

# Taking It Home: Families and Faith

Tools for Deepening Your Faith at Home

## Let's Talk About Respect

by Nancy Palmer-Jones and Pat Hoertdoerfer

### Contents

[How to Use This Guide](#)

[What Is Respect?](#)

[Respect and Unitarian Universalist Faith](#)

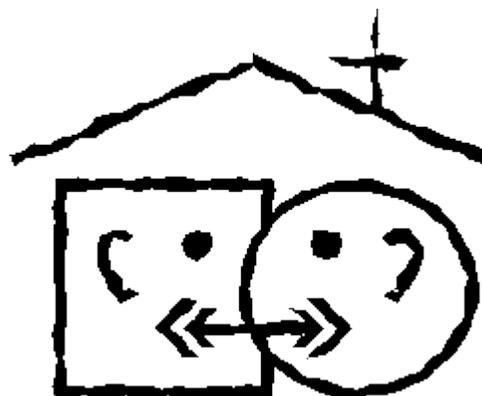
[Respect Across the Lifespan](#)

[Activities](#)

[Resources](#)

[UU Principles \(Adult and Children's versions\)](#)

[About the Authors, About FMTF, About the Series](#)



*You get respect when you give it.*

--Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, *Respect: An Exploration*

*Respect is mutual care and regard, dignity, and physical and emotional safety—a state in which everyone counts, and everyone counts upon everyone else.*

--Ralph Canter, *Days of Respect*

### 1. Respect

*As part of the interdependent web of all existence, we as a community must have respect for the entire web. A strong, healthy community requires that we take care of ourselves. This includes having consideration and respect for the physical and emotional well-being of ourselves, each other, the community, and our hosts. In addition, we must have respect for the well-being of the place of gathering and the earth and its resources.*

--YRUU Principles for the Establishment of Community

**R-E-S-P-E-C-T!**

*Find out what it means to me!*

--Aretha Franklin



## How to Use This Guide

*Respect*-the word seems so common, yet so abstract, that many of us adults may have trouble defining it. If asked, we might protest that "we know it when we see it or feel it"-or more likely, we will point to a hundred daily occurrences at home or at work, in the media or on the street when we feel respect is *absent*. To talk about respect within our families and faith communities, and to figure out how to *live* this central element of our Unitarian Universalist faith, we need to look more deeply at what it means. We need to take apart the concept of *respect* and look at all its components, and we need to find ways to make these components practical and concrete for family members of all ages. This booklet offers a way to begin.

For most of us, though, time is in short supply; we can't imagine fitting lengthy discussions or complicated activities into our own or our children's already full schedules. This booklet suggests ways to think about and to practice respect in the midst of our daily lives.

What's more, families have different preferred styles of dealing with important topics like respect. Some find that *casual conversations* offer surprising insights into their family members' deepest thoughts. Others enjoy creating a family ritual one evening a week, when they can focus together on important events in their lives and share in a *structured activity*. Still others may want to *gather with a group of families in their congregation*, building a sense of community as they explore this topic together. If yours is a casual-conversations family, you will find throughout this booklet questions titled *What Do You Think?* These questions can be used to spark fresh thoughts on this topic and to launch conversations at mealtimes, bath times, or bedtimes; in the car or on a walk; or even while shopping or watching television. The phrase **Try This:** accompanies many of these questions and introduces an activity that will help make the concepts more concrete. For structured activities that build on each other from week to week, turn to the section titled [Activities](#); these suggestions can be used at home or with intergenerational groups in your congregation.

*How to Begin:* Read through the two essays that follow-[What Is Respect?](#) and [Respect and Unitarian Universalist Faith](#)-and note what thoughts, images, and experiences they bring to mind. [Respect Across the Lifespan](#) then looks at aspects of respect relevant to each age group, from infants to elders. The information and practical suggestions offered here will help you focus on the elements of respect that are most appropriate for your family. The [Activities](#) section provides curricula for scheduled times together as a family or with an intergenerational group in your congregation. [Resources](#) lists books and websites, keyed to different ages, which will take your family's exploration of respect even deeper. At the end of the booklet, you will find the [Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes](#) and the [Principles in Language for Children](#). The concluding paragraphs offer additional information about the *Taking It Home* series.

## What Is Respect?

**A Way of Feeling and a Way of Behaving.** *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* offers these two synonyms for the noun *respect*: "consideration" (meaning "an act of giving particular attention") and "esteem" ("high or special regard"). These formal terms capture something crucial about respect: it is both a way of *behaving* and a way of *feeling*.

Each one of us may tend to focus more on one aspect or the other; in fact, in our families and in society, the ways in which we *show* (or *don't show*) respect-the behavior component-tend to get more attention. Yet from the simplest discussions of respect for elementary school children (as in Lucia Raatma's book *Respect*, listed in "Resources") to the multilayered life stories told by Harvard professor Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot in *Respect: An Exploration*, the *feeling* and *behaving* aspects of respect are always linked. Look at the first two sentences in Raatma's children's book, for example: "Respect is believing in the worth of others. Respect means treating others as you want to be treated." "*Believing in the worth of others*": respect is first of all a way of thinking and feeling about others and about ourselves; it is the feeling of value and care we have for people, places, and things. This *attitude* is then linked to *behavior*-to how we "treat" ourselves and others, to how we speak and what we do. As we will see, the link between respect as a way of feeling and respect as a way of behaving is particularly important in Unitarian Universalism.

Certain words seem to come up whenever we talk about respect: care, attention, consideration, courtesy, responsiveness, responsibility, value, worth, integrity, inclusiveness, empathy, and compassion. You will find them throughout this booklet. Each one offers another angle on respect.

***What Do You Think?*** What words would you add to this list? What do they mean to you?

***Try This:*** Make a quick list of words you associate with respect and add to it as more occur to you in the days to come. This list will come in handy as you talk about respect with your family, and it will help alert you to the "teachable moments" about respect that crop up every day.

