



Course Structure

Each course is limited to 8-10 participants, overseen by 2 facilitators

The group needs to be large enough to allow for diverse conversation but small enough to allow for intimacy and vulnerability. Facilitators prepare the course materials for the participants and assure that conversations stay close to the path.

The course is conducted through 8 sessions scheduled regularly across 8 weeks

The course is designed such that each session builds upon previous sessions, and a core goal of the course is to build community. Therefore, participants need to commit to allotting time and space to be present at each of the sessions. We recognize and be accommodating to the fact that the best laid plans are just plans, and that situations may come up where it will be necessary for attendees to miss a session. In these cases, the material in each session can be 'made-up' by reviewing the videos online and through use of the handouts, but this is not ideal for the participant or the group.

Each session is 90 minutes long and broken up into three sections:

Discernment & Epiphanies

- A chance to share results of personal reflections from the previous session and the previous weeks' exercises.

Selected TED Talk video

- One or two TED talks curated to address the session's specific topic.
- The videos are generally no more than 20 minutes long and feature great presentations and presenters.

Group Discussion

- The focus is primarily on sharing personal stories, with discussion.
- No "fixing" people or problems. No debate. No judgement.

Between sessions, there is homework

Each participant is given homework at the end of the session in the forms of **Questions for Discernment** and **Exercises**. Which of the exercises you choose to do is optional, and there is no review or grading; the homework is meant to keep you engaged on the week's topic between sessions. There are also "Side Trails" of additional TED Talks that you can investigate as desired.

Dialogue versus Debate

DIALOGUE is the understanding of myself and others	DEBATE is the argument of my position over an opponent
I listen with the view of wanting to understand	I listen with the view of countering what I hear
I listen for strengths to affirm and learn	I listen for weaknesses to discount and devalue
I speak for myself from my own understanding and experiences	I speak based upon my assumptions about others' position and motives
I ask questions to increase understanding	I ask questions to trip up or confuse
I allow others to complete their communications	I interrupt or change the subject
I concentrate on others' words and feelings	I focus on the point I want to make next
I accept others' experiences as real and valid for them	I critique others' experiences as distorted or invalid
I allow the expression of real feelings in myself and in others	I express my feelings to manipulate others and deny that their feelings are legitimate
I honor silence	I use silence to gain advantage

Session 1: Being Wrong

Introductions, Hospitality, and Ground Rules

Video Presentation

https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn_schulz_on_being_wrong

Questions for Discernment

- Why do we fear being wrong? Why is being wrong seen as a sign of weakness?
- Have you ever felt the need to defend your position, even though you suspected you were wrong? Why? How did it turn out?
- Is it a **white and gold dress or a blue and black dress**? Is it "Laurel" or "Yanny"? How can multiple people experience the same exact thing – even together and at the same time – and yet claim to have experienced vastly different things?
- This course defines four virtues in the following ways:
 - **Humility**: A disposition to be humble. A lack of false pride.
 - **Empathy**: Understanding and entering into another's feelings.
 - **Compassion**: Recognizing suffering and wanting to do something about it.
 - **Kindness**: Being warm hearted, considerate, and humane to others.

Do you agree or disagree?

- What are **your** definitions of Humility, Empathy, Compassion, and Kindness? How are these virtues interrelated? Are some of these virtues prerequisites to others?

Homework Exercises

- Recall a time when you were embarrassingly wrong about something. Consider what was more painful – the actual consequence of being wrong or the embarrassment.
- What is a 'hot topic' with which you hold a very passionate opinion? What in your history makes you hold that position? Create a compelling argument that you could make to yourself that might convince you to think differently.

- Then next time you have a difference of opinion with a friend which will likely end in an 'agreement to disagree', replace debating with repeating back to your friend what you've heard – as many times as it takes – until your friend confirms that you understand their position. The goal is not that you agree, but that you understand.

For Contemplation

It does feel like something to be wrong. It feels like being right. -- Kathryn Schulz

Side Trails

https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

https://www.ted.com/talks/isaac_lidsky_what_reality_are_you_creating_for_yourself

Session 2: Being Vulnerable

Epiphanies

- What, from previous sessions, has come back around to speak to you?
- Which of the homework exercises have had an unexpected impact on your outlook?
- Where is this path leading you?

