

SPRING
2014

Families

WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH



STORY FOR ALL AGES

Every Body Is Beautiful

BY MELANIE DAVIS



Feeling Good
in Your Body



The Families pages
are adapted from
Tapestry of Faith
lifespan faith
development
programs.

[www.uua.org/
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When I was young, I biked, snow skied, waterskied, danced, and played basketball,

volleyball, and softball. Though I

wasn't a great athlete, I set a school district record in the high jump for girls my height. I was proud of all I could use my body to do.

Unfortunately, my abilities did not matter to a few of my middle school classmates. They teased me because my body was maturing more slowly than theirs. I looked like a young girl when the others were starting to look like adolescents. I

assumed everyone was judging me, and I was miserable.

Eventually, I grew up. I found someone to share my life with and we had three daughters. One of them, Tai, was born with bilateral hip dysplasia. Her pelvis was missing the deep curvatures on each side that would have held her thigh bones in place. The problem had to be fixed surgically or

she would never walk comfortably.

When Tai was three, she had operations that left her with two long scars on each leg and two long scars on each hip. She was in a cast from her

armpits to her ankles for three months.

When the cast was removed she was frightened by the scars, but her dad and I told her they were beautiful badges of courage. She must have believed it, too, because she was a confident, active, happy little girl.

One day, a girl at swim class pointed at Tai's scars and said, "Eeew. What are those?" I knew

Tai's feelings were

hurt, even though she didn't let the girl see her eyes fill with tears.

Tai, who is 22 now, said, "When I was younger, I thought my scars were humongous, ugly, and weird. But by high school, I forgot about them until someone asked. I realized I only imagined people were judging me. Mainly, they thought the scars were cool looking. Now, I'm in college and I

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What does your body do that makes you happy?



Tai Davis-Kleppinger, age 22, rock-climbing.

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am happy to talk about them. They are a unique thing that only I have."

She added, "Most people don't really care how other people's bodies look or work. And if anyone does make a rude comment, why waste your time getting upset?"

I didn't have Tai's confidence when I was in middle school, but I'm glad that I didn't let my hurt feelings stop me from doing the things I enjoyed. Today, I'm 54, and I still like to dance and ski. I also enjoy a tough exercise class that makes me stronger, faster, and more flexible. It doesn't matter what those kids teased me about in middle school. My body does a lot of what I want and need it to do. That makes me happy.

Everyone has a body that can do something special, even if it's different from what other people's bodies can do. What does your body do that makes you happy?



EXPLORING TOGETHER

OUR BODIES ARE AMAZING! But sometimes we take them for granted. Can we include our physical bodies when we consider our first Principle, that each and every one of us is important? and our second Principle, which asks us to treat ourselves and each other fairly and kindly? Acceptance, responsibility, and respect are three more words from our UU Principles. Let's celebrate our bodies in a UU Principled way!

Search for Beauty

Here's a fun game you can do anywhere. The goal is simply to find beauty. Take five minutes to explore your surroundings, writing a list of everything you think qualifies as "beauty." Don't forget to consider parts of **YOU** for your list. Come back together and share: **What beauty did you find?**

What does beauty have to do with the way we value different people, places, and things?

How have your ideas of beauty changed as you have grown up?

What does Unitarian Universalism say about beauty?

What groups do you belong to – family, school friends, a team or club, your age group? An ethnic group? What do those groups say about beauty?

Who decides what beauty is? Can we decide for ourselves?

Breathe, Stretch, Laugh

Yoga is a practice that comes from the Hindu religion and Indian culture. Stretching the body and paying attention to the breath help you connect with your spiritual center and make your body feel stronger and more energized. There is even something called laughter yoga. People who practice it say that even pretending to laugh is good for you.

You need no special equipment for yoga, though it's best done in a quiet, comfortable place. Check out yoga learning resources for all ages and all physical abilities on page 4, Find Out More.

Try one pose!

What parts of your body did you stretch?

What does that feel like?

How do your body and your spirit work together?



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What Bodies Do

Get some illustrated magazines or choose a few commercials to watch carefully on tv. Look for images of people using their bodies: playing, eating, traveling, shopping, studying, sleeping. Find some where people use assistance, such as a wheelchair, a cane, or braille.

Do pictures show how well someone likes or respects their body? How?

Does everyone pictured doing an activity seem to have the same type of body? Does that mean only certain body types can do that activity?

Make a collage that shows people with different types of bodies and different abilities, all doing the same activity.



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It's a Gift

In Jewish and Christian scripture, our physical bodies are seen as a gift from God, the creator. King David sings to God:

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works.

- Psalm 139:14

What's in a Body?