**Respect for Self.** Some families focus on fostering *self-respect* in all family members, while others emphasize *respect for others* more than respect for self. In truth, we now know that we need both self-respect *and* respect for others in order to lead a healthy, happy, and satisfying life. Like the elements of feeling and behaving, these two aspects of respect are linked; it is hard to have one without the other.

*Self-respect* grows out of our earliest experiences of receiving care and attention from the most important people in our lives-from our families, caregivers, teachers, and others. When we know that others value us, we begin to think of ourselves as valuable, and we begin to honor and respond to our own needs and feelings, which is a good working definition of self-respect.

As we grow older, self-respect involves an increasing self-awareness-a knowledge of our particular gifts and limitations, and an understanding and acceptance of our many personal,

social, and cultural identities. With self-respect, we have the ability to accept life's challenges, to forgive ourselves when we make mistakes or fall short of our own or others' expectations, and to enjoy and care for our body, mind, and spirit.

In the United States, we often get confusing messages about self-respect from the popular media or even from our friends and family. It is important to note that self-respect is *not* the same as selfishness or egotism—a belief that "I" am the center of the world and that my desires matter more than others'—nor is it a kind of arrogance, which is a defensive and exaggerated view of our own abilities. Self-respect is a positive, not a puffed-up, feeling; all of us can admire and appreciate someone who has a healthy self-respect, rather than criticize or put that person down. In fact, maintaining a healthy self-respect is a lifelong process that asks us to be honest, compassionate, balanced, and patient with ourselves.

**Respect for Others.** Traditionally, respect for others has been related to their status—to their position in some sort of hierarchy. In other words, we have been expected to respect those whom we think (or whom society tells us) are "superior" to us, whether that superiority has been measured by age, job title, talent, power, or social position. By achieving a certain status, people are thought to have "earned" our respect, and respect for them—at least the outward signs of respect—becomes a duty or an obligation to fulfill.

There is another way of thinking about respect for others, however—a way that emphasizes the *person* rather than the *position*. In this view, we respect others as a way of creating reciprocal, symmetrical relationships. These relationships are reciprocal because they allow a back-and-forth exchange of ideas, opinions, feelings, and of respect itself; they are symmetrical because they help create an equal footing from which we can be responsive to the other person's unique qualities and needs. "You get respect when you give it," Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot writes, echoing an experience that most of us have had.

Such a view of respect requires attentiveness to individuals and groups of people. It encourages our increased engagement with others, for getting to know someone is key to deepening our respect for him or her. Curiosity, a willingness to learn, and empathy thus become components of respecting others.

***What Do You Think?*** *What is the importance of "status" within your family? Do certain people get more respect, or attention, because of their age or talents? Does every person feel that her or his needs and unique qualities are known and respected?*

***Try This:*** *Invite your family members to pay attention to how you listen to each other. Do you make eye contact and stop what you are doing to listen, or are you multitasking when you speak to each other? Do you really take in what each person is saying, no matter what their age? Make an agreement with each other that over the next week you will all try to be better listeners. At the end of the week, check in: how did you do? How did it feel? Did you learn anything new about each other from listening attentively? The more specific examples you can collect during the week, the more effective this activity will be. Where do you want to go from here in how you show respect through listening?*

**Respect and Courtesy.** "Whatever happened to fair dealing, and pure ethics, and nice manners?"

goes a song from the movie musical *Chicago*. This lament over changes and losses in social manners (let alone ethics) is a familiar one and perhaps has been repeated in every generation. What is the point of good manners (or etiquette), anyway? And how do we know how to behave when the rules of etiquette change from culture to culture, even from family to family? In *Social Smarts: Manners for Today's Kids* (see [Resources](#)), Elizabeth James and Carol Barkin sum up the double purpose of good manners: "The underlying purpose of every system of etiquette," they write, "is the same: treating people with respect and consideration in order to make society run smoothly" and "acknowledging that other people have feelings and deserve respect." Acts of "common courtesy" and politeness are ways to show people that we care about them; they are among the simplest and most straightforward ways to show respect. Knowing how to handle social situations graciously—whether the circumstances are ordinary or awkward—increases our confidence and self-respect ... and certainly makes the day go more smoothly for all of us!

**Try This:** With younger children, play-act going to a friend's birthday party. Trade off with the children playing all the different parts, including saying hello to the adults at the party (shaking hands, making eye contact, figuring out how to address that person); watching the birthday boy or girl open gifts (what happens if he or she seems to like some presents a lot more than others? How would you handle this at your own birthday party?); playing with other children (what do you do if someone is being left out or ignored?); saying good-bye and thank you when it's time to leave. Sometimes it's fun to play-act doing everything wrong *one time through* (*refusing to share; grabbing all the attention away from the person whose party it is; being rude to adults or other children*), and then to replay the scene with good manners and respect. Explain why the second way is better, and congratulate everyone for doing such a good job when you're done!

**Try This:** With older children, brainstorm the rules for "netiquette" (see [Resources](#)) and practice putting them into action through e-mails and computer use.

**Respect and Boundaries.** Limits are as important as openness in relationships based on respect. Self-respect includes setting boundaries around how we want to be treated. What do we need in order to feel that our body, our belongings, and our selves are respected? Respect for others means that we notice and respect their boundaries, too. Such respect is based on the recognition of the other's *integrity*—her or his wholeness as a separate person. Any form of physical, verbal, or emotional abuse is thus an ultimate expression of disrespect. Similarly, when we feel we need to "fix" something about another person, we are also disrespecting and disempowering him or her.

**Try This:** Invite your family to pay attention over the coming week to the ways in which you criticize or try to "fix" each other. When is advice respectful and desired, and when is it disrespectful? At the end of the week, check in: what did you find out? How did it feel? What would you like to do differently? Spend another week paying attention to the changes you each requested; then check-in again.