Video Presentation

https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability

Questions for Discernment

- How do you personally define 'vulnerability'? What makes you feel vulnerable?
- What are some things that make you feel unworthy of love and respect?
- How does society treat people who make themselves vulnerable? How do you treat people that are open and vulnerable with you?
- Have you ever had a situation where you were vulnerable with another and instead of shame, that person made you feel loved?

Homework Exercises

- Recall a recent circumstance when a friend or co-worker was vulnerable with you. Go back to that person and express sincere gratitude that they trusted you enough to be open to you.
- Stand naked in front of a full-length mirror and look at yourself. What is the worst of what you see? Why does that matter so much to you? What is the best of what you see? Why doesn't that matter more to you?
- Practice being vulnerable: Pick three things that you feel shame around right now; a small thing, medium thing, and big thing. Tell an acquaintance that you have something to share with them and that you hope they will not judge you poorly because of it. Tell them the small thing. Share the medium thing with a close friend with the same preface. Share the big thing with your closest confidant.

For Contemplation

Connection is why we're here. It's what gives purpose and meaning to our lives. – Brene Brown

Side Trails

https://www.ted.com/talks/michele_l_sullivan_asking_for_help_is_a_strength_not_a_weakness

Session 3: Being Rejected

Epiphanies

- What, from previous sessions, has come back around to speak to you?
- Which of the homework exercises have had an unexpected impact on your outlook?
- Where is this path leading you?

Video Presentation

https://www.ted.com/talks/jia_jiang_what_i_learned_from_100_days_of_rejection

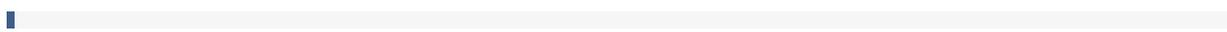
Questions for Discernment

- Is being humble a comfortable or uncomfortable experience? Can one have humility without being humiliated?
- Why are we afraid of rejection? Why do we take rejection personally?
- What can we learn from rejection? Is the lesson worth the pain? Can we get the lesson without the pain?
- Have you ever been rejected for something, but everything turned out OK in the end? What can you share from your personal experience?

Homework Exercises

- Create your own "rejection challenge". Pick one outlandish request per day that you are almost certain to get rejected upon when asking. Keep a diary of how you felt before and after, and anything you learned.
- Recall a time when you were painfully rejected. Is there a way to take that event and turn it, or your memory of it, around for goodness?
- Recall a time when you made a mistake in rejecting someone else. Write them a note explaining why you rejected them then and what has changed since then. Send the note or keep it in a special place for the future.

For Contemplation



I found that people who really change the world, who change the way we live and the way we think, are the people who were met with initial and often violent rejections. — Jia Jiang

Side Trails

https://www.ted.com/talks/raymond_tang_be_humble_and_other_lessons_from_the_philosophy_of_water

https://www.ted.com/talks/hannah_brencher_love_letters_to_strangers

Session 4: Being Grateful

Epiphanies

- What, from previous sessions, has come back around to speak to you?
- Which of the homework exercises have had an unexpected impact on your outlook?
- Where is this path leading you?

Video Presentations

https://www.ted.com/talks/david_steindl_rast_want_to_be_happy_be_grateful

https://www.ted.com/talks/louie_schwartzberg_nature_beauty_gratitude

Questions for Discernment

- How can you live tomorrow as if it's the first day of our life *and* the last day of our life? What would you do? Could you then live the day after tomorrow as if it's the first day and the last day of our life? And the day after that?
- For what are you grateful? ...for the world in general? ...at this time in your life? ...in this place, right now?

