say, *"Stacy, she just took our order. She just walked away."* And I said, *"Right! So she should be walking right back out with our food."*

And it didn't matter how often I asked, *"Where's the food?"* Didn't matter how worked up I got myself over it. The food came when the food came. Right? And I had a choice in that moment. Because back in the 70s, they had games on the tables you could play. Anyone remember this? Yeah! So I could play a game at the table, or my dad oftentimes would take the paper placemat and start drawing with me. Or we would talk about family vacations or school. That way, being more present; not driving myself crazy wondering where my food was.

Because once we remove that big energy of being impatient, we allow ourselves to be open to hearing and feeling divine guidance. And it's through that harmony and tranquility of presence that we can feel and hear divine guidance.

Patience neutralizes our inclination to hurry and rush. We're so busy, aren't we? We're going from one place to the next. And when we hurry and rush, what usually happens is that we tend to make more mistakes, which then makes it take even longer.

So here we are rushing around to get it done quickly, and then we end up making mistakes, and then it takes longer -- if not even longer than it would have taken. And yet, patience allows us to step back, take our time, allow things to unfold on their own ... which then lends itself to stability and strength and lasting progress.

It's sort of like when you watch the Olympics. So, when you see the Olympics and they do those really long runs or swims, at first they're really keeping a modest pace, right? They pace themselves modestly, because they know that they're playing a long game. It's a long race. So, they don't go right out of the gate and give it all they've got. They keep some in the tank, right?

And yet our society, wants results now. We want success now. We want wealth now. We want goals now. We want to lose weight now. We want it all now. We want our health and healing now. And yet Myrtle Fillmore, co-founder of Unity: it took her two years of daily meditation -- two hours in the silence blessing her body, forgiving her body -- for her to heal after 42 years of illness.

So often we meditate or pray or affirm a day or two and we think, *"Why is it not working? Why am I not better yet?"* And there's a great example in the book about Darwin: Darwin, the scientist who discovered natural selection and published "The Origin of Species."

So, he set sail on his expedition in 1831. And it's not until he reached the Galapagos Islands in 1835 that he started to formulate his theory -- four years later. Then he works on his theory from 1836 to 1838, and his book is not published until 1859 -- 28 years from when he set sail. Twenty-four from the beginning of even formulating his theory. Because it takes as long as it takes to get it right. But he didn't push it. He really worked it. He took the time -- the patience -- to take each step.

And what's also interesting is he was 50 years old when the book was finally published. So, I think that's a great reminder also that your age isn't a limit.

Again, it takes as long as it does, but be patient with it.

Here's how much we like -- dislike, I should say -- being patient. So, there was a study in which individuals were given the option of either sitting completely still with no distractions for 15 minutes -- no iPad, no phone, no book, no podcast, no nothing. Just sit still with nothing for 15 minutes -- or get a mild electrical shock. Seventy-six of the men and 25% of the women chose to shock themselves rather than to sit quietly for 15 minutes.

So my husband, Juan, and I just went to CIVANA Spa -- not an endorsement, no sponsorship here; just what a lovely location if you've been there. It's up in Cave Creek: CIVANA Spa. But they have a hammock grove. And so, we were sitting -- laying, right? Swaying -- on Monday. And whenever I share anything for my family, I've always asked them beforehand. So, this has been cleared.

But afterwards, Juan said to me; he said, *"Wow! You know what I really noticed about the hammock? It's really hard to do nothing. Like, I kept feeling like I should be doing something."* And don't you all feel the same way? If you have nothing to do, you feel like you should have something to do! Yeah.

There was also more inspiration at the spa. There always is! This time a bathroom sign. And the sign said this. It said, *"The day you plant the seed is not the day you eat the fruit."* The day you plant the seed is not the day you eat the fruit. You plant it; you water it; you give it sunshine; and you wait. You have patience for the fruit.

And yet, when we do get quiet -- when we tap into that stillness, the quietness within us -- it allows the good to come to fruition without all that spinning energy, the chaos, or shocking ourselves.

One of the author's really good friends, he says, is an ER doctor. And this ER doctor, during his shifts, where every second counts, is **go slow to go fast**. Go slow to go fast. Just whisper that to yourself. Go slow to go fast.

Because, again, we feel like we have to push and push and push towards our goals, be it work or health or retirement or relationships; whatever it is. But when we take a step back and allow that sense of immediacy to relax, then distress relaxes. That's when we can move forward with thoughtfulness, with consistency, with an even greater chance of having success.

And even those plateaus ... Sometimes we hit a plateau, but even there we can receive insight and wisdom. It can be that time to relax, to rest, to allow ideas/solutions to arise in the quiet, in the stillness, with ease.

Ease is a byproduct of patience and presence. Ease manifests when you are fully in the moment: when you're just letting things happen in their own time. Not forcing them or rushing them, but allowing them to happen.