**Respect for Places and Things.** Places and belongings have their own integrity that calls for our respect. History, function, and personal memory all contribute to the meanings and value we associate with different places and objects. Respecting another's belongings is a way of respecting her or his boundaries; it shows that we care how she or he feels about these belongings or personal property. Respecting the integrity of a place means that we will behave differently on a playground, for instance, than we will in a sanctuary, temple, or mosque. The same themes

underlie these differences: to be respectful, we must pay attention to the needs of the space and of all the creatures (humans included) who inhabit or use that space.

***What Do You Think?*** How can we contribute to the health, survival, and maintenance of the land and its creatures, of buildings and public spaces?

***What Do You Think?*** For the adults in the family: when you were growing up, were there rules at home or at school about who or what deserved your respect? Did you agree with those rules? What were you taught about how to show respect for people, places, and things—for family members, teachers, "your elders," or for yourself; in the classroom, on the playground, or at church; for people's belongings and for the larger world, including the natural environment? Which aspects of respect were emphasized more: the feeling or the behaving aspect; respect for others or respect for yourself? Which of all these early learnings do you still carry with you? For whom or for what from your childhood do you still feel respect? Why?

**Try This:** For a week, make a note of the ways in which you talk about or show respect at home, at work, on the street, or in your congregation. Which of these ways reflect what you learned as you were growing up? Which ways have grown or changed? Are there ways that you would like to change now? How hard is it to be mindful of respect in your daily life? In what ways does this activity increase your compassion for the young people in your life, as they continue to learn about respect?

## Respect and Unitarian Universalist Faith

*As Unitarian Universalists, we don't give our children dogmatic absolutes—ours is a religion that embraces paradox, complexity, and diversity. Perhaps our absolutes are LOVE, the context of life, and HOPE, the creativity of life—and of course, RESPECT.*

*--Amanda L. Ailman, "Do Children Need Religion?"*

In the adult religious education curriculum *Articulating Your UU Faith* (see [Resources](#)), Barbara Wells and Jaco B. Ten Hove represent the seven Unitarian Universalist principles as an arch. The first principle, affirming the "inherent worth and dignity of every person," and the seventh principle, promoting "respect for the interdependent web of which we are a part," are the pillars that hold up the other five principles. The pillars ask us to broaden our feeling of respect to include every person and all of existence. They describe *what* we Unitarian Universalists "affirm about life," as Wells and Ten Hove put it. The other five principles—to affirm and promote "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations; a free and responsible search for truth and meaning; the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large; and the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all"—describe *how* we agree to be together." Notice how these five principles in the "arch" are related to the "pillars": principles two through six name ways to *demonstrate* the respect that the first and seventh principles call us to *feel*. Respect as a *way of feeling* and respect

as a *way of behaving* are inextricably linked for Unitarian Universalists.

It is a tall order. First, Unitarian Universalism is a way of seeing ourselves, others, and our world as whole and beautiful in our very being. Such respect goes beyond tolerance and even acceptance to a deep appreciation for the uniqueness of every person, place, and thing and for the diversity that this uniqueness brings. Such a way of seeing asks for a mindfulness that may seem hard to muster in the midst of busy, stressful lives. So it takes practice-and this practice begins at home; it begins with our everyday life.

Second, Unitarian Universalism is a way of living together, a way of being and acting in the world that helps to create freedom, justice, equality, and a sense of care and connectedness for all. Again, such a call seems huge and abstract. Again, each of us answers this call through the choices and the actions, large and small, of our everyday life: at home, at work, at church, and in all the communities to which we belong.

Unitarian Universalism, then, emphasizes both *individual* worth and the central importance of our *relationships*. Sometimes, because we insist on honoring our individual freedom of thought and belief, we Unitarian Universalists are accused of being "too individualistic." In truth, our faith asks us to respect *both* the individual (including ourselves) *and* the community-our own, others', and the larger community to which all existence belongs. Equally important, it asks us to put that respect into action.

***What Do You Think?*** Do you agree with this description of Unitarian Universalism? Do you feel inspired, or daunted, by it? How would you describe the relationship between Unitarian Universalism and respect?

***Try This:*** Go over the Unitarian Universalist Principles in Language for Children (found at the end of this booklet) with your family. How does each principle relate to respect? Can you discover together specific examples that describe this aspect of respect in your lives?

**Respect for Differences.** A key aspect of Unitarian Universalists' respect for individuals and for communities is our respect for the differences among us. From differences in religious beliefs and background, to differences in culture, ethnicity, or race, in sexual orientation and gender identity, in personal styles, income, and abilities, and in opinions, Unitarian Universalism asks us to find ways to be true to ourselves even as we listen to and respect others' truth. In our families, this means respecting where each member is in her or his emotional and physical development, in her or his exploration of religious beliefs and practices, in her or his discovery of sexual and gender identities, and more. It also means finding ways to hear the voices and opinions of people outside the family who may seem different from you.

***What Do You Think?*** What are the limits on your respect for "differences" among your family members? Are there certain religious beliefs that you have trouble respecting? Are there childhood or adolescent behaviors that are unacceptable, no matter how "experimental" or "developmental" they may be? How are these limits related to respect? How do you express respect while setting limits?