Homework Exercises

- Keep a journal each day of the hardest challenges that you faced in that day. Write about the events. Write about how you handled it in the moment. Write about what you might learn from that challenge.
- Create your own personal "stop signs" that will cause you to pause and recognize the things for which you are grateful. They may be strategically placed post-it notes, prayers before meals or bed, periodic reminders that pop-up on your phone... whatever will work for you.
- Give someone close to you the power to be your 'gratefulness alarm'. When that person sees that you are overly stressed or filled with anxiety, give them permission to remind you to "stop, look, go". When that person sounds the alarm, commit yourself to treating it seriously and immediately reflect upon those things for which you are grateful.

For Contemplation

It is not happiness that makes us grateful. It's gratefulness that makes us happy. — David Steindl

Side Trails

https://www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness

https://www.ted.com/talks/matthieu_ricard_on_the_habits_of_happiness

Session 5: Being Broken

Epiphanies

- What, from previous sessions, has come back around to speak to you?
- Which of the homework exercises have had an unexpected impact on your outlook?
- Where is this path leading you?

Video Presentation

https://www.ted.com/talks/shane_koyczan_to_this_day_for_the_bullied_and_beautiful

https://www.ted.com/talks/stacey_kramer_the_best_gift_i_ever_survived

Questions for Discernment

- Do sticks and stones (and broken bones) really hurt more than being called names? Is the beauty of the Shane Koyczan's poetry worth the pain of his childhood?
- How can anyone look at a brain tumor as being a gift? Was Stacey Kramer just being facetious, or is there truth in her description of her 'gift'?

Homework Exercises

- Start writing an outline of your memoir. What are the key events in your life that have shaped who you are? How have you been broken? How have you recovered?
- Spend time seeking out and passively observing the 'others' around you. Where are the homeless, the poor, the sick, and the downtrodden? How can you listen to their stories without sense of guilt or a need to fix them?
- Create a 'spiritual chart' of your life to date. When has your spirit been on a high? When has it been low? Label the highs and lows with what events were happening in your life at that time. If you feel comfortable, share your chart with the group at the next session.

For Contemplation

We are graduating members from the class of We Made It, not the faded echoes of voices crying out, "Names will never hurt me." Of course they did. — Shane Koyczan

Side Trails

https://www.ted.com/talks/kitra_cahana_my_father_locked_in_his_body_but_soaring_free

https://www.ted.com/talks/lidia_yuknavitch_the_beauty_of_being_a_misfit

Session 6: Being Generous

Epiphanies

- What, from previous sessions, has come back around to speak to you?
- Which of the homework exercises have had an unexpected impact on your outlook?
- Where is this path leading you?

Video Presentation

https://www.ted.com/talks/emily_esfahani_smith_there_s_more_to_life_than_being_happy

https://www.ted.com/talks/abigail_marshall_why_some_people_are_more_altruistic_than_others

Questions for Discernment

- Where do you find your own sense of belonging? Of purpose? Where do you find Transcendence? How do you formulate and tell your own story to others?
- If the brains of altruistic people are different from those of others, can we each only be as altruistic as our brain biology allows? Is altruism purely a physical gift?
- In her talk, Abigail Marsh defines altruism as “a selfless act intended to benefit only the other.” If the outcome is the same, is there a difference between giving with the expectation of getting something in return (even a “thank you”) versus giving without the expectation of getting something in return?

Homework Exercises

- Create a list of 'acts of random kindness' that you can perform, with no expectation of getting thanked. For example, pay for the order from car behind yours in the drive through lane, or pick up the paper towels from the floor of the public restroom before you leave. Strive to perform at least one act per day, *as invisibly as possible*.
- For a full day, make a concerted effort to meet everyone's initial eye contact by smiling. If that goes well, continue it for another day. Repeat.

- Make a list of the gifts that you have to offer to others. What resources, availability, knowledge, and skills can you afford to 'give away'? Who could benefit from those gifts? How can you and those that could benefit get together?

For Contemplation

Living a meaningful life takes work. It's an ongoing process. As each day goes by, we're constantly creating our lives, adding to our story. And sometimes we can get off track.

