

## HOW TO GET UNSTUCK

May 16, 2021

Rev. Richard Maraj

### OPENING/ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Rev. Richard Maraj:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center! I'm Rev. Richard Maraj, senior minister, and we are so glad you're joining us!

Of course, we are excited about today, but we're even more excited about June the 6th, when we are starting back LIVE in the Sanctuary with our 9 and 11 a.m. services. We're gonna kick it off with an eight-week "Songs of Series," some of our most favorite songs with spiritual messages from them. So we hope that we'll get to see you at 9 or 11 on Sunday, June the 6th, right here in the Sanctuary.

Also want to invite you to give us a little bit of help! You know, it takes a village to put on all these services, and we could really use some help after not doing them for a year. So if you are open to being an usher or a greeter, and serving while you're already here, that would make a huge difference. Also in our sound booth – with our PowerPoints, camera – and we will provide training. If you're interested in that, it would make a huge difference and support us putting on all of our services.

Join me Tuesday night for the class, "Discover the Power Within You." It is my absolute favorite of all Unity books; it really had a transforming and powerful change on my life. It is a four-week series, and this is Week #2 ... but, even if you missed the first one, go on and register and sign up. I'll catch you up, and you will really learn a lot of amazing things about truly discovering the power within yourself. You can go to [unityphx.org](http://unityphx.org) and register for the class there. And I'll look forward to seeing you on Zoom on Tuesday night.

Right now, we are going to enter a time of prayer and meditation. And to prepare us for that experience, we will now listen to the choir as they sing "Surely the Presence."

#### ***Unity of Phoenix Choir sings "Surely the Presence"***

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place  
I can see God's mighty power and God's grace  
I can feel the brush of angels' wings  
I see glory on each face  
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place

### MEDITATION

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** I invite you to join me for a time of prayer and meditation. As we close our outer eyes and take in a mindful breath, releasing it slowly. Beginning to move our awareness within. Gently breathing in and breathing out. Relaxing the body; relaxing the mind. Letting go of any busyness we've had so far. Gently moving our awareness into our heart space to that peaceful, calm place within: into the serenity of the silence. That place of conscious communion with the Divine.

Again, we breathe in and breathe out, moving more deeply into God's love. Recognizing that – in this quiet, still place – is the wisdom of the ages; in Divine Mind, our ideas for creating new solutions to new problems. And we access those ideas by being still, as we listen. And we know that the Holy Spirit is guiding us, uplifting us, encouraging us for new ways of doing and new ways of being: being at one with Spirit.

In the silence, we listen with spiritual ears. Recognizing that voice within. Knowing that it is for us: letting us know the next best thing to do to live lives of good. To live lives filled with love. To find ways to be a contribution to the greater world. For each and every one of us came here to do a great and important work: our work. To magnify God right here, right now. To glorify Spirit. To live from our higher

spiritual selves, knowing that – in that moment when we connect fully with the presence of God – that God's light illuminates us. Illuminating every cell in our body and bringing us to wholeness.

And so we take just a few moments as we move more deeply into the silence, and we listen for that still, small voice within.

SILENCE

Sweet Spirit, we come in gratitude for the recognition that we are spiritual beings and that, with you, we can create amazing lives of peace and joy and love and prosperity. We're so grateful for all of our blessings: too many to count! And so, for this, we say thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And it is so. Amen.

## MESSAGE

**Rev. Richard Maraj:** Thanks, Rev. Lori! Really appreciate that; that was a wonderful meditation.

So this judge glares at the defendant and says, *"So, you admit breaking into the dress shop?"*

*"Yes, Your Honor."*

*"Why was that?"*

*"Because my wife wanted a dress."*

*"But it says here you broke into the dress shop four nights in a row!"*

*"Yes, Your Honor. It's because she made me exchange it three times." [Simulates "rim shot" drum roll]*

*[Laughs]* Okay, not hilarious ... but it was a least kind of cute!