**Try This:** *Imagine that your good friend, another Unitarian Universalist, has come to ask your advice. She has noticed that her young son likes to dress up in her clothes, and when he visits friends, he wants to try on the girls' new dresses. If she would let him, he would happily wear a skirt to school every day. What should she do? she asks you. How do you feel as you hear this story? What resources can you find together, and how do these resources and your reactions relate to respect?*

**Respect and Antioppression.** On our Unitarian Universalist "journey toward wholeness," we have set ourselves on a path to become an antiracist, antioppressive, multicultural faith community. This means that no matter what our own "color," ethnicity, or other social identity, we believe that we are "whole"-that we maintain our integrity-when we live and act in ways that help to *undo* racism (the privileging of one group of people over others on the basis of skin color) and oppression (the creation of disadvantages for groups based on age, race, ability, income, sexual orientation, gender identity, and more). In our families, this means paying attention to the ways in which prejudice and unfair advantage or disadvantage have an impact on our lives. It means noticing and protesting when people are treated unfairly. It means finding ways to work with others-in our congregation, in our neighborhoods, in our town or region-to create a more just society. From working on issues of accessibility in our churches, to joining in neighborhood cleanups, to writing letters to government representatives on the causes we care about, working for justice is a family project that, at its heart, is all about respect for self and for others.

**Try This:** *"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug," wrote Mark Twain. Explore with your family the People First movement, which focuses on the language we use when we describe people with varying abilities and disabilities. Read together the essay "People First Language" by Kathie Snow from the Kids Together, Inc., website at <http://www.kidstogether.org/pep-1st02.htm>. Discuss the ideas and language described in this essay. What is the difference between using "politically correct" language and using language that demonstrates respect? What decisions about you speak does your family want to make?*

**Respect and Inclusiveness: Lessons from Our Youth.** Unitarian Universalist youth are well known for working on issues of respect and justice in organizations such as YRUU (which stands for Young Religious Unitarian Universalists), in the Unitarian Universalist Association in general, and with the wider world. As you can see in the quotation on the first page of this booklet, the very first principle of the YRUU Principles for the Establishment of Community is "Respect." These YRUU principles reflect the wisdom and experience of Unitarian Universalist youth as they strive to live our faith in conferences, at General Assembly, and during youth-group meetings in our congregations. After *respect*, the principles move on to *shared youth-adult leadership* and to the role of *adults* as role models, friends, and touchstones, "so that youth feel physically and emotionally safe." Then the YRUU principles turn to *inclusiveness*-a key aspect of respect and one that sums up many of the issues touched on in this essay. Listen to how the youth have put it:

"For participants to grow and mature in self-worth, inclusiveness is essential. Conferences are no place for abusive or demeaning behavior. To attain this goal of inclusiveness, we recommend:

- Acceptance and celebration of the rich diversity of lifestyles, backgrounds, and spirituality
- Education about the damaging effects of prejudice and bigotry
- Accessibility of facilities and activities for those with special needs
- A commitment to resolve conflicts through discussion and mediation while avoiding verbal, emotional, and physical violence
- Language and actions consistent with the goal of an inclusive community. Sexual harassment and other verbal and emotional abuse damage the community."

***What Do You Think?*** *What do these principles reveal about youths' concerns and experiences with respect and disrespect? How do they reflect the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes? How can you, as an adult, be the kind of role model and touchstone who helps the youth in your life to feel physically and emotionally safe?*

***Try This:*** *Invite the youth in your family to research these principles with you. They can be found at [http://www.uua.org/YRUU/resources/p\\_comm.htm](http://www.uua.org/YRUU/resources/p_comm.htm). Can you together remember a specific gathering of youth and adults that either the youth or both the youth and the adults in your family attended and that you could use now as a "case study"? This gathering could be a school trip, a family reunion or vacation, a church event. Ask for the youths' opinions: Do the YRUU principles speak to their experiences of gatherings with youth and adults? How would these gatherings change if these principles were put in place? How could these principles be adapted to life at home, at school, or at work? What in their experience do these principles leave out? Youth and adults can work together to craft similar principles, with youth taking the lead, just as the YRUU youth have done. What do you come up with when you try this in your family?*

## Respect Across the Lifespan

*In dealing with my child, my Latin and Greek, my accomplishments and my money stead me nothing; but as much soul as I have avails.*

*--Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*In order for your child to learn to respect and care for others, she needs you to provide a loving, warm, caring, and respectful home for her.*

In dealing with children, Emerson suggests, it is our soul that matters most. Just so, when parents, caregivers, and teachers wish to teach children respect, the best method is to *model* respect through the adults' own feelings and behavior. Building and maintaining our self-respect, affirming and demonstrating our respect for our children, and modeling respect in all our interactions help create the "loving, warm, caring, and respectful" space out of which children's own respect will grow. Modeling respect includes:

- Keeping promises
- Being fair
- Giving children choices, as well as our guidance and feedback so that it is clear that we care what choices they make
- Asking for our children's opinion and input in family discussions
- Listening to how a child feels without being judgmental
- Acknowledging our own, our children's, and others' accomplishments
- Naming what we admire, respect, value, appreciate in ourselves and others
- Praising our children for who they are, not what they do
- Naming and identifying the experiences of feeling and showing respect and of being respected that come up in our own and our children's lives, as well as in the stories, books, television shows, movies, and daily occurrences that are our teaching tools

The following paragraphs offer suggestions for how to focus on respect with each age group. It is key to remember that children and adults alike develop at various rates and at various times. Acknowledging and caring about each person's stage of development is another way to demonstrate respect.

**Infants.** "Infants form their initial impressions of the world and experience sensations of trust,

courage, hope, and love (or the lack of these) on a primary, body level," write Roberta and Christopher Nelson in *Parents as Spiritual Guides* (see [Resources](#)). Respecting an infant means caring for all of his or her sensory and physical needs. In fact, showing respect for a child's feelings starts at that child's birth. We begin by offering our loving and respectful *presence*.

**Try This:** *It matters what we say, even to a baby. Say or sing aloud these affirmations to an infant-and add more of your own: "I am so glad you are alive." "You are beautiful just as you are." "I love the person you are and that you are growing to be."*

**Toddlers and Children Ages 3-7.** Adults' actions, language, and moods have a powerful effect on children at this stage. We can model respect for young children by setting, and helping the children to maintain, good boundaries for all that is physical, including their bodies and their belongings. Sibling rivalry and issues of personal space and privacy may arise now, as these children are just beginning to become self-aware. Young children can begin to learn to forgive themselves for mistakes or "accidents" and to develop the confidence to try again. Preschoolers often seem to have a "special intuition and an almost magical/mystical connection with the entire universe," as Roberta and Christopher Nelson put it. Respecting their wisdom and the ways in which they make sense of the world is particularly important. This is also a good time to build on their sense of connection by showing them ways to respect the earth and its creatures.

