

RISK

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

2 Every society honors its live conformists and its dead troublemakers. **Mignon McLaughlin**

3 Letting go of who you're supposed to be and discovering who you really are is a journey of many experiences, but certainty is not one of them. No matter how long you wait, it'll never feel safe enough. Plunge in anyway. **Vironika Tugaleva**

4 Don't let your fear of what could happen make nothing happen. **Doe Zantamata**

5 Instead of asking myself “what will happen if it doesn’t work?” I’ve started to reframe the question to “what can happen if it does work?” In most cases, the hope of what can happen is much more enticing than the fear of what might not. **A.J. Bianco**, Why Taking Risks in the Classroom Pays Off for Students--and Teachers, EdSurge News

6 I want to swim in both directions at once. Desire success, court failure. **Alan Rickman**

7 blessing of the boats

may the tide
that is entering even now
the lip of our understanding
carry you out
beyond the face of fear
may you kiss
the wind then turn from it
certain that it will
love your back may you

open your eyes to water
water waving forever
and may you in your innocence
sail from this to that

--**Lucille Clifton**, from *Blessing the Boats: New and Selected Poems 1988-2000*.

8 What's risky about being present—aside from being rejected by others, or even if you're by yourself—is that you will be changed. That life will not stay the same. Because if we truly bring who we are out and we drop our preconceptions and our opinions, we will be changed by what we encounter. And life will not be the same. And that's beautiful and scary. You know, Thomas Merton said, "If we truly beheld each other, we would drop to our knees and worship each other." If I truly am in each moment, it's hard to stick to my plans because I will be touched and moved. So it raises this notion: What is our true journey in life?

Yes, it's fine to have plans and to have goals and to work toward them. Let me give you an example. I have a story in my book of stories. It opens the book. It's a very short one about a cyclist who works and prepares months for this cycling race. And it's out in the country. The day comes and he's in the lead. He's ahead of everybody by quite a bit and all of a sudden, out of nowhere a great blue heron sweeps, wings spread, swoops right over his handlebars. And he's stunned. He stops [and] straddles his bike, because the path of the heron opened something he had been chasing his whole life. And everybody else is catching up to him and he's stopped and he's confused. He ran into something he didn't expect. And now, we fast forward and the end of the story, [and it's] years later. Every once in a while he is asked, "What cost you the race?" And once in a while he'll look to the south and he'll say, "I didn't lose the race. I left it."

Often when I tell that story, a conversation will ensue about having to choose between winning the race and meeting the heron. But the exquisite risk was that he was opened to being changed by what he encountered, so that actually the goal of his training and of cycling in this race was not to win or finish the race, it was to meet the heron, which changed his life. We don't know where our efforts will lead us if we're only limited to

what we have in mind. And the only way to be open to that is taking this risk. To meet what we encounter.

Mark Nepo, interviewed by Tami Simon, “Holding Nothing Back,” for her podcast, *Insights from the Edge*.

9 How many times in life do we want something, get close, and then back away at the last minute, afraid to take the risk? We humans are like that.

What are we afraid of? We are afraid of what people will think of us. We are afraid of losing our possessions. We are afraid to fail. Yet none of these are life-threatening, after all. **Jane Dobisz** in *One Hundred Days of Solitude*

10 To prevent questions from weighing us down, we must raise them. The longer we wait, the heavier they get, like a thatched roof in the rain. People who are afraid of raising questions run the risk of getting crushed under them. **David Steindl-Rast** in *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*

11 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**

12 We badly need some new stories. We need stories that have different kinds of heroes willing to take different kinds of risks -- risks that confront recklessness head on, that put the precautionary principle into practice, even if that means through direct action -- like hundreds of young people willing to get arrested, blocking dirty power plants or fighting mountaintop-removal coal mining. We need stories that replace that linear narrative of endless growth with circular narratives that remind us that what goes around comes around. That this is our only home. There is no escape hatch. Call it karma, call it physics, action and reaction, call it precaution -- the principle that reminds us that life is too precious to be risked for any profit.

--**Naomi Klein**, “Addicted to Risk” (TED talk)

13 *Active Hope is a readiness to discover the strengths*

*in ourselves and in others;
a readiness to discover the reasons for hope
and the occasions for love.
A readiness to discover the size and strength of our hearts,
our quickness of mind, our steadiness of purpose,
our own authority, our love for life,
the liveliness of our curiosity,
the unsuspected deep well of patience and diligence,
the keenness of our senses, and our capacity to lead.
None of these can be discovered in an armchair or without risk.*

— **Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone**, from their book, *Active Hope*

For Reflection and Discussion

A Is there some risk that has been calling out to you? What is it? What holds you back? How will you know what to do or not do?

B How do you assess yourself in taking risks throughout the day? Are there risks or some type or risk or risks that you would like to take as you move through the day at work or at home? What has been the result of risks not taken?

C Have you ever had a surprising experience similar to the swooping of the great heron referenced by Mark Nepo (# 8)? What happened and what has been the result?

D Do you talk about your religion in circumstances where it feels like a risky thing to do? What motivates you to take the risk? What have been the results?

E Have you taken risks at All Souls or for All Souls? How has your experience at All Souls informed or changed your understanding of risk and the importance of taking risks?

--*Mary Beth Hatem, for covenant groups at All Souls Church, Unitarian*