

## SESSION 11: SEEKING JUSTICE

*What does justice mean for your life? How do you go on successfully when faced with injustice?*



**[FUN FACT:** Many of the people sitting around Brooks (played by Mike Vogel) in this scene are special people in Brooks' life. The beautiful older woman in the purple jacket is "the real" Margaret who has been like a second mother to Brooks. Several of the men sitting around him are friends and mentors, and I'm (Julea) in the maroon jacket behind him to the right ☺]

### PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING

Start class by practicing the deep breathing method discussed on page 28.

### INTRODUCTIONS

Last week's session was about talking to the person or event that brought trauma to your life.

- *What did you learn from that session?*
- *Does anyone want to share their experience with writing a letter to the source of their trauma?*

### BEHIND THE SCENES

From Webster's Dictionary:

jus·tice [juhs-tis] – **noun**

1. the quality of being just; righteousness, equitableness, or moral rightness: *to uphold the justice of a cause.*
2. rightfulness or lawfulness, as of a claim or title; justness of ground or reason
3. the administering of deserved punishment or reward.

Do you feel like that justice has been served for your traumatic experience? Maybe your trauma resulted from a crime, or maybe it was warfare, a car accident or natural disaster. Maybe there is a process through the judicial system for your incident—or maybe there is not. Maybe there is no possibility for justice or maybe you have already found a sense of peace with the outcome. This lesson is not solely about the process of seeking justice but rather about living with the injustices that can happen to people who have experienced trauma and loss.

in-jus·tice [in-juhs-tis] **noun**

1. the quality or fact of being unjust; inequity.
2. violation of the rights of others; unjust or unfair action or treatment; wrong

## MOVIE CLIP – Chapter 10: Seeking Justice

As you watch this movie clip, look for what Brooks is fighting for and why.

## THINK-PAIR-SHARE

[First, write responses to the questions below (*think*), then share your responses with a partner (*pair*), then discuss the questions as a group (*share*)]:

- 1) In the movie clip, what is Brooks arguing for and asking from fellow senators?
- 2) In your life, what would you consider “justice” for the pain you have experienced from your traumatic experience?
- 3) Is it possible to attain justice in your case? If so, what would need to happen to carry out your goal for justice? (Or has it already happened?) If it is not possible, why not?
- 4) What has been the hardest part for you in trying to seek justice?
- 5) Do you have any recommendations for others trying to seek justice?

## CLASS DISCUSSION: BALANCING THE SCALES OF JUSTICE

"One of the worst effects of bereavement is that the rage or outrage that we feel at the loss cannot be answered."<sup>9</sup> We cannot bring back our loved ones or right a wrong. *So how do we live with injustice? And how do we continue to seek justice if that is a possibility?*



1) On a scale of 1-10, how important is it to you to get justice for your traumatic event?

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_\_\_ 7 \_\_\_\_\_ 8 \_\_\_\_\_ 9 \_\_\_\_\_ 10  
I accept that I may never feel justice      It is important, but I am OK      Very important, I won't rest until I get justice

2) On a scale of 1-10, how close do you feel you are to getting justice for your traumatic event?

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_\_\_ 7 \_\_\_\_\_ 8 \_\_\_\_\_ 9 \_\_\_\_\_ 10  
Justice is not possible in this case      I am midway toward justice but feeling discouraged      I am midway toward justice but feeling encouraged      Justice prevailed!

### Discuss:

- *How many of you had similar numbers for both items 1 and 2?*
- *How many had very different numbers?*

### Activity Interpreted

If your numbers were similar, you have reached a sense of balance in your quest for justice. Either you have accepted that justice is not possible in this case or you have fought hard for justice and justice prevailed.



If your numbers were very different, you live with a sense of imbalance of justice. Either your goal for justice has not been carried out or you are stuck somewhere on the path toward justice.

- *For those of you living with injustice, what has helped you move forward?*

## ACTION STEPS

Though you may not be able to control your path toward justice, you do have control over your thoughts on that path toward justice.

What can you do to take control and find reassurance on your quest toward justice? Often trauma survivors have found four methods to be most helpful<sup>9</sup>:

- 1) **Seek outside resources.** Go to the Douglass House website for recommended legal, legislative, and counseling resources ([www.DouglassHouse.org](http://www.DouglassHouse.org)). Consider contacting these groups for additional information and support.

- 2) **Take care of your physical and mental health.** Healthy living will significantly help you cope with the stress and endurance of living with injustice.
  - 3) **Consider forgiveness.** In Brooks' case, one of the assailants was executed, and the other asked for forgiveness. Brooks found far more solace in his conversation with Glen Ake than in witnessing the execution of the other assailant, Steven Hatch. If forgiveness is not an option, what is another method that would bring you peace and resolution?
  - 4) **Help someone else.** What do you know now about the journey toward justice and healing that you wish you had known sooner? How can you help someone else through that same journey?
- **Are there any other resources or ideas you would recommend for your groupmates?**

## **THE WORK REVIEW** (from Session 9):

In Session 9, we talked about disputing recurring thoughts and blame using Byron Katie's *The Work* strategies<sup>10</sup>. How can we apply the steps of *The Work* to experiencing injustice?

For instance, how would you apply the statement: "*I'm experiencing injustice*" to *The Work*?

1. Is it true? (Yes or no. If no, move to question 3.)
2. Can you absolutely know that it's true? (Yes or no.)
3. How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?
4. Who would you be without the thought?
5. The turnarounds: Turn the thought around (e.g., if the original thought is "*I'm experiencing injustice!*" one turnaround would be "*I am not experiencing injustice.*") Then find at least three specific, genuine examples of how the turnaround is true in this situation.

Apply *The Work* to your own situation. What turnaround might give you more strength to push through? And what evidence could support your turnaround(s)? Share your thoughts with a groupmate.

## **HOMEWORK**

This session's homework will focus on these four aspects of finding balance in your quest for justice. *Handout 11.1: Finding Balance in the Scales of Justice* asks you to dig deeper into each of these areas.

**What have you found in your efforts to seek justice and find peace?**



**FROM BROOKS:** The meeting with Glen Ake actually happened about a year and a half before the Steven Hatch execution. We compressed the timeframe in the movie, but in real life it took me many months to process each of those events separately. With Ake, I felt a great sense of relief and release. I also felt that he still deserved to die for what he had done. And there was still a sense of it not being completely over.

With Hatch, I watched him die and did have a sense of closure in that I knew I never would be called on to testify against him again. There would be no 10<sup>th</sup> courtroom appearance. There was a sense of restoration of my faith in the criminal justice system, which I think is important. We are told as children that police will protect us. Then we find out that isn't always the case. We hear that bad people will be punished and put in prison. Then we find out that courts don't always work as they should and neither do prisons. Offenders plea to light sentences and then wind up doing even shorter terms than agreed. But whatever the offense and the sentence, it restores some confidence in the system when we can actually see it happen.

For me, the more difficult part was finding my bearings after all of this happened. The emotions and baggage associated with each of these events took a long time to process. I also tend to be pretty stubborn and don't always learn lessons right away. Sometimes it's only upon a great deal of reflection that the lesson will really begin to crystallize and sink in.

Ultimately, I began to realize one important point that has been valuable for me from the beginning. We all have choices. Ake and Hatch had a choice to come to our house, to hurt Leslie, and whether or not to shoot us all.

I also had a choice that night about whether I would live or die. It didn't necessarily mean that I would live, simply by making that choice. But I certainly would not have lived if I had decided to just lie down on the floor and check out. There was a time while I was struggling with the ropes that I considered checking out. But I also had a flash in my mind of what my life could be like if I tried.

The visions I had in that moment were not of living a failed and miserable life. It was to live a complete and fulfilling, meaningful and (whatever it might mean) successful life. So many times as I have struggled through the years I've reflected on that night and why I chose to get up off that floor and live. It makes me hold a standard up to any choice that I make that will take me in one direction as opposed to another.

One of those times of decision was as I reflected on the rage and anger that I carried against Ake and Hatch. I realized that by carrying around that hate I was ultimately killing my own chances of living the kind of life I got up off the floor to live in the first place. And it wasn't just the life I wanted to live but the kind that my parents wanted for me. I realized that I actually honored them by forgiving and moving forward with my life. And ultimately it is the kind of life I believe God wants for us—to be joyful and fulfilled... to be complete.

## HANDOUT 11.1: FINDING BALANCE IN THE SCALES OF JUSTICE

---

In the quest for justice, make your next steps especially meaningful.

- 1) **Seek outside resources.** Visit the Douglass House website ([www.DouglassHouse.org](http://www.DouglassHouse.org)) for recommended resources, many of which are organized by state and region. Select at least two resources you want to know more about. Go to their websites and see if you could benefit from utilizing their resources.
- 2) **Take care of your physical and mental health.** Appendix A has a copy of all of the healthy living logs we have done in previous chapters. Choose one or more of these logs that were most helpful to you. Copy the page (so you can continue to reuse the original copy) and keep track of your activities for the week. Compare this week's log to previous logs. *Have you improved in any of these areas?*
- 3) **Consider forgiveness.** Forgiveness may or may not be an option in your situation. If it is, what steps would you need to take to reach a point of forgiveness. You may also want to look into restorative justice options. See *Handout 11.2: Victim Rights and Recovery Resources* for more information about restorative justice.
- 4) **Help someone else.** What do you know now about the journey toward justice and healing that you wish you had known sooner? How can you help someone else through that same journey? Look for a way to reach out to others in need. It may be through a friend or family member, a local victim recovery group, a church, an office in the criminal justice system, or another organization in your community.

<sup>9</sup>Gonzales, Laurence. (2012). *Surviving Survival: The Art and Science of Resilience*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. ([www.deepsurvival.com](http://www.deepsurvival.com))

<sup>10</sup>Katie, Byron. (2002). *Loving What Is: Four Questions That Can Change Your Life*. NY: Harmony Books.