**What Do You Think?** *In conversations with adult family members, friends, or coworkers, do your children overhear you modeling respect?*

**Try This:** *Children in this age range have an active imagination; stories are particularly powerful. With every story you tell or book you read to your child, point out the ways in which the characters are showing (or not showing) respect. Connect respect with caring for oneself, others, pets, the natural world, and more.*

**Children Ages 7-12.** *Reciprocal fairness* is a recurrent theme for this age group. Children now take on increasing responsibilities, which builds their self-respect. Friends, hobbies, and group projects are a central focus, and reciprocal nature of respect-the idea that "you get respect when you give it"-can be made concrete through these new relationships and activities. Curiosity is another gift of this age. As Roberta and Christopher Nelson put it, "the shared stories and meanings of one's family and religious community become very important"; this is a great time to share (or create) family rituals and to tell stories with Unitarian Universalist themes. It is also a good time to explore the stories and rituals of different ethnicities and cultures, encouraging children's sense of connection with and respect for the wider world. Research together how the table manners, greetings, behavior in public places, and other ways children show respect to adults differ in another culture or another country. Children's ability to think logically and absorb explanations grows by leaps and bounds in these years; rest assured that many of the younger children in this age range understand more than they can articulate.

**What Do You Think?** Consider this "teachable moment":

Glaring at the umpire following a questionable call in an important game, ten-year-old Chris throws down a baseball glove and shouts, "You stupid idiot! You don't know what you're talking about!" Later, Chris's mother expresses her concern and hurt to her neighbor, who is also a Unitarian Universalist. "We've always tried to teach our kids to treat other people with respect," she says. "Our kids know our First Principle—the inherent worth and dignity of every person—and they know the Golden Rule. I just don't understand this behavior. What can I do?"

Have you had an experience like this in your family? What advice would you give Chris's mom?

**Try This:** Play "what if?" with your children and their friends. Tell them the story about Chris and the umpire, and ask, "If you were Chris who threw down the baseball glove and shouted at the umpire, what could you say to the umpire after the game that would show your respect?" Then give them some other scenarios, and ask them what would be the most respectful thing to do. You can draw on familiar family and neighborhood experiences, or use some of these possibilities:

- You want to use your sister's bike, but she is not around to ask. What do you do?
- A new child comes to school, and he looks "different." Some of your friends are making fun of him. What would you say to your friends? How would you treat the new child?
- Your brother starts making fun of your grandmother and her advice. What do you say to him?
- A family in your neighborhood has lost their house in a fire. One of the children in that family is in your class, and the morning he comes back to school, he starts crying. Your classmates call him a "crybaby." What do you say?

**Adolescents Ages 12-14.** Issues of identity and belonging take center stage with this age group. Clans, cliques, and groups begin to form at school or in the neighborhood, and peer pressure becomes a crucial influence. The capacity for empathy is growing, and so is the need for privacy. Young adolescents may seem moody and "anti-adult," but they often respond well when adults respect the validity and truth of the youths' own experiences and opinions and when the youth have the opportunity to engage in socially responsible activities.

**What Do You Think?** Asking young adolescents questions and listening nonjudgmentally to their answers is a great way to show your respect for them. Here are some questions to ponder with youth:

- *How do you negotiate the culture of your peers where disrespect ("dissing") may be the most common way of relating? Do you join right in? When does it need to stop, and how do you stop it?*
- *How can you tell where and when you are receiving respect-from teachers, adults, siblings, parents, caregivers, peers? How do you ask for respect?*
- *What happens if your best friend comes to you and tells you that she is pretty sure that she is lesbian? How do you respond? What if it's a guy who says he is gay, or bisexual, or transgendered? Do any of these variations make a difference in how you respond?*
- *If you were the umpire in the baseball game where the ten-year-old Chris threw down the baseball glove and shouted at you, what would you say to Chris?*

**Try This:** Putting faith and respect into action can be a powerful experience for adolescents. Brainstorm with youth which issues are most important to them: who or what do they believe deserves more respect than is currently given? The possibilities are endless; for example, youth may want to try one of these activities:

- *Volunteering for the Special Olympics in your area, helping the athletes to prepare*
- *Tutoring younger children*
- *Participating in a Habitat for Humanity project*
- *Organizing or participating in a neighborhood cleanup day*

**Adolescents Ages 14-18.** Unitarian Universalism encourages a questioning spirit; Unitarian Universalist adults, then, are especially called to respect the questioning and challenging of youth in this age range. Most youth groups are ready for more autonomy; we can respect them by allowing their separation, by giving them more agency and responsibility with each year, even as we continue to demonstrate our interest and offer our feedback. These youth have a strong sense of justice and strong feelings about discrimination, hatred, or inequities based on race, economics, or cultural differences; they often care passionately about the environment and about war, violence, and more. They may be idealistic, but they often have practical ideas about how to

put their faith and respect into action. Although they are more likely to want to work with their peers, they may also be the ones to initiate a family project that demonstrates respect.