— *Emily Espahani Smith*

Side Trails

https://www.ted.com/talks/krista_tippett_reconnecting_with_compassion

https://www.ted.com/talks/matthieu_ricard_how_to_let_altruism_be_your_guide

Session 7: Being Genuine

Epiphanies

- What, from previous sessions, has come back around to speak to you?
- Which of the homework exercises have had an unexpected impact on your outlook?
- Where is this path leading you?

Video Presentation

https://www.ted.com/talks/caitlin_quattromani_and_lauran_arledge_how_our_friendship_survives_our_opposing_politics

Questions for Discernment

- Are we better off avoiding discussing subjects like politics and religion, or worse off?
- Caitlin and Lauren agreed together to have political discussions where neither person would attempt to 'win'. What would happen if only *one* party, but not the other, were to decide not to try and 'win'?
- How did you become close friends with that person you love who is your polar opposite when it comes to topics like politics or religion? How can you create more of these relationships?
- What changes a relationship from being 'acquaintances' to being 'best friends'? What changes 'like' to 'love'? How can you intentionally deepen your relationship with others?

Homework Exercises

- Offer to take a friend who has 'polar opposite' views than you about a hot topic to meet with you for coffee or a meal. Invite them to tell you what leads them to the position that they hold, without telling them why you oppose it, or why you hold the position you hold. Listen. Be uncomfortable. Do not judge, defend, or attack. Just Listen.
- Seize an opportunity to be a source of support and comfort to someone who clearly needs it who is *not* an intimate friend – whether or not you are the best or most appropriate person to be providing that support.

For Contemplation

What if, in these heated moments, we chose dialogue over debate? When we engage in dialogue, we flip the script. We replace our ego and our desire to win with curiosity, empathy and a desire to learn. Instead of coming from a place of judgment, we are genuinely interested in the other person's experiences, their values and their concerns. — Lauran Arledge

Side Trails

https://www.ted.com/talks/felice_belle_and_jennifer_murphy_how_we_became_sisters

https://www.ted.com/talks/dylan_marron_how_i_turn_negative_online_comments_into_positive_offline_conversations

https://www.ted.com/talks/zachary_r_wood_why_it_s_worth_listening_to_people_we_disagree_with

Session 8: Being the Change

Epiphanies

- What, from previous sessions, has come back around to speak to you?
- Which of the homework exercises have had an unexpected impact on your outlook?
- Where is this path leading you?

Video Presentation

https://www.ted.com/talks/cleo_wade_want_to_change_the_world_start_by_being_brave_enough_to_care

Questions for Discernment

- If you have the power to change the life of *one* person for the better – and that one person is of this world – have you not made the world a better place, even incrementally?
- What is the difference between acting humble and being humble? What is the difference between acting empathetic and being empathetic? What is the difference between acting compassionately and being compassionate? What is the difference between acting with kindness and being a kind person?
- What is your story of HECK? What in your history has made you a more Humble, Empathic, Compassionate, and Kind person – not just in your actions, but in how you look at and react to others and the world around you?

Homework Exercises

- **Keep on the Path.** Be as good to as many people as possible.
- **Keep with the group.** How will you continue to connect with this group? How can this experience grow? Make some concrete plans for how you will continue, individually and together, on the path to HECK.
- **Share the journey.** Script your own Ted Talk, telling your story. Where are you on the path to HECK? What have you learned in life about Humbleness, Empathy, Compassion, and Kindness?

Find a way to share your personal story with others. Perhaps with a close friend. Perhaps with this group. Post your story in written or video form on social media.

- **Lead the way.** Consider becoming a facilitator for your own course of On the Path to HECK. Discuss the experience with your facilitators. Contact us for support and guidance at mentor@onthepathtoheck.org.

For Contemplation

The world will say to you, "Be a better person." Do not be afraid to say, "Yes." — Cleo Wade

Side Trails

https://www.ted.com/talks/shaka_senghor_why_your_worst_deeds_don_t_define_you

https://www.ted.com/talks/sally_kohn_what_we_can_do_about_the_culture_of_hate

https://www.ted.com/talks/dave_isay_everyone_around_you_has_a_story_the_world_needs_to_hear

https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_lesser_say_your_truths_and_seek_them_in_others