So this morning the topic is, "How to Get Unstuck." So have you ever been stuck? Have you ever been in a rut and felt like your life was going nowhere, and you just didn't know how to get it moving? Or have you ever had a setback, and just lost some momentum and had to start all over again? Or have you ever had some success and achieved some really good things, but got to a point where you wondered, "What's Next?" You know; "What do I do now?"

So this week, I had a really big setback in my journey and process of getting back fully on my feet. And I was really bummed out about it. And I was really disappointed; I was really kind of frustrated. Because all of the work I've been doing over the last several months kind of came to a halt, and it's kind of on delay for a month or so.

And, you know, it really wasn't that bad – in fact, overall, I had a really fabulous week! We had great meetings – staff meeting, all our meetings went well. We're getting ready for our new budget for our new fiscal year. We're getting ready for services June 6. I mean, it was a really good week! But have you ever allowed one thing that didn't go well to kind of color and affect the rest of your life.

And I didn't really want that to happen, so the next morning I woke up extra early to do some meditation, because I knew I'd need a little extra meditation to be able to handle this thing. And so, after the meditation, a book arrived that I'd ordered on creativity. And it was about being creative in good times and not so good times. It was really written for artists and other creative people. But one thing I've come to realize is that, sometimes when we're stuck in a rut, we get into this pattern – in this cycle – of disappointment and upset and just focusing on the negative. And we really kind of lose our creativity!

But the truth is: We are meant to be creative! We are created in the image and the likeness of the Creator! Which means we are here to create! To be creative, to live creatively, and to express ourselves creatively. So I think one of the most important things of getting unstuck and bouncing back from setbacks and bad times is to live more creatively.

And so this morning I want to talk to you about four things to help ourselves get unstuck and live more creatively in the good times, as well as the not so good times.

**And the first thing we need to do is to unplug ourselves.** Unplug from life. Have you ever had issues with your Internet? I've been having some issues with my Internet, and I had to call Cox. You ever call Cox? And then you ask about wanting to fix this, and they'll say, "Well, Mr. Maraj, have you unplugged your modem? Or have you unplugged your TV?" I had my phone kind of go on the fritz, where the screen – the touchscreen – was not working at all. The only thing that was working on it was the alarm, which kept going off. And the only thing I could do is "snooze" it and not turn it off. So a friend of mine took it to the phone store for me, and brought it back, and it was working just fine. I said, "What'd they do?" she said, "Oh, they just did a hard shutdown on it, and everything's fine."

You know, I'm not "techie," but one thing I've started to realize is, with a lot of electronics, if they're not working well, if you just unplug them and wait for a little bit, and plug them back in, they seem to work fine again! And my question is: So what happens when things get unplugged that, when you plug them back in, they seem to work fine? I mean, is it they calm down? Is it they reset? They reboot? They realign? But something seems to happen in a positive way when you unplug them.

And if it works for electronics, it's gotta work for us! Unplugging from life – unplugging from our problems, unplugging from our setbacks and difficulties – sounds like a spiritual practice. And it is a practice to bring back and reset our level of peace, our joy, and our creativity.

You now, when we are upset, and when we're consumed and overwhelmed, we overthink things. And we can kind of block up our circuits, so to speak. And unplugging kind of calms it down so we can get more centered and be more creative.

Do you know one of the more creative minds – Einstein ... Einstein absolutely believed in "unplugging" to bring forth his creativity. His definition of unplugging was called naps. He would take a nap regularly when he wanted to be creative. When he wanted to solve problems, he would take a nap. He would unplug!

When you think about it, Jesus unplugged from the world consistently with daily prayer. He unplugged and disconnected from the world so he could reconnect to God. Reconnect with the Source. Reconnect to Spirit. And that's why it said he would say, "Come apart awhile and rest." Or, "Go into your inner chamber and close the door." He's talking about unplugging from the world and quieting ourselves to re-center and to renew and refresh ourselves.

Emmet Fox talks about unplugging in his little pamphlet called *The Golden Key*. He said whatever problems you have – whether it's physical, financial or legal – stop thinking about it. Unplug and just think about God. Just think about love. Just think about peace.