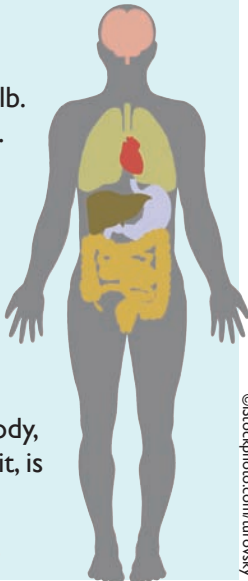
A newborn's brain weighs about 1 lb.

An adult's brain weighs about 3 lbs.

A normal human pulse rate is 70 heartbeats per minute.

The human small intestine is about 20 feet long and the large intestine is about 5 feet long.

Scientists estimate that a human body, including parasites which reside in it, is made up of 37.2 trillion cells.



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Draw Yourself

Your personality, your capabilities, and your dreams are one-of-a-kind — just like your body. Make and share a drawing of your unique self.

■ Take colored chalk outside to a sidewalk. Or, bring markers, large sheets of plain paper, and some tape to an indoor wall or floor.

■ Lie or stand with your back against the sidewalk or paper. Have someone carefully trace your body outline.



■ Use your favorite colors to draw on the kinds of clothing, accessories, shoes, hats, jewelry, uniform, etc. that would make you feel really happy. (These can be items you do not normally wear.)



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When your drawing is complete, take a few steps back and enjoy your self-portrait. If you've done this activity with others, share stories about your self-portraits.

■ What can someone else learn about you by looking at your self-portrait?

■ How does your self-portrait show that you enjoy your health, your strength, your gentleness?

■ Does it show your leadership ability? Your willingness to share with others?

A Beautiful Body

From a post by Kiyah Duffey who blogs at www.ourregularlyscheduledprogram.com. Adapted with permission.

Last night, after my portion of the bedtime routine, I was puttering around in the bathroom cleaning out the stuff under the sink when I heard Tim, my husband, say something to Eleanor that gave me pause. "Eleanor," he said. "You have a beautiful body." When I heard Tim (who is the kind of father that would rather encourage Eleanor's love of books or bugs than eye shadow or handbags) tell Eleanor she had a beautiful body, I wondered where he was going with it.

He continued. "Look at these two legs of yours. They are so strong. They help you run and jump and balance. And look at this belly. It helps you turn all the good food you eat into energy that helps you play and grow." He continued from one body part to another, describing how many she had of each (two eyes and one brain) and detailing all the wonderful things those body parts allowed her to do ("...a nose for smelling flowers, and two strong arms for hugging and holding your animals, and two ears



that let you hear the birds singing and music playing...").

The room was silent but for his voice, which was soft enough to suggest that he was close to her, fully engaged in their time together. There was not a sound coming from Eleanor either, no stirring, kicking against the wall, or rustling of the sheets to suggest her typical toddler fidgeting. I stood motionless in the doorway, listening.

When Tim finished there was a moment of silence. I imagined Eleanor internalizing, at such a young age, this deeply important lesson about all that

she, in her body (the very body that she has, not one that she thinks she should have), is capable of and at that moment I couldn't remember the last time I was so moved.

And I wasn't the only one. After several seconds of silence I heard Eleanor's response: "More, daddy."



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How can you affirm the beautiful capabilities of your child's body when your child is three? ten? fourteen years old?

How are you teaching your child a healthy, loving respect for their body? Do you model self-respect, self-acceptance, and self-care? How?

Photo above: Tim and his daughter Eleanor.
Courtesy ourregularlyscheduledprogram.com and Bolster Collaborative.

To keep the body in good health is a duty... otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear.

— the Buddha

FAMILIES: WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

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Susan Dana Lawrence, Editor

Melanie Davis, Alicia LeBlanc, and Jessica York, Contributors

Ann Casady, Graphic Design

FIND OUT MORE

- Radiant Yoga for All Kids at www.susankramer.com teaches a series of poses to promote balance, coordination, concentration, and vitality. The website has links to yoga and meditation resources for all ages and abilities.
- Barefoot Books' Yoga Pretzels is an oversized card deck that guides cat, cobra, mountain and other poses with colorful, multiracial illustrations and detailed instructions.
- Two contemporary chapter books for middle school age explore peer interactions when a school newcomer has visible, physical differences: *Wonder*, by RJ Palacio (Knopf, 2012) and *Firegirl*, by Tony Abbott (Little, Brown, 2007).
- Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality education programs for all ages emphasize a healthy, accepting attitude toward one's body: www.uua.org/owl
- The Summer 2014 Families pages draw from Tapestry of Faith programs including Faithful Journeys, Signs of Our Faith, World of Wonder, and Exploring Poetry.

www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith