



“BLACK THUMBS WELCOME: GARDENING AND LESSONS ON RESILIENCE” BY DR. PORTIA JACKSON PRESTON

EMPOWERED TO EXHALE

TEDX TALK DISCUSSION GUIDE

This guide can be used to facilitate a group discussion on wellness, or for independent reflection. The talk can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sw2JIKMuqMo>

1. Dr. Jackson Preston describes resilience as “the ability to bounce back and move forward in the face of adversity”.

Take a moment to reflect on a situation where you were resilient in the face of adversity. Write a note of appreciation to yourself for moving forward.

2. Through gardening, Dr. Jackson Preston learned important lessons that had a significant positive impact on her life and wellbeing. The following prompts will guide you to reflect on your journey or experiences using your personal journey. If at any moment you feel any discomfort, please take a deep breath and take time to center yourself.

LESSON ONE: RECONNECT WITH YOUR FOUNDATION

Dr. Jackson Preston mentioned that developing a connection with the land unexpectedly reconnected with her family roots. Conversations with her grandmother about the crops they nurtured on their land reminded her of the strength she has inherited from her family, to face challenges with courage and confidence.

There are a wide range of practices or behaviors that can help us to reestablish a connection with our origins. Think of a practice that can help you reconnect with your roots. This can be as simple as reflecting on a positive memory you had while growing up, or a shared tradition in your community.



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LESSON TWO: EMBRACE A BEGINNER’S MIND

When Dr. Jackson Preston decided to start her garden, she didn’t know where to begin. She found a master gardener who helped to alleviate her fears by providing support and knowledge. However, she still faced great uncertainty as she tended to the garden on a daily basis. By doing so, she learned how to embrace a beginner’s mind. This allowed her to lean into her instincts and develop new skills.

Think about a time or moment in your journey when you had to face a new task with a beginner’s mind. How did you navigate this experience? Who did you turn to for advice?

LESSON THREE: YOU MUST NURTURE WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE GROW

Dr. Jackson Preston mentioned that a few of the plants in her garden, such as her dill, were slow to grow in the beginning. Although she was not certain they were still alive, she practiced patience and consistency by continuing to water them regularly. Eventually, her dill overcame the initial shock and grew to be more than four feet tall!

Take a moment to reflect on your journey. Where have you had to practice patience and show up consistently to achieve results? What have you learned from this experience?



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LESSON FOUR: LET GO OF CONTROL AND PERFECTION

Dr. Jackson Preston recalled noticing dandelions growing in her garden, and initially dismissing them as weeds. However, she came to learn that the definition of a weed is simply a plant that grows where it is not wanted. Once she realized that dandelions could be used as food, she viewed them differently. The weeds in our lives can appear as a nuisance or a distraction, but they may also be used to teach us important lessons.

Think of something that you have learned an important lesson from, that initially appeared as a weed in your life.

LESSON FIVE: FIND HEALING IN COMMUNITY

Gardening connected Dr. Jackson Preston with others in her local area and on social media who shared similar interests. These connections allowed her to engage in communal healing as they shared both techniques and lessons with each other.

How have you experienced healing in community with other people?



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3. Dr. Jackson Preston ends her talk with describing how she will use gardening to help others in her community and states that “gardening can address many aspects of wellbeing.” Her call of action for you is to identify a healing practice that is beneficial for you.

Brainstorm a few practices that resonate with you, and think of ways you might incorporate one into your life.

4. How have your thoughts on your approach to wellness evolved as a result of this discussion?

5. Identify one thing you can do to care for yourself, If desired, you can set a start date for this action and a person you will be accountable to for following through.