I always say, *"I don't mind a challenge, but I really don't like it being hard."* Nothing should be hard. We may have challenges, but it shouldn't be hard. It's hard when we're pushing, when it's *"My will,"* instead of stepping into ease and allowing, and perhaps having to be patient with the process.

But why are we afraid? So, this is interesting. Why are we afraid of being quiet? So, at the end of this chapter, our author states that, when we are less hurried and more present, it allows us to confront our fears. Why? Because there's nothing distracting us. It's forcing us to listen and feel what's within us. What are we running away from? What are we busy distracting ourselves from? What is it that we don't want to hear or feel?

He writes, *"When we confront our fears -- look them in the eye -- we develop deeper trust and confidence within ourselves, and we also forge connections with others. By opening up to and exploring our cracks, we become more solid."*

Ooh! Opening up to our cracks, our fears. Opening up to the not so pretty. Opening up to the not perfect. Opening up to the not always nice. Not always in a good mood. I made a mistake. And from this we gain strength, confidence. We become more solid, grounded. Yes. Yeah. By opening to and seeing our cracks, we become stronger.

And it seems like an oxymoron, but consider the centuries-old Japanese art called Kintsugi. Kintsugi means joining with gold. So, when there's a bowl or a cup, pottery, and it breaks, they fill it with gold. So, if you can imagine cracked pottery now filled and put back together with gold -- it's part of this broader philosophy of embracing the beauty of human flaws.

It's that idea that a broken object can be repaired and be made useful once again. It tells us that, despite failures, we can always begin anew. Accepting imperfections helps us break free from the obsession of perfectionism, which causes unnecessary stress, inhibits our creativity, inhibits our productivity, our happiness.

It reminds us that embracing our flaws and imperfections, you can create an even stronger, more beautiful piece of art: you.

And I love that it's gold. For those of you, I just started a "12 Powers" class last night. So gold is the color connected to our spiritual power or ability of understanding. So, it's our spiritual ability to realize our oneness. Isn't that beautiful?

And this bridges us right into Chapter #5, which is "Embrace Vulnerability to Develop Genuine Strength and Confidence." See, because when we're vulnerable with others -- regardless of our perceived weaknesses or cracks -- they feel they can become more vulnerable with us. Because then we can be stronger together. When *I'm* vulnerable, *you* can be vulnerable. We all become more vulnerable by remembering that we're all human; that we all make mistakes; that we all break apart sometimes. And that we can all embrace our flaws -- perceived flaws; the cracks in us.

But when we're compassionate with ourselves -- when we can put ourselves back together -- then we can show up in community with our imperfections, which allows us to be supportive of others; kinder to others; and kinder and stronger together. It guides us to the understanding that we're all one.

And there's many ancient wisdom practices and modern psychology that really emphasize this digging deep and exploring your inner experience. Your inner experience: meaning *all of it*. Not just the feel-good experiences, but also the hurt, the sadness, the loss, the worry; all of it. We don't want to live there; we don't want to ruminate in it. But it's important to acknowledge it; to look at it.

And so, what Brad Stulberg found was that, when we face our vulnerabilities, we know ourselves better. And knowing ourselves better, we trust ourselves more. In trusting ourselves and knowing ourselves more, then we can create more authentic and nourishing bonds with other people.

And something I've personally experienced is that, when you're honest with your own vulnerabilities, and then you share those with others, the support is there. Authentic relationships then form. Your own inner strength and peace fills in those cracks -- those unsure, perceived flaws; those tender parts of yourself. But then, when we bring it together and accept those, we allow ourselves to become vulnerable. Then we have this beauty of understanding that we're all connected to that One Power, that One Presence: the universal Creative Life Force.

I remember learning in 2012 -- hearing, really, for the first time -- this phrase, "*We are imperfectly perfect.*" We are imperfectly perfect. It changed my life! Because it changed my mindset. Suddenly I realized that I can/we can all have our human qualities that make us perfect in our imperfection. That my imperfection is my perfection. It's that Kintsugi beauty. And now that pressure came off of me.

And I remember I had just been walking in the rose garden -- actually, at Unity Village back in Missouri. And there was this beautiful big rose. It was yellow. It had some red on it. And when I got closer, I saw that one of the petals had a little bit of brown. It was browning just a little bit. And yet, it was so beautiful and still contributed to the entire garden. The browning of that one petal didn't make a difference.

So, what we think can be our weaknesses really can be our beauty to the whole. The fact is that we're all doing the best that we can. And so, when we're compassionate with ourselves, others can be compassionate with themselves. When they're compassionate with themselves, I'm passionate with myself. Well, guess what? Now we're creating a compassionate world. Now we're creating a compassionate community.