You know, Jesus with the loaves and fishes. It was a problem of lack, and he had people unplug by, first, sitting down. And then looked up; he looked away from the problem.

You know, Thomas Merton said this. He said, "The greatest need of our time is to clean out the enormous mass of mental and emotional rubbish that clutters our minds." And the fact is: unplugging from the difficulties and frustrations of life is one of the ways to get rid of all that clutter. To bring us to a sense of peace and calmness.

You know, unplugging on a regular basis – it quiets our minds; it gets us more grounded and more centered. And the truth is: if it works for electronics, would you be willing – in whatever you're worried about right now – just taking a few moments to unplug and disconnect, and just quiet your mind? Just letting your mind rest in the mind of God? The more frequently we disconnect from the world and reconnect to our higher self – reconnect to Spirit; reconnect to God – the easier and greater we will work. Just like unplugging our computer or modem and things work better again, we will work better again if we're committed to regularly unplugging.

**The second thing we can do to improve our creativity is to learn something new.** You know, when things aren't going well, we tend to focus and magnify and exclude a lot of good things that are going on

in our lives. And what happens is that, when we are worried, our minds contract, and they get smaller and more limited. And learning something new actually expands our minds. It helps us create new synaptic connections. It helps us expand and think and see differently so we don't get contracted and stuck.

That's why I love that Scripture that says, *"Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* When we're stuck, we're usually staying in certain negative patterns. They say that 95% of what we think today we thought yesterday, because we're having the same arguments, the same frustrations. The same things keep happening! And that's why learning something new expands our minds out of our problems into new creative ways of thinking.

And, you know, one of the things that I learned that I was so impressed about was: Leonardo da Vinci was voted and considered the greatest genius of all time. And the number one thing about his mind – that made him the greatest genius – is he was curious. He always wanted to explore and discover and try new things, and wonder new things, and take risks and step out of the box. And one of the things he loved to do every single day: he woke up and, instead of doing a "to do" list, he wrote out a "to learn" list. He woke up every day and thought, *"What can I learn today? What do I want to learn today?"*

I bet most of us don't wake up every day and think, *"Hmmm; what can I learn today?"* But let's think about it now! What would you like to learn today? And you know what? There are so many incredible things that we can learn. I mean, you could learn to speak French. You could learn to speak Spanish. You could learn to change your oil. You could learn to add a new faucet; replace a new faucet. You could learn to sculpt or paint. Or you could learn Internet marketing. You could learn cooking or deeper ways of meditation. I mean, you could learn how to ride a horse! Or you could learn how to build model trains. Or you could learn knitting or learn sign language. You can learn how to improve your memory. On and on!

On Thursday, I've got a lesson in learning archery! And this week I started re-learning something I took a couple of lessons for last year. And I haven't practiced in a year. But I decided I want to learn how to play the harmonica! And to prove it, I'll just show a little. *[Plays "Happy Birthday" on the harmonica]* Clearly, learning is the operative word! Because I wasn't that good!

But the question is: What do you want to learn? You know, learning stimulates our minds in new ways. It makes us think in different ways. See, when we're stuck we only tend to think in one narrow way. And so: What hobby? What idea? What skill? What things do you want to learn? And are you willing to learn? Because it will make a huge difference in expanding your level of creativity, and seeing things out of the ordinary so that your mind is more open for solutions and positive possibilities.

**The third thing bringing forth our creativity is savoring the moments.** You know, savoring the moments in life is about slowing down and, whatever it is you are enjoying, just allow yourself to feel it and to experience it. And enjoy the entire experience of it in a fuller and slower and longer and richer and deeper way. I mean, maybe it's like – if you're eating ice cream – is just to slow it down to taste how sweet, and to notice how cold and how creamy ... and it just melts in our mouth.