**What Do You Think?** *The following story, available on the UUA website for General Assembly 2000, represents the kind of action that Unitarian Universalist youth can take: "An unscheduled yet significant event at the General Assembly [in Nashville, Tennessee, in June 2000] was provided by a group of Unitarian Universalist youth. Reacting to the sight of a homeless man in a Nashville park, the group collected \$300 from among their ranks, used the money to buy food, and delivered the food to a local homeless shelter. After announcing their actions in a plenary session of the General Assembly, the young people raised an additional \$2,700 to aid the homeless." In practical, concrete terms, how do the youth in your home or your congregation inspire you to put your own faith and respect into action? Be sure to let them know how they influence and inspire you, and to share with them how grateful you are.*

**Try This:** *Encourage your youth to take up their own causes, demonstrating respect for themselves, for others, and for the earth. Offer them resources: invite them to contact the Youth Office at the UUA; support them in participating in YRUU conferences and General Assembly (scholarships are sometimes available); provide names, addresses, and phone numbers of state and national government representatives and officeholders so that youth can let their views be known; if possible, offer space in your home where they can meet as a group as they organize activities that express their caring and concerns. With you as a touchstone helping to ensure the youths' physical and emotional safety, you can empower the youth to design the details of the work they want to do.*

**Adults.** Adulthood offers an opportunity to address any unresolved issues of self-esteem and self-respect that we may have. Adults must find a way to accept contradictions and paradoxes; they must deal with disillusionment and find ever deepening sources of joy. Unitarian Universalism calls us to be open to the truths of others, even as we come to articulate and act on our own beliefs and values. Truly we are called to be lifelong learners.

**What Do You Think?** *What do you respect most about yourself? What affirmations would you most like to hear?*

**Try This:** *Write yourself a letter naming all the qualities that you most admire, value, and appreciate in yourself-and put it in the mail! This kind of activity engages your own active imagination, as well as offering you the respect you deserve.*

**Elders.** The later years in life are a time of continued growth and change. In American society, the gifts that people in this age range have to offer are seldom respected and valued. Through their words and their behavior, elders have unique insights to share about their own life stories, about historical events and eras they have experienced, and about the issues that arise only at the end of life. Folks of all ages need only learn to be present with elders-to pay attention, to listen, and to watch-in order to plumb new depths of respect.

**What Do You Think?** With family members of all ages, consider these questions: How do you hope to be treated when you are an elder? How do the current living situations and life experiences of the elders you know reflect society's respect or lack of respect for them? What do the elders in your life have to say about this? What would the elders do to change this situation, if they feel it needs to be changed? How can folks of all ages work with elders to make any necessary changes?

**Try This:** Make spending time with elders a priority for your family, whether these elders are your own family members, members of your congregation, or members of your wider community, such as residents of a nursing home or participants in an adult day-care center where you and your family might volunteer for a few hours a month. Ask the elders you know to tell their stories: whom have they respected in their lives, and why? When have they felt disrespected in their life? What did they do about it? What changes have they seen over time about respect or disrespect for different groups of people and various aspects of life? What changes have they seen in manners and in other ways that folks express respect? If they could change one thing about the world right now, what would it be?

## Activities

The following suggestions offer a way to begin creating structured activities around respect, to be used either at home or within your congregation. Let these ideas inspire your own; after all, *you* are the experts on the needs of your family and the hopes of your congregation!

### At Home.

Set aside a time every week for the family to gather for shared conversations and activities. You may choose to make this time a Shabbat (Friday evening) meal or a Sunday dinner; any time that makes sense for your schedules will work. Create a sense of sacred space and time by starting off with a small ritual: light a candle; say a few shared words, which can be as simple as "We gather together as a family to share what's important in our lives" or as varied as some of the opening words, covenants, or chalice lightings in the Unitarian Universalist hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite everyone to be silent for a moment and take a breath together. Then move into the activity or topic for the week. To think about *respect* as a family, try the following suggestions; you can adapt them or borrow from the **Try This** suggestions throughout this booklet in order to better match the age ranges and interests of your family members:



**Week 1.** Explain that for the next few weeks, the family is going to focus on *respect* during its shared time together. With young children, read a favorite story or picture book together; invite older youth to do the reading and to help their siblings with answers to the questions. Ask: Who shows respect (or caring) in this story? Who doesn't? How would it feel if you were each one of these characters? Invite everyone to pay attention in the coming week to times when they see someone (including themselves) showing respect for something or someone. For example, you can play a game as a family while watching television: whenever a character on a TV show or in

a commercial shows disrespect for someone or something, see who can be the first to make an annoying "outa-there" buzzer sound; when a character shows respect, see who can be the first to applaud or make the sound of a bell ringing. How many examples of respect or disrespect can you discover together over the course of just one hour of television? Be sure to gather stories from school and from work, too, and share them at the end of every day.

Week 2. Ask the family to summarize the stories and experiences they had around respect in the past week. Did anything surprise them? Then suggest you all play a favorite board game. Before you begin, brainstorm the ways that you can all show respect for each other as you play. Encourage each other during the game, naming the specific ways in which players show respect. If someone forgets, offer a gentle reminder and the assurance that it is OK to make mistakes; they can always try again. Invite everyone to pay attention during the coming week to the way their friends show respect or disrespect when they are playing games. Adults and older youth can also note how they and their co-workers show respect or disrespect on the job. Be sure to keep the examples specific, and make a note of them to share.

Week 3. Share the stories of the week. Is anyone discovering anything new about respect through paying attention in this way? Then invite everyone to go on a scavenger hunt through the house; have family members pair up so that different ages are working together. Give everyone some paper and a pencil, and tell them to look for any symbols of respect that they can find in the house. Each person needs to think about what represents respect for him or her: are there pictures or symbols, books, CDs, or other items that refer to things or to people they care about, appreciate, or admire? Are there items that show respect for people in the family? Consider not only photographs or awards but also items you might overlook-items that are in your house to make life a little easier for some of your family members, for example, or items that are there to offer family members new challenges so that they can learn new things. These items too are a subtle way of showing respect. Encourage everyone to be creative and to make a note of what they find. Gather back together in fifteen minutes and compare notes. Are there any surprising items on the list? Have participants explain why they included what they did. What does this activity tell you and your family about respect in your household? What do you have in common? Invite everyone, during the coming week, to think about what agreements they would like the family to make about respect.