Because by sharing our truth and things that we've struggled with -- things that we can take responsibility for: making a mistake, doing it the wrong way -- but those vulnerabilities allow us to be

more authentic, have those authentic connections... which allows us to be more grounded; more confident.

And, of course, it's not going to be easy at first to admit your faults or insecurities or vulnerabilities. A lot of times we're uncomfortable with that, especially: *"Am I a good Unity student if I have these feelings or thoughts about myself?"*

But the more you face all your emotions -- the full spectrum of emotions -- and share them with other people, the more strength and confidence and connection that you gain ... which leads to, again, a sense of being more grounded; of that deep inner peace within you.

Because when you let your guard down and get real, others won't see you as weak; they're actually going to see you as strong. *"Oh, thank goodness they're a real person!" "Oh, wow; you've gone through that, too!"*

You know, it's something that I've heard often from congregants and friends: *"Stacy, I like how real you are."* Yeah, I've got to just be vulnerable and real with you all!

Because I remember, starting in high school, when I would observe unity ministers and spiritual leaders in the larger world, the ones that I realized I admired the most were those ones who were really honest about who they were. The ones who were really honest about what they were going through. The ones who were really honest and just shared their perceived weaknesses and flaw; their struggles. They were real. They weren't their stage personality; they were their backstage personality. They were their real self.

In other words, when we share our authentic selves -- including our own struggles, our own dark times -- then the other person can feel like, *"You've been challenged by this; then it's okay that I've been challenged by this. And if you've come through it with grace, then maybe I can come through it with grace. If you've struggled with it, then I can struggle with it and know I can also get out that other side."* See, that awareness heals. It lifts that weight off of us and brings peace.

So, with every chapter, there's different practices to help you build your groundedness. So, **the three groundedness practices for embracing vulnerability**: the first one -- they're here on your screen. The first is develop emotional flexibility to really investigate in your fears. To start to really look at them and befriend them even; change your relationship with them. *"What am I afraid to hear in the silence?"* is another good question. *"What am I afraid to hear or feel? How can I embrace this feeling to take action and connect more with myself and with other people?"*

The second practice is to ask yourself what you really want to say and then say that. Now, do it kindly, though. Don't be harmful or hurtful. Be your authentic self. This is more for our people-pleasers. The people-pleasers who just want to say "Yes," and say whatever they know the other person will want to hear. But when you feel like you're pretending to be the best version of yourself, or finding yourself saying, "Yes" when you really want to say, "No," that's when you can take a step back, be kind, respectful, and give your real answer. What do you really want to say? And say that.

Number three -- third practice -- is to remind yourself that everyone's going through something. And most people are just waiting for the opportunity to open up about what they're going through. And sharing with others is easier, healthier, than holding on to all the feelings inside. Life's too short to go around pretending. Let's be real with one another. And just to reiterate that idea of that Japanese art of Kintsugi: it's okay to be broken. It's okay to have cracks. Fill in those cracks with gold! The understanding that we all make mistakes. And within those cracks, our vulnerabilities, we can understand our oneness with one another. And that's where strength and beauty are found.

And then there's **four practices to help us become more grounded with being more patient** ... or, in other words, **how to build a patience practice**. So those four are here.

The first one: **let things happen instead of always trying to make them happen**. Instead of pushing, allowing for the pause. Allow yourself to discern. Take time in meditation. Listen in the silence. Rest, harmony, sway in a hammock. That's where the divine ideas come: from less stress.

The second practice for more patients is to **take small steps for big gains**. Focus on consistency. Break a big goal that you may have into small attainable parts so you feel accomplished along the way.

Number three -- I love this one. He says, **stop one rep short**. In other words, when you still have gas in your tank. Again, just like our marathon swimmers or runners. And he says to look at where a lack of patience has caused you a problem before -- an injury, an illness, burnout -- and then force yourself to stop just short of where you usually would stop. Progress happens slowly by slowly. Stop one rep short.

Number four: **leave your phone behind**. I'm going to try real hard at this one. To leave the phone behind. Be uninterrupted. Walk. Go outside. And when you walk, not listening to a podcast. Just walk. Sit in silence. Breathe. Brad Stulberg recommends breathing five breaths three times a day.

And develop a patience practice. This is where everything we've discussed so far comes together: acceptance, presence, patience and, especially, vulnerability to help create that inner strength and peace. And also, within that, to help create and sustain deep community with one another, so that we can come together and understand within those vulnerabilities our oneness.

So, we're all going to work on these practices together, everyone. So, I know that you and I are going to be more patient this week. We're going to honor all of our feelings that are going to arise from being more patient this week. And I also am going to really honor your strength, your beauty, and your vulnerability as you open up to those around you and yourself as you walk through this next week.

And so, that concludes our third Wednesday in our five-week series on the book, "The Practice of Groundedness," everyone. Blessings.