Do you know just savoring a moment – savoring an experience – actually elongates it? And it makes it, not only last longer, but it creates a deeper experience? Because often we gloss over things. We move on from one thing to the next. We'll have a moment that we enjoy, but we don't always savor those moments. And, in fact, studies show that – when we savor the moment – it creates a more positive emotional response in us that, not only keeps us there more often, but attracts and notices the positive more. And helps us be more positive more frequently. Having positive emotions is a sign of someone who tends to be happier and more joyful and more optimistic in life.

And so, when you're feeling the love of your child, just let it soak in a little deeper. When you're laughing your butt off with your friend, just take time to appreciate and enjoy it even more. Whether it's playing with a puppy, or just loving and appreciating your job ... Or maybe it's savoring that first cup of

coffee in the morning. Or maybe enjoying a really delicious meal. Like, last week I had some salmon that was fabulous and this spicy miso soup. I was in my backyard and meditating, and the birds were humming and the breeze was cool, and I just savored those precious and wonderful moments. Sometimes it's savoring a hot shower! Or savoring just being with your family. It is really giving yourself the privilege and the opportunity to experience the fullness and the joy and the love of the things that you really like in your life.

This was overheard on the Titanic:

*"Are we really sinking?"*

*"Yes, we are; but isn't that music exceptional?"*

And it's kind of a joke, but it's like: when you're sinking in life, can you actually notice the things that are exceptional? And wonderful? Like, right now, in whatever's going on in your life, what's wonderful about your life? And what's exceptional? Somebody once said, *"The person who looks for beauty will always find it."* And the more you savor and enjoy and appreciate and just drink in those good and precious and wonderful, enjoyable moments of life, the richer your creativity and your joy will be.

So my question for you is: What are the things you like? What do you enjoy? What is it that you appreciate? What is it that touches your heart? What is it that makes you smile or makes you laugh? And whether it's food, or whether it's people, or whether it's nature, or whether it's achievements – whatever it might be – take time to savor those moments.

**And then the final one I want to talk about is to imagine the possibilities.** Our creativity is helped in so many great ways – and getting out of a rut is helped greatly – by imagining the possibilities. Do you remember that movie many years ago: a Bill Murray movie called *Groundhog Day*? He played this kind of crotchety, egotistical weatherman named Phil Connors. And he was going to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, for Groundhog Day, which was February the 2nd. And he keeps repeating this day over and over again. And first he's just really cranky and negative, and he uses the days just to his advantage and help himself and use people. But then – even though it was the same day over and over again in this never-ending rut – he realized that he could actually do some good things. That – even in the sameness – he could see greater possibilities. That he could actually create something good! So he learned how to play the piano. He learned how to do ice sculpting. And he started helping people in positive ways to the point that, he was so well liked, he became a town favorite.

And there's something about imagining the possibilities. It is a great gift that God has given us: to look beyond the present situations and see – in our mind's eye – something greater! Something we don't currently have, something we're not currently experiencing that we could put out into the Universe, and allow Spirit to bring it forth in an amazing way. It is one of the most powerful, creative abilities we have: is to use the power of our imagination and to realize that, with God, all things are possible!

There was a guy named Benjamin Zander, and he was the music director at the Boston Philharmonic. And he had two passions in life: one is classical music, and the second one is to invite students into a mindset of possibility thinking. So in his performance class, one of the things he does is: he says to the beginning class, *"Okay; everyone is going to get an A. You are getting an A in this class, and all you have to do is write me a paper that's dated one year from today. And it says, 'Dear Dr. Zander: I got an A because ...'"* And they just have to write why they got an A. *"Because I practiced really hard ..."* *"Because I've put a lot of extra time and effort into it ..."* *"Because I had experienced a lot of joy doing this class and playing all these pieces and learning all these things ..."* So they were granted an A right off the bat, and they just had to project, a year later, what it was that allowed them to get that A.

And what he says: it's not a goal-setting exercise. It is about opening yourself to possibility. Opening yourself to the possibilities in you, and the possibilities for you. And I just thought: what a powerful thing! So what if I said to you: In this next year, you're going to get an A! You are going to have a

fabulous year! And all you need to do is to write down a letter, dated one year from today. And all you need to do is explain why you got an A, and why you had a fabulous year.