Week 4. Share the family's stories about respect from the week and brainstorm thoughts about agreements you could make as a family about respect. For example, you might ask for family members' input on this question: What should we do in our family when different members' needs clash? For more inspiration on creating a covenant, look up together some of the following covenants on the internet (see [Resources](#) for the web addresses):

- Children's Covenant, from *Reach*
- YRUU Principles for the Establishment of Community
- Family Pledge of Nonviolence, from the Unitarian Universalist Family Network

- Earth Charter, from UU Faith Works



What covenant would your family be willing to make? Write it down and post it where everyone has access to it. Then invite everyone to choose one activity that would help express their respect in the larger world. Continue in the coming weeks to share these stories, explore these activities, and deepen your family's understanding and practice of respect.

### **In Your Congregation.**

Many of the *Try This* suggestions in this booklet can be adapted for use in religious education classes or in family gatherings at church. The following are additional ideas for creating an intergenerational "curriculum" around respect:

- Invite the younger children to make collages and draw pictures that illustrate respect and caring-for themselves, for others, for belongings, for the earth and its creatures. Have the adults and older youth work in teams with the younger children, providing resources (pictures from magazines help with ideas and with execution) and encouraging them to explain their pictures. The older folks can then write up these explanations in the form of a dialogue, story, poem, or description. Display these artworks and their written explanations for all the congregation to share.
- In groups that consist of adolescents and adults, have the groups begin by "caucusing" by age. Let each age group meet separately for thirty minutes to take up the following questions:
  - What do the youth want to say to the adults about respect? How do the youth want to be shown respect? How does respect relate to honesty? To privacy versus secrecy? To whom and to what do they want to show respect? What experiences have they had with disrespect? How do they respond when someone disrespects them? How do these beliefs relate to being a Unitarian Universalist?
  - What do the adults want to say to the youth about respect? How do they want to be shown respect? How does respect relate to honesty? To privacy versus secrecy? To whom and to what do they want to show respect? What experiences have they had with disrespect? How do they respond when someone disrespects them? How do these beliefs relate to being a Unitarian Universalist?

- What other questions would your group want to ask the other group about respect? Have someone record these questions.

After thirty minutes, reconvene the large group and invite them into a "fishbowl," in which each group takes a turn sitting inside the circle. The group around the perimeter of the circle asks the questions listed above, along with new questions they have composed. In response, the group inside the circle has a conversation among themselves, which they allow to be witnessed by the other group. Let the youth choose whether they want to be inside the circle first, or around the perimeter first, asking the adults the questions.

When both groups have had a turn inside the circle, invite everyone to talk about the experience. Did anything surprise them? What did they learn? Will these conversations make a difference in how they show respect at home, at church, at school, or at work?

- Start an intergenerational reading group. Stories are an excellent way to enter into the lives of others and to discover ways to name our own experiences. Many books for children and young adults deal with issues of respect, belonging, identity, inclusiveness, and more—all the elements of respect that are particularly meaningful for Unitarian Universalists. The following list provides a small sample of fiction and nonfiction books that are great resources for adolescents and adults to share:
  - Laurie Halse Anderson, *Speak*
  - Marion Dane Bauer, ed., *Am I Blue?: Coming Out from Silence*
  - Francesca Lia Block, *Baby Be-Bop*
  - Sara Shandler, *Ophelia Speaks: Adolescent Girls Write About Their Search for Self*
  - Theodore R.Sizer and Nancy Faust Sizer, *The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract*
- Create a congregational covenant about respect. See the list of covenants under the Activities for "At Home" above, and explore other resources through the UUA or the internet.

- Explore ways that members within your congregation can work together, across the lifespan, on issues that demonstrate Unitarian Universalist values of respect. Possibilities include volunteering for environmental organizations, for City Year, for international service or relief organizations, or for fair-housing organizations; caring for and tutoring young children; working with animals through the ASPCA or the Humane Society; working with people with varying abilities; or visiting elders and seniors.

## Resources

### Adult, Intergenerational

- Ailman, Amanda L. "Do Children Need Religion?" Available at [http://www.uua.org/re/reach/leadership/do\\_children\\_need\\_religion.html](http://www.uua.org/re/reach/leadership/do_children_need_religion.html)
- Borba, Michele. *Parents Do Make a Difference*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.
- Cantor, Ralph, with Paul Kivel and others. *Days of Respect: Organizing a Schoolwide Violence Prevention Program*. Alameda, CA: Hunter House Publishers, 1997.
- Fulghum, Robert. *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. Boston: C.G. Hall, 1988.
- Perske, Robert. *Circles of Friends: People with Disabilities and Their Friends Enrich the Lives of One Another*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1988.
- Popov, Linda. *The Family Virtues Guide: Simple Ways to Bring Out the Best in Our Children and Ourselves*. Fountain Hills, AZ: Plume Publishers, 1997.
- Wells, Barbara, and Jaco B. Ten Hove. *Articulating Your UU Faith: A Five-Session Course*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2003.

### Adult

- Lawrence-Lightfoot, Sara. *Respect: An Exploration*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2000.
- Muscari, Mary E. *"Not My Kid": 21 Steps to Raising a Nonviolent Child*. Scranton, Penn.: University of Scranton Press, 2002.

