



## **Embracing the Space Between: Flourishing amid great change**

Collectively, globally, as a humanity, we have been experiencing significant change. We have been undergoing disruption in our daily lives as a result of a pandemic. These changes have ranged from shifts that are small to larger, more important things. Some have been less meaningful, and others have struck at the core of our identities. This past year has been very activating for us mentally, emotionally and physically. We all have our perspectives and experiences about how we have moved through this last year of instability.

And yet, change is at the center of our being. That doesn't mean that changing isn't uncomfortable or easy. The unease and even distress that we may feel amid uncertainty is understandable and real. However, it's not the end of our story. Change happens in phases, and we can often identify a beginning, a middle and an end.

Like spring comes every year after cold and darkness bringing new growth and light, we are facing new light. There were many times of great upheaval and change throughout history, and yet, humanity persevered and grew. Brene Brown calls the time in between the messy middle. It can feel like we are floundering; we may be feeling tired, vulnerable and overwhelmed. You can't go back to the way things were before, and we are not yet living in the outcome. The middle space is where we are navigating our storm. It's often a place we would rather avoid, but it's integral to creating our desired outcomes. Brene says, "The middle is messy, but it's where all the magic happens." The space between is where the discomfort and vulnerability foster growth and learning.

### **Balancing the space between**

Even though the middle feels messy, there are ways we can engage with intention and foster growth. Like the flower needs sunshine, warmth, water and air on its journey from soil to bloom, it's necessary we tend to ourselves in this space between.

#### **Self Awareness:**

Name it and normalize it, and put it in perspective. Meaning: name what our internal experience is, realize that we are having a common reaction to an uncommon event and figure out its true personal impact. We can't expect everyone to have the same reactions to change and uncertainty as we do, but we can learn to identify our discomfort and reactions. We can cultivate self-awareness by checking in with ourselves, how we are feeling, what we are thinking and identifying our needs.

#### **Resilience:**

Take stock of the ways that you have managed thus far because you have been managing. You have fostered your resilience and likely picked up new skills and strategies along the way. Because things have been hard, you were pushed outside your comfort zone, and you found ways to cope and survive and even flourish. You wouldn't wish to have these difficult things happen to you, but you are more than entitled to embrace the resilience you have created for yourself.

#### **Compassion:**

When we are caught in the messy middle, we have the option to treat ourselves with judgment and harshness or to offer ourselves compassion and grace. Always choose compassion, even when your inner critic tries to tell you that put-downs and contempt work better. It's simply not true.

We aren't stuck. This isn't permanent! We are deep in the process of growing and evolving. The flower blooms are coming! Yet, we can still slow down and embrace this space between where we were and what we are becoming.

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