So what possibilities do you see for yourself? And what would need to take place for you, for you to say, *"This was a fabulous year!"*? What possibilities lie in you? What possibilities are calling you to give it more life? Why would you have a great year? What would it take for you to have a great year? Is it to have a better and more positive attitude? Is it to be more kind and more generous and more patient? Is it to be more engaged in your relationships? And more engaged and excited about your job? Maybe it's to be more enthusiastic or to be more grateful. Maybe it's to accomplish something; to achieve something. I don't know what it is, but my question for you is: What is it that would give you an A in this next year? What would make you feel like, *"Yes! I have explored my possibilities, and I am living my best life!"*?

One of the things I love that he says to his class is – he says – *"You are an A! So just give yourself an A, because you are already an A!"* And he says it's not about competition. It's not about comparing yourself to others. It's about looking into yourself – into all of the possibilities that are in you – and just letting that come forth. That is what you're A is: your A is bringing for the very best in you.

And the truth is for any one of us: I am an A. I am a great possibility. I am a creator. Let's say those three together! *"I am an A."* *"I am a great possibility."* *"I am a creator."* Even when life isn't going perfectly, you know what? That's always true! You're always an A! You're always a great possibility! And you are always a creator!

This week I invite you to unplug for a few moments from the difficulties and stresses of life. I want you to take time to learn something new. I want you to savor the moments. And then I want you to imagine the possibilities. Because that is how you live your best life and, especially, it is how to get unstuck.

God bless you all!

## **SOLO**

### ***Guest artist Charity Lockhart sings I Am Changing"***

Look at me

Look at me

I am changing; trying every way I can  
I am changing; I'll be better than I am  
I'm trying to find a way to understand  
But I need, I need, I need a hand

I am changing; seeing everything so clear  
I am changing; I'm gonna start right now, right here  
I'm hoping to work it out, and I know I can  
But I need you; I need a hand

All my life I've been a fool  
Who said I could do it all alone?  
How many friends have I already lost?  
And how many dark nights have I known?

Walking down that long road  
There was nothing I could find  
All those years of darkness  
Could make a person blind  
But now I can see

I am changing; trying every way I can  
I am changing, yes; I'll be better than I am  
But I need a friend to help me start all over again  
You gonna be just fine  
I know it's gonna work out this time  
Cause this time I am, this time I am

I am changing; gonna get my life together now  
I am changing; yes, I know, I know how  
I'm gonna start again; I'm gonna leave my past behind  
I'll change my life; I'll make a vow  
And nothing is gonna stop me now!

### **OFFERING**

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** It's that time in our service to give of our gifts and our tithes and our offerings. We're so grateful to those of you who send in your checks and contribute online to keep this ministry going. Thank you so much for that!

Our offering blessing is: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive."*

Thank you, Mother/Father God, for these gifts and these tithes and these offerings. We know they are given in love, they are received in love, and that they move through this ministry with the energy of Divine Love out into the world as good. And that each giver is blessed – heaped up, pressed down and overflowing – for that is the Law. And so it is. Thank you, God! Amen.

### **CLOSING**

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** We're so grateful you could join us here online; we hope you have a wonderful week! Will you join me in our Prayer for Protection?

The light of God surrounds us;  
The love of God enfolds us;  
The power of God protects us;  
The presence of God watches over us.  
Wherever we are, God is. And all is well!

And now listen as our choir sings the Peace Song. Have an amazing week!

### **Choir sings Peace Song:**

Let there be peace on earth  
And let it begin with me!  
Let there be peace on earth  
The peace that was meant to be!

With God as Creator  
Family all are we!  
Let us walk with each other  
In perfect harmony!

Let peace begin with me;  
Let this be the moment now!  
With every breath I take  
Let this be my joyous vow:

To take each moment and live each moment  
In peace eternally!

Let there be peace on earth  
And let it begin with me!

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