- Nelson, Roberta and Christopher. *Parents as Spiritual Guides*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2001.
- UUA, *The Parent Trilogy: Three Programs for Unitarian Universalist Parents and Other Adults*-Roberta and Christopher Nelson, *Parents as Resident Theologians*; Roberta and Christopher Nelson, *Parents as Social Justice Educators*; Makaanah Elizabeth Morriss and David Hicks MacPherson, *Being a Unitarian Universalist Parent* (Boston: UUA, 1990, 1993, 1991, respectively)

### **Youth, Intergenerational**

- Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Speak*. New York: Puffin Books, Penguin, 1999.
- Bauer, Marion Dane, ed. *Am I Blue?: Coming Out from Silence*. NY: HarperTrophy, 1994.
- Block, Francesca Lia. *Baby Be-Bop*. New York: HarperTrophy, 1995.
- Dresser, Norine. *Multicultural Manners: New Rules of Etiquette for a Changing Society*. New York: Wiley and Sons, 1996.
- Lewis, Barbara. *What Do You Stand For? A Kid's Guide to Building Character*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Press, 1997.
- Salzman, Marian, and Teresa Reisgies, with several thousand teenage contributors. *150 Ways Teens Can Make a Difference: A Handbook for Action*. Princeton, N.J.: Peterson's Guides, 1991.
- Shea, Virginia. *Netiquette*. New York: Albion Publishing, 1994
- Sizer, Theodore R., and Nancy Faust Sizer. *The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1999. (Youth, Adult)
- YRUU Principles for the Establishment of Community. Available at [http://www.uua.org/YRUU/resources/p\\_comm.htm](http://www.uua.org/YRUU/resources/p_comm.htm)

### **Youth**

- Packer, Alex J. *How Rude! The Teenager's Guide to Good Manners, Proper Behavior, and Not Grossing People Out*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Press, 1997.

### **Children, Intergenerational**

- Davies, Roger. "Earth Charter," from UU Faith Works, Summer/Fall 2003, available at <http://www.uua.org/re/faithworks/fall03/curriculumandlearningresourcesh.html>.
- Fry, Chris. "Children's Covenant," in *Reach*, Spring 2000. Available at [http://www.uua.org/re/reach/spring00/teaching/childrens\\_covenant.html](http://www.uua.org/re/reach/spring00/teaching/childrens_covenant.html).
- James, Elizabeth, and Carol Barkin. *Social Smarts: Manners for Today's Kids*. New York: Clarion Books, 1996.
- Kaufman, Gershen, and Lev Raphael. *Stick Up for Yourself! Every Kid's Guide to Personal Power and Positive Self-Esteem*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Press, 1990.

### **Children**

- Gainer, Cindy. *I Am Like You, You're Like Me*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Press, 1998
- Payne, Lauren. *Just Because I Am: A Child's Book of Affirmation*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Press, 1994.
- Raatma, Lucia. *Respect*. Character Education Series. Mankato, Minn.: Capstone Press, 2000.

### **Intergenerational**

- Snow, Kathie. "People First Language." Available from the Kids Together, Inc., at <http://www.kidstogether.org/pep-1st02.htm>.
- Unitarian Universalist Family Network. "Family Pledge of Nonviolence." Available at <http://www.uua.org/families/pledge.html>.

## **Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes**

We, the member congregations of the UUA, covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The living tradition we share draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against the idolatries of the mind and spirit
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

**From the bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association.**

## Principles in Language for Children

- Every person is important and valuable.
- All people should be treated fairly.
- Our churches are places where we should accept one another and learn together.
- Each person should be free to search for what is true and right.
- All people have the right to speak out and vote on things that matter to them.
- We should help build a peaceful, fair, and free world.
- We need to take care of the earth, the home we share with all living things.

**From *We Believe: Learning and Living Our UU Principles* edited by Ann Fields and Joan Goodwin**

## About the Authors

Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones is a Unitarian Universalist parish minister, the co-editor with Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley of *Soul Work: Antiracist Theologies in Dialogue* (Boston: Skinner House, 2003), and the author of study guides for John Buehrens's *Understanding the Bible: An Introduction for Skeptics, Seekers, and Religious Liberals*; Forrest Church's *Lifelines: Holding On and Letting Go*, and *Lifecraft: The Art of Making Meaning* (all available on-line through Beacon Press); and for Ted and Nancy Sizer's *The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract* (available through [www.lifelinescenter.org](http://www.lifelinescenter.org)).

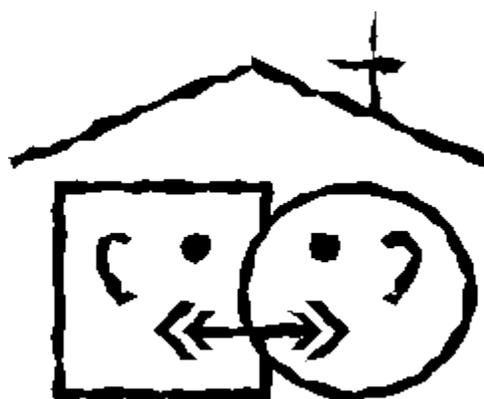
Rev. Patricia Hoertdoerfer is the Children, Family and Intergenerational Programs Director in the

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Pat has served congregations in Syracuse, NY and Bethesda, MD before coming to the UUA. She and her husband have an enduring intercultural partnership of 40 years with a family of four adult children in multicultural families of their own. As the proud Oma of four grandchildren, she believes that it is in the home where we deepen and practice our faith.

## About the Family Matters Task Force

The mission of the UUA Family Matters Task Force is to transform Unitarian Universalism into a community of families empowered through faith, celebration, support, education, advocacy, and service. Visit their Web site at [www.uua.org/families](http://www.uua.org/families) for more information about their endeavors, programs, and resources in the service of ministry with Unitarian Universalist families.



## About the Series: *Taking It Home: Families and Faith*

The booklets in this series provide the Unitarian Universalist community with resources to support families in deepening their faith, expanding their future, and supporting their love. The next pamphlets in this series are *Let's Talk About Time/Money Balance*, *Let's Talk About Marriage and Committed Relationships*, *Let's Talk About Divorce and Broken Relationships*, *Let's Talk About Families and Loss* and *Let's Talk About Interfaith Families*.

This booklet series is sponsored by the UUA Family Matters Task Force.

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[www.uua.org/families](http://www.uua.org/families)